



The Doorknob Collector

Number 51

January - February 1992

ORIENTAL INFLUENCE IN HARDWARE



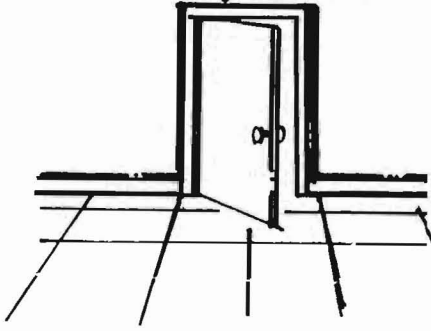
"Art and life in Victorian America"

Although door knobs and hinges might be the last place you would think to look for artistic designwork, it is actually the source of some of the most vigorous Japanese designs. This door latch, with its prominent diagonals, owl, insects and field swallows catalogs some of the most popular Japanese design motifs. This latch can be seen at the Wadsworth Atheneum located at 600 Main Street, Hartford, CT PH: 203-247-9111 or *The Japan Idea: "Art and Life in Victorian America: by William Hosley is available through the museum.*

ADCA Convention, Elgin, IL, August 1-4, 1992

THE OPEN DOOR

by ray nemec



Seeing Rich Kennedy in print in our current issue of *The Doorknob Collector* reminds me that it will be 15 years ago that Rich and Faye put out the first doorknob newsletter. It was in March 1977 that the Kennedys took the first step in uniting collectors. This pioneering effort went a long way to bring collectors together and eventually form *The Antique Doorknob Collector of America*.

Would you be interested in copies of the Kennedy newsletters? There were ten printed, a total of 43 pages. These include some pages of addresses but for the most part are very informative. We are looking at a price of \$20 for the complete set. This would include photocopying, handling and shipping and a little for the club's treasury. Let us know if

there is an interest.

Charlie Wardell has had two displays in his area. One is in the museum in Lexington, NC, and the other one in the public library in High Point. This is the second time Charlie has had a display at the High Point library and, incidentally, it was put there at the library's request.

If you think you have been collecting doorknobs for a long time, in 1978 Fred Magnus reported he had been an avid collector for 38 years. That would now make it 51 years. Can anyone top Fred as having been a doorknob collector for a longer period?

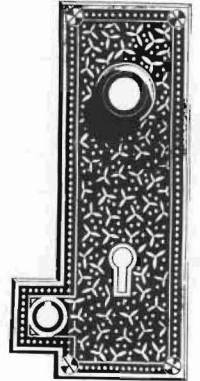
Fred is still very active in his hobby, and is known at Shell Point as Mr. Doorknob. Fred will be exhibiting his knobs once again in the "Hall of Hobbies" which will be the first hobby show at Shell Point with as many as 26 unique exhibitors.

Have you had your collection exhibited anywhere recently? Let us know!

The theme for the 1992 convention will be on, Chicago Hardware Mfg., Co. and United States Steel Lock Co.



1889 Rice Design
YALE AND TOWNE



No. 411R.

**ON THE COVER
PHOTO BY**
Joseph Szaszfai
Can be seen at the
Wadsworth Athenaeum
600 Main Street
Hartford, CT
Door handle and
escutcheon. About 1886
Bronze
Nashua, New Hampshire
Nashua Lock Company

The Doorknob Collector

Published six times a year by Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, Inc. P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126. Raymond and Loretta Nemec, Editors. Phone: 1-708-357-2381

Printed by Sun Printing, Naperville, IL. Annual Membership in USA: \$20.00. Foreign rates on request.

