

# The Doorknob Collector

Number 105

January - February 2001

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

## Glass Bubble Knobs

By Maud Eastwood

What is the vision common to knob collectors hearing the name, PAIRPOINT? A bubble knob. Bubbles captured within the glass body of a doorknob. The collectors who own a bubble knob feel they are "in", though often largely in the dark about the prize.

The truth is, not all bubble knobs were made by Pairpoint. The average collector does not know this, nor should it become a critical point in the appreciation of the knob.

More than one manufacturer produced bubble knobs, using different mechanical devices to produce the pattern. Other differences are found in the shape of the knob body and the type of shank. A glass expert might also identify differences in the character of the glass.

The author is aware of at least three distinctly different types of bubble knobs. In one, the bubbles are all of uniform size. In another, the bubbles are smaller at the top. In the third, the bubbles appear to elongate as they go down into the neck (perhaps an optical illusion). In this knob, the shape is also elongated as opposed to the usual ball or globe type.

The type of shank mostly found on bubble knobs is the shell shank that originated in the 1840s and was still being used for fine glass knobs into the early 1900s. Later bubble knobs were fitted with regular sized shanks with the metal spun over a flange at the bottom of the knob neck. The unusual shank of the third type suggested a "key" was used to secure the end of the shank to the escutcheon plate or rose.

Interestingly, a 1950's printing of the World Book Encyclopedia noted that Pairpoint of New Bedford, Massachusetts was known, particularly in the late 1800s, for a line of paperweights of blown glass containing patterns of air bubbles resembling teardrops. The safe assumption being that incorporating the bubbles into doorknobs came later. William Hall's 1897 catalog of Glass Knobs may have been the first to offer the bubble glass knob.



The Pairpoint name was originally connected with the manufacture of silver. Thomas J. Pairpoint, a leading silver designer of the day, took over the operation of the Pairpoint Silver Company in New Bedford that merged with the Mt. Washington Glass Works in 1894 to become the Pairpoint Glass Works, and still later, the Pairpoint Corporation. The bubble process was developed at the glass works prior to the merger.

### Newsletter Deadline - February 16, 2001

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A microfiche of the 1900 selection of unmounted Pairpoint knobs, including the bubble, exists in Corning archives. Glass knob sections of the following hardware manufacturers' catalogs illustrate the very same knobs mounted on company applied shanks: Yale & Towne (1904), Corbin (1905), Russel & Erwin (1909), Reading (1910), Lockwood (1914), and Corbin as recently as 1932. An educated guess places the time span of the Pairpoint doorknob between the mid-1890s and the early 1930s.

And how were the bubble knob made? Mr. Bancroft of Pairpoint provided an official 1989 explanation.

*"Bubble Ball" is Pairpoint's name for pieces with controlled air trap bubbles. The bubbles are incorporated using a special tool. This tool contains a series of points, that when a gather (blob) of glass is put into the tool, the points form indentations. This gather of glass is then cooled. It is then taken back to the glass pot and a second gather is taken over the first, so that it is completely covered. This second gather of glass traps the air in the indentations created by the tool and they appear as symmetrical bubbles in the glass.*

*"Since then, many other companies have copied this process. However, each tool, from each factory, may create a different series of bubbles and a trained expert may be able to determine the origins."*

Glass knobs have ever been associated with Colonial Architecture, with pillared porches and polished brass knockers. John Tein's 1928 Glass Knob Catalog stressed this point, painting so clear a picture of crystal knobs, "their beauty reflecting brilliantly in the sunlight and their mute dignity appealing to our finer senses",

that one was ready to build a Colonial, or a t least to convert to all glass knobs.

Tein suggests glass knobs be used on inside doors throughout the house. Correspondence with owners of turn-of-the-century houses, particularly around Boston, New Bedford, and other glass producing areas indicate this was common then glass knobs with a pattern, such as the bubble, were used. This knob was found in Inns as well as for residential use. One owner confessed to twenty pair of bubble knobs on his doors and miniature bubbles on cupboards and drawers.

George Doyle, one of the earliest collectors, found his bubble knob in 1977 on the East Coast. Have any been found on the West Coast? Perhaps the Pairpoint Bubble Knob is destined to be just that - a vision infrequently materializing.

