

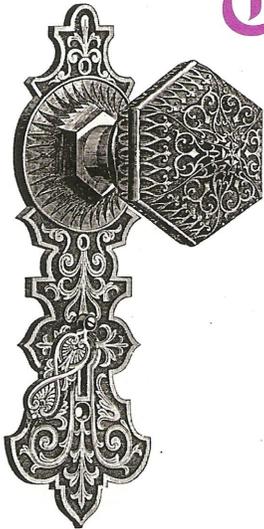
# The Doorknob Collector

Number 154

March - April 2009

A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America

A Nonprofit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware



## COME HOME TO HARTFORD AND TO OUR ROOTS

By Allen Joslyn

Start making your plans, as this year's Convention will be held at the Hilton Hotel in the center of Hartford, Connecticut, on July 14-17<sup>th</sup>. With a few exceptions, Connecticut is the source of all the hardware we know and love, and New Britain is

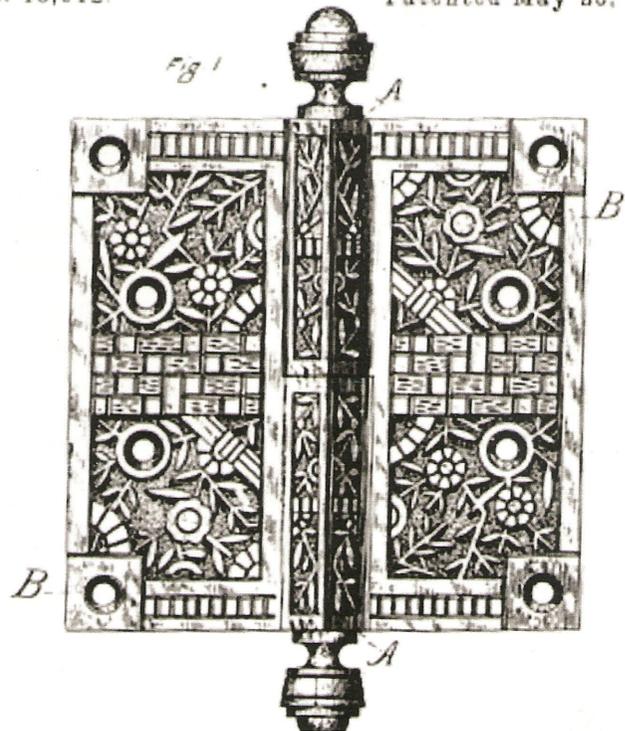
nearby. Thus we return to our roots.

Apart from the Convention, there is a lot to do in Hartford. It is the home of the Wadsworth Athenaeum, a world-class museum, and numerous other attractions. And since Brimfield is open from July 14 through July 19, and approximately only 50 miles away, those who like to wake up very early and travel with flashlights will have good hunting! And so will those who chose to wake at a more civilized time. (Brimfield is one of the country's largest flea markets). Convention packets will go out in April.

Transportation: if you are flying, you can land in New York/Newark, Boston or Hartford. From New York and Boston, it is possible to take a train to Hartford, but renting a car would be easier. (I'll be happy to tell you how to do it by train.) If you fly into Hartford, there is no shuttle to the Hilton, but taxis are available.

The theme of the Convention is American Aesthetic Hardware, 1870-1895. So get out your Nashua, Sargent, Russell & Erwin and all the other manufacturers of this beautiful hardware, and come to knock the rest of us off our feet. (Incidentally, the design patent for the hinge shown above was assigned to the Nashua Lock Company).

DESIGN.  
W. E. SPARKS.  
HINGE.  
No. 15,012. Patented May 20, 188



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## 2009 Convention Schedule

July 14 (Tuesday)	Afternoon	Registration
	6-8 PM	Directors meeting
	8 PM on	Hospitality Suite
July 15 (Wednesday)		<b>Tour Day</b>
	9:30 AM	Tour bus departs
	10:00 AM	Tour bus arrives at Mark Twain House
	10-Noon	Tour of Mark Twain House
	12-1 PM	Lunch at Mark Twain House
	1 PM	Tour Bus departs for Lock Museum of America
	1:30-3:30 PM	At Lock Museum
	4:00	Arrive back at Hilton Hotel
	8:00 PM on	Hospitality Suite
July 16 (Thursday)	8:30 AM-4:30 PM	Buy, sell and trade
	6:00 – 8:30 PM	Open to the Public
	8:00 PM on	Hospitality Suite
July 17 (Friday)	8:30 AM-Noon	Buy, sell and trade
	1 PM-5 PM	Auction
	6PM-7 PM	Open Bar
	7 PM	Banquet
	8 PM	General Meeting of Members
	9 PM on	Hospitality Suite

