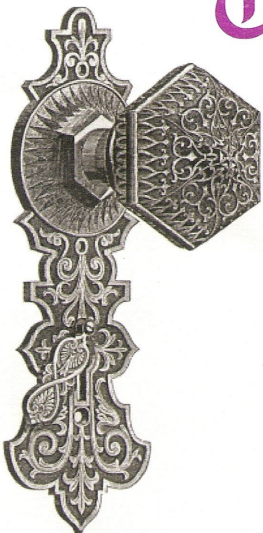


The Doorknob Collector



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TRICKS OF THE TRADE – HINGES

By Steve Rowe

It has happened to all of us. It may have been at the flea market, a local antique shop, eBay or perhaps even at an ADCA convention; we all have purchased a piece of hardware that in retrospect we wish we had never seen! Twenty-five years and counting of collecting hardware has afforded me several opportunities to make this mistake. I have learned a few 'tricks of the trade' that may benefit you in your hardware hunt. In this article, I will address the art of buying a good Victorian door hinge.

There are many considerations when one purchases a new piece of hardware for a collection. The simplest purchase is turning over your money without any consideration at all. However, with patience and careful consideration, you may learn to pass up the purchase that could easily become the albatross of your collection. The first consideration for the buyer is the hinge's metallic makeup. The best tool for this determination is the basic magnet. When I find a hinge that is of interest to me, I first pull out the magnet carried in my pocket to determine whether the piece is iron or bronze. In general, a visual inspection is adequate, but at other times when corrosion or paint is laden upon the piece, it is the magnet that provides the final confirmation as to the composition. A magnet has saved me on numerous occasions from purchasing a hinge in iron that I believed to be bronze. In most circumstances, a bronze hinge is more desirable, collectible and valuable than an iron one.

Another consideration when purchasing a hinge is whether the item is a single or if available as a pair. Thoughts are many on this point amongst collectors: single hinge versus the pair, with the final determination of the value of one over the other being found in the preference of the collector. The main advantage in collecting a pair would be for use as the manufacturer intended: to hang a door. For those who collect with the thought of "one day, wouldn't it be nice..." a single hinge would be useless. From a value point, overall a pair of hinges would be easier to sell than a single hinge. For the purpose of displaying a collection, a single hinge will be a more attractive purchase. Of course, as with all things collectible, a rare single hinge is just as valuable to the collector as having a pair of hinges.

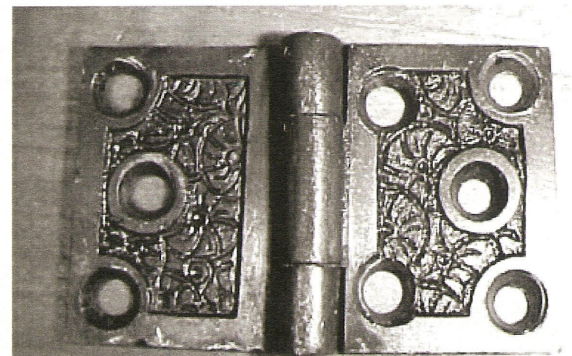


Fig. 1

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If you decide to purchase a pair of hinges it is important to inspect both to see if the pair is correctly 'handed'. A 'handed' hinge indicates that it is to be used for opening the door in a particular manner. If the hinge is labeled RH (right hand) or LH (left hand), it is easy and all you need to do is to ascertain whether two RH or two LH are available for purchase. If not, you do not have a true pair of hinges. A RH hinge and a LH hinge will not hang a door since the pieces are opposites and therefore incompatible. "Fortunately, not all hinges are handed. (A note on handedness is below)"

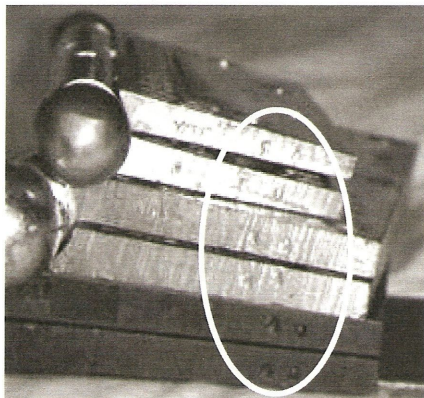


Fig. 2

Hinge wear and tear is another important consideration. Normal wear on the hinge is in the center or barrel. This wear is normally related to the excessive weight of a door allowing for it to sag and cause damage to the hinge barrel. Worn hinges are primarily useful for display purposes only, and personally I would not purchase one unless the hinge was extremely rare and reasonably priced. Overall, a worn hinge is unattractive. Unfortunately, wear is found more frequently on a bronze hinge due to the metallic composition. Bronze is a malleable metal allowing the hinge to bend under stress. Cast iron composition is not malleable and an iron hinge will break or fracture with undue weight.

