

The Doorknob Collector

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Mallory Wheeler “Arabic” Hardware

By Steve Hannum

On December 31, 1889 Charles and Frank Andrews were awarded Design Patent number 19,533 assigned to The Mallory Wheeler Company. The patent covered builder’s hardware. “The main portions of the surfaces of these articles represent a watered groundwork, the watered effect being secured by means of alternate elevations and depressions, which are arranged in waved parallel lines.” The patent did not cover any ornamentation that might be placed on the watered background. However, the escutcheon and doorknob shown in the patent used Arabic characters. All of the hardware produced with the watered background had Arabic like characters. So this hardware has come to be called Arabic design.

Doorknob collectors have wondered and have discussed the source of the Arabic characters and if they had any meaning. People knowledgeable of Arabic calligraphy have told me that there are meaningful names on some of the items. If so, was there someone knowledgeable of Arabic at Mallory Wheeler or if not what was the source?

Recently, I was able to access volumes of Carpentry & Building magazine from the 1880’s and 1890’s. In volume 12, April 1890 page xxii, I found the report of Mallory Wheeler putting on the market a new design in locks, door trimming, &c. It identified the characters that appear in the design as being Arabic “and were copied, we are advised, from illustrations by Owen Jones of the decorations of the Alhambra.” The article had this figure as an example of the design. The article concluded with the notice that an appendix had been issued by the company showing the design in a large variety of door and window trimmings.

So who was Owen Jones and what is the Alhambra? After completing his architectural studies, Owen Jones (1809-1874), began a tour of Europe where he met a French architect, Jules Goury. The two of them continued together to Egypt, Constantinople and then to Granada in southern Spain. There they made a detailed scientific study of the Alhambra. The Alhambra is a fortress and magnificent palace built by the Moorish kings of Granada around the thirteenth century. It was designed to impress viewers as well as to praise God. A poem on one of the walls has in part:

*“Look attentively at my elegance, thou wilt reap the benefit of a commentary on decoration.
For, by Allah! The elegant buildings by which I am surrounded surpass all other building in the propitious omen attending their foundation.”*

This was cut short by the death of Goury as a result of cholera. Mr. Jones returned to England and began publishing the drawings of the Alhambra. In 1837, Mr. Jones returned to the Alhambra to complete the work. He made detailed drawings and plaster impressions to maintain accuracy.

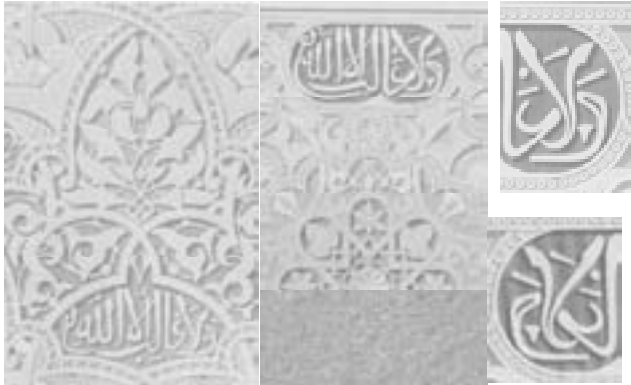


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Publication of his work required several years and the collaboration with chemists and printers using the new process of chromolithography to represent the colors found on the decorations. In 1845, Owen Jones published his work, "Plans, Elevation, Sections and Details of the Alhambra". Jules Goury was listed as the first author. It was two volumes of over sized pages and double foldout pages of impressive drawings. The decorations were reproduced in full color.

Their study of the decorations of the Alhambra led Owen Jones to develop principles of decoration. He employed these principles as one of the Superintendents of Works for the Great Exhibition of 1851. In 1856, Jones published his most enduring work, "The Grammar of Ornament", in which he gave his general principles of decorative arts with 19 chapters of examples from different times and places.

The designers of the Alhambra were prohibited by their religion from the use of actual images of plants or animals. Instead they used decorations based on natural forms, geometrical patterns and Arabic calligraphy. On the left are two examples, as shown in Jones' book on the Alhambra, containing the widely used decorative element. It is the motto of the kings of Granada, which translates as "And there is no conqueror but God".



