THE EDUCATION OF A CONSULTANT

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FOREWORD

My contract with the National Builders' Hardware Association expires on October 31, 1959 and then I begin a period of semi-retirement for the first time in my adult life. I have grave doubts as to whether I shall enjoy it as I have learned to love an industry in which I have spent all my working days. Were I to embark upon a new business life, in a reincarnation, I would again choose to become a builders' hardware consultant; I make this assertion with no reservations.

Thus will end fifty-four years of doing things that I have always enjoyed. Within this period of time, I had the good fortune to meet many men, both in and out of the industry, who provided experiences and knowledge which profited me in learning my trade. It is of them that I wish to write.

Two years ago, I abandoned writing the series, "People, Places and Things", published in Hardware Consultant. In the intervening time, I have received many letters and queries asking, "why?" and these mainly from younger men who were interested in the history of the industry from the viewpoint of an early participant. After a pep talk from one during the 1957 convention in Chicago, I determined to resume the task of compiling these memoirs. John R. Schoemer

Chapter I

MY ENTRANCE into the hardware business was rather an unusual one: I received my first job while riding on a trolley car. It was a beautiful, sunny Saturday afternoon in late spring and my father suggested a trip to Coney Island which, in the early days of the century, was a pleasant seashore resort. The trolley was an open, summer type of car with long cross-seats. As we settled ourselves in our seats, a man next to my father said, "How are you, John Schoemer?"

My dad turned in surprise. "Hello, Mr. Sargent," he replied. "What are you doing in Brooklyn? Visiting Coney Island?"

The name Sargent was familiar to me. The firm of Sargent & Company were customers of my dad who specialized in designing and engraving for trade catalogues. The stranger was a huge man with a large frame. His walrus-type mustache and bushy eyebrows gave his face a rather fierce expression. His voice, a deep bass, was resonant and added to my first impression which was not a favorable one. In later years, I was to learn that he was the kindliest of men with eyes that twinkled when he was amused. His sense of the ludicrous was extremely keen.

"Never been there in my life," answered Mr. Sargent. Looking at me, he asked, "Is this your boy, John?"

I was introduced, asked where I went to school and he inquired, "What are you going to do when you go to work?"

My reply was that my father wished me to enter the hardware business.

"Good boy," he said. "When you are ready, come to my office, hang up your hat and say, here I am, Mr. Sargent."

I was sixteen years of age and in high school. When I first selected my courses of study, I chose German as one of my subjects; my father considered it an excellent language to learn to further my future business career. The language teacher, Herr Professor Grubé disagreed with him. He told me one time that I was just a naturally stupid student. He was distressed that a youth with a German name was unable to master the grammar or the pronunciation of what was to me a guttural tongue. Herr Grubé acquired an intense dislike for me because of this; he did not comprehend the workings of the great American melting pot and, that as a fourth generation product of it, I had lost all relationship with my great-grandfather's native land. He vented his spleen by giving me the lowest possible marks in languages and my father was annoyed at the thought of having produced a moronic son.

The following year, in September, I decided to give school another try but, in a few weeks, the idea of enduring the Herr Professor another year was unbearable.

ONE morning, I wended my way to 149 Leonard Street, New York City, the Sargent executive offices and warehouse. After some inquiries, a man seated at an ancient roll-top desk was pointed out to me.

Hanging up my hat, I said to my acquaintance of the trolley car, "Here I am, Mr. Sargent."

He looked up with a ferocious scowl, "And who are you?"

I was stunned; this was not at all the reception I expected to receive. My tone became less assured.

"I am John Schoemer's son. You promised me a job last year."

He smiled and for the first time, I beheld the twinkling eyes.

"Report for work at eight to-morrow morning," he said and returned to reading papers on his desk.

I was overjoyed; at last, I was rid of an obnoxious school and was on the eve of a career to become a hardware merchant. My elation was later dimmed by the thought that Mr. Sargent and I had not discussed salary and also facing my father that night to inform him that I had left school without his permission.

This was my first introduction to one of the great men in the industry of that period and to the firm of Sargent & Company. When I reported for work the following morning, I was assigned to the catalogue department, which was under the management of William J. Ladd.