## In Search of a Red Glass Doorknob

By Debbie Fellenz

I've been collecting glass doorknobs since 1985, when I won one for hosting the convention in St. Louis. The next year I won a display contest with my collection of glass. The prize was a green glass knob, so of course I had to start collecting colored glass knobs to go with it.

I quickly found many colors of glass knobs. I used to visit a lot of flea markets then and that was my main source for finding them. I have several shades of purple, green, yellow (Vaseline glass) and amber. I received a turquoise blue glass knob for Christmas one year.

I thought my collection would be sort of near complete if I could find a red glass knob. I wanted a clear ruby red glass, not the dark ones that I've seen. I didn't want

to hold a light to it to see if it was really red.

I saw the new ones one year at a convention and they were very nice, but I wanted on that nobody else could have. I heard stories about them but never actually saw the one I was looking for. One person said he saw one at a flea market, but didn't have enough money to buy it and another person said that he had had one in his shop that was stolen.

I talked to a man on the phone who assured me that he had several red glass doorknobs and I



### The Doorknob Collector®



Published six times a year by **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 31, Chatham, NJ  
07928-0031

Richard and Faye Kennedy, Editors  
Phone (973) 635-6338  
FAX: (973) 635-6993

Annual Membership in US \$25.00  
Foreign rates on request.

Single issue of **The Doorknob Collector** \$5.00

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

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thought I was in luck. I could keep one and trade the rest. After driving several hours to look at them they turned out to be brown porcelain! Another person assured me that they had one and would bring it by the shop, so I waited patiently for her to do so and it turned out to be an amber one! I came to the conclusion that there must be a lot of colorblind people out there.

Recently I was looking at the doorknob offerings on eBay (as I often do) and I spotted a description that said "rare 1900's ruby red glass doorknob". I couldn't get to the listing fast enough and tried to wait patiently while the pictures came up on the computer. THERE IT WAS! Not exactly what I had in mind, but still a red glass doorknob. First, I emailed the seller to make sure that it was indeed a real doorknob and was assured that it was. I quickly put a bid on it and then tried to wait patiently for several days until the end of the auction.

As usual for the eBay auctions, there's not much bidding until the last hour or so. I was determined to get this prize so I put in a high bid to start with. I watched the auction and somebody was getting a little to close to my bid so I made it even higher and won the bidding war. The person who was selling it on eBay wondered why it sold for so much after all most people don't think of doorknobs as being valuable.

When it arrived in the mail I tore open the box and was frustrated just trying to unwrap it. Then there it was - I finally held a red glass doorknob in my hand. I'll still try to find other designs, but for now my dream is satisfied.

Thanks, Win, for not bidding on it!

## New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members who have joined the ADCA since our last newsletter.

Christopher Wilson	Portland, OR
Steven Hannum	Newberg, OR
Randy Hagerman	Mt. Sinai, NY
Ryan Schroeder	St. Paul, MN
Jerry Andrews	Mableton, GA
Sarah Robertson	Mamaroneck, NY
Richard Ferrell	Carrington, ND

## "Have I Got News For You"

From time to time we get some very interesting inquiries here in the office. We thought we would share this one with you from Hat Trick Productions Ltd. in London.

"I am writing in regards of your magazine *The Doorknob Collector*, copies of which you kindly forwarded to my colleague, Kevin Treasure for possible inclusion in our television programme *Have I Got News For You* in London. [This program] is a news quiz made for the BBC by Hat Trick Productions and is a well-established programme having been on the air for 10 years.

"We have now started recording the new series and we would like to feature *The Doorknob Collector* in this week's show. It would be included in the round on missing words where we feature a guest publication each week, showing a couple of headlines from the magazine with words blacked out which the contestants then have to guess. These headlines are mixed in with a number of headlines from the week's newspapers.

"We would like to feature the front cover of issue Number 100."

So now the UK knows all about our editors. We have not

heard if it actually went on TV, but it is certainly nice to be asked. We are constantly amazed at the extent of our fame.

## New Member Policy

Membership in ADCA runs for one year from your first issue of the newsletter. New members are enrolled beginning with the first issue of the newsletter after receipt of dues. Yearly membership includes six issues of **The Doorknob Collector**. Your membership renewal date is shown on your address label. Reminders will be sent when membership renewal is due.

