

The Doorknob Collector

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A Non-profit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware



One Family, Two Buildings, and Three Hardware Manufacturers

By Paul Woodfin

Chicago's legendary McCormick family got their start in Virginia as farmers and blacksmiths, mainly working on their father's plantation in the Shenandoah Valley. Eldest brother Cyrus McCormick developed and later patented a horse-drawn reaper in 1834 based on his father's earlier designs and with the assistance of a family slave. McCormick made improvements to the design over the next six years and by 1840 was commercially selling his reaper to farmers, primarily in the Midwest. In 1847 he relocated to Chicago with his brother Leander to begin production closer to the market for their reapers, with brother William joining them in Chicago a few years later.

The McCormick reaper business continued to grow and flourish, even after the 1871 Chicago fire destroyed the factory and was quickly rebuilt. By 1889 Cyrus and William were both dead, and Leander decided to retire, selling his interest in the company to Cyrus McCormick Jr. Leander invested heavily in Chicago real estate, buying under-developed properties in the city's commercial districts, primarily in the Loop.

Two of these properties would become homes to new business buildings a few decades later.

McCormick Building

In 1907 an article in the Chicago Tribune (owned by William's children) announced that Leander McCormick's estate would replace the 1875 Victoria Hotel, facing Grant Park on Michigan Avenue, with a 12 story office building designed by Holabird & Roche. By 1909 when the design and planned construction was announced, the plans were for a 20 story structure to be named the McCormick Building. The first section of the building, the darker portion shown at left, was completed in 1910. *Architecture & Building* magazine described the building as "one of those massive, modern, and handsome structures on Michigan Avenue" featuring "a granite base with grey speckled facing brick of Norman size for the upper walls". The interior had a floor of pink Tennessee marble and a wainscoting of Vermont marble, and



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woodwork of solid mahogany throughout the building.

Special bronze hardware designed by the architects and Yale & Towne, featuring McCB monogram doorknobs ([P-46170](#)) and plates from August 1909 are shown on the following page. The hardware photo is from the Yale & Towne Album of Special Hardware published around 1914, featuring a sample of custom hardware produced by Yale & Towne. These albums were made available to their largest dealers in major cities across the country.

In 1911-1912 the McCormick Building was expanded to the north (the lighter portion shown at right in the photo from the previous page). For the new section of the building, the hardware was manufactured by P. & F. Corbin and the full suite of matching hardware is pictured in the Corbin S catalog on page 66. Holabird & Roche and other architectural firms had adopted the position that architect-designed hardware was their intellectual property, which had become the standard in earlier years after Daniel Burnham with the Flatiron Building hardware and Holabird & Roche with the Cook County Courthouse hardware required that they owned the hardware design. Most likely Corbin produced the hardware at a lower cost than Yale & Towne.

The McCormick Building remains a prominent office address on Michigan Avenue, although in 1997 a portion of the building was converted into residential condominiums, along with upgrades to the remaining office and commercial spaces at street level. Some of the original hardware was removed and sold during the residential conversions.

Lumber Exchange (Roanoke) Building

Following the success of the McCormick Building, the family determined to replace the 1872 Roanoke Building at the southeast corner of Lasalle and Madison in Chicago. First announced in the *Chicago Tribune* in January 1914, the building was to focus on the lumber industry and would be home to the Lumberman's Association of Chicago and most of their members, and would carry the name Lumber Exchange Building. Holabird & Roche would again be the architects for the 16 story office building. Between the permit for the McCormick building and this new one, the City of Chicago had limited the height of new buildings to 200 feet, so the Lumber Exchange would be only 16 stories



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tall. But wisely the foundations were designed for a 21 story building.

The building (at right) was completed in the spring of 1915, with the exterior finishes being brown terra cotta and brick. The interior was described in *Building Age* magazine as white marble and mahogany woodwork, with bronze metalwork throughout.

An article in *Lumber World Review* in May 1915 listed 31 lumber firms already having offices in the building and that more would be moving once their current leases expired.