It appears designers at the Mallory Wheeler Company used elements of motto in their design of the Arabic hardware. Look at this image of the motto at the top of the second panel. The characters in the right of the motto and their mirror image show up in several places. For example, this push plate where the mirror image of the first part of the



motto is used and inverted at the other end.

In addition to using mirror images selected parts are used. On the center of the handle plate we see how the right two characters are joined to form a single image. The right most character is then used horizontally above and below that image. We see the same character many places including on the bottom of the escutcheon.plate below.



Compare these characters to the lower small image above.



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In the image on the left, the characters used are used in a more flowing manner. Looking at the mirror image (on the right) of the center of the upper line, we see how this is used on the center of the hinge leaf. Then notice how the designers reshaped the two-loop section to use in the corners.



In the same way other characters or bits of characters have been used on the hardware.

An example of using a whole calligraphic unit, is found on the doorknob below. In the center is a decoration of a window jamb in the Hall of the Ambassadors. On the right is a picture of the doorknob and on the left its mirror image. Note how some of the characters have been blended together on the knob.



The Grammar of Decoration was also a source of decorative elements. The image below is from the Arabian section. It is part of the decoration on a copy of the Koran found in the El Barkookeyeh Masque in Cairo. The center part



was obviously used as the decorative element on the top of this escutcheon.

The script is a very old form the Cufic script. The Cufic scrip is widely used on the Alhambra but this seems to be the only example of its use on the hardware.



publications. What other editions of book on the Alhambra might have been available or other sources of Arabic calligraphy are yet to be discovered.

It seems that most of the decorations on the Arabic hardware have their source in the two Owen Jones books. However, two images have avoided discovery of their source. These images have been interpreted by my friend, who has studied Arabic calligraphy as the names of the early Islamic caliphs, Ali and Uthman. I could not find them in either of Jones' books. The great Exhibition of 1851 generated a lot of interest in design based on eastern cultures and of many

Thanks to Mohammad Itani, Ph.D. for his translations of the Arabic calligraphy. The hardware images were taken from a display of Bo Sullivan.

"Emblematics Identified"

Paul Woodfin has suggested that this column should be renamed with anyone and everyone contributing. So if you have a knob that you can shed some light on as to where it came from, please forward the information to us.

William McKinley High School in St. Louis, MO.



This knob came from the William McKinley High School in St. Louis, MO. In August, 1901, President McKinley issued an invitation to the nations of the World to attend the Louisiana Purchase Centennial Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. A few weeks later he was assassinated in Buffalo while attending the Pan-American



Exposition by an anarchist, creating a huge public desire to honor him. Teddy Roosevelt became President. The knob is illustrated in the 1905 Corbin catalogue. I am told the knobs were removed in favor of modern levers, probably to accommodate the disabled. *Debbie Fellenz*



The St. Louis Fair celebrated the Centennial of the Louisiana Purchase, and two Presidents were officially honored: Thomas Jefferson, who made the purchase, and McKinley, who signed the enabling legislation for the Fair. Stamps were issued commemorating the two, as was a special edition of 250,000 \$1 gold coins (see picture on left) were issued, half of which bore the portrait of Jefferson, the other half with McKinley's likeness. They were auctioned off, fetching many times their face value. *Allen Joslyn*

Chicago Tribune Building, Chicago, Illinois

Designed by Chicago architects Holabird and Roche in 1901 and completed in 1902, this building housed the complete for the Chicago Tribune newspaper, including two sub-basements to house the newspaper's presses. The Tribune remained in this building until 1925, when they relocated to the landmark Tribune Tower on North Michigan Avenue. The building later served as a bank and office building. The Tribune Building was demolished in 2001 to provide the location for what would have been the world's tallest skyscraper. That building was not built, and the site is now occupied by a smaller glass and steel building.



I bought a pair of these knobs several years ago from a salvage firm. I knew the CT was an older variant of the Chicago Tribune logo. The 1925 Tribune Tower has stock brass knobs on gothic-style backplates that feature a slightly different CT logo, so I suspected that the cast iron knobs were from the 1901 building. I then found a webpage of a story written in 2001 discussing the impending demolition of the 1901 Tribune Building.