# ADCA Convention 2009

**Hartford, Connecticut**

**July 14-17, 2009**

**Save the date**

**Start planning your trip to the Nutmeg State**

# Bakelite !!

*By Liz Gordon*

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

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century scientists, inventors, and chemists sought to create synthetic replacements for substances 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 Americans 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 available – than tortoiseshell or 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 shellac, but in a plastic that could be cast or molded. Unlike celluloid, this new plastic – the 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 on it in 1907. Because it was non-conductive and heart-resistant, Bakelite soon became the standard material for the emerging electronics industry. By 1930, the Bakelite Corporation was producing 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 1920s, the Bakelite Corporation successfully experimented with pigmentation, adding fillers to the plastic to enhance the color and strengthen the article. Manufacturers began to offer kitchen utensils, home electronics, jewelry and hardware in bright opaque and pearlescent colors, as well as marbled 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 1930s, dozens of plastics manufacturers were producing phenolic resins for hundreds of manufacturers of consumer goods. No matter which factory the plastic came from, it was known by its most common trademark, Bakelite. As the Roaring Twenties turned into the Great Depression, it was



hard to find an everyday item that was not made of this ubiquitous material.

Bakelite was not the ultimate solution for which scientists and inventors were searching. 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 from produced from carving the material. The vacuum systems point to another reason why Bakelite was not perfect: the fine dust that scattered throughout 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 had been developed and was waiting in the wings. Use of the new plastic completely surpassed that of Bakelite by the 1940s. But Bakelite will forever remain unsurpassed in our hearts and imaginations.

Unfortunately, since this newsletter can only handle black and white, we cannot adequately reproduce any picture of the real glory of Bakelite, its vast range of coloration.

### The Care and Feeding of Bakelite

- To determine if something is made of Bakelite or another plastic, run it under hot water. Dry it, rub it vigorously between your fingers. If it's Bakelite, you will notice a distinctive smell. That is carbolic acid, one of the main ingredients of Bakelite.
- Clean Bakelite with a soapy old toothbrush, and 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 probably faded. Rub it (on an inconspicuous spot, please!) with 200 grit sandpaper. Mustards will turn white, and some dark greens are actually cobalt blue.



## Anatomy of a Collection

*By Donald Pearson*

The survey of collectors in the TDC (#148) several months ago prompted me to once again think about the features of the collections of ADCA members. The only similar characteristic of collectors that I can come up with is an irrational desire to own a large number of a certain type of item. The motives for ownership are quite diverse and the values placed on the items (often aesthetic rather than financial) vary widely among those collectors. So too does the obsessiveness with which items are added to collectors' stock.

But what about the collections themselves? They are as likely to be as diverse as their owners. When I thought about it I realized the only collection I knew anything about was my own. In comparison with others, is my collection larger? smaller? more or less diverse? Do I have any unique knobs?

With the large diversity in collectors and in collections we have truly benefited by Len Blumin's foresight in developing a system to categorize knobs to foster identification. The VDA2d categories seem to have stood the

test of time and form the basis for deeper study of what is available for collectors.

For some time it has seemed to me that ADCA could benefit from a member survey of knobs owned to determine if any useful information arises, i.e. are certain categories easier to find? What role does geography play in availability of knobs?

In assessing my own collection I've examined what I own relative to the VDA2d categories. The result is as follows:

Category	VDA Total	My Total	My Total as % of VDA
A	51	12	24%
B	69	44	64%
C	33	4	12%
D	34	20	59%
E	61	36	59%
F	75	47	63%
G	42	22	52%
H	215	120	56%
I	22	16	73%
J	45	29	64%
K	80	50	62%
L	30	14	47%
M	51	15	29%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>53%</b>
N	72	0	N/A
O	98	0	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>44%</b>

As you can see, I have finally reached over one half the available knobs I choose to collect, categories A through M. I have purposely not sought categories N and O because I felt there were too many patterns to ever find a significant portion of those categories. My goal remains to get as close to 978 as I can.

The knobs listed as "DP total" include about 100 knobs not listed in VDA which are the result of about thirty years of "modest searching." At least 125 are the result of old-fashioned one-for-one swaps with other ADCA members where no money changed hands. The earliest swap was 1981, the latest 2008. Well into the 1990s knobs were obtained for about \$5 on average. Recent acquisitions have been higher in price but more limited in number due to my reluctance to pay prices I feel are too high.