## How to Save a Picture From the Web

If you would like to send a picture to be published in our newsletter from the Internet, do the following:

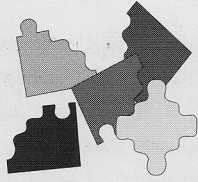
Right Click on the picture and choose **Save As**. You can then put it on your computer as a **\*.jpg** file. Make a note of where you saved the file. This can now be sent to us in an email and it will be ready for the newsletter. Send to [Knobnews@aol.com](mailto:Knobnews@aol.com).

## ADCA Handbook Available

The club has put together a handbook edited by Len Blumin that has been given out to new members and those attending the convention. The handbook contains such things as the club history, bylaws, convention information, finances and other pertinent information. It also has a page on frequently asked questions. Anyone who would like a copy may contact us and we would be happy to send one on to you. (see page 8 for addresses)



# Bits and Pieces



By Win Applegate

We have recently heard from Art Paholke (#51). One of our more knowledgeable members, Art has a keen eye and interest in many facets of ornamental hardware and is an accomplished speaker who has given presentations at our conventions. Art very generously gave me a copy of *The Old Way of Seeing: How Architecture Lost It's Magic* by Jonathan Hale.

The author examines what he feels was an historical time in the 1830's when architects changed buildings from expressions of human spirit to structures laden with symbols. A well researched book with numerous illustrations. Comparisons are drawn between ancient structures and those of more "modern-(ism)" design. A complex presentation, the book, at times, challenges some of the works of more recent architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and his idol, Louis Sullivan.

For those with a strong interest in the history of Architecture, this would make interesting reading. I thank Art for his thoughtfulness.

In the magazine *Architectural Digest*, September 1999, there is an article by Mario Buatta on "Secrets of Custom Work" (referring to the production of 'ornamental' hardware). E. R. Butler & Co. owned by **Rhett Butler** is very favorably mentioned. Referring to hardware reproduction, Buatta makes such statements about the firm as: "If you've found something that's old and rare, they can reproduce it exactly." "They do such special things that it feels

more like an art." and finally, "A few people in England and France do this, but in the United States, they're tops."

Very nice accolades for one of our members (and President). Many thanks to new member, Robert Bendus, for forwarding the article to me.

Keep an eye out for continued news regarding the 2001 Convention in Bethlehem, Pa. The **Hotel Bethlehem** reminds me of our Convention Hotel in Portland, Oregon ... lots of 'character'. Completely renovated, it will present a beautiful setting for us. Remember August 15 - 18, 2001

January will be a busy month. A number of us are meeting in St. Louis to view the doorknob display set up by a team headed by Bruce Gerrie. I don't want to slight anyone on the team, so I'll leave it up to the newsletter editors to report in more detail in the next issue. (see page 8)

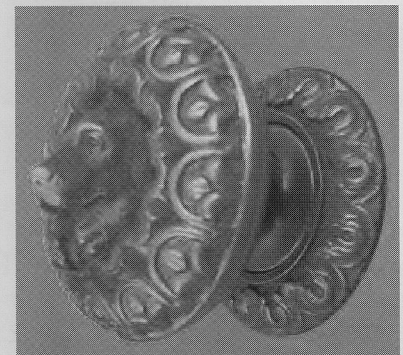
## Rare "Doggie" Sets Record

Web Wilson let us know that a rarely seen "footed" doorknob featuring a face seemingly identical to the well-known MCCC/R&E masterpiece designed by Ludwig Kreuzinger was sold in his latest online auction for almost \$8,500 including the buyer's premium. The piece, slightly smaller and with a different background and profile than the better known A101 that has a patent date of 1870 is thought to predate that year. The bronze casting's quality certainly suggests a compression molding technique. The "footed" feature is similar to knobs produced by Robinson.

Unlike the ornamental hardware of the time that tended to have the manufacturer's name stamped on the back, this knob had no markings. The more familiar "doggie" (A101) came in as many as three variations: the 'Metallic Compression Casting Company' that appeared for only a brief time, then after a business agreement was reached, the phrasing 'Sole Agents for Russell and Erwin' were added, then some years later, only 'Russell and Erwin' with the New Britain, Conn. designation was imprinted.

Because of the lack of a manufacturer's designation and the issue of possible patent infringement with MCCC/R&E's patented (1870) "doggie" design, it is assumed that this footed knob is possibly an earlier example of Kreuzinger's work.

