



The Doorknob Collector

Number 86

November-December 1997

THE JOHN WANNAMAKER STORY

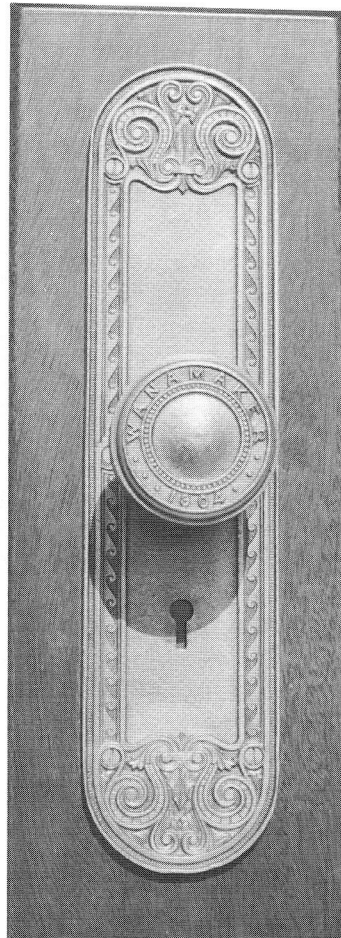
by H. Weber Wilson

“... **T**he plumb of honor, the level of truth, and the square of integrity ...” That was the focus and creed of Philadelphia merchant John Wannamaker, and he built these principles into a great merchandising empire, while changed the face of American retail shopping.

Before Wannamaker opened his first store in 1861—a men’s clothing shop located on the site of George Washington’s Philadelphia home—America’s Main Street was just a series of small, one or two item stores where customers had to haggle over prices, and guarantees were few and far between.

Wannamaker’s first day receipts were \$24.67, of which he reinvested \$24.00 in his business and his dreams. In 1876, he moved to The Grand Depot, an abandoned railroad shed across from City Hall. By 1885 he had become the first store to be lighted by electricity—and had recorded his first \$1,000,000 sales day.

John Wannamaker continued to build on his vision of a new way to sell. He was totally customer oriented, and was the first retailer to bring a broad variety of items



WANNAMAKER 1904

together under one roof. He instituted uniform quantity and specific pricing, and establish a no-question-asked return policy. He also invented the “**White Sale**” that has become a January tradition.

In 1902, Wannamaker’s business had grown to where he began a major expansion project. He kept his Grand Depot open throughout a mammoth three-stage building program that lasted until 1911. When the project was complete, there stood a twelve story Roman-Doric “merchant’s cathedral” that rose 247 feet, and enclosed 2,000,000 square feet of floor space.

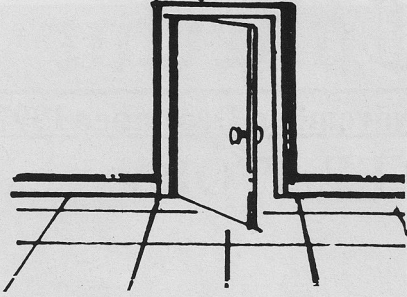
At the dedication of his flagship store there were 35,000 guests, including President Taft and a special greeting from the Emperor and Empress of Japan. The crowds came to browse, to shop, and to see the huge, 2500 pound bronze eagle that Wannamaker had bought at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904. They were also treated to a concert from the Wannamaker organ, also purchased in New Orleans, which soon became the world’s largest, with 451 stops and 30,067 pipes, and which would play every business day thereafter.

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THE OPEN DOOR

by ray nemeč



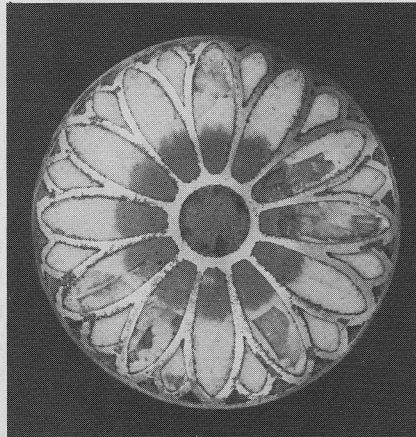
Membership... For some of you this may be your last issue of **The Doorknob Collector**. Memberships for 1997 expire at the end of December. If the label on the envelope reads 1/1/98 you need to send your check in before January 1st to keep the newsletter coming. If you have sent your check and renewal form in, the label will be corrected for the next issue.

