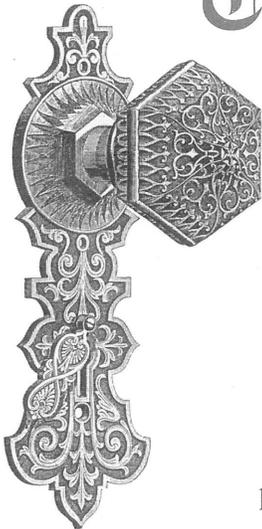


# The Doorknob Collector



Number 165

January – February 2011

**A Publication of The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America**

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

## ADVENTURES IN HARDWARE: THE HOLLENBECK LOCK AND KNOB COMPANY

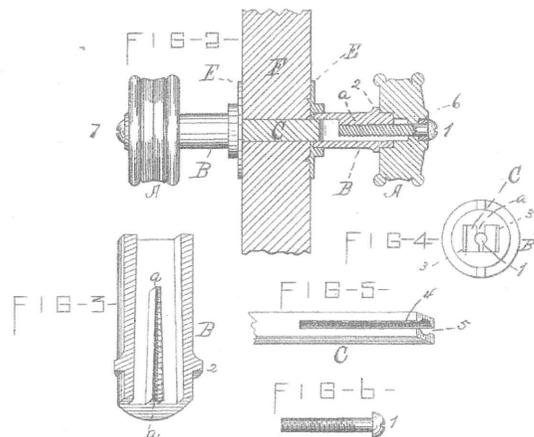
*By Steve Hannum*

Why do I collect doorknobs? When I am asked this, I say because they are nice to look at and they are interesting. But on reflection, it is the questions of who, when, where and how a doorknob was made that keep my interest, which brings me to my mystery.

Like a lot of mysteries, this one begins simply enough. In April 2007 I saw a big lot of old parts on e-Bay. It had a large number of roses, key escutcheons, a few doorknobs, locks, what looked like bell pull and other assorted items of little interest. It looked as if there were more treasure than trash so I bid and bought it. When it came there were three pair of wooden doorknobs with unique the knob attachments. There was a spindle that went through the knobs like some others but one end was split and taped to receive a screw.



The two pair of the knobs had a shape different from most wooden knobs. They were more drum-shaped with a knurled band. One pair came with a latch that could be installed in a 7/8 inch circular hole. There was a patent date of August 31, 1886 on one of the spindles. Eventually I was able to find the patent, number 348,494, by Frank A. Hollenbeck of Syracuse, New York. Below are some of the figures from that patent. The shank of the knob contains a projection having screw threads, which causes the tapped and split end of the spindle to be wedged in the shank. The screw then holds it in place. There was no indication as to the manufacturer of the knobs. Additional search for Hollenbeck hardware patents yielded patents for another knob attachment and two latches. That was where things stood for a while. Shortly after the Baltimore Convention I saw two pair of non-metal knobs with brass decorations come up for bid. When they came, one was clay and the other wood.



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They were both the same shape with brass pieces laid into the front and with the Hollenbeck attachment I had seen before. This encouraged me to find out more about Frank Hollenbeck via Google search. Google books had Onondaga's Centennial (Boston History Co. 1896) on line. Volume II, Family Sketches, p. 479 gives a brief biography of Frank Abram Hollenbeck. He seems to have been a very inventive person. He



had patents in the areas of door hardware, shot guns and even bicycle seats. Most of his life he worked in gun making but about 1885 he founded the Hollenbeck Lock and Knob Company. The company seemed to last for only about five years; more about this later. It was for his shotguns he was best known. H.J. Swinney in an article in *The Gun Report* stated the Hollenbeck was one of most influential of the New York shotgun designers of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. This article in the September 1991 issue and an earlier one in July 1988 by A.C. Atterbury entitled "The Syracuse Arms Company and Frank Hollenbeck" provide a great deal of biographical information and as expected empathize with his gun manufacturing.