This knob was undoubtedly the highlight of Web Wilson's third online auction. New software now drives Web's auctions in real-time allowing instant feedback on up-to-the-second bidding action. Web's auction can be reached through [www.webwilson.com](http://www.webwilson.com). The next auction begins January 25th.

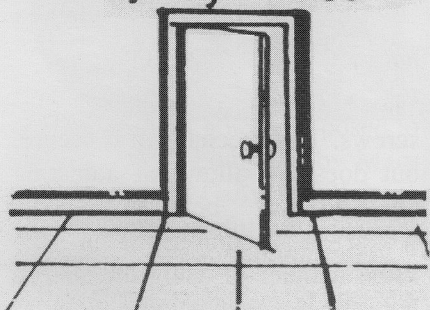


*[Editor's note: Other variations of "doggie knobs" have been purchased by members for as little as \$200. We do not want our new members to feel as though all beautiful knobs go for such astronomical prices. Look around, you may find a real bargain.]*



# THE OPEN DOOR

by ray nemecc



## Necrology of ADCA Members

Below is a table of former members of the Antique Door-knob Collectors who died during the first 19 years of the club:

If you know of a former ADCA member who has passed away and is not on the above list please let us know.

### Kane County's Helen Robinson Dies

Helen Robinson, owner of the Kane County flea market, died September 24, 2000, in Dearborn, Michigan, while on vacation.

Mrs. Robinson was born October 5, 1918, at Ontario, Wisconsin. Along with Jack Kelly, she co-authored her autobiography,

*Queen Flea: The Helen Robinson Story*, in 1997.

Helen and her late husband, J. L., started the flea market in an American Legion hall in Wasco, Illinois, in 1967 with 14 dealers and 400 customers. She came up with the idea of a flea market to raise money for the post. It was the first of its kind in the area.

Within a short time the flea market had outgrown the American Legion hall and moved to the Kane County Fairgrounds where it operates the first weekend of the month year around. An estimated 30,000 people come to the market each month. It is estimated that over 100 current and former members of the **Antique Door-knob Collectors of America** have been there at least once looking for treasured doorknobs.

The flea market will continue, as her family continues to operate it.

### Starting the 20th Year

As the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America enters it's twentieth year, I would like to mention the names of the 23 founding members who continue

to be active in the club.

The two people who were instrumental in the formation of ADCA, Arnie Fredrick and Emil Miller have both passed on.

These two men who hatched the idea of holding a meeting, which was held in Waverly, Iowa, in September 1981, and forming a club have been honored by the club. The Arnie Fredrick Award and the Emil Miller Memorial Library and Archives are continuing tributes to the roles they played in forming ADCA.

The 23 current members who attended the September 11-13, 1981, meeting are Alva and Charles Bednar, Leonard Blumin, Mark Davidovich, Maude Eastwood, Lois Hatch, Chlorene and John Holland, Florence Jarvis, Lee Kaiser, Ardythe and Gerald Leaders, Barbara Liesman, Dorothy Ann Miller, Loretta and Ray Nemecc, Arthur Paholke, Don and Judy Ann Peterson, Charles Wardell, Marjorie Wiemer and Kae and Ray Zyc.

These 23 people along with twelve others voted to establish ADCA at a meeting on September 13, 1981.

