

# The Doorknob Collector

Number 222 July-August 2020

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

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

## THE 40TH ANNUAL ADCA CONVENTION

OCTOBER 17, 2020 BY ZOOM

Many of us have attended virtual church services or met with friends or family using Zoom or similar technologies over the past few months. Here are a few notes so that everyone has the opportunity to attend our upcoming convention.

• Be sure to register for the convention by October 15th by sending an e-mail to adca.members@gmail.com.

• On October 10 a link and password for the Zoom meeting will be sent to your email address. For those that register after the 10th you will receive the link on the following day. All attendees will again receive the link and password on the 17th.

• When you receive the link for the first time, please click the link and allow Zoom to install the video conferencing software on your computer. If you will be attending using a smart phone or tablet, be sure to download and install the Zoom app from the iTunes App Store or Google Play store.

• After Allen does a brief introduction we will provide a few minutes of Zoom training so we will all better know how the system works.

• Be sure, if you want to post items to sell on a webpage on the ADCA website, to let Paul know by e-mailing adcaoffice@aol.com.

The CONVENTION WEBSITE is available at <a href="https://www.antiquedoorknobs.us/convention.html">https://www.antiquedoorknobs.us/convention.html</a>, with separate pages for the Auction and additional photos of the "high end" items shown on the next page. Member pages (our virtual display tables from the Convention) will be available for viewing before the convention, along with the blog page where you can post requests for items which you are seeking.

## ANTIQUE DOORKNOB COLLECTORS OF AMERICA

## 2020 Virtual Convention via Zoom

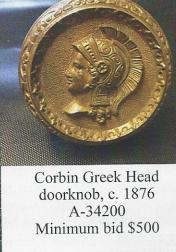
Registering for the Convention is easy! If you are a current ADCA member, send an e-mail to adca.members@gmail.com by October 15, 2020 telling us your name, member number, your e-mail address, and who will be attending. The follow the instructions below to get your computer, smart phone or tablet ready for the Convention.

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## High-end Auction lots at the ADCA Convention, October 17, 2020



Russell & Erwin Geisha double keyhole plate, doorknob, escutcheon & sash lift, 1882 A-30401 Minimum bid \$500





Hopkins & Dickinson Navy seal doorknob, 1888 P-10300 Minimum bid \$450



Mallory Wheeler Steamship doorknob, c. 1882 A-20900 Minimum bid \$400



Russell & Erwin Plaza
Hotel center knob mounted
on mahogany, 1907
A-20900
Minimum bid \$100



Corbin enamel hinge, c. 1875 Minimum bid \$750

## The Doorknob Collector



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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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## BOWER-BARFF "RUSTLESS" IRON

BY STEVEN HANNUM WITH PAUL WOODFIN

Water runs down-hill, Time passes and Iron rusts. Some things can be reversed and some things can be slowed. Ever since man discovered how to get metallic iron from ore, ways to keep iron from rusting have been pursued. Iron exists as the element Fe, an ion with a +2 charge Fe<sup>+2</sup> and an ion with a +3 charge Fe<sup>+3</sup>. Rust is Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. Rust flakes off the surface of iron exposing a new spot for rust, eventually destroying the whole object. When iron became available as a building material it's use for decoration came next, increasing the demand for ways to protect iron from rust. Early methods required coating iron with some other material. Eventually it was discovered that a coating of magnetite, an iron oxide, protected from the formation of rust. Converting this discovery into a commercial process took time. The first users were makers of decorative wrought iron, followed later by makers of door hardware.

Magnetite is one of the ores used to make metallic iron. As the name implies it is magnetic. In early times small pieces were called lodestone. It is a very stable structure as demonstrated by its existence in the black sands of some beaches. In the mid 1800s it was observed that sheet iron from Russia resisted rusting better than that English sheet iron. It was discovered that this was due to a coating of the magnetic oxide. Professor Frederick Barff of England was chemist interested in preservation of materials. He was the first person to develop a method for a controlled forming the magnetic oxide on the surface of iron. In his process the object was place in closable chamber that was externally heated to a high enough temperature to decompose steam. When steam is injected into the chamber the oxygen is seized

by the iron to form an oxide film. The Barff US patent is 182,148 issued September 12, 1876.

