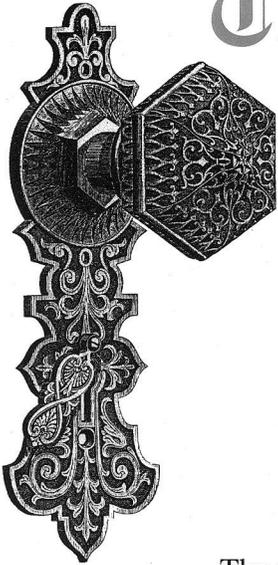


The Doorknob Collector



Number 119

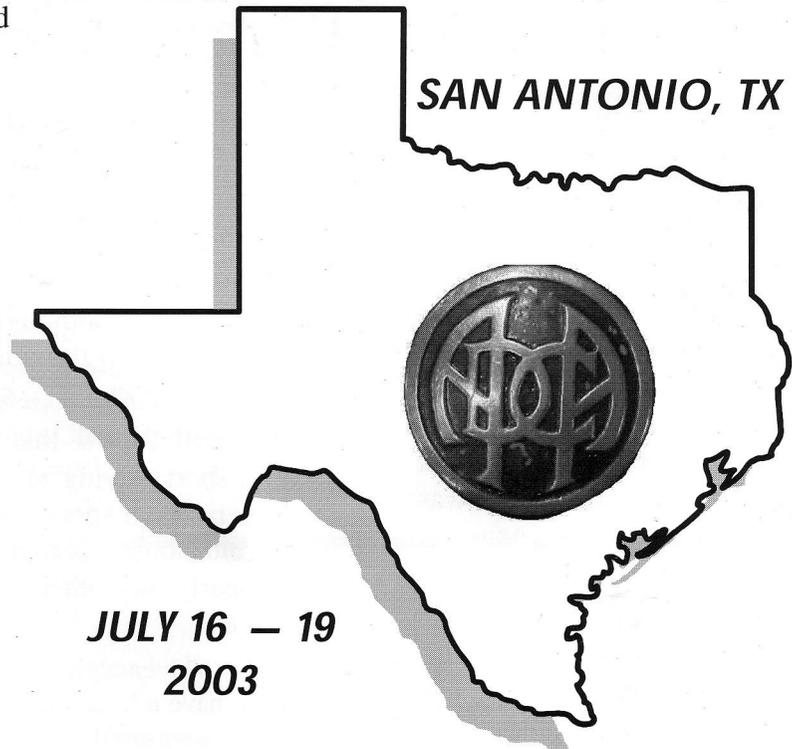
May - June 2003

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

ADCA 2003 Convention "The Unclassified Doorknob"

The theme for 2003 will be based on Len Blumin's classifications in *Victorian Decorative Art*. The goal will be to find as many knobs as possible that have yet to be photographed and classified. A special award will be given for the most unclassified knobs displayed as well as for the most identified by manufacturer and estimated original date of the pattern. We will have a booth set up for taking doorknob pictures, which will hopefully be added to the archives for future publication as addendum to *Victorian Decorative Art*.

The convention will kick off with a great tour on Wednesday. We will start with a private tour of the Dilworth House, in Gonzales, Texas, where the Texas Revolution started. Mr. Dilworth was a Texas Banker whose investments in land and the cattle industry were incredibly successful until the Depression when his bank, like many others, collapsed. The home is mostly original with stained glass, Rookwood tiled fireplaces, Steuben lighting fixtures, and other fine features. (cont'd)



Newsletter Deadline - Wednesday, June 18, 2003

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ADCA 2003 Convention

(cont'd)

From there we will visit the Gonzales County Courthouse which has been completely restored and exhibits great hardware as well as incredible architecture. Right around the corner is also the jail house museum where you can get a taste of what life would have been like for a criminal in the Wild West. This was the first high security jail in Texas.