Name	Date	Place	Age	Name	Date	Place	Age
Emil Miller	Mar-84	Omaha, NE	64	Adair Stroing	Jun-91	Chico, CA	67
Lionel Moes	Feb-85	Olympia, WA	40	Frances Bolen	Jan-92	Atlanta, GA	75
Liz Fowler	Mar-85	Portland, OR		Emmet Wiemer	May-92	W. Sedonia, AZ	85
Darrell Razor	Nov-85	Belleville, WA	65	Ethladel Magnus	May-94	Ft. Myers, FL	87
Patrick Cody	Nov-85	Holmes, PA	56	Martha Mueller	Feb-95	St. Louis, MO	63
Charles King	Nov-86	Moline, IL		Donald C. Hill	Apr-95	Pasadena, CA	
James Kaiser	Feb-87	Minneapolis, MN	60	Arnold Fredrick	Jun-95	Waverly, IA	67
Evelyn Nichols	Feb-87	Flint, MI	65	Fred Magnus	Jan-96	Ft. Myers, FL	90
Ralph Chelin	Apr-87	Princeton, IL	72	Roger Gwillim	Mar-96	Phoenix, AZ	75
Roy Schorek	Dec-87	Moline, IL	60	Claude Knox	Jan-97	Oak Harbor, WA	61
George Clark	Jan-88	Milford, CT	74	Richard Wise	May-97	Aurora, IL	71
Irma I. Dick	Jul-89	Minneapolis, MN	82	Emanuel P. Dick	Feb-98	Winona, MN	
Jimmie Meadows	Aug-89	Ft. Smith, AR	58	George J. Doyle	Feb-98	Portland, OR	
Eugene Morris	Aug-89	Forest City, IA	70	Steve Efner	Mar-98	Los Angeles, CA	56
Nels Nelson	Sep-89	Minneapolis, MN	80s	Charles Mesken	Mar-99	Minneapolis, MN	69
Max Liesman	May-90	Des Moines, IA	73	William Fellenz	Dec-99	Lexington, NE	84
Vince J. Noe	May-90	Metamore, IL	73	Walter Bright	Jan-00	Tempe, AZ	90
Tecla A. Snow	Apr-91	Nashville, MI	63				



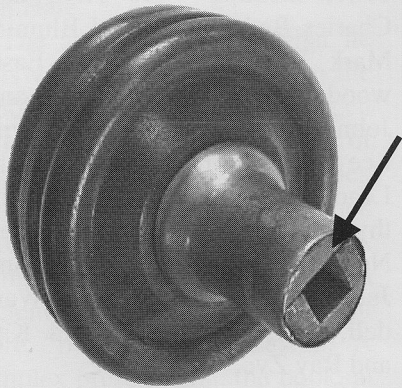
## Two Attachments Exploded

By Len Blumin

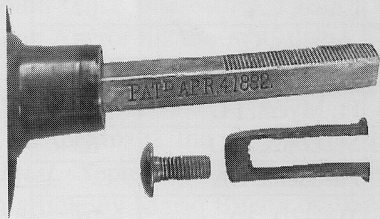
[Editors note: In TDC Number 102, July-August 2000 there was a discussion on how wooden knobs were attached to the shanks. Two of those attachments are explained in detail here.]

### Clothespin Attachment

This is Hidden's patent knob (patent No. 255,858), or the "clothespin" mechanism. You can just see the ends of the clothespin pushing outward at the bottom of the shank.

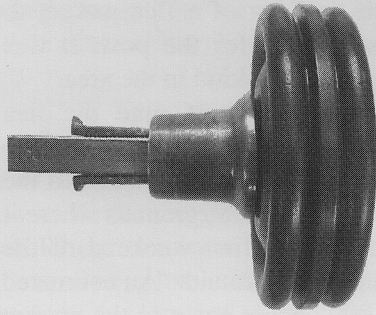


Here the clothespin has been removed by loosening the screw in the knob's face, allowing spindle and clothespin to be extracted. The parts can now be seen separately.



Illustrated to the right bottom, the clothespin mechanism has been placed on the spindle. A series of grooves in the mating surfaces of both pieces allows careful adjustment of the distance between the knobs, simply by moving the clothespin location along the spindle. The screw is shown as if the knob had been replaced. Of

course in actual practice you put the clothespin on the spindle, insert the mated parts into the end of the shaft of the knob, and then secure them by inserting the screw in the face of the knob, as shown below.

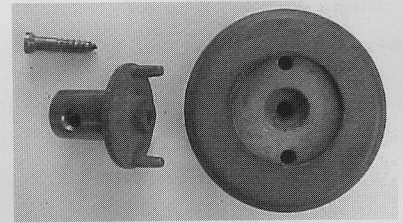
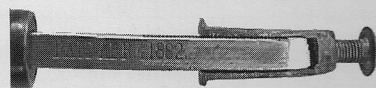


Here the spindle/clothespin pair has been partly reinserted in the end of the knob's shaft. It is now simply pushed all the way in and the screw placed in the knob face.

