

The Doorknob Collector

Number 137

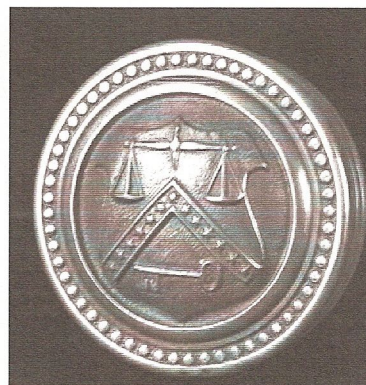
June- July 2006

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

HOPKINS & DICKENSON CONVENTION DISPLAY CONTEST

The theme of the ADCA 2006 Convention will be Hopkins and Dickenson hardware, and this will be the subject matter of the display contest. "Hardware" is not limited to doorknobs, as long as it is from H&D. Awards will be given for the Most Creative Display, the Best Theme Display and finally, the Best of Show. In the **Most Creative** category the test is creativity or imagination, and can use any theme that you wish. In the past, for example, we have had a "Devil" knob with a very scary soundtrack, and, in another year, school buses with knobs (the theme that year was "Schools of Design"). The **Best Theme** display will feature outstanding H&D hardware and **Best of Show** will go to the most outstanding display, regardless of its theme. The membership picks the award-winner in each category.

Just to get all of you in the mood, we are including in this issue a lot of Hopkins & Dickenson eye candy.



Reminder: Convention, September 12-16th; make your reservations at the Holiday Inn Amherst. The ADCA room rate is \$79 per night. You will be receiving a registration packet in the mail. If you do not plan to attend please fill in the proxy vote that will be included in the packet and mail it in.

Holiday Inn Amherst,
1881 Niagara Falls Blvd.
Amherst, NY 14228
(716) 691-8181.

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HARDWARE COMPANY RESEARCH

by Len Blumin

For the past quarter century ADCA has relied heavily on Maud Eastwood for historical research about antique hardware, with occasional scholarly contributions by others such as Ray Nemec. More recently we have been treated to carefully researched Louis Sullivan articles by Al Joslyn and Patty Ramey. Other authors of note include: Win Applegate, Dick Hubbard, Preuit Hirsch, etc. Well, you too can do some research. It is challenging, but great fun, and when you get all the material together we can help, if you need it, to put together an article for *The Doorknob Collector*. Speaking of which, there is perhaps no better source of research material than TDC itself, because Maud and others have already done a lot of the work for you. For instance, Maud wrote an excellent piece, the *History of Mallory, Wheeler & Company*, TDC No. 32, Nov/Dec 1988

I'd like to pass on some ideas you get you started, in the hope that some of you will rise to the task as Al and Patty did. First, try the Internet. It's amazing what you can find using search engines these days, such as Google.com. More importantly, I was amazed to discover the Internet provides the location of the archives of various Connecticut hardware companies at various branches of the University of Connecticut. Apparently these were put on the net circa 2003. Moreover, the archives are indexed. Listed below are the sites I found.

University of Connecticut Archives & Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, 405 Babbidge Road, Unit 1205, Storrs, Connecticut 06269-1205. The collection consists exclusively of 577 volumes and one box of payroll lists and financial ledgers and journals relating to **American Hardware Corporation** and the predecessors and divisions associated with it, including Corbin Cabinet Lock Company, Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company, Corbin Screw Corporation, and P.& F. Corbin. See http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/American_Hardware/MSS19950001.html

The **Sargent and Company** archives are located in the same collection, see <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/online/research/specilib/ASC/findaids/Sargent/MSS19800038.html>

The archives of **Yale & Towne Co.** are located at the University of Connecticut in Stamford. See <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/campuses/stanford/about/y&t.htm>

I have not yet found the archives of Mallory-Wheeler or Hopkins & Dickenson,.

For background, buy and read the excellent works by Thomas F. Hennessy (*Early Locks and Lockmakers of America*, available through the Lock Museum of America) and Maud L. Eastwood (several, but mostly *Antique Builders' Hardware and Accessories – Research Manual and Collector's Guide*, available through ADCA). These books are a "must have" for any serious hardware collector or student of the hard-

The Doorknob Collector®



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Founded Sept 1981, the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** is a non-profit organization devoted to the study and preservation of ornamental hardware.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Directors of ADCA or the editors.