Inspection of the hinge is important in order to note any man-made alterations. Many different alterations are done to antique hardware including "extra" screw holes that can be quite difficult to see, cut-down or trimmed pieces to accommodate later door styles, and finally marriages. Look at the perimeter border on a bronze hinge. Does it seem equal? One-half of the hinge should be symmetrical to the other. Many times one-half will have additional screw holes not original to the piece (See Figure 1). This will happen when the original screws have become loose or worn. Rather than removing the screw and properly repairing the hole, someone will have modified the hinge by adding new screws. Victorian hinges that have been married are more difficult to spot. Certainly, if the design does not match correctly, the two halves are not original. However, many times the matching hinge halves became separated during the demolition process. Imagine a Victorian mansion being stripped of the hardware. It would be easy to find numerous hinges in a pile during door removal, but re-assembling that occurs at a later date allow for hinge halves to be mismatched, or married, to the incorrect half. From a utility view, this marriage of halves makes for a hinge that neither fits properly together, nor moves as freely as was intended for regular opening and closing of the door. Fortunately for the collector and savvy salvager, most high-end bronze

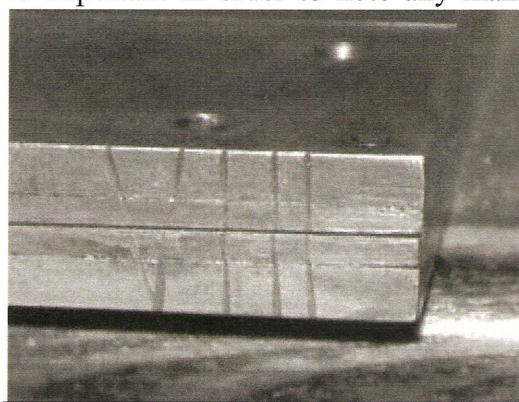


Fig.3

Victorian hinges were marked during the manufacturing to indicate the correct matching halves. The manner in which the manufacturer denoted this match varies. For example, Yale & Towne manufacturers marked their hinges with a corresponding number on either the top or bottom edge of the hinge (See Figure 2). If the number doesn't match, the hinge has been married (Figure 2). Many hinges will still fit together, but do not have a factory fit as intended. Russell & Erwin normally used

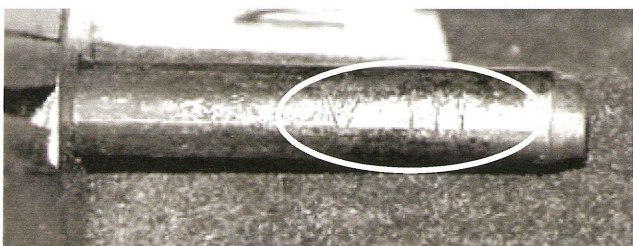


Fig. 4

inscribed lines to mark their wares (Figure 3). This particular type of mark is the most common identifier. In some instances, the center pin for the hinge will also be marked correspondingly (Figure 4). Corbin used both lines and numbers as identifiers for their hinges. The enamel hinge pictured has removable plates with

corresponding numbers to confirm identity as a correct unit (Figure 5). To some, a matter of marks to identify the hinge is not as significant as the beauty the piece provides, but from a collectible and value viewpoint, a correctly identified and matched hinge is more valuable than a married unit in much the same way that a furniture maker's mark adds value to a piece of furniture.

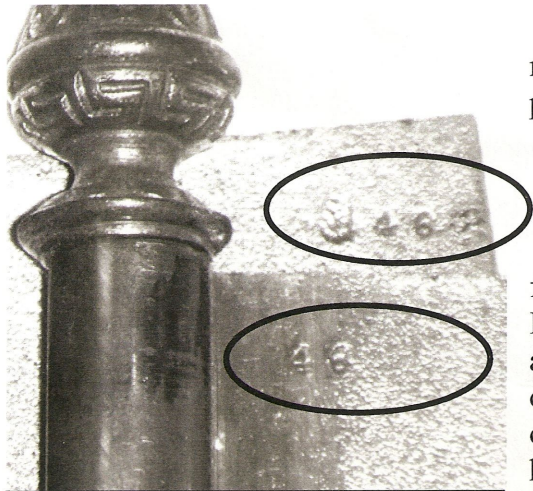


Fig. 5

through the removed finial hole. Doing it this way allows for easy removal of the hinge pin and will keep the pin finial intact to the pin itself.

