

The Doorknob Collector

Number 93

January-February 1999

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

Who was William R. Belknap? He was born in Louisville, KY in 1849. He was the grandson of Morris Burke Belknap who is described as one of the founders of the iron industry west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was there that he conducted extensive operations in the mineral regions of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. But it was William's father who, along with a brother, organized the firm of W. B. Belknap & Co. in 1840.



As a young man in a family of some standing, William was educated in private schools and went off to graduate from the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale University in 1869. He then completed a year of postgraduate courses in the natural sciences including botany, zoology, history and economics. To round out his gentleman's education he took the next year off to tour Europe. Upon returning to Louisville he was given an interest in his father's lucrative hardware business. The business was incorporated in 1880 at which time William was made vice-president for two years before becoming the president of the company.

Belknap Hardware and Manufacturing was listed as one of the big four giants in hardware merchandising and distribution. The Belknap plant in 1917 covered twenty-four acres of floor space and employed nearly 1,000 people in various capacities. The catalogue at that time contained from 80 to 100,000 items that were sold chiefly throughout the southern, central and southwestern United States. The company continued to grow and be a leader in the industry.

The company was originally a store to sell iron goods, nails, horseshoes, and some heavy hardware. By 1880 the storefront stressed wagon materials. We must recall that in the mid-1880s builders hardware was largely from the forge and it tended to be utilitarian rather than decorative. The decorative artistry came a little later. As far as we can determine, the company never made any doorknobs. We do not know the manufacturer of this knob, but according to George Yater, a local Louisville historian, the knob came from a school building.

Throughout the years the Belknap management emphasized service to their customers, regarding this pursuit as the greatest asset to their business. To that end, they installed their first computer system as early as 1952. Their entire sales force was equipped with portable order entry systems using tapes to report their orders at night to the office, expediting the filing of orders over the slow mail service. In 1975 their entire catalog of 5,000 pages was on microfiche.

It was said of Mr. Belknap in 1912 that "for forty years he has been actively identified with the business interest of his native city, and he has in this field, as well as in the domain of loyal citizenship, well upheld the prestige of the honored name which he bears." In addition to running his business, Mr. Belknap was a director of the Louisville Board of Trade, president of the Second National Bank, the Southern News Co. and the Louisville Commercial Club. He contributed \$25,000 [a tidy sum at the time] for a new YMCA building in Louisville and was for twenty years a director of the Associated Charities. He was also a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers. They call him a "well-balanced Man". Of this I think there is no doubt.



William R. Belknap

Newsletter Deadline - February 15

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Restoration vs. Alteration

By Steve Rowe

This is a follow-up to an article on cleaning hardware that appeared in the last issue.

"Going once, twice, sold", yelled the auctioneer. For a final bid of \$5500 the 19th century Victorian bedroom suite appeared to be a steal. Pre-auction estimates based on rarity alone indicated the set would command closer to \$10,000. What went wrong? I quickly asked the auctioneer and the answer was loud and clear: if the pieces had carried the original finish there would have been much more spirited bidding. Many people had called to inquire, but only a handful came to bid. The lack of original finish or "patina" made this rare antique bedroom suite sell for approximately half of its pre-auction estimate.

Patina is defined in Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary as: "a thin film, coloring, or mellowed appearance on the surface of an object as a result of age or use." To the advanced collector in virtually all areas, evidence of original patina signifies an increase in value. Simply put, condition equals money and original condition increases the likelihood of even a greater value. Having attended each ADCA convention since 1994, and seeing various members' collections, it is apparent there are differing opinions regarding the cleaning and polishing of door hardware. Following is one considered opinion along with a detailed method for cleaning which does not destroy patina.

When I first started collecting hardware I was 21 years old, just married, and very fond of Victorian architecture. I can remember visiting the flea market weekly, buying everything from old windows to a front door for the home I would eventually build. My

first piece of hardware was a mortise lock in the popular F.C.

Linde pattern H-219.