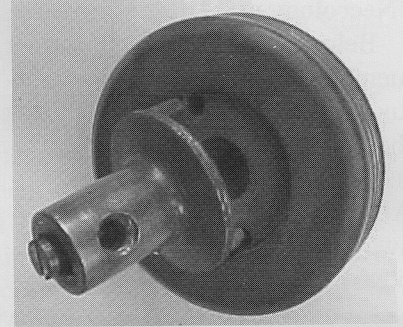
### Flared End Attachment

The knob W-303, or "Box with rings", has a patent date of Feb 21, 1882. One can presume that the patent refers to the neat method of securing the knob's metal shaft to the wooden body. The backside of the knob reveals two screws that pass through the flared end of the metal shaft and into the wood body. In this photo (top right) the screws have been removed so that we can see how carefully the shape of the metal parts are matched to the cavity carved in the back of the knob. The two small metal "posts" of the shank prevent any rotation.

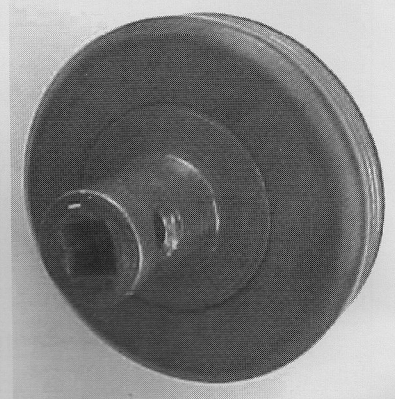
The metal shaft is shown partly reinserted into the cavities on the back of the knob. The assembly is completed by pushing it in the rest of the way and inserting the



screws. This mechanism is secure, but does not allow for adjusting the distance between knobs, which is accomplished in the usual manner of using the spaced holes on a typical spindle.



Below, the flared shank has now been completely replaced and is flush with the back of the knob. This method of attachment requires a very carefully machined cavity in the knob body to exactly match the shape of the shank parts, or else there would be a loose feeling to the assembled product.





## ***Inquiry Answers***

*The question concerned the various colors in glass knobs that have been exposed to the sun.*

Member Bud Wolski's book on solarization (the term for color change in glass objects exposed to the sun's rays) compiled by Mary Zimmerman of Canyon, TX, contained much useful information. Causative factors making solarization possible start with the raw materials and their handling. Interaction between the mineral content of the sand, a basic component of all glass making, and the addition of a decolorizing agent, usually manganese or selenium, being melted in a pot along with other additives, sets the stage for pressing the glass knobs.

The inability to effectively control any one of the above factors due to differences in the raw materials from batch to batch, and factoring in the variables of keeping even furnace temperatures early on, and exposure to the sun, made predicting the resulting depth of color impossible. The addition of manganese to the glass mix produced the purples. When selenium was added yellow hues were the result after exposure to the sun.

Zimmerman confirmed that most purple-turning glass was produced prior to 1910 and the yellow-turning glass from 1910 to the 1930s. Knob collectors will agree, for in cataloging their knobs, those with a yellow cast are predominately of the polygon or octagon shape of the 1920s and 30s.

Manganese was the decolorant from around 1850 through the turn of the century and selenium was used following the war, though it was not unknown in the 1800s. Used in larger amounts these same additives added color according to Zimmerman. Man-

gane produced amethysts, purples and even black glass. Selenium gave the glass a pink, rose or cerise hue and sometimes even red and ruby, depending on the amount added to the mix.

Interestingly, the foot of a glass knob, covered by the spun-over metal shank will not turn color, as does the body of the knob that has been exposed to the sun.

Finally, sun-colored glass is not to be confused with the 1929 Reading Knob Works colored-glass knobs. Reading glass came from the furnace in living colors of blue, topaz, mulberry, emerald, black, and azurite.

## **Byingtons Volunteer**

Helen (#41) and Bill (#405) Byington are long time members of ADCA. We always find it interesting to see what our members do outside of collecting door-knobs. We received a newspaper article about the good works done by this couple and we would like to share this with you.

These are excerpts for the Community News Advertiser in Iowa, July 5, 2000 written by Sarah Hankel.

"Sometimes it's the littlest things that make the biggest difference. That's how Anne Smothers of Old Capitol Museum feels

about a pair of volunteers who committed a lot of elbow grease to a rather mundane job that's putting a new light in the exhibits.

Over the past winter and spring, Helen and Bill Byington took on the arduous task of stripping and polishing a total of 67 pewter inkwells - a traditional gift given to attorneys who present cases in front of the Supreme Court.