Frank A. Hollenbeck was born in 1851 in upstate New

York. He grew up on a farm and began work in a foundry and machine shop, then moved into gun manufacturing. From this he jumped to lock and knob manufacturing before going back to guns. It seems clear that he had an active, inventive, mind but did not seem to be able to stay at one company very long. He founded several firms, none of which lasted very long, indicating a certain lack of business skill. [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com) has a huge collection of searchable scans of old New York newspapers. A search yielded information on the Hollenbeck Lock and Knob Company and also on the nature of the times.

The 1880's were a time of great industrial expansion. New manufacturing firms were being created and many were doing very well. Inventions were being turned into fortunes and every town wanted to be a manufacturing center. According to the Onondaga's Centennial the Hollenbeck Lock & Knob Company was capitalized at \$35,000 in 1885. In 1888 the company decided to move from Syracuse and put out the word to area towns. The purpose of the move was supposed to be the need for larger quarters. A bidding frenzy among towns apparently followed. The Fayetteville, NY Weekly Recorder told its readers "If you have not subscribed to the stock of the Lock factory, do so today without fail so as to make the thing sure. We cannot afford to let this opportunity pass us by." As the Recorder later reported, "Too much talk and newspaper reporting noised the matter over Central New York and every village of an enterprise was soon competing with us." Fayetteville was out bid by Jordan, New York which the Fayette newspaper blamed on indifference of large portions of the Fayette public. On August 2, 1888 the Marcellus NY Weekly Observer reported "The Hollenbeck Lock & Knob Company, have begun the manufacture of locks and knobs, and their first order turned out in Jordan was shipped last Friday to San Diego, Cal., to be placed in a large hotel in that city. The order was for 36 dozen of bronze and the rubber knobs. -Jordan Times."

## The Doorknob Collector®



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However, a year later The Democratic Herald, on Tuesday, Aug. 13, 1889, reported "The Hollenbeck Lock Company of Jordan has ceased operations. This is the concern which was induced to move from Syracuse to Jordan by offers of land and subscriptions of several thousands of stock by Jordan people."

This was a disaster to many people in Jordan and a disappointment to all. This left so much of a scar on the community that 50 years later when reporting the deaths of two of the principals the story was told as the people of Jordan saw it then. As the Marcellus NY Weekly Observer Wednesday, July 20, 1932 reported:

"Louis Will, who died suddenly at his home in Syracuse Friday night, was president of the Hollenbeck Lock and Knob Company when the concern moved from Syracuse to Jordan. The concern was nothing to brag about, and Mr. Will drew away from it, after Jordan capital

was put in, which left a crippled business on our hands, and no one connected could stop the downhill descent, and it has always remained a bad memory with us destroying every confidence in anything else that might come to Jordan if we would pay the price. Once was enough for us."

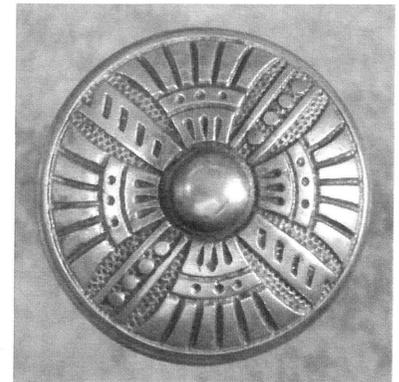
The Marcellus Weekly Observer of July 12, 1933, shortly after Frank Hollander died, carried this story:

"Fifty years ago the Hollenbeck Lock and Knob Company came up from Syracuse and gave Jordan a proper trimming. Hollenbeck was the inventor of a lock and knob for doors. He thought it was worth a million and a man or two in Syracuse thought the same way. So one of them financed a start in a small upstairs shop in West Street and when he came to have \$10,000 tied up in it and something had to be done about it. So feelers went out for a location where neighbors would buy some stock to the tune of \$15,000 and Jordan was the town that fell for the lay. Three or four wise men of Jordan went down to the local Jerusalem and were ushered into a crowded shop where twenty men were busy at twenty machines punching holes, making wheels and otherwise holding down a job for a day or two just to impress us visitors.

"We swallowed the bait, came home and in our unsophisticated way told the story as we saw it with our own eyes, and then everybody took more or less stock. - All but one man who had been farther east than Canastota and way west beyond Montezum. - So everybody said what a near-sighted selfish old pup lie was and so they went ahead without him. And they received the blow that killed Jordan.

