



The Doorknob Collector

Number 27

January-February 1988

History & Salvage Shops

(Subjects of recent articles)

Doorknobs and latches were the subject of a feature article in the November/December 1987 issue of the OLD HOUSE JOURNAL. The seven page article (plus one page of sources and credits) was written by J. Randall Cotton. Maude Eastwood was a major contributor.

Cotton takes us back in history, describing early door latches and the eventual move to the doorknob. He covers replacing latches and knobs, sources for antique knobs, reproductions and rehabilitating knobs and latches.

If member have not seen the feature "Knobs & Latches," check your local library or write to The Old-House Journal, 69A Seventh Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11217.

"Treasure hunting at midwest salvage shops" was the title of an article in October 1987 issue of "Midwest Living," a new monthly magazine published in Des Moines, Iowa, by Meredith Corporation.

Six salvage shops were described in some detail. Most of the shops are probably well known to doorknob collectors but the article is interesting and

well worth reading. The salvage shops featured were:

Wooden Nickel, 1408 Central-Parkway, Cincinnati, OH 45210.

After the Paint, Inc., 2711 Lafayette St., St. Louis, MO 63104.

Colonial Antiques, 5000 W. 96th St., Indianapolis, IN 46268.

Architectural Salvage Co., 103 W. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, MI 49240.

Architectural Antiques, 401 N. Third St., Minneapolis, MN 55401.

Salvage One, 1524 S. Sangamon, Chicago, IL 60608.

It's Indianapolis In September

The 1988 Antique Doorknob Collectors of America annual convention will be held from September 22 to September 25, at Indianapolis, Indiana. This marks the first time the convention has been held in Indiana and only the second time east of the Mississippi River.

Co-chairman Steve Menchhofer indicated the site of the 1988 convention will be the Hilton at the Airport, 2500 South High School Avenue. Complete details will be mailed later this year to all ADCA members.

Working with Menchhofer on this year's program are his wife, Barbara, and daughter and son-in-law, Julie and Joe Mann.

Indiana becomes the sixth state in which a convention has been held. California, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Minnesota have hosted doorknob collectors in previous years. Iowa, has had two conventions. The club was formed at Waverly in 1981 and a formal club convention was held there in 1984. In 1987, Des Moines was the site of the convention.

For those who like to buy, trade, sell and learn more about doorknobs, the annual convention is almost a must. If you have never attended a doorknob convention or have attended them all, you surely want to mark your calendar for a great time from September 22 to September 25, 1988.

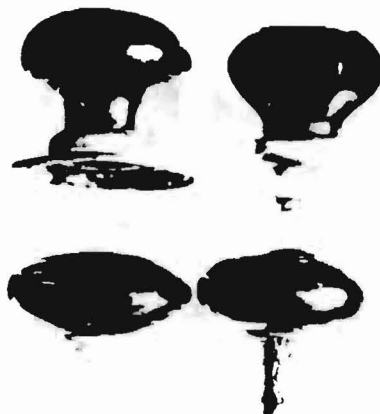
DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

by Maude Eastwood

Question: Doorknobs of what type, in reference formative material and provenance are the least easily classified and identified?

ANSWER: Ceramic. Hands down. Ceramic knobs are knobs formed of earthy materials and fired at various temperatures. The formative materials may range from simple red clays to complex porcelain mixtures. The three types commonly offered being Porcelain (white), Mineral (brown) and Jet or Ebony (black). This article zeros in on black glazed knobs.