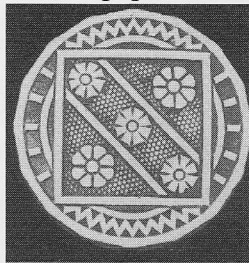
Intrigued by the intricate design I began to hunt for more pieces.

Within 2 weeks I had found knobs and plates that matched. I became captivated by the detailed work and shear artistry of design. I had found artwork that seemingly no one else collected and it was amazingly cheap! Sets could be purchased for twenty dollars or less and all I had to do was go hunting to find more.

Throughout my collecting experience there have been many changes. Although I am still happily married, I no longer have the doors and windows in the garage, I own a new home, and am today a much more informed collector of Victorian decorative art.

Prices have steadily increased and hardware collecting has now come into vogue. The price I once paid to purchase a complete set, today cannot buy an individual knob. In the beginning money had nothing to do with my collecting experience, yet today it affects every purchase since I can only spend what my budget allows! This increase in price and value is undoubtedly the most important aspect that affects our collecting experience today. Greater awareness of these two factors is imperative if we intend to protect our hobby and growing investment.

One way of protecting this investment and insuring a collection's future marketability is to preserve rather than alter the pieces in a collection. If original patina equates money then removing patina from a doorknob removes money from one's pocket. As a firm believer of this concept I



cannot promote the polishing of hardware.

Only in rare circumstances do I ever remove metal from a doorknob. Removing metal disfigures the original state and should only be done when a knob has clearly been abused. (See TDC#69, "Sandpapering of Doorknobs???" by Len Blumin.)

Restoration is defined in Webster's Dictionary as: "to bring back to a former or normal condition, to recover or renew." As a promoter of restoration I believe that gentle cleaning of a doorknob to bring out its natural color and restore luster actually enhances the item. If done properly, a thorough cleaning will not destroy patina. A superior method of cleaning involves a common household detergent booster. *Arm & Hammer's Super Washing Soda*® is the strongest chemical suggested and is all you need.

Soaking hardware for periods of

The Doorknob Collector®



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Richard and Faye Kennedy, Editors

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FAX: (973) 635-6993

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Founded Sept 1981, the **Antique**

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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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5 minutes to 24 hours not only cleans, but also enhances the appearance of the knob. I have found the best approach to be as follows: pour several cups of A&H soda into a 1.5 qt. stainless steel pot. Using hot tap water, fill until full and stir thoroughly. Once completely mixed, drop in hardware and wait to cool. Take each piece out individually and gently scrub under the tap with a toothbrush sized bristle or brass bristle brush (not steel). Never use a stronger brush or you risk scratching and damaging the item. Once the piece is clean it is important to wash off all of the remaining solution and dry thoroughly. Knobs need to be filled with water and allowed to drain 3-5 times to insure all traces of the mixture are gone. Finally, stand the knob on end and allow any water inside to drain for 24 hrs.

The finished product will amaze you! The item will be clean, the details crisp and clear, and most importantly the original patina will be undisturbed. Painted items sometime need a longer soaking period and/or a second cleaning. Pieces with original black paint in their background require a much shorter period of soaking since you want to avoid disturbing the original coloring. You should wait to clean an item like this until more experience is gained with this cleaning process.

In summary, I urge all collectors to try this method of cleaning. Benefits include working with a solution that is safe to use without gloves; has relatively no odor; is extremely economical, and most importantly preserves original patina. By using this technique instead of a polishing wheel you will someday pay yourself dividends.

However, I do realize it all comes down to personal preference. If you must use the wheel, stick to the

common pieces since polishing a figural doorknob destroys high relief and value quickly. As for me? I intend to follow the principles of restoration rather than alteration. Someday, if I am ever forced to sell my collection, my wife is counting on 100% of the members being at my ADCA auction!

From the Archives



By Steve and Barbara Menchhofer

Having read about the history of Lockwood Manufacturing Company, we've gleaned some interesting tidbits about the 1914 catalog which we have in the Archives. Lockwood was successful in the builders' hardware industry by 1910, and in 1914 this catalog, containing over 700 pages, was published. Designs found in the catalog range from utilitarian to ornate.