George Bower had previously done work on the decomposition of water at high temperatures and had seen the formation of the black oxide but had dropped the study. He began to investigate the effect of mixing air with the steam in the Barff process. He found that by controlling the amount of air he could control the film formed. Too much air produced only rust. At some point his son, Anthony, an engineer suggested that they heat the articles by the internal application of heat and to use a combination of oxidizing and reducing to form the film. In due time they developed a suitable fire-brick chamber system, and a process which by adding water to hot coals made a mixture of gases, which when preheated resulted in a process which cycled oxidizing reducing operations. The resulting film on the iron could be controlled and was generally rustless. US patent 234,452 was issued to George and Anthony Bower November 16, 1880.



In the United States both the Barff and Bower patent rights were purchased by the Bower-Barff Rustless Iron Company of New York City. The first American manufacturers of the Barff-Bower process were makers of ornamental iron. Niels Poulson was a director of the Bower-Barff Rustless Iron company and his company, Hecla Iron Works, was one of the first licensees. Hecla quickly became a major producer of Bower-Barff treated iron, providing ornamental iron for the Western Union, Chelsea Hotel (at left), Produce Exchange & Dakota Apartments in New York (1883-1884), and the Home Insurance building in Chicago (1885). After their factory burned down in 1889, Hecla rebuilt using Bower-Barff finished iron for curtain walls. William and Francis Winslow began working for

Hecla Iron Works in in the early 1880s, becoming a partners in the business a few years later. Francis joined his brother at Chicago in 1886, forming the manufacturing business that by 1888 was Winslow Brothers. Winslow became perhaps the largest maker of ornamental iron in the country, and offered their products using the Bower-Barff process from the beginning. Their ironwork graced many Chicago buildings including the Stock Exchange, the Auditorium, the second Leiter, and the Monadnock, along with the Mills in San Francisco, the Pioneer Press in St. Paul, and the Bradbury in Los Angeles.



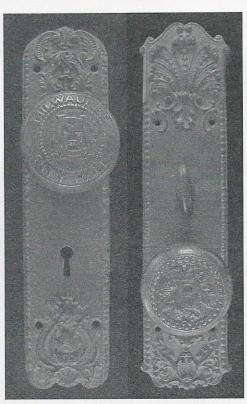
William Wells of Hackensack, New Jersey was also one of the original licensees. After using both the Barff and Bower processes he developed a variation. In his US patent 382,447, May 8, 1888 he describes how he combined both into one. He put the iron articles into the furnace and slow heated them to red heat taking care to maintain a uniform heat. A stream of steam was then used to remove scale and foreign substances. Then the chamber was filled with a carbon monoxide, CO, atmosphere for a time. Finally, a mixture of steam and the CO is maintained for several hours. The cycle could be repeated many times for the desired effect. According to Wells, this process produced more consistent results, could take large items and was more economical.

Bower-Barff hardware was manufactured in in the United States in 1888, and used in Chicago. The architect John W. Root conceived the idea of especially designed hardware to match the design of the building. Together with Mr. Lockett of Orr & Lockett Hardware, Mr. Root designed the hardware for the Rookery Building (see TDC #204). Yale & Towne provided the Bower-Barff finished hardware (C-15000), along with hardware for the Kansas City Board of Trade (L-13600). The 1889 Yale & Towne catalog used two pages to extol Bower-Barff finished iron and their years of experience in its production.

They offered this finish for many of their hardware designs and by 1890 had provided Bower-Barff hardware for the Ernest & Crammer building in Denver (top right), the Lumber Exchange in Minneapolis, and the Arcade in Cleveland, using the <u>E-10401</u> Rokeby knob with Cluny iron plates. Another Bower-Barff design was created for the Northwestern Guaranty Building in Minneapolis (<u>H-42100</u>, top left). Later buildings such as the Chicago Stock Exchange (<u>M-16800</u>) and the Guaranty Building (<u>L-16500</u>) also used Yale & Towne Bower-Barff hardware.

Chicago Hardware was the other early hardware producer. Their 1888 catalog showed one design with an oxidized iron finish. They said the finish was made under the Wells Rustless Iron Patents. The 1895 Chicago catalog offered the Bower-Barff finish as an option for any of their designs and that Chicago Hardware was one of two hardware manufactures to offer that finish. They also made custom hardware for important buildings, including doorknobs for the 1891 Pabst Building in Milwaukee (P-70360, at right with a stock Orleans plate) and the 1895 Milwaukee City Hall (P-15010, at left with a stock Rouen plate).

