The Doorknob Collector

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

THE VENETIAN BUILDING

BY PAUL WOODFIN

One of the great thrills of collecting custom hardware is the story behind the design. Sometimes the design is obvious, like the knob with *Wanamaker 1904* on the face (P-25140) being from the Wanamaker Store in Philadelphia (see TDC #86). Sometimes they are just a mystery, because the only description that exists is words on a page. The Orr & Lockett ad from 1895 (see TDC #188, page 5) described the hardware from the Venetian Building in Chicago

as Aluminum. As noted in the last issue of this newsletter, the Monadnock building had aluminum on the

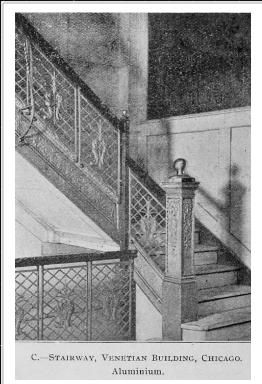


first floor and more common materials on the other floors, so the Venetian may also have used hardware of different metals. Unfortunately, this information does not help identify the design for the hardware.

What was the Venetian Building and what made the building deserve a prominent mention in a national advertisement? The same group of real estate investors who had just completed the Monadnock Building (designed by Burnham and John Root, who had passed away earlier that year) were looking to construct a mid-block medical office building on Washington Street between State and Wabash. The group chose the firm of Holabird and Roche to design their new 12 story building, which would be the firm's fourth tall office building. When the Venetian was completed in 1892, the amount of windows and glass on the façade made this building highly unusual. The exterior featured roman brick and decorative terra cotta, all fitting for a building named after the city of Venice.

The interior featured white Vermont marble walls with mosaic ceramic tile floors (to emphasize light and cleanliness desired by their medical clients), decorative ironwork by Winslow Brothers (recently found in their 1894 catalog as made of aluminum), and the special hardware noted above. Unfortunately the Venetian building was not well

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forming a large "V".



celebrated in contemporary newspaper and architectural journals, likely because it lacked a corner location like it's neighbor shown at left, the Columbus Memorial Building. But the building was commercially successful from the start, and remained occupied until about 1958. When the Venetian and her neighbor were demolished in 1959 for a "taxpayer", most of the article in the Chicago Tribune talked about the Columbus Memorial, with scant sentences about the Venetian. The demolition contractor, Harvey Wrecking, usually advertised and sold salvaged items at the site, and maintained a warehouse for items with commercial value after the project was completed, preferring that item's from Chicago's past find a new home rather than a landfill or sold for scrap.

A couple years ago I e-mailed the City of Chicago's Cultural Historian, Tim Samuelson, asking about the hardware from several lost buildings which were mentioned in the Orr & Lockett articles and ads from the 1890s. Mr. Samuelson answered that "I did find a back plate for Holabird & Roche's Venetian building (mentioned in the Inland Architect article) recycled in a nearby building. Tried to get the building sympas to

to get the building owners to let me have it, but then it disappeared. No lettering and very ornamental – the back

A few years back I bought a set of Columbus Memorial Building hardware from Urban Remains Chicago after Eric connected with a man whose grandfather had managed the building until demolition. Eric also had for sale another elaborate Yale & Towne knob and plate (shown at left) that was with the Columbus Memori-This hardware in al hardware. bronze just seemed to me to be too nice to be secondary hardware in an office building. Eric made further inquires of his source and discovered that his father had managed the "Columbus-Venetian buildings". which shared a boiler. Eric has an excellent post on his website which includes a grandson's remembrances of his grandfather and the interesting items in his basement (see References for link to the blog post).

So the Yale & Towne hardware was the mysterious hardware from the Venetian, featuring fish and other patterns reminiscent of Venice. But was the hardware custom, or actually a stock item which was featured in the 1897 Yale catalog as the Rialto

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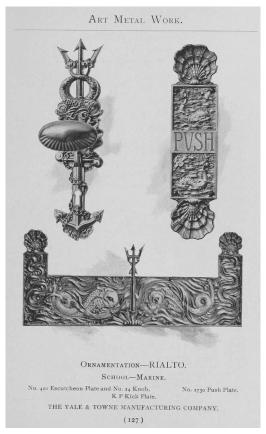
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design? The Winslow Brothers photo above shows the same fish motif in the stair panels as the back plates, so no doubt the fish theme was designed for the building in 1892. The 1897 Yale catalog (photo below) features several items including a kick plate with marine embellishments, which may well have adorned the entry doors to the Venetian Building.

So what about the entry plate that Mr. Samuelson described? No doubt these were located on all of the hallway doors leading into office suites. Sharing the photo of the set I had and the information about the find with several ADCA members yielded the photo at right of the V plate which Mr. Samuelson described. No doubt there were aluminum examples of the hardware, and hopefully an example will turn up in the future.



References:

Robert Bruegmann, *The Architects and the City*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997.

Eric Nordstrom, Urban Remains Chicago blog, https://www.urbanremainschicago.com/news-and-events/2018/01/10/shedding-light-on-long-forgotten-artifacts-rescued-from-the-non-extant-columbus-memorial-building-1893/, Chicago, 2018.

Winslow Brothers, Ornamental Iron, Chicago, 1894.

The Garden State Welcomes the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America to Princeton in July 2018

Nick and Jean Doto will be welcoming ADCA members to Princeton, New Jersey starting on the evening of Tuesday, July 17, 2018 and ending with the banquet Friday night, July 20, 2018. The theme this year is "Oval Knobs". Please be sure to register for the convention using the convention packet mail in April or on-line using the new membership system after you complete setting up your membership account. For members who have not previously attended a convention, your first-timer registration is FREE.

Wednesday, July 18 will be tour day. Early birds can depart at 6:00 am for the Golden Nugget Flea Market in Lambertville. The rest of those touring will depart the hotel at 9:00 am to pick up those at the Golden Nugget and then travel to Pennsbury Manor (at left), the recreated estate of Pennsylvania founder William Penn. The estate sits on 43 picturesque acres along the Delaware River, and was one of America's most famous Quakers, and features colonial craft demonstrations and daily life as it existed 300 years ago.

Pillsbury Manor

King George Inn





Lunch will be at the King George II Inn at Bristol, PA (at left), the oldest continuously operating inn and restaurant in America.

After lunch we will travel to Hamilton, NJ for a tour of the Grounds for Sculpture, then return to the hotel at 5pm. The **Grounds For Sculpture** present the work of both established and emerging sculptors. Emerging sculptors are defined as artists at the beginning of their careers as well as artists whose work has contributed to the field of contemporary sculpture significantly without accompanying recognition. The outdoor exhibition grows by approximately 15 sculp-

tures annually, working in conjunction with the landscaped environment.

Thursday will be our usual day to buy/sell/trade, starting at 9:00 am. We will be open to the public from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm Thursday evening. As always we will have a display contest, with awards given for "Best of Theme" (Oval Knobs), "Best of Show", "Most Creative", and Mike Smith's favorite category, "Ugliest Knob". The displays will be open to the public and it is our chance to demonstrate the beauty of the hardware, its place in history, and why we collect and preserve this lost art.

Friday morning will continue buy/sell/trade activities until noon. The annual auction will be held from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm, with the banquet starting at 6:00 pm.

BE SURE TO REGISTER FOR THE CONVENTION AND RESERVE YOUR ROOM AT THE DOUBLETREE BY HILTON PRINCETON BY CALLING (609) 452-2400.

The Making of a Hardware Collector

A Series of Articles about Why ADCA Members Collect Hardware

In some of the early issues of The Doorknob Collector, our founding members were asked to record some of their experiences and memories of collecting, and especially doorknobs. We will feature some of the early articles along with ones that hopefully current members, young or old, will share. The first is from TDC #3 (June 1982), written by Charles Wardell (#9). Mr. Wardell passed in 2012 at the age of 92.

Charles Wardell Trinity, North Carolina

I am interested in art, especially mosaics and stained glass windows. In the late 1950's and early 60's many windows became available locally because of the great building boom. Many fine churches were demolished and entire streets and sections of towns were cleared for urban renewal.

Some of the wreckers saved everything for resale and their yards and warehouses were rich in artistic windows, doors, paneling and metal work. I bought all the fancy windows, doors and sidelights I could find at a low price and stored them in my basement. Right then I became a collector and didn't care what others thought of my love for these beautiful artifacts. Ornate beveled and leaded glass entries could be bought for \$5.1 I have seen some similar entries recently priced at \$5,000. So - I wasn't so far off in my mind in 1960 as some thought at the time.

As a result of my frequenting the wreckers yards and sites of demolition I saw the door hardware which I passed up, through ignorance, for a time, but there came a day of reckoning. While I was loading windows into my station wagon, I sat down to rest in the old church and gazed across the room at a door fitted with some beautiful knobs. These were the first doorknobs I had ever appreciated and right there I became a collector and fancier of doorknobs.

The field was endless for a collector such as I in the 1960's and I added constantly to my collection. I was alone, I thought, in that fine hardware was being stripped from doors and sold as scrap metal. I have obtained many pieces from scrap yards, mixed with steam fittings and old machine parts.

Flea markets, antique shows and yard sales furnished a lot of knobs and a few were "liberated" from abandoned and fallen in buildings. I don't in any respect believe I stole these knobs, only that I preserved a bit of Americana.

Thanks to the kindness of other collectors, namely Maudie Eastwood, Len Blumin, the Kaiser's and a few others, I have built my collection to over a thousand different patterns.

Some prize knobs are: the McKinley (face of President McKinley), Shriners emblem, Oklahoma State Seal, seven different warrior's face knobs, millifiori paper weight knob, a White House knob (removed during Mrs. Kennedy's stay), lion, bear, dog's face, honeybee, stork, dragon, Jenny Lind, Statue of Liberty, and over a hundred emblematics.

The cost of building this collection wasn't that much and the travels required have enriched my life and given me more recognition than I will likely receive in my own obituary.

Our heritage is priceless and our Federal and State governments are recognizing this by designating buildings and neighborhoods as National Treasures. There have always been collectors of fine arts such as, furniture, ceramics, glass, china and crystal ware, but you and I, as doorknob collectors (I hope you also like escutcheon plates, hinges, knockers, bells and store door handles) are alone in preserving this facet of American industry.

Fellow collectors wishing to visit us are welcome. I have been a carpenter and foreman for 35 years and I'm thankful for God's blessings and especially for his planting in me the love of beauty in nature and in man's crafts.

The New ADCA Membership System

By Paul Woodfin

All members for whom we have an e-mail address have received a few e-mails from our new membership asking you complete your registration with the ADCA using our new on-line membership system. With the membership for many members due on June 30, this will be a great time for each of you to complete this process. And if you wish to use your Paypal account to pay your membership and convention registration, you can setup your account with that option.

We need every ADCA member who has an e-mail address to complete this on-line registration. If you have not received one of these e-mails, you may be one of the 27 current members for whom we do not have your e-mail address. Send us an e-mail to adca.members@gmail.com and we will update our database and get an invitation e-mail back to you. If you do not wish to pay using your Paypal account, or do not have a Paypal account, simply complete the registration to the page where it asks about Paypal, and STOP. Send an e-mail to adca.members@gmail.com and we will manually complete your registration. If you Do want to use your Paypal account, you can authorize your account and choose to either have your account charged on your due date, or be reminded to renew your membership manually using your Paypal account.

You only have to provide your name and contact information to be an ADCA member. Once your registration is completed, your Profile may show to only be 40-90% complete. Simply click the "X" in the upper right of the Profile box to close that window (first image below). For the pop-up that appears (second image below), click the "Dismiss quick-update fields" button.

Profile	Add your date of birth		
90% complete	MM/DD/YYYY	Skip this step	
72	Dismiss profile quick-update fields	×	
	e you want to dismiss the quick-update fields? If you'd like to update your profile later, just click ner of the page and select "Edit my user profile.	on your user menu in the	
	Dismiss quick-update fields Cancel		

A couple members who have setup their account have forgotten their password. You can go to the login website, www.memberplanet.com, and click "Forgot your password?". Enter your e-mail address and you will receive an e-mail with a link. Click that link and you will be able to create your new password for your account.

Email		
Password		
	Log in Forgot your password?	

Visit the ADCA on Facebook

Join in the discussion at https://www.facebook.com/groups/412087788964066/. As of 5/23/2018 we have 296 members on Facebook. A Steve Rowe post led Andy Streez to explain why generally cylinder locks are above the knob. Actress Marion Lorne (Aunt Clara from Bewitched) actually collected doorknobs.



Can anyone help identify the maker of this set?

It is a beautiful pattern and am certain it must be circa 1895-1910. Any help would be appreciated. The seller stated it was Sargent manufacture, but had no documentation to back the assertion. I learned long ago that the locks on sets were often changed through the years due to function and newer security features in the industry. Just because a set has a manufacturer name on the lock does not necessarily mean that the lock maker made the plates & knobs



Like

Comment

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Robert Mcnutt Don't know, but I can say, I prefer the cylinder over, rather than under



Stephen Rowe Funny that you say that Robert.... I prefer the under. I think it looks more attractive and more functional. I wonder if the preference comes from being right / left handed? I am right handed and would have the keys in my right hand. Turning the knob w... See More

Like · Reply · 8w



Andy Streenz 99% of the time, the manufacturer intended the cylinder to be installed over the knob (upside down for those carpenters used to installing locks that take skeleton keys, which were almost always under the knob). It is because it puts the lock cylinder in a position where gravity can assist the pins and springs. From a locksmith's perspective, this is very important. If a pin tumbler lock fails and it is installed sideways or upside down, you are simply locked out. If one fails, but gravity is helping, it can literally work for decades still. I have taken apart locks that had NO springs in the cylinder at all, but we're working due to gravity alone. There are also certain mechanisms in the mortise lock body itself that this orientation can be helpful for fumction, although not nearly as predictably as the cylinder.

Then there's the fact that most manufacturer names are printed in order to be read when the cylinder is above the knob. And you've probably even seen the "TOP" cast into mortise lock bodies reminding the carpenter as well.

Like - Reply - 8w





Robert Mcnutt Top , this side up labels , arrows



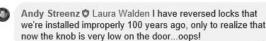
Like - Reply - 8w



Laura Walden I love all this technical stuff. Thank you Dr. Andy Streenz PHD in lockmetology!!

Like · Reply · 8w





Like Reply 8w

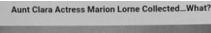




Stephen Rowe thanks to all... Andy, you should write a short article for the tdc regarding this aspect. here i was looking for a manufacturer name and instead was schooled on lock function! thanks for your expertise and willingness to share it.

Like Reply 8w







Aunt Clara's obsession with door knobs was based on actress Marion Lorne's real-life obsession with them. The actress had a collection of more than 1,000 antique door openers

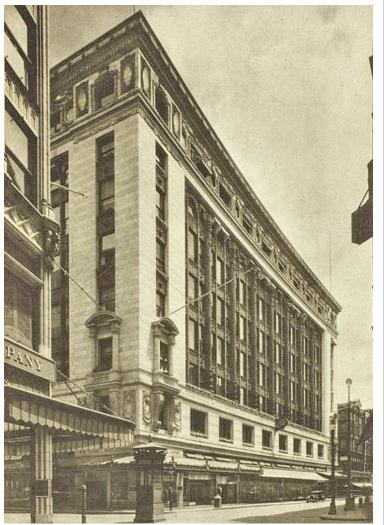


Filene's Department Store Boston, Massachusetts

Filene's was founded in 1881 by William Filene to be a full-service department store in Boston. A decade later Filene passed control of the business to his two sons who successfully managed and expanded the business over the four decades. In 1912 they contracted with D.H. Burnham & Company to design a new flagship store in Boston. The store remained in operation until 2006.

The building was sold to developers just prior to the 2008 economic downturn, and stood gutted until 2014, when the previously-planned Millenium Tower was finally constructed behind the 1912 Filene's building.

The bronze hardware (P-71110) is by P & F Corbin and features a prominent F on the doorknob.



Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filene%27s

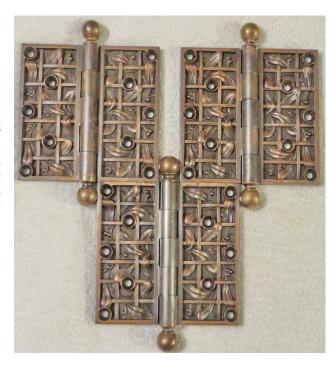
The Doorknob Exchange

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:

Paul Woodfin (#829) is hoping that someone will have one of the V plates from our cover story which I can acquire for a reasonable price. As a collector of custom building hardware, this plate is important to Paul in order to complete his collection of Holabird & Roche custom hardware. If you have one, please contact Paul by e-mail at paul.woodfin@sbcglobal.net or phone at (254) 722-7353.

Steve Rowe (#287) is seeking 5" Yale & Towne Holly hinges. Please contact Steve by e-mail at 4narowe@sbcglobal or phone at (559) 593-3567 if you have any you that can go to a new home.







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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.



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americanantiquehardware.com

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