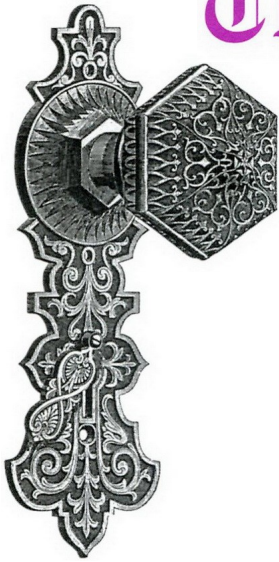


The Doorknob Collector



Number 203

May-June 2017

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

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

BRANFORD LOCK WORKS

By JANE PETERSON BOULEY, PAUL WOODFIN & PETER SABINE

After the Civil War, the entrepreneurial spirit was alive and well in America, and new businesses developed from earlier models. Branford Lock Works is an excellent example of the evolution of American business.

Founded as a trading post just east of New Haven, CT, Branford was first settled in 1644, and over ensuing decades the town grew as agriculture, fishing, and commercial trade interests continued to expand. A sawmill was established in 1672. Orrin D. Squire became a resident of the village in about 1809, and as a skillful blacksmith carried on a shop in the rear of the "Hayes Garden." Location of Hayes Garden refers to Ezekiel Hayes, great-grandfather of the ex-president who lived in Branford and built a house in 1757. Squire was a toolmaker, having a shop on the brook in the rear of his garden. Near the same time L. D. Hosley and Daniel Nichols established a small foundry on the same brook, above the village. These two firms united their interests and established a new plant (where the Lock Works would later be located) manufacturing fine castings, Franklin stoves (for which they were renowned), and other products were added on succeeding years. In 1852 Levi Parsons, Lyman Squire and William Kirkham established a lock business at the site after the foundry failed, and called it the Squire and Parsons Manufacturing Company.



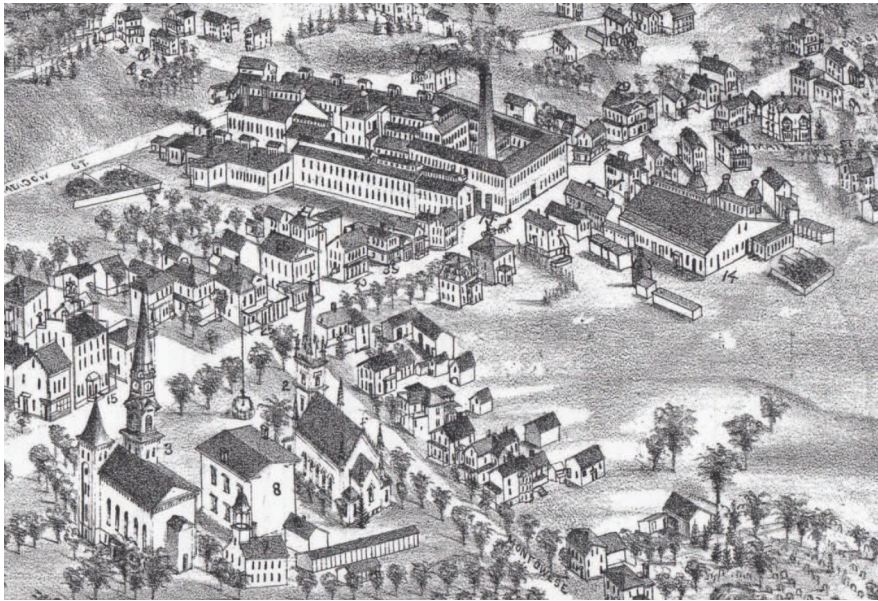
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Thomas Kennedy, a lockmaker from New York purchased the company in 1862 and brought with him skilled labor. He used modern equipment for making locks much of it his own invention (Branford held 39 patents). The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (6/21/1866) described the Branford lock as "preferred to any and all others on account of its superiority over any and all others". Kennedy incorporated the Branford Lock Works in 1865 and was president of the company until his death in 1880.

