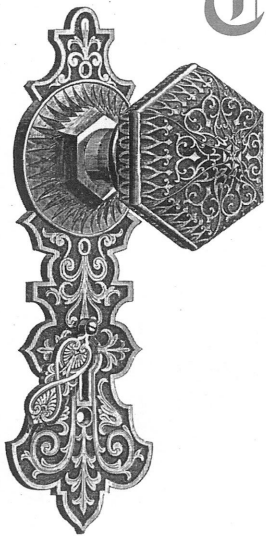


# The Doorknob Collector



Number 167

May-June 2011

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

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

## THE STORY OF EARLY DECORATIVE BRONZE HARDWARE: MORE COMPLICATED THAN FIRST THOUGHT

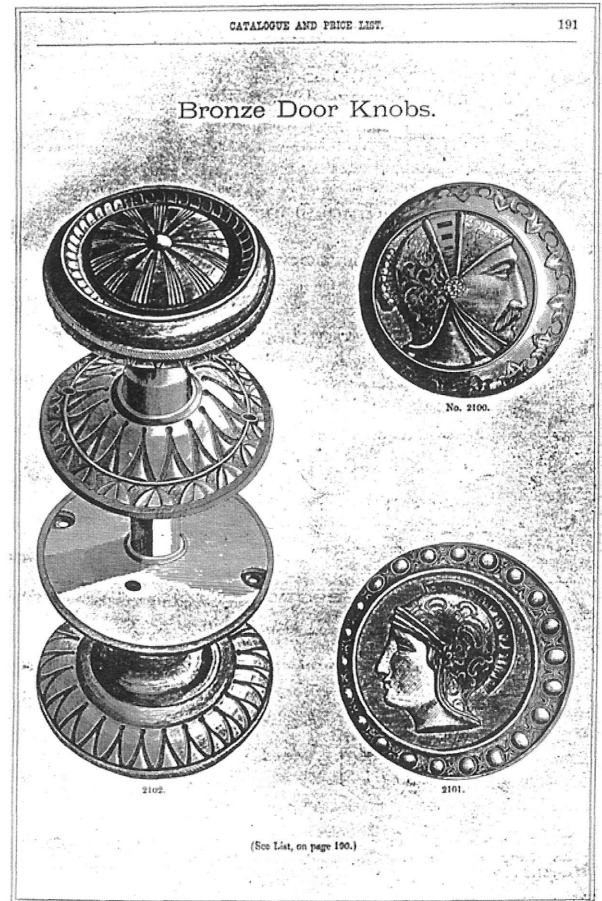
By Bo Sullivan

Additional Research by Allen Joslyn & Rhett Butler

**I**t has been clear for many years that interesting decorative bronze hardware was being made prior to Russell & Erwin's acquisition of the Metallic Compression Casting Company in 1870. But how many companies were involved, who were they, and what were their processes and designs?

In TDC 163, Allen Joslyn reprinted an article he found in a May 1869 issue of the Architectural Review that not only described electrotyped decorative bronze hardware (a key pre-MCCC manufacturing process), but also mentioned a specific company that was producing it, Smith & Butler. Accompanying the article were engravings we had never seen before of an array of knobs and other items that provided our first period images of clearly identified electrotyped bronze hardware.

Allen's article then led to my own discovery of an original Smith & Butler catalog from around 1868 in the Special Collections of the University of Delaware – a catalog that included copy remarkably similar to the content of the Architectural Review article and additional illustrations of decorative bronze hardware. This in turn led us to even more information about Smith and Butler themselves, research that was published in TDC 164.



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Following the appearance of that article, we went back and looked at hardware shown in an 1869 Russell & Erwin catalog in Rhett Butler's collection and discovered even *more* pre-MCCC bronze hardware designs – designs that looked a lot like the range shown in the other two volumes, right down to similar names and item numbers. Suddenly, thanks to these three remarkable primary sources, we had more documentation of bronze hardware during the key years of 1868 and 1869 than ever before.

Based on the wealth of illustrations we had found, the remarkable similarity of the copy in the Architectural Review article and the Smith & Butler catalog, and the fact that the knob designs in all three sources had the same names – Medallion, Scroll, and Gothic – it was perhaps natural to assume that everything shown was from Smith & Butler, and there we had it... a convenient story of the origins of our early bronze hardware neatly captured up in multiple illustrations from a single company at a single date. Mystery solved.

Wouldn't it be nice if historical research worked that way? Of course, it doesn't, and you know what they say about those who assume. Two complications quickly arose.

