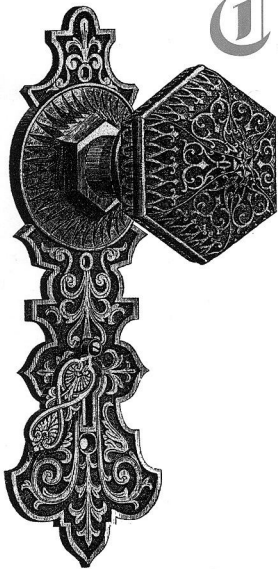


The Doorknob Collector



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A Bit of Old New Orleans Shushan Airport

There is a group of elderly flying men known as the Quiet Birdmen who meet to talk on a regular basis in the Flight Deck restaurant at the Lakefront Airport that juts out into Lake Ponchartrain in New Orleans. They drink coffee and talk of old times and air shows. In the 1934 there was a five-day air show at this airport, then known as the Shushan Airport. At least three men died that week and many of the Birdmen remember and honor those lost. One parachutist was making a jump and his lines got caught up in the tail of the plane. The pilot tried to free him by maneuvering and doing flips, but it was an open cockpit and the pilot himself fell from the plane causing the crash that killed both men. Earlier in the week another pilot was killed while trying to make a landing in the dark.

The airport has undergone many more changes than just its name. There is a very interesting history behind the place. It seems that Abraham Shushan was head of the Orleans Levee Board. It was this group that oversees the airports and Shushan worked hard to get the state aid to build a modern facility to accommodate the up and coming air service. The original cost was \$4,500,000 and was then named after Shushan to honor him for all of his effort in getting the project off the ground, you might say.



Newsletter Deadline - Friday, December 13, 2002

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ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, SHUSHAN AIR-PORT, NEW ORLEANS, LA.



It was an elaborate art deco edifice. No space was left undecorated and great friezes surrounded the top of the two-story lobby. Vintage planes from the 1930s fly over exotic locals in the eight lobby murals.

A large compass was inlaid in the center of the terrazzo floor to indicate every point from which a plane might come to this airport. There was no doubt in anyone's mind about who was responsible for this new facility. Shushan's name was everywhere. The roof, the floor, the doorknobs and some say even the plumbing fixtures bore his name.

Now about this time there was a very famous man from the area, Gov. Huey Long. There were some real questions about how he managed the state and the federal government became increasingly interested in his dealings. He wasn't an easy man to pin down so perhaps the best way was to take a look at his friends. One of them was Shushan.

Maybe Shushan knew long before that something unpleas-

ant might develop from this relationship. Well, it certainly did, in October 1934 he was indicted on income-tax fraud and in 1940 he and other Long cronies were convicted and spent 30 months in prison.

Oops, now we have an airport named after a convicted felon. That will never work. It should be simple enough to change the name of the airport, right? Well, except remember his name is everywhere in the building.

There is a quote in a book written by Harry Williams about Huey Long. Shushan was asked once why his name was everywhere in the building and his answer was, "We may lose out sometime; and they may change the name of Shushan Airport -



but it'll cost 'em \$60,000 at the least, and I doubt whether they could do it for \$100,000."

The doorknob shown here belongs to Dick Hubbard. He is lucky indeed because one of the Quiet birdmen as one where the name "Shushan" has been drilled off and also part of the nose and tail of the airplane.

As with many old buildings an indignity was performed on the building in the 1960s when Art Deco was simply thought of as outdated design. Stucco was used to cover the high windows and artful friezes on the exterior of the building. It was converted into a "modern" office building by covering over all but three of the murals. The mezzanine now has a floor filling the space and second floor offices rise above the terrazzo floor below.

The Doorknob Collector®



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Some feel it was done because of deterioration of the original building. Others think that because it was during the Cold War, fallout shelters needed to be built, and here was a practical place to put one. No matter the reason, the original beauty was replaced with an austere building.

The airport just keeps flying along. Today there is an average of 200,00 takeoffs and landings each year at this facility. With the few remaining art works at the airport it still my top the list of "grand" airports that caters to private planes.

The Quiet Birdmen sit in the Flight Deck restaurant, which

was added on to the original Walnut Room restaurant, enjoying the panoramic view on three sides and enjoying the fellowship they share.

First Look at Convention 2003

As it stands right now the next convention will be held in San Antonio, Texas on July 15-July 20th, 2003. It will be held at the St. Anthony Hotel located in downtown San Antonio, just a couple of blocks from the Alamo and the Riverwalk. It will make for a great getaway

and a chance to visit Texas for those who have never been to this wonderful state.

