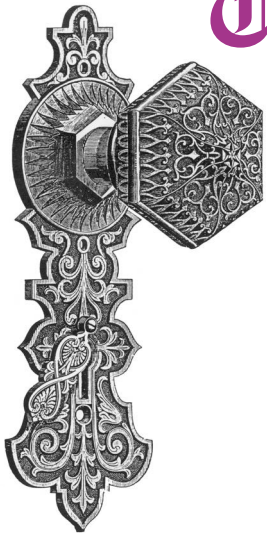


# The Doorknob Collector



197

May-June 2016

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

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

## **Holy Cow!**

### **An Interesting Twist When Researching the Hood Dairy Knob**

BY PAUL WOODFIN

I was very happy recently to finally acquire a chrome-plated knob from the H. P. Hood & Sons facility in Charlestown, MA. I missed out on a pair of these on eBay a year ago, but they were bought by a fellow club member so at least they were in the club. Personally, given that both sets of my grandparents were farmers and raised cattle here in Texas, having this knob was a prized addition to my collection.

Having lived down south my whole life, I had never heard of the Hood Dairy (around here we had Gandy's). So a Google search was in order, revealing a few facts about this firm.

Harvey Perley Hood (1823-1900) was born in Chelsea, VT and educated in public schools and Randolph Academy. He moved to Boston in 1845 and the following year bought a milk route. By 1856 his business included a large farm with a dairy in Derry, NH, where he lived. Sons Charles, Edward, and Gilbert joined their father in the business when they were old enough, creating H. P. Hood & Sons based in Charlestown, MA. While providing fresh milk deliveries to New England homes was their primary business, the company later added ice cream (including the famous "Hoodsie" cup), cottage cheese, sour cream, and other dairy products to their line as time and technology created new business opportunities. HP Hood LLC is today one of the largest dairy companies in northeastern United States, and through corporate acquisitions has nationwide operations.

The interesting twist for this story came as I was using Google to research Hood Dairy. I found a court case from 1979 in which a certain Allen S. Joslyn of New York represented H. P. Hood & Sons, the Appellant. Needless to say, [ajoslyn@comcast.com](mailto:ajoslyn@comcast.com) quickly received an e-mail, and I could almost hear Allen laughing robustly through the ether about something from his professional life almost 40 years ago.



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The H.P. Hood & Sons plant and offices Charlestown, Massachusetts

Allen added, “This was a not very exciting case (other than to those involved) under the Robinson-Patman Act, an antitrust law which prohibits certain kinds of price discrimination in sales to big and small wholesalers or distributors. The Court of Appeals used it, however, to clarify what is required before a preliminary

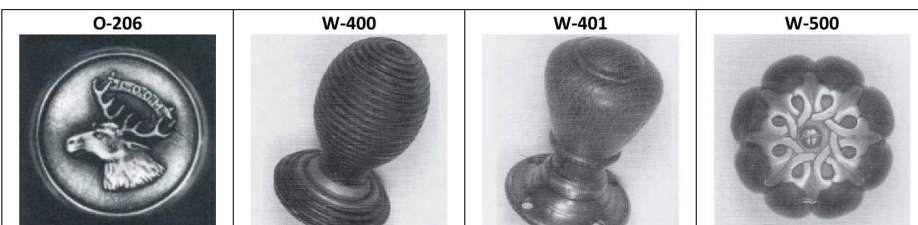
injunction pending the trial can be issued - that the proponent must show a real threat of irreparable injury, to wit, that monetary damages after trial will not be sufficient. Surprise, the case has been cited in 1,381 other cases! My associate on the case, P. Kevin Castel, went on to be my partner and then a highly respected District Court Judge in the Southern District of New York (known to the legal profession as ‘the mother court’ based on its distinguished bench). And so, my two major interests, the law and doorknobs, finally come together.”

References: George F. Willey, *Willey’s Book of Nutfield*, George Willey Publisher, Derry Depot, NH, 1895 *HP Hood*, Wikipedia

## 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:** Restoration specialists at the Pittock Mansion in Portland (which you may remember from our 1999 Convention) are looking for five complete sets of Russell & Erwin Belfort knob sets, a fairly uncommon concentric Ribbon & Reed pattern from c1914. If anyone has any, please contact Liz Covey at 708-254-5531.



