

The Doorknob Collector

Number 87

January-February 1998

THE END OF AN ERA

By Len Blumin

When an organization elects a new leader, there is often a ceremonial presentation of a gavel to mark the transition. Ray and Loretta Nemec don't have a gavel to pass on, but perhaps a nice set of blue pencils will suffice as they transfer editorial duties of *The Doorknob Collector* (TDC) to Rich and Faye Kennedy.

We use the word "era" to talk about a period of time that is notable and momentous, and the eleven years (1986-1997) during which Ray and Loretta served surely qualify. During that time some 66 issues of TDC were produced, representing 70% of *all* issues of TDC since inception in 1981. Not that quantity alone means much. Rather more important, TDC has evolved into an outstanding example of its kind. Six times a year ADCA members eagerly look forward to read about our common interest and delight in the historical aspects of ornate hardware. The thoughtful and literate content, supplemented by ample illustrations, make for a most pleasing package. The Nemeecs have set a standard of craftsmanship hard to match.

Just think for a moment the number of hours needed to put together just a *single* TDC newsletter. Phone calls cajoling others (not you, Maud!) for copy. Typing to enter copy. Faxes to assign a number to a new design. Trips to the printer. Typing, and more typing. Photographs that are the wrong size, or reversed. Proofing, mailing, etc., etc. Then take, say three dozen hours for each issue, multiply by 66, and you begin to get an idea of the vast contribution made by Ray and Loretta. (Let's see ... 36 hours x 66 issues = 2376 hours!) That happens to come to more hours than the average worker puts in during an entire year.

We better stop here. If we mention the capable work Ray has done as treasurer, their hosting of the ADCA convention in Naperville, their assistance to neophyte convention hosts, Loretta's letters of condolence, or her special thoughtfulness in producing a video tribute to Maud Eastwood, you might begin to think that this pair is something special. Worse still, we would be leaving out another dozen contributions that distinguish this couple, who have been the heart and soul of our organization. So instead, we'll just say, "**Thank you Ray and Loretta, for all you have done.**" We look forward to many more years of their friendship and active participation.



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Our E-Knob Friends

ADCA is moving toward the 21st Century. We now have an E-Mail address. You can find us at KnobNews@AOL.com.

It's been reported to us that Maude was caught "surfing the net" at her son's during Thanksgiving. Don't know what's gotten in to her, but I hope she finds us at our new E-mail address.

As you get on line, please send us your full E-mail address along with permission to print.

Blam, Cheryl NYC Blam@aol.com
Blumin, Len/Patti Lblumin@aol.com
Bornino, Marge/Joe jlboring@aol.com
Hubbard, Richard Doorknobid@aol.com
Kennedy, Faye/Rich KnobNews @ aol.com
Donaldson, Edward edonaldson@aol.com

The Public Relations Post

By Rich Kennedy

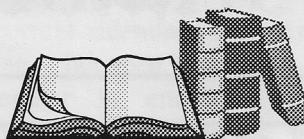
In an effort to make people aware of our group and offer membership, we have ADCA brochures available. If you are giving a talk or exhibiting a collection please let us know and we will send you as many copies as you need. Its not a bad idea to keep some in your car. If you strike up a conversation with someone who might be interested in joining, the brochure gives information about the club and has a membership form attached.

The Book Peddler will be reinstated shortly with some new titles. Look for it.



From the Archives

By Steve and Barbara Menchhofer



Today we would like to reflect on an article that Emil Miller, our first ADCA archivist, wrote in the January 1984 issue of TDC when the archives were newly established. Emil wrote the following:

"In view of the many facets of interest involved in ADCA, our archives will need to contain a wide variety of information. This information will all be collected and maintained for the exclusive use of ADCA members.

One of the many important phases of our interest is research. We are already in the process of trying to assemble a library of old manufacturer's catalogs to enable all members to learn more about their knob treasures.

