



The Doorknob Collector

Number 70

March - April 1995

CALIFORNIA, HERE WE COME!

The 1995 ADCA annual convention will take place, Wednesday through Friday, August 16-18, at the Bayview Plaza Holiday Inn in Santa Monica, California. Your convention information packet is expected to be mailed in early June.

Members attending the convention may want to visit several flea markets held in the Los Angeles area on the weekends. Members should also set aside time to stop and see Bud Wolski's Manchester Sash and Door Company, Liz's Antique Hardware, Hills Brothers Lock and Safe and the Crown Hardware Company.
(continued on page 8)



Above - The Niles Building being renovated in 1992.



The Niles Building as it looks today, after the renovation has been completed. For more information and pictures on the Niles Building, see The Story of the Chicago Hardware Company on page 3.

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ADCA Convention, Santa Monica, CA - August 16-18, 1995

Identifying doorknobs

This is the sixth of a series which cross-references the number appearing in Lionel Moes 1984 catalog with those assigned by Leonard Blumin.

Moes Enterprises	Len Blumin's Victorian Decorative
Catalog	Art
A-91	F-225
A-92	E-148
A-93	H-256
A-94	F-113
A-95	B-214
A-96	H-216
A-97	L-101
A-98	K-111
A-99	K-112
A-100	D-105
A-101	A-205
A-102	B-201
A-103	H-414
A-104	F-206
A-105	E-113

(Compiled by Edward Sobczak)

U. S. Patent

Invention number chart

This is the fourth table in a six part series to help you determine the approximate age of patented hardware.

YEAR PATENT NUMBERS

1900.....	640,167 through 664,826
1901.....	664,827 through 690,384
1902.....	690,385 through 717,520
1903.....	717,521 through 748,566
1904.....	748,567 through 778,833
1905.....	778,834 through 808,617
1906.....	808,618 through 839,798
1907.....	839,799 through 875,678
1908.....	875,679 through 908,435
1909.....	908,436 through 945,009
1910.....	945,010 through 980,177
1911.....	980,178 through 1,013,094
1912.....	1,013,095 through 1,049,325
1913.....	1,049,326 through 1,083,266
1914.....	1,083,267 through 1,123,211
1915.....	1,123,212 through 1,166,418
1916.....	1,166,419 through 1,210,388
1917.....	1,210,389 through 1,251,457
1918.....	1,251,458 through 1,290,026
1919.....	1,290,027 through 1,326,898

KENNEDY KOMMENTS



by Rich Kennedy

Each month our town has curb side pick-up of anything you might want to throw away. My wife spotted a door with the knobs and lock set intact, I thought all I have to do is drive by unscrew everything and be gone. **Wrong.** First of all, the plates were attached to the door with special slotted screws requiring a special screw driver of which I didn't have in the car. I figured this will be easy, just lift the door and take it home hardware and all. **Wrong again.** The door weighed 500 pounds, too heavy to lift, not wanting to leave everything behind for the trash pick up, I had to think of a solution fast, I found a saw in my car and proceeded to cut it out, it broke my heart to cut into a beautiful mahogany door but then the hardware was the object. •



Get Well Wishes

Get well wishes go to long-time ADCA member Norman Nichols who is recovering from a stroke he suffered in 1994. Norman is one of the club's charter member #38.

New Member Policy for 1995

Membership in ADCA follows the current calendar year. Anyone joining during the period from January through September 30 is enrolled for the current year and is sent all back issues of **The Doorknob Collector** for the current year. The member then continues the rest of the current year's issues of **The Doorknob Collector**.

Applicants for membership after September 30 are enrolled as members for the following year. They received notices of year end meetings as well as other current ADCA announcements and are told they will begin receiving **The Doorknob Collector** during the next year. •

Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

Board of Directors 1993/1995

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Vice President Dale Sponaugle #85

Secretary/Treasurer Raymond Nemecek #350

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Len Blumin #3

Maud Eastwood #2

Arnie Fredrick #1

Rich Kennedy #238



The Doorknob Collector

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Founded in September 1981, the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** is a non-profit organization devoted to those interested in collecting and preservation of Antique Doorknobs and related hardware.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writer and not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Directors of ADCA or the editors of **The Doorknob Collector**.

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From Niles to Sager The Story of the Chicago Hardware Company

by Raymond J. Nemeo

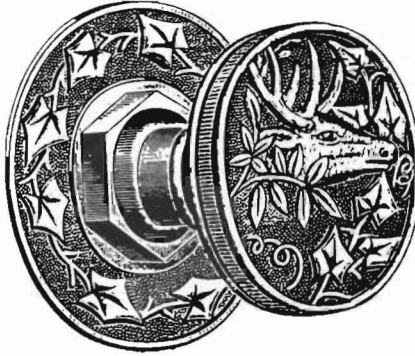
(Continued from Jan/Feb. 1995 issue 69 of *The Doorknob Collector*.)