The business flourished under Kennedy's management, with 4

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departments, shown in the picture at left: the Lock-shop (large building at top center with smokestack), the Knob-shop (buildings across Main Street from the Lock-shop), at first producing high quality ceramic knobs, and later adding brass, bronze, and other fine metal knobs (note the 3 ceramic kilns next to the Knob-shop), the Brass foundry, and the Iron foundry (both located to the left of the Lock-shop). The plant was expanded to 5 acres, was the town's largest employer of 500 people, and produced 500 dozen items per day. The factory consumed 5 tons of iron, brass, and nickel daily. Many of Branford's

Irish families came to Branford to work at the Lock Shop.

The Branford Lock Works made many types of door and window hardware from simple ceramic knobs to very ornate locks. Many homes built in Branford in the late nineteenth century were equipped with fixtures from the Lock Works, while the products were also sold nationwide through many hardware dealers.

Unlike locks today which come together as one set, Branford Lock Works made many small parts associated with the lock (knobs, locks, plates, escutcheons, hinges, pins etc.), all of which could be interchanged. The 1893 catalog reveals an extensive line of simple and ornate fixtures in many designs and combinations. The products were very sturdy and after 100 years it is nearly impossible to remove a ceramic knob off of its pin.

The finer products were made of brass and others of bronze. The



B-11700

products could be purchased with plain fronts or in design, ivy and oriental being the two most common. There was also many variations within the designs. Some products were *Japanned* (coated with dark lacquer) in a special room at the factory. Knobs also came in many variations: ceramic, brass or bronze with different designs, uses and sizes. Doorknob patterns were mostly based on nature, including Bamboo (B-11700) and Ivy (D-10200).

The Doorknob Collector ©



Published six times a year by
Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, Inc

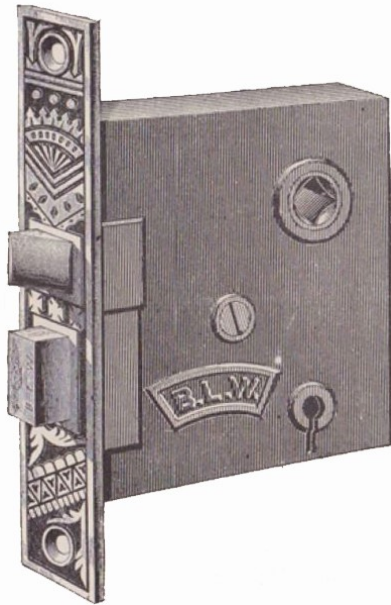
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Annual Membership in US \$25.00
age 18 or younger US\$10.00
Foreign rates on request.

Founded Sept 1981, the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization devoted to the study and preservation of ornamental hardware.

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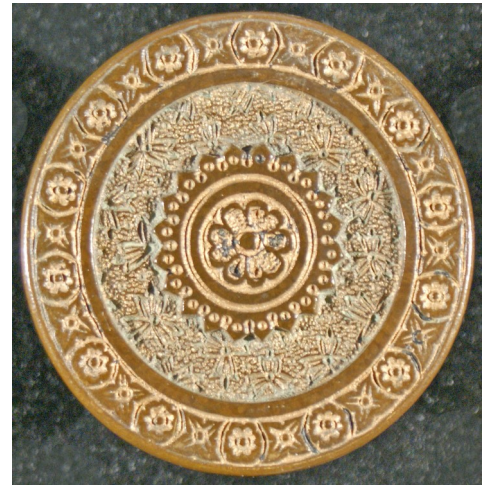


The products were usually marked with B.L.W. or sometimes Branford Lock Works written out on the back of a hinge or the side of the lock. More rarely a product just says Branford. Often patent dates, product numbers or dimensions are marked somewhere on the hardware.

Branford Lock Works struggled after the death of Thomas Kennedy, suffering from a number of strikes throughout the 1880s as wage cuts were necessary to maintain competitive prices since new equipment and manufacturing efficiencies were not implemented, unlike the competition.