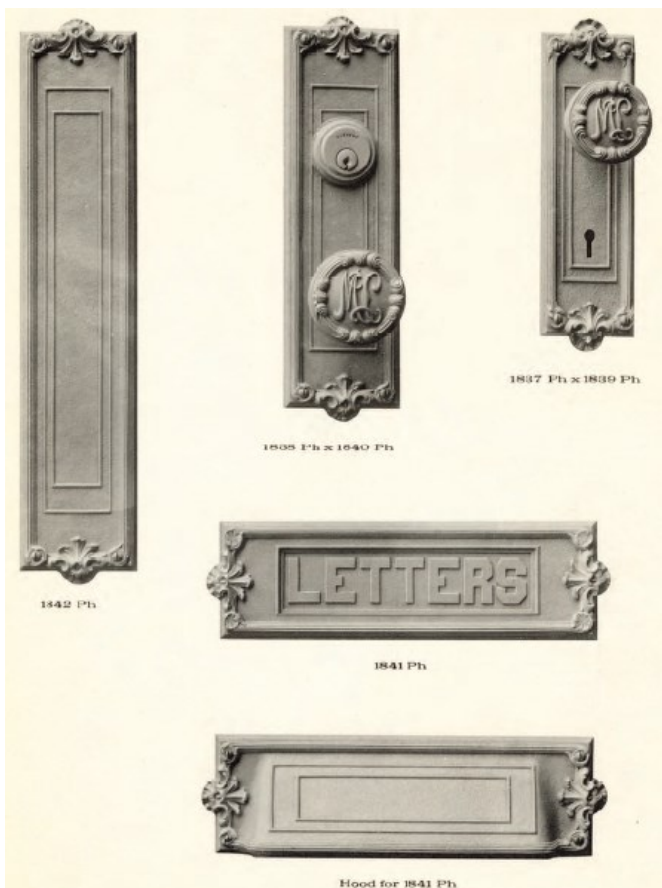
For the Lumber Exchange, Holabird & Roche asked Sargent to manufacture the hardware using the McCormick Building designs. While the hardware used Sargent attachments, and the doorknob monogram was modified to be McC (P-46180, at right), removing the B because this was not the McCormick Building. The complete suite of hardware is shown in Sargent's Special Hardware catalog (below, left).



By 1922 Chicago had removed their building height limit, and so Holabird & Roche were asked to add 5 stories to the existing building. In 1925, the property to the east was purchased by the McCormicks and a 35 story tower was added to the building using the same materials as the existing building. The top of the tower includes four large bells to chime on the quarter hour, and all marked "Leander" for the patriarch of this branch of the McCormick family.

During the depression as many lumber businesses closed or relocated to new premises, the McCormick family renamed this building as the Roanoke building in reference to the 1872 building that stood on the property. In 2008 new owners sought to upgrade the commercial viability of the building, renovating some building infrastructure using historic tax credits, adding new elevators and upgrading mechanical systems and finishes while maintaining much of the interior fabric.

In 2014, another set of new owners announced the conversion of the building into a hotel at the heart of Chicago's business district. Some of the hardware was removed during the hotel conversion to support modern locks used today in hotels. The large rooms originally required by the Lumberman's Association of Chicago became meeting room facilities for the hotel. The hotel opened during the centennial year of the Roanoke Building.



References:

- Wikipedia, Leander J. McCormick. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leander_J._McCormick
- Wikipedia, Cyrus McCormick. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrus_McCormick
- Wikipedia, Roanoke Building. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roanoke_Building
- Manor, Robert, *Timeworn Gem Gets a Polish*. Chicago Tribune, March 1, 2008.

Member Hardware and Wanted Items

By Paul Woodfin

During the on-line convention back in October 2020 we set up pages for members who requested them so that they could post hardware items they had available for sale or trade, much like our display tables during the convention. Several club members participated and were able to sell a few items, while others were able to sell a great deal of the items that they listed. We also set up a "Wanted Items" page where members were able to enter text and photos of any items which they are seeking.

After the convention several members asked if these website features could be retained for club member use on an on-going basis. Allen Joslyn and I had discussed this possibility while we were discussing the Convention website for October, and agreed that this would be similar to the Doorknob Exchange section, which has been a feature of this newsletter since 1981. The executive committee of the Board discussed this and unanimously agreed to provide this service to members.