For instance, what about that knob you found in the bottom of a bucket of old knobs and plates in some antique shop? Who made it? When? What building did it grace? What is the name of the design? Who originally patented the design? Is the building still standing? Who was the architect? The knob can't tell you, even though it no doubt has quite a story behind it. As we progress with our archives, this interesting information will be available for you to pursue ... Exciting thought, isn't it?"

Now it is January 1998, some 14 years later, and we are proud to say that our archives have enlarged to include 68 hardware catalogs that we offer to our membership. As Emil wrote that one of the important phases of our interest is research, we tell you we have the tools for research in the archives - let's use them to broaden our knowledge?

Meet Your Board

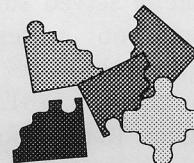
Len Blumin

Len returns to the ADCA Board after a two year absence caused by his heavy commitment to another organization. In the past Len served on the board for a total of ten years, including three years as Vice President (82, 87, and 88) and four years as President (83, 84, 89, and 90). For the past five years he has acted as co-chair of the nominating committee. He welcomes the opportunity to talk with any members who have issues they feel merit discussion by the ADCA Board.

It is great to have you back on the board, Len.

Bits and Pieces

By Win Applegate



We have recently received a generous donation in memory of Frederick and Etheladell Magnus by their son, Rick Magnus.

The \$3,000 was the result of the sale of Fred's doorknob collection and it seems befitting that it is being given back to the organization that they helped charter.

The Board of Directors will begin looking for ways to use the funds in a manner that will properly memorialize them.

We had the opportunity to visit with the Magnuses a few years ago in their home in Florida. Fred loved to retell his story about appearing on the "What's My Line" television program many years ago and how he stumped the panel. We came away reminded of what a fine, gentle couple they were.

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All About Bakelite

By Terri Hartmann
at Liz's Antiques

"Ohh, Ba-a-kelite," customers will sigh when they spot a drawer knob in a rich opaque color unequalled in nature. There's something about the material that elicits an almost slavish devotion, an admiration that takes on tones of adoration. The Bakelite mystique is somewhat ironic: the revered material is just another form of plastic.

Throughout the 19th century scientists, inventors, and chemists sought to create synthetic replacements for natural plastics such as amber, horn, ivory, and tortoiseshell, which were becoming increasingly difficult to find and harvest. In 1853 English inventor Alexander Parkes combined cellulose nitrate, a combination of sulfuric and nitric acids used as an explosive, with camphor to create a flowing substance that could be molded into finished products. In 1884 he lost his patent rights to Americans, John and Isaiah Hyatt, brothers who had been working with a similar substance. The Hyatts called their invention celluloid, and began the American Celluloid Company.

Celluloid was heralded as a miracle. Silverware, picture frames, jewelry, hair combs, buckles, and buttons were made of celluloid, which was much less expensive – and much more renewable—than tortoiseshell and ivory. French manufacturers developed a method of etching lines into celluloid (meant to resemble the horns of an African elephant), creating a finished product which became known as "French ivory."

The next major occurrence in the development of synthetic plastics was an accident. Belgian émigré Leo Hendrick Baekeland, a professor of physics and chemistry, became a millionaire in 1899 when he sold his patent for a photographic paper to Eastman Kodak. He then set up a laboratory to research shellacs in Yonkers, New York. As an experiment, he combined carbolic acid (phenol) and formaldehyde. The combination resulted not in

All About Bakelite

(Cont'd)

a shellac, but in a plastic that could be cast or molded. Unlike celluloid, the new plastic—first truly manmade plastic—would not melt or ignite, even when exposed to extremely high temperatures.

Baekeland named his plastic Bakelite, and obtained a patent for it in 1907. Because it was non-conductive and heat-resistant, Bakelite soon became the standard material for the emerging electronics industry. By 1930 the Bakelite Corporation was emitting thousands of pounds of the phenolic resin from plants in New Jersey, England, and Germany.

