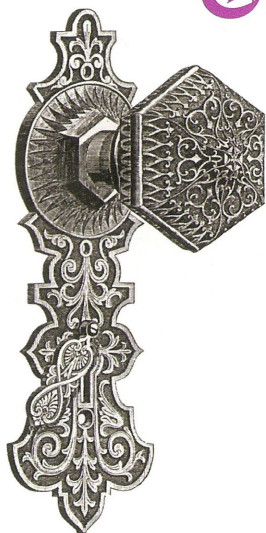


# The Doorknob Collector



Number 151

September - October 2008

**A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America**

*A Nonprofit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware*

## The "Arnie Award" Goes to the Nemecs The Significance of the "Arnie"

By Steve Rowe

In 1999, the Arnie Fredrick Committee was established by the ADCA. This Committee was formed to honor the memory of our co-founder, Arnie Fredrick, by honoring those within the club who have exhibited the same qualities which Arnie had. An "Arnie" award recipient is one who has many years of service within ADCA and has been instrumental in

helping to maintain the club's existence.

The first recipient of this prestigious award was Maud Eastwood at the 2000 Minneapolis convention. Since this first award there have been two other recipients with Len Blumin and Win Applegate being recognized in 2002 and 2005.

In 2008, the Arnie Award Committee decided it was again time to honor one of the ADCA leaders. This presentation was made at the Lisle convention by the award's first recipient, Maud Eastwood.



## *The Contributions of the Nemecs*

By Maud Eastwood

The 2008 recipients of the prestigious Arnie Fredrick Memorial Award were none other than Loretta and Ray Nemeč, former co-editors of the ADCA newsletter, *The Doorknob Collector*. This office was filled by the Nemecs for a period of 11 consecutive years as they edited, produced, and mailed a total of 68, 6 page issues dating from December 1986 through December of 1998. However, the successful accomplishment of this monumental feat was not the only basis for their selection for this great honor. (To the left Loretta and Ray receive their award).

Suffice to say that the ADCA was fortunate when the Nemeč's accepted the role as the club's editors, for their background qualifications and personal dedications proved them to be fully capable for the role. Both individuals were visionaries, both knowledgeable in the use and production of graphic material.

Loretta was a full-time employee of FERMI, The National Accelerator Laboratory at Batavia, Illinois, funded by the Office of Science in the Department of Energy. She has always been very museum-oriented. Ray, a founding member of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR, a cooperative of 6,700 members, spanning the globe), worked for Corn Products Co. International, where he handled production, planning and scheduling. In 1997,

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as editors, the Nemeecs were given an ADCA Merit Award plaque. But they did far more than that to further the aims and interests of the ADCA. As a founding member of the ADCA, in 1983, Loretta worked with Arnie Fredrick to compile the first convention brochure distributed. That same year, she hosted the Convention in Naperville. In 1984 Loretta was nominated Vice-President, serving perennially on the Board.

In succeeding years, Loretta developed an outstanding collection, portions of which she was to often display as she or she and Ray accepted invitations to display or present lectures. Further, Loretta was an involved, 'caring' individual, serving as a personal relationship ambassador at large, among the members.

Ray is a dedicated numbers man, facts and figures being his passion. He also served as Secretary-Treasurer and a member of the board until 1997. His stated goal as co-editor was "to give members a balanced newsletter that appealed to all levels of collectors through historical, informational, and educational features". The Blumin supplements came through his vision. As board member, his suggestions were pertinent and far reaching, such as looking forward to awarding of honoraries where deserved, to the giving of life memberships to aging founding members and service awards for outstanding services performed, all of which were later adopted.

Ray's Open Door columns featured lists and charts of members and their roles filled in the governance and running of the club, including statistics involved. In leaving office, Ray left a legacy of meticulously kept membership and financial records providing following statisticians a wealth of well-developed and kept records.

In view of my long acquaintance and working relationship with Loretta and Ray, I was honored to be asked to present the Arnie Fredrick Memorial Award to them at this, the 2008 ADCA convention, the second convention they have hosted.