## Jackson Dairy, Inc., Appellee v. H. P. Hood & Sons, Inc., Appellant 596 F.2d 70 (2d Cir. 1979)

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit  
596 F.2d 70 (2d Cir. 1979)

Argued Dec. 15, 1978  
Decided March 23, 1979

Allen S. Joslyn, Cahill Gordon & Reindel, New York City (P. Kevin Castel, Cahill Gordon & Reindel, New York City, and Alan B. George, Carroll, George, Hill & Anderson, Rutland, Vt., of counsel), for appellant.

Michael B. Clapp, Dinse, Allen & Erdmann, Burlington, Vt., for appellee.

Before WATERMAN, MANSFIELD and OAKES,  
Circuit Judges

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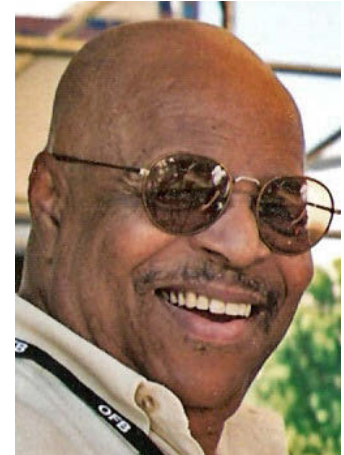
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## In Memoriam

Baby James E. "Sweet James" Benton

In the last issue we reported upon Cathy Gabraith's (#494) retirement as Executive Director of the Architectural Heritage Center and the Bosco-Milligan Foundation in Portland. Now we must report the death of her husband, "Sweet James" Benton.

He was a jazz musician of formidable talent in the Portland and the beyond area. His father worked on the construction of the Boulder Dam, and then moved to the Portland. James was drawn to the local music scene, departing from semi-professional basketball. He was a mainstay of the Portland music scene for many years. For a full obituary, which details his musical successes, please go to [www.sweetbabyjamesmusic.com](http://www.sweetbabyjamesmusic.com).



Several years ago, when he finished singing as one of the Ray Charles Tribute Performers, he turned around to see that the Oregon Sympathy Orchestra had joined the audience in a standing ovation. He was featured in a Oregonian Public Broadcast documentary on April 21, which went on the Oregon public TV station on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