Next will be The Boothe and Lewis building, a hardware store for nearly a century, where we will have lunch with a view of Soldiers Square. This is a classic downtown view of a town laid out by the Mexican government in 1825, making it one of the oldest in the state. For you Northerners that doesn't seem very old, but it was wild times in Texas in those days.

For those of you who wish to visit, Discovery Architectural Antiques it is just two blocks away. There you will find a true hoard of hardware on display at what has become the largest architectural antiques store in the Southern United States.

Then it is on to the Kleine house, owned by your hosts and built in 1907. It is a great example of an early Prairie Style bungalow.

Display Categories for the 2003 Convention:

Each year we have a display contest for our members. This year the theme of the contest is "The Unclassified Doorknob" (see article on page 1). So gather up those knobs that are not shown in *Victorian Decorative Art* and put together your display. Awards will be given for the following categories.

New collectors take note of category number 3. You do not have to have an extensive collection to be a winner. The displays are enjoyed by the public and are judged by all the members in attendance. Join the fun!

Categories:

1. Most schools of Design Represented
2. Best Display, Schools of Design
3. Best Novice Collector Display (1 to 3 years)
4. Most Creative Display
5. Best Assortment of Unclassified Knobs

There is a variety of nice hardware inside, although it is not original to the house for the most part.

We will follow that up with a short driving tour of the town which sports more great old houses per capita than nearly any other town in Texas.

Haven't had enough? Well, we will have a little social get together sponsored by Cappy Lawton, a prior member who has rejoined the club. He will host a get-together at his restaurant, **La Fonda**, the oldest Mexican food restaurant in San Antonio, and one of the best. You might possibly want get dinner, but maybe not after the wonderful snacks and drinks that will be provided. There will also be a cash bar if you want alcohol.

The Doorknob Collector®



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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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In Memoriam.



Gunilla Joslyn

Gunilla Joslyn, 66, died at her home in Montclair, New Jersey. She was born in Stockholm, the middle child of five children of the chief set designer for the Stockholm Opera. She was trained as a dental technician, but the spirit of adventure won out, in 1956 she traveled to Scotland to be an au pair on a farm outside Edinburgh.

There she met Allen Joslyn, who was taking his Junior year at the University of Edinburgh. She moved to the United States in 1958, where they were married. Then followed two years in Oxford, England, and three years in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Allen attended Harvard Law School. They moved to New York in 1963 and then to Montclair.

In 1975, shortly after trip around the world, she became involved in sponsoring and assisting Vietnamese refugees who had begun to arrive, including two couples that lived with them for several months. Later, she became an active breeder and exhibitor of English bulldogs.

Although she lived in the United States for many years, as Gilbert & Sullivan put it, "In spite of all temptations, to belong to other nations", she never became an American citizen. She and Allen attended their first convention in Winnipeg, and were hosts

for the Bethlehem convention. Unfortunately, they never found a bulldog doorknob.

She is survived by her husband, Allen, and her children, Carl of Montclair and Ylva Haddadin of Fair Lawn, New Jersey, four grandchildren, and her siblings, Lars of Queens, New York, Kerstin of Vaxholm, Sweden, Barbro of London and Cairo, and Klas of Stockholm, as well as three English bulldogs.



New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our newest members who have joined the ADCA since our last newsletter.

710	Toby Beavers	937 Tilman Rd Charlottesville, VA 22901	(434) 979-7438	tobybeavers@historic-homes.com
711	Sandra Milillo	13 North Ct Port Washington, NY 11050	(516) 883-7189	
712	Thomas Fox	419 Elm Selkirk, NY 12158	(518) 439-3720	
713	Ivor Barber	126 Cleland Ave Los Gatos, CA 95030	(408) 354-0652	Ivor@LSIL.com

You Just Never Know

By Vern Eklund

Originally published in TDC 45 (1991)

Collecting is a strange affliction that can take one down unplanned paths at times. Not long ago a doorknob to me was just a functional gadget that allowed me to get into the house. Now I find myself writing a piece for the **Doorknob Collector**. Let me explain.