American Hardware of Oriental Design

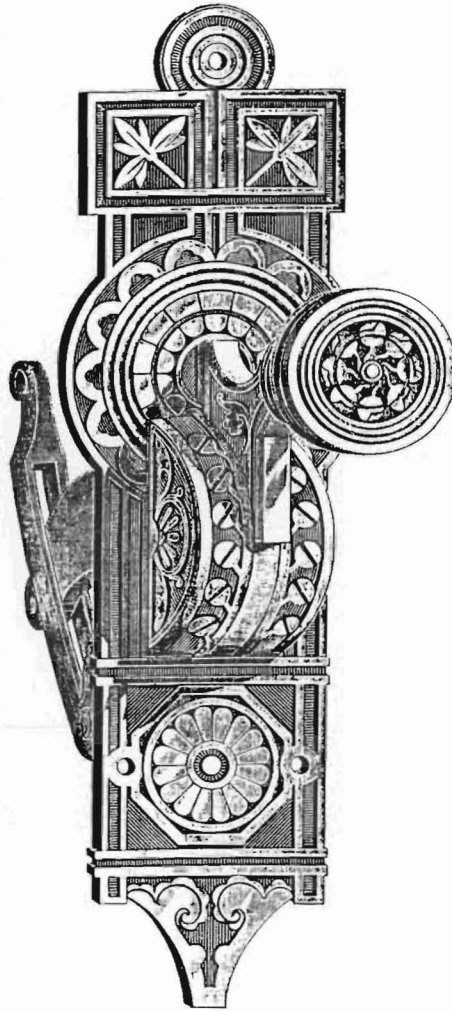
by Maude Eastwood

In America, "the wealthy and middle class of the 1880's embraced opulence, were excited by Oriental and Japanese influence and welcomed new stylistic ideas."

In the mid-1870's America was caught short, she was found lacking in the arts. Japanese and other foreign exhibits at the Exposition displayed an artistic superiority that caught the fancy of would-be fashion conscious Americans. American architects were inspired by the Japanese concept of free and open space and alignment with nature. The manufacturers of builder's hardware reasoned correctly that their trade should take advantage of this interest in foreign fashion and the competitive market that could result.

Under pressure to act quickly, a number of early companies, including Norwalk, Trenton, Union, Perkin's Specialty, Whipple, Phoenix and Nashua came up with surprisingly similar pseudo oriental designs.

Had these companies aim been to portray the Japanese essence of restful tranquility through



Lever Bell Pull No. 1500.

1879

Hopkins & Dickenson

missed the mark. Their designers picked up on the accepted Japanese emblems of bamboo, Chrysanthemum blossoms and other flowers and foliage, birds and geometric patterns, including the diagonal. Then, with great artistic license, they added Egyptian and other emblems in profusion. Most of these early hybrid designs would in later years

be classed as Vernacular designs.

However, the major hardware companies did a creditable job with this new "craze." In 1879 Hopkins & Dickenson issued a large catalog featuring Japanese inspired designs on the cover, on the page borders, and on certain hardware items. Pages 246 of the catalogue featured a bell-pull with a likeness of the Emperor's symbol, a 16 petal chrysanthemum, but, leaves, and geometric lines.

The same year, Russell & Erwin, a rising star in hardware ornamentation, offered knob designs in the Japanese style. Secured by patents, these designs featured birds, human forms, bent branches, single flowers and fretwork (see center fold). In 1882 Corbin contributed to the Oriental theme with a stork dominated cover design for a supplemental catalog.

A description of the Japanese School of Ornamental prepared by W. W. Kent, New York Architect, for Towne's "Lock and Builder's Hardware, covers nine pages. In short,

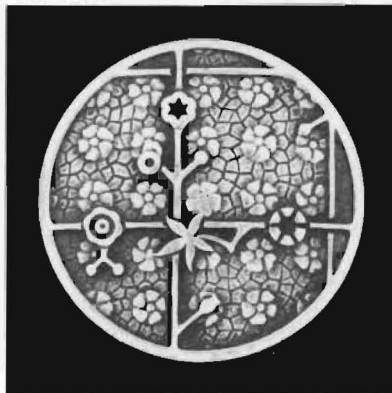
See page 4

"Japanese and Chinese art shows a marvelous intimacy with natural and geometrical forms." The background of Japanese art is in Chinese art and earlier Mongolian forms. Each culture developed its own style using similar emblems. Comparatively, Chinese art is bold, Japanese is sensitive. Strict realism is never the intent. Yale & Towne's "Osaka," 1910, is undoubtedly the truest rendition of Japanese Art to grace a set of door hardware.

