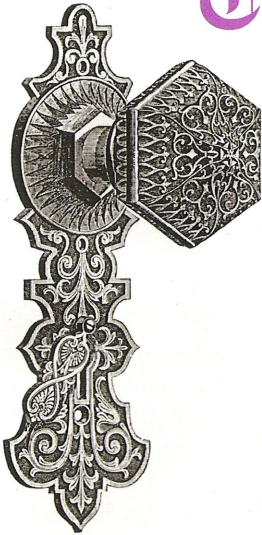


The Doorknob Collector



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THE CORN BELT BANK

By Allen S. Joslyn

In 1989 Ardythe Leaders wrote an article in TDC (#38) illustrating this knob and asked whether anyone had any information on it. It took only 20 years to get the answer: it is from the Corn Belt Bank of Bloomington, Illinois, and is certainly rare. What makes it so aesthetically pleasing is its almost unique use of two metals on one knob, and the simplicity of its design. The bronze part is riveted into the iron knob. There is also an entirely bronze version. The history of this knob begins and ends with fires.

The first fire is a story of resurrection. Just after midnight, June 19, 1900, a Bloomington patrolman noticed flames on the second story of a laundry. Firefighting efforts failed, due in part to antiquated firefighting equipment and low water pressure. Firefighting assistance arrived from Peoria and Springfield about 5 a.m. by special train. The most substantial buildings, such as the five-story and supposedly fireproof Griesheim Building and the County Courthouse, were no match for the conflagration. People saved what they could, including the residents of the Windsor Hotel, who saved the whiskey bottles by prompt action. By 8:00 a.m. 4 ½ blocks of the downtown were smoking ruins, including the Corn Belt Bank. Currency in its safe was, however, not damaged, although it required the services of a professional (but legit) safecracker to open it.

Bloomington responded as one would expect of the Midwest – it rebuilt, bigger, better and very fast. The new Griesheim building was completed only 175 days after the fire. A new Court House was built in the center of a new square. The Corn Belt Bank purchased the site of Adam's Ark, a local cigar store and hangout, and in 1901 erected a beautiful six story building.

The building was designed by George Miller, a Bloomington architect who apprenticed in Columbus and Chicago. Corn was a motif of the building, from the ears of corn on the façade on the top of the first floor to the name in raised letters (later chiseled off). The first floor interior was classic bank marble and grilles.



**ADCA CONVENTION:
JULY 20-23, 2010
BALTIMORE!**

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The Corn Belt Bank survived the Depression intact, as it did WWI, WWII and the 1950s. Nothing exciting, and only one office. By 1961, however, the Bank moved its offices out of the building and in 1985 was acquired by another bank. Other firms moved in and out of the building. In the mid-1990s, it suffered two destructive fires. In rebuilding and converting the building, the doors (and knobs) were donated to a local non-profit salvage warehouse. All the banking equipment (teller's booths, etc.) was removed from the first floor and it is now rented out. The downtown area, including this building, is in an historic district.

There was one other "Corn Belt Bank", but it had no connection to the Bloomington one. The Corn Belt Bank and Trust Company of Pittsfield, IL. (with two branches) was founded in 1946 and taken over by the FDIC in 2009.



The Bloomington building itself is still remarkable, and the knobs are fantastic. The door-plate, however, was rather plain, as are the plates for a number of other emblematic knobs. The consensus view those who count (Maud and Len) is that the knobs were made by Yale & Towne, since it is the only firm known to use a chuck mechanism to attach the knobs to their shanks; it works like a drill chuck, where screwing down the chuck wedges the drill in. Y&T began using that design in about 1881, but by 1904 few customers ordered it. It appears to have made a comeback, and was one of the three spindles illustrated in Y&T's 1929 catalogue.

Thanks To: Andy Streez, ADCA # 838 from Bloomington; Bill Kemp, Librarian/Archivist, and Susan Hartzold, Curator, of the McLean County Historical Society, and the materials Bill provided, including his "Bloomington's 'Great Fire'" from the Pantagraph (Bloomington's local newspaper) of June 15, 2008; photograph by Notarealphotographer on Flickr; telephone interview with Paul Brown, the current owner; Henry B. Towne, Locks & Hardware (1904), p. 171.