In 1896 Corbin offered Bower-Barff iron for any of their bronze metal designs. Examples of their Bower-Barff iron hard-



ware in stock designs include <u>B-22400</u>. <u>E-13400</u>. <u>E-14711</u>, <u>I-10500</u>, while emblematic designs include  $\underline{P}$  -41520 and P-49240.

The 1897 Russell & Erwin catalog also offered the Bower-Barff finish for several of their designs. Examples of their Bower-Barff iron hardware in stock designs include <u>F-20400</u>, <u>G-10801</u>, and <u>I-11800</u>, while emblematic designs include <u>P-21350</u> and <u>P-48020</u>.

Bower-Barff hardware was widely offered into the 1920's. However, reasonably priced wrought bronze or brass hardware and changing taste caused cast iron hardware to be discontinued. As collectors well know with a little cleaning with soap and water the Bower-Barff finish looks as good as new. Even if the finish has been chipped the rust is only in the chipped area.

#### References:

• The Bower-Barff Rustless Iron Company, <u>Rustless Iron & Steel-The Bower-Barff and Wells Processes</u>, New York, 1893.

P & F Corbin Bower-Barff knobs:







B-22400

E-13400

E-14711









P-41520

P-49240

F-20400









G-10801

I-11800

P-21350

P-48020

5

## **Small But POWERFUL**

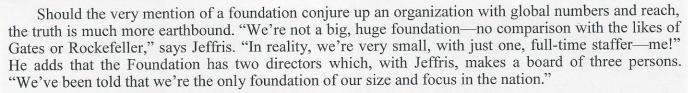
By Gordon H. Bock

Advertising is fond of the phrase "Looks small, thinks big" as a tagline for high-tech products that are as powerful as they are compact, but it might apply equally well to philanthropic organizations like the Jeffris Family Foundation of Janesville, WI. Though overshadowed by the Goliaths of the giving world, and with a tightly focused mandate, it nonetheless stands tall in supporting historic preservation projects that are under-the-radar, but with outsized impact.

As Thomas M. Jeffris, President, (at right, in front of Louis Sullivan's Old Home Association building in Newark, OH) explains, the Foundation was established in 1979 by his parents, Bruce and Eleanor, and Jeffris himself with some down-home goals. "The family felt that it wanted to improve the quality of life of the people of Wisconsin, and through preservation projects in smaller communities because, obviously, these don't have the financial means of the big communities."

The Jeffris family immigrated from Scotland to Wisconsin in the 1840s, he says, and has always had a strong Wisconsin commitment. In fact, Bruce Jeffris built a highly successful business career in the state, joining the Parker Pen Company of Janesville after World War I, then

rising through the ranks of one of the world's largest makers of high-end writing instruments to retire as Chairman of the Board in 1960.

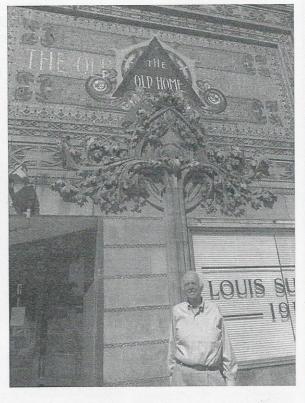


Jeffris says that when they hired a consultant to help with management issues, he reported back he couldn't find any comparable organizations on which to base recommendations. With classic Midwestern geniality, Jeffris responded, "Well, do what you can."

As he explains, "We just focus on doing a very few projects, but with relatively sizable grants, so we give away two or three large grants a year." He says their largest grant to date—for \$1 million, which approaches the amount they give for an entire year—went to the Cyrus Yawkey House in Wausau, WI, and helped the local historical society finish a \$3-million restoration.

While some philanthropic organizations are a response to a crisis, such as a war or natural disaster—think Hurricane Harvey—the inspiration behind the Jeffris Foundation is much more low-key and local. "The money was gifted for the benefit of the people of Wisconsin and small towns," says Jeffris, "and the preservation aspect just sort of evolved from there."

