

The Doorknob Collector

Number 99

January-February 2000

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

THE BEAUTY OF WOOD

Doorknobs formed of wood are considered antiques if dated from the early 19th century through the last quarter of the 20th (c. 1840-1975). The earlier, the less often they are found. Rarity, in this case, apparently has not increased interest among collectors. Behold the beauty of the wooden knob.

Wood was undoubtedly one of the earliest materials used for making door pulls and knobs, and continues to be utilized today. The advantages of wood as a doorknob material include wide availability, ease of working into a knob shape, and good looks. The main disadvantage, that of lack of durability, was not a major deterrent to its use, but clearly did diminish the number of surviving knobs available to the collector.

Judging from catalog offerings, wood probably achieved its greatest popularity in the 1880s, and many examples found have "vernacular" style rosettes typical of that period. In America, the main woods used were maple, oak, and walnut. In England there was greater access to foreign woods, so we find knobs made from such exotics as ebony and teak. Mahogany was also used, but usually "ebonized", as was popular in the period.

The round form of a knob is readily turned on a lathe, and the invention of powered duplicating lathes facilitated the making of large numbers of cheap wooden knobs. Wood rosettes were also made, but these seem to have been more popular in England.

"Carved" knobs are the hardest to find. Of course each knob was not carved by hand. Rather, it seems likely that using a "die" containing a negative image created the desired design. This die was probably impressed on the end grain of the turned knob under high pressure, possibly with the aid of steam to soften the wood. The high pressure would crush the wood fibers, allowing them to permanently retain the details of the design. The Ornamental Wood Co., who provided Corbin with their first wooden knobs in 1876, pressed the designs into their knobs. Ornamentation included human profiles and artistically arranged foliage with rings, beads, or the Greek key border. Examples may be seen on pages 3 and 4.

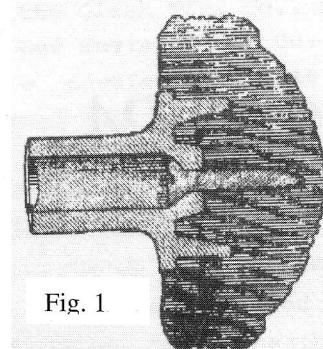


Fig. 1

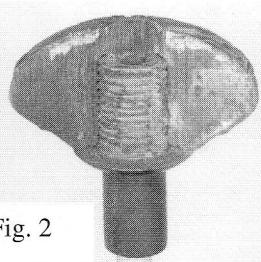


Fig. 2

The Jos. Bardsley Company produces what might be called the conventional shaped wooden knobs. These are the common shapes that we are used to seeing and are most often encountered in the catalogs from the last two decades of the 1800s. The Bardsley wooden knobs were turned in balls, round top, and flattop versions with either wooden or metal roses. Their oval, egg, and round-fluted shapes were special orders. Other ornamentation was limited to three rings milled on the side of the box and round shaped styles.

Ever in the forefront, Yale & Towne ran an ad in a trade magazine in the 1880s for a

Newsletter Deadline - February 15, 2000

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THE BEAUTY OF WOOD (Cont'd)

Bardsley knob featuring the metal shank held to a wooden knob head by a screw inserted from the bottom through the spindle channel into the head of the knob. See Figure 1. An alternative manner of connecting the shank to the knob is illustrated in Figure 2. Here the center shank is screwed into the turned knob and glued. An even earlier example is a broad toadstool shape with no neck that is pinned to its forged spindle, the end of which forms a button on the knob's top surface. An educated guess places this knob from the 1700s.

Four distinct eras of wood knob popularity are recorded. In each era one company dominated the market: Nashua Lock Co. in the 1840s, the Ornamental Wood Co. in the 1870s (the Eastlake period), Jos. Bardsley Co. in the 1880-90s, and the Charles I. Allen Co. in the 20th century - notably from the 1950s through the 70s.

More information on wooden knobs may be found in the March-April 1989 issue of the newsletter (No. 34).

Contributors

We would like to thank the following people for their contribution of ideas, articles and information presented in this issue.