For instance, on page 122 the St. Cloud Design is featured. The doorknob is very nice, but it is the escutcheon plate that is the real eye-catcher here. Looking closely one sees the profile of a woman's face and head with long flowing hair. Her hat is reminiscent of the era. The school of design for this knob is Empire.

The Marengo design is on page 120 and it shows a gorgeous knob with four flowers in a circle -- very striking!

Another nice design is the Tuscany on page 82. It hails from the Italian Renaissance school of design. Once again the knob is nice but the escutcheon plate is the star. Cherubs grace the top of the escutcheon and give it class. These three are just three of the examples of Lockwood's fine craftsmanship.

New Category of Knob

Len Blumin has introduced a new category for the classification of knobs. These wooden knobs will have a "W" designation. Some knobs that have already been put into another category will be renumbered to reflect the new classification. Below are some newly numbered wooden knobs.



W-101



W-201

Fine "pressed" design
in walnut, c. 1875

Correction

Issue#90 of TDC, Jul-Aug 1998 Knob O-212. Loretta Nemeč remembered a similar knob from 1996. At that time Larry Bolen corrected the initials on that knob. They should have read "HTWSSTKS" meaning Hiram, The Widows Son, Sent To be in charge of building King Solomon's temple.

Convention Opportunities

By Steve Rowe

A couple of weeks after returning from Winnipeg I was cleaning off my dresser and under all of the clutter I came across a small piece of hard candy with the words Canadian Pacific Hotels printed across the wrapper. Once seeing it, my hands quickly grasped it and tore open the paper. One more motion and it was popped into my mouth. As I began to enjoy the sweet orange honey flavor I closed my eyes and commanded my mind to remember:

Can you remember too? The complimentary candy I refer to was available at just about every table throughout the Lombard Hotel at the convention in Winnipeg. For those of us who attended we are all fortunate to share the fond memories of another fine convention. Whether it was tables of wonderful hardware, a fine educational seminar by our own Maude Eastwood, or the great tour of historic downtown Winnipeg, we all enjoyed ourselves tremendously. We came together from all parts of the country to visit our friends and enjoy the commonality of hardware! Again, special thanks to our hosts Valerie Friesen and Robert Wilson for a job well done. Greeting from all of the ADCA to the members who attended their first convention. It takes courage to step out and visit where one has never been before, but the rewards are significant!

Courage is again called upon for those who host a convention. The 1999 convention will be held in Portland, Oregon. Hats off to Kathy Galbraith and the Bosco-Milligan Foundation for accepting the responsibilities of hosting the convention. The ADCA expects this to be a great convention that will be attended by many. Portland is a city of great historical significance on the West Coast.

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There will be many opportunities for those who wish to also vacation in this area.

In the year 2000, the ADCA will enjoy its 20th year convention. Current plans call for the site location to be in the greater Midwest region. The group is currently seeking a host for this great opportunity. If you are willing to consider this task or wish to help as support staff please contact Steve Rowe, member 287.

Plan Your Calendars Soon!



**1999 Convention
Portland, Oregon
August 4-7**

New Members

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

Edward and Lois

Paul	Chatham, NJ
Carl Sorenson	NY, NY
Andrea Ridout	Garland, TX
Mike Byrnes	Aurora, OR
David Sherk	Angelica, NY
Dennis Hancin	Norwich, CT
Don Larrew	Bridgeton, MO
Robert Raffel	Chicago, IL
Gunilla Joslyn	Montclair, NJ

Contributors

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

Len Blumin
Allen Joslyn
Brad Widseth
Steve Rowe
Barb and Steve Menchhofer
Loretta Nemecek
Maude Eastwood
Joe Ley

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.

GET ONLINE

We keep hearing from members about www.eBay.com.

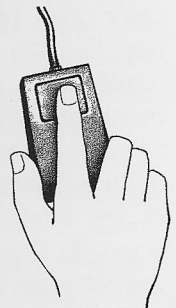
This is an auction where doorknobs and other items can be purchased online.

