



The Doorknob Collector

Number 36

July-August 1989

Historic Iowa City in 1989

The 1989 annual convention of the Antique Doorknob collectors of America will take place at Iowa City, Iowa, from September 20th to September 24th. It will be located at the Day's Inn - Ironmen hotel in Coralville.

Coralville is contiguous to Iowa City on the northwest side. The Day's Inn - Ironmen is on Route 80, Exit 242. It is also convenient to the Cedar Rapids Regional Airport. For those flying in, there is an airport limousine service to Iowa City. Hertz, Avis and Budget car rentals have counters at the Airport.

Members planning to attend are encouraged to complete the registration forms, which were mailed

separately, as soon as possible but no later than August 20, 1989.

Thursday, September 21st, will be devoted to a tour of historical points of interest in West Branch and Iowa City.

A display contest will again be held for those wishing to enter. The categories will be (1) Best Mallory-Wheeler Display, (2) Best Metallic knob(s) and (3) Best Non-Metallic knob(s).

An auction is planned for Saturday night. Bring your auctionable items along with your displays and traders.

Don't forget this year's theme is **Mallory-Wheeler** and you are invited to bring a display reflecting this company's long and



notable roll in developing doorknobs and related hardware.

In the last issue, ADCA President Dorothy Ann Miller stated to members who have never attended the annual convention, it is not necessary to bring a display. Attending the programs, visiting with collectors and dealers, viewing the displays and possibly buying or trading some knobs will, in itself, be a rewarding experience and we think you will be back next year.

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. ■



1988 Indianapolis
Convention Hall

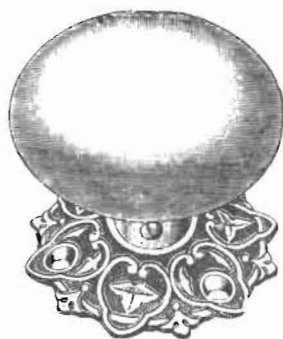
Porcelain Doorknobs

by Maud Eastwood

This third and final article in the series on black, brown and white pottery knobs deals with the white variety. Until the last few years, mail order and builder's hardware catalogues perennially offered these knobs. They were listed as Mineral, Jet and Porcelain; they were survivors and probably will still be found at flea markets even as the end-time trumpet is blowing! Some types are definitely more collectable than others.

Both potter's clay and porcelain body knobs are represented in this trio, therefore, basic differences other than color occur. Jet and Mineral knobs formed of common clay remain porous clay wares through both baking and glazing. Porcelain knobs are formed of sophisticated white clays fired at extreme temperatures that cause vitrification, changing the body in the process, to a glassy surfaced, non-porous ware of great strength. Tracing these porcelain knobs to their original sources is virtually impossible, since large numbers of potteries produced them, each listing a number of like or near-like options.

Round, oval and ball shaped porcelain knobs were offered with the round type sometimes having a bulbous shape, sloping contour or thick or thin body. A porcelain knob in the

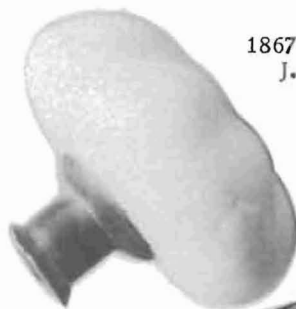


Mallory, Wheeler & Co.

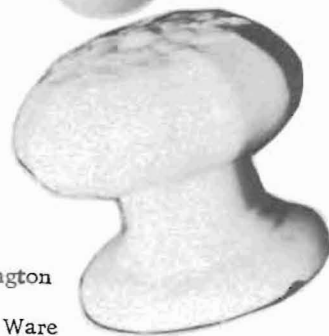
Dorothy Miller collection has decoration accomplished in the shape and is believed to be an example of the J. Euteneuer design patent of 1867, an early (if not the first) patent given for a doorknob design. In 1879, Branford sold porcelain "square band" models, (pg. 110, ABH*)

Each company listed specific combinations of shank and rose treatment. Cast iron was standard—usually with a japan finish—but was often plated with brass or bronze. Other shank and rose combinations in metal and finish included brass or bronze, cast or wrought; cast iron, plated with nickel or silver; cast brass with nickel or silver plated shanks combined with porcelain roses; real bronze or bronzed iron shanks paired with ornamental bronze rose; and cast iron shanks with steel ornamental roses. (see TAD*, p55)

Mallory, Wheeler & Co. provided round or elongated roses of ornamental gold bronze metal for their Pearl White (porcelain) knobs in 1882. Norwalk offered silver plated and capped shanks with porcelain roses. One of Branford's 1886 models featured a designed cast iron shank (pg 111, ABH). Russell & Erwin, in 1865 listed porcelain knobs decorated in gold or gold and flowers, (pg. 48, ABH) but without illustrations, so the patterns are unknown.