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ware industry. Another useful source is *The Industries of New Haven* (1889), or *The New England States, Vol. 2*, by A.G. Underwood.

Next, choose a favorite subject to concentrate on. The buildings and hardware designs of a single individual such as Louis Sullivan are a good example. Or study a particular aspect of doorknob manufacture like attaching the knob to the spindle, and learn all about the U.S. Patent Office. Or perhaps investigate the history of a single company, such as P. & F. Corbin, or Mallory Wheeler & Co. Here's where it gets to be both fun and a challenge. Plan a visit to the geographic area where the object of your research was located. For Ray Nemec, who did a workmanlike job on Niles/Chicago/Sager, the work was close to home, but for most of us it means a fun trip to Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, etc. Investigate sources before you go, and plan ahead to maximize your time. The Internet can provide very helpful maps and directions (MapQuest, Yahoo, etc.).

I chose Mallory Wheeler as a subject, so that meant a visit to New Haven, CT, which just happens to be where my mom's family is from. Both Mallory Wheeler & Co. and Sargent and Co. were in New Haven. If you chose Corbin or Russell & Erwin then you will head for the New Britain/Hartford area, which is a short drive from New Haven.

So once you arrive, head for the local Historical Society, and dig in! You may not find a wealth of original source material there, but you will find helpful people who can point you in the right direction. For me that meant visiting both the City Library of New Haven and the enormous library system of Yale University (second in size only to the Library of Congress, but in some ways a better resource for original material).

Card catalogs have largely been entered into computer databases, so your work may be simplified, but you may find that much of what you want is in archival areas such as rare book collections, which still may rely on the old style card catalogs. Be prepared to go through a security process at some institutions, which may require you to obtain an I.D. card to access historical material in some libraries, such as in Connecticut State Library (Hartford).

Once you have identified the most likely productive sources, then it's just a matter of sitting down and methodically tracking down the material, and that is the fun part. In one of the many "satellite libraries" at Yale, I was absolutely delighted to not only find a complete original copy of the 1876 Mallory Wheeler Co. catalog, but was thrilled to learn that I could have some copies made of the pages of ornamental hardware. You can now get these copies yourself from the ADCA Archives.



(Yes, the ADCA Archives are another great source of material, especially if you are mainly interested in the designs themselves). And, of course, you should look at the collections of company records at the University of Connecticut, which have largely gone untapped.

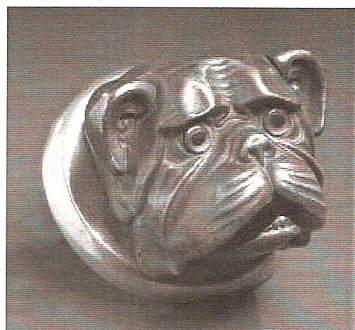
One of the most fun Mallory Wheeler Co. discoveries I made was a scrap of a research article on MW & Co., by an unknown author, found in the files of the New Haven City Library. Hopefully we can reprint that piece in a future issue of TDC.

Good luck in your sleuthing.

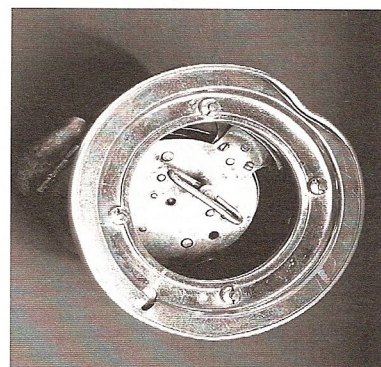


ANOTHER BULLDOG!

So here is the mystery. (Lordy, will the Editor ever quit with that bulldog thing?) In 1994 Red Barron Antiques in Atlanta auctioned off a “Bulldog Doorbell”, which was activated when one pulled on the ears. It was said to be sterling silver and to have originated in England in the early 1900’s. Another version of the “doorbell” – or perhaps the same one – was auctioned off by Cowan’s Auctions in Cincinnati a few months ago. It was described as brass and chrome, and the backplate had a diameter of 4 ½ inches. But the view from the back showed that the “bell” is a



wind-up bell inside the mechanism and there are no holes for attaching it to a door-frame. So it obviously could not have been a doorbell. Any suggestions will be gratefully received. My guess is that it was a bell put on a dining room table and used to summon the help. Incidentally, this “doorbell” sold for less in 2006 than in 1994.



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