Each year we lose some members. As pointed out in the last issue of **The Doorknob Collector** we have been dropping in membership for the past several years. Our drop of less than 10% in membership pales when compared to several large organizations. The Beer Can Collectors of America reached about 11,000 members in the 1980s. Membership now is about 4,000. The Jim Beam Bottle Clubs' Association peaked at 21,000 members in 1981. Their total has dropped to 5,000. There seems to be a general trend for collectors' clubs to be losing memberships. There are exceptions. This seems particularly true in the area of sports. One organization I helped found, The Society for American Baseball Research, has rebounded after a slump and sets a new high with over 7,000 members in 1997.

E-mail... We had no response for members to send their e-mail addresses to us. I wonder if everyone is like us. We are going to go on-line but just haven't made the move.

Books... You may have asked if there is a new book coming out on doorknobs and/or related hardware. We have had some exchange of information with a writer very early this

year and also with a publisher but nothing seems to be coming forth. I recently learned that over 90% of the books published lose money. A good friend of mine wrote a book on baseball. Last count, he had sold about 150 copies. I had thought about doing a book on the Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company. Back in 1995 we did a series of articles in the newsletter and received a lot of nice comments and a great deal of interest in the history of the company. Would a book like that sell more than 150 copies? I doubt it and the publisher doubts it. ●



L-131

When in its mint condition L-131 is a stunning doorknob. The one pictured here, unfortunately, is not in mint shape. The first impression is that this is a cloisonné doorknob. After several people have examined it, the feeling is that it probably is not cloisonné but other material, possibly marble or granite. The colors on the face of the knob are white and burgundy, with a green center, and touches of green along the outer perimeter. The side of the knob is also enhanced in a colorful manor.

How can this knob be restored to its original beauty? We are looking for someone who can either restore the knob or suggest how it can be done. Are you the one that can bring this knob back to that original look? If so, please write Loretta or Ray Nemeč, 1424 Heatherton Drive, Naperville, IL 60563-2233 or call at 630-357-2381. ●

Meet Your Board of Directors

Each issue **The Doorknob Collector** will feature the picture of an ADCA member who is on the Board of Directors. In this issue we present:



RHETT BUTLER

Rhett Butler was elected to a two year term on the Board of Directors in August 1997. He has published **A Guide to Architectural Builders' Hardware Research Material**, which is an invaluable aid to anyone doing research on the subject. In addition to doorknobs, Rhett likes to obtain the old hardware catalogs. ●



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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.

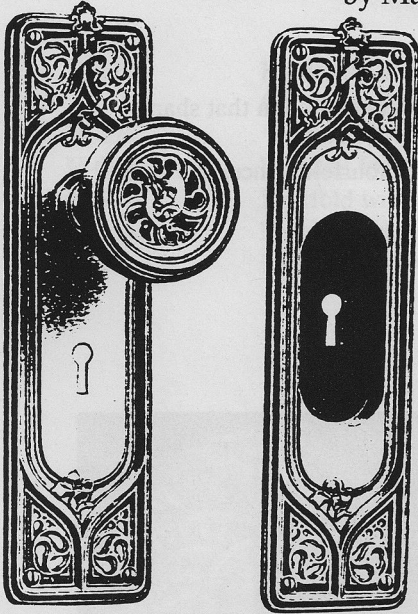
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FARGEAU

A Sargent & Company Design

by Maud Eastwood



Fargeau Design

Sargent & Company's Fargeau design for door hardware shown in their 1901 and 1910 catalogs was unusual both for its French Gothic pattern and for its listed use. Read on.

For readers with an interest in design, Gothic refers to certain emblems, among which are grotesques and leaves and stems, realistically used. Fargeau is a good example of the Gothic School.

Suggested use? Design and builders' hardware have always gone hand-in-hand. Specific types of hardware have been designed for certain uses; hardware ornamentation has been designed to compliment buildings of differing architectural background. Yet, how many knob and plate designs carry the distinction of having been expressly labeled by their manufacturer for a particular use building or for use for a specific room within a building, and so-noted in a general distribution catalog? Fargeau may supply the one isolated case.

Fargeau is shown in Sargent & Company 1901 and 1910 catalogs. Quote, "This design (Fargeau) is intended especially for Library use." Illustrations may be found on page 24 in the 1901 catalog and pages 82 and 83 in the 1910 catalog.