The earliest products manufactured from Bakelite were in serviceable brown and black; in the early 20s the Bakelite Corporation successfully experimented with pigmentation, adding fillers to the plastic to enhance the color and strengthen the object. Manufactures began to offer kitchen utensils, home electronics, jewelry, and hardware in bright opaque and pearlescent colors, as well as marbleized swirls. In 1929 the Catalin Corporation developed a translucent pigmentation process, resulting in a plastic the company claimed had “gem-like qualities” with “a depth of color and richness of finish equaled only by precious and semi-precious stones.”

By the early 30s dozens of plastics manufacturers were producing phenolic resins for hundreds of consumer goods manufacturers. No matter which factory the plastic came from, it was known by its most common trademark, Bakelite. As the Roaring Twenties turned into the Depression, it was hard to find an everyday item that was not made of the ubiquitous material.

Bakelite was not the ultimate solution for scientists and inventors searching for the perfect plastic. The production of Bakelite was expensive: it involved special jigs to cast the plastic, special tumblers to polish it, and special vacuum systems to collect the fine dust produced by carving the material. The vacuum systems point to another reason Bakelite was not perfect: the fine dust that scattered through the air when the plastic was carved was found to be toxic when ingested.

By the end of the 1920s a less toxic, less expensive urea-formaldehyde resin was developed. Use of the new plastic completely surpassed the use of Bakelite by the 1940s. But Bakelite will forever remain unsurpassed in our hearts and imaginations.

The Care and Feeding of Bakelite

To determine if something is made of Bakelite or another plastic, run it under hot water. Dry it, then rub it vigorously between your fingers. If it's Bakelite, you will smell a distinctive chemical smell. That's carbolic acid, one of Bakelite's primary ingredients.

Clean Bakelite with a soapy old toothbrush, then dry with a soft towel.

Bakelite may be polished with Simichrome. Rumor has it that polishing or rubbing compounds from an auto body shop also work.

If a Bakelite piece seems somewhat lackluster, it's probably faded. Rub it (try an inconspicuous spot, please!) with 200 grit sandpaper. Mustards will turn white, and some dark greens are actually cobalt blue.

If you pay your dues annually, here is
your 1998 Membership Card

Remove the Tape Completely

Newsletter Deadline – February 15

We Welcome You to Winnipeg Site of the 1998 ADCA Convention

From Val Friesen and Bob Wilson

We are very happy that Winnipeg has been chosen as the site of the 1998 ADCA Convention. We are proud of our city and enjoy sharing it with friends.

Winnipeg is especially beautiful in the summer and is proud of its many full-grown elm trees on city streets and in the parks. It's a city of older homes. Most of the homes were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As in most cities, large houses in or near downtown areas become rooming houses and multi-family dwellings. In Winnipeg there is a trend for young families to buy these older homes because of the lower cost, lower taxes and number of bedrooms. In a lot of cases they are being restored.

Winnipeg, a city of 650,000 is situated in the geographical center of Canada, 80 miles from the border with North Dakota. Winnipeg is the capital of the Province of Manitoba and is at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, in the southeastern part of the province. The city, known as a "Gateway to the West", is served by major railroads and highways and by an international airport.

Winnipeg boasts many things to do and see. There is the Winnipeg Art Gallery with a collection of Canadian, Inuit (Eskimo), and European art. The Centennial Centre Complex includes the Manitoba Museum of Man and

Nature with natural history exhibits and a planetarium; the Concert Hall, home of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet; the Manitoba Theatre Centre; and the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre with displays of Ukrainian folk art and historical artifacts. The city has a horse racing track, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers professional football team, and the Winnipeg Goldeyes Professional Baseball team. Also of interest is

follow a footpath along the Assiniboine River to the Legislative Building. There is a marina that provides canoe rentals and a waterbus to other areas of the city.