As happens with many organizations, there was a natural tendency for the Foundation to follow the interests of its leaders, and Jeffris, one of the founders, had deep interests in historic preservation. After being appointed five times to the State Historical Society Board by Tommy Thompson, Governor of Wisconsin from 1987 to 2001, as well as being chairman of the local landmarks commission reviewing permits for historic properties, he says historic preservation "gradually became something about which I



felt very strongly."

In contrast to some architecturally oriented foundations that fund a wide range of project types across the country, the Jeffris Foundation keeps a tight rein on its largess. "Though in the past we have occasionally underwritten books and workshops related to historic preservation, we generally support just buildings, and those of regional or national significance," says Jeffris.

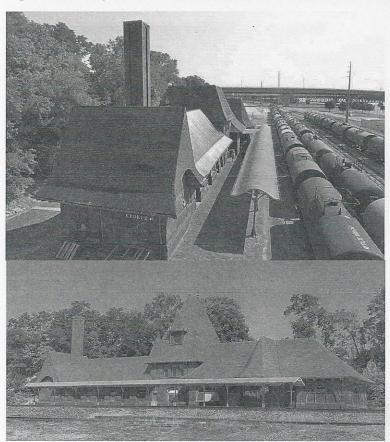
That being said, in 2009 the Foundation expanded its scope beyond Wisconsin to Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri and Ohio, "but we stick to just this Midwest, eight-state region." Of course, grants don't grow on trees, and at the Jeffris Foundation a grant is a two-way street that must be earned. "Applicants have to do a Historic Structures Report (HSR)," advises Jeffris, "and it has to be an excellent one."

He says the most important criterion is that the Foundation fund projects with a comprehensive HSR that documents the history and condition of the property and recommends appropriate treatment of the building's significant elements. "An HSR is the best means to prepare for and support quality restoration and rehabilitation efforts, including a path to restoration." Separately, the Foundation looks for a detailed construction document itemizing window costs, roof repairs, and so forth.

The other quid pro quo at Jeffris is that applicants must fulfill challenge grants, a popular fundraising mechanism for foundations and non-profits. Here, the grantor stipulates that before the applicant can receive any grant funds it has to raise a certain amount of funds on its own as described in the challenge—commonly in ratios of 2:1 (\$1 donated for every \$2 raised by the applicant), 1:1, or 1:2.

The Jeffris Foundation limits funding to documented 501(c)(3) 509(a)(1) or (2) non-profit organizations. As outlined in the grant criteria, it does not fund privately owned sites, endowments to support specific properties or operations, maintenance or stabilization projects, acquisitions, debt reduction, or operating budgets. Most potential projects come though the Foundation's own field staff, not unsolicited applications.

Given the generous figures of Jeffris Foundation grants, the bar for matching funds can, at first, be quite daunting for modest communities, but the results are nonetheless remarkable. "What I find abso-



lutely unbelievable is how these people just rise to the occasion," says Jeffris with evident pride. He notes that there have been some failures, which is to be expected, "but by and large these small Midwestern communities really come through, and about 90% of our challenge grants have succeeded."

A case in point he says is the Keokuk Union Depot in Keokuk, IA. Designed by the famed Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root and erected in 1891, the Depot served all five railroads in this commercial crossroads for some time. Because of consolidations, mergers and bankruptcies over the years, by the 1960s it served only the CB&Q line.

In 2012, the non-profit Keokuk Union Depot Foundation was established to help restore the 178-ft. Romanesque Revival building, including its massive tile roof. "It was a \$1-million project, and we gave a challenge grant of \$330,000," recalls Jeffris, "so they ended up raising some \$700,000 in a town of 10,000 people! We



find this kind of interest throughout the Midwest."

Adds Janet M. Smith, president of the Depot Foundation, "The matching grant inspired the hope, now nearly fully realized, of actually being able to restore the roof to the highest historic preservation standards, including raising the central tower to its original height and using red clay tiles made by the successor maker of the 1891 tiles. This would not have been possible without The Jeffris Family Foundation."