"Fifteen thousand dollars was raised and paid over to the old Board of Directors and they immediately paid off the man who had hooked for \$10,000. This left \$5,000 to begin where the old regime left off. Consequently the new concern became bankrupt immediately - or I might say, automatically. Any way the subscribers had been ribbed and those who were not executed right away by the fool killer lived alone a spell and one by one passed on to the Kingdom of Heaven, where such smart men do not operate because you can't take money with you when you go on the last journey.

"No one blamed Hollenbeck to speak of because, like any inventor, he thought he had the greatest thing on earth and in the hands of his sponsors he was as a plastic mass, but they trimmed him as they trimmed us and he was compelled to go back to his trade as a gunsmith until the other day when he





died at the age of 82 and was carried back to his native home, Homer, for burial.”

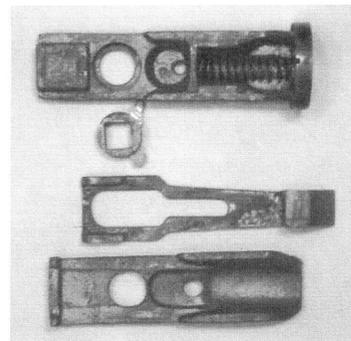
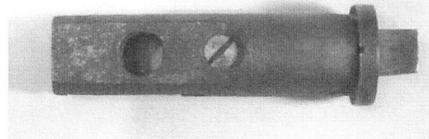
Hollenbeck was also a director of the Syracuse Arms Company where he was issued several patents relating to shotguns. The Hollenbeck shotgun is a collector’s item today. Hollenbeck left that firm before it went under. He went to form several other short lived companies before returning to Syracuse as a gunsmith.

There is no known catalog of the Hollenbeck Lock & Knob Company so the knobs provide the only historical record. They are interesting. The early wooden knobs were nicely designed. But the knobs with the brass inserts represent a unique design. They are just alike in shape and design with identical brass inserts. The only differences are the material and how the brass stem is fitted into the knob. The clay knob was especially interesting in that the brass stem could not be removed from the clay. There was no obvious way for the brass to be put in the baked clay but there was no indication of the brass going through the firing process. It’s a mystery.

The mystery further developed with the appearance of another set of knobs with the Hollenbeck attachment. The set is brass and came with escutcheons. The

knob has a four-fold design with elements that seem similar to those of the brass inserts of the earlier knobs.

Frank Hollenbeck designed two mortise latches, patent numbers 317941 and 357084, each simpler in construction. The last design was simplified even more by Elmer Knowles and patented September 11, 1888. It is also interesting and quite simple in design. A spring holds the latch bolt in place. The spindle connecting the knobs goes through the latch stem and a small piece with two ear-like tabs. The turning rod turns this small piece and its ears cause the latch bolt to retract. The latch is installed in a door by means of a single 7/8 inch hole. The knob uses a single hole in the face of the door, thus making the whole process quick and easy, similar to the current knob and latch installation.



Did anyone else continue to make this style hardware? That is a mystery. So my fellow collectors, do any of you know anything about the Hollenbeck Lock and Knob Company? I would also be interested in any additional pieces of Hollenbeck hardware. And finally what are the mysteries you are seeking solve or to find partial answers? I am sure the rest of us would like to hear about them.

**Notes:**

1. The Gun Report, P.O Box 38, Aledo, IL 61231-0038, (309) 582-5311. They have back issues for sale at reasonable prices.
2. I wish to thank the editor, Allen Joslyn, for pointing me to [www.fultonhistory.com](http://www.fultonhistory.com). This site has more than 13,500,000 pages of old New York newspapers available for searching.
3. Frank Hollenbeck hardware patents:
 

Mortise Lock, May 12, 1885 #317,941	Knob Attachment, Aug. 31, 1886. #348,494
Spring Mortise Latch, Feb. 1, 1887, #357,084	Knob Attachment, July 23, 1889, #407,661
Latch by E.E. Knowles, Sept. 11, 1888, #389,390 assigned to Hollenbeck Lock	

## In Memoriam

### Don Shreve (# 83)

ADCA member Don Shreve of Portland, Or. passed away at home on Dec. 17, 2010, surrounded by loving family members. Long time members, Don and Elaine Shreve's names appeared in the June 1985 membership list for ADCA, identified as No. 83. Thus, this couple ranks among a select group of early appreciators of vintage door hardware. Their photographs may be found on page 5 of the 2007 TDC July-Aug. Portland convention coverage.