## LOUIS SULLIVAN, ELLIS WAINWRIGHT AND THE ART OF BOODLING IN ST. LOUIS

*By Allen S. Joslyn*



Many architectural historians would nominate Louis Sullivan's Wainwright building as the first modern skyscraper, the foundation of a new school of architecture, whose descendents are the buildings of many of us work in or live in, or both. There is a lot of history behind this, and eventually we will get to the hardware.

### The Wainwright Building

Ellis Wainwright was a very rich brewer in St. Louis, the son of one of the founders of the Wainwright brewery. (Beer has never failed to turn a profit in St. Louis). He was also an aesthete, collecting paintings of the Barbizon school and travelling in Europe. He met Louis Sullivan, presumably in connection with the meetings of the Western Architects Society in St. Louis. Sullivan and Wainwright, both with highly trained artistic sensibilities, obviously hit it off.

Wainwright had a plot of land in downtown St. Louis and wanted to make a statement, as well, of course, as a profit. Sullivan was a talented architect, with a number of successes behind him, recently including the Auditorium Building in Chicago. And so the Wainwright building of 10 stories, a skyscraper in those days, was born.



The technology of skyscrapers was had just become available. The problem with building high was that if you built with masonry, the taller one built, the thicker the lower walls would have to be. The limitation of the cast-iron buildings (popular in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) was that cast iron was brittle - and if you ever were at the top of the World Trade Center and watched the water in you glass swish around when the winds were high, you would appreciate the problem. Moreover, such buildings were practically limited by the human aversion to climbing up stairs more than six stories.



Ornamental cross pieces and the top port holes on the Wainwright Building

In 1872 the pneumatic elevator was patented. Structural steel was also developed. This made possible the modern skyscraper, which was supported, not by its walls, but by its internal steel structure. The exterior of the building, rather than supporting the building, was hung on that internal steel structure.

Moreover, the economics were there. The problem was the aesthetics. Architects knew how to design low, horizontal buildings, but what do you do with buildings that are taller than wider?

So by the mid-1880s, the technology of the modern skyscraper was present (even if there was a shortage of

structural steel). One approach was to treat the building as a series of layers, and every few floors to change the style, which produced some striking – perhaps the word is too strong – monstrosities, such as the Women’s Temple in Chicago. Other architects clung to a massive stone or masonry style, even if there was a steel structure inside.



Women’s Temple, Chicago

Sullivan, however, recognized that the new type of building needed to emphasize what it was – vertical. The Wainwright did so. After the first two floors, the base, as it were, a simple vertical took over, rising to the tenth floor. The vertical columns emphasized the steel columns inside the building which supported it. Between the verticals were recessed richly ornamented cross-pieces that did not support anything. (see top picture)

Now to the economics of the building – by careful planning, some 53% of the space in the building was rentable, a very high figure, given the necessity of halls, lavatories and various mechanical systems. Of course, over the following years, the building was surpassed, fell into gentle decline, and was proposed to be demolished. Fortunately a public outcry ensued, the National Trust For Historic Preservation bought it, and it was then acquired by the State of Missouri for governmental offices. The building was completely restored.

The tenth floor was even more richly ornamented, with port-hole windows. Since the tenth floor was chiefly devoted to mechanical systems, such as returns for the heating system, not much light was required. It provided, visually, a visual cap for the vertical thrust of the lower floors.

Incidentally, the draftsman for the plans for the Wainwright was Frank Lloyd Wright, the chief designer at the time for Sullivan. Wright recounted that Sullivan went out for a long walk to consider the design problem, then rushed back in a high state of elation, sketched the



Building Decoration

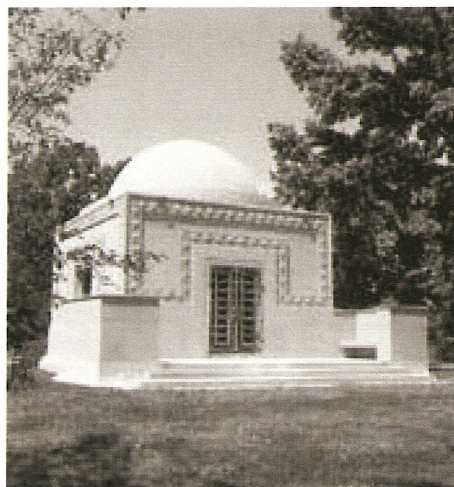


outlines of the building in 3 minutes. Wright was awe-struck. "This was the great Louis Sullivan. The skyscraper as a new thing beneath the sun ... with virtue, individuality, beauty all its own, as the tall building was born."

