

The Doorknob Collector

Number 92

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FLIGHTS OF FANCY IN DOOR HARDWARE

By Maude Eastwood

How widespread was the inclusion of birds in the ornamentation of door hardware? To the extent that a cursory examination of seventeen American manufacturer's catalogs turned up sixty examples, it appears that birds were often used to delight the eye. While further research would undoubtedly add to the count, the field will be well represented in the following 1865-1929 examples.

Three categories of hardware were covered in this search: locks, escutcheons, and doorknobs. Among the thirteen types of birds noted, eagles were by far the most abundant, the earliest examples being eagles cast or embossed on lock plates illustrated in Russell & Erwin's 1865 catalog. Because of limited space, coverage of the more unusual designs will take priority over more common or previously shown examples. Eagles in federal and lodge hardware may be found in the 1st Supplement of *Antique Builder's Hardware, Revised*. (Available through The Book Peddler)

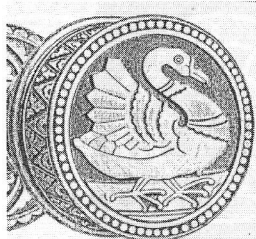
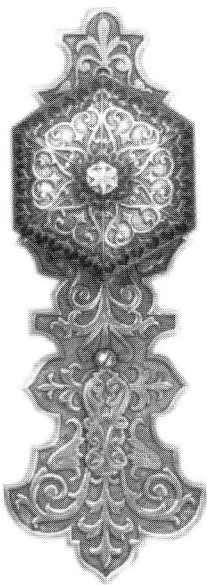
Even ornithologist might have a hard time identifying some of the birds in hardware designs. Excluding eagles, many birds were so fancifully represented that there is little indication of kind, other than through basic characteristics of size and shape. Norwalk's 1890

catalog provided two examples, on page 75 there is a lock which bears a likeness of a bird of Paradise and on page 265 a door pull features a parrot-like bird except for its bill.

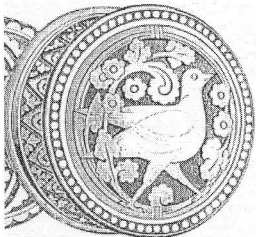
Three well-executed exceptions were R. Christensen's "Flying Bird" (A-104), "Two Birds" (A-105), and "Hummingbird" (A-106). For sheer artistic beauty consider Russell & Erwin's 1897 "Christensen", a naturalistic design executed in bronze and featuring two birds in an unconventional leaf and flower arrangement. A remarkable melding of high art and mechanical skill was evident. *Note: Parentheses reference Len Blumin's book, Victorian Decorative Art.*

Use of the mythical Phoenix bird was not uncommon. This symbol of long life and renewal was found on the Seal of the City of San Francisco after its destruction in 1906 by an earthquake and also on the Atlanta City Hall Seal, inscribed "Resurgent". Less understood is the Phoenix-cherub-torch combination design on Branford's 1889 knob (A-204). The two birds on an 1887 Russell & Erwin plate may also be Phoenix birds. Delicacy and refinement are personified.

The focal point of Yale & Towne's 1904 "Osaka" design is a



Hopkins & Dickenson
1879



Hopkins & Dickenson
1879



(A-105) 1875
Russell and Erwin



Osaka Design

Newsletter Deadline - December 15

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FLIGHTS OF FANCY IN DOOR HARDWARE (cont'd)

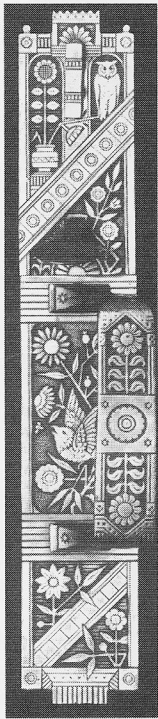
Phoenix bird with wing tips completing a circle. It is considered by many to be the finest example of a true Japanese-style to grace a set of door hardware. Appropriate finishes included Royal Copper, Sage Green, Relief Gold, Gun Metal Brown, Relied Silver, and Gold.