Henry Russell, of Russell & Erwin, patented the design of the above NO. 304 knob in May of 1879. This an important knob, noteworthy because, while it is identified in the title as a "Design for a Door-Knob," Russell further established, "As far as I know, I am the first to apply a design in the Japanese style to the ornamentation of door-knobs." This knob is popularly called the Parasol Lady and nearly a century later would be the subject of reproduction by a Japanese firm, for export.

Branford, circa 1880, decorated knobs with a simulated fan, bamboo

and fretwork and called it "Oriental" (VDA Pg.B-1). In 1882 Sargent developed three Japanese designs for a trio of knobs, all called "Ekado" (VDA Pg B-1). Ekado is an excellent illustration of Japanese flower arrangement, for which the Japanese have long been noted.



B-101

EKADO
Sargent 1882

"Simplicity and gracefulness are achieved by a few flowers in a vase, or a single blossoming branch, often crooked, placed in front of tapestry in a natural manner."

Changes in styles automatically inherit its loud dissenters. In 1881 an editor for CARPENTRY AND BUILDING called attention to the craze in building styles and ventured an opinion on what he perceived to be the marked feature of the current decorative mania sweeping the country - "the Oriental Craze". He

labeled the move a behest of fashion "for we cannot regard it as anything else than a fashion or fancy--."

THE METAL WORKER reprinted the article, including facetious remarks that if the mania continued, "We doubtless would see our youths forsaking their four-in-hand and coaches for Babylonian chariots. Vessels of gourd would replace crystal goblets, etc." He noted that American artists were tracing Japanese forms on our ceilings and that China plates shipped from London were slapped like a school boy's spit balls upon the walls.

Fortunately, history proved the predictors wrong. The move lasted some 20 years and experienced two revivals. However, as pertains to door hardware, strictly Japanese is design, as opposed to generic Oriental, specimen are few.

For instance, rice, a Yale & Towne pattern (see ABH, Pg. 67) celebrated Japan's annual Rice Festival - or was it China's status as the leading producer of rice? Knob No 22 on page 67 as noted above, is in the

continued on page 10

Ornamental design in antique doorknobs

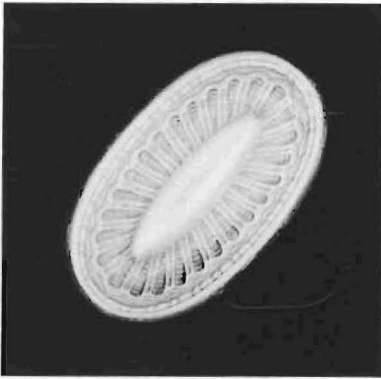
by Len Blumin

(The following regular feature is a supplement to Len Blumin's excellent book, *VICTORIAN DECORATIVE ART*. Copies of the book are available from ADCA for \$11 per copy.)

OVAL KNOBS

- N-167 Concave "shell" design.
N-168 Striking "goddess" with gossamer attire.
N-169 Impressive acorn and oak leaf design. Photo does not do it justice.

N-167



N-168



N-169



INDEX

To the classification system.

A Representational designs

B Asymmetric designs

C Odd-shaped knobs

D Field or Diaper patterns

E Spiral and Swirls

F Twofold Symmetry

G Threefold Symmetry

H Fourfold Symmetry

I Fivefold Symmetry

J Sixfold Symmetry

K Eightfold Symmetry

L Radial Symmetry

M Concentric Symmetry

N Oval Knobs

O Emblematic & Fraternal knobs

Oriental design in antique doorknobs



A-105
Russell & Erwin
June 3, 1879
by R. Christensen
"An echo of A-104."



A-104
Russell & Erwin
June 3, 1879
by R. Christensen
"Japanese style."



A-304
Russell & Erwin
May 13, 1879
by H.E. Russell, Jr.
"Parasol is concave."