The author discussed that the building originally had cast iron doorknobs with the Tribune logo, but most had been removed over the years other than one in the building manager's office and a few on utility closets. Unfortunately that was before I started saving links to such stories and I cannot find that one now.

Paul Woodfin



2013 ADCA Convention

July 25, 26, and 27, 2013.

Wyndham University Center

Pittsburgh, PA

For reservations call 412-682-6200

2013 ADCA Convention

By Jeff Orman

Our 2013 ADCA convention will be held in Pittsburgh, PA July 25 – 27. Thursday July 25 will be a group tour day and Friday July 26 and Saturday July 27 will be the buy, sell, trade days. The convention will be held at the Wyndham University Center which is in the heart of Oakland, the University of Pittsburgh area just east of downtown. This will be the first time the convention will be held in Pittsburgh and we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to visit this unique and beautiful city. Our rate is \$109/night + \$10/night for parking.

Some Pittsburgh History

Located at the point of land where the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers meet to form the Ohio River, Pittsburgh got its start as a military fort. The French, from Canada, and the English, from Virginia, both desired what is now Western Pennsylvania with the English being victorious. Early military roads used by General Braddock (he of the famous defeat) and General Forbes were precursors of the first national road, Route 40 and also Route 30.

Once the military issues were settled, Pittsburgh, named for the Earl of Pitt in England, grew at a steady pace. The abundance of coal led to growing iron and glass industries. First the civil war and then the industrial revolution sparked an enormous expansion of these industries. By 1870, Pittsburgh produced half of the nation's glass and over half of the nation's steel. Numerous industrial giants were formed in Pittsburgh; United States Steel, Pittsburgh Plate Glass (PPG), Alcoa, and Gulf Oil to name a few. Millionaires abounded; Carnegie, Frick, and Mellon being perhaps the best known. This industrial explosion also led to Pittsburgh becoming known as "hell with the lid off" and the "Smoky City". The decline of the steel industry after WWII and the implementation of pollution controls have made these names obsolete.

Pittsburgh Today

Today Pittsburgh is renowned as a center of arts, education, and sports. Many of the city's attractions are within walking distance or a short drive from the convention's hotel. The **Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History**, as well as, the **Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens** are within walking distance. The weekend before the convention, the country's largest **vintage car display** and race will be held in Schenly Park –well worth a visit if you are planning to come early –and also just a short walk from the hotel.

The **Andy Warhol Museum** is a short drive away as is the **National Aviary**. **PNC Park** where the National League Pirates play is considered to be one of the finest, if not *the finest*, baseball stadium in America. Frank Lloyd Wright's **Falling Water** is approximately 75 miles from Pittsburgh and is well worth a visit. The list of things to see and do in the area goes on and on and you should definitely plan on attending the convention in July.

Tour Day

Tour day (Thursday, July 25) events include a visit to Henry Clay Frick's mansion, **Clayton**, his turn of the last century family home. Lunch will be at the **P&LE Railroad Station Square complex**. Then we will go on to the **University of Pittsburgh Nationality Rooms**. I hope you plan on attending what I think will be a great convention site.

The Doorknob Exchange

Members are reminded that your dues entitle you to advertise items for sale, trade, or wanted at no charge.

Our Business Members

These are paid advertisements. The ADCA assumes no responsibility. For further information about these businesses see the

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Albion Doors & Windows Owner: Larry Sawyer PO Box 220 Albion, CA 95410 Phone: 707-937-0078 Fax: (call first) 707-937-0078 Web Site: knobsession.com Email: bysawyer@mcn.org	House of Antique Hardware Owner: Roy Prange 3439 NE Sandy Blvd./PMB 106 Portland, OR 97214 Phone: 888-223-2545 Fax: 503-231-1312 Web Site: HouseofAntiqueHardware.com Email: Sales@HouseofAntiqueHardware.com	Bill's Key & Lock Shop Owner: Andy Streenz 127 E. Beaufort St. Normal, IL 61761or 401 N. Main St. Bloomington, IL 61701 Phone: 309-827-5522 Web Site: billskeyandlockshop.com Email: locksmith@billskeyandlockshop.com

Resource section on our website: www.AntiqueDoorknobs.org.

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