



# The Doorknob Collector

Number 30

July-August 1988

## Convention News



Early versions of the Official Seal of the Great State of Indiana appear on official papers as early as 1801. Between 1816 and 1963 there were more than 200 variations of the seal. Finally, in 1963, the design and dimension above were fixed by the legislature. The hills are those lying west of Vincennes. The sun is setting in the west, symbolic of the fact that Indiana, at the time of her statehood, was considered an empire gaining a foothold in the west. The trees within the picture are sycamore trees. The buffalo is symbolic of the rich natural resources of the state. Once plentiful in Indiana, the last buffalo were recorded as being seen in 1923 near New Harmony in Posey County.

The annual convention of **ANTIQUE DOORKNOB COLLECTORS OF AMERICA** will take place in Indianapolis, Indiana, from September 21st to September 25th at the Airport Hilton Inn. Members planning to attend are encouraged to complete the registration forms, which were mailed several weeks ago, as soon as possible, but **NO LATER THAN AUGUST 21, 1988**. An Airport Hilton Inn registration card was also enclosed and must be returned to the Hilton Inn if you are staying there.

The Hilton Inn is convenient to Indianapolis International Airport. It is also convenient to Interstate 465, as it is located off the Indianapolis International Airport Exit 11-B. For those flying, there is a courtesy phone in the airport baggage claim area. The Hilton has a free

airport limousine service.

Thursday, September 22nd will be devoted to a tour of several points of interest in Indianapolis.

The display contest has been changed this year. The categories will be: (1) Best Single Knob, (2) Best Russell & Erwin display, (3) Best Metallic Knob(s) display and (4) Best Non-Metallic Knob(s) display.

An auction is planned again for Saturday night so don't forget to bring your actionable items along with your displays and traders. As usual, all donations for auction will be gratefully appreciated.

If you did not receive the 'convention package,' please notify **ADCA**, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126 (or phone 312-357-2381) and we will rush it to you.



## RUSSELL & ERWIN; THEIR ROLE IN COMPRESSION CASTING.

by Maude Eastwood

**I**n the background of every eminently successful business enterprise are men of strong character, conviction and foresight who are capable of making decisions critical to future growth. The enviable record of Russell & Erwin (R&E), whose roots date from 1839 in New Britain, Connecticut, gives testimony to such company leadership.

Perhaps Russell & Erwin's earliest and greatest single opportunity to assume an important role in the growing number of fine builder's hardware companies of the 1870's came through an opportunity to secure all patent rights for a unique method of casting metals under pressure, eliminating the necessity to resort to expensive "clean-up" methods before marketing. These patents were held by the Metallic Compression Casting Company (MCCC) of Boston, Massachusetts and Michael Smith of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. MCCC had announced their intention to "--sell to Foundrymen and other Manufacturers, Right to use our Process", in conjunction with an April, 1869 informative paper on their unique casting process. Prompt action on the part of company officials saw Russell & Erwin by June, 1870, not only in sole control and ownership of the original patents, but also the assigned owners of forty-two design patents for articles



On January 1, 1839 Henry E. Russell (l.) and Cornelius B. Erwin (r.) joined forces to lay the foundations of the Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company. Together, they ran the Company for 46 years and were chiefly responsible for its tremendous growth during the nineteenth century.

of door hardware first assigned to Metallic Compression Casting Company by gifted designers, one of whom was the patentee of the improved process, John Joseph Charles Smith.

Russell & Erwin suddenly found herself in a very advantageous position among her competing sister companies in the race to produce finely designed hardware. Indeed, this was the birth of the 19th century Victorian Bronze hardware era.

Who were the gifted designers of the forty-two design patents, all dated June 7, 1870 and numbered D4097 through D4138 and what designs did they produce? In numerical order Ludwig Kreuzinger of Cambridge, Massachusetts, designed the first ten, the first four being door knob designs and the following six other door hardware items. (See **Victorian Decorative Art A-1**

and A-5 for the first Kreuzinger designs) Charles Kunze, also of Cambridge, and Joseph Lucien Leger, of Somerville, Massachusetts, each obtained one patent for a doorknob design. Joseph Ruff, of Cambridge, was the most prolific with twenty patents, six for designs for door knobs and fourteen of other item of door hardware. John Joseph Charles Smith, of Somerville, produced ten designs. Eight being for doorknobs and two for bell-pull knobs. Smith's designs utilized emblems more conventional in theme; Kreuzinger chose living

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### The Doorknob Collector

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# What is a butt?