Characterized as great friends and supporters of Portland's Bosco-Milligan Architectural Heritage Center; the Shreves gave unstintingly of time and effort on its behalf. Don, for the Sept.-Oct., 1992 TDC issue, authored the article THE BOSCO-MILLIGAN COLLECTION, leading the ADCA to establish an assisting liason, with him involved, with this entity. Don spoke with authority on the amazing collection of architectural hardware bequeathed to the Center by Jerry Bosco and Ben Milligan, having teamed up with fellow ADCA members Linda Smeltzer and Maud Eastwood in the initial attempt to assess the size and worth of a seeming limitless trove.

Those attending the 2007 Portland convention may recall Don's glass knob display, personally loaned and arranged. The Shreves also handled, for that occasion, the compiling of convention packets, manning the desk for early arrivals, plus arranging for publicity through local outlets. He has also loaned hardware for past featured displays.

And Don's collecting interests were not limited. Rather, they were unlimited, extending to the hunt and history of antiques in general, clocks, posters, and all things Model T and classic car related. Nor were his highly motivated efforts self-centered. Rather, they extended to completion of home projects and involvement in rigorous family activities--all the while gainfully employed and having served in the military.

Don Shreve was a human dynamo with heart. The ADCA was privileged to have known him as a member.

*By Maud Eastwood*

## Greetings for Charlie Wardell

Lee Kaiser has been speaking with Charlie Wardell's wife, who reports that he is not in good shape. Lee suggests that Charlie would undoubtedly be cheered up by cards from those who have known (and traded with) him over the years. His address is 5342 Trinity Blvd., Trinity NC 27370.

## 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:** County of New Haven, Conn knob. Laural leaves under Shield. On shield are plow, arm with hammer, and sailing schooner. On top of Shield is a horse head. Asking \$200.00. Call Norman or Cheryl Blam at 516-295-5511



**For sale:** B-107, School Vernacular, Mfgr: Russell & Erwin, c.1885. Two flowers with leaves. Knob in excellent condition, with four rings around the side of knob. On back is inscribed Russell & Erwin MFG, Co., New Britain Conn. USA. Call Norman or Cheryl Blam, 516-295-5511



# 2011 ADCA Convention: Tour Day in Portland

*By Bo Sullivan*

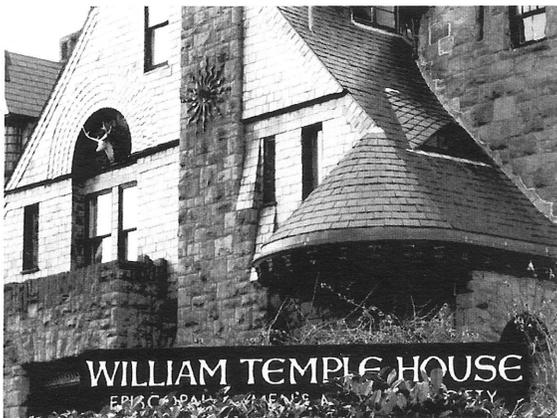
**Tour Day** is a special part of any convention, a chance to hang out, catch up and be taken around to interesting local settings unique to each host city. In keeping with our convention theme, this year's tour day will focus less on historic homes and more on fun and funky destinations.

It is still a bit early for a finalized itinerary for our **Tour Day on Monday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>**, but below are activities that I'm hoping to fit in.

Our tour will start on Portland's Westside at **Rejuvenation's lighting factory** where we'll learn how the company finds and develops fixtures for its national catalog, and watch as reproduction fixtures are being hand assembled and finished. We'll also take a peek at the company's trove of antique fixtures and shades waiting to be restored and given new homes.