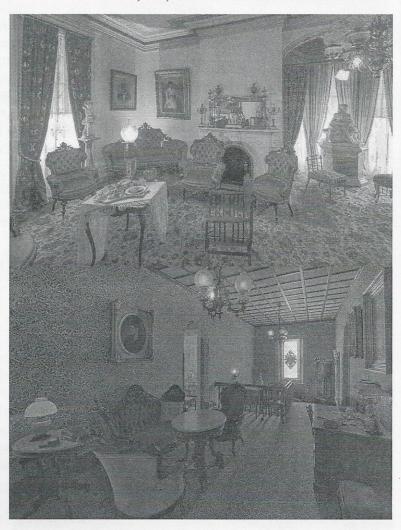
Though many historic restoration projects are dominated by the structural and mechanical needs of the building, Jeffris grants are by no means exclusively for the practical, as demonstrated by the Villa Louis Historic Site in Prairie du Chien, WI. Along with the Mark Twain House in Hartford, CT, and the Glessner House in Chica-

go, the interiors of Villa Louis (photos below) are considered among the top examples in this country of the ideas of William Morris, the designer, purveyor and proponent of the English Arts & Crafts movement.

In another instance, Jeffris recalls a grant where the town had three years to raise about \$100,000 before the Foundation would give

them \$50,000. "At first they figured, 'Oh Tom, we're never going to make it,' but, to their surprise, they fulfilled the challenge in six months." Later, the town reported they had only one regret. "I know, I know," he shot back, "you should have asked for more money!"

After funding over 100 projects, Jeffris continues to be as amazed as he is pleased, "It's always interesting to see how enthusiastic these people are about getting a large challenge grant for their local historic property—and from a foundation that nobody's ever heard about."



#### References:

- Article originally published in the October 2017 edition of *Traditional Building* magazine, and is used with permission of the author. Gordon Bock is an architectural historian, instructor with the National Preservation Institute (www.npi.org), and speaker. For more information, go to www.gordonbock.com. Mr. Bock remembers working with Maud Eastwood on a few articles while he was Editor of *Old House Journal*.
- Photos of the Keokuk Union Depot at Keokuk, IA (and an original Yale & Towne store door handle from the 1889 catalog) courtesy of Restoric LLC of Chicago, IL, and Janet M. Smith.
- Photos of the Villa Louis Historic Site at Newark, OH courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society.



## Hotel Astoria New York, New York

John Jacob Astor was born in Germany, and immigrated to America by way of England around 1783. Astor entered the fur trade, and by start of the new century was the dominant seller of furs to Europe, China and America. Astor wisely began investing in New York real estate in 1799, and by his death in 1848 he was said to be the wealthiest person in America and the largest landowner in the city. Part of his fortune came from the Astor House Hotel, which was constructed in 1836 on Broadway facing City Hall Park. The hotel was the first to offer full-service accommodations, and the location at the heart of the business district was a contributing factor to his wealth.

His son William B. Astor inherited most of Astor's property and in 1854 gave each of his two sons and primary heirs, John J. Astor III and William B. Astor Jr., half of a block on Fifth Avenue between 33rd and 34th Streets. Both built large mansions for themselves and their families by 1859. William B. Astor Jr. was married to Caroline Astor, the noted socialite, and their house contained the ballroom which accommodated "The Four Hundred".

After John J. Astor III died in 1890, his son William Waldorf Astor demolished his parent's house and hired architect Henry Hardenburgh to design the Waldorf Hotel. The hotel opened in 1893 and towered over his socialite aunt's mansion next door. Her son, John J. Astor IV built a new house for his family and Mrs.

Astor facing Central Park and had Hardenburgh design the Hotel Astoria, next door to the Waldorf. The cousins later agreed to jointly operate the hotel as one.

The Astoria was much larger than the earlier Waldorf and became the front door to the massive hotel. Russell & Erwin designed the hardware for the Astoria as shown at right, using the F-23100 doorknob which later became the Bramante design. The hotel remained in use until 1929, when all of the contents and many architectural elements were sold to the public. The Empire State Building was constructed on the site once the Waldorf-Astoria was demolished. In the book Building the Empire State, a written summary of requests by "Souvenir Hunters"

includes a notice that many items were sold, including a request for 1,000 doors for an institutional building in Florida".