First, further research in the Architectural Review turned up the following statement published one month later, in the June 1869 issue:

**NOTE.—In answer to several enquiries respecting the BRONZE DOOR KNOBS described at page 689, in the preceding number of the REVIEW, we would state that all further information can be had by addressing J. B. SHANNON, 1009 Market street, Philadelphia, the manufacturer of these admirable pieces of artistic door furniture.**

Second, closer examination of the details in the three different published sources confirmed some similarity across the designs shown, but notable differences as well – differences too significant to attribute to the inaccuracy of the engravers.

These differences have led me to question my initial assumptions, and to acknowledge that our documentation may in fact show the work of at least three different companies. And there may well have been more. In this issue we are including a chart (see pgs. 4 & 5) that compares the illustrations from the three different sources.

In the coming months, it is our hope to follow more leads and perhaps tease out some new information on the makers of non-MCCC decorative bronze hardware between 1865 and 1875. In order to support this goal, we are putting out the following call:

**IF YOU HAVE ANY KNOBS SIMILAR TO THE HARDWARE IN THE CHARTS pg 4 & 5**

**(this hardware may not be solid bronze on the interior)**

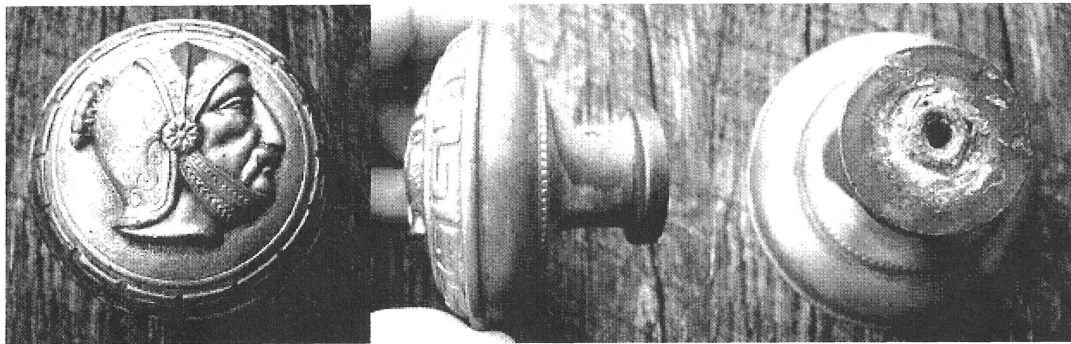
**PLEASE PHOTOGRAPH THEM AND SEND TO [bo@arcalus.com](mailto:bo@arcalus.com)**

**TOGETHER WITH A DESCRIPTION: Size, Weight, and Method of**

**Construction, such as copper exterior, filled with lead, etc.**

## **OR BETTER YET, BRING THEM WITH YOU TO PORTLAND!**

If possible photos should include a front view, a side view, and a rear view, like this:



We look forward to learning more about this crucial and poorly understood period of time, and about the hardware and manufacturers that were a part of it. As this research progresses, you'll read about it first in TDC.

### **A Note On Patination**

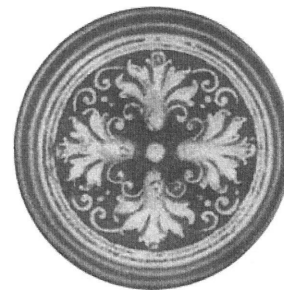
This may be old news, but there is a very useful article in the Old House Journal for August, 2008 on how to patinate antique hardware. It also recommends two books: Richard Hughes and Michael Rowe, *The Coloring, Bronzing and Patination of Metals* and Ron Young, *Contemporary Patination*. (A reviewer noted that Hughes & Young are not for home use, due to the toxicity of the chemicals used, etc.) Sources for patination formulas that will wear well in exterior areas are [www.jaxchemical.com](http://www.jaxchemical.com), <http://sschemical.com/index1.html> and [www.artchemicals.com](http://www.artchemicals.com). To create your own patina recipes, look at <http://secure.sciencecompany.com/Do-It-Yourself-Patina-Formulas-W12C672.aspx>.

### **The Doorknob Exchange**

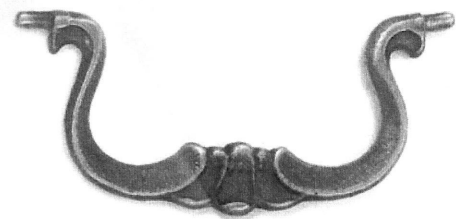
Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade, or wanted at no charge. ADCA is not responsible for any transaction or the condition of the items advertised.