The pewter inkwells are prominent in each room of the Old Capitol Museum and haven't been touched since the building's restoration nearly 25 years ago. Smothers says they were a bit of an eyesore for the 25,000 to 30,000 visitors who tour the museum each year.

"While the museum boasts a host of dependable volunteers as docents, tour guides and gift shop clerks, Smothers says, "Helen and Bill are continual givers in their own quiet way."

Having volunteered in the gift shop for a few years in the 1970s, the Byingtons became familiar with the museum. Over the years they have continued to support the museum while filling their schedule with other volunteering duties with the Hoover Foundation, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, the Iowa City/Coralville Conven-



Helen and Bill Byington hard at work polishing inkwells. Great Job!



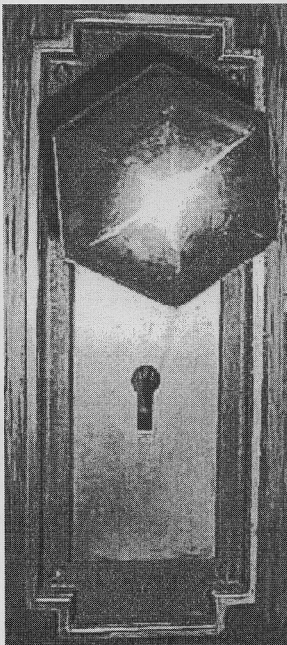
tion and Visitors Bureau and Mercy Iowa City. Combined with Bills' continued career as a pharmacist one day a week with Miller Medicine in Kalona and frequent travel, Helen says their time is limited.

"Helen says, 'Anne had told us that she needed more help and Old Cap is special to us. We're in and out a lot and we go to Florida (in the winter) so we were look for ways to volunteer that's flexible.'

"Knowing the Byingtons' penchant for antique doorknob, Smothers thought they would be ideal candidates to help put that sparkle back into the museum's exhibits.

"In batches of 10 or 20, Smothers delivered the inkwells to the Byington's residence. Upon receiving the first batch, Helen and Bill realized polishing the pewter wouldn't quite cut it..

"There was some kind of coating on them,' Helen says. Whether a thin film of a clear lacquer or simply build-up of dirt coated the inkwells remains a mystery, but Bill figured out how to get rid of it ... with acetone. 'They were quite tarnished,' Helen says. [Then came] paper towels, silver polish, chamois clothes and



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a lot of elbow grease. 'It was tedious but there is great satisfaction in it,' Helen says.

"[All of the inkwells have been] returned to their display areas in the museum. Smothers tells them that their work is quite noticeable, giving the museum's exhibits that spit-and-polish appearance."

### Doorknobs on Display in St. Louis

On November 21, 2000 the City Museum of St. Louis, MO opened an exhibition called "*Jewelry for Buildings: The Art of Antique Doorknobs in the City*". The artwork will be displayed in the Architectural Museum located in the City Museum for six months. This exhibition will be the first of its kind, and will show the imagination and creativity used in the design and production of these functional pieces of hardware. Jewelry for Buildings is being presented with the support and cooperation of the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America**. Their enthusiastic support makes this all possible.

Many of our members have doorknobs on display at this exhibition. Several members are going to see it in January and we will be reporting on their findings in the next newsletter.

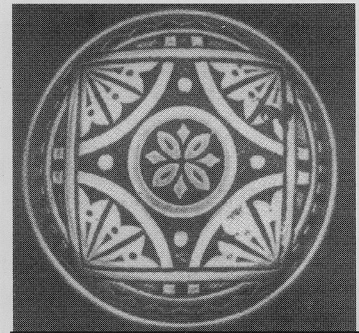
The museum's mission statement states, "We believe all people are innately creative and artistic. Our goal is to re-awaken the child-like imagination, joy and sense of wonder in all of us, transforming the way we look at our world." This exhibit is bound to open the eyes of all who see it to the wonder and art of antique hardware that we all know and love.

### 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:** Four brass knobs, H-216.

Also need several hexagonal brass knobs (2 3/8" diameter, 2 1/2" projection) along with the brass plates with keyhole (7 1/4" x 2 3/4"), see bottom left.



H-216

Vicky Berol (#450)  
2527 Gough Street  
San Francisco, CA  
94123-5012  
(415) 771-9899

### 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>



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