## An Update on "Victorian Decorative Art -

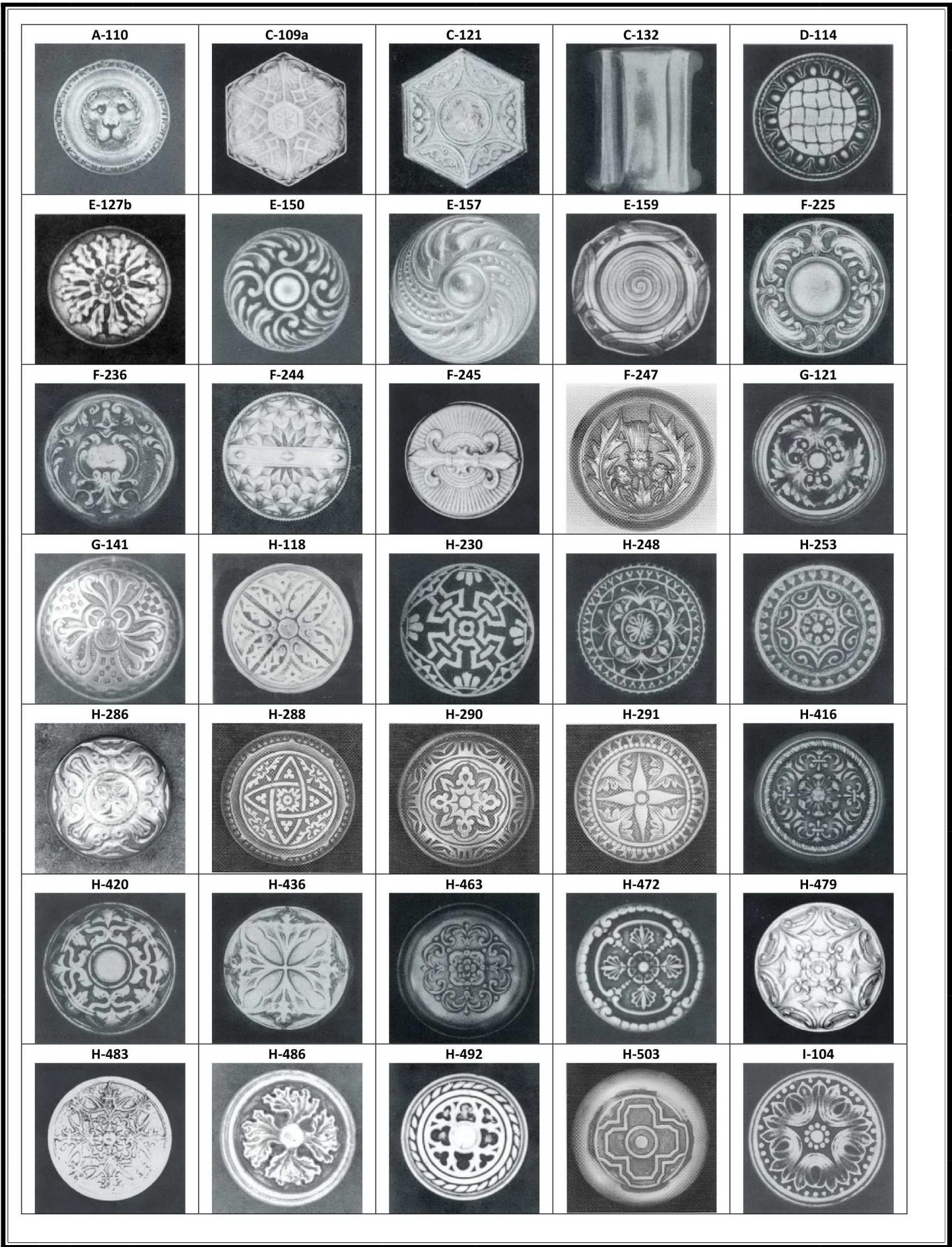
Revised and Expanded by Antique Doorknob Collectors of America"