Not all black knobs are pottery knobs. Close examination may reveal a supposed Jet knob to be black glass, blown or molded, or a black-enameled porcelain. The earliest ceramic knobs, regardless of type, were characterized by a thick self-shank sometimes fitted with a metal ferrule or collar that protected the end and provided a metal throat to receive the spindle or bolt. Black knobs of this type are extant, circa 1868, preceded by porcelain and mineral by several years. Surface clues are observable, body clues are mostly hidden, but through such means, type and manufacturer may be established. If the formative material beneath the glaze is entirely concealed, the amount of damage to the glaze surface can indicate the type of body, whether clay or porcelain. An un-marred glaze on an old ceramic knob indicates a hard-paste porcelain. The high fired enamel glaze has united with the body and is, therefore, not subject to

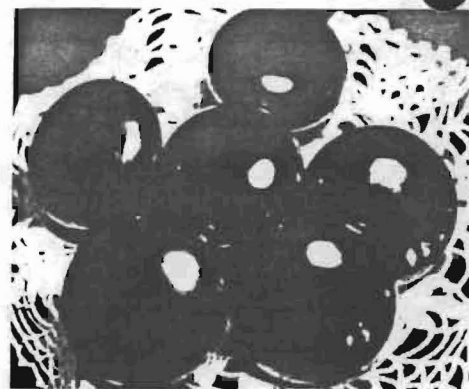


damage, whereas a pottery glaze is characterized by numerous scratches and chips, showing the vulnerability of both native clay body and the slip glaze fired at lesser heat. Black glass knob surfaces, by comparison are ultra-smooth, often reflective, never crazed. Crazing on black clay knobs can result from age or in the glazing. Often overlooked variations in glaze color are blue and brown sheen and an iridescence, highly desirable, such incidence will be the future criteria for establishing comparative worth of Jet knobs.

Black glazed doorknobs - the Jets and Ebonies - that are found in abundance exhibit few clues as to their manufacturer, for their differences in shape and glaze (other than round or oval) though noticeable are not distinctive, leaving the type of shank or it's manner of connection with the body, the deciding factor, as in the case of Branford's ornamental cast iron shank (page 111 Antique Builder's Hardware). Other positively identifiable jet knobs will be from the Clark, Gilbert, Prouty and Parker - Whipple companies. These companies advertised their innovations and mentioned the Jet knobs in the last 1870's and 1880's.

Interesting that the main line hardware manufacturing companies did not carry the Jet knob (or list them) until the 1880's, but then not dropped them, except for short periods, for the next 100 years.

Black enameling on baked earthenware was a process patented in 1851. However, evidence that this process was used on doorknob bodies before 1871 has yet to be supported. Dealers, Britnell, Terry & Beldin advertised Porcelain Japanned knobs from the Moorhead, Adams & Co. (formerly the Pittsburgh Novelty Works) in that year. The bulk of Jet knobs were mounted on cast iron shanks, with an occasional solid or plated bronze shank. Pewter plated shanks are extant and presumable pre-date the 1870's. Have you found a diamond in the rough lately?



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YOU CAN'T KEEP 'EM DOWN

After the 1986 convention and seeing Jim Kaiser's doorknob collection, the first thought Ray Zyc had was to go home and call the local salvage company and try to unload what he considered meager collection. Fortunately he didn't. Since then Ray & Kae have been having the time of their lives educating various groups in Southern Wisconsin on doorknobs.

Recently the Zyc's put on a display and lecture before 30 members of the Janesville D.A.R. Soon word got around and once again they were off giving another presentation to 80 members of The Blackhawk Homemakers.

Again they were asked to do a presentation to the Wisconsin State Questers Convention in Jamesville, for 140 registrants. After the presentation, remarks were "most interesting," and "least boring presentation we have had in recent years."

Besides collecting knobs there is a little flair for sketching. The sketch below was done by Kae of their present house. Upon doing some repairs to the wood siding, Ray discovered an old newspaper, "The Chicago Times" dated Tuesday morning, August 11, 1874. The following was written across the top of the paper, "James Sanfield McGowen, born in Ireland, built this house in 1874. (It was a custom for the local craftsmen to leave some notice of who the craftsmen were.) The knobs are all pottery and are as old as the house."

At present Kae is recovering from surgery, but the Zyc's will be back.....

YOU CAN'T KEEP 'EM DOWN.



Ray & Kae Zyc are dressed for the occasion when they display doorknobs. Kae is wearing her great grandmother's outfit from around the time of the civil war.

