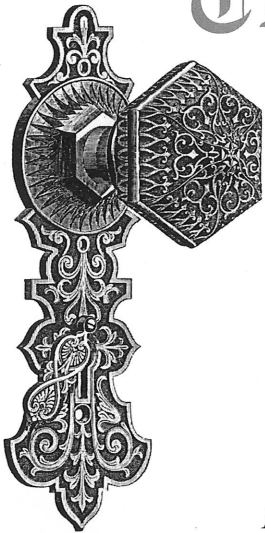


# The Doorknob Collector



Number 163

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

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

## BRONZE HARDWARE IN 1869

*Into By Allen Joslyn*

*We reprint below an article that appeared in the Architectural Review in May, 1869 (reprinted as a single volume in 1871). The most immediately interesting part of the article is the illustration of the hardware of 1869 (pg 4). The first three knobs on the top row are Russell & Erwin, and at least one of them (No. 3) exists in copper-clad lead, later appearing in solid bronze. The hinge to the right in the bottom row is from P. and F. Corbin (DP 3354). I assume the remaining pieces can be identified by other collectors. The article itself describes how copper hardware was produced by electroplating (“electrotype”) suggesting that the copper cladding of doorknobs in that era was produced in that manner. It also raises the question of who were “Messrs. Smith & Butler” and all sorts of other interesting questions. We all extend our sympathy, posthumously, to the mistresses of such fine houses, burdened as their lives seem to have been. Imagine, if you can, being too busy to attend to door knobs!”*

### BRONZE DOOR-KNOBS

Amongst the many improvements introduced, to beautify and adorn the better class of city dwellings and stores, COPPER-BRONZE DOOR-FURNITURE occupies a noticeable place.

It is presented in a number of styles for door-knobs: the Medallion, Scroll, Gothic, and the Cross, or “T,” Handle; and there is a variety of Key Escutcheons, connected and otherwise, for Front, Vestibule, and Parlor-Sliding, or Swinging, Doors. There are also many patterns of Hinges, Bell-Pulls, Shutter-Bars, Sash-Lifts, Bell-Levers and Sash-Fastenings.

Electrotype Copper-Bronze requires no cleaning. The action of the atmosphere and the lapse of time tend only to heighten the effect aimed at in their manufacture; and whilst the cost is less than that of silver plating, the durability is greater; for the sheet of bronze, thrown into the mould by the battery, is thicker by many times, than the sheet of silver used in silver-plating.

Silver-plating, still preferred by some, contrasts finely with a walnut door; but it must be cleaned; and it is impossible to clean the silver without discoloring the door in the vicinity of the mountings.

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or see addresses on pg 6

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Copper-bronze door-furniture would be nothing without walnut doors; and much as we admire copper-bronze, we must not lose sight of Walnut. Many of the doors and jambs made of this material are marvels of beauty in style, proportion, and finish. Architects have exercised their utmost skill, and joiners theirs, to produce some of the doors that have been hung in this city during the past season. There are residences in which the front, vestibule, and parlor doors, with their casings and hangings, have cost enough to build a complete dwelling, which the workman, who made the doors, would think very respectable and comfortable.

Hard, close-grained walnut is the kind for doors. It is costly to have them made of carefully-selected wood; but fine doors are an important part of a fine house.

"Well supplied with all the modern conveniences, is the usual end of all recommendations and advertisements of messages [sic] for sale or to let. The old style was: "Substantially built, dry cellar, and good water convenient." A home, with "modern conveniences," means one built substantially enough to last until the fashion changes, or encroaching business requires alteration, or removal, of the tenement, with a dry cellar, kept dry by a large furnace or two, no stint of coal, good water, so convenient as to be found, both hot and cold, in almost every room in the building, and many other things not dreamed of by the house owners or property agents of the olden time, such as gas, baths, water-closets, dumb-waters [sic], speaking-tubes and bells, until it is a LIVING MADE VERY EASY, so far as the pile is concerned, by the combined ingenuity and labor of the architect, the builder, and their host of attendant satellites.

The mistress of one of these fine mansions hardly looks at her own premises; for everything must be kept in perfect order, without any apparent care on her part; and, with her bell and speaking tube, from her boudoir, or dressing-room, to the servants' hall, she gives her orders for the day, herself neither seeing nor being seen. And, indeed, between receiving and making calls, dressing, dining, napping, and the opera or concert, there is left her but little time, and less thought, for the cares of a household. It is under these circumstances, that copper-bronze and walnut are invaluable improvements for the great world: -- they are the most recent and highest styles, and kept from the appearance of soil and tarnish with the least labor.

Electrotype, copper-bronze door-furniture, and indeed, all electrotyping, arose in this way: About forty years ago, the discovery was made simultaneously in Italy, Russia, and England, that two pure metals, holding within themselves different degrees of electricity, if made to touch each other at one end, with a wet cloth between them, would exchange electricity; and, if they were then united by metal at the other end, a complete circuit of electricity would be formed.

Subsequently, the discovery was made that, if this circuit were interrupted by any pure metal, that metal would be dissolved; and, at the opposite electric pole, the dissolved infinitesimal atoms would be recrystallized into solid metal.

