

# The Doorknob Collector

Number 94

March-April 1999

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

## The Turk's Head Building

By Faye Kennedy

Does this face look familiar to you? You might have seen it on knob O-312 in the July-August 1998 newsletter. It was described as probably Masonic, perhaps Mystic Shrine. A phone call from a friend inspired Rich to take a quick trip to Providence, RI and may have helped solve the mystery. Standing across the street and looking upward, Rich surveyed this impressive figure over the front door of the Turks Head Building. The similarity to the knob was unmistakable.

It was in 1912 that a skyscraper was built in the Turks Head area of Providence. This V-shaped building, a smaller version of the famous Flat Iron Building in New York City, was described as the tallest building in New England at the time.

The new building, at the junction of Westminster and Weybosset Streets, took the place of 50 businesses and grew daily until it reached 16 stories high. We read in The Providence Sunday Journal (October 9, 1988) that "The new building featured an elaborate granite and brick exterior, street-level columns and a rounded front with a fierce, chiseled Turk's head ...".



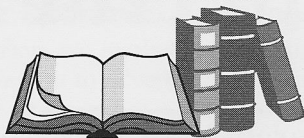
Today there are flashing signs and advertisements everywhere you look in a city. But, in a time long-gone, a business was identified by a symbolic figure or sign that stood or hung in front of its place of commerce. Any of you who have taken a stroll along the walking streets and alleys of Europe know of what I am speaking. Beautiful signs hang above the doors for all to see. Bunches of grapes, golden balls, wild stags, swine, bakery goods, all call out a welcome to the shopper. The custom for businessmen was to include in their advertisements a phrase such as "At The Sign Of The Grapes" (or "The Turks Head"). Well, it was such a painted sign that was the origin of the Turk's Head corner of Providence.

(Continued on page 3)

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## From the Archives



By Steve and Barbara Menchhofer

How important are catalogs to you? They have become very necessary tools for some. Besides the hardware collector, many antique dealers and reproduction hardware companies use catalogs.

How do you identify your doorknobs--by looking on the back of the knob or escutcheon for the manufacturer's name or initials? Do you look at the way their shanks are made? Do you ever question the person from whom you purchased your doorknobs about the knobs' history? What if you draw a blank on the above questions? This is where catalogs come into play.

By using your catalogs you might find the answer to what company made your doorknobs, in what finishes they were available, in what sizes they were offered, and what types of related hardware were made and sold in the same design. Without these descriptive illustrated books we would be limited in our knowledge of hardware. We should peruse these books and educate ourselves about hardware. How important are catalogs to you?

## Contributors

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions of ideas, articles and information presented in this issue.

Len Blumin  
Barb and Steve Menchhofer  
Loretta Nemec  
Maude Eastwood  
Win Applegate  
Larry Bolen  
Marjorie Weimer  
Ed Sobczak

## THE CASE OF THE MISSING ROSE

By Len Blumin

Recently I received a note from a new member who had acquired the "Priest" knob, A-205. She wondered if a specific rose or backplate exists that matches the design. I replied that I have owned the knob, and seen it perhaps a dozen times at ADCA conventions, but had never seen it with a rosette or escutcheon. That got me to thinking. Most knobs are sold as part of a "set". So what happened to the rose (or escutcheon) that must have at one time been used behind the Priest knob?

I immediately thought of the Statue of Liberty knob, A-206. It too has appeared at conventions, and like A-205, always by itself, with no rose or backplate. Other knob designs come to mind, such as Christopher Columbus (A-316), the Indian knob (A-317), and the Clipper Ship (O-107): rose-less all.

What gives? I think the answer lies in the type of building that must have featured most, if not all, of these designs. We know that several of them were from banks or hotels, in other words, "commercial" buildings. When such buildings were remodeled or destroyed, the knobs could have been removed relatively easily, but the heavy plates or commercial locks were another matter, and were often left behind.

Thus I suspect that the Priest knob once adorned a commercial building, perhaps a theater or hotel. We could speculate that when the building was "re-modeled", the designer decided to replace the knobs, but kept the existing backplates and lock sets, which were probably relatively plain and would go with any new knob design. A commercial use would also explain why we don't find

these designs shown in the standard hardware catalogs, as most were produced "specially" for a particular building. What do you think?