In contrast to Osaka, Hopkins & Dickenson (1879) offered two knobs whose sketched designs were reminiscent of grade school art. One was representational of a goose and the other a dove. (pg. 1)

Of the thirteen states to feature birds on their official seals, twelve chose eagles to combine with other emblems appropriate to their states. Louisiana, the Pelican State, so-called for the bird that lives in its coastal marshes, used



Louisiana, the Pelican State, so-called for the bird that lives in its coastal marshes, used



Nashua 1886



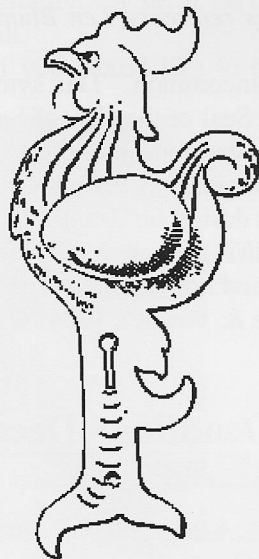
Phoenix 1894

originality in choosing a Pelican rather than the eagle. The Pelican mother with outstretched wings, feeding and protecting her brood, symbolizes the state's function as the protector of its wealth, resources, and people.

Owls portrayed on door hardware designs were uncommon, however, Nashua, Phoenix, and Sargent & Greenleaf produced certain Americanized pseudo-Japanese designs for lock and escutcheon sets and thumb latches. In truth, these Victorian-busy designs were as foreign to the Japanese concept of art as was the use of the owl, a symbol of both wisdom and evil.

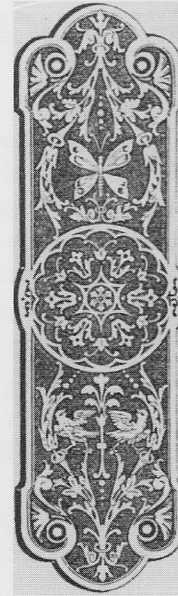
Not content with just an owl, Phoenix Lock Works (1894) took artistic liberties to new heights by adding a crane, sparrow, butterfly, shooting star, plants and star and crescent to an escutcheon design. Better taste was shown in the 1880 Sargent & Company's push plate with two birds and a single butterfly among artistically arranged foliage.

Corbin was also responsible for an intriguing plate of a rooster outline with an interesting egg-shaped knob to compliment the



farmyard feel of the escutcheon plate.

Numerous other pieces of bird design door hardware also deserve mention or illustration. However, Mallory, Wheeler's "Eagle on Shield", a most sought-after design, will serve as a fitting finale to this limited cover-age of an interesting class of representational design hardware.



Sargent & Co. 1880



Mallory, Wheeler 1882

The Doorknob Collector®



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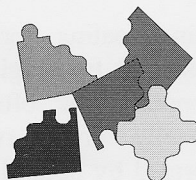
Founded Sept 1981, the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** is a non-profit organization devoted to the study and preservation of ornamental hardware.

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

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Bits and Pieces

By Win Applegate



Recently, someone said that it seemed that almost every newsletter mentioned the Annual Convention. This is probably so; it is the only opportunity for the majority of us to gather together and this is coupled with a meeting of the Board of Directors and, of course, the Annual Business Meeting of the membership.

Well, here's one more mention! There are a number of people who, behind the scenes, support the convention hosts as heads of steering committees. Running the risk of failing to mention a key person, I would like to specifically thank Bob Rodder for his role in handling the convention registrations. Bob's involvement has grown as he also edits and publishes the Convention Booklet and is a consultant on souvenirs.

In their various roles, the Kennedys are always significant support people as Rich, for a number of years, has run the display contest which will be picked up next year by Valerie Friesen. Faye and Rich, of course, coordinate the printing and mailings which is no small effort.

The Saturday auction is run by Jackie Rode and assisted by Bettie Madison and Norman Blam. This year, Marshall Berol, Vicky's husband helped considerably and we intend to see that he volunteers again next year, but don't tell him. We missed Larry Bolen and Joe Bornino this year and look for their return in Portland.



Over recent years, many of the members have asked how they can better financially support their

organization. In response to this, your Board of Directors has defined the "Annual Membership Donation Levels" which you will also find on the membership form. Unless you specify otherwise, once a year those members who support the ADCA at any level above "regular" will be listed in the newsletter.

All except the LIFE membership are annual contributions that will be used for the general operation of your organization. The LIFE membership is a one-time donation which will be invested. Upon the death of the LIFE member, the remaining principal will be used for a purpose to be determined by the Board of Directors at that time.