What the above data shows is not much luck in categories A and C, which is not surprising, and a fairly consistent proportion of the other categories, except M. I do not purposely seek any par-



ticular category. Rather, I obtain whatever is available that I don't have at a price that is right (low) I obtain. Aside from trades with ADCA members, particularly at conventions, I frequent antique shows and shops, flea markets and auctions usually in the upstate New York area, but occasionally in Pennsylvania (Adamstown and Kutztown) and New England.

Supporting the general breadth of knobs available is the fact that the seventeen knobs I have added in the last two years come from eight of the categories A through M. It should be noted that none of my collection has been obtained from eBay or other online sources. I'm sure opportunities exist there. It would be good to hear from a member who uses the internet to learn the benefits.

While I can follow the growth in my collection by periodically updating the above chart, the question remains 'as compared to what?'. When I attend conventions I feel my collection is insignificant compared to many. Yet in Buffalo three years ago Dale Sponagle found about 20 of my duplicates useful for his purposes, and his duplicates in turn produced 20 patterns I did not have. You never know what will appear at a convention!

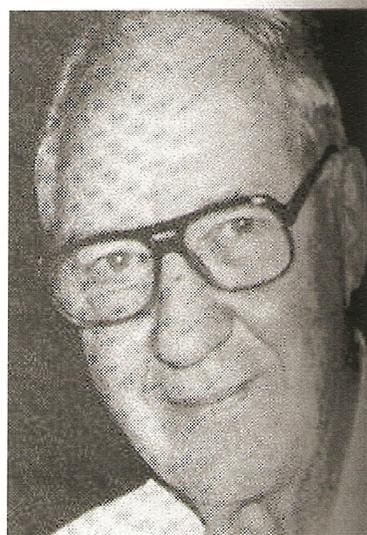
In hopes of developing a benchmark against which collections may be measured, I suggest members enter the number of different knob patterns they have by VDA category, as well as the patterns not in VDA on the sheet included with this newsletter for that purpose. In order to protect privacy, you will note collector identity is masked by only asking for your geographical area. If members who wish to participate will return the sheet to me by May 1<sup>st</sup>, I will analyze the data and report at the Convention and in a future TDC.

### **In Memoriam - Charles Bednar**

Charles Bednar, (#6) of Maplewood, Minnesota, passed away on October 21, 2008 at the age of 91. He was a founding member of the ADCA, No. 6 to be precise. He served in the Navy in WW II, and was a longtime carpenter for the schools of St. Paul. His first serious exposure to doorknobs was in 1966, when a building he had been working in was due to be demolished, and he became aware of some ornate hardware just lying around, waiting to be thrown out. Later he was given the job of boarding up a number of old houses in anticipation of their being demolished, together with their hardware. He had a screwdriver.

'Nuff said. It was the beginning of a collection of over 500 knobs from the Twin City area, generally mounted on blocks of wood together with the matching escutcheons. He was also an avid rock collector. Charlie, with his wife Alva (who predeceased him) attended ADCA conventions in 1985-89.

They had 5 children, 7 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. He was interviewed in TDC # 6, March, 1983 and an article by him on polishing appeared in TDC # 13, Jan. 1985.



### **In Memoriam – Philip Warrey**

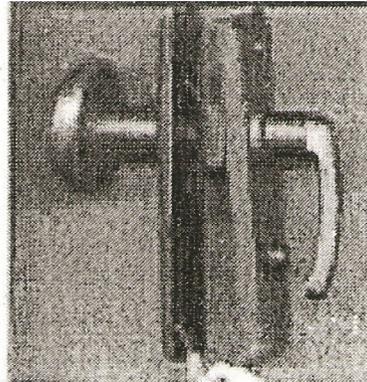
We received word that both Philip Warrey (#59) and his wife, Lois, of Page, ND passed away in November of 2007. He was a long time member and he and Lois, attended both Minnesota conventions in 1986 and 2000.

## The Doorknob Exchange

Members are reminded that their membership entitles them to advertise items for sale, trade, or wanted at no charge. Please send your ads and pictures (preferably in jpg form) to Faye Kennedy at the Membership Office (see address and email on last page of newsletter). I would like them by the first week of odd months of the year for inclusion in the next newsletter. Thanks.

**Wanted:** (Vicky Berol, sfgofer@yahoo.com)

Brass set of screen knobs. The back plates are 1 1/2 by 4 1/2 inches. There is a knob on the front with a handle on the back. The rear plate has a locking mechanism.