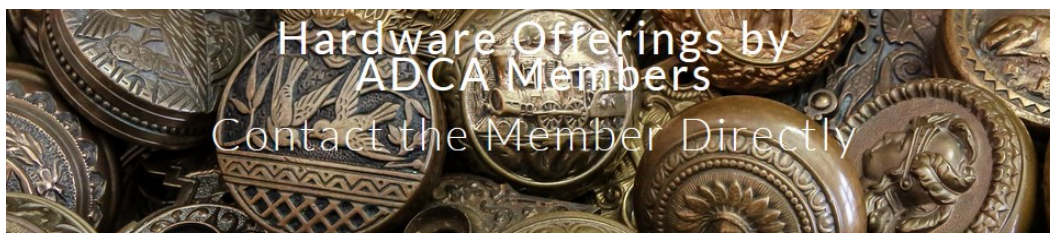
The pages can be found in the menu of the www.antiquedoorknobs.org website as the **Member Hardware and Wanted Items** pages. As a non-profit we will make available a page template to ADCA members whose membership is current and who requests a page, but you must have an e-mail address to use the website. We will create a page for you and you will receive an e-mail about setting up your login into your Weebly page on our website. If you want a relative to take photos and load content for you, that will be your call, as the password you choose for the site is your own. Your page content must be focused on antique hardware and similar items (i.e. architectural salvage is OK) and is the responsibility of each member. A "how-to" guide of instructions will be provided to each member requesting about copying and formatting the page to meet your needs. Any transactions that result will be solely the responsibility of that member and the buyer, and the club will not be involved. You should state your terms about shipping on your page, etc.

Our hope is that this can become another option that members who want to sell a few items or part of their collection can use for that purpose. The Wanted Items page can also provide the opportunity for members seeking hardware items to post their requests, and we encourage everyone to check this page

periodically to see what your fellow members are seeking.

To request a member page, please send an e-mail from your email account to the club at

adcaacct@gmail.com and you will receive an e-mail from our website provider (Weebly) regarding establishing your password. If you believe that someone has fraudulently stolen you password at any point, the login page allows you to reset your password. Shown below is the top of the Member Hardware page.



Click to visit each member's page for hardware available for purchase or trade from that member. If you are interested in an item displayed, contact that ADCA member directly, and work out a deal between the two of you, including shipping and postage.

Each member is responsible for the accuracy of of the content shown on their page. The ADCA's sole role is providing access to the member's page, and the ADCA is neither responsible for the content of any member page, or party to any transaction which occurs.

Please note that items may be added or deleted by each member at any time, so check back periodically for updates!

Note: The photos shown below are chosen by the listed member from the www.antiquedoorknobs.us website. The photo does not necessarily represent a knob available from that member-please see each member's page for the items they have available for sale or trade.

Member Offerings Updates

12/10/2020 Web Wilson has posted a new Auction opening 12/18/2020 and ending New Years Day



James Tomasello #942

[See Hardware](#)



Dale Sponaugle #85

[See Hardware](#)



Web Wilson #266

[See Hardware](#)

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.

BUYING

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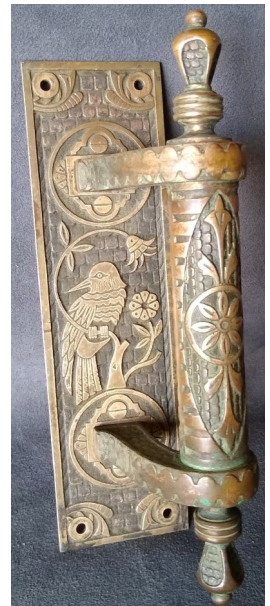
Super Rare—Super Valuable?

Often, when I go picking, and some shop owner asks “What are you looking for?”, I reply: “The doorknob of life”. Which usually brings forth a confused laugh, or at best a weak “What’s that?” And of course I respond: “I’ll know it when I see it”.

Which is to say that while we collectors (of anything, really; not just hardware) are always seeking certain “Holy grails” or objects-of-desire that are well defined, such as a certain MCCC doorknob, or a set of Fishy door pulls, what we also seek, perhaps with more fervor than what we generate for the “great knowns” is the discovery of a “great unknown”.

Many folks have reached this plateau of collecting zeal, which brings forth not just personal satisfaction from using all that hard earned knowledge, but one also the expectation that such a discovery will result in a nice monetary reward. The brutal truth, however, is that quite possibly no one else really cares, and your great find may have minimum money value, or may even be un-sellable.