Basically I'm an antique gun collector. A few years back I began researching Civil War era natural thermoplastics because small pistol cases had been made from these early plastics. Today gun collectors usually refer to them as "gutta percha" cases. One major initial use of this shellac-based material was to produce daguerreotype photo cases which were made by the thousands in the 1850s and 1860s. These are known as "union" or "composition" cases today. Every sport has its own terminology it seems.

My pistol case research took me to Florence, Massachusetts, where Alfred P. Critchlow began making photo cases in the early 1850s. In 1858 the company became known as Littlefield, Parsons and Company but continued to mold these early thermoplastics. In 1866 the company name was again changed; this time to the Florence Manufacturing Company (FMC) by plastics were still

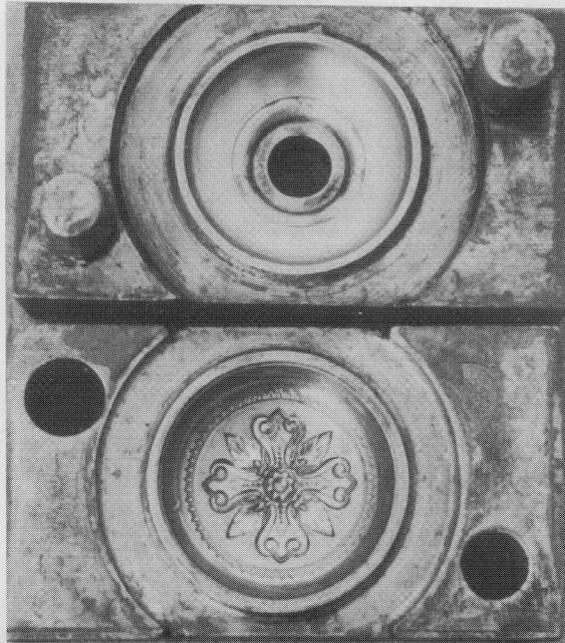


Fig. 1 Composition doorknob mold from the Florence Manufacturing Co., Florence, MA

their game. FMC began expanding its product line to find new markets for their molding expertise. Hand mirrors, hairbrushes, umbrella handles, jewelry boxes, photo frames, and yes, doorknobs were produced. The company name has changed several more times but the firm still molds plastics today as the Pro Corporation – some 136 years after it first started!

The material initially used was a combination of "gum shellac, woody fibers" and a coloring agent like lamp black. Most of their products were black or dark brown during the mid-1800s. This composition was described in patents of the 1850s but wasn't the exclusive property of Florence Manufacturing. The mixture was heated and placed into a steel die in a putty-like consistency and then pressed to form whatever

object was being made. The molds or dies were heated to about 300 degrees F during the molding process. The steel dies themselves are a work of art engraved by die sinkers to produce a very decorative image in reverse.

FMC initially called its material the "Florence Composition" but later referred to it as "Diatite" and used the trademark – DIATITE-. It appears that other companies also used the name Diatite, a name probably derived from diatomaceous earth.

The original 1866 Florence Manufacturing Company building still stands and is owned by its successor company the Pro Corporation. In this structure one of my more exciting moments occurred a couple of years back when we discovered a vault containing over 100 original steel dies from the mid-nineteenth century. One of the molds or dies found,

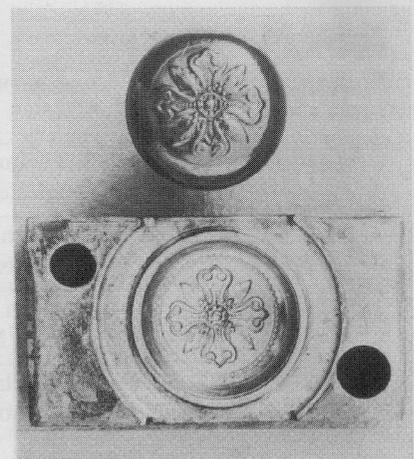


Fig. 2 Steel mold and composition doorknob

Figure 1, is for a doorknob. In fact "doorknob" is stamped on the exterior of this die. Figure 2 shows this same die with an original knob produced from this very mold.

