The Doorknob Collector

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A Non-profit Organization Devoted to the Study and Preservation of Ornamental Hardware

Bridgeport's Most Famous Citizen Builds a New Seaside House

By Paul Woodfin

Many of us know the name "Barnum" from the storied Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey Circus, "The Greatest Show on Earth", that would visit most larger cities across America every year or two, to the delight of children and parents alike. While Phineas Taylor Barnum, the showman, founded his circus in 1870, he had been a shopkeeper, newspaperman, and legislator in Connecticut for the first decades of his life. In 1841 he bought and expanded what became Barnum's American Museum in New York, just south of City Hall Park on Broadway (shown in print at right). The Museum contained a ever-changing menagerie of historical objects, oddities, animals, and unusual persons such as Siamese Twins and General Tom Thumb, a boy who claimed to be an adult, and in adulthood remained a little person. Barnum took Tom Thumb and later singer Jenny Lind on tour across the world.

Meanwhile, Barnum lived with his wife and 4 daughters quietly in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Well, maybe not so quietly. His first residence, "Iranistan" (below left), was designed by architect Leopold Eidlitz and built in 1848, in a similar style to the Royal pavilion in Brighton, England. After Iranistan burned in 1857, he built "Lindencroft" on the same site (center). Due to Mrs. Barnum's health issues, doctors rec-

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ommended that the family live by the sea, and so they built "Waldemere" along Long Island Sound in 1869 (at right, preceding page).. Unfortunately, Mrs. Barnum succumbed to her illness in 1873.

Barnum soon married the daughter of a friend who was 40 years his junior. They lived together at Waldemere quietly, With Barnum now being well into his 70s and in declining health, he decided to build a new, modern home next door to Waldemere for his young wife. In 1888, construction began on "Marina", designed by local architects Longstaff and Hurd . Their firm was quickly becoming known in southern Connecticut for ornate and original designs for spaces such as the City National Bank, with marble, onyx, mahogany, and ornamental bronze and ironwork. So the new house, Marina (below), would be in very capable hands.

The Barnums moved into their new home in January 1889. As can be seen from the photos below the home was everything the Barnums wanted. While the hardware was not discussed in publications, the photo at right shows Yale & Towne's Ferrara design on the front door (K-31300, shown in the masthead on page 1). 1889 was very early for this design, which was not included in their 1889 or 1890 catalogs. While possible that the design originated for the Barnum residence, there is no documentation other than a mention in the 9/1892 edition of The Trefoil magazine and the 1893 catalog.

Barnum died in 1891, and his wife remained at Marina for 4 years, marrying a Turkish official and moving to Europe, Marina survived until 1961, when it was demolished by the University of Bridgeport for Marina Hall. The doors were salvaged locally.

References:

- Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._T._Barnum
- Meghan Rinn & Adrienne Saint-Pierre, P. T. Barnum's Mansions, The Barnum Museum. http://hdl.handle.net/11134/60002:4013
- Connecticut Digital Archive, P. T. Barnum Digital Collection, https://collections.ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/60002%

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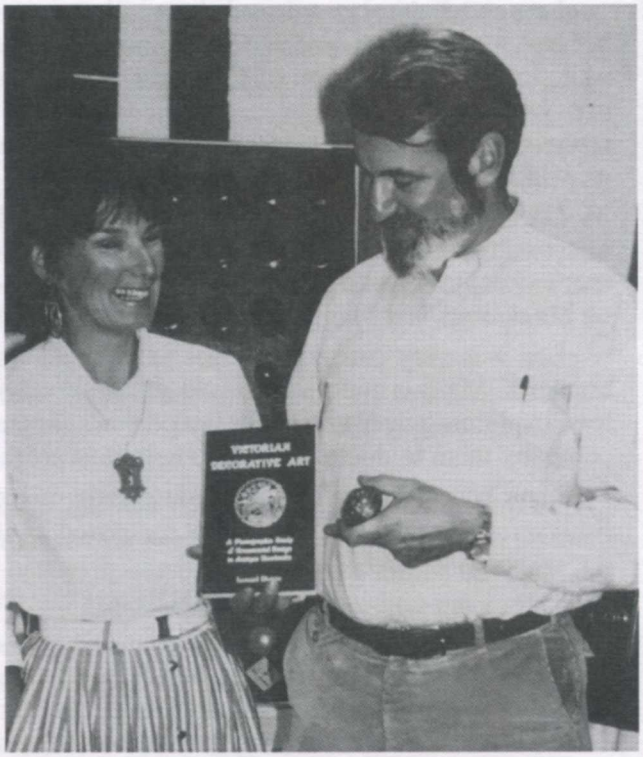
In Memorium
Len Blumin (#3)



Len Blumin courageously completed his earthly journey January 19, 2022, at his home in Mill Valley, Ca., imbued with the love of his family and his caring Hospice nurse. He had exhausted his DNA by living a rich and meaningful life, having an interesting career, diverse hobbies, a few adventures, and the love of family and friends.

