



The Doorknob Collector

JULY-AUG 1979

EDITORS' NICHE

The reproduction of the photos in our last issue was somewhat disappointing. The quality seems to depend largely on the cleanliness of the copy machine. We received an exquisite photo this month and have tried a new method. We drew as much detail as possible from the photo by putting a light behind it. We hope this will be more satisfactory.

Charles Wardell also suggested the possibility of rubbing the knob detail on a piece of soft paper or cloth. We tried this with quite good results. We used both crayon and pencil successfully.

Since our last newsletter we were visited by Leonard Swanson, northeast representative for Baldwin Hardware Co. They are looking for knob designs that can be reproduced for their line of solid brass door hardware. We enjoyed his visit.

This month, many of you will note a stamp on your newsletter indicating your subscription is running out. To continue receiving the letter, simply send \$1.00 for the next three issues. Let us know if you do not want your name and address printed if you have not already done so. We certainly appreciate your sup-

port of our effort.

Faye and Rich Kennedy
Editors

COLLECTORS CORNER

Unfortunately, our last newsletter had gone to press just as we received this information from Emil Miller so we were unable to feature a collector. We will remedy that with these quotes from Emil's letter.

"Having a background of being a machinist and boilermaker caused my interest to lean toward things made of metal. After World War II, jet, porcelain, mineral, glass and wood knobs were being thrown out and replaced in many cases as brass and bronze became plentiful again. I paid little attention to non-metallic hardware until I found Maude Eastwood's book, The Antique Doorknob. That book did it! Now I dig through all kinds of junk looking for anything that resembles a knob or an escutcheon.

"Many of my lock and dummy trim samples are from dealer display rooms of long ago, so in some cases they are not complete operating locks but have matching knobs and roses.

"(I also have several) old iron padlocks from India. They were col-

lected over a period of two years by my sister when she was living there several years ago. I wrote to her so many times urging her to hunt for lock information that she became extremely interested herself and sent me some fine specimens. Fortunately most had keys to operate them.

"My job with Schlage Lock Company takes me through Iowa and Nebraska. I see places I'd like to stop, but time seldom permits. I have been a member of the Architectural Hardware Consultants since 1957. Have worked for Schlage 25 years--still at it. Am a member of the Associated Locksmiths of America and the Nebraska Locksmiths Association.

"I'm always looking for old lock manufacturer's catalogs. The only catalogs I have that are older than Henry Towne's 1904 are wholesale hardware distributor catalogs which, in most cases, leave out the manufacturers name or substitute their own. There were many unique and beautiful locksets manufactured in America from about 1870 to 1910 at which time standardization and cheaper methods of production cut back on the numbers of designs and the sizes of the catalogs."

SERENDIPITY

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we were interested in featuring some unusual stories from fellow collectors as to how they obtained some of their doorknobs. We did hear from several people.

Charles Wardell writes, "Several (of my knobs) required much diplomacy and craftiness (to obtain them). I spotted an unusual knob on the door of an antique dealers shop and began trying to buy it. I received promise after promise and then a flat no to my request. After several years, the dealer asked me to repair his roof knowing I was a carpenter. I couldn't tackle the job for a long time even though he asked repeatedly. Finally, a thought occurred to

me that perhaps I could start his work immediately, providing he'd part with the doorknob! This was agreed upon and both of us were happy. I replaced the knob and es-cutcheon with another nice set that was a duplicate I didn't need.

"I have salvaged many pieces of hardware from a wrecked building and one from the pile of rubble in front of a bulldozer. I've also seen many nice items loaded into dump trucks headed for a land fill because I couldn't locate the owner. These experiences have led me to "liberate" some nice hardware that was destined to be destroyed."

Judy Rhea sent a brief note saying, "I obtained my first knob 12 years ago from a lady friend whose father-in-law worked for the N.Y. Public School System. When they tore down his school he took some knobs. (The Antique Doorknob, page 119) Over the years I kept it set out and polished--then just last year decided to start collecting knobs."

Greg and Pam Kareofelas sent us a photo of one of the most beautiful knobs we've seen. Below is a sketch of the knob which shows much of the detail but not the beauty of the royal blue and white enamel inlay on the bronze knob.

According to their letter, the knob was found by her mother. She had become interested in antiques and was taking her cat to a breeder when she saw the knob, covered with layers of paint, on the door of the "cat house" which was in the back yard. The shape made her realize it was unusual and she asked if she could replace it with another knob. Upon cleaning it, the beauty of knob became apparent.

Greg and Pam received the knob as an anniversary gift much to their delight. It is the pride of their collection.



CASTING PATENT

The following is quoted from "Historical Research on American Locks" Series #3 by Thomas F. Hennessey, Pres. and Curator, Lock Museum of America.

"It was not until 1869 that fancy ornate designs could be cast on items such as round doorknobs, etc. On May 18, 1869, a patent, #90,318, was issued to three brothers, John, Joseph, and Charles Smith of Philadelphia, Pa. and assigned to the Metallic Compression Casting Co. of Boston, Mass. This new casting process developed by the Smith Brothers used fine potters clay instead of sand for the mold, and the injection of the molten metal at the bottom under great pressure by a piston moving in a cylinder.

This process allowed the casting of fine and delicate ornate designs in perfect detail on round or flat objects without having to hand chase them after casting. This reduced the cost of these items and ushered in a new era of

ornate designs.

Refer to the doorknob with a woman's face (The Antique Doorknob, pg. 157) which was one of the first items in hardware produced by this company.

The Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. became the sole agents for selling these doorknobs and escutcheons made by the Metallic Compression Casting Co. of Boston, Mass. In 1870, the Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. bought out this company including their nine design patents #4130 thru #4138 dated June 7, 1870. Russell & Erwin then became the leading manufacturer of compression bronze ornate hardware in the country.

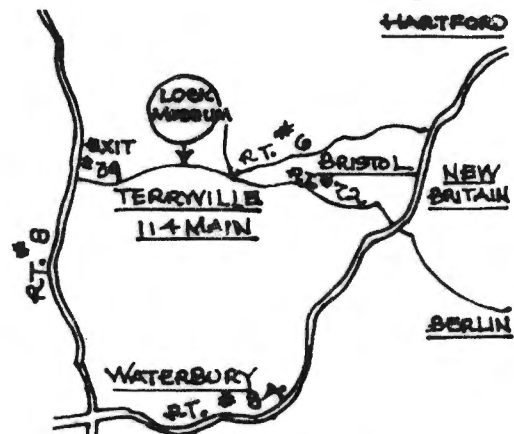
KNOBS FOR SALE

In the January newsletter from The Lock Museum of America it was noted that there are for sale a limited number of sets of emblematic cast brass knobs from the old (1910) LaSalle Hotel in Chicago. They can be purchased for \$17.50 per pair including postage. The money received will be put toward the museum's Building Fund. They were donated by Don Friedman of Skokie, Ill.

Lock Museum of America, Inc.
P.O. Box 104
Terryville, Conn. 06786

From all reports, this museum is well worth the trip. We plan to visit it ourselves sometime in Aug.

NEWS FLASH: Ground Breaking for the new Lock Museum is August 19.



QUESTIONS & ANS.

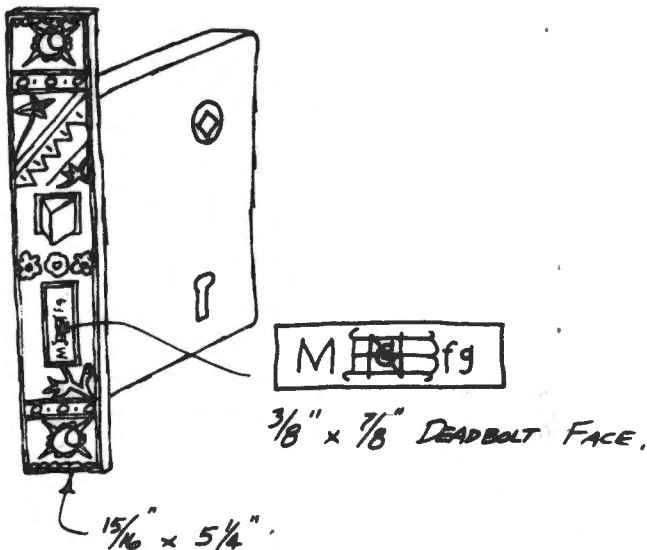
A couple of months ago we had the pleasure of visiting Lombard Pozzi in Bristol, R.I. He is restoring several buildings in the area and needs several mortise lock boxes and escutcheon plates of the following description.

Lock box: $3\frac{1}{4}$ " X $3\frac{3}{4}$ " with a solid brass face $7\frac{7}{8}$ " X $5\frac{3}{8}$ " with Sargent embossed on the box.

Escutcheon plate: $1\frac{7}{8}$ " X $5\frac{3}{4}$ " solid brass with a key hole, four screw holes, and rounded edges.

Contact him directly at
1226 Hope Street
Bristol, R.I. 02809

Emil Miller sent along this sketch of an old mortise lock with the manufacturers mark stamped on the face of the deadbolt. He is hoping that a reader can identify the manufacturer.



$15\frac{1}{16}$ " X $5\frac{1}{4}$ "
SOLID BRONZE FACE, LATENBOLT & DEADBOLT.

$2\frac{3}{8}$ " BACKSET. CAST IRON CASE.

Emil Miller has found locksets in Nebraska similar to the knob with the trigger mechanism pictured in the March 1978 issue of the newsletter, but with "G.I.C. GILBERT'S PATENT MAY 30, 1876" cast in

the case. There is an old home in Waterloo, Iowa which has locks featuring the same style and operating function--but they are mortise instead of rim locks. They are better quality and have white brass or "Nicolene" metal triggers and escutcheons. The name Gilbert also appears on the case of these locks. He was hoping to find some reference to a Gilbert Lock Company in Tom Hennessy's book Early Locks & Lockmakers of America but to no avail. Maude Eastwood researched a patent, granted June 13, 1886 to Orvellas H. Gilbert and she shows a patent drawing on page 82 of her book, The Antique Doorknob. This lock patent, however, has a much different type of operation. He is hoping that someone can come up with more information on Gilbert's locks.

Sibyl Sears sent us a note saying she has solid and hollow brass knobs and is looking for a china knob in exchange. Contact her directly at RR 1, Rising Star, Texas 76471. *Sent inquiry on 9-27-8.*

NEXT ISSUE

In our November newsletter besides all the knobby news that's fit to print, we will have an updated name and address list including old and new subscribers. Several have requested we not print their names and of course we will honor that. If there is anyone else wishing their name not to be printed please drop us a note or we will assume it is okay to print.

We also wish to do a feature on the emblematic knobs which our readers own. We will print pictures of as many as possible and list the others. We are sure there are many that we don't know of and would be interesting. Even if you don't know the whole story of your knob send us a picture or Xerox. To Xerox a knob just lay it face down in the machine. It does quite a good reproduction of the detail.