From there, my hope is to be able to drop in on one of Portland's funkiest Victorian homes to see



a little architecture and hardware. Built in 1892, the **MacKenzie Mansion** is now home to the William Temple House service agency and is a poster child for our convention theme, with such unusual details as bat chandeliers, fossils in the fireplace front, and a large metal head of an elk on the exterior. The slate-clad stone edifice built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style is like no other home in Portland.

Next, we'll head across the river to the Eastside where my goal is to arrange a second factory visit. Portland is home to two of the leading producers of hand-crafted art glass in the country – **Bullseye Glass** and **Uroboros Glass**. If one of these two factories will take a group of our size, I hope we'll be able to drop in and see art glass in the process of being made



Lunch will be at the **Architectural Heritage Center**, a home-away-from-home for the ADCA. The AHC has the largest collection of salvaged building parts west of the Mississippi and serves as Portland's primary education and advocacy organization for the city's tens of thousands of old homes and buildings. We'll take in two gallery exhibits, including one in the **Liz's Antique Hardware Gallery** where we can drool over our favorite non-food items – doorknobs.



After lunch we'll head just a few blocks down the street to our two final destinations: First is **Kidd's Toy Museum** – one of the country's most remarkable and eclectic collections of antique toys, signs, lanterns, railroad locks, and mechanical banks. This family-run quirky gem is tucked away in the basement of the Kidd's auto parts business.

Then we'll wrap up the afternoon, as we have at past Portland conventions, with a special club reception in the 35,000 sq. ft. **Rejuvenation retail showroom**, where you can not only dig around in the salvage department for hardware and other treasures, but also explore the **Arca-lus Archive** of more than 2,000 original period trade catalogs and other materials related to old-house building and home décor from 1870 to 1970. Needless to say, old hardware catalogs will on display.

Tour Day will include a box lunch provided by McMenamins Edgefield. Finalized details will be pro-

vided with your registration materials in the coming weeks.

**See you in Portland in August!**

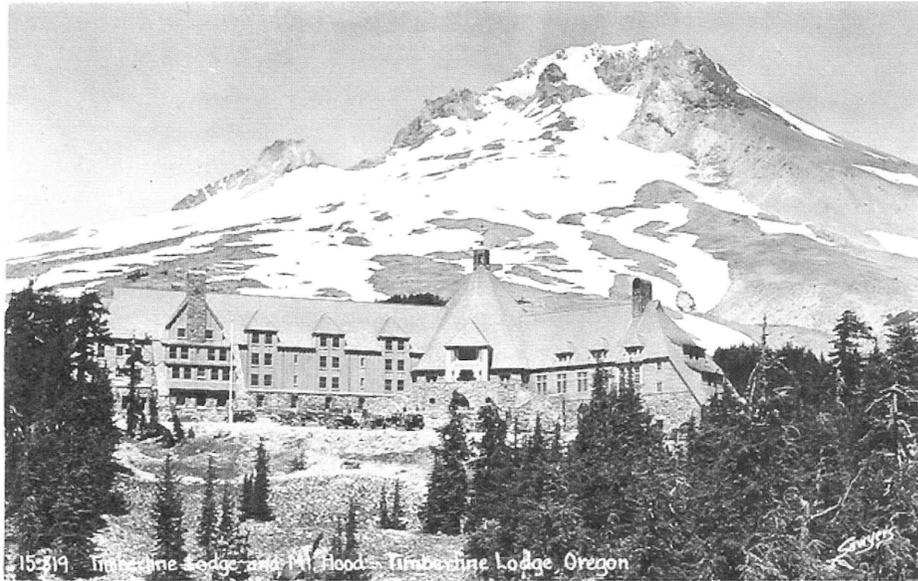
### Portland-Area Sights & Activities

There are many other interesting sights and activities around Portland to explore, and I encourage you to plan an extra day or two before or after the convention to check out a few. McMenamins Edgefield is the gateway to the Columbia River Gorge, where there are abundant natural wonders to discover. Numerous waterfalls and a wide range of hiking trails dot the gorge. Stunning basalt rock formations create steep walls that line the Columbia's cut through the Cascade Mountains on its way to the Pacific Ocean at Astoria, some 100 miles to the northwest.