A key escutcheon mold, Figure 3, was also found. An example of this escutcheon, Figure 4, was found in the collection of the local historical society know as Historic Northampton. It had been given to them some years ago by the Pro Corporation.

The brown composition knob shown in Figure 2 is 2 1/4 inches in diameter and appears to have been painted over at some time. The key escutcheon is also brown but has not been painted. The knob has a 9/16 diameter by 3/4 inch steel knob shank molded in for what appears to be a 19/64 inch square spindle. The marking on the back side of the doorknob and in the steel mold are very faint due to wear. The same marking on the knob's rose (not picutred) is very clear however: "NORWALK LOCK COMPANY. SILICA. - DIATITE—PATENTED DEC 15 1868. A."

This leads to a bit of a mystery. The patent referred to is almos certainly No 85018 for a "Material for Various Articles" by J. M. Merrick, Jr. of Boston, Massachusetts dated December 15, 1886. It was assigned to the New England Vulcanite Hide company and covered a gum shellac and diatomaceous earth (silica) mixture for molding. Many of the FMC products; hand mirrors ,for instance, have the trade mark - DIATITE—on them in addi-

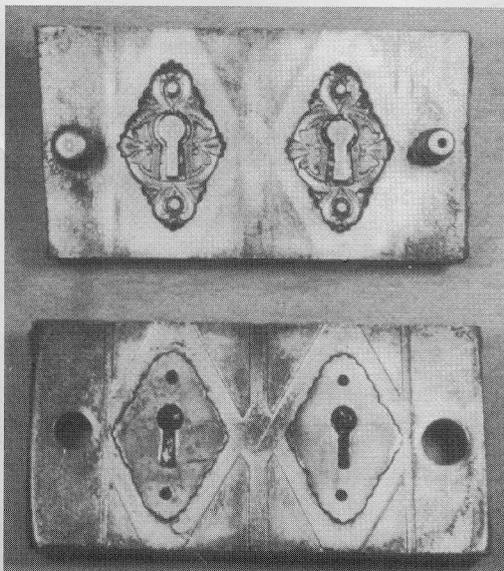


Fig.3 Key escutcheon mold from the Florence Manufacturing Co.

tion to "Pat. 1868" and "Florence Manufacturing Co." Also the mold was found in their vault. It seems likely that Florence Manufacturing obtained the rights to the Merrick patent at some point although, they could have acted as a subcontractor for the Norwalk Lock Company. Whatever the arrangement, it appears certain that this composition doorknob was manufactured in Florence, Massachusetts and very likely in the 1870s.

The limited company records available do not pinpoint the doorknob period. We can document the photo case manufacture started in 1853, that the first pistol cases were sold in November 1858, that thermoplastic hand mirrors and hairbrushes were in production by 1865, so the doorknobs couldn't have been far behind.

Now for the rest of my story. My wife noticed that ADCA was holding its national convention in our "backyard" in

East Windsor, Connecticut. I hurried on down on Saturday morning to see if I could learn anything about "plastic" doorknobs since I had by then found the molds. I soon met Maudie Eastwood and several other very nice people and did learn the "composition" doorknob aren't all that common. Maude asked if I would draft this article to let the membership know about one company that produced composition products in the nineteenth century and to show what the mold looked like. Maudie also was responsible for putting me in touch with the ADA collector who sold me the doorknob shown in Figure 2.

This unexpected detour in my collecting life certainly hasn't taken me down a dead-end street -in fact, you might say it has opened a few doors!