1867 Design Patent
J. Euteneuer



1845

Bennington

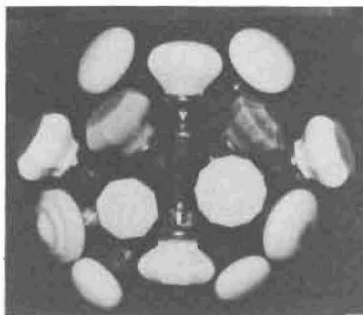
Parian Ware

The Doorknob Collector

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In use, common porcelain knobs were preferred for ground-floor passage doors and the mineral and jet for cellar and upstairs use, however, there is extensive evidence that larger sized porcelain knobs with porcelain roses were used on entry doors across the land, particularly on frame houses. The finer grades of this type knob - those with cast brass, or bronze or silver plated shanks paired with silver roses and key escutchions were used with mahogany doors of fine homes of the 1850's - 1870's. A heavy grade porcelain knob with brass fittings was sold for ships hardware in the 1860's.

The history of porcelain making goes back into antiquity. Europe wrestled with perfecting their product for 100 years before America started dealing with it. The field is wide and complicated and inter-play between the English and American contingents reads like and exciting novel. An important American pottery of 1869, partly staffed with experienced English pottery figures actually folded when they were unable to find a viable American market for their high-grade porcelains, due to prejudice in favor of foreign goods. Interestingly, seven years prior, Carpenter and Tildesley congratulated themselves as being the first Wolverhampton lock maker to duplicate (with the aid of a pottery) American porcelain door-knobs "in their entirety." Yet, in 1875, a reliable



source stated that American potters were still passing off their wares as foreign made, in order to have a market.

Great changes were effected on the American porcelain knob scene in the 1860's and 1870's, largely through important potteries in New York, Long Island and Greenpoint and Branford in Connecticut. Numbers of patents were let for knob making machines, dies for forming knobs and methods of attachment. In 1869, Thomas Sloan of Bronxville patented a machine that could produce knobs of any desired contour, through the adaptation of different die faces. Russell & Erwin buildings in 1849 included a pottery.

The porcelain field is wide. Fine china lovers, hearing the term "porcelain" conjure visions of delicate hand-painted specimen finished with gold leaf decoration. An un-romantic collector, conversely may see only cast-iron shanked, mail-order types in his mind's eye. Between the two versions - the first a hardpaste porcelain of mar-free surface and the second, a soft-paste version with a vulnerable glaze - are a vast array of types deserving recognition: Contrived crackle

wares in the Chinese tradition, with or without colored veining; knobs of contoured design; certain specialty company models; simulated marble; Bennington Parian Ware knobs; Delft types; printed and transfer designed knobs. (For examples of porcelain, note the illustrations and appropriate pages in the ABH color section and company material, also TAD pg.45-58.)

Which are the most collectable common porcelain doorknobs? Those with fine metal shanks, capped shanks, decorated through unusual body configuration or with technical differences unique to specialty manufacturers. ■

Apology

We, the editors of The Doorknob Collector, apologize to our readers for a remark which appeared in the May-June 1989 issue.

Sometimes a word is inadvertently used by an author and then slips by the watchful eyes of an editor. Such was the case in the article titled "What A Treasure." The reference to how a price was reached was inappropriate and in extremely poor taste. We apologize to all who were offended by this remark.

We pledge a more diligent policy of editing and ask your forgiveness.

Ornamental design in antique doorknobs

by Len Blumin

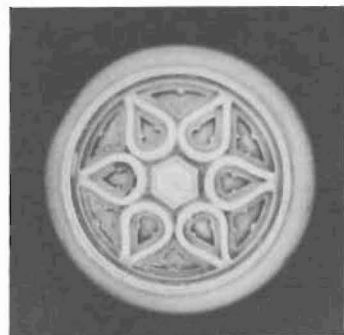
SIXFOLD SYMMETRY

- J-307 "Austerlitz," Empire School, Yale & Towne, 1893 catalog.
J-308 "MECCA," Russwin, 1909 catalog. Wrought.
J-309 Wrought. Could be with the "swirls."
J-310 Gothic.
J-311 Nicer Gothic.
J-312 "Belfort," Sargent. Gothic.