## The Wainwright Tomb

The Wainwright building was completed in 1892. On April 15, 1891, at the age of 24, Ellis Wainwright's wife, Charlotte Dickson Wainwright, suddenly died of peritonitis. A few days earlier she had appeared at the Grand Opera House "looking radiant and full of health". "She was described as being the most beautiful woman in St. Louis and as one of the social lights. As her husband is very rich, he enhanced her loveliness by exquisite French costumes and by jewels of every description."

One of her parties was described in an article entitled "Representative Society Ladies of the West" in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper as follows (Ed: please excuse the digression, but I love its description of the life of the rich in the Victorian era, limited, of course, to those who were):



*"On last Christmas day an elegant afternoon reception was given by Ms. Wainwright in compliment to her pretty young friends, Miss Maria Hopkins and Miss Clara Sherwood. The interior, hung with fine silken draperies of Oriental manufacture, was transfigured by the radiance of silver lamps and myriads of tapers, enshrined in garlands of roses, while Christmas decorations, wreaths of club-pine mingled with the red berries and polished leaves of the holly and the velvety crimson petals of the poinsettia, ornamented every room of the house. In the large open fireplace of the square medieval hall sat a beautiful boy, on unlighted logs just as if he had just descended from the heights above. He was dressed as Kris Kringle, and, from a sack, at his side, gave to each of the guests, as they entered, a pretty souvenir of some kind, such as a bonnbornnière, a tiny vase, a scarf-pin, a mounchoir case, etc. The flower of St. Louis society was invited, and gentlemen as well as ladies were present. Through the rooms brilliant with lights and perfumed hundreds of flowers, the fair chatelaine, en grande tenue, moved like a beautiful picture, in a Paris gown of opalescent brocade with graceful demitrain, the low-cut bodice trimmed with a parcement of opaline crystals and a snowy white lace. About her snowy throat she wore a necklace of fine-pearls, clasped with diamonds."*

Ellis Wainwright retained Louis Sullivan to design a mausoleum for Charlotte and himself in the Bellefontaine cemetery, St. Louis. The result was a little gem, based on Sullivan's work on synagogues, influenced by Islamic-Jewish designs from medieval Spain, more specifically the North African quibba, an Islamic cubic one-room building surmounted by a dome and often used as a tomb. Sullivan was also retained to design a house for Wainwright in 1901, but it was never built.

## Boodling In St. Louis

No, whatever you might have thought it referred to, "boodling" was the term used a century ago to refer to municipal corruption. If you wanted permission from the city to install a railroad line to your factory, or to do anything else that the city could stop, it cost. Even more importantly, if you wanted to sell supplies to the city – of whatever quality and regardless of the price – it cost money, unless, of course, you were one of the inside group of public officials, in which event it was very profitable. And if you wanted city permission to build a street car line, it cost even more money.

St. Louis may not have been the worst in this respect – Lincoln Steffans said that honor belonged to Philadelphia, but others favored St. Louis – but it certainly was right up there. It had a boss, Col. Edward R. Butler, and he had a following, who, putting partisanship aside, came from both parties, and who controlled municipal government. They were for sale.



But the municipal leaders made a mistake. There was a rising disquiet among the populace, which the leaders thought they could assuage by electing an outsider, Joseph H. Folk, a civil lawyer, to be the Circuit Attorney (equivalent to District Attorney). He was reluctant – he did have a good private practice, after all. After much persuasion, he eventually acquiesced, but stipulated that if elected, he would do his duty with no influence from others. He was elected, with many votes from “repeaters” who were bused from voting booth to voting booth. He took office on January 1, 1901– and promptly brought criminal charges against a number of the repeaters. He turned out to be not a wise choice.

From then on, all sorts of inducements were offered to Mr. Folk to go easy, but nothing worked. As Col. Butler exclaimed after one fruitless meeting, “D—m Joel, he thinks he’s the whole thing as Circuit Attorney”, and warned his followers to beware of Folk. (Don’t worry, kids, we will get to hardware shortly).