A-305
Russell & Erwin
Circa 1880
A mate to A-304

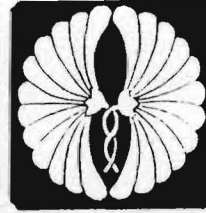
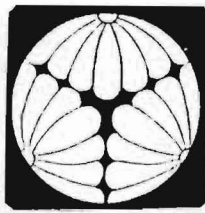


B-107
Russell & Erwin
Circa 1885
In cast iron and brass



K-214
Mallory & Wheeler
Circa 1890
Is there a meaning
to the center?

(The above Oriental style doorknobs are reproduced from the book *Victorian Decorative Art*, by Len Blumin.)



Symbolic Meanings

Through Japanese folklore and religion, natural forms have symbolic meaning:

Bamboo: Is an emblem of loyalty, harmony and consistency.

Butterfly: A Butterfly symbolic of immortality and rebirths as it has the amazing powers of transforming itself from a caterpillar into a winged creature and seems to come to life once again.

Camellia: Shortness and uncertainty of life.

Cherry Blossom: Delicate fragrance-beautiful sight.

Chrysanthemum: Is the symbol of perfection.

Crane: The crane symbolic of a long and prosperous life.

Daisy: Same as chrysanthemum

Dragon: Supernatural creature in Japanese Folklore. The three clawed dragon represents the "Mikado," spirit with great imperial powers.

Dragonfly: The dragonfly is the national emblem of Japan. Japan has been called the "Dragonfly Island."

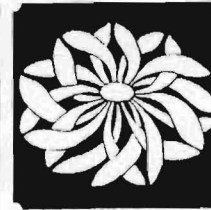
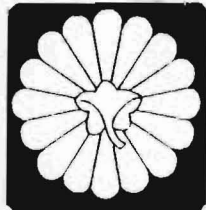
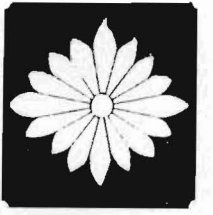
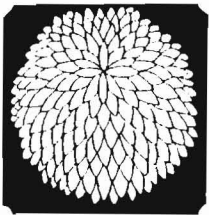
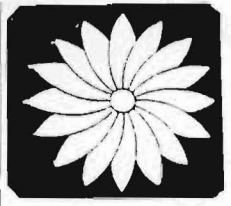
Morning Glory: Beauty and briefness of life since it blooms early in the morning and is withered by noon.

Plum Tree and Nightingale: Linked together, first to flower in spring admired by Japanese as a brave tree.

Sparrows: Are the emblem of gentleness.

Water-lily and Lotus flowers: The emblems of purity.

Wild Geese: Seasonal reference-the flight of wild geese from their winter home is a clear reference to spring.



An open letter to doorknob collectors

by Liz Gordon



It's been quite a while since the August convention, where John Holland asked me to write an article for this newsletter. I was very enthusiastic about the convention and intended to write sooner, but I've been extremely busy opening my new store: **Liz's Antique Hardware** in San Diego, CA. My shop has an inventory of over 300,000 pieces of hardware in all categories for doors, windows, curtains, furniture, bath and lighting. The most exciting news, however, is that I have just started the first nationwide hardware matching service.

All a homeowner, collector or dealer has to do is send a photo or sketch of the missing item, and the size, to: Liz's Antique Hardware, 3821 Park Blvd., San Diego, CA

92103 or call (619) 297-6502 or 284-1075. If we can't find it right away for you, we'll keep it on file until we find it.

This little advertising blurb, above, is not my only reason for writing. A more important reason is to thank *The Doorknob Collectors of America* for being in existence. As a dealer of hardware, my job consists mainly of dealing with hardware functionally, not aesthetically. However, attending the doorknob convention and knowing some of the collectors has given me the opportunity to enjoy the quality and beauty of antique hardware, leaving behind the tedium of function for a time. The enthusiasm that I was fortunate to experience at the convention was infectious. I now find myself keeping the more unique knobs so I will be able to share, swap or sell them at the next convention.