1901 offered one option, Blue-black "rustless Iron" Finish. The 1910 Sargent offered, in addition to the iron, Cast Brass and Cast Bronze and two finishes, Polished and Sand. The number of pieces available in 1910 was expanded to include a large number not offered in 1901 beyond the usual plate, knob and other usual trimmings.

The most interesting aspect of Fargeau has yet to be touched: the used of red morocco leather to add background color seen through the metal open-work. Color in cast door hardware was seldom seen at this early date. While both years pinpointed this design for library use, 1910 noted the red and black combination was a rich combination for inside work, (suggesting the blue-black "Rustless" Sand Finish without the leather could be more satisfactory for outside use?). ●

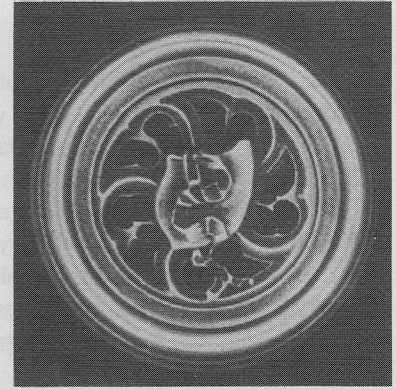
Wannamaker Story

(continued from page 1)

John Wannamaker died in 1922, by which time he presided over a retail empire that included more than a dozen stores both in the United States and overseas. His vision, his determination, and his belief in building trust and satisfaction with his customers made him one of the great entrepreneurs who lived—and created—the American Dream.

In 1904, when Wannamaker was deep into his mammoth store expansion, he ordered special hardware to commemorate his history he knew he was making. The knob and plate pictured here were removed from the flagship store in 1985, and then presented to Frank Benner, who was retiring after 20 years as Director of store security.

This historic example of American hardware, on its original presentation block, will be sold in Web Wilson's Antique Hardware auction #5. Color catalogs will be mailed November 1, 1997. For information, call Web or Jill Wilson at 1-800-508-0022. ●



E-104 Fargeau Design

Harry Rinker's New book is great but...

Harry Rinker, the nationally noted columnist on antiques, has issued a new book, **Harry L. Rinker Official Price Guide to Collectibles**. The first edition publication has a listed price of \$18.95.

Glancing through the 408 page book, with over 600 photographs, I quickly spotted some items I have and was impressed with the value. The book focuses on the period between 1920 and the present. It is pointed out that the book is a buyers' guide, reflecting what someone would expect to pay for the item. Rinker points out that if you want to sell the item, expect to receive only 30% to 40% of the selling price.

The book lists auction houses, periodicals and items from Abingdon Pottery to Yellow Ware. You will find prices on bicycles, Coca-Cola items, Railroadiana and many, many more items; in fact the book lists over 20,000 prices... but no doorknobs. There are no listings for architectural hardware, doorbells or door-knockers. Rinker has completely ignored our field of interest. I don't know if it is because our collectibles usually pre-date the 1920s or if he has left the subject for someone else to cover.

The book is a very interesting addition for someone who has a general or overall interest in collectibles. ●

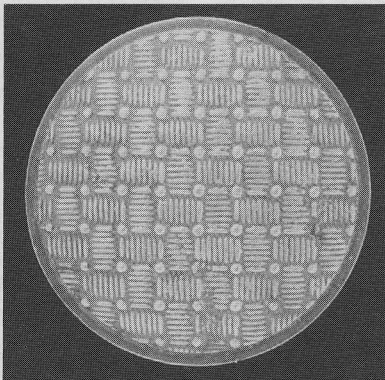
Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs

by Len Blumin

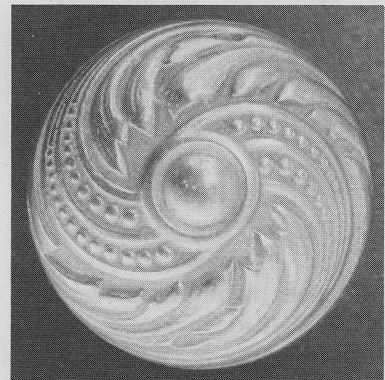
Assorted Designs

- D-136** Unusual knob with basket weave design. Same design on back. Remarkable in that shank even has similar design of parallel lines.
- E-155** Common wrought steel. Eightfold radial spiral in the center, with fourfold concentric border! (Placing design in "E" category is clearly arbitrary.)
- E-156** "Grenoble" by Branford (1894) catalog, threefold swirl.
- E-157** Striking twofold swirl, reminiscent of E-108, E-109. C. 1890
- F-127** Iron, with brass shank. Twofold border.
- F-246** Palmette design looks like it is made of pea pods. Nicely made.