Brad Widseth describes it as the world's largest flea market. He also warns that it is easy to spend HOURS browsing through the wares. We know several members have purchased doorknobs this way. You might want to check it out.

And while you are online, try www.eddonaldson.com. Ed Donaldson (#295) describes his business as "Original Hardware Restored to Working Order". Take a look at what he has to offer. It is definitely worth the time, beautiful stuff.

If you have a website and would like to be listed, please let us know.

Also remember if you have anything to offer, ideas, articles, etc., our e-mail address is listed on the back of this newsletter. We would also be delighted to hear from any of you who support the US Post Office and still use stamps.



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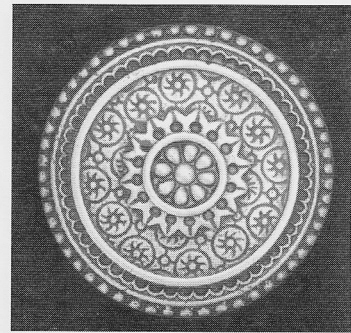
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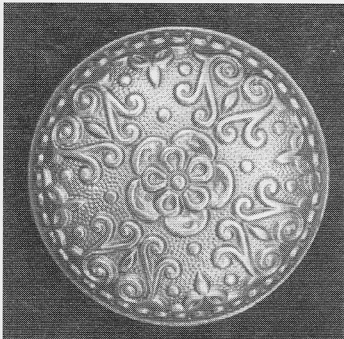
Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



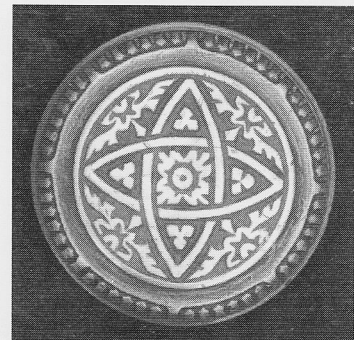
B-139
Bronze vernacular, c. 1880-1890
Note pincushion/sun background



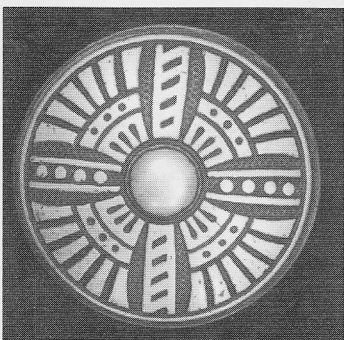
D-137
Bronze vernacular, c. 1880
Compare to D-102, D-103



H-121
Handsome cast iron
Main design fourfold with fivefold center



H-288
Pretty bronze vernacular, c. 1880
Compare to H-283

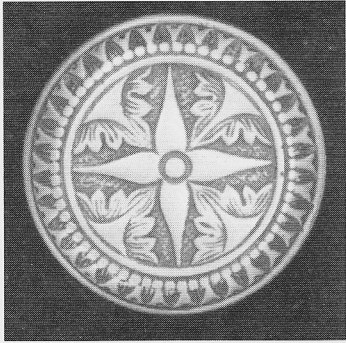


H-289
Bronze, c. 1880
Main design fourfold with twofold dividing bands

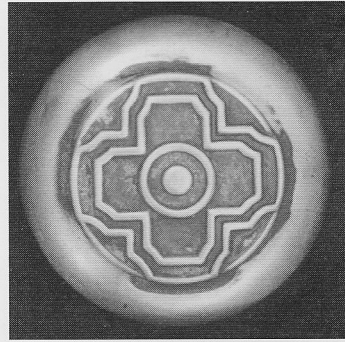


H-290
Cast iron/steel, c. 1880
Well done and takes a high polish

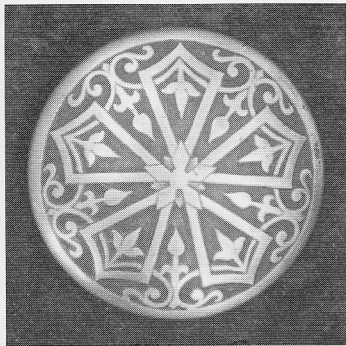
Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