An architect was having a difficult time with a prospective home builder. "But can't you give me some kind of idea," he pleaded, "of the general type of house you want to build?"

"Well," the man replied hesitantly, "all I know is it must go with the antique doorknob my wife bought in Vermont." (submitted by Fred Magnus)



OPEN THE DOOR, RICHARD....

But Use The Doorknob

If the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America decide to have an official song, Sam DeVincent of Fort Wayne, Indiana, has supplied several pieces of sheet music for consideration.

The popular song of the 1940's, "Open The Door Richard" would be a strong candidate. The sheet music depicts a man pounding on a door (with a knob).

A song copyrighted in 1910, "I've Got Your Number" which features an oval knob and escutcheon plate could get some votes, too.

"Your Key Don't Fit This Lock No More", a song on the lighter side, copyrighted in 1898 has a doorknob and a big padlock on the cover of the sheet music.

Although no doorknob is shown on the sheet music, "Hang Out The Front Door Key" could also pick up some votes. This 1908 song was featured by many artists for a long time.

A latch, rather than a doorknob, was probably used on the hen house in the song "Who Broke The Lock Off The Hen House Door." This number was featured by many novelty groups on radio during the 1930's and 1940's.

Sam DeVincent has a collection of well over 100,000 pieces of sheet music. His collection is Sheetmusic/P8

ORNAMENTAL DESIGN IN ANTIQUE DOORKNOBS
by Len Blumin

(Editors' note: The following feature is a supplement to Len's excellent book, "Victorian Decorative Art," and additional supplements will appear as a regular feature.)

REPRESENTATIONAL DOORKNOBS

- A-107 Small Lion. Mallory Wheeler type, See A-309.
A-108 Eagle, with escutcheon. Large, possible Mallory Wheeler.
A-109 Dog in center. Mallory Wheeler, 1882 catalog. A beauty.
A-110 Bear? Small knob, possibly English.
A-111 Crow, Said to be for "Crow County."
A-112 Scalloped Lion. Cast iron, with rivets in ears. c 1860.



A-107



A-110



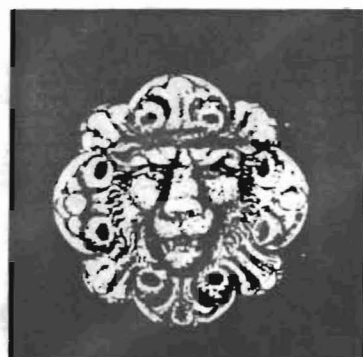
A-108



A-111



A-109



A-112

OVAL DOORKNOBS

- N-143 Unknown.
 N-144 Unknown. Nice casting.
 N-145 Unknown. Well done.
 N-146 Unknown. Gleaming steel.
 N-147 Unknown. Possibly Sargent.
 N-148 "L" Pattern, Sargent, 1910 catalog.

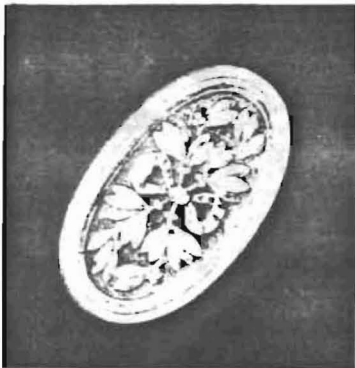
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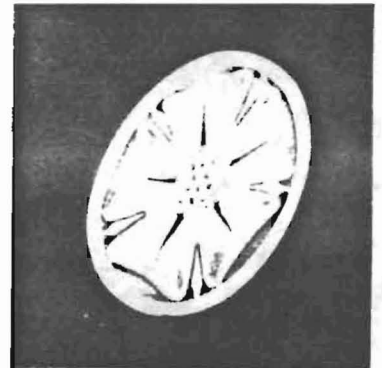
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N-144