by Charlie Wardell

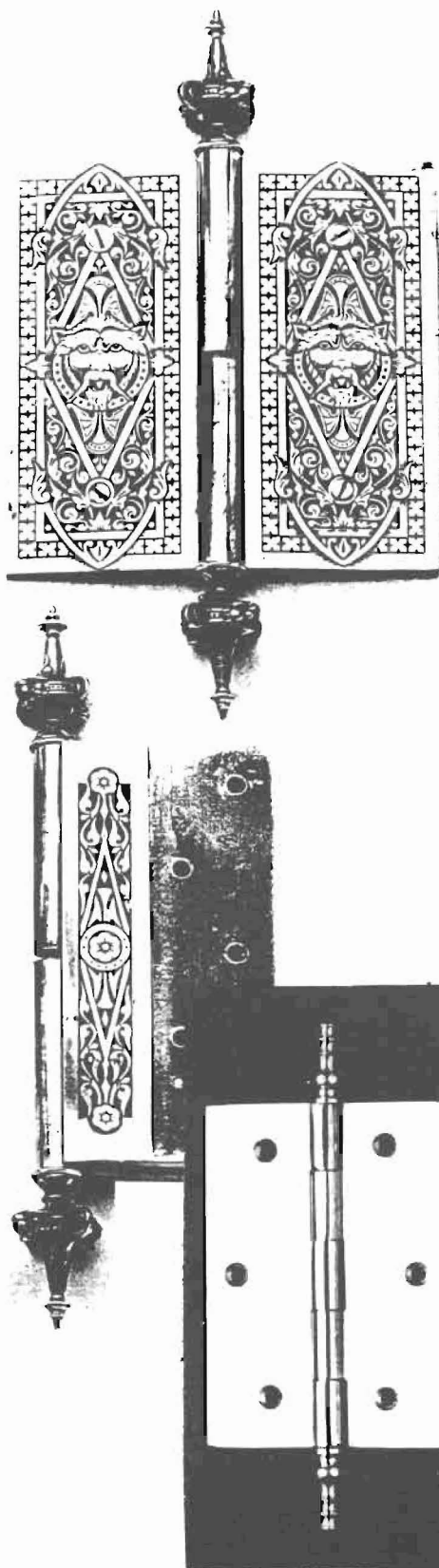
The term is universally used in the hardware trade and has a mysterious origin. I can't trace the word back far but it was applied to the hinges even in 1879. There were loose pins butts, shutter butts, fast joint butts, Parliament butts, ball bearing butts, transom butts, and toilet butts and I'm only naming a few. Whatever the name applied, it still was just a hinge.

"Just a hinge" detracts from its importance drastically for without it we couldn't have a door and then we wouldn't need doorknobs! Mercy on us doorknob collectors.

I have seen hinges made entirely of wood, hinges of leather and hinges of bent-rods. I am of the opinion the hinge dates back to the invention of the hammer and the wheel as a machine to accomplish work with a nominal expenditure of energy.

In the same era as the ornate doorknob appeared in American industry (1865-70), or should I say when men were occupied more with industry than the slaughter of his fellow man, there arose wonderful ideas of manufacture and men (and women) used their genius to produce articles of beauty. Witness the decorative buildings and parks for the enjoyment instead of the drudgery in life.

There are designs on butts that harmonize with the knobs and escutcheons and some are fantastic in their



beauty. I have a pair of Russell & Erwin that were designed for the very finest of fine buildings. Harking back to the cathedral and its gargoyles, these butts use gargoyles as a finial on the pins with intricate decoration on all exposed parts. The construction is massive and could support a half-ton. Some doors in early churches were ten to twelve feet tall.

We as collectors of doorknobs should familiarize ourselves with allied hardware. Store door handles, mail drops, doorbells, door-knockers, chain bolts, window sash lifts, and locks, push plates and bin pulls are continually on my list. I am just as thrilled to find a good example of these as I am when I find a doorknob.

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## Big Success

More than 20,000 people attended the Kane County Flea market during its first two-day session in many years.

The first Saturday afternoon at the Kane County Flea Market, April 30th, was a huge success with more than 4800 paid admissions. There were 1300 different dealers. On Sunday, May 1st, 15,300 people paid admissions and 1500 dealers were present.



## ORNAMENTAL DESIGN IN ANTIQUE DOORKNOBS

by Len Blumin

### SPIRALS AND SWIRLS

E-127b Iron, circa 1895.

E-134a There are several varieties of this acanthus design.

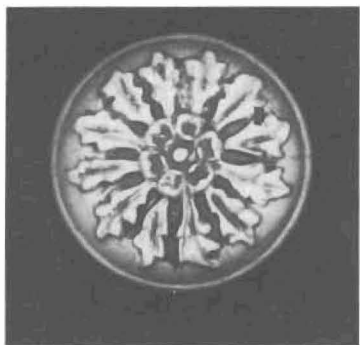
E-137a A more elaborate version.