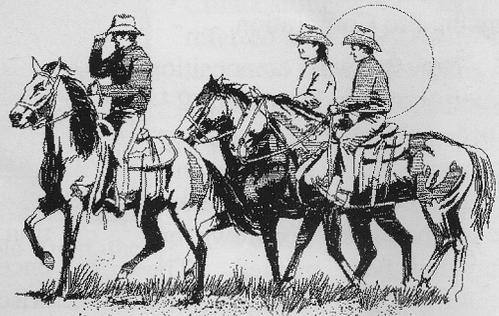
Fig. 4 Composition key escutcheon from Historic Northampton collection, Northampton, MA

IT'S TRAVEL TIME!!

It's no secret, most people love to travel. The dream of the American vacation is one that is relived over and over each year. So why do we like to travel? Simple: It is fun and enjoyable! With travels, new experiences are generated which bring a lifetime of memories. Unfortunately, many people are never given the opportunity to visit new, exciting venues. As ADCA members, we are privileged to have just this opportunity. In the last eight years of convention attendance, I've visited Grand Rapids, Milwaukee, Portland,

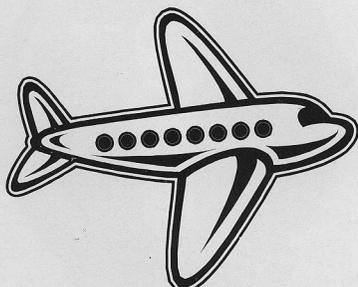
Winnipeg, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, St. Louis and Minneapolis. It is with eager anticipation that I look forward to visiting San Antonio, Texas for ADCA's 2003 convention.

Why San Antonio? Historically, ADCA conventions have been held in different areas of the country to facilitate new member involvement. Rotating from the East to the West via the Mid-west, the central part of the United States has been well traversed. This year's convention opens a region new to ADCA. The Southwest offers a new choice for ADCA travelers and should be well attended. San Antonio is a rapidly growing, historically significant area that offers many opportunities for visitors. Don't hesitate to come a day or so early or plan to stay a few days after to make the most of the area.

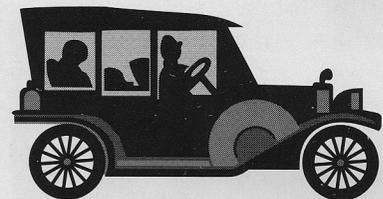


Located not far from San Antonio is the smaller town of Gonzales, home to this year's convention hosts Brad and Suzanne Kittel. The Kittel's have planned quite a reception for the ADCA convention attendees. Brad and Suzanne own and operate the architectural

restoration business, *Discovery Architectural Antiques*. Their business is known to be the largest architectural antique store in the Southwestern United States. Those attending the group tour on Wednesday, July 16th will be given the chance to visit their store and see what is available in architectural antiques from the region. Brad and



Suzanne also maintain an extensive collection of vintage door hardware that will be on display at the site.

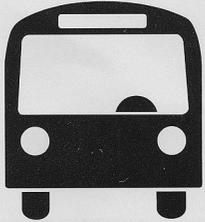


Speaking of hardware, there has always been plenty to buy, sell and trade at every convention I have attended. I can still remember my first convention in Milwaukee when a previous collector walked in with almost 600 good bronze Eastlake knobs for sale. It was like being the proverbial 'kid in a candy store!' Whether you are a collector, restorationist or a historian in this field, the ADCA convention is the premiere event

for hardware collectors every year. You will not find more hardware, information or knowledgeable collectors in any other location. If you attend antique shows; scout flea markets; follow eBay or any other auction house, then the ADCA annual convention is the place for you!