Beware of purchasing a hinge, or any other bronze hardware piece, that has been polished. As a method of restoration, polishing is not acceptable in that it removes layers of metal and therefore design, lessening the clarity of the vintage manufacturer's work. Simple cleaning is appropriate and will avoid the loss of patina, design and ultimately value that polishing causes (see TDC No. 93, Jan-Feb. 1999).

I would encourage all collectors and salvagers to take your time when purchasing the Victorian hinge for your collection or for home restoration. With close examination and armed with information on what to look for in that vintage piece, an informed decision will make the purchase a treasure rather than an albatross. Happy Hunting!

Once you have purchased the hinge that fits your style and meets your criteria for collecting, it is good to work on cleaning the piece if desired. When cleaning a bronze hinge, it is important to remove the finial(s) and pin in order to remove all paint, corrosion and dirt. I have found the best method for removal to be as follows: Start with the single finial. If it will not unscrew, do not use a pair of pliers to force its removal. Doing so will scar the finial as the bronze metal is softer than the alloy of the pliers in use. Rather, place the finial between two pieces of soft wood such as pine, and clamp the item in a vise. Tighten the vise until the finial is compressed into the wood and is held tight. Turn the hinge half counterclockwise using leverage to unscrew easily. Once the finial has been removed, you can clamp the whole hinge and wood in the vise and using a punch, tap out the center pin



Fig. 6

A Further Explanation of "Handedness"

The "handedness" of a door is relevant only to pintel hinges, those with only two "knuckles" (the aligned, prominent cylinders through which a narrow rod or pin is passed to connect the two sides of a hinge), where the pin is solidly affixed to one half of the hinge, and the other half lifts up and off (Figure No. 6). The half of the hinge with the pin has to be affixed to the door frame, so the other half can be installed on the door and lifted off. The double-knuckled hinge has only one surface to bear the weight of the door, the top of the knuckle which has the pin.

THE BLACK RATTLERS

By Allen S. Joslyn



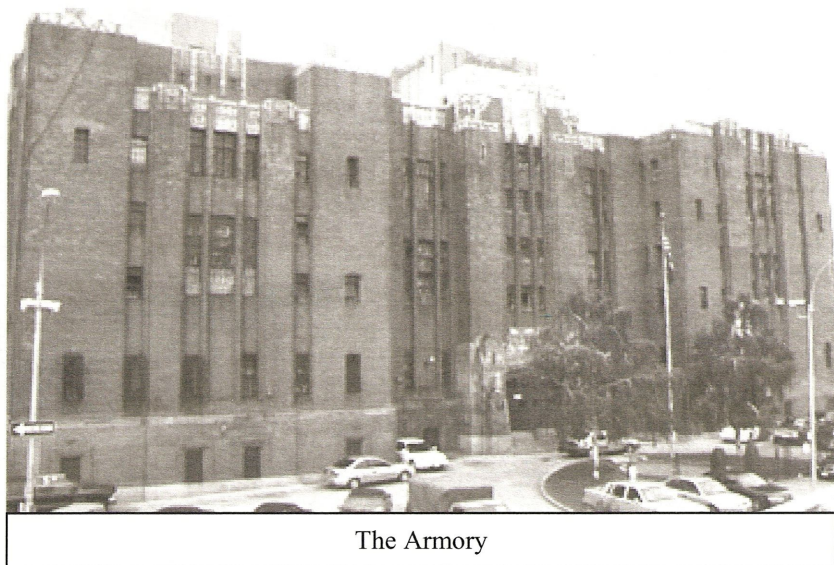
The knob puzzled me deeply. It had the number “369” and a coiled rattle snake. Was the “369” an address somewhere? But where? Did the snake signify some exclusive club, perhaps a speak-easy?

Fortunately, an enterprising seller on eBay suggested that the knob might come from the Harlem Armory of the 369th Regiment, located at 5th Avenue and 142nd Street in Manhattan, known as the “Black Rattlers”. A quick trip to Harlem confirmed the suggestion – the Regiment insignia shows the same decoration and the knobs are on the doors. And thereby hangs a tale of courage, racism and jazz, among other things.

To start with the Armory, it was erected in the 1920s and 1930s as the Regiment’s permanent residence. The front, or administration building, was erected in 1930-33, and features delightful Art Deco terra cotta parapets; there is also a medieval-style drill shed, constructed in 1920-1924. The building was added to the National Historical Register in 1991. The knobs are found in the administration building and thus undoubtedly date from the early 1930s.