A-205



A-206

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## The Turk's Head Building (Cont'd)

In 1763 the Providence Gazette printed the following advertisement: "*Smith and Sabin, Hereby notify their Customers and others, that they have entered into Partnership, and have opened their new Shop called the Sultan, at the Sign of Mustapha, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, at the Corner near the East End of Weybosset Great Bridge in Providence, where they have a complete Assortment of European, East and West India Goods, which they will sell at the very lowest Rate, besides using their Customers in the most obliging Manner.*" [from a brochure presented by The Old Stone Bank, Providence, RI, May 18, 1931].

The original was simply a painted sign with a kindly bearded-Sultan wrapped in an elaborate turban. As the shop was "under the sign" it was known as "Sultan's Head". Later a fierce wooden carving took the place of the painted sign and became known throughout the area. The carved figure has traditionally been thought of as coming from a ship, the *Sultan*, but this part of the figure's history is a bit murky.

In 1791, Jacob Whitman, Jr., the owner of the land where the Turk's Head Building stands today, began calling the carving the "Turk's Head". Mr. Whitman believed that the original sign was copied from a carved head of a Turk that identified a printing establishment in Fleet Street, London around 1670. His house in Providence had a large piazza on the second floor and he erected a post in one corner and displayed the Turk's Head carving for all to see until 1815. This carving is described as having a hideous appearance with the "head enveloped in a black turban, the eyes enormous, staring from their sockets, the nostrils distended

as if breathing perdition and ruin, the mouth open, with beard and moustache, and the fiery tongue hanging out broad and long as if to lap up whole schools of human beings as they passed! It was painted in the most exaggerated colors, and [sic] the terror of all strange children, and was a never-ending subject of remark to the country people who came in to market." This certainly makes today's angry face seem much less fierce than that of the past.

This corner of Providence has evermore been known as Turk's Head. It remains a symbol of downtown Providence to this day. According to Paul Davis, the author of the article in The Providence Sunday Journal, the building inspired a very bad poem, but one line is worth a quote.

*"But always at the junction where the lanes of traffic meet, a grim and granite visage keeps a guard above the street."*



O-213  
c. 1912, Manufacturer  
Unknown

The Turks Head Club was formed as the building was being constructed by a group of businessmen who met for luncheons. The original invitation to new members stated, "It is the intention of the committee to form a club which will give to its members practically the same facilities as are furnished in the down-town luncheon clubs in New York City." The club has been a great success ever since. The Turks Head appeared on the

stationery and menu cards of the Turks Head Club.

However, among all the articles concerning the building, there was no mention of the doorknobs, but maybe that is because writers are looking through the door instead of at the beautiful hardware in their hands. However, having compared the edifice with the knob, there is little doubt that the knobs are somehow related to the building. They were certainly custom made, although we still do not know the manufacturer of the knob. The date of the knob is probably that of the building, around 1912.

## New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the ADCA:

Anton Wetzel	Huntington, NY
Andrew Maltz	Little Ferry, NJ
John Hay	Goshen, IN
Mark Dooley	Sewell, NJ
Lynne Stephens	Topeka, KS
Sharon Black	Portland, OR
Ronald Ehle	Mendocino, CA
Gerald Leaders	Dunlap, IA
Judith Dautcher-Barone	Warminster, PA
Skip Willett	Pasadena, CA
Robert Kaiser	Peoria, IL
Michael McHill	Cromwell, CT
Jim Watzon	Mandeville, LA
Ronald Eggers	Seattle, WA

## New Member Policy

Membership in ADCA follows the current calendar year. Anyone joining between January and September is enrolled for the current year and receives all the issues of **The Doorknob Collector** for the current year.

New members after September 30th will be enrolled as members for the following year. They will begin receiving **The Doorknob Collector** with the Jan-Feb issue of the next year.

# CONVENTION '99 IS COMING

From Cathy Galbraith, our 1999  
Convention host

## "DOOR HARDWARE SCHOOLS OF DESIGN - CONVENTION '99"

### TENTATIVE 1999 ADCA CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Portland, Oregon - "The Rose City"  
- welcomes the 1999 ADCA  
Convention, to be held Wednesday  
through Saturday, August 4th - 7th,  
1999. Expect a great attendance, a  
jam-packed convention, and an  
outstanding auction.