In 1889, 40 of the experienced BLW workers responded to advertisements by a manufacturing concern in Florence, AL, seeking consistent work and a living wage.

By 1892 BLW had leased much of their manufacturing capacity to Yale and Towne, and began mostly producing hardware for Yale & Towne. In November 1893 Branford Lock Works was placed in receivership (bankruptcy), and Henry Towne was name receiver to oversee the operations. In April 1894 Branford Lock Works was sold at auction, and was purchased by Yale and Towne. Operating as a division of Yale and Towne, over the next several years the product lines were merged. The knob shop was located where Svea Avenue is today and was de-



D-10200



stroyed by fire in 1899. On June 14, 1902 Yale closed the Branford facility and consolidated their entire hardware operation in Stamford.

The former lock works complex (above) was bought by the Rosenthal family in the 1920s and became known as the Rosenthal Block. This block became home to a shirt factory, smaller manufacturers, a grocery store, drug store, and other retail businesses. The main building burned in 1979 (photo at right) but three buildings which originally were built to house part of the oper-

ations of Branford Lock Works remain on the site and use today. Since the 1979 fire, the block has been partially demolished, and Lock Shop Square includes some new construction, ample parking, and the three remaining former factory buildings which have been restored for 21st century use as restaurants and as an office building.



Donovan's Reef Restaurant, a former factory building

References:

Jane Peterson Bouley, *The Branford Lock Works*, Branford Historical Society, 2017.

Paul Loether, *Nomination form for Branford Center Historic District*, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1987.

John L. Rockey, *History of New Haven County*, W.W. Preston, 1892.

The various newspaper articles cited in this article are available at Newspapers.com.



Where Am I From?

There are a great many unidentified emblematic doorknobs in the P category of www.antiquedoorknobs.us. The various hardware companies custom made these doorknobs and plates for specific building(s) as ordered by architects, builders, or owners. Hopefully we can help identify the origins of these doorknobs so that the buildings and the hardware can be featured on pages like the one in this issue. Please contact your co-editor, Paul Woodfin, at paul.woodfin@sbcglobal.net if you have any knowledge to help identify these. If anyone happens to know where the records for special order hardware for any of the hardware companies wound up, please let Paul know!



P-48990 SVV

P-46750 FNB Eagle

P-41280 CA or AC

Majestic Building Indianapolis, Indiana



A large field of natural gas was found near Muncie, IN in 1886, which jumpstarted a regional transition from kerosene as fuel to natural gas. Several companies began selling to customers, and by 1890 a few of these competitors joined to form the Indianapolis Gas Company. By 1895 the company was prosperous and large enough to need their own office building. Local architect D. A. Bohlen & Son (son Oscar Bohlen is credited as architect) was hired to design a 10 story steel framed “skyscraper” (the first in Indiana) in the Romanesque style, clad in Indiana limestone.



The doorknob for the building is cast iron showing the Indiana gas field landscape in the 1890s with a derrick at center surrounded by related work buildings and a gas flare. The building contained a decorative iron railing and marble treads the staircase, and marble wainscoting throughout the building.

While the Majestic Building has lost her cornice and balconies, and portions of her interior have been modernized to serve 21st century tenants, after 120 years of continuous use, the Majestic Building remains an Indianapolis icon. The Majestic Building was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission and listed in 1980 (#80000059).

Sources: <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/80000059>

<http://historicindianapolis.com/indianapolis-then-and-now-majestic-building-charles-h-blacks-carriage-manufacturing-century-building-east-maryland-street/>

Federal Building/Post Office Chicago, Illinois

After the Chicago fire of 1871, the citizens of Chicago were left without a Federal courthouse and post office for several years, using temporary quarters until the Supervising Architect's office completed a new building in 1880. Poor foundation design and growing to need for office space led to a new building being authorized in 1895. Designed by Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb, more than \$2 million was spent to furnish the building's interior, a sum equal to the amount spent to construct the building. The post office began service in 1904, and the courts and other agencies occupied their space in 1905.