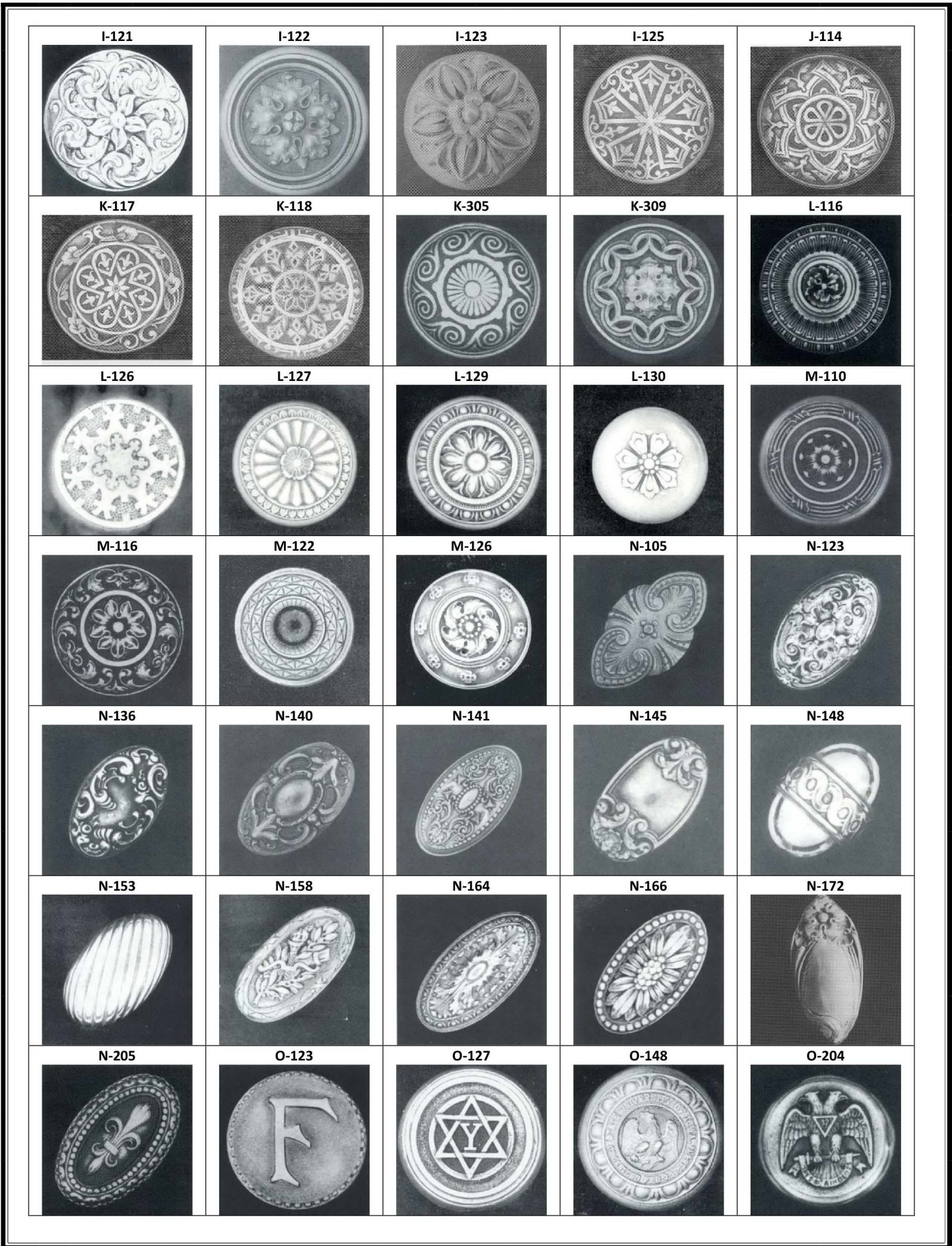
Under the leadership of Win Applegate, a Supplement with additional material was added to the original book and previous revision (VDA 2) by Len Blumin was published in July of 2010. Now I have accepted the charge of leading us to the next phase, and our club members have been very supportive. Win Applegate gave me my initial guidance. Two years ago Don Pearson invited me to his home to take pictures of his collection. I live in Indianapolis and Steve Menchhofer and Architectural Antiques of Indianapolis have opened their collections to me. Members have mailed me knobs and at the recent conventions members have responded to calls for knobs. I have also received pictures. Paul Woodfin, a source of all things emblematic, pushed the number of emblematics to over 700.

We are down to needing new pictures of the last few knobs in the current VDA. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Look over the knobs pictured on the bottom of pg 2 and those on pgs 4 and 5. If you have any, please send me a picture, on a black background if possible. Or you can mail me the knob. I have received some wonderful knobs for photographing, which I have returned with great care to their owners.

Even without these pictures our process continues. Paul Woodfin has set up a website to host the VDA on-line for the club and we are in the process of loading pictures. For many of the knobs multiple views are included. All of the currently-known information about each knob will be listed including articles from The Doorknob Collector. The board will be making decisions about the operation of the site at the July meeting, and we hope to be live shortly afterward. The site will be an easy reference for both PC and mobile searches.







## BAKELITE REDISCOVERED

*By Allen S. Joslyn*

In TDC 138-139, I wrote about doorknobs which have traditionally been misidentified as made from Gutta Percha. In fact, it seems never have been used for doorknobs.

The article also illustrated four knobs from the Menchhofer collection, and speculated as to their composition. Well, the answer is now in – they are Bakelite. How can one tell? As discussed in the article by Terri Hartman and Liz Gordon, reprinted below, by running warm water over them, drying them and vigorously rubbing them, they produce a “funky” smell. Also illustrated herein is another great Bakelite knob, this one in entry size.



This deepens the mystery, since it puts them after 1907 when Bakelite was invented, and afterwards when it became popular. They do not seem to fit into the decorative art of the era after 1910. As the article notes, Bakelite was used on everything, and there are lots of plain Bakelite knobs on eBay, mostly art deco. We have no idea who produced these exquisite knobs or why. Each appears to be unique, except there are two examples of the boy-running knob (TDC 138-2).

That's all we know now.

### Bakelite !!

*By Liz Gordon and Terri Hartman*

Ohh, Ba-a-kelite" customers will sigh when they spot a drawer knob in a rich opaque color unequalled in nature. There is something about the material that elicits an almost slavish devotion, an admiration that takes on the tones of adoration. The Bakelite mystique is somewhat ironic: the revered material is just another form of plastic.