Also, I was impressed by the club's desire to further the cause of hardware education and research. I believe that hardware is a too-well-kept hidden treasure of our heritage. It is

very important that we collectors share our treasures with the public so they will not casually throw away the heritage embodied in hardware. In today's world we are visually manipulated by the new architecture which is built and the old which is destroyed. Much of our visual history is being lost every day to the wrecking ball. For those buildings which cannot be saved, we can at least preserve the hardware, thereby giving it a chance to live again in another structure and tell its story to ourselves and future generations.

If we, as a culture, continue to destroy our architecture and its details, we will cheat our children's children of the wonderful diversity of our visual architectural history, and thereby our cultural history. Architecture is an important aspect of how a society views itself and its history. As Winston Churchill so wisely put it "We shape our buildings, thereafter, they shape us." I can't help but feel he would agree that the same could be said of a building's hardware.■

Obituary



FRANCES BOLEN

Frances Bolen, a member of ADCA since 1987, died on January 17, 1992, in Atlanta, Georgia as a result of heart failure. She was 75 years old.

Mrs. Bolen was born on May 5, 1916 at Atlanta. She married Lawrence C. Bolen on June 1, 1941. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary the past summer.

The Bolens began collecting doorknobs in earnest when they retired in 1985. A friend who owned a brass shop gave Lawrence an ADCA membership application. In early 1987 the Bolens joined and became active members. They attended every convention since 1987 and have been working on the clubs promotional items.

In addition to her husband, Mrs. Bolen is survived by four children, Patsy Paton (Norcross, CA), Larry Bolen (Brentwood, TN), Judy Helton (Powder Springs, CA) and Bobby Bolen (Canton, GA), 12 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

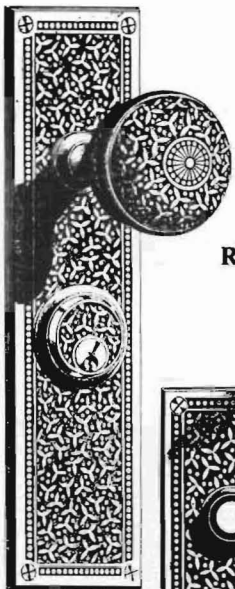
Address Changes:

#194
John Van Kluyve
P.O. Box 55, Park
Station
Patterson, NJ 07543

#111
Liz Gordon
Liz's Antique
Hardware
3821 Park Blvd.
San Diego, CA 92103

#120
Patrick Hughes
P.O. Box 5286
River Forest, IL
60305

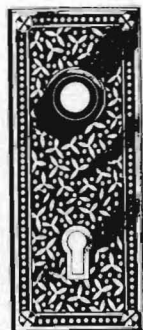
#242
Thomas Nemec
6723 S. Vail Apt. 4
Westmont, IL 60559



1889

Rice Design

COMBINED DISC/TURNER PLATE
No. 401K
(RICE DESIGN)



Letters

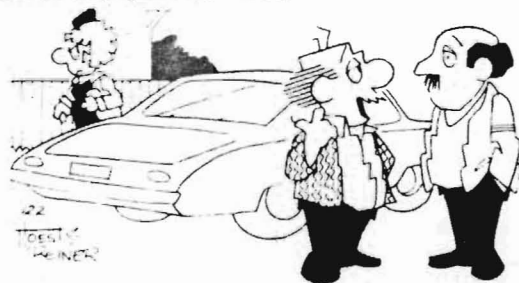
Somebody commented on cleaning door-knobs, so I decided to respond. don't overclean with caustics like Polident or caustic soda. Use something like Goop for dirt, and paint remover for paint and varnish (use outdoors if you value your life!) I have a few outside doorknobs with patina that will stay as is to show they are old.

There is an acid-based "antique-restorer" that I will try and report on it later. You could probably get the same effect by leaving your knobs in a cattle barn.

How about a report on getting recasts made? I can see where an unscrupulous foundry could run off a few extra for himself and deflate the market.

Jerry Johnson
Indianapolis, IN

THE LOCKHORNS



"We just got back from the antique fair ... Loreta won first prize."