A practical use was soon made of these two discoveries. Sheets of gold or silver were dissolved at one electric pole, in a circuit passing through acid water instead of a wet cloth; and the gold and silver was, at the other pole, spread over the surface of works of art or daily use, thus constituting the process of electro-gilding and electro-silvering, or electroplating.

Copper was, in the same manner, spread (technically, deposited) over the wax impression of a form of types; and, in a few hours, a perfect copy of the types was procured. Copies of medals and medallion figures were

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also made by the same process.

About twenty years since, wood-cuts, and the pages of books, began to be thus copied for the trade, in England, France, and the United States. To-day the United States excel [sic] all other countries, in this branch of electrotyping, both in improved apparatus, and in its general use.

The more solid electrotypes, called copper-bronzed, have been used in Europe for several years. Antique bas reliefs have been multiplied for wall pictures, for panel ornaments in doors and in pieces of furniture. Hundreds of architectural ornaments are made in the bronze, bronze-gilt and oxidized silver styles. In Paris, several imperial palaces are ornamented with these bronzes, in inside walls, ceilings, doors, door-knobs, stair-railing, and household furniture – in fact, throughout.

In the United States, copper-bronze furniture ornaments, consisting of medallion heads and grouped figures, caryatides, and rosettes, were introduced into trade, about five years ago, by an enterprising firm in New York, and was first viewed by many as a doubtful venture. Like other experiments, that of the introduction of bronzes was expensive; and, at first, unremunerative; but such has been the progress of taste and expansion of fashion for these things, that, to-day, the popular demand justifies the creation of new models.

As it costs no more to electrotype and elegant design than to duplicate a coarse pattern, these manufactures find their interest to consist in frequently making a necessarily large initial outlay for tasteful models. They thus constantly reproduce, by the battery, all those beautiful, artistic touches, which, upon brass or bronze castings, only costly hand-labor can create.

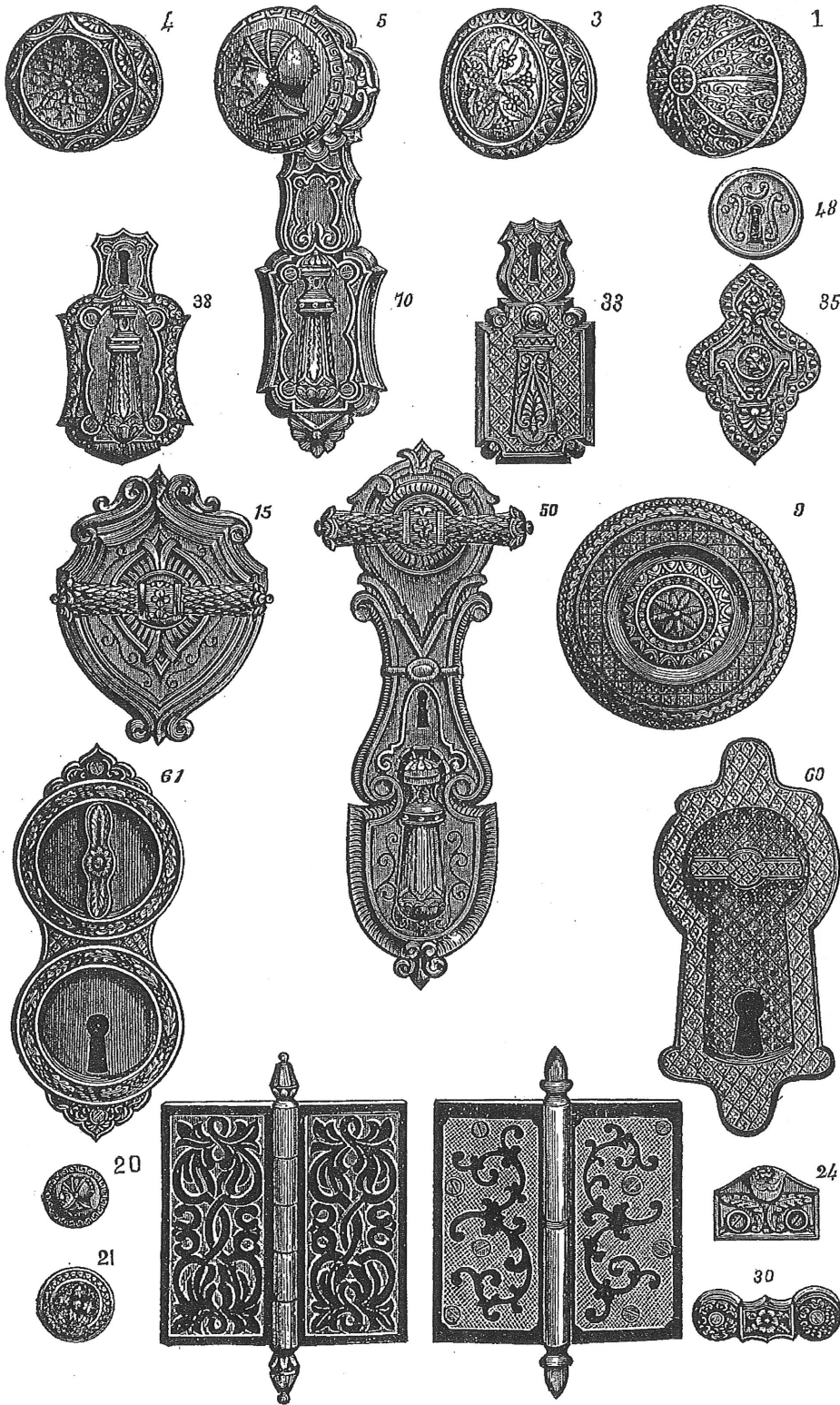
The frequent visits of Americans to the capitals of Europe, tends [sic] to introduce among us whatever is really useful and true, in European taste, which may, with advantage, be Americanized. Prominent, among the educated and refined of the Old World, is the admiration of bronzes, either in the reproduction of antique subjects, or the efforts of the highest modern skill; and there is no better sign of American development than the steady growth of the same cultivated and refined partiality here for bronze articles of vertu [sic].