We have special room rates so be sure to let the hotel know you are part of our party. We will spend a day touring homes and take a trip to Gonzales where the War for Texas Independence began.

There will be some educational programs for those who want to learn more about door-knobs from the experts and there will be ample opportunity to buy and trade some incredible knobs that you may never find anywhere else.

Plain and Variegated Mineral Knobs and Their Extended Family

(What You Don't See is What You Got)

by Maude Eastwood

Mineral doorknobs, focus of this article, are variegated members of the clay family of door-knobs, the production of which, "in their day", accounted for a significant segment of the American industry and livelihood. Just one of many potters, Enoch Wood's in Perth Amboy, NJ, shipped 3,000,000 door-knobs a year (yes, I rechecked the figures.)

As a collector's item, mineral knobs may not top a Christmas wish list, but certainly would find a place on a list guaranteeing bragging rights for one-of-a-kind, no duplication ownership. And there are millions of them.

In doorknob speak (and certain patent copy vocabulary),

the term mineral refers to the brown colored member of the white, black, and brown clay knob threesome perennially offered through mail order catalogs, hardware stores, and other outlets. Mineral knobs were ordered and used by the cost-conscious for their modest dwellings. Today, Mineral knobs are a curiosity to be explained. What of their background?; their history?; composition? Have they a place in today's world of Doggies, Cut Glass, and Limoges porcelain doorknobs? Yes, they are family and thus their name will be capitalized.

The term, mineral, became the name, Mineral, to identify coarse clay knobs made of dif-

ferent colors of clay mixed together and finished with a thin slip to protect the surface and enhance the color. (Without the slip, the color would appear drab and dry and feel rough to the touch.)

What you don't see is what you got" is a play on words. Clues as to what you have are largely hidden by glazes that could reveal the composition of a clay body. The specifics of attached mounting, etc. are not viewable. A flaw in the glaze, a chip or other imperfections could aid examination. Mineral knobs do not photograph well. In early catalogs they were either drawn or listed without illustration.

Important early patents, including to, or specifically covering the Mineral knob included the July 29, 1841 Hotchkiss, Davenport, and Quincy patent titled simply "Knob" on the drawing page and "Making Door and Other Knobs of Clay Used in Pottery and of Porcelain" on the specification page. The term mineral was not used, but would be covered under pottery. Interestingly, in the 1850s these inventors were sued for false claims. Potters of impeccable character witnessed that such knobs had already been in production and use in America and Europe, in some cases as long as 10 years.

However, the patent that defined the Mineral knob was dated September 17, 1867 and assigned to Thomas Kennedy (Branford Lock Works President) by patentee Josiah Jones, a master potter formerly from Staffordshire, England and the Cartlidge pottery at Greenpoint, Long Island. Here he worked with Mineral knobs of unrefined clays and other wares. "This invention relates to an improvement in what are known to

the trade as mineral knobs, that is, knobs composed of clay of different colors." The result of the improvement to be a knob that was mottled in appearance instead of veins, as in the old method. Thus, a tangible clue: The introduction date of the mottled Mineral knob.

Certain Glass bodied door-knobs have been misidentified as clay bodied, through the use of the word, mineral, in patent specifications. A notable example is found in John Paige Pepper's 1851 patent titled "Improvement in Mineral Composition Resembling Jasper". Largely unrecognized, very distinctive in its colors approximating those of the Jasper stone of nature, red and black only, opaque with endless variations of design, found in both round and octagon shapes. In 1864 twenty-six octagon pairs were ordered for the extension of the Treasury Building through Enoch Robinson. Russell & Erwin, ever alert to business opportunities, acquired Pepper's Albany Argillo Works in 1850.

Clay wares are as different as

the clays from which they are formed – unrefined brick clay to the white clay of porcelain. For the purposes of this article, coverage will be limited to variegated wares utilizing two clay types, buff or cream-colored and different clay, mixed.