Financial strength! Yes, this is the foundation of a healthy and progressive *Antique Doorknob Collectors of America* that can then further its goals in education, research, and the preservation of ornamental hardware.

Happy Holidays to
You and Yours!



New Member Policy

Membership in ADCA follows the current calendar year. Anyone joining between January and September is enrolled for the current year and receives all the issues of **The Doorknob Collector** for the current year.

New members after September 30th will be enrolled as members for the following year. They will begin receiving **The Doorknob Collector** with the Jan-Feb issue of the next year.

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: Oddfellow doorknobs. Cast brass with the initials F L T inside three connecting links. \$45.00 includes shipping and insurance.

Joe Mann #70 (317) 293-2235 or
jmann42056@aol.com

Wanted: Six bronze Antwerp Lion doorknobs

Sally Hyslop #499
2019 Irving Avenue S.
Minneapolis, MI 55405

Auction: Antique Hardware Auction.
Call for catalogue. Web Wilson #266

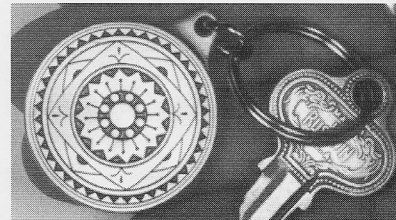
Phone: 800-508-0022

Fax: 401-683-1686

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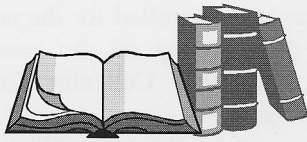
HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

As the holidays approach, think about giving a gift that will be appreciated by any doorknob collector. We offer books of interest, ADCA pads that always come in handy, and our newest item, an ADCA silver-metal key ring which is a replica of an 1885 Sargent knob. Key ring: \$5.00



From the Archives

By Steve and Barbara Menchhofer



Everyone who ordered catalog copies from the Archives should have received them by now. As we said in our last article the response was better than ever. Orders ranged anywhere from one catalog to sixty. Members ordered 21 complete catalogs, 137 offerings of selected pages, and 30 offerings of doorknob designs. That gave us the awesome job of having approximately 24,700 sheets of copy to check, sort, package and mail. It took us awhile to achieve this.

The hottest catalog that was ordered was the R&E-Vol. VII-1887. Eleven people ordered the selected pages and two ordered the doorknob designs. Nine people chose the Mallory & Wheeler-1882 catalog. Seven ordered selected pages and two ordered doorknob designs. Corbin Special Hardware was another catalog selected by six people.

All of the above were good choices but any of the catalogs in the Archives are good choices. Each and every one has something to offer.

We are very pleased by the growing interest in the Archives.

Can You Identify This Knob?

We receive pictures of knobs for identification. We are not always able to give an answer. The knob to the right is one we know nothing about. Perhaps one of you can help with this query. If so let us know.

See the back page for all the ways you can contact us. Thanks.

To Clean or Not to Clean

There is a continuing debate on whether to clean brass knobs or not. Although all members are not in agreement, we offer here some suggestions.

One opinion is to not clean the knobs at all. Many of us have seen The Antiques Road Show on PBS and have seen that the value of the antique furniture is decreased by over cleaning and refinishing. However, many of the pieces of furniture are carefully cleaned, removing only the surface dirt, without damaging the finish. This enhances the antique and makes the piece more enjoyable to the owner. That seems like a reasonable goal when considering whether to clean your knobs or leave them as you found them.

We also know that there are finds that will require some cleaning before we even know what we have. Maude Eastwood saw an escutcheon plate with a knob on a chicken coop and knew it would be interesting. But first, all those layers of paint needed to be removed to reveal a beautiful, enameled 8-inch plate and knob. Before removing the paint it was simply an interesting shape.

In removing paint, you must take into account how you feel about maintaining the patina of the knob. The patina is described as a

thin coating or color change resulting from aging. On brass or copper it is often a fine film, usually green or greenish-blue, formed by natural oxidation that is valued by many as adding to the value of the knob.