SARGENT & COMPANY occupied a seven-story building, as their main office and warehouse, on Leonard Street, in the city of New York. Together with Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Company, which had a similar establishment a short distance away on Chambers Street, they filled the dual role of hardware manufacturer and jobber. They both sold and catalogued: tools, screws, nuts and bolts, wire netting, lawn mowers and a host of other items of well-known makes, in addition to the products of their own manufacture. The two firms were a thorn in the sides of the local jobbers who were struggling for existence against this type of competition. This rivalry for business was later resolved by the jobbers confining their sales to variety and smaller hardware stores; the cream in the trade was shared by R. & E. and S. & Co. who, as a result, enjoyed a considerable prosperity.

This form of merchandising was popular with the owners of the larger retail establishments in the metropolitan area, and in other sections of the country. It enabled them to purchase the majority of the items they carried in stock from one source; assured them of securing standard brands and reduced bookkeeping costs to a minimum. I am not trying to defend this system as, viewed from another angle, it was a great injustice to the legitimate jobbers.

A salesman for either firm (R. & E. or S. & Co.) had a comparative sinecure in selling his customers; he thumbed through his catalogue until he had acquired an order of many pages, and the catalogues contained eleven to twelve hundred pages.

At the time of which I write (1905-06), the main offices and warehouses of the major lock manufacturers, and also the wholesale hardware firms, were located in what was then known as the hardware district, a section in the lower part of Manhattan, beginning at Chambers Street near City Hall and extending four or five city blocks south and west. Here were the headquarters of P. & F. Corbin, Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., Yale & Towne Mfg. Co., Lockwood Mfg. Co. (now Lockwood Hardware Mfg. Co. under new ownership), Norwalk Lock Co. and Reading Hardware Co. All of the aforementioned lock manufacturers maintained contract builders' hardware departments, some with large staffs of salesmen.

The directing heads of the four larger producers were men of outstanding ability: Charles H. Parsons of P. & F. Corbin; Ben Hawley of Russell and Erwin Mfg. Co.; Joseph B. Sargent and George Henry Sargent of Sargent & Co. and Henry R. Towne of Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. They all left an indelible mark in the history of their industry and of their careers I shall write in a later chapter.

THE lock manufacturers all sold direct to the architects as agents for the owners and to the contractors. New York architectural firms of established reputation, many nationally famous, generally made allowances in their specifications for private work and controlled the selection and purchase of the hardware. They, the majority of times, stipulated that only "hardware as manufactured by P. & F. Corbin or Yale & Towne Mfg. Co., will be accepted." Competition in many of the offices of these architects was infrequent and they selected the firm, of the two mentioned, whose products, consultants and service were most satisfactory to them. The two aforementioned producers "never had it so good."

Not alone did these conditions exist among the well-known architects but it extended to the more important contracting firms who operated on a cost-plus basis (cost of materials and labor to which was added a fixed percentage of profit). Marc Eidlitz & Sons, C. T. Wills and others accepted no competition, except that limited to these two producers. They obeyed without objections the naming of the hardware contractors by the architects. This was understandable as both Corbin and Yale had concentrated upon the production for years of special designs and types of hardware which appealed to the New York architects.

Between 1910 and 1915, Russell and Erwin began to make inroads upon this preferential business and to remove part of the magical spell cast on the architects. The possession of the unit lock was of additional assistance in doing this. The late Bob Leeds, of R. & E., was an exceptional salesman and he began to secure contracts for some of the more important buildings in the city, particularly when he could influence the inclusion of his firm's name in the specifications. It was similar to membership in an exclusive club; blackballed and no amount of pull could change the decision.

As for the other manufacturers (Lockwood, Norwalk, Reading and Sargent), they were the outsiders looking in. Their contracts were mainly for public schools and public buildings, apartment houses, smaller hotels and like structures where the competition was keen and the low bidder became the hardware sub-contractor. The reader will note that competitive conditions in this type of construction has not changed radically in the past half century.