**Wednesday, August 4th:** Tour  
Day: A bus tour is being planned to  
include Portland's (and beyond)  
historic and scenic wonders, taking  
you to sites that would be difficult  
to visit on your own. The local  
host committee hopes to schedule a  
tour of Portland's historic and  
opulent Pittock Mansion (publicly  
owned historic property) and drive  
through the Columbia Gorge  
National Scenic area to Timberline  
Lodge, atop Mt. Hood. An evening  
reception at Rejuvenation, a  
treasure trove of all things historic  
for vintage buildings, will conclude  
the day.

#### Thursday, August 5th

Buy, sell, trade your hardware.  
Balloting for display awards will  
take place, educational sessions  
during the day.

#### Friday, August 6th

Buy, sell, trade some more!  
Educational sessions. Public  
welcome during the afternoon.  
Displays are to be taken down at  
4:00 PM. Evening Banquet

### Saturday, August 7th

Buffet breakfast. Convention  
closing event is the eagerly  
anticipated AUCTION!

### The Hotel

The Convention Hotel is the  
historic MALLORY HOTEL at the  
"western edge" of downtown  
Portland (729 SW 15th Avenue and  
Yamhill). This is a lovely old-  
fashioned hotel with all the up-to-  
date amenities, at reasonable rates.  
Free parking in the secure adjacent  
garage is provided for hotel guests.  
Hotel reservations should be made  
by calling the Mallory Hotel at  
(800) 228-8657.

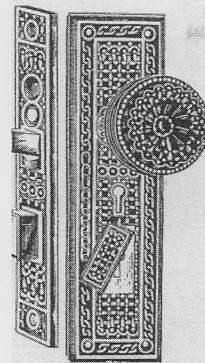
Convention display days and  
banquet will be held at the historic  
Scottish Rite Center (Masonic  
Lodge Building), right next door to  
the Hotel (709 SW 15th Ave.).

*Make your plans now to attend the  
convention this summer. Mark  
your calendar!*

### Ernest Hemmingway Foundation Looking for "Elaine"

The ADCA has received a  
request for help from Elaine  
Harrington, a member of the  
Restoration committee of The  
Ernest Hemingway Foundation of  
Oak Park Illinois. The group is  
restoring the birthplace of Ernest  
Hemingway and needs our help in  
locating some knobs and hinges. I  
will simply relay the message here.

"Earnest Hemingway's birth  
place is a Queen Anne style house  
where the author lived as a small  
child. On the first floor the  
hardware on the principle doors  
was the "Elaine" pattern from the  
Reading Hardware Company. We  
have need for 6 sets - hinges,  
knobs, and escutcheon and strike

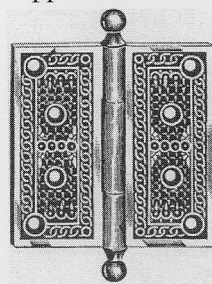


plates. On the  
second floor a  
less fancy pat-  
tern was used  
and it has been  
easier to fill in  
the few missing  
parts there.

The  
Hemingway  
birthplace is  
open to the

public. The restoration is con-  
tinuing through the spring with a  
target date for completion in July,  
in time to celebrate the centenary of  
the author's birth on July 21.

The original porch on the house  
has been restored, giving it the  
appearance it had in historic  
photographs. In the interior, wall  
colors and finishes are being  
replaced, woodwork refinished, and  
a few more modern windows are  
being returned to their original  
configuration. Accessible bath-  
rooms have been added in the  
basement, and new heating and air  
conditioning equipment installed.  
The volunteer organizers of the  
restoration have been diligently  
raising funds for work on the  
building over the last few years  
through public programs and grant  
applications."



If your are able  
to help them  
locate some of  
this much  
needed  
hardware,  
please contact  
them directly:

The Ernest Hemingway Foundation  
of Oak Park  
PO Box 2222, Oak Park, IL  
60303-2222  
Phone: (708) 949-2222  
Fax: (708) 386-2952  
Web Address:  
<http://hemingway.org/hemingway>



## Looking Forward to Convention 1999

By Maude Eastwood

ADCA conventions of the past largely targeted well-known builders' hardware companies and highlighted their wares, thus filling the club's charter-mandated educational role. This year's non-company oriented theme, **Door Hardware Schools of Design, Convention '99**, focuses on yet another important educational aspect available through the ADCA.