V

The Gray Iron Company was officially incorporated on November 11, 1880 and F. T. June, M. C. Niles and W. G. Stephens were elected as the company's first Board of Directors. June became President, Sidney S. Niles, although not a stock holder, became the Secretary.

Art Paholke pointed out, "The name 'Gray Iron Company' is deceiving, as the locksets using the Niles patents seem to have been the firm's principal product." Advertising in the 1881 Chicago city directory listed the company as the "sole manufacturers Niles' patent Mortise Door Knobs and Locks."

On May 12, 1881, the stockholders of Gray Iron Company held a special meeting and increased the Capital Stock to fifty thousand dollars. The resolution was signed by S. S. Niles, Secretary, and Frank T. June, President.



NILES PATENT KNOB

A year later, on April 26, 1882, the Board of Directors of Gray Iron Company voted to change the name of the corporation to the Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company. The certificate was signed by Frank T. June, President.

Milton C. Niles continued to file for patents on Niles locksets. He filed for two patents on March 25, 1882, one for the latch and the other for the reversible latch. About two weeks later he filed for still an

other latch patent. They were all issued in December 1882.

Sidney S. Niles applied for a patent for a new and original design for doorknobs and escutcheons on November 7, 1884. The patents were issued March 31, 1885, to Sidney S. Niles, assignor to the Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company.

A major problem the company had was conveying the message to the building trade about the merits of its thoroughly different hardware. Articles appearing in publications, such as the July 1882 issue of "Carpentry and Building," went a long way to bring attention to the Niles Patent Mortise doorknobs and locks. With the publicity, growth of the company continued.

The year 1889 saw Chicago's population reach one million. When Milton C. Niles first visited the city in the late 1840's, Chicago

IMPROVEMENT IN DOOR LOCKS.

The Chicago Hardware Mfg Co., Chicago, Ill., are calling attention to the Niles Patent Mortise Door Knobs and Locks, a complete view of which is afforded by the accompanying engravings. The special features in this lock to which to company direct attention are, that screws in the shank of the knob are dispensed with entirely; there are no washers, no spindle and no hub in the lock, and in their place is the knob shank only, extended and provided with a lug and cam on its inner end, the cam performing the function of the hub in the common lock. Its parts are clearly shown in the engraving, the cam on the end of the knob shank being shown in Fig. 6. while the yoke in which it works is clearly shown in the details of the lock, Fig. 7. the knob acts directly upon the latch without loss of motion. The

CARPENTRY AND BUILDING

rose and key escutcheon, as shown in Fig. 6, are in one piece, extending above and below the lock, so that the long screws necessary for securely fastening furniture of this kind will enter the solid wood and make a firm attachment to the door. The inner end of the knob shank is attached by the lug directly to the lock, while the outer part is supported in the rose, so that there is no possibility of the knob coming off until the screws in the roses are drawn out and the knob can be tipped to one side. Another feature to which the manufacturers direct attention is that the number of parts required to operate this lock, as compared with the old style, is reduced one-half. In the construction of the lock the latch bolts are made reversible without taking off the cap. The inside works are made strong and accurate, the tumblers being stamped out of wrought iron and the

bolts made of hard brass or bronze. The lock has been sufficiently introduced to be thoroughly tested. It has been subjected on public buildings, railway car doors and like places during the last three years to the most severe and trying tests that could be found and where the least objectionable feature would be quickly manifest. After a test of this kind, the manufacturers offer it strictly on its merits. As may be seen by the engraving, a very happy design is incorporated in the ornamental features of the rose and key escutcheon. The lock is attractive in appearance, and, we have no doubt, will be a favorite in the trade.

(Published in the July 1882 issue of *Carpentry and Building Magazine*. The figures 6 & 7 were printed in the Jan/Feb. issue of TDC)

had about 20,000 inhabitants. The city's rapid growth was not without problems. As was mentioned, Frank T. June, because of continued labor problems, moved his sewing machine manufacturing out of Chicago. The Haymarket Square riots in 1886 brought national attention to the unrest in the city. Although Chicago had its culture, there was an increasing rise in theft, vandalism and prostitution. Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company was well aware of the "city" problems.

By 1890 William Spooner had become president of the company. Sidney S. Niles continued as Secretary, having been with the company in that capacity since 1880.