E-143 "Clinton," U. S. Steel Lock Co., 1907 catalogue.

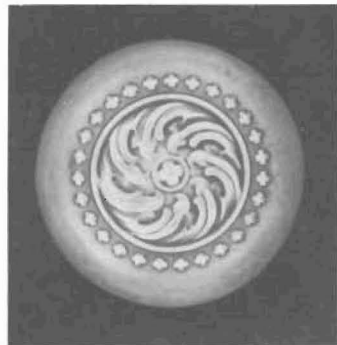
E-144 Spiral of acanthus, or eightfold, or concentric?

E-145 One of the better spiral designs.

E-127b



E-143



E-134a



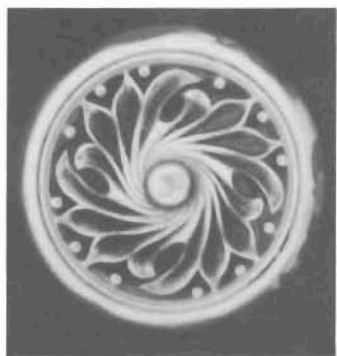
E-144



E-137a



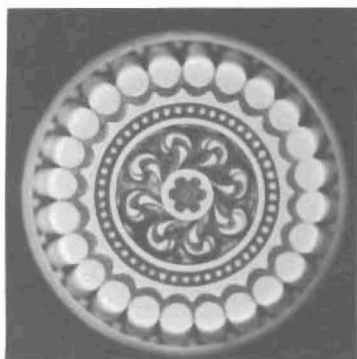
E-145



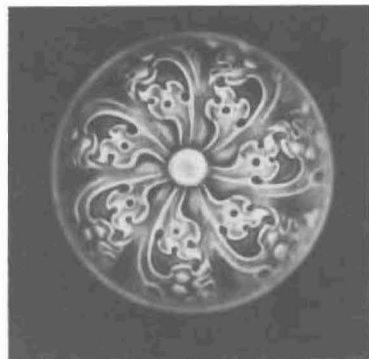
# SPIRALS AND SWIRLS

- E-146 Large, striking knob. A Charlie Wardell favorite.
- E-147 Steel knob.
- E-148 Spiral with egg and dart, circa 1905.
- E-149 "Heraldic", large acanthus beauty, Norwalk, circa 1895.
- E-150 Information is needed on this knob.
- E-151 Note beaded rim.

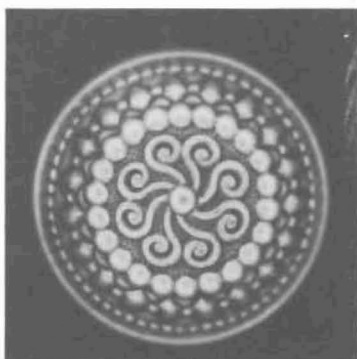
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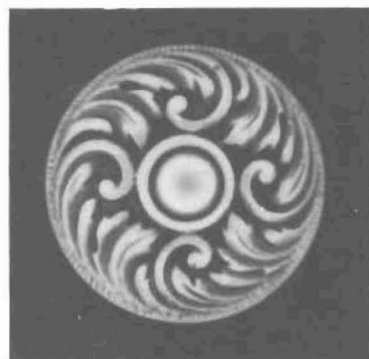
E-149



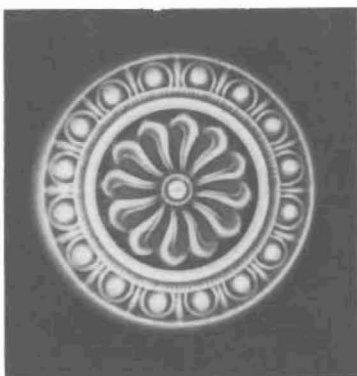
E-147



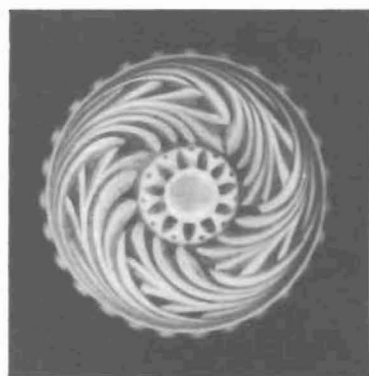
E-150



E-148



E-151



# Doorknobs can be dangerous

by Len Blumin

Having worked for 20 years in hospital emergency rooms, I thought I had seen just about every type of accidents that can occur around the home, from knife cuts in the kitchen, slips in the bath, to falls from the roof. I can even remember a few dents in toddlers' heads from protruding doorknobs. But two recent cases are of interest because they relate directly to the age-old problem of keeping the knob firmly attached to the spindle.