That is about all I know about the knobs themselves. What the knobs commemorate, the 369th Regiment, is, however, a fascinating bit of history. It is depressing history insofar as it reflects attitudes in this county in years gone by, but the accomplishments of the 369th itself are all the more impressive given those attitudes.

Besides being known as the “Black Rattlers”, Germans who had the misfortune to cross their path honored them with the name “Blutlustige Schwartzmanner” (“bloodthirsty black men”). They also became known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”, and today a portion of the FDR Drive bears that name in their honor. They engaged in more days of combat during WWI than any other regiment in the United States Army, never gave up a square foot of territory nor had a member taken prisoner, except temporarily until they rescued him. About one-third of their number lost their lives in combat. The regiment as a whole was awarded the Croix de Guerre, and 171 of the officers and troops received individual Croix for bravery. It was not, however, until 1991 that the heroism of these troops was recognized by the American Government when the family of one black soldier was awarded the Congressional Metal of Honor. (It was not until 50 years after WWII that a black soldier in that war received that honor.).



The Armory

In November, 1918, they were the first American troops to reach the Rhine. Upon return to New York, on February 17, 1919, they led the parade from 23rd Street up Fifth Avenue to Harlem, with their band, led by James Reese Europe. Hundreds of thousands watched and cheered the troops. It was a giddy day. As the New York Times reported, "Thousands and thousands of rattlesnakes, the emblem of the 369th, each snake coiled, ready to strike, appeared everywhere, in buttonholes, in shop windows, and on banners carried by the crowd." Five days later, at band concert and reception given by the Regiment, the Acting Mayor of New York promised a new Armory.



Winners of the Croix de Guerre

A few months later the U.S. Army prohibited African-Americans from participating in the Bastille Day parade in Paris, further illustrating the profoundly conflicted attitude the Army had towards black soldiers in the First World War (and, indeed, in WWII). Once America entered the War, the need was for manpower, and a draft was established in May, 1917. Large numbers of blacks volunteered for the draft on the first day. Draft boards also generally favored drafting blacks over whites (a course of least resistance, particularly in the Midwest and south, where the War was not popular), but that left several questions: who was to lead the black soldiers, where were they to be trained, and what were they going to do? The Army establishment feared the Southern politicians and soldiers, believed that blacks

could not fight, and/or feared a post-war blowback from an "oppressed minority" if it were taught how to fight. The 369th Regiment, all of whom were volunteers, was to face the same questions.

First, some demographics. Following the turn of the century, masses of African-Americans migrated from the South to Northern cities, as a result of declining agriculture in the South (which boll weevil decimated), increased manpower needs in the industrial North, and a desire to escape the rigid strictures of Jim Crow. In New York City, Harlem became the destination of choice. Blacks were gaining political power in New York and a new pride. So the idea of a black regiment in the National Guard took root. Initially the movement was spearheaded by a black veteran of the Spanish-American war, but in 1916 the Governor of New York asked William Haywood, the white Public Service Commissioner, to recruit the regiment and to obtain support from prominent blacks. It was understood that the Regiment it would be commanded by Haywood and other white officers, but it also had a few black officers who had been trained at a special officers' training camp in Iowa.

There were serious reservations among the black community about fighting for a country where they were systematically denied educational opportunities and voting rights (in some areas), segregated, occasionally lynched, etc. W. E. B. DuBois successfully argued, however, that blacks should put aside those grievances for the time being and support the war effort, pointing out that after every war in which they fought, blacks made further progress.

The regiment was first organized as the 15th New York Infantry Regiment, but became the 369th when it was mustered into federal service after the United States' entry into WWI.

The 369th was assigned to training in Spartanburg, South Carolina, not a good move. The local white population was adamant that Northern black soldiers would be subject to the same rules as the local black population. As the Mayor said, in attacking the assignment, "they will probably expect to be treated like white men. I can say right here that they will not be treated as anything except Negroes. We shall treat them exactly as we treat our resident Negroes. This thing is like waiving a red flag in the face of a bull..." Tensions ran high, and there were several incidents, while they were defused, the threat of racial violence persisted. Less than two weeks after they arrived, the training of the soldiers of the 369th was cut short and they were shipped off to France, where they completed their training. Five black officers were in the Regiment when it departed; later the Army adopted a policy that black soldiers should be commanded only by all black or all white officers and those five were transferred.