What broke the ring was the Suburban Railroad caper. That enterprise wanted a franchise to build a street car line, and went about trying to get it. It offered a deal to Col. Butler, but Butler held out for more, and so the company started bribing the legislators in the “combine” directly, bypassing Butler. A \$135,000 deposit was made in two safety deposit boxes, \$75,000 for the combine in the House of Delegates, and \$60,000 for those in City Council. Each box required two keys to open it, one being held by a representative of Suburban Railroad, the other by the leaders of the combines in the two respective bodies. The boxes were to be opened when the franchise was approved. Both bodies approved the franchise, but it was blocked by an injunction (or perhaps a mayoral veto, the record is not clear). An impasse ensued. Suburban wouldn’t open the boxes because it had not gotten its franchise; the combines said they had lived up to their part of the bargain, and would not open the boxes for Suburban to retrieve its cash. A short note appeared in a newspaper that a large sum of money had been placed in a bank for the purpose of bribing certain Assemblymen to secure the passage of a street railroad ordinance. (It may have been purposely leaked by one of the combines to pressure Suburban). Folk’s attention was called to it, and surmising that it involved the Suburban Railroad proposal, he started issuing Grand Jury subpoenas. First he demanded that the depository bank open the boxes. It took the threat of an indictment of the Bank president and 10 minutes of his consulting the Bank’s attorney to open the boxes, wherein was found, respectively, \$75,000 and \$60,000. More subpoenas went out, and when one of the recipients fainted upon receipt, Folk knew he had a basis to bluff. He sent for the recipient’s lawyer and offered his client the choice of being a witness before a grand jury or a defendant. The client decided to be a witness, and the ball of string started to unwind. Eventually Folk obtained convictions of 13 people, including Col. Butler, and suffered only one acquittal. One of the boodlers confessed in 1904 that boodling had been going on for the last quarter of a century and “there is hardly a corporation in the City of St. Louis of \$250,000 and over, that has not either been held up for bribe money or bought official action from the combine in the House of Delegates.”



Front Door handle on the Wainwright Building

Ellis Wainwright was a director of the Suburban Railroad, and had endorsed a note to borrow the funds to be used for bribes, undoubtedly not his maiden voyage in corruption. The President of Suburban Railroad, Charles H. Turner, testified against him before the Grand Jury and Wainwright was indicted. But he couldn’t be found, not in St. Louis, or in New York, where inquiries were made of his clubs, the Union League and the Lambs Club, nor in various hotels such as the Waldorf-Astoria. In fact, he was touring Egypt when word of his indictment reached him. He was not so silly as to return to St. Louis - rather he decamped to Paris and Monte Carlo, where over the years he regularly entertained touring American millionaires. Extradition was attempted, but since bribery was not listed as an extraditable offense under the treaties with France, it failed.

By 1906, Charles H. Turner had died, depriving the State of its only witness against Wainwright, and friends thought he was about to return to St. Louis. He eventually did so in 1911, based on advice of his counsel. The then-County Attorney concluded that Turner’s Grand Jury testimony could not be used in a trial against Wainwright, and dismissed the indictment for lack of evidence. Wainwright moved back to New York until 1922



when he returned to St. Louis and died in 1924 at the age of 74. He left most of his estate, said to be near a million dollars, to Washington University and other charities. He is buried next to Charlotte in the Wainwright tomb (although there is no name on the tomb). He is best remembered as a patron of impeccable taste, and a guy who knew when to stay in Paris.

Based on his campaign against boodling in St. Louis, Mr. Folk went on to be Governor of Missouri, and thereafter Chief Counsel for the Interstate Commerce Commission (where he continued his prosecutorial activities), Solicitor for the State Department, and a highly respected international lawyer. In the latter capacity, he became general counsel for Egypt in its fight against British control over Egypt, and represented Peru in a dispute with Chile. He was mentioned as a possible Democratic Presidential nominee in several election cycles. He died in 1923 at the age of 54.