About 20 miles north of Winnipeg, there is Lower Fort Garry, which is a stone walled fortress complete with gun ports. The fort, situated on the Red River, was originally built by the Hudson Bay Company and housed the Governor of the Company. Today it is a National Park featuring volunteers in period costumes who demonstrate sewing, cooking, blacksmithing, etc. as it was done in the last century. The fort can be reached by highway or river



the Manitoba Legislative Building, the restored areas of Townsite, and Old Market Square.

Dalnavert is an 1895 house that was built for Hugh John MacDonald, the son of Canada's first Prime Minister. It has been completely restored and is now a museum representative of a wealthy Victorian home. This is a must see when you come to Winnipeg.

"The Forks" is a park built around the intersection of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. It features many boutiques, restaurants and food stores. Street performers entertain in the summertime. There is a walkway that allows you to

Corydon Avenue features a blend of many nations, predominately Italian and Greek. In the summer Corydon Avenue is teaming with sidewalk cafes. It is becoming a tradition to wander late on a warm summer evening along the avenue stopping to chat with friends, having a cool beer or licking fabulous authentic Italian Ice Cream. Strolling along Corydon has become a favorite pastime for many Winnipegers and draws people from all over the city.

Winnipeg has over 900 restaurants catering to every taste imaginable. Many of these are in the downtown area and just a stone's throw from the hotel where the convention will be held. The Forks, also close by, has three full service restaurants

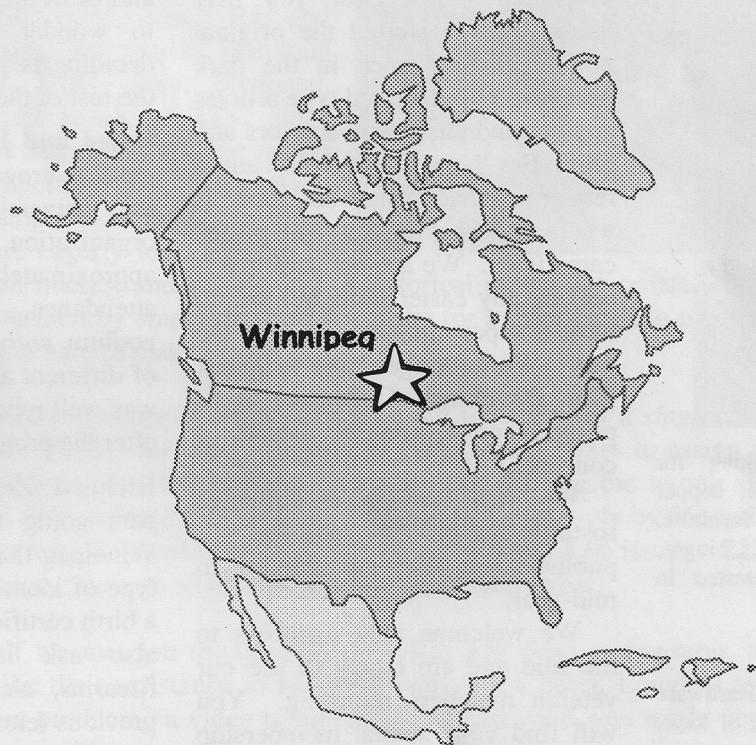
Welcome to Winnipeg (Cont'd)

and many deli style outlets featuring Canada's best hot dogs as well as many ethnic choices. Corydon Avenue features many Italian and Greek restaurants. Almost any part of the city has fine or casual dining.

You can walk the entire length of the downtown area without going outside. The Lombard concourse, which features many shops and

restaurants, is directly below the Lombard Hotel, the convention site. From there you can walk through underground thoroughfares and overpasses that connect the Lombard concourse to the Courts of Winnipeg Square, Eaton Place, (a major department store), Portage Place and The Bay (another major department store). It is almost one continuous shopping mall from one end of the city center to the other.