Edgefield also sits near the base of Mt. Hood (picture page 8), Oregon's iconic snow-capped mountain (or dormant volcano, to be more accurate), which rises to 11,200 feet. It is just over an hour's drive up to the historic 1936 Timberline Lodge (see picture page 8) at the tree line. Built between 1936 and 1938, the lodge is an Oregon landmark and features outstanding hand-wrought iron hardware and metalwork. There are many parks and trails on the mountain, and

several winter-time ski areas have recreational areas and activities for families during the summer.



**Come to Portland not only for the  
Convention, but also for the sights!**

**August 21<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011**



# 2011 ADCA Convention Theme: “Funk”tion & Folly

By Bo Sullivan

In keeping with our fun and funky setting for our 2011 convention at McMenamins Edgefield, I’m inviting everyone to bring their fun and funky hardware to Portland!

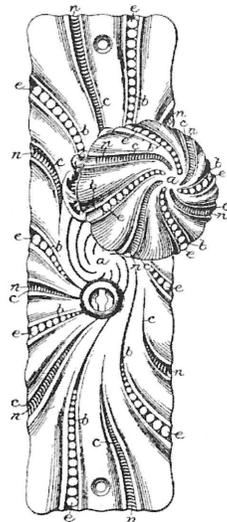
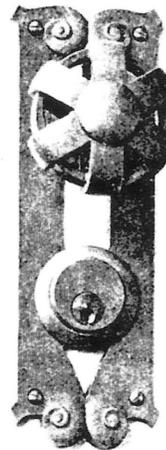
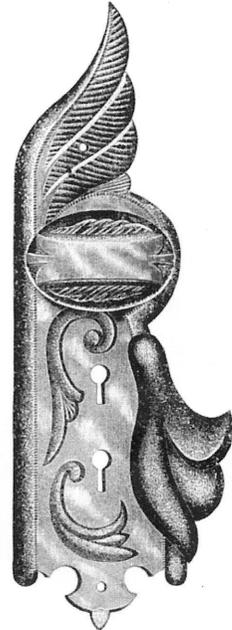
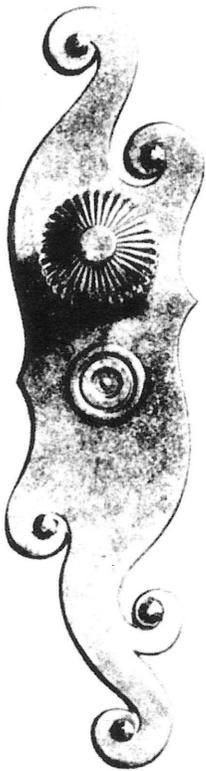
What do I mean by the “Funk”tion & Folly theme? Well, I’m especially imagining (because I enjoy seeing examples so much) those odd, unusual or downright weird knob and plate designs that challenge conventional notions of hardware and defy easy style categorization. But this theme could also mean hardware that goes beyond classic Victorian brass and bronze door sets, hardware that was used for strange or obsolete purposes, hardware that made more sense on the drawing board than on the door or window, or even hardware whose original function is a complete mystery.

Perhaps you’ll show off your collection of Gilbert knobs, coffin handles, or sash locks. Possibly you have a secret stash of hardware associated with railroad cars or hall trees or doorbells or furniture. Or maybe you’ve developed a peculiar taste for picture moulding hooks, knobs with animals on them, mid-century modern star escutcheons, drapery tiebacks, or flowers encased in Lucite...

Of course, your hardware doesn’t have to be strange to be entertaining and enjoyable, and classic pieces will be welcomed as always (have you discovered any Smith & Butler in your collection?). But this will be the convention where anything goes, so take a chance, choose any theme you like, and jump on the opportunity to showcase your stuff that might otherwise be scorned, overlooked, or considered unworthy of a sane collector.

Whatever your special fancy or fascination (the head-scratching work of F.C. Linde is one of mine), Portland will be your chance to unleash it upon the world and perchance raise the awareness – and eyebrows – of friends, fellow collectors, and unsuspecting convention guests.

See you – and your special collections – in Portland!



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