On February 21, 1890, the company's first President, Frank T. June, died unexpectedly at his residence, known as Ames Park, in Belvidere, Illinois. He was 55. His wife, Jennie, and their children would move back to Oak Park and become prominent citizens of the community.

Later in 1890, Sidney S. Niles left the company to concentrate on the family's real estate and development business. It was in 1890 that he revealed plans for a building at 101 S. Marion in Oak Park,



A Niles building staircase during a 1992 rehab.



The "Niles" name still proudly adorns the building Sidney S. Niles built in 1881.

Illinois. The building, named the Niles Block, was completed in 1891. Situated on the southwest corner of Marion and South Boulevard, the three story structure housed businesses on the first floor and offices and apartments on the upper floors.

After years of prosperity and surviving two fires, the building was finally destined for the wrecking ball in the 1980's. It was saved by concerned citizens and gained new

life when it was completely renovated in 1992 and 1993. The name, "Niles," first placed on the building in 1891, still remains on the structure, literally a living monument to an Oak Park family instrumental in the development of the village.

Milton C. Niles remained active in real estate during the 1880's and early 1890's but by 1900, now in his seventies, he retired from active participation in business. During all this time he lived as 129 Park Place, the home he built in 1864. Sidney Niles had an office at 15 South Canal, Chicago in 1887 and still maintained it in 1894.

VI

The Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company maintained its offices and showrooms in downtown Chicago. In 1887, they were at 87 Washington. The factory remained at the original site, 29 Erie (northeast corner of Erie and Kingsbury). By 1895, after 15 years at the Erie street address, the company was looking for a new site.

Builder's Hardware had come a long way by 1895. Thirty years earlier, in 1865, the Civil War was ending, President Lincoln was assassinated and Milton C. Niles



Looking at the north side of the Niles Building as it is today.

family was settling in to their new home in Oak Park. *"The Island Architect and News Record"* reported that in 1865 "there was practically nothing known except common black japanned cast-iron hinges, dark mineral, white porcelain and glass knobs." The article went on to point out that if anyone desired something better they were limited to the use of electro or hand plated silver or gold on plain surfaces.

This was to dramatically change in the next seven years. Companies in the East began coming out with hardware in bronze. Russell & Erwin brought out their line of compression bronze knobs and in 1872 Hopkins and Dickinson brought out their line that was called "art hardware."

It was not until 1886 when John W. Root, the famous architect, revealed his idea that hardware for a building should be "made to harmonize with the character of the building on which it was to be used." Almost immediately buildings were being given their own designed hardware. By 1895 specialty builders' hardware was at its peak.

The year, 1895 is probably remembered today as the year, in which three sports hall-of-famer's were born, Babe Ruth (baseball), George Hales (football) and Jack Dempsey (boxing). It was also the year my father, Anton Nemec was born and other than his love to ride horses as a youth, he was proof that not all those born in 1895 were sport greats.

In 1895 William Spooner continued firmly entrenched as Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company's president. Robert T. Fuller had become treasurer in 1891. The company, realizing the need for a new facility to stay competitive in the ever expanding and changing builders' hardware industry, settled on a site 32 miles north of Chicago

in what is known today as North Chicago.

The area was settled as farmland in the mid-1800's. When real estate agents began offering extravagant prices for farms in the 1880's it was not long before the town of South Waukegan was laid out in 15,000 lots, each lot was 25 x 125 feet; some sold for as much as \$1,000 per lot.

South Waukegan was advertised as "ideal for manufacturing" and was 'dry,' with a motto of "No saloons." In June 1892, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad built a station. A post office was established and a hotel was constructed. Development was rapid.

The Washburn-Moen Manufacturing Company erected a mill. The Lanyon Zinc Oxide Company (later called Vulcan Louisville Zinc Works) followed with a plant. Then came Morrow Brothers Harness Factory (manufacturers of pads for horse collars) and that was followed by the construction on Commonwealth between 22nd and 24th avenues of the Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company buildings. South Waukegan became North Chicago in April 1895, just prior to the hardware company's move.

Other companies would follow and North Chicago would grow. The first U.S. census taken at North Chicago was in 1900. The population was 1,150. By 1910 it had grown to 3,306 up to 5,839 in 1920 and 8,466 in 1930. Many of the early settlers were immigrants from Eastern Europe, attracted by the availability of factory jobs.

Shortly after the move to North Chicago, the company would lease the iron foundry to two employees. John Shewin had started with the company as a molder at the Chicago plant but by 1895 he was the foundry foreman. E. P. Sedgwick was the factory superintendent.