Collectors will be given the opportunity to acquire a working knowledge of design motifs attributed to various cultures throughout history and to assign these designs to a specific School of Design (or School of Architecture or of Ornamentation, as also known). This information, assimilated, will become an invaluable aid in today's burgeoning door hardware market as a means to recognize and to catalog designs.

As noted in Len Blumin's *Decorative Victorian Art*, this method of classification - by design school - was first advanced for door hardware by Yale & Towne who aimed at keeping a "handle" on their large and diverse stock of ornamental hardware.

Note that presenting the Schools of Design classification system in no way supplants nor competes with Blumin's unique and indispensable system to locate a pattern by design characteristics. Blumin's system is irreplaceable (see Jan-Feb 1999 newsletter, pg. 10). Also note that a number of significant examples in Blumin's book were identified by design school.

All ADCA members stand to benefit from material that will appear in subsequent newsletters

relevant to the convention's theme. Hand out material will also be offered at the convention. Members who in the past have availed themselves of background on the "Schools" system where fine cast metal ornamental designs of specific themes were listed in appropriate schools, will find the material further enlightening and useful for review. Newer members will benefit significantly, and collective benefit will result when experienced and novice collectors are able, together, to vocalize using terms internationally accepted, when referring to art classification applicable to door hardware designs.

Sources of Schools of Design information and/or illustration may be found in the following publications, but by no means are limited to those mentioned.

Yale & Towne Locks and Builders  
Hardware, 1904, 1910, and 1929

Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., 1899  
Catalog, VI. XI; 1901, Vol. 10;  
and 1923, Vol. 14.

Lockwood Hardware  
Manufacturing Co. c. 1900,  
catalog of plates.

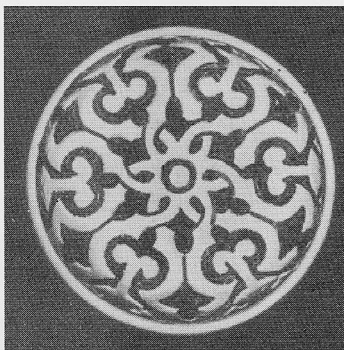
Reading Hardware Company,  
1910, Locks and Hardware.

P&F Corbin, 1905.

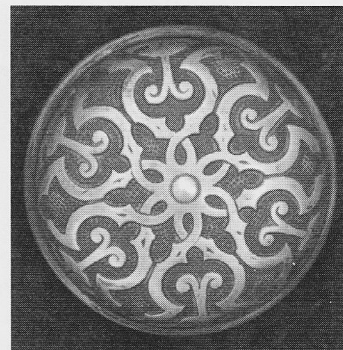
## Sharp Eyes, Great Memory

*The following is a note we received from Len Blumin in response to his numbering of new knobs in the last issue.*

"With over 1000 doorknob designs in print, it is no small matter to keep track of them and assign new numbers. Every once in a while I goof. Nothing pleases me more than to have a sharp-eyed member cry, "Aha!", and write to question my accuracy. It merely proves that some members really care about hardware design, and spend time in the study and appreciation of what we publish. So thanks to Ed Sobczak (#154) for noting the similarity of knob J-115 (shown in TDC #93) to the previously published knob J-224 (shown in TDC#44). They are in fact two versions of the same design, as Ed point out. J-224 was a photo of a cast iron knob, with the background darkened to bring out the design elements. J-115 is a more finely crated bronze knob, and features subtle refinements of the J-224 pattern. Had I noted the similarity, a number such as J224a would have been assigned, to indicate a "related design", or "variation", instead of J-115. But to avoid further confusion I will leave things as they are and just thank Ed for his fine sensitivity to design elements."



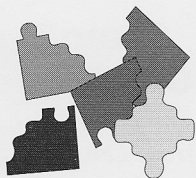
J-224



J-115

## Bits and Pieces

By Win Applegate



How do you spell "Doorknob"? Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Well, at least that's not the only way to spell it on the Internet.