A decade later (1915), Sargent & Co. joined the ranks of the three important lock manufacturers; the scope and types of their products were increasing rapidly and their general acceptance by the major architects was becoming an accomplished fact. This period was the era in which the Big Four (Corbin, Russwin, Sargent and Yale) became a reality.

THE New York office of P. & F. Corbin was established in 1854, soon after the incorporation of the company. Mr. Frank Corbin left the New Britain office to assume charge. It was located 11, 13 and 15 Murray in 1906 and upon the completion of the Architects' Building at Park Avenue and East 40th Street, removed to the new location. The staff, composed of what is now known as architectural hardware consultants and in those days builders' hardware salesmen, was an exceptionally competent one. Here reigned Charles Gregoire and George L. Chandler, both tops in their profession. Over the years, I grew to know Charlie Gregoire quite well. We both lived on Long Island, he at Kew Gardens and I further east, and we often commuted together. I had a great admiration for his ability.

Gregoire had been born in England and up to the time of his death in the early Thirties, he still retained traces of an English accent. With such prominent contracting firms as Marc Eidlitz & Son and others, he secured contracts for hardware to be furnished on prominent buildings without competition. He sold and scheduled the hardware for Radio City, Empire State Building and many of less equal size. To me, he was tops among the consultants and I owe him gratitude for many of the things I learned from our conversations, even though I was employed by a competitor.

Shortly after the formation of the distributor firm of Ostrander & Eshleman, he was offered a position with them but he declined, being content with security and a much smaller salary; he was too cautious to gamble with the possible future success of a distributor in New York. I was second choice and secured the job, thereby eventually earning approximately three times Charlie's salary. We often discussed it on our homeward journeys.

I was acquainted with the men working in the contract department of Russell & Erwin less intimately than I did those employed by Corbin. Bob Leeds I knew quite well in later years, particularly as he gave me a severe beating several times when I was in competition with him. He was a far better salesman in competition than I could ever hope to be.

The R. & E. main office and warehouse was on Chambers Street between Broadway and Centre Street, adjoining the Hall of Records. Here they maintained their jobbing stocks, and those of their own products. Their salesmen sold the hardware stores and the large lumber dealers in the territory as did the men working for Sargent & Co. However, the unusual phase of this type of distribution was that the dealers generally bought exclusively from either one of the two manufacturers. Later, when I had a territory on Long Island, I rarely called on an R. & E. dealer and, if I did, I had small chance of securing an order. John Duyckink, my competing peddler, soon retaliated by soliciting business from one of my customers; then, as friendly enemies, we resumed the old methods.

A major portion of the success of the firms forming the American Hardware Corporation was due to the development of the unit lock in the early part of the century. It made an instant appeal to the architects because of its compactness and key-in-the-knob feature. Here, they decided, was the first radical departure from the more than century old mortise lock; it represented to them a fitting addition to the progress that architecture and building materials were making in this country. Sargent & Co. decided to play a lone hand with their union lock which had the working parts ingeniously inserted in the inside escutcheon but it did not have the key-in-the-knob feature. Another disadvantage was its cost of production which consisted largely of handwork.

When the unit lock patents expired, it was produced by a number of the other lock manufacturers but while they held, the unit lock was cussed uphill and down by the competitors. When they were specified, protests were made to the architects that they were eliminating competition as the lock was produced by one corporation but, in our hearts, we knew this to be an untruth for the two firms (Corbin and R. & E.) were bitter competitors, often I fear to the loss of the parent corporation.

The story of Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. and its president, Henry R. Towne is too lengthy to be told in these paragraphs and I shall devote space in later chapters to it. The firm had a famous reputation throughout the world because of the original development of the Yale lock and cylinder, and the high quality of its products. Readers of detective stories are familiar that a designation of a lock of any make is a Yale lock to the authors.

In the time of which I write, the Y. & T. executive offices and warehouse were located in the hardware district; on Murray Street, as I recall it. They were the second firm to move to the midtown section where they located on East 40th Street. They had engaged the services of a well-known firm of New York architects and erected a pretentious structure there for their main offices and sample rooms.