My best example of this is the “Tweedle Dum” sash stop offered in our New



Year's Day 2020 auction. Here was a find that had a real personality and was marked with the maker's name and patent date. I paid a lot more than what I wanted to for that little guy, but for something never-before-seen, what are ya gonna do?

Plus, with an auction coming up, it was worth a shot. But even with lots of publicity, the result was a dud. No bids in the auction and a post-auction sale for basically no profit.



So now, for the NYD 2021 auction I have another "great unknown", or at least I believe so. But this time, in the spirit of serious collecting and concomitant mysteries, the identity of this latest discovery will not be revealed until the auction opens on **December 18, 2020**.

Maybe it will turn out that there are a dozen of these pieces in various collections, but I've consulted the Great Guru of our fraternity and am made confident that this mystery lot is exceedingly rare. And then, on New Year's Day 2021, we'll see just how much value I have unearthed.

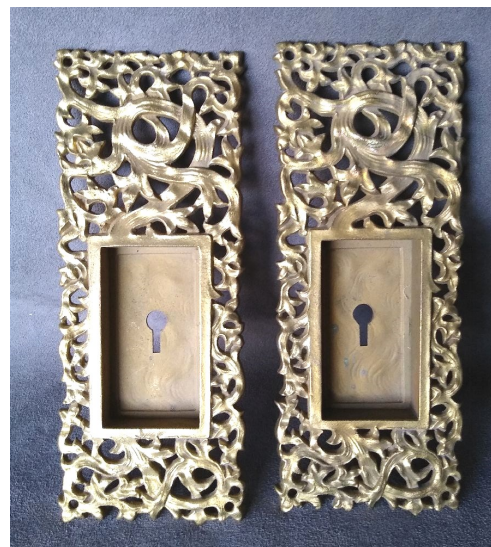
Again, I paid more than I wanted, but hey, this thing is special and I have an auction coming up, right? Oh, wait...

Beyond this exciting mystery item our NYD 2021 Auction will be offering more than 200 lots of quality collector hardware. There are about 80 nice pattern knobs, both entry and passage size, that will fill many gaps in many collections. Most of these knobs will have opening bids of \$10

to \$15.

There is also an excellent selection of higher grade knobs, plates, hinges, and various other pieces of fine builders' hardware.

www.auctions.looloodesign.com is the place to download the LooLoo Auctions mobile app. **Then register to bid and make ready for a fun event on New Year's Day 2021.**



New Additions to the ADCA Websites

- In response to our request in TDC #220, long-time member Jeff Beutner shared copies of all 12 of the newsletters which Rich & Faye Kennedy published between 1977 and 1981. These newsletters are available at the bottom of the *Newsletter Archives* page on the www.antiquedoorknobs.org page. Jeff was given copies of these newsletters by Maud Eastwood at his first convention, and several of them have Mrs. Eastwood's handwritten notes, which are enlightening to read.
- We have added a free download of Maud Eastwood's "A limited handbook of The Iron Age in Hardware" which was given to all members attending the ADCA Convention at King of Prussia, PA. That convention's theme evidently was Iron Hardware in America, so Mrs. Eastwood wrote four newsletter articles about iron hardware prior to the convention. Those are included at the back of the PDF download on the *Books about Hardware* page on the www.antiquedoorknobs.org page.
- On the www.antiquedoorknobs.us website, the new S page contains examples of enameled hardware of all types. If you have examples, please contact **Steve Hannum** or e-mail photos to adcaacct@gmail.com.



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Owner Keith and Sarah Chilcote
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Web: americanantiquehardware.com
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contact@americanantiquehardware.com



Antique Door Hardware Collector

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<p>DISCOVERY ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES</p> <p>Owner: Suzanne Kittel 409 Saint Francis St. Gonzales, TX 78629 Phone: 830-672-2428 Web: discoverys.net Email: swk@discoverys.net</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">HISTORIC HOUSEPARTS</p> <p>Owners: Christina Jones & James B. Wolff 540 South Avenue Rochester, NY 14620 Phone: 585-325-2329 Web: historichouseparts.com Email: info@historichouseparts.com</p>	<p>Liz's Antique Hardware </p> <p>Owner: Liz Gordon 453 South La Brea Los Angeles, CA 90036 Phone: 323-939-4403 Web: lahardware.com Email: Shop@LAHardware.com</p>
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