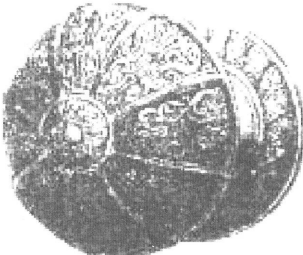

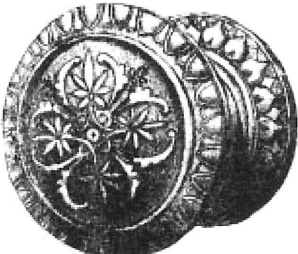


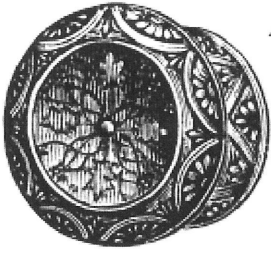

**Wanted:** "Truro" H-429 doorknobs. Need 8  
Anne Marie Ferguson  
PO Box 4561  
Carmel, CA 93921-4561  
(831) 624-6165  
[The-Magpie@earthlink.net](mailto:The-Magpie@earthlink.net)

H-429



**Wanted:** 2 Bail Handles (pictured here), most likely bronze, possibly brass. Size: 3" wide, 1 1/4" deep.  
Contact Vicky Berol, Gofer #1,  
[sfgofer@yahoo.com](mailto:sfgofer@yahoo.com)

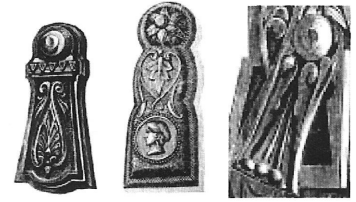
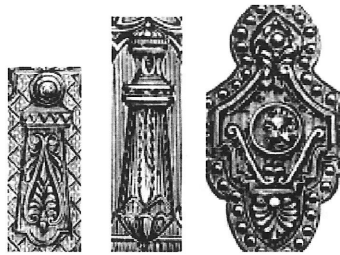


	Smith & Butler 1868	Architectural Review 1869	Russell & Erwin 1869
Medallion Mustache	 <p>approx. 30-32 keys around rim</p>	 <p>22 keys around rim</p>	 <p>Called out as "with Chin Strap" 16 keys around rim</p>
Medallion Clean-Shaven	 <p>approx. 30-32 keys around rim</p>	<p>not shown</p>	 <p>Called out as "without Chin Strap" 15 keys around rim</p>
Gothic			<p>No Gothic in price list, but a No. 3 is not shown and called out as Scroll – perhaps this matched others' Gothic.</p>
Scroll (1)	 <p>approx. 24 petals around rim</p>	 <p>approx. 26 petals around rim</p>	 <p>Called Fancy, Convex in price list approx. 20 petals around rim</p>
Scroll (2)	<p>not shown, but Shutter Bar in same pattern is shown</p>		 <p>Called Fancy, Concave in price list</p>

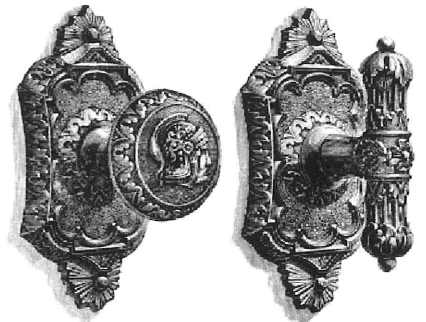


Keyhole  
Drop Cover Styles

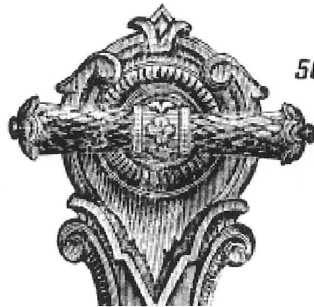
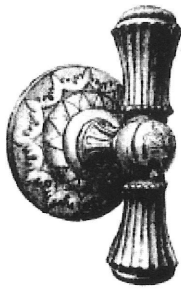
not shown



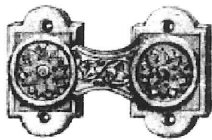
Bell Pulls



Handles



Shutter Hardware

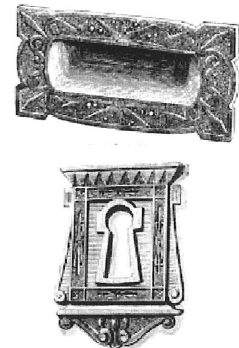
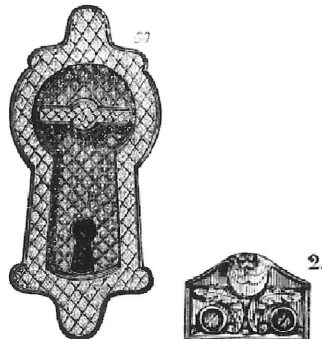
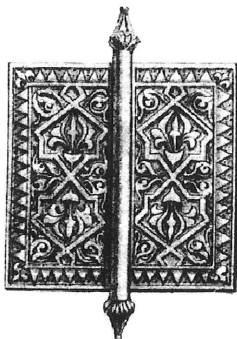


Ohio pattern



New York pattern

Other Misc.



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