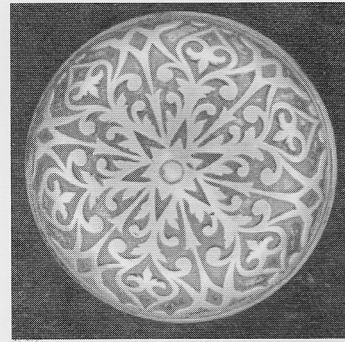
H-291
Bronze fourfold, c. 1880
Almost a classical motif



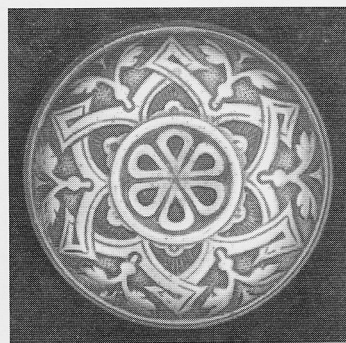
H-503
Simple brass fourfold
Mounted on a central iron armature/shank



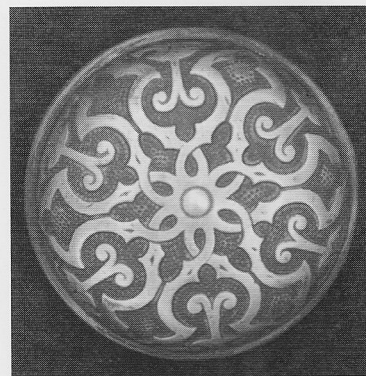
I-125
Fivefold bronze bellpull by MCCC/R&E
June 7, 1870. A beauty



J-113
Rare bronze Mallory Wheeler classic
1882 catalog



J-114
Classic style bronze sixfold, c. 1870
Maker unknown

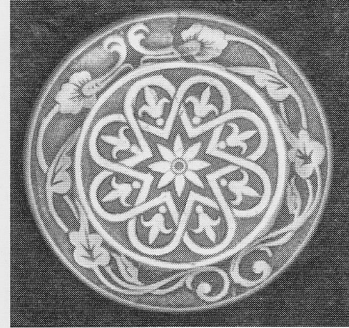


J-115
Bronze sixfold by Parker & Whipple
Patent date on spindle July 29, 1873

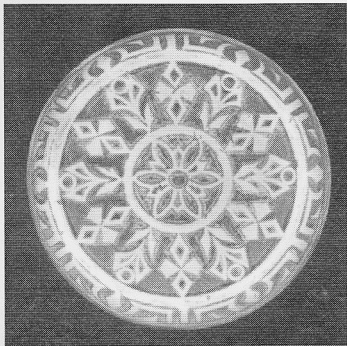
Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



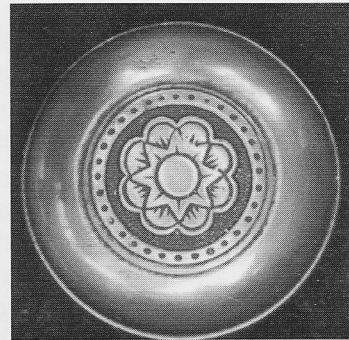
F-247
Gorgeous "Thistle" motif
Rare and finely crafted



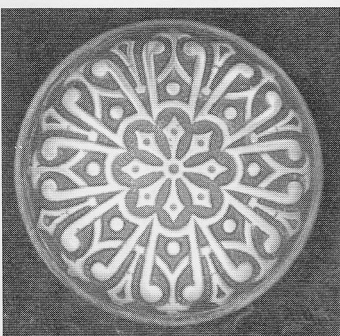
K-117
Bronze bellpull by MCCC/R&E
Patent #4130, June 7, 1870
Note the pretty twofold perimeter



K-118
Eightfold bronze with classic elements,
Sold on the internet, no less!