Throughout the 19th century scientists, inventors, and chemists sought to create synthetic replacements for substances such as amber, horn, ivory and tortoiseshell, which were becoming increasingly difficult to find and harvest. In 1853 English inventor Alexander Parkes combined cellulose nitrate, a combination of sulfuric and nitric acids used as an explosive, with camphor to create a flowing substance that could be molded into finished products. In 1884 he lost his patent rights to Americans John and Isaiah Hyatt, brothers who had been working with a similar substance. The Americans called their invention celluloid, and began the American Celluloid Company.

Celluloid was heralded as a miracle. Silverware, picture frames, jewelry, hair combs, buckles and buttons were made of celluloid, which was much less expensive - and much more available - than tortoiseshell or ivory. French manufacturers developed a method of etching lines into celluloid (meant to resemble the horns of an African elephant), creating a finished product which became known as "French ivory."

The next major occurrence in the development of synthetic plastics was an accident. Belgian emigre Leo Hendrick Baekeland, a professor of physics and chemistry, became a millionaire in 1899 when he sold his patent for a photographic paper to Eastman Kodak. He then set up a laboratory to re-search shellacs in Yonkers, New York. As an experiment, he combined carbolic acid (phenol) and formaldehyde. The combination resulted not in shellac, but in a plastic that could be cast or molded. Unlike celluloid, this new plastic - the first truly manmade plastic - would not melt or ignite, even when exposed to extremely high temperatures.

Baekeland named his plastic Bakelite, and obtained a patent on it in 1907. Because it was non-conductive and heart-resistant, Bakelite soon became the standard material for the emerging electronics industry. -By 1930, the Bakelite Corporation was producing thousands of pounds of the phenolic resin from plants in New Jersey, England and Germany.

The earliest products manufactured from Bakelite were in serviceable brown and black. In the early 1920s, the Bakelite Corporation successfully experimented with pigmentation, adding fillers to the plastic to enhance the color and strengthen the article. Manufacturers began to offer kitchen utensils, home electronics, jewelry and hardware in bright opaque and pearly colors, as well as marbled swirls. In 1929 the Catalin Corporation developed a translucent pigmentation process, resulting in a plastic the company claimed had "gemlike qualities" with a "depth of color and richness of finish equaled only by precious and semi-precious stones."

By the early 1930s, dozens of plastics manufacturers were producing phenolic resins for hundreds of manufacturers of consumer goods. No matter which factory the plastic came from, it was known by its most common trademark, Bakelite. As the Roaring Twenties turned into the Great Depression, it was hard to find an everyday item that was not made of this ubiquitous material.

Bakelite was not the ultimate solution for which scientists and inventors were searching. Production of Bakelite was expensive: it involved special jigs to cast the plastic, special tumblers to polish it, and special vacuum systems to collect the fine dust from produced from carving the material. The vacuum systems point to another reason why Bakelite was not perfect: the fine dust that scattered throughout the air when the plastic was carved was found to be toxic when ingested.

By the end of the 1920s, a less toxic, less expensive urea-formaldehyde resin had been developed and was waiting in the wings. Use of the new plastic completely surpassed that of Bakelite by the 1940s. But Bakelite will forever remain unsurpassed in our hearts and imaginations.









Unfortunately, since this newsletter can only handle black and white, we cannot adequately reproduce any picture of the real glory of Bakelite, its vast range of coloration.

#### The Care and Feeding of Bakelite •

- To determine if something is made of Bakelite or another plastic, run it under hot water. Dry it, rub it vigorously between your fingers. If it's Bakelite, you will notice a distinctive smell. That is carbolic acid, one of the main ingredients of Bakelite.
- Clean Bakelite with a soapy old toothbrush, and then dry with a soft towel. •
- Bakelite may be polished with Simichrome. Rumor has it that polishing or rubbing compounds from an auto body shop also work.
- If a Bakelite piece seems somewhat lackluster, it probably faded. Rub it (on an inconspicuous spot, please!) with 200 grit sandpaper. Mustards will turn white, and some dark greens are actually cobalt blue.

## Our Business Members

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