The second son of Arthur Blumin and Lillian Schiffrin Blumin, Len was born in Staten Island, New York, in 1942 and attended New York City schools. Having excelled in secondary schools, he entered Union College of Schenectady, New York, at the age of 16, taking pre-med courses before continuing on at Albert Einstein College of Medicine to earn his M.D. degree. He did his Internship and Residency at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in San Francisco to become Board Certified in Internal Medicine. His education also included a Research Fellowship in Nuclear Medicine and was Certified by the American Board of Nuclear Medicine.

Concurrently, during his fellowship work, he began moonlighting as an Emergency Physician and found his niche. He could set his own schedule, enabling him to pursue his numerous interests. He worked at a couple of Bay Area hospital emergency rooms before learning of an opening for Director of Emergency Services at the former Children's Hospital of San Francisco. He served as Director for ten years before taking early retirement from medicine in 1995.

The flexible schedule of ER work enabled Len to apply his fine woodworking skills, to adapting his 1960's post and beam home on a Mill Valley hillside into a semi-Victorian styled home. His newly acquired antique interest prompted him to sell his modern furniture to make room for period furniture. He met his wife and partner of 47 years as a result of placing an ad for the sale of his modern dining room table. Patti responded. On a Saturday afternoon she walked one block down the hill to look at and possibly buy the table. During the visit, Len gave Patti a tour of all the projects he had accomplished on his home. They found they had many common interests and formed a deep connection during that first visit. After a dinner date several days later, along with a round of shooting pool, they were inseparable. They began going weekly to the Marin City flea market and went to auctions to look for antiques. About a year later, they saw an ad for a small,1894 Victorian home in Mill Valley. They fell in love with it immediately and put in an offer to buy. In 1979, they married in their backyard garden under the canopy of an English Laurel.

Owning an authentic Victorian allowed Len to exercise fully his fine woodworking skills. He replaced the pine wainscoting in the dining room with koa and transformed a large family room into a large kitchen using five species of wood for cabinets, floor, and ceiling. He also added an octagonal dining bay on the corner of the house. He could fix anything and had "how-to" books on all aspects of home repair.

The front door of their newly acquired Victorian had a brass doorknob decorated with flowers, which appealed to him and Patti. Later, they found another decorative, cast bronze doorknob at the flea market - and another, amassing a sizable collection, which they displayed in their "doorknob" room. Through an antique magazine they learned of a woman (Maud Eastwood) who had even written a book on doorknobs, with whom they met. Subsequently, Len traveled to Waverly, Iowa in 1981 to meet other doorknob collectors, and helped found the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America. He served four years as club President, and was a Board member for 32 of the club's 42 years. Len also in 1983 published a book, "Victorian Decorative Art, A Photographic Study of Doorknob Design."

Len and Patti also enjoyed downhill skiing and visiting wildlife refuges in Northern California. He became interested in bird watching and began photographing them, and sent out his photos, along with a write up, to a large group of followers. Because of his medical background, he was very good at taxonomy. Using his photos, he produced two books - one on ducks and one on shorebirds. His photography wasn't limited to birds, however. He also took photos of wildflowers and dragonflies, and any other wildlife that would avail themselves.

Len's avian interest took him and Patti across the United States, and around the world. Being the son of schoolteacher parents, Len led many field trips for fellow bird watchers, injecting his wry sense of humor to keep everyone interested. Frequent participant feedback was how much they had learned by going on his outings.

Len was very caring about his family and was a back-up father in many respects, for his nieces and nephews. Many a time Len would willingly advise family members and friends regarding medical matters, explaining very clearly in lay person's language complicated medical conditions. He would even accompany them to doctor's visits to help interpret some of the arcane nuances of medical procedures.

Len's was a life well lived. He is greatly missed by all who knew him and loved him. As Ralph Waldo Emerson aptly penned, "Life is not measured by its length, but by its depth."