The Chicago Hardware Manufacturing Company provided thousands of Niles-style doorknobs monogrammed with US at the center, with a backplate featuring cornucopias and other flourishes at the top and bottom. The central dome (larger than the US Capitol in Washington) was gold with marble interior finishes and iron railings featuring eagles. The building hosted the trials of Al Capone, who was convicted of tax evasion in 1931, and one of the anti-trust trials which led to the breakup of Standard Oil in 1911.

The Post Office left the building for new quarters in 1922 to meet expanding demand by Sears, Wards and other mail-order retailers for package shipping. The Federal courts and other government offices expanded into the former post office space.

By the late 1950s the Federal government was needing addi-



tional space and an International-style complex of two skyscrapers were designed for Chicago by architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The photo below shows the start of construction for the first tower at bottom. In 1965 the Federal Building would be razed for the second tower and plaza. The interior elements were sold to the public at auction the following year.

Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Federal_Building

THE MAKING OF A WINDOW PULL FOR THE ROYAL MISTRESS OF A FRENCH KING

By Allen S. Joslyn

So we think we know, approximately, how builders' hardware was produced for well-off Victorians. But how was it made a hundred years previously by hand for a King's Mistress, for whom cost was not a consideration – and by the finest craftsman in France? A recent exhibition at the Frick Collection in New York provides a wonderful lesson, Pierre Gouthière: Virtuoso Gilder at the French Court. There is a luxurious catalogue published by Frick, and a well-illustrated article in The New York Times of December 23, 2016 (Page C1). The Frick also has a video on its website showing the manufacture of the Pull, and other related videos on the exhibit (also on YouTube).



The Royal Mistress was Jeanne Bécu, comtesse de Barry, Maitresse-en-titre of Louis XV. She was the illegitimate daughter of a comely seamstress, and rose far in the world. For more details of her accession, I refer you to Wikipedia. The Royal Mistress was a semi-official position with her own apartments. Jeanne became very powerful, but could not be qualify as the Royal Mistress until she had a title. Eventually, a quick marriage to Comte Guillaume du Barry (the brother of Jean-Baptiste du Barry, the high class procurer who helped establish her carrier as a courtesan in the highest circles of Parisian society) solved that problem. She was officially presented at Louis XV's Court and largely ruled over it until his death, but lost her position during the reign of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

In addition to her Royal apartments, Du Barry also had a pavilion built for her at Louveciennes, with many examples of Gouthière's work, including the window-pull pictured here with the "DB" initials.

Gouthière's art was in chasing and gilding brass castings, which were created for him. They would end up decorating luxurious furniture, or as clocks or mounts for porcelain. After a piece had been cast (using sand-casting), it would be finely textured in a laborious process using a great variety of different chisels and punches to create great detail, and, most importantly, textures. In particular he was a master of creating matte textures which could appear as skin, as well as feathers, etc. After chasing, the object would be gilded - a technique using gold dissolved in mercury, which would be applied to a surface, and when the object was heat-



ed, the mercury would vaporize, leaving a gold surface. A contemporary description of the du Barry's Pavilion concluded that "the locks could be admired as masterpieces of the goldsmith's art", and another that "not one thing was not a model of taste and delicacy, even down to the hinges." Unfortunately much of this was broken up and sold following the Revolution, and some has disappeared. Madame Du Barry was guillotined in 1793. (Incidentally, the sand used in Goutière's casting was very fine and mixed with clay so as to produce sharp detail; one of MCCC's 1870 Patents was for use of clay in casting.)



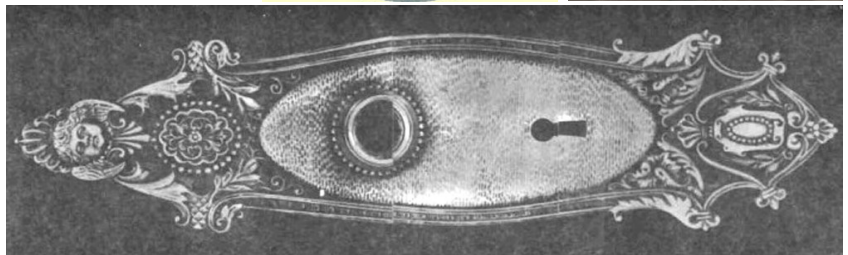
The Doorknob Exchange

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: Paul Woodfin (#829) is seeking the two knobs shown at right. If you have either of these that you are willing to sell or trade, contact him at paul.woodfin@sbcglobal.net.