Mrs. Smith was at home with her two year old. No sooner had she entered the bedroom to fetch something when a breeze blew the door shut. The sound startled her, and remembering her overly active child left in the hallway alone, she rushed to pull open the door, only to find herself grasping a doorknob with its protruding spindle, freed from the lock when the loose screw on the corridor knob finally fell off (for the tenth time). Panic! Thinking that the door was now unopenable, she rushed to the window and jumped out, to rejoin her youngster. Unfortunately the 12 foot drop to the pavement was quite enough to cause a rather serious ankle fracture. And "no", I didn't add to her pain by suggesting that she could have simply reinserted the spindle and turned it to open the latch!

Mrs. Jones lived in a "post-Victorian" dating from about 1920, which featured the commonly used "fluted" glass knobs. Like many knobs from this period, its shaft

was threaded, allowing it to be screwed onto the threaded spindle the proper distance, at which point its position was secured by tightening a setscrew which in turn pressed against a flat on the spindle to prevent further rotation. That is, it prevents it until the setscrew loosens, as it will inevitably do. When the screw loosens, the knob tends to "spin", and the end of the setscrew starts to wear away the treads and corners of the spindle. Re-tightening gives a temporary fix, but with each recurrence and spinning of the knob the spindle gets a bit more rounded. Mrs. Jones knob and spindle had loosened hundreds of times in the 60-odd years, so that the setscrew could no longer prevent spinning. But she had cleverly discovered that by pressing downward on the knob very firmly before turning, she was able to "trap" the spindle enough to get it to operate the latch. This worked fine for about two years, until finally the glass could no longer take the unnatural stress and fractured. Unfortunately, a sharp fragment remained attached and served to inflict a very nasty gash on the palm of her hand. While sewing up the laceration I couldn't resist pointing out to her the fact that I probable knew more about doorknobs than any Emergency physician within 100 miles. No, I didn't tell her that for 75¢ she could have purchased a quite serviceable replacement spindle at the hardware store.

R&E\_\_\_\_\_page 2

entity subjects, the most notable being the Doggie and the Lion.

Russell and Erwin did not "rest on their laurels" when they landed this plum. Their work was cut out for them. They labored to develop the line and continued to keep a sharp eye on other technical advances as they evolved in the trade and dealt with the vagaries of taste and limits of pocket books in the market, never deviating from their 1855 slogan, **"TIMES CHANGE AND WE CHANGE WITH THEM."** Russell & Erwin has at all times kept abreast of the current and coming.

We collectors of antique door hardware salute this grand company for their initial role in perfecting compression bronze that resulted in the specimen which so often are the focus of collector's attention and for their many years of sustained leadership in their field.



## THE SEED THAT FLOURISHED

by Helen Byington

The "Seed" for our collection was planted around 1972, when I went to a friend's house to play bridge, and noticed a darling little oriental looking white vase containing straw flowers on an end table. Imagine my surprise, upon picking it up to discover that it was a porcelain doorknob.

I then became aware of the white and black knobs on some of the doors in our centry old drugstore building, and began removing them to keep as momentos, for our daughters, and ourselves of the place we all had worked in.-- Many knobs and hardware had long been lost through remodeling.

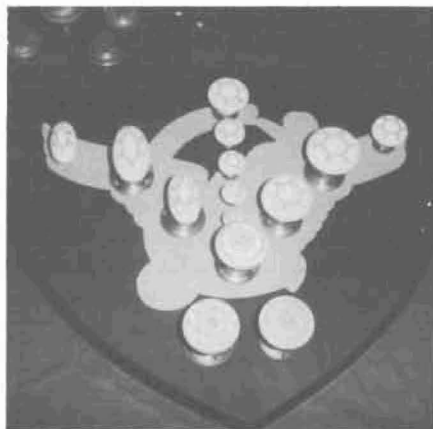
I asked my parents if there were any ceramic knobs left in the house on our grandfathers' farm, but all had been replaced.

The old one room schoolhouse my father had attended had been moved to the farm to be used as a garage and there we found a pair of knobs. This is how it all started. At flea markets and yard sales we sorted through the boxes under table, turning up more ceramic knobs in white, black and brown and some wood ones.

An article in an antique newspaper mentioned a doorknob newsletter to be published, so we subscribed to it.

