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A Nonprofit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware

The J. B. Schroder Company

BY STEVE HANNUM

The family names Schroder and Schroeder have a long history in Cincinnati. They are easy to confuse. Most likely they both come from the German Schröder. S.B. and Christopher Schroder are listed in Shaffer's Advertising Directory for 1839-40 as lock makers. J. B. Schroder first appears in the Cincinnati

City Directory for the year 1842 as a lock maker. By 1849-50 J. B. Schroder is not only a locksmith but also a business owner. The 1850 U.S. Census of Products of Industry reports the business had 7 men employed and produced \$7,500 in product.

By 1857 the business had become John H. Schroder & Co. at the same address. The owners were listed as John H., Mrs. Charles, Lawrence and Richard Schroder. On June 21, 1859 patent number 24,523 was issued to Lawrence Schroder and assigned to John H. Schroder & Co. Then in 1863 Lawrence took over and the business became L. Schroder & Co. This is where the second J.B. Schroder first appears. The owners of L. Schroder & Co. are listed as Lawrence, Richard and John B. Schroder.

Sometime between 1865 and 1866 the final change occurs because is 1866 the directory lists J.B. Schroder, Locksmith and Bell Hanger at the L. Schroder & Co. address. A manufacturing arm is created in 1869 with the creation of Schroder Lock Co. with Lawrence, Richard, J.B. Schroder and others as owners.

The names J. B. Schroder, Locksmith and dealer in Builders' Hardware and Schroder Lock Co. continue to be listed in the city directory through 1887. The officers of Schroder Lock Co. are shown as rotated among the owners. By 1889 J. B. Schroder & Co. is listed as manufacturer and the name Schroder Lock Co. no longer appears in the city directory.

The family relationships between the above Schroder's is difficult to determine. Most of the 1870 U.S. Census records were destroyed in a fire and the 1860 Census did not record names of children.

An article in The Centennial Review of Cincinnati by I. V. Leonard (1888) reported J.B. Schroder & Co. was started by J.B. Schroder the uncle of the present J. B. Schroder. The 1880 U.S. Census listed John B. Schroder as being born in 1836 of parents born in Hannover, Saxony. Cincinnati had a large German population, which drew other German speaking immigrants to the city.

This was a time of great growth in manufacturing. In 1880 Schroder Lock employed 12 skilled

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With the last issue of the TDC, we completed 200 issues. With this issue, we begin the next 200.

men working at \$3 per 12-hour day (times definitely have changed). They produced goods valued at \$50,000 per year. In 1883 "The Industries of Cincinnati", A. N. Marquis, Ed. described the Schroder Lock Company in the following mix of facts and advertising: "The building occupied is a three-story brick, covering 40 by 100 feet of ground, and arranged expressly for the convenient prosecution of the

Established 1834

Tel. Main \ \ \frac{1564}{2432}

J. B. SCHRODER & CO.

Manufacturers of FINE BUILDERS' HARDWARE

No. 133 Fifth Street, East, Works, Church Street

CINCINNATI, O.

business. It is provided with an ample outfit of the latest and best tools and machinery, including power presses, lathes, etc., and every other appliance that can be employed to facilitate the large production required by the trade of the house. The foundry for brass, bronze and plated goods is on the upper floor, and is quite complete in its plant, being fully prepared to meet all the demands of the business. Only experienced workmen age engaged, and every effort is made to produce first-class goods at the least possible cost to the trade.

The company manufactures bank, store, dwelling, jail, and other locks in great variety. They are made in all styles of finish, from plain iron to the finest nickel-plate, and with iron, brass, bronze, or nickel trimming. A large line of brass, bronze, and nickel-plated goods is manufactured, in which the company does a valuable business—locks and bronze goods being the specialties to which the concern is devoted."

Continuing with a description of J.B. Schroder & Co. it goes on to say: "No manufacturing concern in the city surpasses this veteran establishment in age and honorable success. It has long stood at the head of its special line of industry, and occupied a prominent place among the industrial interests of the city generally. The house manufactures all kinds of bank, jail, store, and residence locks, and builders'

hard ware, making a specialty of brass, bronze, and nickel-plated goods, and the putting up of electric and mechanical bells and pneumatic speaking tubes. There is also a large repairing business in locks, bells, annunciators, etc. An extensive stock is carried at all times, embracing a full assortment of all lines, and no similar house in the West has a higher or wider reputation for making the very best goods of the kind, and keeping pace with all new inventions and im-



provements many of the productions of the concern being of its own exclusive construction. This manufactory furnished all the locks and hardware for the State House at Columbus (the Statehouse Annex knob is shown above), all the asylums except the Deaf and Dumb, all the city schoolhouses, workhouse, many jails, the penitentiaries of Ohio and Texas, and most of the public buildings in Illinois, Missouri, and Kentucky. A large business is done in Chicago, a heavy local trade supplied in this city and State, and in Kentucky and Indiana, and a general demand throughout the South and West, with considerable orders from other sections of the country. "

The Centennial Review of Cincinnati in 1888 described J.B. Schroder & Co. as "Manufacturers of and Dealers in Brass, Bronze and Builders' Hardware, Special Locks for Asylums, Hotels, Jails and

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Public Buildings; Office and Salesroom located at the Northeast Corner of Third and Elm Streets, and Factory at 16 and 18 East Seventh Street." It goes on to say:

"The business now is one of the most prosperous in the United States, and the goods manufactured are of the best make and of materials of careful selection. The firm have done work for the majority of office and public buildings in this city, as well as for the capitol building at Columbus, the Ohio State Lunatic Asylum, the Ohio Agricultural College, the State Blind Asylum, Court House and City Hall at Columbus. They have also done work on the Insane Asylum and Custom House at Toledo, O., the Penitentiary building in Texas, and on public buildings at Memphis, Tenn.; Pensacola, Fla.; Columbus, O, Syracuse, N.Y.; Kansas City, Mo., and other cities. The firm makes a specialty of fine bronze goods of special patterns, and employ about sixty-five men, all of whom are skilled in every branch of the business."

I have found little more detailed information about the products of the firm. J.B. Schroder, Jr. moved into leadership of the firm after J.B. Schroder, Sr. died in 1894. The Schroder name appears in leadership of the J.B. Schroder Company until 1915. In the 1940's the firm became Cincinnati Schroder as part of Cincinnati Builders' Supply. And some time later disappeared. The remaining stock of Schroder hardware was purchased by Charles Woods of the Acme Lock Company, Cincinnati, OH. Unfortunately, it has all been sold but continues to make and sell the keys and spindles. They can

be obtained by contacting them directly at www.acmelock.com.

Schroder doorknobs are usually recognized by the cut in the stem of the knob. This cut holds a key that slides into slots in the spindle, shown *at left*. The escutcheon or rose was made to cover the slot and hold the key in place. The stem of the knob extended through the escutcheon and a metal piece was put be-



hind for the knob to rest. So the escutcheons will look similar to those of Chicago Hardware. The photo *at right* shows the knob, key, spindle and back plate. I have found nothing to indicate that the design was patented. In fact, several variations of this method appeared in patents over the years. When and why this design was adopted is lost in history. Knobs in an early Schroder catalog do not use that attachment. And to add confusion I have two knobs of the same design with one using the Schroder attachment and the other a common screw attachment.



Several Schroder knobs are in doorknob collections and are shown in the VDA. Here is a list of those found in the current online version of the VDA.

B-11500	C-11500	C-11501	D-10300	F-23900	H-44200	H-45200
H-45201	H-47700	H-52100	I-12800	K-32100	L-12700	M-17000
M-17900	P-10170	P-13600	P-13610	P-13640	P-21060	P-21061
P-41400	P-42420	P-44470	P-45870	P-50100	P-70710	P-73560
P-80540	P-81020					

"THE SECOND LARGEST HARDWARE CENTER OF THE U.S." – READING, PA.

By Allen S. Joslyn

So boasted William Heizmann, head of Penn Hardware, in 1915, and with good justification. Reading was, or had been, the home of at least four hardware companies: Penn Hardware, Reading Hardware, the Chantrell Hardware & Tool Company and Keystone Hardware. Only New Britain, Conn. ranked ahead.

So, in this article, we will touch on the history of Reading and in this and the next article, what is known of its hardware companies. Unfortunately the records of most 19th century companies are sparse to miniscule. Corporate records were not saved, companies went bankrupt, were sold or just disappeared, people did not write biographies or collect their letters. We do have local histories, catalogues directories, and old newspapers which can now be digitally searched.

Reading, Pennsylvania

Much of the history of Pennsylvania, particularly Eastern Pennsylvania, revolves around anthracite coal, iron, and railroads.

Reading is located on the Schuylkill River, giving it easy access to coal, iron ore. limestone and Philadelphia. (The river was not an unmitigated blessing when winter ice broke up in the spring and occasionally formed ice dams, behind which the river backed up, or otherwise hosted flash floods). The area was a major iron producer from before the Revolution and during those festivities the area's iron production exceeded that of England. It started out with blacksmiths, then small scale foundries and other factories, eventually expanding into a hub of all kinds of producers, from hats to fences to hosiery to sheet iron, etc. Reading was also at the intersection of canals linking it to Philadelphia, to the Susquehanna River and to Harrisburg, but by the 1880s railroads forced their abandonment. It was the home of several automobile manufacturers in the first decade of the 19th century.

Berks County, of which Reading was the seat, had been populated by German immigrants (the Pennsylvania Dutch) in the 18th and early 19th century, a seriously conservative and frugal group. Industrial Reading was distinguished by the fact that the owners of its large businesses were not absentee, but lived right in town, sometimes only a few blocks from their establishments. They were philanthropic in a way absentee owners never would be.

News accounts suggest a prosperous, peaceful, and pleasant town. There were many athletic contests among teams organized by employer, and then sometimes organized by activity within an employer – e.g. The Moulders of Penn Hardware which played basketball. There were frequent meetings of civic organizations and gala public events were occasionally held. For example, in June 1889, the town held a "Monster Parade" in commemoration of its sesquicentennial. The theme was celebration of the success of Reading's manufacturing and mercantile establishments. The *Reading Times* breathlessly reported "The Glittering Pageant Viewed by Thousands who Densely Lined a Route Several Miles in Length."

"THE PROCESSION. . . The first division was made up of fully 4,000 of the employees of two of Reading's great industrial establishments, the Reading and Penn hardware companies, headed by members of the firms and with several beautiful floats."

"The two floats of the Reading Hardware company attracted considerable attention. Both were drawn by four horses and the decorations were black and yellow in the form of a canopy over each. The first was entitled "Progress" and along the sides were the names of cities where they had branch houses. On the front of the first float was a little bell, cast in 1854, which was used when the works were first started to call their 50 employees to work. In contrast with this was the great whistle that is now used in calling to work the 1,200 employees of the establishment. The other float was a wood screw-making machine with the engine operating it."

"The Penn Hardware company had over 400 employees in line, followed by a float drawn by

four horses. It was decked with red, white and blue, on which were 40 girls dressed in patriotic colors. There was a long banner on which was the following inscription in big letters: 'I am much surprised at the progress Reading has made since my last visit in 1748. But I am still more astonished at the growth of the Penn Hardware Company, named after me. Signed Wm. Penn.'"

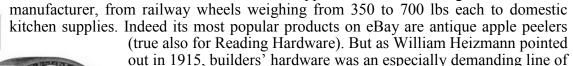
Those were also, however, the times of industrial conflicts between workers and employers, and in Pennsylvania they could get sometimes deadly. The worst in Reading occurred in July, 1877. A national strike of the Brotherhood of Railway Engineers and Firemen spread to Reading and to the employees of the P & R Railroad. The bridge that carried freight westward over the river, and other P & R facilities were torched, tracks ripped up, etc., which provoked the railway's management to request that the State Militia intervene and restore order. On July 11, a passenger train was being blocked by strikers, and the Militia attempted to free it. Strikers threw rocks and the Militia responded with gunfire, killing 11 people, mostly bystanders. One person watching, James Maurer, aged 13, was so affected that he went on to organize a highly successful socialist party. He was elected to the State Assembly and in 1927 Reading gained the distinction of being one of the only three American cities to have a socialist government. Maurer 's retirement in 1936, the coming war and disunity in the party eventually led to disappearance of the party. Later the mob moved in.

Sadly, time has not been kind to Reading, or to much of Eastern Pennsylvania. It remained a vigorous town in the years after the hardware industry disappeared, but the decline in heavy industry and railroads took their toll Suffice it to say that, for a variety of reasons, by 2011 Reading had the highest percentage of its population below the poverty line of any city in the country.

Penn Hardware

It was established in 1877 by Albert and Charles Raymond Heizmann; that family remained in control until 1954. The enterprise prospered. In particular, Charles obtained a number of patents, the most successful of which was a plug tobacco cutter. Penn Hardware beat out a number of leading cutter manufacturers to obtain a contract with Lorillards for 20,000 highly polished machines.

Penn Hardware was not limited to builder's hardware but appears to have been a general hardware



hardware.

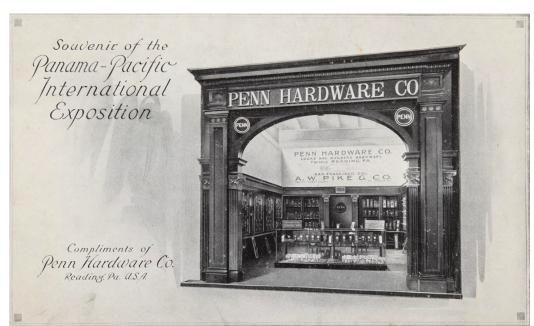
"That builders' hardware is the longest and the most complicated line of goods in the whole rank of industry is evidenced by the publications of the several companies. The Penn Hardware Company's latest catalogue, for example, illustrates and describes some 15,000 items; many of these items, furthermore, are listed in a number of sizes and the majority of them are to be had in 96 different finishes. It follows, therefore, that we must be prepared any day to furnish

any one of at least 35,000 different items of manufacture."

One of Penn Hardware's concerns was to hold on to its name, which others would be happy to ride on. One particularly interesting case occurred in 1903, when the managers of the Reading Hardware Company purchased the assets of one Rick Brothers Hardware Company and proposed to incorporate a "Pennsylvania Hardware Company" to operate them. At some point, however, it dawned upon these gentlemen that their chosen name was similar to Penn Hardware's and might cause "confusion". Accordingly they decided to name the new company "Keystone Hardware Company", and create another company to hold the stock of both companies. The hardware trade was assured that Keystone would be run "in harmony with the interests of the Reading Hardware Company and in no wise as a competitor". (Surprise!).

And when gentle persuasion did not work, Penn Hardware was ready to litigate. In 1908 a West Virginia Company which retailed hardware in Pittsburgh decided to change its name to Penn Hardware and then to Pennsylvania Hardware Company. Suit swiftly followed in the Reading courts and, following an adverse court ruling, the miscreant changed its name. The court noted that even though the defendant operated only at retail in Pittsburgh, the confusion of names resulted in one entity often getting the others' mail.

At the 1903 World's Fair in St. Louis, Penn Hardware not only exhibited, but also supplied the hardware for four hotels, one of which was the only hotel on the Fair grounds and another of which was the largest temporary hotel ever built, just outside the Fair grounds. In 1915, Penn Hardware was awarded the



Gold Medal of Honor at the Panama Pacific International Exposition, which showcased the recovery of San Francisco from the 1906 earthquake. It was particularly known for supplying hotel hardware, and its "Portulaca" line (F-20600) seems have been quite well received. When the Arts and Crafts movement became popular, company was happy to include that style in its line.

We have no information on its later years, espe-

cially after WWII. Eventually, in 1954, control of Penn Hardware was sold to Fred Gershon, who owned Akron Hardware, a large retailer, and its buildings in Reading were abandoned. The location later made the news when the mob, as part of its activities in the city, established a huge still in one of the buildings. These and other activities (such as a large casino) led to a long battle by the Federal authorities to break organized crime's control of vice in Reading. The city Mayor, among others, went to jail.

Nothing of Penn Hardware is left now in Reading.

The Reading Times (on newspapers.com)

The Iron Age, 6/18/1903

Iron Trade Review, 3/5/1903

"Reading, Pa. Knew It Was Poor. Now It Knows Just How Poor" New York Times, 9/26,2011

Engle, Rob, "The Guilded Age in Reading Pennsylvania", <u>The Historical Review of Berks County</u>, Summer 2006

France, Jean, Beth Ann McPherson and Gordon Bock, "In Search of Arts & Crafts Hardware", <u>Old House</u> Journal, Jan-Feb 2004

Montgomery, Morton, "The Iron Industries", <u>History of Berks County</u> (1909) (pp 185-192), available on Google as Bonnie Blau, "Iron Industries in Reading, Pennsylvania"

National Registry of Historic Places: Reading Hardware Company, Berks County, Pa.

"Reading, Pennsylvania" in Wikipedia

Taggert, Edward, When the Rackets Reigned, (Universe, 2008)

Empire State Building Spokane, Washington

The wealth generated by mines in eastern Washington, Idaho, and Montana made Spokane by 1900 the third largest city in the state, and the significant business center in the region. New York native Charles Sweeny (owner of the Empire State-Idaho company) and partner F. Lewis Clark hired Spokane architect John K. Dow in 1900 to design a six story fireproof office building to house both Sweeny's business and other companies. The \$100,000 budget ballooned to \$800,000 due both to material shortages and high quality finishes, including imported marble, and custom ornate ironwork by Winslow Brothers of Chicago. The hardware for the Empire State Building features iron doorknobs by Yale & Towne with an ES monogram reflecting the building's name. building was later sold to Great Western Savings and Loan, who maintained the building with minimal changes other than in stores on the first floor. The 2017 appearance is very similar to the building (at left) below, reflecting community pride for this National Register-listed landmark.



Architect: John K. Dow

905 West Riverside Avenue, Spokane, WA

Standing: 1900-Present

Yale and Towne Manufacturing Co., Stamford, CT



2017 Convention Date Change

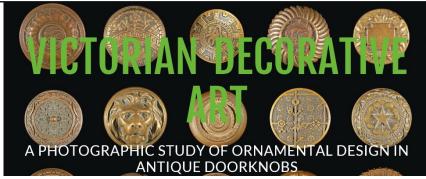
One of the joys of hosting conventions is finding a great venue, announcing the date, and arranging events, tours, etc. Unfortunately, sometimes things change. On December 12, Steve was notified that the convention hotel would be closing on January 1, 2017. Steve has secured a new venue, but our date has changed:

2017 ADCA Convention will be JULY 19-21, 2017 in Indianapolis

Clarion Hotel 2930 Waterfront Parkway West Indianapolis, IN 46214 (317) 299-8400 Rate: \$80.00 per night plus tax, and includes a daily continental breakfast

Mention <u>Antique Doorknob Collectors</u> for group rate

We will have more details in future editions of *The Doorknob Collector*. Remember that the theme for this convention will be "**The Other Guys**", such as Branford, Hopkins & Dickinson, Lockwood, Chicago Hardware, Schroder, and many others. Most of the "Other Guys" made exceptional pieces of door hardware. Bring your best doorknobs and door hardware made by "**The Other Guys**" to show, and sell or trade (Y&T, R&E, Corbin, and Sargent are OK on the last part). Be sure and include items made by that most prolific of hardware makers: **Unknown.**



The website is now live and accepting memberships. Feedback received has been very positive, and many unidentified doorknobs are being identified by ADCA members using the Comments box on each doorknob page.

In order to get full access to the site, you need to go to www.antiquedoorknobs.us, click the Buy Membership link at the top of the page. We have re-organized this page to be a bit less confusing, so that ADCA Individual members can select to buy just the site membership (at the bottom of the options), or renew your ADCA membership (choose Basic, Sustaining, Supporting, Patron, or Benefactor levels) including a website membership (which will have matching expiration dates). Business members can buy just the site membership (at the bottom of the options), or renew your ADCA membership including a website membership (which will have matching expiration dates).

We posted 32 new knobs in December and already have 15 more in January, so are now well north of 2,200 doorknobs on the site at this writing. Send any photos of new doorknobs and related hardware to adcaacct@gmail.com.

New Business Members

Welcome to our newest Business Members, <u>Ohmega Salvage</u> in Berkeley, CA and <u>The Door Store</u> in Toronto, Canada. See listings for all of our Business members on the back page of this newsletter.

The Doorknob Exchange

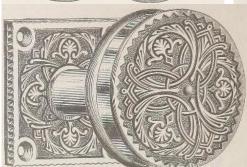
Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade, or wanted at no charge. ADCA is not responsible for any transaction or the condition of the items advertised.

Wanted: Pete Sabine (#933) is trying to round out his Branford collection and needs the rosettes shown in the photos below. Contact Pete at solarpowerpete@tampabay.rr.com.















Membership Office: Faye Kennedy

Paul Woodfin (#829) is seeking a couple of cast iron knobs as shown in pics to the right. If you have either of these that you want to sell or trade, contact Paul at (254) 722-7353 or paul.woodfin@sbcglobal.net.

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January-February 2017

Officers

Our Business Members

These are paid advertisements. The ADCA assumes no responsibility. For further information about these businesses see the Resource section on our website: www.AntiqueDoorknobs.org.

Materials Unlimited

Owner: Reynold Lowe 2 W. Michigan Ave. Ypsalanti, MI 49197



Web Site: MaterialsUnlimited.com

Email: Materials@MaterialsUnlimited.com

Aurora Mills Architectural Salvage

Owner: Mike Byrnes 14971 First St NE Aurora, OR 97002 Phone: 503-678-6083

Fax: 503-678-3299

Web Site: auroramills.com

Email: auroramills@centurytel.net



American Antique Hardware

Owner Keith and Sarah Chilcote

Phone: 503-399-8009

Web Site: americanantiquehardware.com Email: contact@americanantiquehardware.com



Www. Materials Unlimited.com

Liz's Antique Hardware

Owner: Liz Gordon 453 South La Brea Los Angeles, CA 90036 Phone: 323-939-4403 Fax: 323-939-4387

Web Site: lahardware.com/ Email: Shop@LAHardware.com



Albion Doors & Windows

Owner: Larry Sawyer

PO Box 220 Albion, CA 95410 Phone: 707-937-0078

Fax: (call first): 707-937-0078

Web Site: knobsession.com Email: bysawyer@mcn.org



Antique Door Hardware Collector

Owner: Thomas Iannucci 16624 Frederick Rd. Mount Airy, MD 21771 Phone: 240-595-1115



Website: antiquedoorhardwarecollector.com/index.html

Bill's Key & Lock Shop

Owner: Andy Streenz

127 E. Beaufort St. Normal, IL 61761 or 402 N. Main St. Bloomington, IL 61701 Phone: 309-827-5522 or 309.454.1713

Web Site: billskeyandlockshop.com

Email: locksmith@billskeyandlockshop.com

House of Antique Hardware

Owner: Roy Prange

3439 NE Sandy Blvd./PMB 106

Portland, OR 97214



Phone: 888-223-2545 Fax: 503-231-1312 Web Site: HouseofAntiqueHardware.com Email: Sales@HouseofAntiqueHardware.com

The Brass Knob

Owners: Donetta George

2311 18th St. N.W. Washington, DC

Phone: 202-332-3370 Fax: 202-332-5594

Web Site: theBrassKnob.com Email: BK@theBrassKnob.com



KEY LOCK

The Door Store

Owner: Sam Mirshak 1260 Castlefield Avenue Toronto, ON, Canada M6B 1G3

Phone: 416-863-1590

Website: thedoorstore.ca

Email: info@thedoorstore.ca



Webwilson.com

Owner: H. Weber Wilson

PO Box 506

Portsmouth, RI 02871 Phone: 240-595-1115



WEB WILSON'S **ANTIQUE** ARDWARE AUCTIONS

Ohmega Salvage

Owner: Katherine Davis 2407 San Pablo Avenue Berkeley, CA 94702 Phone: 510-204-0767

Website: ohmegasalvage.com

Email: info@ohmegasalvage.com