A Further Note on Newman & Capron, and Tappan & Haggart

Reviewing A. G. Newman's 1876 catalogue adds a few facts about the Brooklyn Historical Society's hardware. First, while title page of the catalogue stated that it was issued by A. G. Newman, the interior pages bear the header "Newman & Capron", further illustrating that it was all one firm, operating under two interchangeable names. Second, the catalogue carries as stock items the BHS push plate and lock, but the knob and escutcheon certainly were specially designed for the Society, especially as they carry two symbols of knowledge, an owl and a lamp. Third, the catalogue recites that the firm has purchased the entire stock of Tappan & Haggart's locks and hardware, their patterns and the exclusive right to manufacture and sell their goods. So apparently Tappan & Haggart was a substantial firm on its own, and may have supplied Newman & Capron before its purchase.

The Doorknob Convention Comes to Baltimore

By Steve Hannum

Quoth the Raven, "Baltimore"

This year Baltimore is celebrating the 200th anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allen Poe. Poe was a Baltimore resident from 1831 to 1835 and is buried there (and symbolically re-buried in 2009, with a lot more attention than his first burial got). He is just one of the many men and women who formed the fabric and culture of Baltimore. You can see the city they created when you come to Baltimore, July 20 - 23, 2010.

Located near the head of the Chesapeake bay, Baltimore is named after Lord Baltimore (Cecilius Calvert), who was the first Proprietary Governor of the Province of Maryland. The port of Baltimore has been important since colonial times. During the War of 1812 the British attack on Fort McHenry guarding the harbor was memorialized by Francis Scott Key in "The Star-Spangled Banner".

With the construction of the National Road (now US 40) and the railroads Baltimore became a major a major shipping and manufacturing center. Being 200 miles closer to the heartland than any other port and with access to major land routes, Baltimore became a major link for the movement of farm products from the mid-west and manufactured goods from the east and the world. It was also the port of entry for a large number of immigrants, some of whom stayed to form some Baltimore's ethnic neighborhoods.

The architecture of Baltimore changed dramatically after the great Baltimore fire. On February 7, 1904 the fire destroyed over 1,500 buildings in 30 hours and forced most of the city then existing to rebuild. The new building codes required brick or masonry construction. As a result Baltimore is known for its many row houses. The wealth that came with the railroads and manufacturing is also reflected in the architecture, some of which survived the great fire and others that were built to replace those lost.

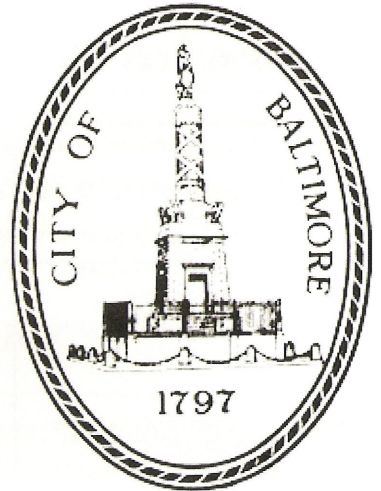


As with many cities, downtown Baltimore went into decline. In the 1980's redevelopment began at the Inner Harbor. This area now has a convention center, Harborplace, a retail and restaurant complex, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Oriole Park at Camden Yards and the M&T Bank Stadium.

Up the hill from the Inner Harbor is the Mount Vernon area, home to the first monument to George Washington and the historic district. Baltimore also has the Battle Memorial, which commemorates the Battle of Baltimore and those who died in September, 1814 during the War of 1812. This Memorial is on the seal of the City of Baltimore, and more importantly to doorknobers, is shown on one of the rarest of the R&E knobs.

You can walk this area and see a lot of interesting hardware. Across from the Inner Harbor is Harbor East containing Little Italy and Fells point areas. Across from Fells point is Locust point, the location of Fort McHenry National Monument. A water taxi system can get you to these places on the harbor.

The convention will be at the Holiday Inn BWI (www.hi-bwi.com) located near the Baltimore Washington airport. The hotel has shuttle service to the airport, then light rail to downtown Baltimore and to the Amtrak train to Washington, Union Station, making it convenient to both Washington and Baltimore. Annapolis is only a short drive away. Come early and stay after the convention to see the many sights this area has to offer.



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