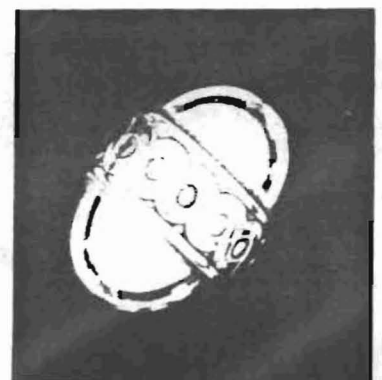
N-147



N-145



N-148





You might say it all began with a bulldozer: Ed bought a TD-9 in 1945, and set out to rearrange the farm. He and the bulldozer got along so well that they began rearranging other people's land and soon Ed graduated to a TD-14 and then a brand new TD-15.

Meantime redevelopment came to Hartford and Ed turned from cellar holes and landscaping to demolition.

One day a friend who knew he was working on the Heublein Hotel asked him to rescue some of its doorknobs for him. Ed did and kept a couple for himself.

Doorknobs were not the only thing Ed rescued; he couldn't bear to see all the used but still rugged building materials being hauled away to the dump, he could see the possibility of his dreamed dance hall/recreation building becoming a reality. He could take all the brownstone he wanted simply by loading it on his lowbed and trucking it home. (Boss said, "The more you take, the less we need to pay to put in the dump.") He could have all the two-inch matched planking he could pry up and haul away before the wrecker's ball got to them. The huge timbers and steel trusses took some fancy Yankee trading - but that's one of Ed's many talents. So shortly the site of his new building was littered with piles of stone and lumber, timbers and trusses, factory windows, doors and all the miscellaneous relics which caught his eye.

With considerable difficulty, delay and frustration he managed to secure a building permit from the town and **THE BUILDING** was officially under way.

He had been told by an old timer that it wasn't dancing unless it was on a spring dance floor so Ed began collecting truck springs. Unfortunately they all had different tensions and Ed visualized interminable shimmy and adjusting. Until a friend suggested that he use truck tires which could be all the same size - and with new tubes inserted, practically "blowout proof."

Perhaps this was the last straw for the building inspector; he viewed all this unorthodox construction which was completely outside his limited understanding as a threat to his authority,



evidently, and Ed was obliged to cope with "roadblocks," stalling and many a hassle until finally the building inspector and the town became so obnoxious that Ed lost all hope of dealing with them conventionally, in September 1978 he invited people in to dance, certificate of occupancy or no!

He ended up in jail for this "offense" - and five more times in the years to come. With the government and the court system endlessly harassing him he needed something to take up his mind.

A friend of his had brought

him a cast iron implement seat mounted to make a stool and it proved to be so popular with the band members who played in **THE BUILDING** that he set out to find enough for the whole group. Soon he discovered the great variety of brands and fancy patterns available in these seats and had made quite a collection. He joined the Cast Iron Seat Collectors Association, and our trips around New England were greatly enlivened by visits with other club members and stops at farmhouses where there were farm implements with cast iron seats in evidence - a great way to meet the natives!

Meantime, Ed was still picking up doorknobs here and there and becoming more and more interested in them.

Early in 1981, Ed saw an ad for a book on doorknobs by Maude Eastwood. He sent for it and was much impressed. It seemed more than coincidence that the author lived in Tillamook, Oregon - right on our route from Seattle, Washington to Pacific Grove, California! (For Christmas 1980, our daughter Janett had given us airline tickets to Seattle - so we could attend the National Square Dance Convention there in June 1981, and arrange for a rent-a-car to take us into the giant Douglas firs, from which the timber in **THE BUILDING** came - and down the coast to see my relatives in California.)

Ed called Maude and she agreed to show us her fabulous collection, and though we couldn't tell her our exact arrival day, we were in luck and she was at home. That afternoon with Maudie fired up Ed's enthusiasm for doorknobs, and the doorknob that Ed brought Maudie fired up her as

continued/P7

(Thrall continued)

well. She gratified Ed by giving him some knobs from her own collection and sent us on our way greatly enriched by a fascinating afternoon, and followed with a supply of luscious red raspberries freshly picked from her garden.