Copper-bronze, door-lock furniture has won for itself an assured place in public favor. It is elegant in design and very durable, every article bearing a warrantee. The first set of this furniture applied to a door in this city, was put on, some three years and a half since, and may yet be seen in good order. Many doors, of handsome residences here, have since been furnished with these ornamental bronzes, which give continued satisfaction.

Architects recommend these mountings; and they are entering largely into specifications for dwelling-houses and public edifices. The Treasury Building, at Washington, D. C. has three hundred and seventy-five sets on it different doors. [Editor's note: see pg. 5 for examples of treasury knobs.] The Park Bank, New York, has fifty set on. The City Court House, New York, has one hundred and seventy sets.

During the past year, several thousand sets were manufactured and sold by Messrs. Smith & Butler, whose success has induced several parties to attempt imitating their bronzes, which they do in appearance, but not in fact; in form, but not in substance. These copyists make their goods of another metal, and coat it on the outside with a thin film of copper, which cannot be very lasting, or, at least, not so lasting as if the goods themselves were formed of copper, and able to rely on it for their enduring strength.

*[Editor's note: This article has been typed exactly as published; hence all of the punctuation.]*



REFERENCE TO THE  
FULL-PAGE PLATE

No. 1, a Gothic Knob and Rose, for Front Door

No. 3, a Scroll Knob and Rose, for Front Door.

No. 5, a Medallion Knob and Rose, for Front Door.

No. 4, a Scroll Knob and Rose, for Parlor Doors.

Nos. 33 and 38, Front Door Main and Night-Key Escutcheon combined.

No. 70 and 50, Front door Escutcheons, in which the Knob, Base, or Rose, the Night and Main-Key Escutcheons are combined in one piece.

Nos. 48 and 35, Small Front Door Night-Key and Main-Key Escutcheons, separate.

Nos. 9 and 15, two varieties of Front Door Bell-Pulls.

Nos. 60 and 61, two varieties of Sliding-Door Flush Cup and "T" Handles, by which the Key may remain in the Door, and allow the later to slide clear back into the Partition.

Nos. 20 and 21, Sash, or inside Shutter, Knobs.

No. 24, a Sash Lift.

No. 30, an Inside Shutter Bar.

Two specimens of Embossed Parlor, or Front Door, Hinges, unnumbered, complete the plate.

BRONZE FURNITURE FOR DOORS



## 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:

I'm trying to gather up the missing hardware for an 1883 Queen Anne. Do you have any of the following items for sale or trade?

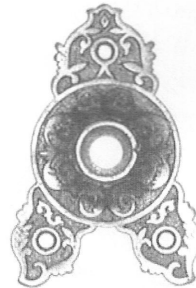
Mike Raisbeck (#862)

Email: k1twf@arrl.net, or mike.raisbeck@conexant.com

Phone (508) 250-1235 (cell)

Mallory Wheeler, 1884, passage knobs, rosettes, entry sets, plates, and just about anything else in the following pattern: See below

Mallory Wheeler, 1884, triangular plates, in iron or bronze/brass in the following pattern: See below



## Rhett Butler in New York Times

On August 19, 2010, the New York Times published an interesting interview with Rhett Butler focusing on doorknobs, design, hardware collections and why he is not named "Wolfgang". Go to [www.NYTimes.com](http://www.NYTimes.com) and look at the archives (last 12 months) under Rhett's name. [Note from Faye] I had a bit of trouble finding it, so after going to the website you might want to follow these detailed instructions.

In the **search box** type New York Times Archives; then in the **search box** on that page put in **Talking with Rhett Butler** and it will not find it yet. Then click **Past 12 Months** and you will find the article listed. Now click **"Currents - Q and A - Talking With Rhett Butler"**. That may be a bit easier than typing in the following link: [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/19/garden/19qna.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=Rhett%20Butler%20&%20doorknobs&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/19/garden/19qna.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Rhett%20Butler%20&%20doorknobs&st=cse)

## Two Treasury Knobs

*(There are many)*



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