Remembrances of Dr. Len Blumin

Len (#3) was one of the original founders of the ADCA and very active in its operations and governance for many years, but he made another tremendous contribution – he, in effect, invented the common "language" we speak to each other. He did that by photographing and classifying knobs. Words cannot adequately describe doorknobs, nor plants, nor medical conditions. "It is a very pretty knob with some flower-like decoration on it." That doesn't tell you very much, does it? A picture certainly helps but where to find it among pictures of hundreds, then thousands, of knobs? Len solved that problem.

Carl Linneaus was a 18th century Swedish scientist who developed a system of classifying animals and plants based on their common characteristics and relationships to each other. As has been said "God created, but Linnaeus organized." For example, he classified many plants by their reproductive organs, since that was straightforward and simple. Thus was born the science of taxonomy, classification. In the medical field there is nosology, the science of identifying and classifying diseases. "If you don't know what he has, you cannot pick a remedy." Nor, one might add, how to charge for it. A method of classifying, bringing order into, a mass of data, is frequently essential.

Len picked a straightforward method of classifying knobs, their symmetry or lack thereof. He produced the first "bible" or collecting; a second edition was supervised by Win Applegate. Then we went digital on the web, allowing for continuous updating and ease of access.

Thanks to Len, we can precisely describe what we had or have. And the knobs we still lust after.

- Allen Joslyn (#12)

Len Blumin. Husband, physician. Also Co-founder of ADCA (No. 3), creator and author of Victorian Decorative Art (VDA), recipient of The Arnie Award, past President, leader, photographer. Others will go into detail about Len's many contributions to the Club. Let me tell you about the man I knew.

The year was 1997. I was on my way to attend my first ADCA Convention, to be held in King of Prussia, PA, a Christmas gift from my husband, Marshall. I was in the hotel limo. Another couple joined me. During our drive to the hotel, "the man" asked if I was traveling on business. I said no, I came to Pennsylvania to attend a convention. I said that I would tell him which, if he promised no to snicker...The Antique Doorknob Collectors of America. He said that they were also attending the ADCA Convention. He introduced himself and his wife - Len and Patti Blumin. From that time until the end of the convention they saw that I was never left alone. They introduced me to many of the members, Maud Eastwood, Helen and Bill Byington, the Menchhofers to name a few. They shepherded me around making me feel comfortable, welcomed and part of the group.

Several year later I purchased an existing collection from a member, as I wanted to know more about

antique builders hardware. I turned to Len to ask him to identify and price my new acquisition. Len came over to assist me, and even brought me a copy of the VDA. So generous with his time and knowledge.

Fast forward to 2002. San Francisco was being considered as a convention site for 2004 and Len asked if I would make the presentation to the Board, which I did. It was accepted, and Len suggested that, as Marshall and I were San Francisco natives, we should be convention chairs. We accepted, but he and Patti should join us as co-chairs. We four forged ahead, Patti and I planning the events for five days, Len and Marshall handling the financial end. We worked together like a fine tuned watch, and through our efforts, we put one hell of a party. We contacted many of the historic house societies in the Bay Area, and held an open house. Hundreds attended and hardware was identified, bought, traded and sold. San Francisco showed herself beautifully. 2004 was a big year for me, as at Len's suggestion I was appointed to the ADCA Board.

My years with ADCA have been sweet, but made sweeter by my having known Patti and Len. Thank you.

- Vicky Berol (#450)

In 1983 I attended my very first convention (if that's what you call it). I got there 15 minutes before it was over. With my $15.00 I had to spare I decided to purchase Len Blumin's book, from the man himself. Of course it only further peaked my interest in Antique Hardware and later that year I joined the club. After 39 years, as they say, the rest is history!! Thank you Len Blumin for the education you have given the club.

- Steve Menchhofer (#60)

When I first discovered that there was a doorknob collector group (I thought I was a Lone Ranger with a weird hobby), I stumbled across people selling knobs on eBay. The first one I ever bought there was a beautiful Sargent exterior knob...from Dr. Blumin. I had just gotten an old copy of the VDA, and the knob I bought was the one he photographed and used in the book. I kept my eBay receipt for provenance! I love this one. As a side note - he was a lovely man. He was gracious in sharing his knowledge and expertise with me as I knew nothing about makers or styles.