K-119
Eightfold bronze by R&E, c. 1880
Design taken from center of the popular K-104



K-240
Bronze eightfold with footed shank
c. 1870 - well executed



H-120
Older classic (possibly pre-1870)
Copper foil over pot metal

How to Classify a Doorknob

Many of our new members have been asking how to classify their knobs. Throughout the newsletter we use a combination of letters and numbers to describe a knob. These numbers come from **Victorian Decorative Art** by Len Blumin, one of our members. This book is presently out of print; consequently many of our new members do not have access to it. Let me describe how Len has classified antique knobs to make identification easier for all.

A Representational Designs: have a figure or scene on them; faces, birds, animals, buildings, trains, etc.

B Asymmetric Designs: have a design that looks different from each angle. Often there is no top or bottom to the design. However, they might also have a flowerpot or the like that indicates the direction the knob should be displayed.

C Odd-Shaped Knobs: these are often six-sided. They may be heart-shaped, look like pillows, or some other unusual shape.

D Field or Diaper Patterns: these are often designs within designs, but the design of the knob usually covers the entire head of the knob.

E Spirals and Swirls: the design radiates from the center in a swirling or spiral pattern or there are fanciful swirls of leaves or geometric design on the knob.

F Twofold Symmetry: these knobs are identified if an imaginary centerline can be drawn across the knob and the design will be fully repeated on both sides of the line.

G Threefold Symmetry: likewise these knobs have a triangular design on them that could be divided equally and have the same design in each of three sections.

H Fourfold Symmetry: a design that can be divided equally into four like sections.

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I Fivefold Symmetry: it becomes obvious that the design is now equally divided into five parts of similar design.

J Sixfold Symmetry: six repeats of the design decorate the knob. They sometimes have a central design of slightly different count; for example there may be a four-pointed star, a dot, or the like in the center.

K Eightfold Symmetry: these knobs usually have a rather busy appearance. Again the center may have a different count.

L Radial Symmetry: these include knobs with designs that radiate from the center of the knob and have a count that would not be included above.

M Concentric Symmetry: these appear to be circles within circles. However, the circles may be made of leaves, flowers, flower petals, designs, etc.

N Oval Knobs: somewhat self-explanatory. However, this category also includes knobs that have irregular form that appears in the general form of an oval.

W Wooden Knobs: may be carved, turned, or pressed. They come in many types of wood, oak, walnut, etc.

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: Six pair pressed glass knobs; sharply defined flat top octagon with foil starburst interior; stop back brass shank.

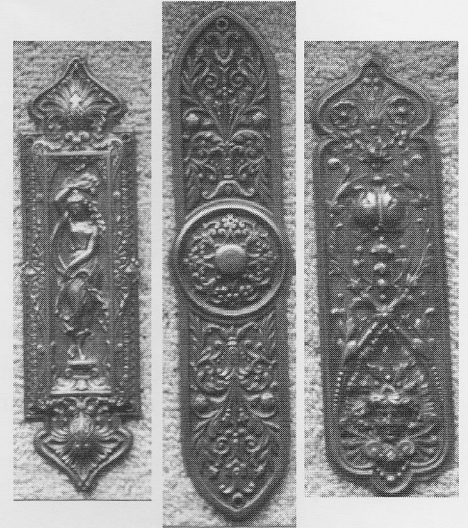
Six pair wrought brass escutcheon with key hole; 1 3/4" x 5 3/4". Pair of brass or bronze Victorian pushplates. Need not be heavily detailed.

Vicky Berol #450
(415) 771-9899

For Sale: One gargoyle doorknocker 5 1/2" wide x 11" high. See Sept-Oct 1995 newsletter. Three gargoyles, two with claws extended at the top. Have

to see this one! Below are three beautiful push plates also for sale.

Lee Kaiser #5
6040 Morgan Ave. So.
Minneapolis, MN 55419-2011
612-861-6215



Wanted: a St. LM knob. It might be from either an old hotel in St. Louis or St. Luke's Methodist.

Bonnie Otte #484
(630) 897-2959

Keep in Touch



Mail:
ADCA Box 31
Chatham, NJ
07928-0031



FAX:
(973) 635-6993



Phone:
(973) 635-6338



E-Mail:
KnobNews@aol.com



Web Site:
<http://members.aol.com/knobnews>