## The Hardware

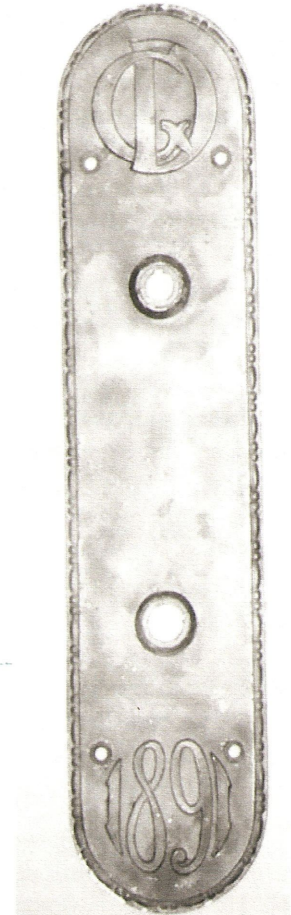
The design of the hardware on the Wainwright building is generally credited to Louis Sullivan or at least his firm, Alder and Sullivan. I have some doubts. Tim Samuelson (a leading Sullivan expert who we had the joy of meeting in Chicago this summer when we toured the Cultural Center) believes that the Wainwright hardware is clearly from Adler and Sullivan, although he has his doubts as to the degree of Sullivan's participation in the interior Wainwright hardware.

There are two designs of hardware on the Wainwright. There are the large door handles on the main doors, and the smaller hardware on the interior doors. The large door handles could clearly be Sullivan, given the elaborate vegetative scrollwork. The fact that the complex design is confined to the top and bottom, connected by an unembellished plate in between, is consistent with the design of the door plate on the St. Nicholas. There is no reason to doubt which firm designed it.

But the smaller Wainwright hardware is problematic. All it has is the monogram which appears on the door handles, and the date "1891". That date, together with a monogram, also appears on the doorplate for St. Louis's Globe Democrat, so it was presumably a design element that Yale & Towne was promoting at the time. The Wainwright indoor doorplate and knob are supposedly the standard "Bonn" pattern from Yale & Towne. Y&T Catalogue No. 20 (1910), p. 685. The Globe Democrat plate appears to be the "Sparta" design, id. 546. So the only element unique to the Wainwright indoor hardware is the monogram, hardly enough to attribute the whole design to Adler & Sullivan. Moreover, and most importantly, there is nothing in the interior hardware that looks like Sullivan's work, no elaborate vegetative or other designs, no flourish, and no pizzazz. Just a monogram.

While there is a dearth of authority as to which hardware designs Sullivan himself participated in, given his rigorous standards (and personality), I doubt that he would have permitted his subordinates to design anything which was mundane.

My speculation is as follows. Adler & Sullivan designed the front door handles, but for whatever reason (perhaps to save money, or perhaps interior hardware was not considered part of the showcase), Yale & Towne designed the interior hardware, using stock designs and the monogram. Given the state of the documentation, we will never know.





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Thanks to Suttonhoo for Flickr pictures of Wainwright door and door handle. See flickr@suttonhoo. Thanks to Connie Nisinger for the picture of the tomb.

## **In Memoriam**

**Leonard Empric** (#419) died on May 18, 2008. He was the beloved husband of Alice; devoted father of Col. Bruce Empric, Mark Empric, Lynn Marie Smith, Leigh Ann Laska and Mary Beth Masna; and the loving grandfather of Sarah, Julia, Meggan, Myranda, late Emma, Taylor, Luke and Matthew.

Leonard had been a member of the ADCA since 1995. We enjoyed meeting him at the Buffalo convention. He had many interests beyond collecting doorknobs. He was a Navy Veteran of the Korean War, a member of the Matthew Glab Post #1477, American Doorknob Collectors of America and the Adam Plewacki Post #799 Stamp Society. There is an article about him in the July/August issue of Stamp Insider magazine on page 20. Our condolences go out to his family.



## **The Doorknob Exchange**

Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade, or wanted at no charge.



## Meet Your ADCA Board Members

This is the first in a series. We would like all our members to know a little about who is on the ADCA board so we asked them a couple of silly questions like "What is your favorite knob?" We all know that you really can't answer that because we love them all. But here is **Maude Eastwood's** answers.



Maude Eastwood (#2)

Eddyville, OR

E-Mail: Meastwood@Peak.org



I became interested in the variety of doorknobs as a teenager, following leaving my childhood country home to continue my life in more populated areas within my state. There, I was to view the door hardware of grander dwellings as well as types found on business and public buildings. I was intrigued. Such an array of artistically executed utilitarian objects produced in more than one medium. I was inspired to research their background. All the more so in the 1970s as historic buildings were being demolished and replaced and their irreplaceable hardware consigned to land fills or melted for scrap.