A simple way to clean off layers of paint is to put the knob into a covered plastic container filled with ammonia and leave it for a few hours. The paint will then peel off under running water with a little rubbing with your fingers or using a toothbrush or the like. You probably should wear gloves for this operation.

Others use lye to do the same thing. This process will also clean the drain where you are working, but both processes tend to be quite caustic and also remove the patina from the knob.

Using a paint remover containing ethylene chloride is another option. Using this chemical in restricted quantities should not remove the patina. Be sure to use these chemicals in a well-ventilated room as our lungs do not need this form of cleaning. Another member mentioned the use of H2Off as a paint remover.

A gentle brushing may be required to get the paint out of the design. A very very fine metal brush or steel wool can also be used. One member uses a very fine wire wheel and can see no visible damage to the design even when viewed with a magnifying glass. But be extremely careful using this method as excess pressure might cause some damage or wear to the design.

After the paint is removed the debate begins. Should the knob be polished or left as is. People have spoken of using a great variety of polishes for the brass knobs. They vary from Polident, liquid toilet bowl cleaner, and



To Clean or Not to Clean

(Cont'd)

Worcestershire sauce, to the standard brass cleaners. The toilet bowl cleaner will clean the brass, but it also removes the patina and leaves the brass with a dull finish so it will have to be finely polished to bring out the shine. The Worcestershire sauce cleans and polishes brass that has no lacquer on it. Apply it with a damp cloth and wipe away any residue with another damp cloth. Most paste cleaners contain some form of ammonia and a jeweler's rouge. If you have a knob that was lacquered and needs polishing, you will need to remove the lacquer first using acetone or paint remover. This layer will already be removed if you have first taken the paint off with a chemical. These cleaners

will bring the knob to a beautiful shine that may actually be more highly polished than when the knob was new.

The amount of polishing is strictly a matter of taste. Those who are using antique knobs in the restoration of a home may prefer the highly-polished variety. Many collectors prefer a more "antique" look to their knobs. Some even like the chips of paint to remain on the knob. It certainly tells a story that the knobs, once so highly prized for their detail fell out of fashion and became very utilitarian and were painted to be more "modern".

Once the knob is in the condition that you prefer the question becomes how to keep it that way. None of us wants to polish the knobs on a regular basis. It is not only a lot of work, but also wearing on the brass. Some use a light coating of household oil to protect the knob from the air. Wax, either paste wax or aerosol type can be used to give some protection. The product that you use on your car, ArmorAll can also serve to delay the oxidation of the carefully polished knobs.

We welcome any comments on cleaning knobs. We will do an article in the future about how to preserve iron knobs which present their own problems, rust. Let us hear from you.

*Happy Thanksgiving
We all have much
for which to be thankful!*

Correction:

Our apologies to Dorothy Ann Miller. We got her name right in one place and goofed on this picture. But we definitely thought



Len Blumin, Maude Eastwood, Win Applegate, and Dorothy Ann Miller who have all served as presidents of ADCA

it was worth repeating a picture with four members who have given untold time and dedication to the club.

New Members

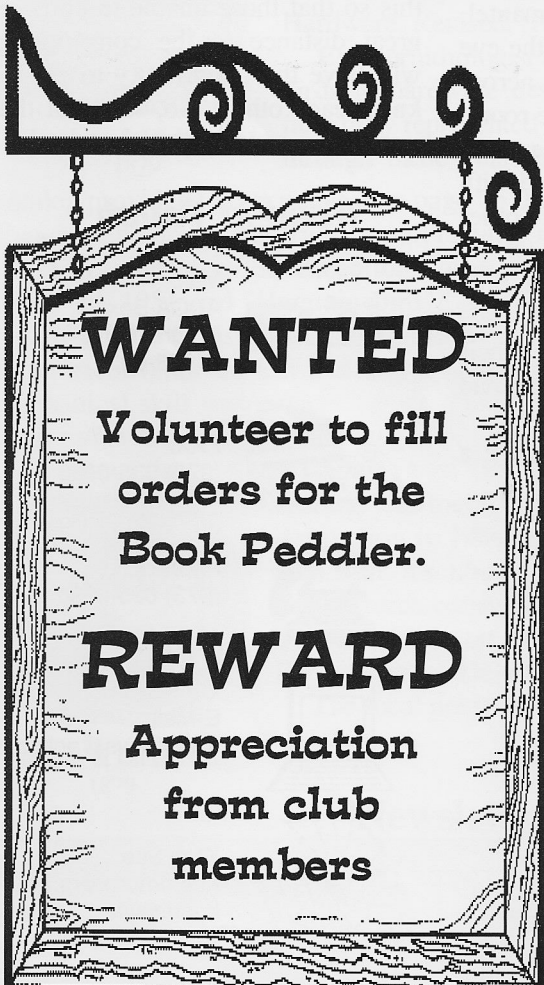
We extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the ADCA:

Nancy O'Connor	Houston, TX
Kate Kirkpatrick	Houston, TX
Michael Schmitz	Mequon, WI
Kelly Corbett	Madison, NJ

Contributors

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions of both ideas and articles presented in this issue.

Win Applegate
Maude Eastwood
Dick and Carolyn Hubbard
Allen Joslyn
John Van Kluyve
Barb and Steve Menchoffer



Check out Florence Jarvis on the Van Andel Museum Center web page: <http://www.grmuseum.org> See her display at the museum in Grand Rapids, MI now through Jan 3

From the Editors

Have you ever wondered how you could be more involved in the ADCA?

Well, there are plenty of ways to contribute to the good of the club. We would be happy to find a job for you to do either on a one-time basis or as a long term volunteer.

Currently we are looking for a member to work on our web site. Our site is out there and needs some attention every couple of months. Surely there is someone who would love to do this on a regular basis. We will offer lots of help with scans of pictures to put on the web and ideas for articles from old newsletters. When the new info is ready we will put it on the web from here. Are you the computer jock we are seeking? Just let us know and we will get you started.

You really can't miss the Wanted sign on the previous page. Filling the book orders requires a little paper work to get the orders out. This usually involves faxing or mailing the order to Maude Eastwood who keeps the books

authored by herself at her own home. There are a couple of boxes of books here, but nothing that won't fit in that spare space in your closet.

We are waiting to hear from you so give us a call.

A Local Meeting

It was one of those glorious fall Saturdays on October 17 (blue skies, colored leaves) when a group of ADCA members gathered at the home of Allen and Gunilla Joslyn in Montclair, NJ. A wonderful variety of knobs were on display and quickly the swapping began. We all enjoyed visiting and sharing the pot luck meal. Your editor really enjoyed the great exchange of ideas, some of which are reflected in this newsletter.

The Joslyn's display of hardware was unique. A most interesting bowl of knobs sat on the mantel. Escutcheon plates delighted the eye and knobs marched proudly across the chair rail surrounding the room. Antique chair seats held nests of equally old doorknobs. Mixed with the door hardware were other treasures from around the world. What a great way to get to see how members display their wares. We thank the Joslyns for their hospitality. A great time was had by all.

If you would like to organize a



similar gathering in your area, let us know and we will send mailing labels for members in your local area.

Be sure to let us know your date in plenty of time so that we can put it into the newsletter. This might even attract members who are visiting in the area. It is a great way to meet other members. We would like to see area meetings like this so that those unable to come a great distance to the conventions will have the opportunity to get to know each other. So, send out the invitations and enjoy the company.

Keep in Touch



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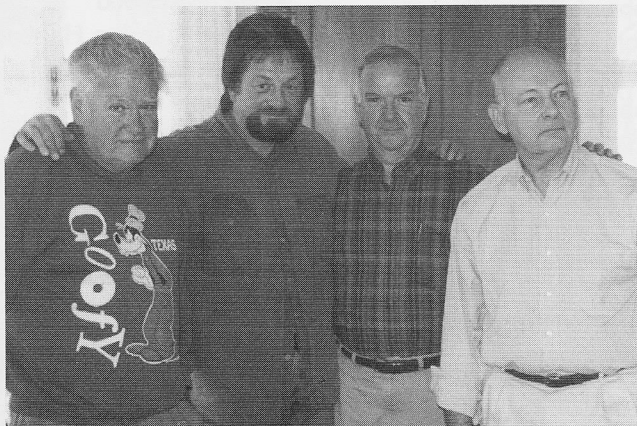
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Dick Hubbard, John Van Kluyve, Win Applegate and Allen Joslyn enjoying the fall get-together in Montclair.