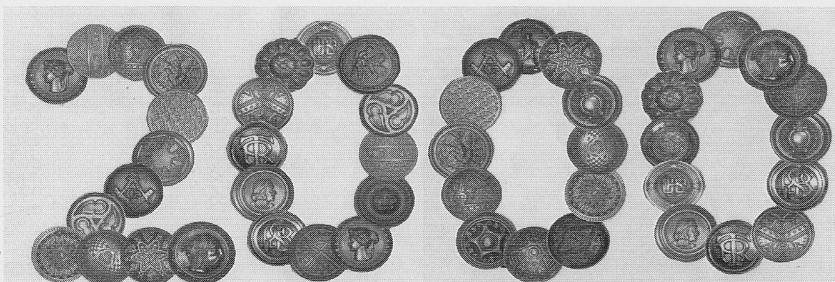
Win Applegate
Len Blumin
Maude Eastwood
Dick Hartley
Sally Hyslop
Allen Joslyn

ADCA Knobs

The ADCA knob is a beautiful knob although not yet an antique. We must note however that they were made in the previous century. Presently we have 17 of the club doorknobs left, all in walnut. The purchase price is \$25 U.S. and may be purchased through the archives. (See Bits and Pieces on pg. 5.)



CONVENTION



August 22-26
Tuesday through Saturday
DoubleTree Hotel
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Mark Your Calendars!

New Member Policy

Membership in ADCA runs from July 1 through June 30. Anyone joining between July and April is enrolled for the current membership year and receives all the issues of **The Doorknob Collector** for that membership year.

New members after April 30th will be enrolled as members for the following membership year and will begin receiving **The Doorknob Collector** with the Jul-Aug issue.

Changing the Membership Cycle

Just a reminder, we are changing the membership year to run from July through June (previously January through December). It is important that you note the change if you have not yet sent in your 2000 membership.

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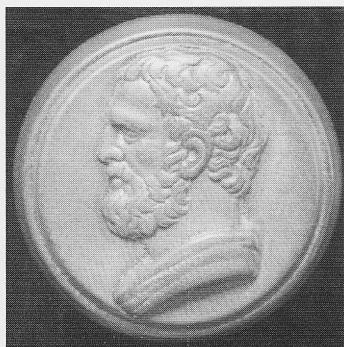
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Founded Sept 1981, the **Antique Doorknob Collectors of America** is a non-profit organization devoted to the study and preservation of ornamental hardware.

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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Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



W-102
Classical profile, perhaps Socrates
Design #6 Ornamental Wood Co.
Bridgeport, CT Circa 1870. Walnut



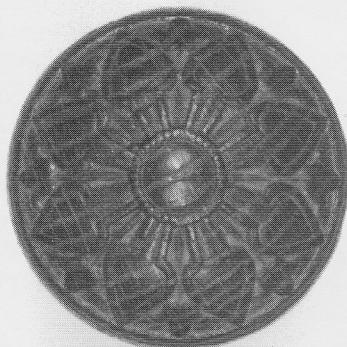
W-103
George Washington
Design #5 Ornamental Wood Co.
Bridgeport, CT Circa 1870



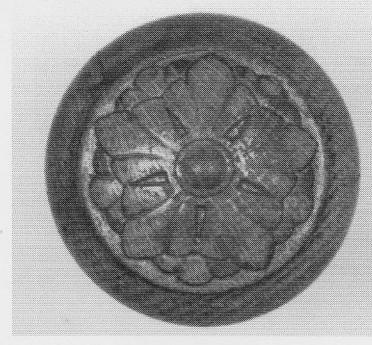
W-104
Warrior with Greek Key border
Design #3 Ornamental Wood Co.
Bridgeport, CT Circa 1870



W-202
Radial floral design with ninefold perimeter
And eightfold central patterns



W-203
Eightfold radial "arrow" motif
Design #4 Ornamental Wood Co.
Bridgeport, CT Circa 1870

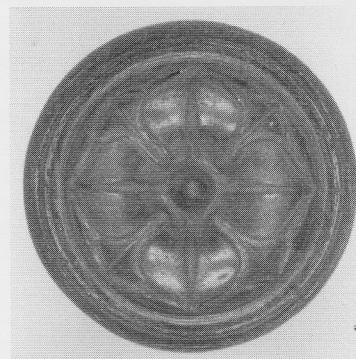


W-206
Fivefold floral

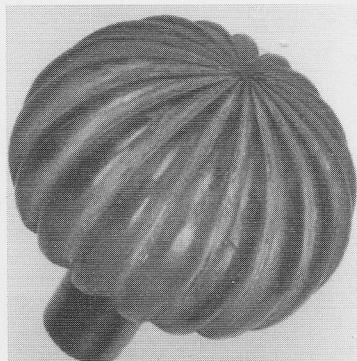
Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs



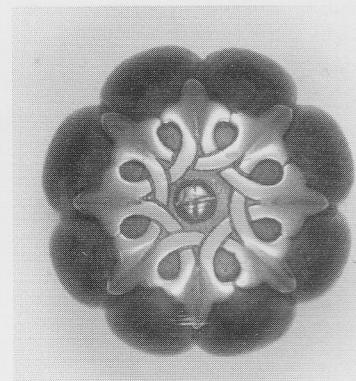
W-207
Floral wreath with pointed leaves
Design #1 Ornamental Wood Co.
Bridgeport, CT Circa 1870



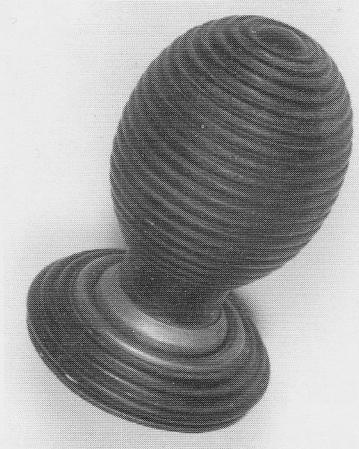
W-208
Fourfold floral with deep relief
Walnut



W-209
Fluted radial pattern
Similar to "Colonial" Designs in metal knobs



W-500
Eightfold walnut
German silver overlay.



W-400
Tall "beehive" shape
With attached beehive rose



W-401
Conical profile, oak
With attached rose

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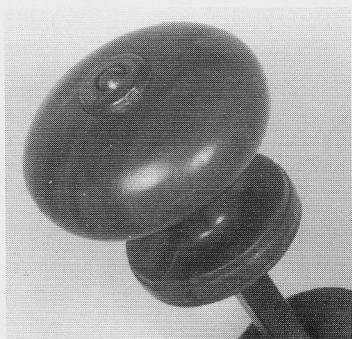
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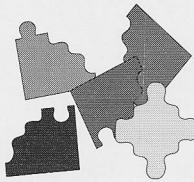
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Barb Menchhofer	
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Len Blumin	
Maude Eastwood	
John Holland	
Dorothy Ann Miller	



Examples of knobs held to the metal shank by a screw inserted through the spindle channel into the head of the knobs.

Bits and Pieces



By Win Applegate

With this issue, we again address wooden knobs. For various reasons, earlier 'numbered' wooden knobs, for the most part, were not included in the "Revised and Expanded" VDA.

This brings to the fore some of the dilemmas facing Len Blumin as he numbers and classifies specimens. A-209 "Steamship" is carried over from the first edition with a photo of a wooden version although a bronze example exists. Many of us are aware of the various "Warrior" knobs available in wood, but it is the O-150 (under Emblematic & Fraternal), the ADCA Seal done in wood by the late Arnie Fredrick (#1), that typifies some of the problems.

Although the knob is certainly modern (1991 and laser cut) by any standards, there are firm reasons for its inclusion. The seal itself was designed by the late Emmett Wiemer (#18) and then modified by Charles Wardell (#9). Now, the question is: how should it be classified Emblematic/Fraternal or Wooden?

Those of you who have not yet ordered the VDA should be aware that deliveries have been made. Everyone ordering before Christmas should now have their copies; shipped US Mail Priority, except for Canadian orders. The printer's delivery was late so it meant that packing and mailing ran into the Post Office Christmas rush. No need for the details, but it would be appreciated if we could get

acknowledgment of receipt and condition when received.

Work has already begun on the first (and free) update that includes the next 100 knobs. Corrections and additions should be sent to me.

Ever felt 'a little' inadequate when people discuss house architecture in the 1800's; what distinguishes Second Empire from Queen Anne, etc.? A lot of this can be cleared up by studying the tear-out "Classic Houses" in the Jan/Feb issue of This Old House magazine. The piece is authored by Alexandra Bandon with excellent illustrations done by 'our' Tom Hennessy (#164). Well, if we're pressed, we might admit that Tom does have some 'slight' affiliation with the Lock Collectors of America, but you know...!

Happy hunting.

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: I need a knob with the letter "M" on it for a baby present. Please help me find one. Thanks

Debbie Fellenz, (#31)
2224 Cherokee, St.
Louis, MO 63118 (314) 776-8363

For Sale: H-217 Corbin knobs and plates. 10 sets. Excellent condition.

Lee Bettenhausen
127 Green Bay Road
Wilmette, IL 60091
847-251-0187
E-mail: Lee4006@AOL.com

In Memoriam



William Fellenz (#30) of Lexington, NE passed away on December 6, 1999. He and his wife of 55 years, Dolores, are long time members of the club. The ADCA is a family affair with his daughter Debbie Fellenz-Kelly and son William R. Fellenz also members of the group.