© 1991 by King Features Syndicate, Inc. World rights reserved

KENNEDY KOMMENTS

by Rich Kennedy

Now that I decided to retire I am going to become an active member in the *Antique Doorknob Collectors of America* again.

After reading the last newsletter, I definitely agree there should be East and West chapters. Since our membership is spread out across the United States and members do not get together much except for the annual convention, I think East and West chapters would be a way of old and new members to get together.

I would be glad to head the first East chapter. If anyone is interested in working with me on an East Coast meeting, please let me know.

this coming summer I am planning a bicycle trip through Wisconsin, and it just dawned on me that I can kill two birds with one stone and take in the convention if I plan it right. Just think I may be the first person to arrive at our convention by bike.

(Editor note: Rich Kennedy's address is 7 Lafayette Pl., Chatham, NJ 07928. PH:201-635-6338.)

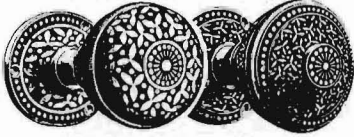
intercourse and influence.

So, yes, authentic and imitation goods of Japanese origin were widely used in American households in 1880's and 1890's. Japanese doorknobs? No, but doorknobs of Japanese design are eagerly sought - those produced by American manufacturers 80 to 100 years ago.

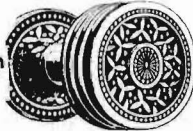
Oriental design

(continued from page 4)

configuration of a coolie hat.



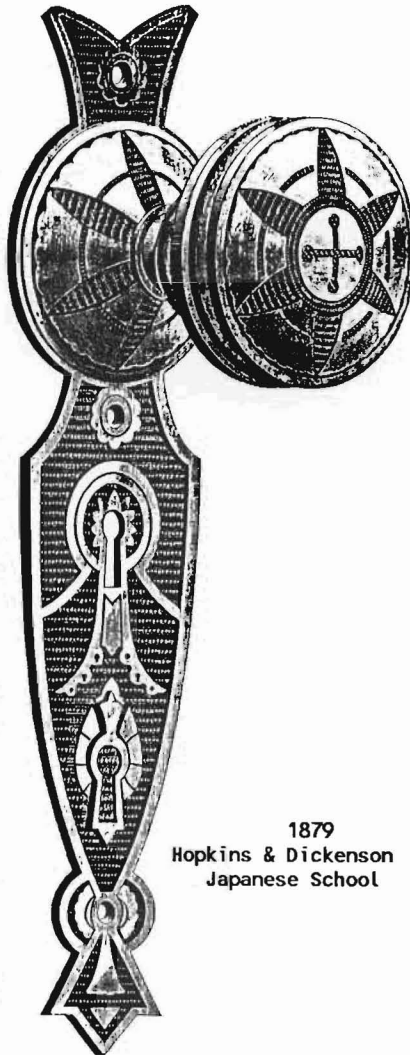
1889 Rice Design
YALE AND TOWNE



No. 76.

Examples of Japanese style in American architecture were the Japanese ballroom in the old De Soto Mineral Springs Building in Hot Springs, Arkansas, now restored, and the Japanese room of the John Plankenton house, one of Milwaukee's imposing residences. Scott Williams, New York painter, executed the Bird Motive ceiling panels for the Porcelain Dining Room of the Park Central Hotel.

A. A. Vantine & Co. of New York was a major importer of Orientalia as they featured authentic and imitation Japanese goods. Doorknobs were not among their wares. Japanese doors did not operate with turning knobs and for nearly 300 years Japan had been cut off from all foreign



1879
Hopkins & Dickenson
Japanese School



**1885 Arizona State
Teachers College.
Seal of the State
of Arizona. 1912**

ADCA FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The following statement is for the year January 1, 1991 through December 31, 1991.