If you want to be up on your doorknob collecting or your hardware research, you need to "touch" the Internet, specifically the auction service known as **Ebay** at <http://www.ebay.com>. Here, most anything is for sale through an on-line auction. You say you don't bid? Well, that's OK, but if you become even a voyeur, you may see hardware that you have never seen before or, perhaps even knew, existed.

When you enter Ebay, you are presented with a 'Search' screen where you can enter a key word and Ebay will search all current auction items (probably several 100,000) for that key. Now, here is where the spelling comes into play. To some sellers, **OUR** word is really two words; to others it might be presented as plural; to others 'knob' might be spelled 'nob'. Put these various combinations of variables together and it will be necessary to do several searches. Might there be others? Yes, but even your 'best' collector friends may not readily tell you other keys that they have found. (can you say "paperweight"?)

Many aficionados find the whole process exciting. Typically, much of the action occurs within the last hour of the usual seven-day life of each auction. Sometimes, the communication lines, the Ebay main computer, and the software get so much last minute activity that the system slows to a crawl and many last minute bids do not get recorded ... I hear that 'they' are working on it.

Find the spelling facet interesting? Well, how about those classic pressed glass knobs of, what I consider to be, the '20's? Here is just a sampling of how this type of glass is listed: shabby chic old pressed, vintage set, bright clear, glass and brass (or silver), antique, decorative, silvered star, decorative and "appears very old". Now, that is just about one week's worth of action on pressed glass.

I really don't want to carry this much further, except to say that porcelain often gets tagged as black glass, onyx, or white glass.

Other spelling, grammar, or typos? ... not important; it's all in the game. Decide to skip what you think is a description of pressed glass and you might miss a rare knob. This caveat goes for most any other search key. Not interested in 'latches'?; well, the other week you would have missed a bell pull. And we go on and on.

The Ebay scene is full of inaccuracies, accuracies and even some humor; describing two glass knobs, the owner said "One has turned a wonderful amethyst color, the other is holding out".

Prefer the research/historic side to our decorative Victorian hardware and you occasionally find verification of a manufacture that was only considered a 'possible' in "Victorian Decorative Hardware".

Why don't you visit Ebay, I don't think you will be sorry.

### Letters From Our Readers

Each month we receive letters from our club members. Many of them are about administrative business, but we also receive interesting tidbits and observations. We have a letter from Larry Bolen who was looking through some old newsletters and found that knob N-177 which was numbered in issue No. 90 on page 3 (July-August 1998) was also shown in

issue No. 14 in March 1985. There it was identified as "St. Omer" pattern manufactured by Reading although it had not yet been given a number. So mark your newsletter with this further identification. Thanks, Larry, we can use all the help we can get.

We also received a note to "Members of ADCA" from one of our charter members, Marjorie Wiem (#18). I will simply quote her feelings.

"I loved reading of the Convention. I have not been well and do not get to be with my dear friends of ADCA -- memories come racing through my head as I view all of our beautiful antique door knobs and remember our trips to Conventions. Beloved friends, it is so great to know that Em and I spent happy days with old timers. I will be 87 soon and our home has large frames of the lovely knobs we picked up on vacations and hunted in our books to find out who were the makers - so beautiful.

"Members, we will have to sell some and would like to donate the beauties to the museum. Keep in touch. Em loved the exhibit we have of at least 600.

"Keep the club together, enjoy the club and all the parts. I'm so glad people respect and love what the knobs mean to our members and friends. My children respect the beauty and all the knobs stand for. My daughter, Christine, will be at the Oregon Convention with me.

Sincerely, Marjorie H. Wiemer"



N-177  
"St. Omer"  
Reading  
Number 94



## Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



A-327

Truly fine hardware, probably custom order;  
Gothic style escutcheon, perhaps for a church



B-207a

Unusual variation of B-207



H-502

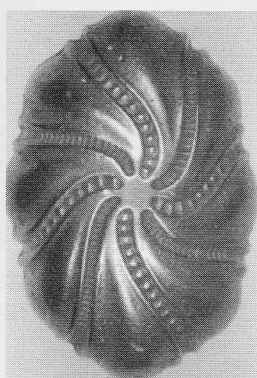
Cast Bronze

Shank has slot near the end (Schroeder type)



N-126a

Variation of N-126



N-175

Cast Bronze

Unknown manufacturer



O-301

Cast Bronze c. 1920

Beautiful commercial logo of Step-Over Shoe Co.