There had been a general pick-up in business by 1895 after the panic



John Sherwin, who worked his way up from a molder to foundry foreman at Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Co. and then to President of Chicago Hardware Foundry Co.. Known as a man of practicality and ingenuity. Also remembered, too was his faithful dog, "Lemons," who seldom left his side.

of 1893. Sherwin and Sedgwick talked thoughtfully about gray iron castings, in which they both felt there was a future. The two were able to rent Chicago Hardware Manufacturing company's foundry as the company was turning to other fields. Records show that Sedgwick remained as plant superintendent at Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company through 1896.

Sherwin and Sedgwick named their new company the Chicago Hardware Foundry Company and it was incorporated on May 25, 1897. Apparently Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company had no problems with the new company's name; however, historians 100 years later, still grapple with the confusion.

The foundry company soon built a plant on a site across the street from the manufacturing company.

BITS AND PIECES

by Win Applegate

... WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

The grandson of a friend of mine came traipsing up from his grandfather's basement recently with the question "Grandpa, what are the little bottles with the nails sticking out of them?"

It took a trip to the basement work bench to answer that query . . . the child had seen his first vacuum tube! That vacuum tube had been around in various forms for years and years and survives today, I believe, mainly as the picture screens of TV's and CRT's of computer monitors. The vacuum tube gave way in the late 1940's to the transistor . . . the size of a postage stamp. Even those not too familiar with 'technical' things know that something the size of a postage stamp now contains hundreds or thousands of transistors.

With my profession centering around computers and one of my avocations being *The History of Computers* I have seen the acceptance of a technology or idea and the quick death of that or another, sometimes, in a matter of weeks.

Life today is like that; my deceased parents would have little idea what it means to 'fax a letter' or 'nuke a meal' and would be rather astonished at the proliferation of devices such as 'pagers' or 'computers' or 'answering machine' or 'cellular phone.'

What we tend to overlook is that it has always been like that. Victor Hugo, the author of *'The Hunchback of Notre Dame'* and *'Les Miserables,'* among others, wrote in a lesser work . . . "greater than the tread of mighty armies is an idea **WHOSE TIME HAS COME.**"

Many of the knob types that we collect have passed by the wayside by being eclipsed by something better.

For those so inclined, the **"Development of the Door Knob"** can provide an interesting and rewarding sub-collection and display. Most of us already have some of the pieces; an old latch (for the 'latch

string'), or the thumb latch with the inside cam lock, to a Sandwich glass knob with its cast thread to perhaps a Gilbert lock with its trigger and immovable knob.

One could continue the development of the knob beginning with a wood or porcelain knob with the shaft through the ends. The wide-based A. E. Young cast glass with its distinctive base and rimmed washer bearing is one we seek for its pristine 'silvered' interior, probably forgetting that it lost out to a knob based upon a better idea.

Oh yes, for a distinctive passing "ideas," let's not forget the "Chicago" style chronicled for us by Ray Nemeec.

Are you really into construction like Maude Eastwood? Well, not everyone may wish to break open clay knobs and most of the metallic knobs are also of the destroy-to-study type. However, you should know that some, notably the E-125 is a halved cast iron knob that is usually held together with a screw, accessible through the shank. If you are inclined to make a too hasty buy at a flea market like I then you certainly have a knob or two where the shank is bent and the underside slightly squashed from too many slams against a hard wall. A few minutes with an oversized drill bit against the internal rivet would easily open the knob without ruining anything valuable.

Materials? Certainly an example of wood could be included. Why did true crystal lose out to the lesser cast glass? a chipped crystal knob will answer that one. and let's not forget the too soft pewter knob with its elongated screw hole and warped shaft.

The collection, arranged in a display would be a real eye catcher and attention-getter for one giving a talk on our favorite topic before an audience or in a display case at the local library or bank. •



E. P. Sedgwick started at Chicago Hardware Manufacturing company as an office boy and worked his way to factory superintendent. Known as the "visionary," Sedgwick became President of Chicago Hardware Foundry Company after Sherwin's death.

Sherwin became Chicago Hardware Foundry Company's first president and Sedgwick was Secretary-Treasurer. Their business flourished and expanded, by 1899, to manufacturing of small hardware items. Both Sherwin and Sedgwick in addition to taking an active role in their company found time to serve terms as mayor of North Chicago. John Sherwin remained President of Chicago Hardware Foundry Company until his death in 1921. E. P. Sedgwick succeeded him as President and remained the chief officer until his death in 1935. (The Story of The Chicago Hardware Company, by Raymond J. Nemeec, will be continued in the next issue of *The Doorknob Collector*.) •



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 \$12.00)

THREEFOLD KNOBS

G-127 & G-128 Originally shown in the September-October 1988 issue of **The Doorknob Collector**. These photos are of better quality.