While visiting our daughter in Corvallis, Oregon, we all went over to

the coast for the weekend. Bill, our son-in-law, another daughter and the grand dog went crabbing one afternoon. Our six month old grand-daughter, her mother and I took a walk in the area of our cabin at Oceanside and spotted an Antique shop that was open. When I made a comment about a pair of decorated porcelain plates and knobs, the shop keeper said if we were interested in doorknobs we should see the collection a beautician had, just a few miles away in Tillamook. I took her name and address, but time ran out for us, so when we got home I wrote to her asking if she was aware of the newsletter. She answered saying she had been in close contact with the originators, and also told us about the book she had written. Naturally we ordered one of the books, and thus began a friendship with Maude Eastwood.



We were not able to attend the first two conventions, so did not meet Maude in person until the Naperville 1983 meeting. What an eye-opener to see all the beautiful knobs and related hardware!

It was exciting, and at the same time, depressing. How could we ever have anything worth showing or trading? We didn't give up, though, because the people we met from all over the United States were so friendly and readily shared their knowledge. We were hooked!

Gradually we have built up our inventory. Our first big find was the Indian bust knob like John Holland had pictured in a earlier ADCA newsletter, reportedly coming from The Mizpah Hotel in Tonapoh, Nevada. We bought it at considerably less than one had sold for at our auction.

I saw an ugly brass bat pin or ashtray at a show, and couldn't resist turning  
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**FROM THE ARCHIVES**  
by Alice Chadonich



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Charles Bednar, Len Blumin, Gerald Leaders, Dorothy Miller, Art Paholke and Schlage Locke Company for being so gracious over the past in loaning catalogs to be copied.

If any of our other members have catalogs that are not listed on our order blank and would permit them to be copied, it would be appreciated if you would make a list and either send it to my home address or give it to me in person at the convention. While copying a book can be hard on it, our copy centers do handle them with the utmost care. We also provide you with a photocopy for your use to save further wear and tear on your original.

It hardly seems fair that we repeatedly ask the same people for use of their catalogs. Let's all get in the spirit and give an assist in building the archives library.

In the event anyone has duplicate catalogs, may I suggest a donation to the Emil Miller Memorial Library.

Byingtons-----from p7  
it over. On the back it said, "Compliments of Miller, Sloss & Scott, Agents for Reading Hardware Company." Of course, we had to buy it, even though I hate bats! Another time at an outdoor flea market I spotted a black iron open work escutcheon plate, with male & female figures, riding mythical creatures. In the center was a circle with Y&T on the back center. It said, Yale Lock Co., 152-154 Wabash Ave., Chicago. Yes, we have the plate.

We have a variety of items, acquired from friends - a special English knob with painted flowers, a purple glass knob, plates and knobs from the house where our three daughters grew up, and from the Junior High School all three attended. Both places have been torn down. We have one from the University of Iowa, and a large brass pull knob and plate our oldest daughter found in London.

I'm hoping our nephew, now in Hong Kong, will bring us a pair of bone knobs, like he brought to his dad, who isn't even a member of ADCA!

We came across a bunch of PE Guerin porcelain decorated knobs in all sized and shapes which Bill mounted on an old trophy board. We wonder if they weren't a salesman's samples.

We look forward to seeing all our old friends and making new ones in Indianapolis and learning more about our collection, and adding to it.

**CLASSIFIED AD SECTION**

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

**WANTED.** To trade for or buy, antique doorbells, Joe Mueller, 1227 Roxton Drive, St. Louis, MO 63137. Phone 314-867-7943.

**WANTED.** Art Deco light fixtures, glass shades, etc. Carlos Ruiz, 2333 Clement Ave., Alameda, CA Phone 415-769-6062.

**WANTED.** 20 sets of doorknobs for 1890 Victorian house. Walnut toned plastic celluloid knobs made in three parts. Central portion like hollow doughnut with brass center medallion. Will consider white or black plastic or celluloid. John Merrick, 117 South Broad Street, P.O. Box 67, Kennett Square, PA 19348.

**FOR TRADE.** Will trade doorknobs for padlocks. Thomas Bower, P.O. Box 171, Middletown, CT 06457. Phone 207-347-6605.

**ROSTER CHANGES**

**Additions:** #144 Thomas E. Bower, P.O. Box 171, Middletown, CT 06457. Ph: 207-347-6605.

#145 Mark & Pamela Hill, 500 Everett Lane, High Point, NC 27260.

#146 Franklin E. Wells, 410 Armfield Ave., Asheboro, NC 27203. Ph: 919-625-4001.

#147 Kip Wendler, 4129 Cambridge, Kansas City, KS 66103. Ph: 913-722-2547.

**Address Change:** #80 Jean P. Hand, 6145 Old Oregon Trail, Redding, CA 96003.