## 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.

**Wanted:** Pair of "Cluny" (E-132) doorknobs by Yale & Towne 2 1/2" x 2 1/4" doorknob with high shank (bronze or brass); 2 1/4" x 2 1/4" doorknob with high shank (bronze or brass) also "Cluny" doorbell (pushbutton) (p 810) Item #1413 4 1/2 x 1 1/2: push button, bronze or brass.

2 or 3 pair of oval "Ionian" doorknobs by Yale & Towne (1920 catalog, p 810) - item #C1167 2 5/8" x 1 5/8" doorknob with low shank (3-piece style spindle)

2 or 3 pair of oval "Ionian" escutcheons by Yale & Towne (1920 catalog, p 810) Item #C1185 plate with No.1 thimble for 3 1/2" to 4 1/2" locks

Sally Fefercorn Hyslop  
2019 Irving Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
PH: (612) 377-8747  
FAX: (612) 377\*8757

**For Sale:** "Normandie" knob (L-110) with plate, 10 sets

Lee Bettenhausen (#281)  
127 Green Bay Road  
Wilmette, IL 60091  
PH: (847) 251-0187  
FAX: (847) 251-0281  
Lee4006@AOL.com

**Wanted:** New collector wants to buy single decorative brass cast knobs in excellent condition. Please send picture, price and diameter to:

Lynne Stephens (#547)  
3034 S.W. Quail Creek Drive  
Topeka, KS 66614

**Wanted:** 9 or 10 flush mounted cabinet latches with matching striker, approximately 2" x 2". Also 8 bin pulls.

Patty Maclay (#389)  
3511 Highway D  
West Bend, WI 53095-8621  
PH: (414) 338-4096

## Ball Bearing Knobs

By Maude Eastwood

Are early 1900 ball-bearing mounted doorknob specimen really as rare as the scanty reports of their findings? Perhaps they go unrecognized through lack of definition or exposure.

Incorporating ball bearings in the shanks of doorknobs was an exclusive Russell & Erwin innovation. In operation, the knob shank rotated on sets of ball bearings fitted in the hardened steel cones. Thereby reducing friction and assuring closer adjustment and eliminating endplay of the knobs.

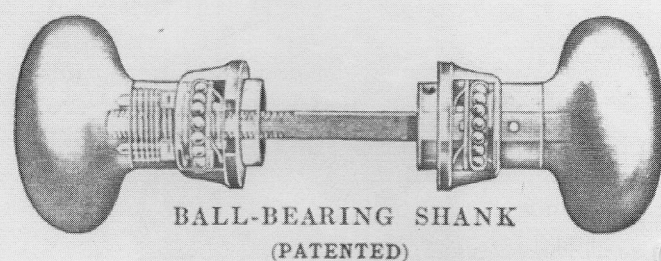
Russell & Erwin's 1909 catalog (the only catalog offering knobs with this feature) added the ball-bearing shank to their list of shank types available or specified for their several types of knobs. Plain, Simplex and Screwless (also patented) being the other shank type options. Spindles for the several shank types also varies, however, the Screwless and Ball Bearing were interchangeable.

Scores of doorknobs listed in the above 1909 catalog were available with ball-bearing shanks, though limited to glass (both pressed and cut) and cast metal knobs. Included were knobs with designs representing the different schools of architecture, lodge and society emblematic and monogram knobs, public school knobs for Newark, New York, Chicago, and Detroit, and state house knobs for Illinois and Kentucky. Thus the number of possibilities was impressive.

To date, John Holland (1981) and Bob Heileman (1997) have reported finding ball-bearing knobs of solid glass inscribed on the bottom "Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co.,

Ball Bearing Knob". Will this inscription appear on all shanks covered by this Russell & Erwin Patent? Feedback on this question is requested, as well as information from other owners fortunate to have acquired a bonafide Ball-Bearing knob.

Below is the drawing of the ball-bearing knob from the 1909 Russell & Erwin catalog. The ball bearing can clearly be seen in the drawing. It is also understandable how a knob might not be recognized as a ball-bearing knob from viewing only the outside of the knob.



## Keep in Touch



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07928-0031



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(973) 635-6993



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<http://members.aol.com/knobnews>