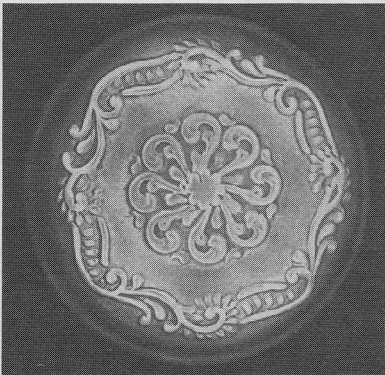
D-136



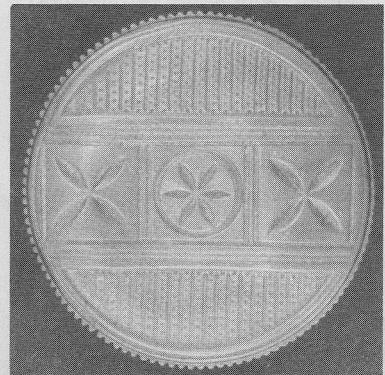
E-157



E-155



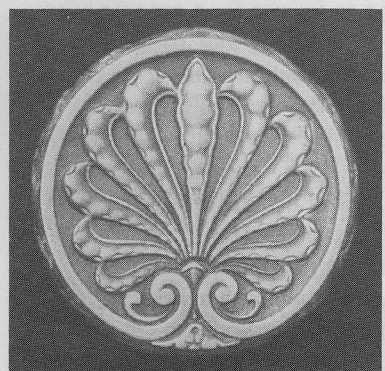
F-127



E-156



F-246



Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs

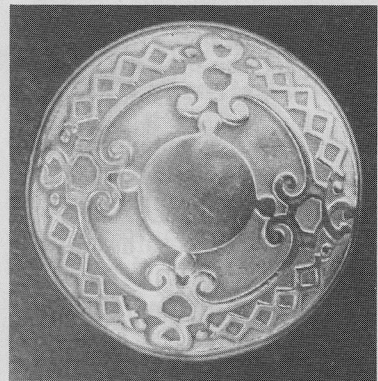
Assorted Designs

- H-119** Border identical to J-106a, possibly by Corbin. Notice how center design borrows heavily from H-116.
- H-496** "Novina," Art Nouveau, Reading, 1910 catalog.
- H-500** Unusual fourfold with modernistic spirals. c.1910-1920.
- H-501** Fourfold with diamond shape border.
- K-236** Eightfold grape motif, also concentric. Nice!
- I-122** Nice fivefold with a leaf motif over a star. c.1900.

H-119



H-501



H-496



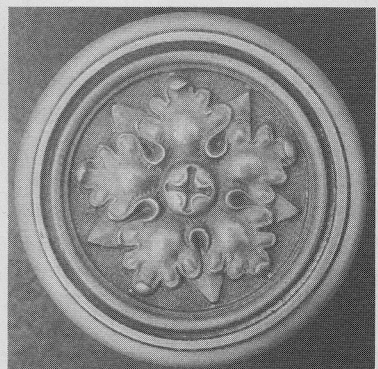
K-236



H-500



I-122



Liz's Antique Hardware



Win Applegate, Miriam & Gene DeLange & Larry Bolen—at Liz's Antique Hardware Shop in 1995.

How does a girl, planning to attend law school, wind up owning what is described as "perhaps the best supermarket for antique hardware in the country?" The story of Liz Gordon and Liz's Antique Hardware is told in the October 1997 issue of **MARTHA STEWART Living**.

The magazine article, by Michelle Huneven, tells how Liz got her start, recaps her career and tells of her future plans. The article also gives you an insight on what you might find at Liz's Antique Hardware.