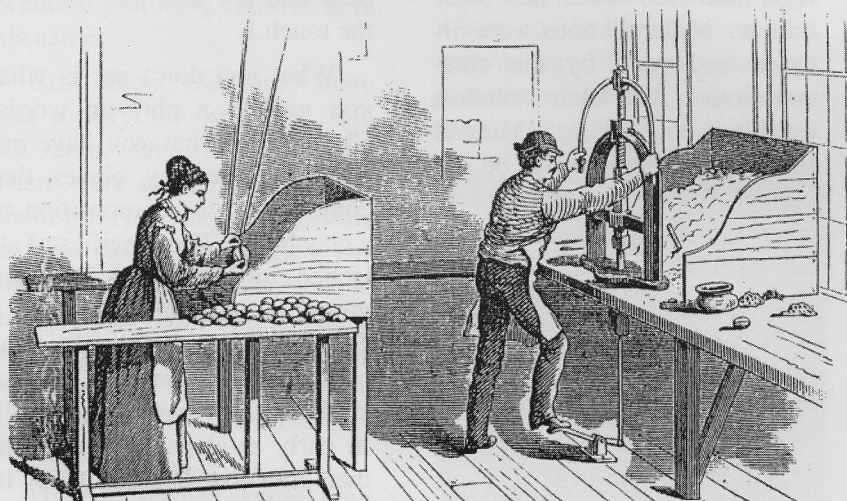
There are two types of variegated knobs, one with surface decoration through dipping or mottling a buff or cream-colored body, and one through forming the body from different colored clay then applying a slip or clear glaze to enhance the formative color. The first, knobs of buff or cream colored body with applied variegations include Rockingham, Marbled, imitation tortoiseshell, and Flint Enamel knobs. Those with mixed clay bodies: America's Mineral and its English forerunner, the agate knob.

Though the Bennington Rockingham and Flint Enamel knobs have little in common with the Mineral knob, because they are variegated they have, for this time, been included in the extended family of the mineral knob.

Much disagreement surrounds Bennington pottery lore. To quote Spargo, renowned expert on things Bennington and pottery in general, "More erroneous and unverifiable information on Bennington has been circulated, than that probable." I believe it.

I did, however, observe an interesting aspect of the formation of the seemingly all-in-one body of the footed Fenton Rockingham knob. I believe this to be the shape of all Bennington knobs, including the Flint Enamel, Parian and Granite – that shows it to be a three part pottery knob that was made

Fig.1.—MOLDING THE WARE.



Picture from Scientific American March 20, 1875

to telescope together, head, neck and foot. When the glaze was than applied, the pieces were "cemented" together in a strong, unified body. That explained the absence of mold marks or lines.

According to Spargo, Fenton did not invent his famous Flint Enamel Glaze, it had been produced by Whieldon and other English potters nearly a century earlier than Fenton's patent date, November 27, 1839, and was considered common property of the trade. He merely introduced a process to distribute metallic colors on a clay body. Examination of the patent confirms that Fenton had not sought to patent the colors or the glaze, only an improvement in their application to all articles made of potters' materials. He did develop two formulas for Rockingham glazes. Every pottery of any size made Rockingham ware. The first to make it in America was James Bennett at East Liverpool, Ohio in 1839.

Christopher Webber Fenton, celebrated potter of Bennington, Vermont, whose potting skills were matched by his business acumen, assured that his name would be forever remembered and his wares forever collectable, when he brought to America, in the 1840s and 50s, a nucleus of England's Staffordshire finest. This was a timely influx of major potting talent to the then fledgling American pottery scene and propelled Fenton's United States Pottery into unprecedented prominence.

The author is much intrigued with the mineral knob, appreciating the no-two-alike aspect, visioning for the future a glass entry wall set with dozens of mineral knobs, ceiling to floor.

Applicable pottery definitions are as follow:

AGATEWARE pottery made to look like the agate "stone" through combining clay of different colors.

COMBING (Imitation Grain-ing) decorating with the use of a steel comb. Before firing, following an application of this slip, a design is combed to produce waving lines.

FLINT ENAMEL a ware characterized by a rich appearance of mingling colors produced by sprinkling metallic salts over a transparent glaze before firing.

MARBLING painting on solid body to represent varicolored marble.

MINERAL (in doorknob context) body of different colors of clay, blended, covered with a slip to protect and enhance.

ROCKINGHAM a ware of light clay body mottled or dipped in brown glaze containing manganese and red lead. The first Rockingham ware made in the U.S. was by James Bennett at East Liverpool, Ohio.

TORTOISESHELL an effect produced by dusting metallic oxides such as manganese, cobalt, and copper, over the surface of the ware that, in the firing, appears to resemble a tortoise shell.

That Mineral doorknobs have traveled far and wide is evidenced by the far-flung places they have been found. They have been dredged up from an old shipwreck, found at the scene of an early cabin fire near Boot Hill with the cast iron shank rusted nearly away, and resting in an attic pack rat's nest along with a shiny metal spoon. Others mineral knobs have been

extricated from the harbor mud near the docks by an adventuring youth; and lifted from the pebbles along the surf (thoroughly scoured). Knobs have been found at the site of a deep woods logging camp shanty; pulled from an old well in Virginia (late 1700s level); and rescued from many attics and other rooms in millions of homes nationwide.