The fruits of my research resulted in publishing books on the subject of antique door hardware. The first, *The Antique Doorknob*, pub.1976, was accepted by the American Library Association for review in Books In Print. The second, *Antique Door Hardware, Knobs & Accessories*, pub. in 1982. A 36 page revised supplement to the *Antique Door Hardware*, paper bound, was published in 1992. The third: *150 Years of Builders' Hardware*, published in 1994.

I was fortunate in contacting other like-minded individuals, nationwide, who made available helpful manufacturers' catalogues and also unusual specimen.

With Walt McAninch, DAHC, author of *The Builders Hardware Industry 1830s To 1990s*, I served as Research Consultant. It was published in 1996.

I started my collection around 1955. Collecting physical specimens for me took a back seat to researching, whether for company or the technology involved. I collected differing specimen to broaden my research, and I started collecting in order to save this "endangered specie".

To collect; to own was secondary. Were I to count all pieces in my collection, set screws to spindles to locks to lock trim to auxiliary pieces, I probably have one of the largest collections, but that would not win it any Brownie points in the eyes of the collector of the rare and "name" specimen.

My favorite knob? A nicely designed and cast brass knob from my sister's 1930s home in Portland (pictured at left), being the first metal knob I noticed with ornamentation--that at the age of 15. This is a Sager knob of "Flanders" design of the Flemish Renaissance Period and illustrated in Sager's 1937 catalog.

*Our members come from diverse backgrounds. Maude made her living for many years as a hairdresser. She proves that you don't have to be an expert to do research or to appreciate beautiful hardware. She **became** an expert and great asset to us all because of her research and interest.*



# THOUGHTS OF A FIRST-TIME CONVENTION ATTENDEE

*By Frank Dvorak*

I attended my first ADCA convention this year. It was a great event. This confirmed that I was not alone in my appreciation of fine builder's hardware. I was amazed at the knowledge and extensive collections of the other members. Everyone was very friendly and easy to talk with. We were not too obsessed with hardware – were we? I was happy to see the generosity of club members towards our youngest new member getting started on his collection.

Prior to the convention, I assumed a good size collection might be 300 to 400 knobs. I was off by a factor of 10. I think I brought over 200 knobs to the convention. It was wonderful to see so many doorknobs, plates, bells, etc.

The auction was fun. More and more items were added to the kitchen table until it was packed full of this and that. I was definitely into the spirit. Prices were quite reasonable on many items. I am not sure how I will use all my purchases yet, but I guess that means I have become a collector. I look forward to examining them and trying a little cleanup.

I was pleased to obtain some pieces in the patterns in old houses I restored as both extra parts for use and remembrances of past homes. Next time I am in St. Joseph I will look and touch the Y & T Holly hardware adorning several interior doors of one such house, and remember how I had to discover the jam nut for adjusting the fit of the knob on the shaft, and wonder if I should have gone ahead and purchased an extra set at the convention. These are things to ponder when the notice for the next convention arrives.

Some have asked about the Noah's Ark building in St. Charles, Missouri. It has been demolished after sitting vacant for several years. A commercial complex is to be built on the site starting next year. Some of the animal figures were saved and are to be reused in the new development.

## ADCA Tote Bag For Sale

This year at the Convention in Lisle, IL, black cloth bags were offered with Antique Doorknob Collectors of America printed in white. The bags measure 14 x 15 inches. I use mine to carry curriculum to a class I teach. They are great to keep in your car for simple shopping and you can go "green" with this black bag as well. Cost is \$3.00 each.

Send orders to ADCA, PO Box 31, Chatham, NJ 07928-0031



### ***36th Annual Lock Collection Show***

#### **ANTIQUE PADLOCK AND HARDWARE SHOW**

Saturday, October 11th, 2008 - 9am - 4pm  
Terryville High School ~ Terryville, CT

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Let us know of your displays or talks so we  
 can post it on our Calendar of Events  
[www.AntiqueDoorknobs.org](http://www.AntiqueDoorknobs.org)

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