If you have not read the feature on **ADCA** member Liz Gordon, we recommend you do. Many libraries carry the magazine and it is probably available from other sources. ●

Museum Display

Loretta Nemeč had a display of doorknobs at the Downers Grove (IL) Museum for a month. The display closed on October 8th when Loretta's collection was featured with her presentation at the Collectors Hour which was held at 12:10pm. The flyer read: **"Bring your sack lunch to the Museum and open a door to the world of doorknobs as presented by collector and enthusiast Loretta Nemeč, No need to knock, just turn the knob!"** ●

From the Public Relations Post

By Rich Kennedy

Bright sunshine. . . good feelings. . . a joyous crowd. Where was I? I was at the annual Lock Collectors Show, this past October 11, 1997, in Terryville, Connecticut. I was invited by Tom Hennessey, curator of The Lock Museum of America, to set up a table as the official **ADCA** spokesperson. In an effort and my commitment to promote **ADCA** in a bigger way, I accepted. Amongst hundred of locks and keys I discovered our own **ADCA** members, Rhett Butler, Richard and Carolyn Hubbard and Ed and Flicka Thrall. At that point I wasn't really sure which convention I was at.

After a great day of talking about our group, handing out literature, signing up two new members, Charles Stuttig and Jim Morneau, I was invited to view the Lock Museum I chatted at length with Charles Stuttig, the president of The Lock Museum of America, in ways we could interact more and share ideas.

As we all know, a proposal to the United States Postal Service to create a stamp commemorating The builders' Industry and ornate hardware is in the works. Also, an idea was suggested that we approach the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC to have an exhibit. The **ADCA** Book Peddler is being expanded with some new and informative booklets, written by Maud Eastwood; you don't want to miss those. Anyone having more ideas on how to promote **ADCA** in bigger and better ways, let me know!

FAX me..Phone me..Write me.

Rich Kennedy

P.O. Box 31

Chatham, NJ 07928-0031

Phone: 973/635-6338

FAX: 973/635-6993



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.

For Sale: Emblematic knob with large or small escutcheon plate. Star of David with menorah behind it. For price and information call:

Tom Hennessey (#164)

PH: 860/589-6359

For Sale: D-104 single, brass; E-125 single, iron; E-133 pair, iron; G-106 single, iron; H-209 pair, brass and iron; H-219 single, brass; H-260 pair, brass & iron with roses; H-456, single, brass; and K-112 pair, brass.

Craig Phillips (#297)

2324 33rd Street

Allegan MI 49010

PH: 616/673-2815

FAX: 616/673-8293

Wanted: Old Hardware catalogs.

Rhett Butler (#292)

75 Spring Street 5th Floor

New York, NY 10012

PH 212/925-3565

FAX: 212/925-3305

Wanted: Doorknob H-499 Westminster design by Chicago (Niles) Mfg. Co.. see P3. May/June 1995 issue **The Doorknob Collector**. Have been searching for this knob for many years.

Ray Nemeč (#350)

1424 Heatherton Drive

Naperville, IL 60563-2233

PH: 630/357-2381

FAX 630/357-2391

Antique Hardware Auction #5

Web Wilson announces his phone/fax Antique Hardware Auction #5. Full color catalogs mailed November 1, 1997. Figural, colored glass, aesthetic, bells—more than 150 lots of best quality antique hardware for collectors at all levels. All items guaranteed. Send \$12.50 to:

Web Wilson (#266)

P.O. Box 506

Portsmouth, RI 02871

PH: 800-508-0022

Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs

Assorted Designs (continued)

I-123

Floral fivefold in the Art Nouveau style, c.1905.

J-112

Metallic Compression Casting Company, Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. Patent #4108, June 7, 1870 by J. L. Leger, Note the perimeter design similar to A-301/A-302.

M-141

Design similar to that of Branford "Star" knob.

N-171

Oval shape with urn motif and beaded circumference, brass.

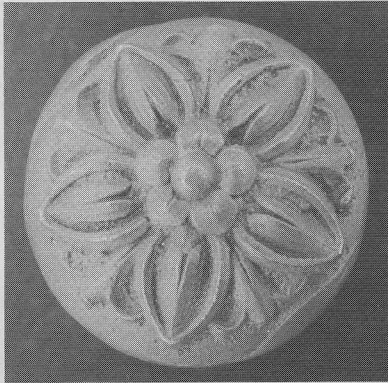
N-172

Beautiful asymmetric, Art Nouveau - oval, circa 1905.

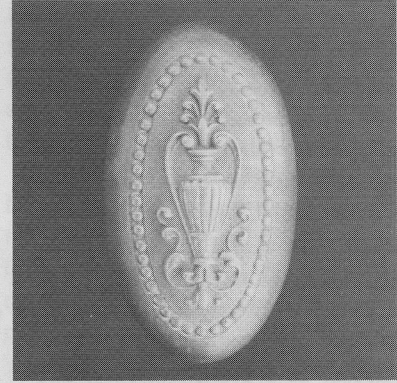
N-173

Pleasing French Renaissance style, with triple fleur-de-lis. c.1900.