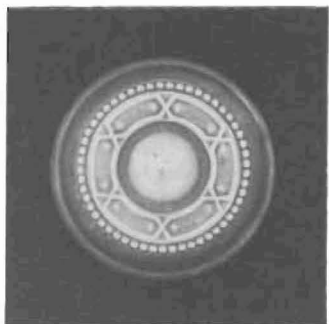
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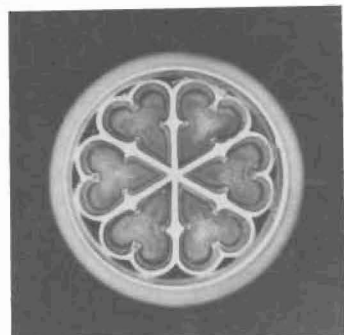
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J-308



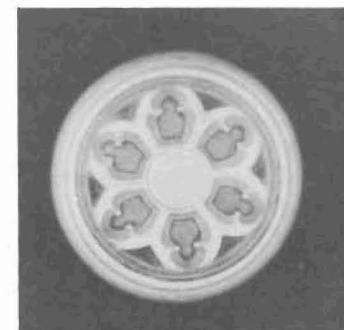
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J-309



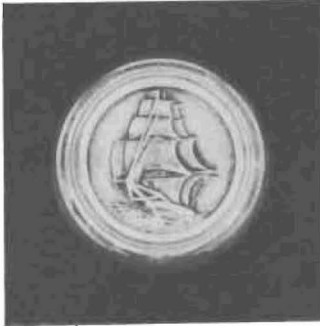
J-312



EMBLEMATIC, ETC.
(continued)

- O-107 Ship, possibly from a Boston bank.
O-108 Seal of Minnesota. These farmers kept their guns handy!
O-109 Jamaica, New York, Beaver.
O-110 Seal of New York, (Photo reversed, sorry.)
O-111 Possibly a treasury variant. Niles/Chicago.
O-112 Treasury seal. One of the best of many.

O-107



O-110



O-108



O-111



O-109



O-112



DOORKNOB COLLECTING - A PRIMER

PART I - REASON FOR COLLECTING DOORKNOBS

by Len Blumin

It would not be stretching the truth to say that there are as many different reasons to collect doorknobs as there are doorknob collectors. Each of us reacts in a very personal way to these inanimate "relics," based on our personality, upbringing, aesthetic values, and myriad other factors. We have all been asked (endlessly, it seems) by non-collectors "why" we do it, and have struggled to explain a complex motivation that cannot easily be put to words. This article will explore some of these motivations.

Aesthetics. "I like them." There is perhaps no better reason to collect (doorknobs or anything else, for that matter), nor any better explanation to give the querulous. We like them because they are pleasing to look at and handle, beautifully crafted, handsomely designed, strikingly colored, whimsical, or just plain funky. We like them, so there!

Utility. Most collectibles have some aesthetic appeal, but few are as downright useful as antique hardware. This is especially true for the owner of a vintage home that has been stripped of its adornment by the ill-guided efforts of previous "modernist" occupants. Many of us have started out as restorers, interested largely in the historical integrity of our dwelling, only to find that the materials accumulated in the effort to restore



is the accumulation of antique builder's hardware, most especially doorknobs. Symptoms tend to be emotional. There is a strange serenity that a doorknob collector experiences when reviewing his treasures. It's sort of like petting a cat - your blood pressure drops, pulse slows, muscles relax, and you forget for a few moments the insanity of the outside world that seems hellbent on violence and environmental destruction. There is a comforting "permanence" about our hardware that cannot be challenged by the modern-day counterparts. There is also a strange kind of mental satisfaction in being able to isolate a very tiny sphere of human-kind activity, to study it in all its richness, and to emerge with a real grasp of the subject. These are just a few of the symptoms of this new disease. We would be interested in hearing of other problems being suffered by those afflicted.

Investment. As doorknob collecting grows in popularity (it may soon challenge barbed-wire collecting), a market has developed for the resale of such objects, which in turn has encouraged a few strongbacked antique dealers to become specialist in antique hardware. To these hardy souls we offer our highest thanks. The scant return they get from salvaging what other consider "junk," and reselling the wares to us, saves thousands of hours and miles spent scouring had become the basis for a "collection." An important function of the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America is to provide assistance to those seeking historically accurate replacement hardware for older buildings.

History. If only the knobs could tell the stories of the hands that turned them! There is a wealth of history behind each knob, as Maude Eastwood has so lovingly taught us. There are patents regarding both function and design, stories of designers and manufacturers, and lessons in the history of the industrial revolution and the birth of American's emerging economic greatness. Not to mention the buildings themselves on which the hardware had resided, buildings mostly gone, or "renovated," but whose spirit may be recaptured in part by viewing the salvaged



Comraderie

Continued from Page 6

hardware. The sublime beauty of the tracery patterns in the Louis Sullivan hardware for the Chicago Stock Exchange is but one example. We commend those collectors that carefully record any and all details known concerning the origins of the hardware they acquire.

"Collection-itis." This is a disease afflicting about one in three adults. No known cure. Commonest forms exemplified by those collecting useless bits of paper (stamps) and metal (coins). Newly discovered rare and sophisticated variation of this disease flea markets and swap meets for that never-to-be-found doggie knob. Of course we still go to the flea markets, but once a year we can go to the A.D.C.A. convention and besiege the tables of our dealer-members, to make up for the many journeys that proved fruitless. The value of antique hardware will be the subject of the future article. Suffice it to say that I know of no collector that has made a profit from

his hobby, or cares to for that matter.