G-140 Designed patent #4138, June 7, 1870, by J.C.C. Smith. Easily confused with G-126 and G-127. One of eight MCCCC doorknob patents issued to Smith on this date.

G-141 Variation of Mallory Wheeler's F-122, possibly 'pirated' by another manufacturer.

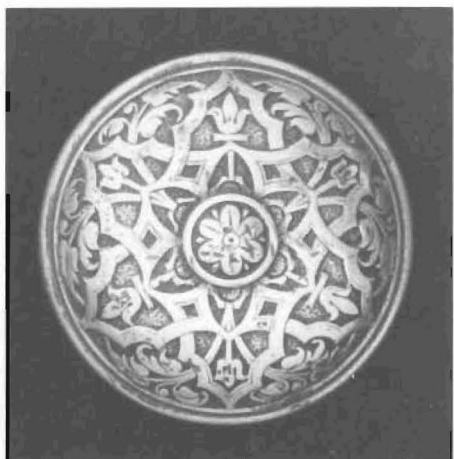
G-127



G-128



G-140



G-141





FROM THE ARCHIVES
by Steve & Barbara Menchhofer

The Doorknob Exchange

Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade or wanted at no charge. **ADCA** is not responsible for any transaction or the condition of the items advertised.

Wanted: To buy or trade. Entry knobs, dome or flat of pattern K-214. Large collection of Victorian hardware and house parts for trade. John Decker (#141)
517 Clayton Street
San Francisco, Ca 94117
PH: 415-552-6625.

Wanted: Competitive prices paid for knobs with ornamental design such as featured on page 3, of Jan-Feb. (#69) issue of **TDC**.
W. E. Slay (#331)
25501 Hack Road
Bay Minette, AL 36507.
PH: 334-937-3115.

Wanted: Issues number 1 through 24 of **The Doorknob Collector**.
Ann Parkhurst (#131)
41-429 Woodhaven Drive East
Plam Desert, CA 92211
PH: 619-345-7121.

Wanted: Knob and plate of the Portland, Oregon, Morning Oregonian. Wish to buy, but will trade if possible.
Edward Sobczak (#154)
4848 So. La Crosse Ave.
Chicago, IL 60638
PH: 312-735-1468.

The old knobs were brass, oval shaped and had the letters **NYPO** embossed on them.

I am writing to see if you have any record of this door knob. My budget is very small and if I can find one and if it is not too expensive I would like to purchase one for our museum.

Joseph H. Cohen, Curator/Historian
Museum of Postal History
421 Eight Avenue, Room 3023
New York, NY 10199-9998

(**The Doorknob Collector** welcomes letters from its readers. Address all correspondence to the Editor, ADCA, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.)•

As always we are thankful to all of you who have ordered catalog copies from the Archives. To the ones who have donated catalogs to us, we thank you for preserving a part of history that is so important to everyone.

One of the latest additions to the Archives is the 35 selected pages of the 1892 Penn Hardware Company Catalog. There are six designs of hardware shown in various forms in this illustrated catalog. The names of the patterns are Floral, Magnolia, Plain, Century, Fluted, and Daisy. The drawings of the hardware are very intricate and true to size. Included are doorknobs, escutcheons, bells, bell levers and pulls among other related items. This copy would make an interesting addition to your library.

This catalog is just one of the eight new ones we had listed on our order forms in the last newsletter. We will try to give a short description of some of them in future articles.

If you have any comments or questions about any catalogs we have, please write or call us. We would enjoy hearing from your. •

..The theme for this year's convention will be **GLASS KNOBS**, Pairpoint Mfg. Company and Technical Glass Co.

DEADLINE

All ads, material and articles for the May-June 1995 issue of **The Doorknob Collector** should be in the hands of the editors by April 15, 1995.

Letter to Editor

Many Years ago, all the doors at the General Post Office in New York had oval shaped door knobs. Again, many years ago these knobs were removed, why I cannot tell you, and replaced with plain round brass knobs.

California (continued from page 1)

If you would like to do a presentation at the convention, contact Liz Gordon. Members are always interested in how to clean knobs, display or photograph them, for example, and if you would like to share your experience let Liz know. If you have done research on a hardware company, processes, individuals, etc., and would like to share this information with convention members let Liz know, (PH: 213/939-4403).

Would you like to be on the board of directors? There will be an election of board members at the annual meeting in August. If you are interested and want more information contact Len Blumin, Nominating Committee Chairman, (PH: 415/388-4990).•



K-214