The visit was a turning point. From then on the cast iron implements seats, which were already encroaching on our living space, took a "back seat" to the doorknobs.

In 1982 we joined THE ANTIQUE DOORKNOB COLLECTORS OF AMERICA and read about their conventions. In September 1983, we bought a van, and a week later packed up our bed and doorknob display (Ed had no idea how one was supposed to exhibit one's collection, so found some coffee table tops and devised his own unique display) and set out for Naperville, IL to our first Doorknob Collectors' Convention.

● have never seen Ed so excited as he was that first Friday in Naperville! He, who must eat well and on time, didn't even think of lunch until after three in the afternoon, and hurried back to the fascinating activity in the doorknob room. The whole weekend was one of revelation and excitement and shifted his doorknob collecting into high gear.

Ed's collection grew and grew. Not only did he trade and buy and sell at the five conventions we've attended, but our trips back and forth from Connecticut to the Midwest were punctuated by stops at antique shops, flea markets, locksmiths, and demolition outfits, although from this latter category the response to doorknob queries

was apt to be, "Doorknob? Who'd collect doorknobs? I can't be bothered...I just chuck'em in the trash barrel."

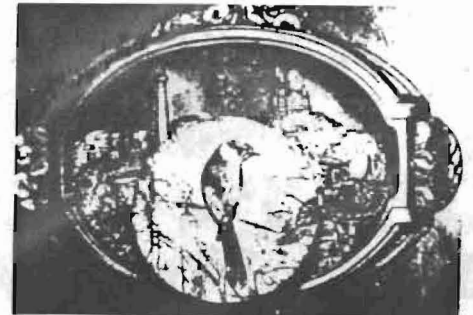
All during the year Ed has an eagle eye out for the unusual and the ones he hasn't captured yet. With a prodigious memory, probably common to all collectors, he knows in an instant whether his find is new to his collection or one he already has. And he had found treasures in the unlikely places. On our trip to Minneapolis, we came upon a little antique shop tucked in with lakeside cottages on a very secondary route, and there he found a regular nest of very attractive knobs. (He also found a pair of antlers which he secured to the roof of the van, and attracted attention from people who wanted to know where we'd been hunting!")

Once he found an "end-of-day" knob at Newfane(Vermont) Flea Market. It was on one side of a set, the other knob being an ordinary brown pottery knob. The price was rather high, so Ed talked the man into selling him just the "end-of-day" knob, convincing him he could get the balance of his asking price from selling the remaining knob. Some months later he went into an antique shop south of Burlington and asked the proprietor if he had any unusual knobs, "No," the man replied, "but I saw an unusual one at Newfane last year." He went on to describe it, complete with price, and Ed was able to tell him he'd already bagged that one!

But his greatest treasure was acquired at a Square Dance Convention site. The New England convention is held two

years running in each state on a rotating basis, and the first year it was held in Burlington, Vermont, we spent much of our time visiting antique shops. One of the first was connected to the Ethan Allen Motel and the elderly owner said he had only one knob of consequence. It seems a wealthy client of his from Canada spends her summers at the Motel and one year she left him a knob to sell for her. She said it had been given to her husband by the French government when he was the Canadian Ambassador to France. It was a lovely thing: a glass knob with a golden bird in a golden setting etched deep within the glass. It was attached to a heavy block to serve as a door stop, but in spite of this humble station, the firm price - and the lady said not a cent less! - was \$100.00. "We do have a hundred," I ventured tentatively. But Ed began enumerating the places that the \$100 was needed, and reluctantly we left the golden bird behind.