Our winters are extremely cold, but our summers are very pleasant. The temperatures are in the seventies. Also the US dollar is worth more here. Currently a US dollar is worth \$1.30 Canadian. The prices here for most items have the same dollar amount as we witnessed in Philadelphia at the 1997 convention, therefore there are significant savings. Also Provincial and Federal taxes are refundable to US visitors.



Come join us August 19th-21st at the 1998 ADCA Convention.

The theme for the displays will be announced in the next newsletter.
See you in the North Country!

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.

For Sale: Over 1,000 doorknobs, and boxes of escutcheon plates, roses, and mortise locks. All cleaned. \$7,500.

Ed Thrall
145 Chamberlain Road
Broad Brook, CT 06016
PH: (860) 623-5278

Wanted: I need at least one, but prefer eight more lion knobs as seen in the picture below.

Sally Fefercorn Hyslop
2019 Irving Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55405



Wanted: I am always looking for original Arts & Crafts bronze, copper and brass hand-hammered furniture, hardware, i.e., drawer/ door pulls, hinges, upholstery tacks. Also interested in wood pieces as well.

Vicky Berol (#450)
(415) 771-9899

Wanted: Old catalogs from Hardware and Lock Companies, any kind of locks and keys.

Gary Hahn (#436)
135 So. Glassell
Orange, CA 92866
PH. (714) 997-0243
FAX: (714) 997-1601

For Sale: H-233 with rose, M&W 1882, \$100 postage paid.

Tom Hennessy (#164)
230 Main St.
Terryville, CT 06786-0104
PH/FAX (860) 589-6359

New Member Policy

Membership in ADCA follows the current calendar year. Anyone joining between January and September is enrolled for the current year and receives all the issues of **The Doorknob Collector** for the current year.

New members after September 30th will be enrolled as members for the following year. They will begin receiving **The Doorknob Collector** with the Jan-Feb issue of the next year.

From the Editors

This is a new experience for us as we begin as the editors of the newsletter. Many of you may know that we started the original newsletter way back in the dark ages when Faye would type articles and cut and paste with scissors and glue. For those of you who cannot remember back that far, that is where the phrase "cut and paste" came from. We are not sure that it will be any easier now, but we do have a super computer to ease the way. We no longer have to Xerox **The Doorknob Collector**, it is printed professionally (what a concept).

We will include a complete roster in the Jan-Feb issue and will publish corrections and additions in mid-year.

We welcome new members to the fold and are happy to see our veteran members returning. You will find your annual membership card attached on page 5.

Correction

In the last issue (#86) the knob pictured on page 3 entitled Fargeau Design was incorrectly numbered. It should be E-140. Please make the change in your copy.

REMEMBER, REMEMBER ...

Those who attended the ADCA convention in Milwaukee must remember the Pabst mansion with its Victorian elegance and grandeur.

Recently, Ray Zyc sent us an article by Whitney Gould from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* mentioning a restoration program in progress. John Eastberg, Pabst mansion historian, figured the project would be done in about three weeks or so. Weeks turned into months. The toil has uncovered beauty beyond belief. Hidden under layers of paint in the servants' meal room was a rose marble sink with nickel plated legs and Delft tile on the walls. One has to wonder what other splendid detailing is yet to be uncovered in the rest of the house.

Helen and Bill Byington recently gave a program on doorknobs to the University Club, a women's organization in Iowa City where approximately 200 ladies were in attendance. They shared the podium with four other collectors of different antiques. The program was well received and many stayed after the program to ask questions.

Richard Zellman advises members going to the convention in Winnipeg that they will need some type of identification, a passport or a birth certificate. The officers will also ask if you are carrying firearms, alcohol or have had a previous felony conviction.

Lois and Phillip Warrey say they are looking forward to the convention in Winnipeg, they are only 235 miles south of there.

In Nov. **Bud Wolski** fell and broke his hip. He is learning to use a walker and hopes to be home soon from the rehab center. We all wish him a speedy recovery.