Wanted: James Tomasello (#942) is seeking the plate at right. If you have one to sell or trade, contact him at ease53ny@yahoo.com.



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The Doorknob Collector

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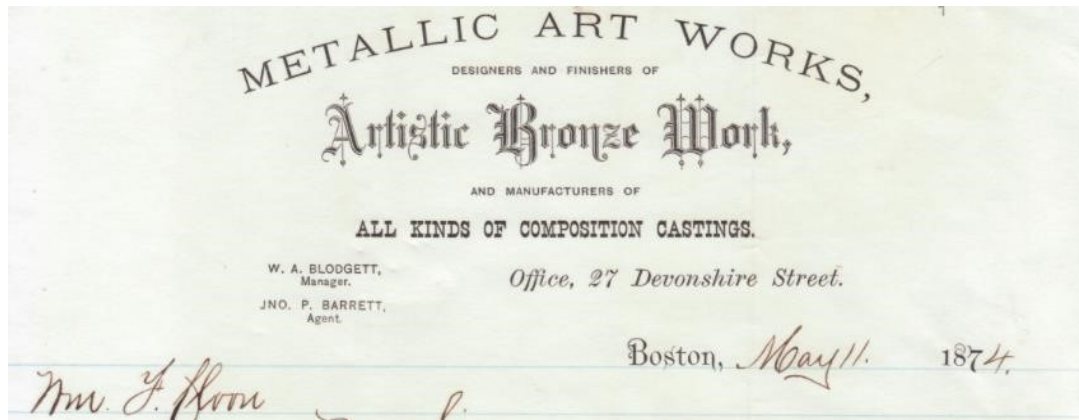
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New Developments In The Case of R&E and Metallic Art Works

By Allen S. Joslyn



Rhett Butler recently acquired a letter written by John P. Barrett of Metallic Art Works to a potential customer, which sheds light on the relationship between R&E and Metallic Art Works, and the fate of the latter.

Illustrated above is the letterhead with the text of the letter below:

“Dear Sir:

“Allow me to call your attention to the included price list of bronze hardware. We have until recently made all the goods sold by Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co.. They now make their own, but we do the same. Our goods are of genuine bronze metal in quality equal to any that are put on the market – our designs are new and attractive & our prices are less than those of any other first class maker. Our knobs are handsome both in shape and design, feel _____ in the hand, & being of pure metal will not turn black with age, but change to a beautiful bronze color. We should be glad to have you handle our goods, if you wish to order in a small way, you can do so. We can give you a sample board showing all our hardware, charging only for the goods that are on it, or you can select such articles as would sell best, for example. In either case the cost would be light and might bring you considerable trade. There certainly is nothing handsomer or more durable than these goods & we can offer you inducements in price and quality that cannot be equaled elsewhere. I should be glad to show you our stock when you are here, or to fill an order.

“Yours Respect
“Jno P. Barrett”

So, as discussed in TDC 160, after MCCC failed, a Metallic Art Works was incorporated in 1871 to produce Compression Casting hardware for R&E. There was a falling out in 1873 and it was then, presumably, that R&E moved its machinery to New Britain. The corporation was dissolved, but Metallic Art Works (in a different form) then tried to go it alone, claiming that it was as good as anyone (even though its machinery was by then in R&E’s hands). Initially Metallic Art Works was located in Somerville, but moved to Watertown, some 4-5 miles away. After the break with R&E, Metallic Arts does not seem to have produced very much, only a few styles. On October 23, 1874 it suffered a fire, but since the damage was only \$6,000 and it had \$30,000 insurance, it was believed that “the business of the establishment is probably unimpeded”. On December 22, 1874, however, fire struck again. This time the damage was \$ 35,000 and the insurance was only \$ 20,000. And that, presumably, was that.