INCOME STATEMENT

Membership dues	\$3530.00
Donations	5.00
ADCA publications	403.13
ADCA promotional items	62.00
Consignment sales	267.06
Interest on investments	343.03
Convention income	2243.29
Miscellaneous income	2.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$6855.51

EXPENSE STATEMENT

Printing newsletter	\$2199.65
Other printing expenses	136.28
Postage	1092.99
Other publications expenses	116.83
Supplies & operating expenses	74.03
Purchase of books	900.00
Convention expenses	509.53
Insurance	174.00
Consignment purchases	286.50
Miscellaneous expenses	14.88
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$5504.69

Profit or (loss)	\$1350.82
Beginning cash balance	\$6928.19
Ending cash balance	\$8279.01

Your continued support and patronage is very much appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Loretta T. Nemeč,
ADCA Treasurer

ROSTER UPDATE No. 5

The following are additions to the 1991 **ADCA** roster which was enclosed with the May-June 1991 issue of **The Doorknob Collector**.

#195
Phil Ondersma
P.O. Box 6406
GrandRapids, MI49506

#272
Peter Kraushar
10220 E Rio deOro Pl
Tucson, AZ 85749

#271
Daniel L. Powers
P.O. Box 728
Ogden, IA 50212-0728

#273
Rebecca Long
60 Cathaway Pk.
Rochester, NY 14610

#274
Karen L. Caulfield
41 Brunswick St.
Rochester, NY 14607

#275
Jeff R. Hart
185 S. Mountain Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07042

#276
Carol Stone
601 Pioneer Rd.
Reinbeck, IA 50669

#277
Alan Ladner
P.O. Box 333
Springboro, PA 16435

#278
Stan Schirmacher
1725 Farmers
Tempe, AZ 85281

The doorknob exchange

Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade or wanted at no charge.

FOR TRADE. Brass oval doorknob with seal of Massachusetts for knob from another state. Other offers welcomed. Charles Wardell (#9), P.O. Box 195, Trinity, NC 27370. PH: 919-434-1145.

FOR SALE. Actual cast brass doorknob from the ASU Matthews Library built in summer 1930, with the Great Seal of Arizona encircled by "Arizona State Teachers College." Made into paper weights, \$100; handle on cane, \$150. Gavel with turned brass handle, \$250. Stan-Schirmacher #278, 1725 Farmers, Tempe, AZ 85281. PH: 602-967-5405.

FOR SALE. "10 Sets" Russwin Lock Set (see picture) \$30 per set. Bill Hart (#108), 1937 Moser Dr., Henderson, NV 89015. PH: 702-565-4752.

FOR SALE. If you are passing through San Diego, make sure to stop at: Liz's Antique Hardware (#111), 3821 Park Blvd., San Diego, Ca 92103. An extensive inventory of over 300,000 pieces of door, window and lighting hardware and furniture dating from 1950 on back.

FOR SALE. Back issues of **THE DOORKNOB COLLECTOR.** \$2 each. Send for list of available issues.

The Doorknob Collector
P.O. Box 126,
Eola, IL 60519-0126.

WANTED. Escutcheon plate for Christesen design (Page 36, ABH supplement #1). Will pay \$150 for this escutcheon. Charles Wardell (#9), P.O. Box 195, Trinity, NC 27370. PH: 919-434-1145.

WANTED. Dexter knob sets, complete, with glass knobs, plates and strikes. These are tubular lock sets with glass screw-on knobs. Need three baths with latch and seven passageway. Jerry Johnson (#161). 830 E. Southport Road, Indianapolis, IN 46227 PH: 317-784-8878. ■



**FROM THE ARCHIVES
WITH ARCHIVISTS**
Steve/Barb Menchhofer

Thanks to everyone who ordered catalog copies the last time we offered them. It is great to see a lot of the newer members of the **ADCA** ordering catalogs.

Why order catalogs? Well, if for no other reason, maybe it is just to see some of the beautiful, ornate hardware that was produced back in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Maybe you have an interest in other related hardware such as locks, hinges, window hardware, etc. Many of the catalogs contain these items. It is interesting to see the miscellaneous hardware items that are offered in the same designs as doorknobs and escutcheons. Or maybe you want to research and catalog the items in your collection. Whatever the reason, the catalog copies are helping you to broaden your knowledge of hardware history. ■



Stan Schirmacher with one
with one of his walking sticks.