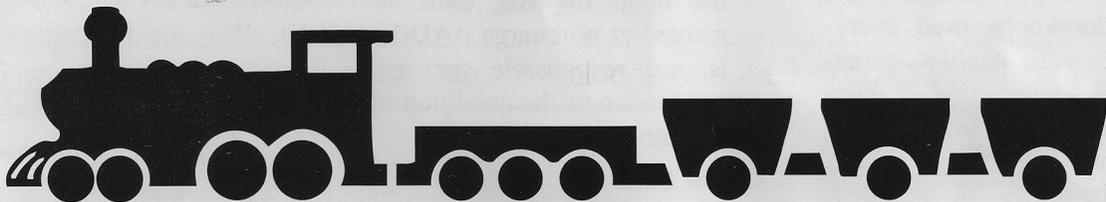
The final great reason to attend this year's ADCA convention is the fond personal relationships developed with fellow members. Many of my best friends are collectors within ADCA that have been met through attendance at annual conventions. It is surprising just how quickly lifelong friends can be made when we all share an obsession with hardware!



So take the opportunity and hospitality that Texas and the Kittel's have to offer: attend the 2003 ADCA convention in San Antonio. Enjoy the city, hardware by the gross, new and old friendships and the creation of new memories! See you in San Antonio...

Stephen Rowe

ADCA President



Come by car, bus, train, plane, or horse, whatever. Just get there!

Changes to Your Roster

Please make these changes to your Roster.

Berol, Marshal	Fax: 415-956-4525
Wilkemeyer, Robert	Email: rjwilkemeyer@attbi.com
Swedenburg, Robert	Email: swedenburg@adlephia.net
De Luca, Michael	105 Second Ave, Little Falls, NJ 07424
Hannum, Steven	23112 63 rd Place, Cheverly, MD 20785-3116
Applegate, Carol	Email: Caroll12@erols.com
Fellenz, Debbie	Email: imnotpops@aol.com
Pearson, Frank, Jr.	Phone: 505-421-0167
Takes, Steve	Email: remove
	402 21 st St. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52403

Convention Shipping Instructions

No shipments are to be received prior to 5 working days before the convention. There is a handling fee to move boxes from receiving to the exhibit room (see your Convention Packet).
No Boxes larger than 75 pounds or wider than 36 inches can be accepted.

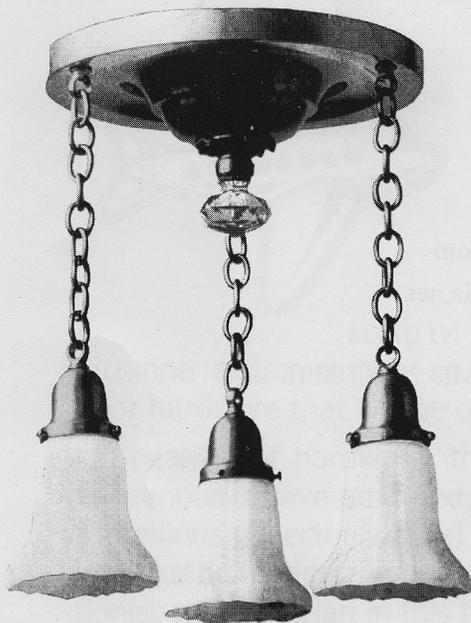
Please place a label on each box as follows

Your Name
Antique Doorknob Collectors of America
July 16 - 19, 2003
Attn: B. Rivas (Pat Jacobson)
c/o The St. Anthony Hotel
300 East Travis
San Antonio, TX 78205

Another Use for a Doorknob

By Bo Sullivan

Just when you thought you'd seen doorknobs used everywhere - cane handles, paperweights, curtain rods - even towel bar ends - here comes a new one: light fixture finials! This period light fixture is from Cleveland's Morreau Lighting Co., Catalogue #9, c. 1914.



May - June 2003

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:

Back copies of **The Doorknob Collector**. Issues 37 through 116 (Sept-Oct 1989 to Nov-Dec 2002). Missing issues 46 and 65. Best offer (plus postage) received by July 15, 2003.

Helen Ryan (#202)
Box 404
Stronghurst, IL 61480

New Member Website

One of our newest members, Toby Beavers of Charlottesville, VA has a very interesting web site. Take a look, there is a very good article on

the development of locks that includes lots of pictures. He also displays some very interesting hardware handles. He will also post and sell your knobs for a 10% commission.

Keep in Touch

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