Fire was obviously a major problem for hardware producers, housed as they were in wooden buildings with a lot of fire and heat. In Reading, both Penn Hardware and Reading Hardware suffered major fires, and in Massachusetts both MCCC and Metallic Art Works succumbed to them. It is no wonder that Reading Hardware replaced its buildings in the 1920s with reinforced concrete ones.

Source: Newspapers.com

www.antiquedoorknobs.us Now Free

When our club began planning for the 4th Edition of Victorian Decorative Art, we chose to create an easily updated and expanding website to serve as a reference for collectors. Part of the Mission Statement of the ADCA includes a “long-term vision for the ADCA is the establishment of a public museum dedicated to the field of ornamental builder’s hardware.”

At the 2014 Board meeting we did not know the cost of creating and operating such a website, and so decided to charge a subscription fee to use the site, making certain that the club was not losing money by operating the website with annual operating costs to be several thousand dollars a year. After launching the website back in December and renewing the subscription and registration for the website in January it was realized that the actual annual costs will be a few hundred dollars per year, and so in March the Board voted unanimously to make the site publicly available to everyone for free.

Highlights include:

- www.antiquedoorknobs.us is available as a virtual public museum, with more than 2,300 doorknobs and related plates and other hardware pictured.
- The search box at the bottom of each page allows you to search the site for knobs containing any keyword. If you type “lion” you will get links to 21 different doorknob pages, If you type “corbin” you will get links to 217 different knobs. (Stats are as of 4/24/2017, and of course will increase).
- You can renew your membership to the ADCA using the [Join the ADCA](#) link.
- You can make a tax-deductible donation to help us continue expanding this site and add additional features by making a donation through Paypal using the [Support this Site](#) link.
- New marketing opportunities will be available for businesses as well as individuals who sell and trade hardware. Information will be shared at the July convention.
- We have had more than 1,700 unique visitors to our site viewing almost 40,000 pages since February, with half of those in the past month.

There’s lots of interest in antique hardware, and with this site the ADCA will achieve the part of our mission to help inform and educate others about antique hardware.

Visit the ADCA on Facebook

Over the past year, the activity on the club’s Facebook page has increased significantly. Club members and the general public are asking questions about hardware items, and usually getting answers. A number from the general public have asked questions about hardware they have found or inherited, and often want to sell their items for a fair price. Some recent highlights include:

- Pete Sabine has been posting links to items he finds for sale and items he needs for his Branford collection.
- Steve Rowe posts photos of hardware he is seeking, along with photos of new finds.
- Laura Walden and Robert McNutt post photos of great and unusual finds.
- Errol O’Flynn and Nancy Circo were looking for specific hardware to finish their house, and ADCA members helped them.



If you have a Facebook account, use the link below to access our page and join the fun!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/412087788964066/>

In Memorium

Norman Blam (Member #176)

Norm Blam passed away on March 30, 2017 at age 94. He was a long-time and very active member of the ADCA, having served several years on the Board. Many will remember him at the conventions, tall and wearing his Navy cap. Norm and wife Cheryl attended their first convention in 1989, which was hosted by the Byingtons at Iowa City, IA. Norm became a Board member that year, and helped host the 1990 convention in Windsor, CT with Ed & Flicka Thrall and Applegates, along with the 2009 convention in Hartford with Allen Joslyn. At the 2009 Convention Norm won the Ugliest Knob competition. He was always up for fun!



Norm, a native of Brooklyn, NY, served in World War II in the Pacific, and retired as a Navy Captain in 1987. Norm and his wife Cheryl became members of ADCA in 1989 after reading Maude Eastwood's book, and finding out there was a doorknob club. Cheryl says "He enjoyed collecting the knobs so much, and the conventions were highlights for him. Of course the friends he made and being on the Board enriched his hobby". The Blam household was full of doorknobs in baskets and on the walls, and in an English Shirt case which Norman had to put a support column in the basement to hold up the floor because of the weight of the knobs. Both Norm and Cheryl felt the ADCA was a big part of their lives. Part of their doorknob collection has been donated to a museum which will help preserve doorknob history for others.