Also needed are 22 Corbin "drum" knobs B-119. Note the shape of the knob below.



Side View of B-119



Corbin B-119

**For Sale:** (Joseph Abraham #227; 724-971-0045 or 724-656-8488 or email arose4joe@aol.com)

Antique hardware including both entry and interior sets, glass knobs, iron and bronze hinges, window hardware, miscellaneous doorknobs (bronze and iron), and lock boxes of various sizes. Will send photos on request.

## PayPal Comes to the ADCA Website

*By Faye Kennedy*

Many members have asked if we accept credit cards to pay their membership. We will be initiating the use of PayPal on our website very soon. Using this method, you will be able to renew your membership as well as purchase books or antique catalogs. Watch for it on **AntiqueDoorknobs.org**.

Another question we are often asked is "How do I know that my membership is due?" That's easy; on your address label, in the upper right hand corner is your due date. The office sends out only one letter stating when you are due and asking for confirmation of your contact information. We do not send out notices months in advance. Watch for your membership renewal in the mail and you won't miss a single issue of *The Doorknob Collector*. Membership remains a bargain at \$25/year USD. We will send you a second reminder along with the newsletter if we have not received your payment. We also use red underlining on you address label if your membership is due for renewal. Hope this helps everyone to keep current with your membership.

## Our Business Members

<p><b>Al Bar Wilmette Platers</b>  Owner: Greg Bettenhausen  127 Green Bay Road  Wilmette IL 60091  Phone: 866-823-8404  Web Site: albarwilmette.com  email:info@albarwilmette.com</p>	<p><b>Albion Doors &amp; Windows</b>  Owner: Larry Sawyer  PO Box 220  Albion, CA 95410  Phone: 707-937-0078  Fax: 707-937-0078 (call first)  Website: www.knobsession.com  Email: bysawyer@mcn.org</p>	<p><b>Antique Door Hardware Collector</b>  Owner: Tom Iannucci  2611 Silverdale Drive  Silver Spring, MD 20906  Phone: 240-595-1115  Web Site:  www.antiquedoorhardwarecollector.com/  email: rebecca.iannucci@comcast.net</p>	<p><b>Architectural Salvage, Inc.</b>  Owner: Elizabeth Werhane  5001 N. Colorado Blvd.  Denver, CO 80216  Phone: (303) 321-0200  Website: salvagelady.com/</p>
<p><b>Back Door Warehouse</b>  2329 Champlain St.  Washington, DC 20009</p>	<p><b>Discovery Architectural Antiques</b>  Owner: Suzane Kittel  409 St. Francis  Gonzales, TX 78629  Phone: 830-672-2428 or  888-686-2966  Fax: 830-672-3701  Web Site: www.Discoverys.net  Email: swk@discoverys.net</p>	<p><b>House of Antique Hardware</b>  Owner: Roy Prange  3439 NE Sandy Blvd./PMB 106  Portland, OR 97214  Phone: 888-223-2545  Fax: 503-231-1312  Web Site:  www.HouseofAntiqueHardware.com  Email:  Sales@HouseofAntiqueHardware.com</p>	<p><b>Liz's Antique Hardware</b>  Owner: Liz Gordon  453 South La Brea  Los Angeles, CA 90036  Phone: 323-939-4403  Fax: 323-939-4387  Email: Shop@LAHardware.com  Web Site: www.lahardware.com/</p>
<p><b>The Brass Knob and Back Door Warehouse</b>  Owners: Donetta George and Ron Allen  The Brass Knob  2311 18th St. N.W. Washing-  ton, DC  Phone: 202-332-3370  Fax: 202-332-5594  Email:  BK@theBrassKnob.com  Web Site:  www.theBrassKnob.com</p>	<p><b>Webwilson.com</b>  Owner: H. Weber Wilson  PO Box 506  Portsmouth, RI 02871  Phone: 800-508-0022  Web Site: www.webwilson.com  Email: Hww@webwilson.com</p>	<p>These are paid advertisements.  The ADCA assumes no responsibility.  For further information about these  businesses see the Resource section our website:  <a href="http://www.antiquedoorknobs.org">www.antiquedoorknobs.org</a></p>	

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## The Doorknob Collector<sup>©</sup>



Published six times a year by  
**Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, Inc.**

P.O. Box 31,  
Chatham, NJ  
07928-0031

Annual Membership in US \$25.00  
age 18 or younger US\$10.00  
Foreign rates on request.

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

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