- Carol Turquette (#869)

I too purchased a set from Len, and because it was Len, on eBay. I am glad I had the opportunity then - to thank him for creating the system that we all use and enjoy so much. It seems he left many gifts behind - a wonderful life. antique builders hardware. I turned to Len to ask him to identify and price my new acquisition. Len came

- Linda Batt (#999)

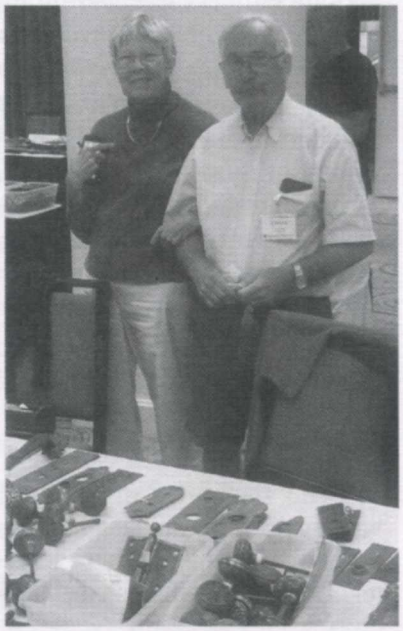
Edited from 2003, when President Steve Rowe presented the Arnie Fredrick Award to Len:

Len endeavored to be involved with the club from its' beginning. He is one of three people who have never missed a convention. His abilities were quickly recognized and he was soon involved in many areas of leadership within the club. In 1982, he hosted the second ADCA convention in San Francisco, CA. The following year he was elected President. His book, *Victorian Decorative Art*, became known as the "Blue Bible of hardware," Len has also been very active in helping to distribute information and education to others in the field of hardware. He is known for his extensive research and has been a long time contributor of articles for *The Doorknob Collector*. In December 1986 Len began publishing updates on his book in the TDC. This regular feature was entitled "Ornamental Design in Antique Doorknobs" and was eagerly looked forward to with each issue.

There is one more element, though, that I have not spoken about. That is, Len Blumin the human being. Len has many friends in this room tonight. Like Arnie, he is well respected and loved for the man he is. I believe it is fair to say that many of us are pleased to count him as a friend. Charlie Wardell, in a quote from the June 1984, TDC #11 stated; "For the first time in my collecting experience I parted with a knob of which I had no duplicate. It is a rarity, and I traded with one of the finest collectors."

- Steve Rowe (#287)

Nancy Orman



Nancy Orman, wife of ADCA Treasurer Jeffrey Orman, recently passed away after a courageous battle with cancer, Nancy entered Heaven's gates on April 24, 2022. The Ormans attended their first convention at Bethlehem, PA in 2000, and had attended most ADCA conventions since, including the 2021 ADCA convention at Albany, NY back in September.

She was born in NYC and grew up in Glen Ridge, NJ. After graduation she went to Florida State for a Bachelor's Degree, then on to Emory University in Atlanta for her Master's in Nursing. She worked at Hahn Air Force Base in Germany after school. Known as "Nurse Nancy" to many, she worked at several nursing homes and hospitals including Beverly Manor, Forbes Metro and Lifecare Hospital in Point Breeze. After retirement, she enjoyed traveling the states and overseas. She also loved antiques and was always on "the hunt" for treasures. She leaves behind her husband, Jeffrey Orman of 49 years of marriage, a son and daughter, and three grandchildren.

The ADCA Needs Your HELP

The ADCA is seeking volunteers from our membership for a couple of tasks which we need help to maintain going forward. Our membership continues to grow, and we are hoping some newer members may be willing to devote a little time to help our club.

Secretary/Membership Office: Mike Smith has served as club Secretary since 2018, but since they spend a good bit of time away from their North Little Rock home, Mike's ability to receive payments by mail and update our on-line membership system has proved challenging. Unfortunately the Post Office's success at consistently forwarding our mail has been unacceptable for the past two and a half years, leading to mis-deliveries, lost mail, and slow service.

We are needing someone who consistently lives at the same address, to serve as Secretary, or at least be willing to accept payments for memberships and convention registrations, make deposits to the bank, and update our web-based membership and convention systems for renewals, new members, and attendees. This individual would need to attend the ADCA Convention annually. Please contact Steve Rowe and Paul Woodfin at 4narowe@sbcglonal.net and paul.woodfin1@gmail.com if you are willing to help us keep our membership straight.