#### References:

Hotel Astoria

- Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John Jacob Astor
- Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caroline Schermerhorn Astor
- The Skyscraper Museum (Carol Willis, editor), <u>Building the Empire State</u>. W. W. Norton, New York, 1998

### Visit the ADCA on Facebook

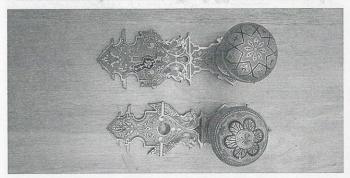
Join in the discussion at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/antiquedoorknobs/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/antiquedoorknobs/</a>. As of August 2020 have more than 1,200 members on Facebook. Recent highlights include Wally Lugli posting photos of some enamel hardware which his father collected many years ago, Craig Phillips posted some unusual porcelain knobs that someone called "groovy", and Lora Frost posted photos of Trenton knobs and plates she was seeking for a house restoration.



## Wally Lugli

September 15 at 8:50 AM · 3

Does anyone know who manufactured these beautiful pieces? I can't find any name listed, but they do have numbers stamped on the back: 2653 and 2755. Any ideas would be greatly appreciated. Great Group!





#### Christina Jones

I just saw the matching hinge at the Lock Museum. This was my favorite piece in their collection. Love the color combo





#### Paul Woodfin 🖸

There was a fair amount of enameled hardware in the 1870s and 1880s, but was not widely sold because it was significantly more expensive than bronze hardware of the same design. This TDC article has good information about this decorative hardware, and has 4 pages of color photographs. We currently are trying to get photographs of enameled hardware and add them as variations to the website. https://www.antiquedoorknobs.org/.../tdc159\_jan-feb2010.pdf



#### Stephen Rowe

i am late in this conversation but i would still like to comment, both knobs and plates are corbin, they are circa 1875 and i have keen interest in acquiring them. i have a large collection of corbin hardware and also like the enamel finish. i would be willing pay or trade.



#### Craig Phillips

September 15 at 12:10 PM ⋅ 🚱

a little different mineral knob came in this week, brown and white, has a clear glaze not the normal molasses colored glaze came in with other normal colored mineral/ bennington knobs





#### Blair Holben

Too cool! Will take 18 of them!

Like · Reply · Share · 2w



#### Jeremy Farver

Love these only have a couple myself but hopefully I fine more in my hunting expeditions.

Like · Reply · Share · 2w



#### Mike Stewart

Groovy



#### Lora Frost

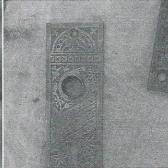
September 8 at 2:17 PM · 🔾

Hi All!

I'm working on an 1889 Victorian home in Richmond VA, and we cleaned up this hardware from the inside double entry doors. From Paul, I learned that this pattern is Trenton F-11900 (First three photos; brass hardware).

I'm looking for at least one more escutcheon plate if anyone has one to part with.... See More





## **Our Business Members**

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

#### Bill's Key & Lock Shop



Owner: Andy Streenz 1509 N. Clinton Blvd. Bloomington, IL 61701 Phone: 309-454-1713

Web: billskeyandlockshop.com

Email:

locksmith@billskeyandlockshop.com

#### THE BRASS CENTER

#### The Brass Center

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Email: info@thebrasscenter.com

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

Web: lahardware.com

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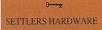
Email: webstore@oldegoodthings.com

## REQUIEM SALVAGE CO

Owner: Amy Larrimore Philadelphia, PA Phone: 215-645-2691

Website: requiemsalvage.co Email: hello@requiemsalvage.co

#### Settlers Hardware



Owner: Susan Neptune 1901 West Alabama Houston, TX 77098 Phone: 713-524-2417

Web Site: settlershardware.com Email: settlershardware@gmail.com

#### Tim & Julie's Another Fine Mess

Owners: Tim Harmon & Julie Crow

2901 East 10th Street Indianapolis, IN 46201

Phone: 503-399-8009 Web Site: indysalvage.com

Email: timandjuliestore@gmail.com

## **Uniquely Olde**

Owner: Steven Carter Youngstown, OH Phone: 330-953-8518

eBay Store: overlyoptimistic Etsy Store: UniquelyOlde Email: smcarter@smc13.com

#### Village Salvage



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

Web Site: villagesalvage.com Email: villagesalvage@gmail.com

#### Webwilson.com



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

Email: hww@webwilson.com

## The Teffris Family Foundation

Director: Thomas Jeffris PO Box 1160

Janesville, WI 53547

Phone: 608-757-1039 Web Site: .jeffrisfoundation.org

#### Next TDC issue:

- 2020 Convention highlights
- Spooky hardware