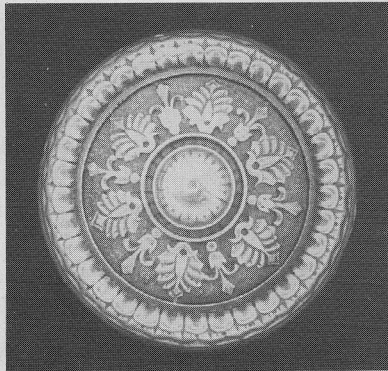
I-123



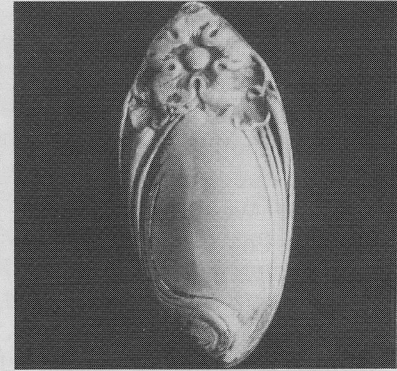
N-171



J-112



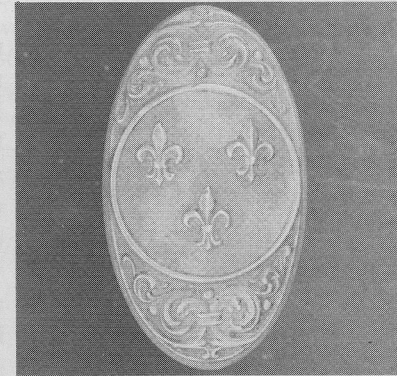
N-172



M-141



N-173



From The Archives



by Steve & Barbara Menchhofer

For all the members of the ADCA who are still curious about the Emil Miller Memorial Library, we have an update. After reading the article in the July/August 1997 issue of **TDC**, we know how the library came to be. Here is more information about it.

The library is a private library, not available to the public, and is currently maintained in Speedway, Indiana. It has been there since 1989. Since its beginning, the library has steadily grown through the donations of members and some acquisitions by the archivists on behalf of the ADCA.

Represented in the library are catalogs from hardware companies such as Adams and Westlake, Chicago Hardware Mfg. Co., P & F Corbin, A.G. Newman, Nashua Lock Co., Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., Sargent & Co. and Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. Books written by members Maude Eastwood and Len Blumin are also housed here.

Although the library is not a huge one we feel it is an exceedingly fine one for its size. We do accept donations of hardware catalogs and we also purchase them. If you have any hardware catalogs to donate or sell, please get in touch with us at 317/291-6043.

We want to see the library continue to grow as it is one of the major avenues for seeking and preserving information about our hobby - doorknobs. ●

First Archivist



Emil Miller

The memory of Emil Miller, one of ADCA's founders, who started the archives and library has been perpetuated by having the archives and library named in his honor.

The ADCA archives and library were started by Emil R. Miller in 1983. He died on March 2, 1984.

Emil Miller, a native of Nebraska, was born December 27, 1917. He retired from Schlage Lock Company, after 30 years with the company, on December 31, 1983.

He originally started collecting Cooper's (barrel maker's) tools. Miller switched to door locks, knobs and lock manufacturer's catalogs in the early 1960s.

On the type of collecting he did, Emil said, "No special type collecting, such as emblematic or Victorian or such." He did not limit his collection to doorknobs and included es-cutcheons and complete locksets.

At the 1984 ADCA convention, the archives and library, to honor his memory, were named "The Emil Miller Memorial Library." Emil's wife, Dorothy Ann Miller, was appointed to fill the position of archivist and librarian left vacant by his untimely death.

Dorothy Ann remained in that role until 1987 when she was elected President of ADCA. Alice Chadonich succeeded her as the archivist and



Dorothy Ann Miller - Alice Chadonich

librarian. Since 1989 the positions have been held by Barbara and Steve Menchhofer.

The library continues to grow and become an important asset to the club, thanks to the start by Emil Miller and those who have followed his lead. ●

Correction

The all-time list of ADCA board members that appeared in the September-October 1997 issue contained three errors.

Under the column titled "Years," the 84-84 should be changed to read 83-84 and 97-98 should be corrected to read 97-99.

Linda Smeltzer, listed for the 95-96 period should also have been listed for the year 96-97.