Antiquedoorknobs.us Website: Since 2014, Steve Hannum has worked to develop Dr. Blumin's VDA system to be web-based, photographing all doorknobs found in VDA3, along with many other new entries with help from several club members. In December 2016 the antiquedoorknobs.us went live, and has proved to be a valuable tool for club members and collectors, homeowners, contractors and many others. We have also photographed matching plates and knobs with plates to add to the website.

More than half of Facebook questions are concerning hardware items other than doorknobs, and most club members collect much more than just doorknobs. Part of our club's mission should be to expand this website beyond just doorknobs, and our first added item will be hinges later this summer.

The ADCA cannot expect Steve to spend even more time building new web pages, and so we need a team of people with some computer skills to help add and maintain these new sections of the website. No coding or advanced computer skills are required-just some time to click and add photos and text to new web pages. Steve and Paul will build templates for each hardware item which can be easily copied. If you might we willing to spend some time on this contact Steve at hannum1415@comcast.net or Paul at paul.woodfin1@gmail.com.

Club News and Notes

Membership Dues

If you pay your dues by mail, please remember our new mailing address:

Antique Doorknob Collectors of America
2527 Gough Street
San Francisco, CA 94123

Convention Registration

Remember to complete and submit your convention registration form (mail or on-line) now or not later than June 27th, which is also when our block of rooms with the hotel will expire. If mailing your registration form and payment, we need to receive ASAP to provide counts to the tour sites.

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Email: bysawyer@mcn.org

American Antique Hardware

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Web: americanantiquehardware.com
Email:
contact@americanantiquehardware.com

Antique Door Hardware Collector
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16624 Frederick Rd.
Mount Airy, MD 21771
Phone: 240-595-1115
Web: antiquedoorhardware.com
Email: antiquehardware@verizon.net

Bill's Key & Lock Shop

Owner: Andy Streenz
1509 N. Clinton Blvd.
Bloomington, IL 61701
Phone: 309-454-1713
Web: billskeyandlockshop.com
Email:
locksmith@billskeyandlockshop.com

The Brass Center

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248 East 58th Street.
New York, NY 10022
Phone: 212-421-0090
Web: thebrasscenter.com
Email: info@thebrasscenter.com

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Charleston Hardware

Owner: Brad Williams
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North Charleston, SC 29405
Phone: 866-958-8626
Web: charlestonhardware.com
Email: contact@chco.biz

Classic Home Hardware
Original Antique House & Furniture Hardware

Owner: Jim Morneau
PO Box 1102
Canton, CT 06019
Phone: 860-693-4451
Web: classichomehardware.com
Email:
sales@classichomehardware.com

DISCOVERY ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUES

Owner: Suzanne Kittel
409 Saint Francis St.
Gonzales, TX 78629
Phone: 830-672-2428
Web: discoverys.net
Email: swk@discoverys.net

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Owners: Christina Jones & James B. Wolff
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Rochester, NY 14620
Phone: 585-325-2329
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Email: info@historichouseparts.com

Liz's Antique Hardware

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453 South La Brea
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Phone: 323-939-4403
Web: lahardware.com
Email: Shop@LAHardware.com

Old House Parts Co.

Owner: Mike Thompson
1 Trackside Drive
Kennebunk, ME 04043
Phone: 207-985-1999
Web: oldhouseparts.com
Email: parts@oldhouseparts.com

Settlers Hardware

SETTLERS HARDWARE

Owner: Susan Neptune
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Houston, TX 77098
Phone: 713-524-2417
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Email: settlershardware@gmail.com

TICE INDUSTRIES

Owner: Scott Tice
2405 SE Moores Street
Milwaukie, OR, 97222
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Web Site: ticeindustries.com
Email: scott@ticeindustries.com

Tim & Julie's Another Fine Mess

Owners: Tim Harmon & Julie Crow
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Indianapolis, IN 46201
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Email: timandjuliestore@gmail.com

Uniquely Olde

Owner: Steven Carter
Youngstown, OH
Phone: 330-953-8518
eBay Store: overlyoptimistic
Etsy Store: UniquelyOlde
Email: smcarter@smc13.com

Village Salvage

WAYNESVILLE ANTIQUE MALL DBA
VILLAGE SALVAGE
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Owners: Rick Lepley & Lauren Slaughter
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Web Site: villagesalvage.com
Email: villagesalvage@gmail.com

Webwilson.com

WEB WILSON'S ANTIQUE HARDWARE AUCTIONS

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Email: hww@webwilson.com

The Jeffris Family Foundation
Dedicated to Midwestern Historic Preservation

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Phone: 608-757-1039
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