Comraderie. With few exceptions, each collector came upon doorknob collecting serendipitously, shyly exploring this offbeat territory, convinced he or she must be the only person in the world "crazy" enough to indulge in such a pursuit. Then there was a rumor of another "crackpot" in the next town similarly inclined. Then, miraculously, an honest-to-goodness book called "The Antique Doorknob." Collectors surfaced from around the country, heeding Maude Eastwood's clarion call, and the seeds of A.D.C.A. were sown. The warm relationships between members that have been fostered through yearly convention and correspondence now provide a major reason for many to continue active in the hobby.

Undoubtedly I have omitted the major reason that you collect antique doorknobs. This was intentional, so as to encourage you to write and article about it for The Doorknob Collector. ■

ANTIQUE MAGAZINE OPENS SOME DOORS

The May/June 1989 issue of The Review, Cape Cod's Arts & Antique Magazine did a one page story on doorknobs. The article, Opening New Doors With Vintage Doorknobs was written by Sheryll Hirschberger.

In addition to the full page story there was a page, in color, of doorknobs. From the article, we assume they were knobs from Robert Beaulieu's collection.

Hirschberger did a fine job of covering the history, types of knobs and Maud Eastwood and Beaulieu's interests. ADCA was also mentioned.

The Review is a relatively new publication dating back about four years. It is published six times a year and subscriptions are \$15 per year. For more information about the doorknob article or the magazine, write to: The Review, Box 34, Centerville, MA 02632. ■



Mallory, Wheeler & Co.

ROSTER UPDATE

Addition:

#101 Robert J. Beaulieu
33 Church Street
W. Dennis, MA 02670

#186 Eugene & Betty Burger
17811 Terry Court
Cleveland, OH 44119

#184 Dan Sheehan
Phone: 209-931-6661

#187 Gary Murphree
Sargent & Greenlead, Inc.
1 Security Dr.
Nicholasville, KY 40356

Changes:

#8 Loretta & Ray Nemec
Zip code: 60563-2233

#104 Marie & John Osborne
432 Arlington
Birmingham, MI 48009

Corrections:

#108 Correct last name is
HART

ADDRESS CHANGE:

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, IL 60519-0126.



ROSE IS ROSE—by Pat Brady

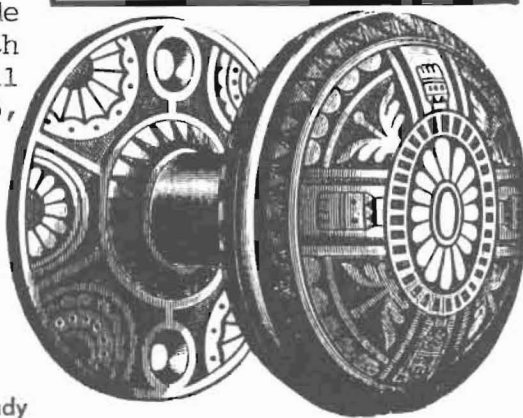
LETTERS

Missed convention pictures.

You are doing a great job on **The Doorknob Collector**. I especially like the classified ads and the section by Len Blumin, but would like to see it as a separate pull-out section. I also like articles by different collectors. I did miss the pictures of everyone who was at the convention.

Vince Noe, Metamora, IL.

(Editors note: A number of members expressed disappointment we did not carry very many pictures of the 1988 convention. Would you like to see Convention in Action, as it appeared in the November-December 1987 issue, be revived? Please let us know, either by mail or at the convention. This publication is for you and your in-put makes the newsletter what it is.) ■



CLASSIFIED AD SECTION

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

WANTED. Eight plain box shaped wood doorknobs. I am also in the market for fancy or colored glass and other odd materials. Will buy or trade. Have lots of brass and iron for sale. Vince Noe (#56), 402 W. Walnut, Metamora, IL 61548.

WANTED. Art Deco light fixtures, glass shades, etc. Carlos Ruiz, (#52), 2333 Clement Ave., Alameda, CA 94501. Phone 415-769-6062.

WANTED. To buy or trade for, Crow Doorknob (A-111, **THE DOORKNOB COLLECTOR**, Issue #27, page 4). Ray Nemec, 1424 Heatherton Dr. Naperville, IL 60563-2233.

FOR SALE. Addenda to "Victorian Decorative Art." 1st addenda. Additional information on over 100 doorknobs. \$2 prepaid. ADCA, Dept. VDA, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126.

FOR SALE. Supplement Number One to Antique Builders Hardware by Maud Eastwood for \$4.75 plus 50¢ shipping and handling for each book. ADCA, P.O. Box 126, Eola, IL 60519-0126.