When the Regiment it arrived in France, the Army was unsure what to do with it; while it dithered, the Regiment was assigned to labor service duties. Indeed, some 50,000 African-Americans in the U.S. Army were relegated to laborers in French ports. Only 19% of black soldiers were classified as combat troops while 57% of white troops were.

General Pershing and his officers didn't want black soldiers and the problems they believed they would bring (by law the Army was segregated, so blacks could not serve together with whites). Meanwhile the French Army had suffered mutinies and mass defections following massive casualties in trench warfare. So Pershing simply gave the division containing the 369th regiment to the French. As Colonel Hayward remarked, "Our great American general simply put the black orphan in a basket, set it on the doorstep of the French, pulled the bell and went away." (Pershing offered another black division to the British, who refused it.)

The 369th was issued French helmets and brown leather belts and pouches and went into the trenches as part of the 16th French Division. The French officers were considerably more accepting of black soldiers than the Americans, having served with African soldiers in the French colonies, and the 369th fitted in well. Secretly, however, the Americans instructed the French army that it could not deal with black officers "on the same plane as with the white American officers without deeply wounding the latter", to give only moderate praise to black troops and to keep them apart from white French women.

Within a month of joining the French army, two privates of the 369th, Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts, fought a famous engagement when they confronted and drove off at least two dozen German soldiers, killing four and wounding as many as a dozen. They were the first Americans to win the Croix de Guerre. The 369th was involved in fierce fighting in several offensives, including the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, and reaching the Rhine. They were the first troops to return home via New York.

Now for the jazz. Even before the War, James Reese Europe was a recognized jazz musician, having founded a musical society for black artists in New York and in 1914 he was the leader of one of the first jazz bands to perform in Carnegie Hall. His Society Orchestra was the first black band to record jazz (on the Victor label in 1913). Europe was one of the backers of the 369th, where he organized the regimental band. On arrival in France, the band was assigned to a 37 day good will tour throughout France. Europe not only organized the band; he also passed the Lieutenant's examination and was commissioned. He was one of the first African-American officers to lead troops into battle during the war, but was gassed. Upon recovery, his band was assigned to a concert in Paris, which proved so popular that it spent the next two months playing in various camps and hospitals. He and the Regimental band were more popular than other famous bands such as the British Grenadiers' Band and were credited with introducing the French and others to ragtime jazz. (The thing between Jerry Lewis and the French came later). On their return to the United States, Europe organized a national tour for the Hellfighters band; when he was murdered by a band

member, others (Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, each of whom went on to become famous) took over and completed the tour.



The Home-Coming Parade

The 369th has participated in every subsequent armed conflict, including Iraq, and its Armory bustles with soldiers.

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Photo - The Home-Coming Parade, The National Archives

Photo - Winners of the Croix de Guerre, The National Archives

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 trade one or two Union County, N.J. Knobs (O-105) (the unique Hanna Caldwell knob) in very good condition. Prepared to make cash adjustments based on relative values and conditions. Below is a listing of the doorknobs that I am interested in obtaining: Contact Bob Hallock at Hallockr1@earthlink.net or call me at 1-509-893-1942, leave a message

1. especially-seated stag (Connecticut Capitol)
2. M&W reaper (A-201)
3. M&W steam engine (A-202)
4. R&E geisha girl (A-304,305)
5. triple scallop shell
6. bronze dragonfly
7. R&E motherhood
8. Shushan airport
9. Chinese man
10. California state seal

In Memoriam



We are saddened to report the death on April 22, 2007 of Carlos Ruiz, an enthusiastic Convention attendee, collector and general good guy. He was born in Corinto, Nicaragua on November 4, 1923, one of 10 children. As a young adult, he migrated to San Francisco and was employed at Simmons Mattress. After 30 years he decided to be his own boss, specializing in dealing in authentic antique lighting, stained glass and hardware. He became known among antique dealers as "the glass man", because of his extensive collection and knowledge of stained glass. One can view his lighting fixtures in many Victorian and other buildings in San Francisco. He was also an early member of the ADCA (Number 52), and attended numerous conventions, his arrival always being warmly greeted by collectors anxious to make off with hardware. His son, James, continues his legacy at Ruiz Antique Lighting in Alameda, ruizlamp@alamedanet.net

Carlos was married to Blanca for 55 years, and had five children and nine grandchildren.

Later in his adult life,

he became a member of AA, dedicating his time to speaking and being a living example of AA's Principles. He will be sorely missed.

Lock Collectors Annual Show

The 35th Annual Lock Collectors show will be held at the Terryville High School gym in Terryville, CT on October 6, 2007

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