The next year Convention was in Burlington again, and we could hardly wait to check in before hurrying back to that Antique Shop. Sure enough, our golden bird was still there, and still \$100, but this seemed so providential that we put down the money and made Thrall/P8



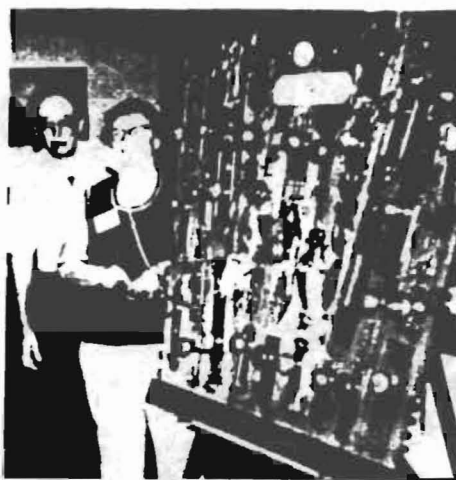
Thrall/continued
off with our treasure!

As we did with the Cast Iron Seat Collectors, we visit doorknob collectors when we travel: We visited Charlie and Mary Wardell in High Point, NC, on our way to visit Jenett and Doug in Atlanta; we spent an evening with the Fred Magnuses in Fort Myers, during our trip to Florida; we admired the Menchhofers' collection and met Charlie the Schnauzer in Speedway, Indiana on our way home from St. Charles convention; and we felt privileged to be part of the group which spent the afternoon with the Kaisers amongst their treasures.

In addition, we have visited collectors who don't attend convention, although a couple of young fellows we visited in Pennsylvania popped in on the Waverly convention. One couple in New Jersey seemed to think nothing of staying up until we could arrive at 11:15 PM, when they showed us their collection, served us sandwiches and coffee and sent up on our way sometime after 1:00 AM.

When **THE BUILDING** is finished there will be a special room just for doorknobs. Meantime, there are 20 doorknobs displays decorating our front hall, back hall, living room and dining area. They make great conversation pieces, and I find them even more interesting than paintings; I'm continually noticing a unique arrangement or special knob which I really hadn't taken in before.

Maybe there are folks who might think 20 displays should be enough, but they, poor things, have never caught the collecting fever. Ed has, though, and he's off to Brimfield tomorrow. Here's to Number 21!



Ed and Flicka Thrall display their knobs in a variety of ways.

Moving your doorknobs to a new address? Please let us know. Be sure to include your old address along with your new address and mail them to ADCA, P.O. Box 126, Eola, Illinois 60519-0126

CLASSIFIED AD SECTION

Members are reminded that your dues entitles you to advertise items for sale, trade or wanted at no charge.

FOR SALE. Grand Lodge Knights of Pythias - Indiana doorknobs & escutcheon plates. (see **THE Doorknob Collector** #22, page four, O-203.) One small knob with escutcheon, \$22. One large knob with large escutcheon, \$32. Steve Menchhofer, 5538 West 25th St., Speedway, IN 46224. Phone 317-291-6043.

FOR SALE. Back issues of **THE DOORKNOB COLLECTOR**. Write for availability list and prices. **THE DOORKNOB COLLECTOR**, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126.

Sheetmusic/continued
 one of the largest in the country. He has been collecting sheet music for over 50 years and along with his wife, Nancy Lee, they do a weekly radio program.

In September 1940 Sam and Nancy Lee met when they join a musical group on radio station KMA, Shenandoah, Iowa. By July 1941, it was love and marriage. In 1945 they joined WOWO, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and soon had one of the most popular acts on the station, "Nancy Lee & the Hilltoppers." Nancy Lee plays guitar and sings. Sam is the accordionist and also does vocals. A third member, Jack Carmen plays the violin.

Nancy Lee & The Hilltoppers can now be heard every Sunday Morning 6:05-to-7:00 EST from WOWO's 50,000 watt transmitter which covers many of the states east of the Mississippi River. When Dugan Fry, WOWO's very popular morning announcer says, "It's Chore Time From The World's Famous Little Red Barn," listeners are in for a real treat. The program features old recordings, numbers from rare tapes and songs by Hilltoppers themselves. The Sunday Little Red Barn program has a large and very loyal audience. So, if you can hear WOWO on a regular basis, or just passing through the midwest, put your radio on 1190-AM and enjoy a Sunday morning extravaganze.