But where did individual specimens originate? From which pottery? What hope is there for tracing their provenance; for starting a collection based on manufacturer? The exception is Branford's ornamental shanked mineral knobs (see below). It is true that iron shanks show difference in configuration when closely compared, that some mineral knob bodies appear almost bulbous, others, flatter, but that does not give us name to research.

We have the names from Spargo of five early potters who produced doorknobs.

Edwin Bennett

1846 Baltimore, MD

E&W Bennett

1848 Baltimore, MD

L.D. Wheeler

1853 South Norwalk, CT

Richard Thomas & Elijah Webster

1869 Beaver Falls, PA

Richard Thomas

1873 East Liverpool, Ohio



Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs

This is the first in a series of "new" designs that will appear in an upcoming supplement to VDA. We invite ADCA members to provide additional information on any of these patterns. Also, if any of you have a better photo of any of these knobs, preferably in a digital format, we would welcome your submitting the photo for possible publication. Please send any information or photos to Len Blumin at LBlumin@aol.com, or mail them to:

Len Blumin
382 Throckmorton Ave.
Mill Valley CA 94941



A-118: Timid Lion
Mfg: Unknown
1875-1890
Note the funny ears



A-119: Large Lion
Hopkins & Dickinson
1875-1880
Large (2.75") knob, perimeter like J-110, featuring a small fierce lion. Note that perimeter design is seven-fold.



A-120 Small Lion
Hopkins & Dickinson
1875-1880
Perimeter like Diana, A-306, but same fierce lion that H&D used on the rarer A-119.



A-121 Lion, rope border
Mfg: Unknown
c. 1870
Comment: Kruezing style lion face with nice rope border.

Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



A-122 Bearish Lion
Mfg: Unknown
c. 1870's



A-123 Double Doggie
Mfg: Unknown
c. 1860's

Fabrication suggests maker might have been E. Robinson. Note similarity of larger dog to A-101 Doggie. Rare beauty.



A-124 Little Doggie
Mfg: Unknown
c. 1860's

Mate to A-123, and probably the same scottie type dog shown next to the hound in A-123. Rare and fine.



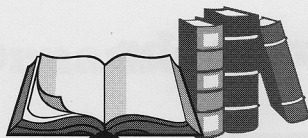
A-125 "Christesen"
Naturalistic School
Russell & Erwin
1897

Striking piece of work, not commonly found.



A-126 Standing Elk
R&E
1871

Extremely rare and fine. Probably a special order piece, like the Charter Oak, with the familiar MCCC medallion border.



From the Archives

Each time we have the catalog copies for sale, it gives us the opportunity to look through the masters of the ones that were ordered. It's always amazing to see the beautiful hardware that was available years ago and to see the related hardware that went with the various designs. We always see something different each time we go through them.

After checking 14,000 sheets of catalog copies we realize that we are very fortunate to have these manufacturers catalogs to offer to our membership. They afford great help in finding information about our collections.

We thank everyone who ordered catalogs this year for their patience.

*Barb and Steve Menchhofer,
Co-Archivists*

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

Small collection of metal, glass and wooden knobs. Small A-106 with plate, two A-315 with roses and escutcheons, two A-316, two H-409, two BPOE knobs with plates (excellent), two con-

trolled bubble knobs with roses and escutcheons (footed), two milk glass (footed) knobs with roses and escutcheons, along with a few others. Forty-five knobs in all. Pictures and descriptions on request. \$1800 for all.

Mike Maldonado (#135)

207-934-0442

Please call after 8:30 PM
Eastern Time

For Sale:

Entire collection of The Doorknob Collector newsletters in 3-ring binder. Issue #1 to current issue. Price \$100.00 plus shipping charges.

Kae Zyc #23

375 Highway 67 Apt. #108

Dousman, WI 53116-9645

Phone: 262.965.9342

Wanted:

One pair Yale & Towne "Holly" Doorknob (B-213)

Two pairs white porcelain knobs; on one knob is a brass button, on the other knob is a brass screw.

Still looking for **two types** of plastic knobs shown in May-June 2002 issue.

Vicky Berol (#450)

2527 Gough Street

San Francisco, CA 94123

(415) 771-9899

sfgofer@yahoo.com

Holiday Gifts

Look at the Book Peddler order form and find the perfect holiday gift. New books have been added that can be purchased directly from the authors. SO HELP YOURSELF.



New Members

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

Aloha to our 700th member, our first from Hawaii!

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------|
| 694 | Robert Bowman | Nokesville, VA |
| 695 | Jay Paul | San Francisco, CA |
| 697 | Catherine Allred | Omaha, NE |
| 698 | Lisa Conde | Hoboken, NJ |
| 699 | Debra Baumgartner | Chicago, IL |
| 700 | Stephanie Ishikawa | Honolulu, HI |

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