I knew Billy Hill, their assistant sales-manager (later president of Sargent & Greenleaf in Rochester) and he invited me up for an inspection tour, and I became green with envy. The building was beautifully laid out with well appointed offices and sample rooms, the like of which I had never beheld before. They were decorated in various periods of design and equipped with appropriate hardware samples. The entire layout was a sensation in the industry, and caused the shaking of many heads among the competitors; Henry R. Towne must be arriving in his dotage, the more conservative New Englanders said. But H. R. T. knew very well the motives he had in mind when

The old Sargent building on Centre Street, razed to make place for the Criminal Courts Building.

he planned; it was popular with the New York architects and added prestige to his firm.

I decided that this was the atmosphere in which I wanted to work and, through Billy Hill, I secured employment with Y. & T. Its duration was only twenty-four hours but that is another tale to be told later.

Sargent & Co. had moved from Chambers Street, near the close of the last century, and were the first to leave the hardware district. They had purchased a building on Leonard Street and later the adjoining five story structure at 94 Centre Street, both now the site of the beautiful Criminal Courts Building, occupying two city blocks.

When I came to work for the firm, Leonard Street bordered on the infamous Five Points, a collection of unsavory joints favored by the criminals in the city. Here they found refuge from the police. Patrolman walked its streets in pairs, experience had taught them that lone men were frequently attacked.

When we worked in the office late at night, everyone waited until there were groups of five or six before departing for the subway or elevated. One morning, I arrived to find an excited night watchman in our building. He had, a short time before, opened the shipping room doors and found a dead, naked woman on the sidewalk. He called the police and they nonchalantly carted the body away. I scanned the newspapers but no word of the murder appeared in them.

During this time, there occured the Sargent Payroll Robbery which made the front pages of the New York papers, for hold-ups were rare those days. One of the office boys was returning from the bank with the money in a bag. As he neared the office, two men jostled and shoved him into an empty store; bound and gagged, he surrendered the bag. Soon, the Sargent office was filled with detectives and news reporters but, after several weeks of investigations, no clues to the robbers were found.

Some time later, James Cunnison, the foreman on the third or lock floor, met a former assistant of his, Joe C———, on the Bowery and was invited into a nearby saloon for a drink. Joe, in his Sargent days, was frequently without funds and his display of a roll of bills aroused Cunnison's curiosity. Joe glibly explained that he had made a killing at the racetrack. The Scotsman's suspicions were aroused and, thinking the incident over, he

recalled that C———had brought a wax impression of a keyhole to him to have a key made several months earlier. Searching in a work-bench drawer, he located the wax, went to the scene of the robbery, found that it held the impression of the keyhole and reported his findings to the office manager. C———and his confederate were apprehended, confessed and sent to Sing Sing Prison. My early days in the industry were not with-out interest and I was fascinated in contemplating the future.

Chapter 2

AT THE turn of the century, Big Business controlled the economy of the country. Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, John D. Rockefeller, the Vanderbilts and others dominated the business world. Some were ruthless in acquiring their wealth and later solved their consciences by establishing charitable or research foundations. It was not until President Theodore Roosevelt wielded the "Big Stick" and influenced the enforcement of the Anti-Trust Laws that this wild orgy of speculation was brought under partial control.

The publicity brought to those financial giants by their operations blanketed the rise of many small manufacturing firms who, with no fanfare or trumpets, were slowly becoming major factors in the economy of many industries. In lock production, the Corbins, Russells, Sargents and Henry R. Towne, from small beginnings, were assuming major importance in the development of lock security that later was to place America in the forefront in this field.

WHILE I, years after my induction into the builders' hardware business, learned that these men were of exceptional ability and were destined to leave an impact upon their industry, I became more intimately acquainted, through daily contacts, with the Big Four of Sargent & Co.: George Henry Sargent, Thomas J. Atkins, William J. Ladd and George Munson. (I do not mention Joseph Bradford Sargent for he died shortly after I came with the company but as president and founder, he occupied a more important position in the creation of the firm than do the four aforementioned individuals.)

Together, the Big Four were an incongruous group; Sargent and Munson over six feet in height, