The Doorknoh Collector

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A Non-profit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware

CHICAGO'S GRAND AUDITORIUM BUILDING

BY PAUL WOODFIN

Over several issues of The Doorknob Collector between 2005 and 2013, the club was able to provide interesting articles for *The Doorknob Collector* regarding the custom hardware used in landmark buildings designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Adler & Sullivan between 1890 and 1896. Allen Joslyn wrote epistles on the Chicago Stock Exchange (#129), Buffalo's Guaranty Building (#134), Saint Louis's Union Trust (#148) and the Wainwright Buildings (#151, in which we learned about "boodling"), and Chicago's Schiller Theater (#177), while Patty Ramey gave us a tour of the lost St. Nicholas Hotel in Saint Louis (#131). To complete this study of Adler & Sullivan hardware, one more article is needed, for perhaps their earliest landmark building.

The first announcement about a "Chicago Grand Opera Association" appeared in a December 1886 issue of the Chicago Tribune, describing a meeting of the stockholders, which included most of the

prominent Chicago businessmen of the day. The construction cost was expected to be \$1,000,000, with a wellequipped auditorium that would seat 5,000 people and would be large enough for 8,000 person political conventions. The building would also include between 350 and 500 hotels rooms, meeting rooms, restaurants, and shops. Unlike many theater venues at the time, the businessmen planning the building had determined that the hotel, restaurants, and shops (plus the office building which was later added on the west side of the building) should generate enough revenue to make certain that the Association would make a profit, or at least not lose money.



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The site selected was on the north side of Congress Street between Michigan and Wabash Avenues. The hotel frontage extended 189 feet along Michigan and the lakefront, and the office section extended 160 feet along Wabash. The frontage along Michigan Avenue will play into our story in a few pages. A week following the stockholders meeting Ferdinand Peck was elected President of the Association, and a short while later Adler & Sullivan were rapidly progressing on the designs for the building (photo on previous page). Peck was from a prominent and early Chicago family that had made a fortune in real estate.

The first major event held in the theater was the 1888 Republican National Convention, when the theater portion of the building was watertight but mostly unfinished. The Romanesque granite and stone exterior drew inspiration of H. H. Richardson's Marshall Field Wholesale Store, located a few blocks away and completed two years prior to the Auditorium. But the interior and mechanical designs for this multi-purpose building when completed clearly established Adler's engineering excellence and Sullivan's talent at holistic decoration from floor to ceiling for a building.

Benjamin Harrison, the President and nominee from the Republican convention just a year earlier, attended the building's dedication in December 1889. The national

press celebrated the building's ornate and unusual décor which was unique to Chicago. The building featured mosaic tile floors in the lobbies, onyx wainscoting on the stairwell walls, stained glass windows

featuring musical themes in the theater and Sullivanesque geometric designs for the windows and skylights in the rest of the building, ornate iron balusters and newel posts for the stairs, and designs of nature in the in the plasterwork. Sullivan's design styles were clearly evident at the Auditorium and would continue to expand and develop over subsequent projects.

The first book published about the Auditorium was by Exhibit Publishing in 1890, a firm which published works with owners, architects and builders about many prominent buildings constructed across America between 1888 and 1894 (the Ames Building discussed in TDC #220 was another). Edward Garczynski, a former staff writer for the New York Tribune, wrote *The Auditorium*, which





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(C)



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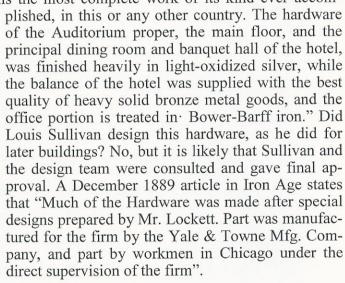
The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Board of Directors of ADCA or the editors

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is cited as a prominent reference in the National Register listing. HABS documentation, and most other books about Adler, Sullivan and the Auditorium. This book features two pages of information (pages 4 and 5 of this article) about the hardware designs for the building, and is the first instance of custom hardware for a building by Adler & Sullivan. The hardware shown is by Yale & Towne, with push plates and pulls for exterior doors, plus an entry doorknob and plate, and also features several photos which show this hardware design on he doors. A photo of push plates still in use in the building, but slightly shorter version, is shown at right, while an 1889 photo from the book (below left) shows the doors to the Ladies Entrance on Congress Avenue. A bronze doorknob (M-13712) and plate from the building is shown on page 4, while a Bower-Barff cast iron Yale knob (E-15211) included in the 1889 Yale catalog which was removed a support area of the building is shown below right.

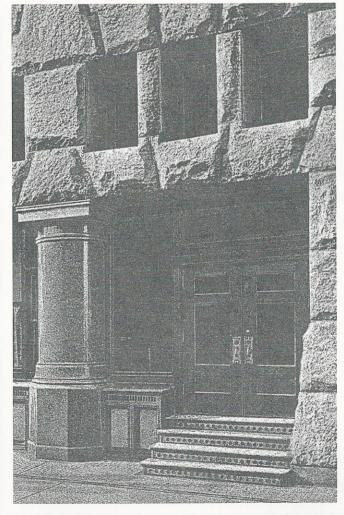
As described in the book, "Messrs. Orr & Lockett were awarded the contract, with the stipulation that Mr. Lockett should give it his personal attention. The greater part of the hardware is of special design, and was made particularly for

this building, there being many articles of great merit which have not heretofore been produced, and cannot be found elsewhere, all combining to make this the most complete work of its kind ever accom-



In the decades following the opening, many changes came to the Auditorium. While a 1906 plan by Sullivan to demolish the theater portion of the building and erect a 22 story hotel tower was discussed, the Auditorium Association continued to struggle







HE HARDWARE entering into this building is worthy of more than passing mention. It was probably the largest contract for such supplies that was ever let to any one firm in this country. Comprising, as it does, an immense Opera House, a Hotel, and an Office building it necessitated a distinct treatment

for each. Durability and absolute security were, of course, the first desiderata, but it was not sufficient that strength, safety, and durability be obtained, beauty of design and excellence of workmanship had to be carefully considered, for each little article is the best possible for the particular place in which it has been used. Messrs. Orr & Lockett were awarded the contract, with the stipulation that Mr. Lockett should give it his personal attention. The greater part of the hardware is of special design, and was made particularly for this building, there being many articles of great merit which have not heretofore been produced, and cannot be found elsewhere, all combining to make this the most complete work of its kind ever accomplished, in this or any other country. The hardware of the Auditor-



dining room and banquet hall of the hotel, was finished heavily in light-oxidized silver, while the balance of the hotel was supplied with the best quality of heavy solid bronze metal goods, and the office portion is treated in Bower-Barff iron. Some idea of the magnitude of this work can be obtained by stating that over 2,000 locks, knobs, and escutcheons; 800 mortise door bolts; 700 transom lifters; 450 heavy nickel-plated towel racks; 2,400 sash lifts; 1,200 sash locks, and 2,500 bronze hat and coat hooks, were used in the building. The main corridor doors are supplied with a special hotel lock, so arranged that no two keys are alike, and yet all are under the control of the house-



keeper and office by means of a pass key that will open any of them. The outside, as well as communicating, doors are supplied with a separate bolt, so that every guest has a feeling of absolute security, as he has but to turn the bolt to make it impossible for anyone to intrude on him. The transoms are hinged at the bottom, which secures greater

privacy, and prevents downward drafts, while obtaining the most perfect ventilation. Each entrance door is provided with a special combination rubber bumper and automatic catch, preventing the door from opening too far, and automatically catches and securely holds it

open when an audience is dispersing, or at any other time. The outside windows are fitted up for the Skidmore patent adjustable window balcony, by which the outside of windows on the highest buildings can be as easily cleaned as those on the lower floors, and with perfect safety. But it is impossible in a single paragraph to do justice to a subject of such magnitude. Suffice it to say, the work has been well and thoroughly accomplished, and is a fitting supplement to a remarkable building, which has no equal in the world; and it must be a source of great satisfaction to the firm that executed it, as well as to the architects and directors, owing to the happy results which have been obtained. The detailed illustrations herewith will give an idea of the high character of the designs in which the hardware has been wrought.



financially after the Chicago Symphony moved to Symphony Hall in 1904. The original hotel did not have private bathrooms for each hotel room-common in 1888 but not a decade later. Architects Marshall & Fox were hired to renovate the hotel rooms in 1910, add additional boxes in the theatre, and convert Adler & Sullivan's original ornate hotel lobby to shops to generate more revenue. While the first two parts of this plan were implemented, fortunately the lobby remained intact. And in 1929 the Civic Opera House opened, and the ever-evolving Opera company which had called the Auditorium home since 1889 relocated.

In 1929 the Auditorium Association declared bankruptcy due to the principal on the bonds used to finance the original construction coming due. The landowners became owners of the Auditorium buildings and formed a corporation to operate the building and hotel. They too could not make money, and stopped paying their taxes during the Depression. In June 1941 the hotel's owners announced that they would be closing at the end of July, and so after hosting Presidents and many celebrities for more than a half century, the doors were closed. By June 1942 Cook County gave notice that it would begin foreclosure proceedings in court, and so the owners scheduled an auction in early July to sell everything from paintings, china and silverware to seats from the theater and carpeting by the yard.

By August 1942 the county owned the building, and soon the City of Chicago arranged to lease the building for a military serviceman's center. A bowling alley was constructed in the theater and a snack bar was opened on the first floor, allowing the Auditorium Building to survive through the war. By 1946 a newly-created Roosevelt University sought to acquire the building for their non-profit use. While the school operated in leased buildings nearby, they were raising funds to pay some of the taxes owed to secure the building. After those discussions made some headway, a Complication emerged-a different entity held title to the north 52 ½ feet of the Auditorium Building along Michigan Avenue and had paid the taxes for their portion of the property for many years, and so was not included in the tax foreclosure (a ground lease for this tract was never created in 1888). That owner demanded \$800,000 to purchase that part of the building, which was double what the school paid for the rest of the building. He cut off heat for the entire building (since his portion contained the boiler) and barricaded access by the school, installing "chicken wire" in the hallways. Soon Roosevelt University filed suit stating that an easement had existed since 1889 for his portion of the building. Roosevelt prevailed and wound up acquiring his property for a fraction of what he was demanding, but during the legal battle a filing noted that the 52 ½ foot section of the building "has no doors".

After securing clear title to the whole building, the Auditorium was reconfigured to serve as classrooms for the school. More than a decade passed before sufficient funds were raised to begin fully restoring the theater and the large public spaces in the building. Currently there is a mix of door hardware in portions of the building, and an acquaintance did not find any knobs and plates like are shown on page 4. Some portions include Chicago Hardware's Thistle pattern shown in the 1895 catalog, while others contain the iron Yale & Towne knob shown on page 3. Given that in 1946 a portion of the building was noted as not having doors, they may have been sold at auction in 1942, or the hardware could have been replaced in the 1910 renovation. Fortunately, some of the hardware shown on pages 4 and 5 still exist in the building, serving the entrance doors to the theater as they have for more than 130 years.

References:

- Garczynski, Edward, *The Auditorium*. New York: Exhibit Publishing Co. 1890, republished by Prairie Avenue Bookshop in 2007.
- Siry, Joseph, The Chicago Auditorium Building. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press. 2002.

2020 ADCA Convention to be held On-line using Zoom

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to restrict our ability to safely travel, so having our convention in Albany in October is not a viable option for any of us. After some planning and testing over the past few weeks, we will hold the 2020 ADCA Convention virtually over the internet using Zoom. Many of us are now familiar with this video conferencing website through church and work group meetings held since March.

Our on-line Zoom convention will be held on **October 17, 2020** starting at <u>1 PM Eastern time/10</u> AM Pacific time, and consist of three parts, following a brief Zoom orientation:

- 1. The "Howdy" session (to use Paul's favorite phrase), so that everyone gets to say hello to everybody, talk about any new purchases or hardware topics, and can show off their collection if they choose, etc. We will also get the opportunity to meet some of our newer members who have not yet been able to attend a convention.
- 2. The Auction, which will include at least 5 "high end" pieces of hardware which are often on your "Want" lists, plus any hardware items that other members wish to sell. No commissions will be charged this year. Each of us will be able to hold up any hardware items to their camera and describe the item so that everyone can see for what they are bidding, and the seller sets the minimum starting price. The sales price for each lot sold will include shipping by the seller to the buyer, and after the Zoom convention ends, each buyer will need to contact the seller and make payment. This will be an opportunity for members who have been able to attend a convention lately to participate in the auction (albeit by Zoom) as buyers and/or sellers to our club membership. If you have items which you wish to sell in the auction, please send an e-mail listing those items to adca.members@gmail.com, and Mike Smith will know whom to call on and will help us keep track of the items being sold.
- 3. The annual ADCA **Business Meeting** of our members, which unfortunately will not be preceded by a banquet dinner, unless you provide one for those at your house (the official club sommelier will be happy to recommend a suitable vineyard and vintage-check with Allen). This is the session where we get to hear reports about club activities and elect the nominated officers and Board members. This will be end of our 2020 ADCA Convention, using Zoom.

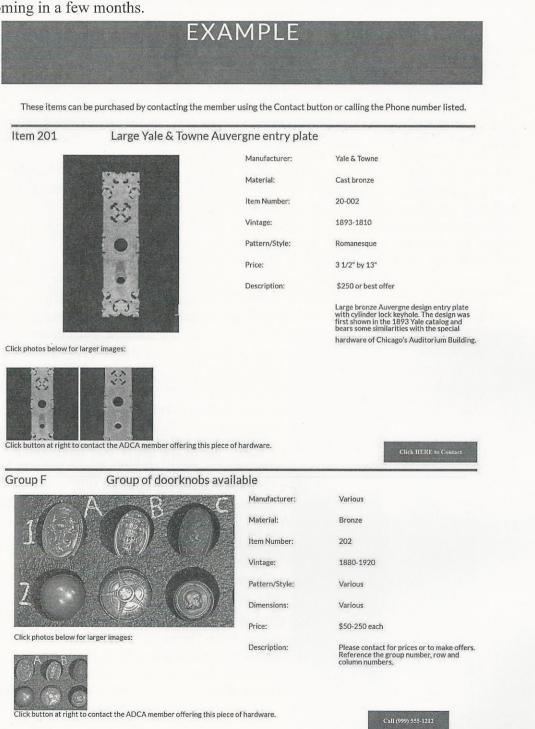
In addition to the Zoom meeting items above, we will have several convention pages on our website:

- To replicate our usual display tables, each member will have their own Member page where you can post photos and information about hardware items you have available for sale or trade. If you wish to have your own "virtual display table", please send an e-mail to Paul Woodfin at adcaoffice@aol.com or call (254) 722-7353 and he will get your page built and your website login created within 24 hours. You must have an e-mail address to use this, and can actually start loading items in August if you wish. We've built a template page, but can also link to a personal or business website if you wish. An example page is shown below, and is located at https://www.antiquedoorknobs.org/mbrtest.html.
- We will have another page where members can list items which they are seeking for everyone to see.
- Our theme this year will be "The Gilded Age", and we will have a page for Displays for members to see the displays that members have "brought to the convention". Please e-mail a photo of your display to adcaoffice@aol.com by October 8, 2020. We will post these on or before October 10, 2020 in the order which they are received, and ask that everyone send your votes for Best in Show, Best Theme Display, and Most Creative Display by e-mail to

<u>adca.members@gmail.com</u> by **October 15, 2020**. We will not be awarding the Ugly knob award this year, so multi-year award winner Jessie Brooks gets to keep it for another year. The awards will be presented in the Business meeting of the Zoom convention.

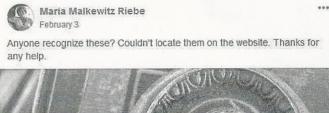
Please register to attend the 2020 ADCA Convention by October 1, 2020. Send an e-mail to adca.members@gmail.com to register, including your member name and number (which is on the address label for this newsletter). There is no charge for registration this year. You have to be a paid up-to -date member of the club to participate. Prior to October 17th you will receive an e-mail from Zoom that is your invitation and link to participate in the convention-PLEASE SAVE THAT E-MAIL. No Zoom account is required.

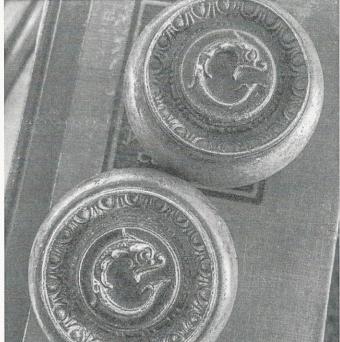
NOTE: The 2021 Convention will now be held in Albany, NY, likely in July, and more details will be forthcoming in a few months.

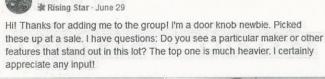


Visit the ADCA on Facebook

Join in the discussion at https://www.facebook.com/groups/antiquedoorknobs/. As of July 2020 have more than 1,100 members on Facebook. Recent highlights include Maria Malkewitz Riebe showing some "fishy knobs", Sargent and are now B-22410, Lucas Freedman posted a collection of knobs, including a Treasury knob which was not on the website, Liz Covey Wyatt posted some F. C. Linde store handles, and John Harris warns about how addicting collecting hardware can be (he just started last year).







Lucas Freedman







A page from Sargent's Special Hardware catalog from around 1917.

Plate X

Sargent & Co.'s Special Hardware.





582 Ph



583 Ph



584 Ph



1028 Ph



585 Ph



586 Ph



587 Ph



588 Ph



1029 Ph









592 Ph





592% Ph



591% Ph



891%'Ph



1031 Ph



593% Ph

Special and Monogram Door Knobs.

Illustrations on this page are about half size.

Original from the E.R. Butler & Co. Research Library

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:

Tom Iannucci #638 is seeking an A-13600 Hopkins & Dickinson swan door-knob, and has an A-11300 Hopkins & Dickinson doorknob which he is willing to trade. Contact Tom at (240) 595-1115 or antiquehardware@verizon.net if you have a swan knob that you are willing to part with by sale or trade.







ADCA Archives—Catalog Discounts

Recently the Executive Committee of the Board voted to offer a 10% discount off the purchase price when you buy 10 or more individual catalogs in a single purchase on-line through out website. In order to receive this discount, identify each catalog which you wish to purchase and click "Add to Cart" for that catalog. Once you have added 10 or more catalogs to your shopping cart, your purchase price for each will be reduced by 10%. Once you check out through PayPal using your PayPal account or a credit card, you will be able to download the 10+ catalogs that you purchased.

We hope this makes these terrific references more affordable for our members!



Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

The Doorknob Collector Co-editors: Allen Joslyn,

Phone (973) 783-9411 Email: ajoslyn@comcast.net

Paul Woodfin

Email: adcaoffice@aol.com

ADCA Website: www.antiquedoorknobs.org
VDA Website: www.antiquedoorknobs.us

Membership Website: www.antiquedoorknobs.org/membership

Membership Office: Mike Smith ADCA

1608 Osage Drive

North Little Rock, AR 72116

Email: adca.members@gmail.com

Phone: (501) 529-1836

General Questions

ajoslyn@comcast.net

Officers

President: Allen Joslyn Vice President: Steve Rowe Secretary: Mike Smith

Treasurer: Paul Woodfin

Email Addresses:

ajoslyn@comcast.net 4narowe@sbcglobal.net arkansaswms@gmail.com paul.woodfin1@gmail.com

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.



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American Antique Hardware

Owner Keith and Sarah Chilcote

Phone: 503-399-8009

Web: americanantiquehardware.com

Email:

contact@americanantiquehardware.com

Liz's Antique Hardware

Owner: Liz Gordon 453 South La Brea

Los Angeles, CA 90036 Phone: 323-939-4403 Web: <u>lahardware.com</u>

Email: Shop@LAHardware.com

Albion Doors & Windows

Owner: Larry Sawyer

PO Box 220 Albion, CA 95410

Phone: 707-937-0078

Web: <u>knobsession.com</u> Email: <u>bysawyer@mcn.org</u>



Antique Door Hardware Collector

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Web: <u>antiquedoorhardware.com</u> Email: <u>antiquehardware@verizon.net</u>

Bill's Key & Lock Shop

Owner: Andy Streenz 1509 N. Clinton Blvd. Bloomington, IL 61701

Phone: 309-454-1713 Web: billskeyandlockshop.com

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Email:

KEY & LOCK

sales@classichomehardware.com

DISCOVERY ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES

Owner: Suzanne Kittel 409 Saint Francis St. Gonzales, TX 78629 Phone: \$30,672,2428

Phone: 830-672-2428 Web: <u>discoverys.net</u>

Email: swk@discoverys.net

HISTORIC HOUSEPARTS

Owners: Christina Jones & James

B. Wolff

540 South Avenue Rochester, NY 14620 Phone: 585-325-2329

Web: <u>historichouseparts.com</u> Email: <u>info@historichouseparts.com</u>

House of Antique Hardware

Owner: Roy Prange 802 NE Davis Street

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Phone: 713-524-2417
Web Site: settlershardy

Web Site: <u>settlershardware.com</u> Email: <u>settlershardware@gmail.com</u>

Tim & Julie's Another Fine Mess

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Indianapolis, IN 46201 Phone: 503-399-8009

Web Site: <u>indysalvage.com</u>

Email: timandjuliestore@gmail.com

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Owners: Rick Lepley SALVAGE
& Lauren Slaughter

& Lauren Slaughter 85 S. Main Street Waynesville, OH 45068 Phone: 513-914-4177

Web Site: <u>villagesalvage.com</u> Email: <u>villagesalvage@gmail.com</u>

Webwilson.com



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Owner: H. Weber Wilson 6451 Highway 159 La Grange, TX 78945 Phone: 240-595-1115

Web Site: <u>webwilson.com</u> Email: <u>hww@webwilson.com</u>