Debbie says her dad was not a doorknob collector, but a dealer who appreciated the beauty of any antique, especially a doorknob. He attended the convention in St. Louis and enjoyed the association with the club.

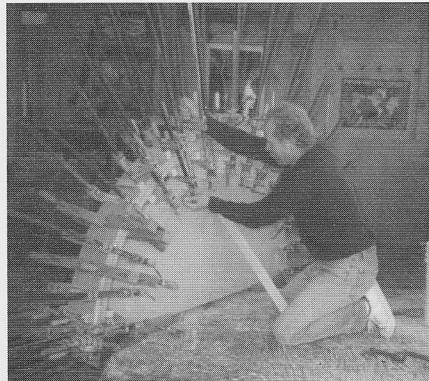
For nearly three decades, Mr. Fellenz bought and sold thousands of fine and collectible antique items, including architectural pieces salvaged from the Mill Creek Valley area in St. Louis, MO and from throughout the country and Europe. He started his business in the early 1950s. He encouraged others to start collecting antiques and was an avid collector himself.

During his career, he was a frequent guest on a local call-in radio program where he discussed all aspects of antiques. After his retirement in 1980 he retired and moved to his boyhood home in Nebraska.

Get to Know Our Members

There are real advantages to being in the front office of the ADCA. One in particular is we get to speak to many of our members over the phone and get to know a little more about them. One of our newest members sent along some pictures of himself and a bit about what he does for a living.

We would like to introduce Dick Hartley (#584) to the rest of you. Dick is a bachelor who lives alone with his dogs on four acres in the mountains of California. He is a doormaker by trade who will build anything that interests him.

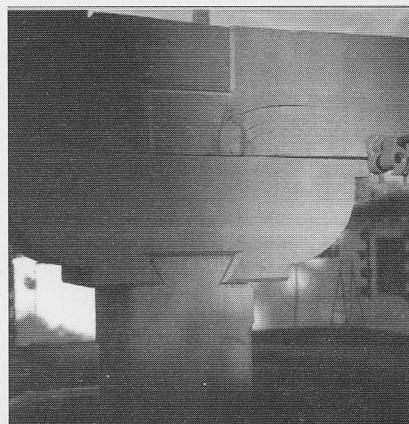


Dick Hartley working on the rounded top of a door

One of the great things about living alone is he can make all the noise he needs to while building the doors and the dogs don't complain. Just a short 25 feet walk from his home to the workshop. Now there is a commute that many of us would like.

Dick has lived his entire life in California. He is planning to build his own house in the near future and says it will be a blend of medieval French country and park service styles. He says the hardware will be unique yet

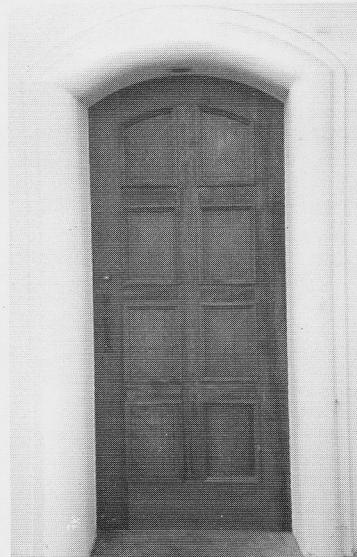
utilitarian. We may end up seeing this house on a TV as one of those most unique homes.



How do you like this craftsmanship?

Dick says he began rescuing hardware long before he was interested in woodworking. He likes anything that is unique.

These pictures certainly show the true quality of his work. He will build anything that is requested. From the looks of this arbor support (above) it appears that he might also enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles although he did not say that to us.



Just one of the beautiful doors made by Dick Hartley

Corrections to the Roster

Several of you pointed out corrections that needed to be made to the roster which was issued in the last newsletter. Please make the following changes on your current copy. They have been corrected in the database. Let us know if there are further corrections. Thanks Richard Breitbart (#469)

srbghb@gte.net
Ken Spahr (#402)
Phone (207) 845-2263

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the ADCA:

Nelson Hoffman	Kingston, NY
Mel Elam	Shell Knob, MO
Sam Skibicki	Stevens Point, WI
Dick Hartley	Mt. Center, CA
Paul Wicklow	Oak Park, IL
Robert Chapman	Santa Fe, NM
Joel Baird	Butte, MT
Gary Firestone	Woodbridge, VA
Robert Thompson	Bothell, WA
Angela Toomey	Thayer, MO
David Shoffstall	Poland, OH

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