Our condolences go out to Cheryl and their family. Norm will be missed by all members of the ADCA who had the privilege of knowing him. *Fair winds and following seas.*

On the ADCA Facebook page, Steve Rowe posted the following to honor Norm Blam:

"I first met Norman Blam in Milwaukee at my first convention in 1994. He and Cheryl were so friendly and accepting of some California kid who really had little knowledge of the hobby. Norm sold me my first hummingbird knob which I still own today. I consider myself lucky to have known this man and to call him my friend. Norm was a great guy and I will miss him."

Our Business Members

These are paid advertisements. The ADCA assumes no responsibility. For further information about these businesses see the Resource Directory section on our website: www.AntiqueDoorknobs.org.

<p>Materials Unlimited Owner: Reynold Lowe 2 W. Michigan Ave. Ypsalanti, MI 49197 Phone: 800-299-9462 Web Site: MaterialsUnlimited.com Email: Materials@MaterialsUnlimited.com</p> 	<p>Aurora Mills Architectural Salvage Owner: Mike Byrnes 14971 First St NE Aurora, OR 97002 Phone: 503-678-6083 Fax: 503-678-3299 Web Site: auroramills.com Email: auroramills@centurytel.net</p> 
<p>American Antique Hardware Owner Keith and Sarah Chilcote Phone: 503-399-8009 Web Site: americanantiquehardware.com Email: contact@americanantiquehardware.com</p> 	<p>Liz's Antique Hardware Owner: Liz Gordon 453 South La Brea Los Angeles, CA 90036 Phone: 323-939-4403 Fax: 323-939-4387 Web Site: lahardware.com/ Email: Shop@LAHardware.com</p> 
<p>Albion Doors & Windows Owner: Larry Sawyer PO Box 220 Albion, CA 95410 Phone: 707-937-0078 Fax: (call first): 707-937-0078 Web Site: knobsession.com Email: bysawyer@mcn.org</p> 	<p>Antique Door Hardware Collector Owner: Thomas Iannucci 16624 Frederick Rd. Mount Airy, MD 21771 Phone: 240-595-1115</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Website: antiquedoorhardwarecollector.com/index.html</p>
<p>Bill's Key & Lock Shop Owner: Andy Streenz 127 E. Beaufort St. Normal, IL 61761 or 402 N. Main St. Bloomington, IL 61701 Phone: 309-827-5522 or 309.454.1713 Web Site: billskeyandlockshop.com Email: locksmith@billskeyandlockshop.com</p> 	<p>House of Antique Hardware Owner: Roy Prange 3439 NE Sandy Blvd./PMB 106 Portland, OR 97214 Phone: 888-223-2545 Fax: 503-231-1312 Web Site: HouseofAntiqueHardware.com Email: Sales@HouseofAntiqueHardware.com</p> 
<p>The Brass Knob Owners: Donetta George 2311 18th St. N.W. Washington, DC Phone: 202-332-3370 Fax: 202-332-5594 Web Site: theBrassKnob.com Email: BK@theBrassKnob.com</p> 	<p>The Door Store Owner: Sam Mirshak 1260 Castlefield Avenue Toronto, ON, Canada M6B 1G3 Phone: 416-863-1590 Website: thedorystore.ca Email: info@thedorystore.ca</p> 
<p>Webwilson.com Owner: H. Weber Wilson PO Box 506 Portsmouth, RI 02871 Phone: 240-595-1115 Website: webwilson.com Email: hww@webwilson.com</p> 	<p>Ohmega Salvage Owner: Katherine Davis 2407 San Pablo Avenue Berkeley, CA 94702 Phone: 510-204-0767 Website: ohmegasalvage.com Email: info@ohmegasalvage.com</p> 
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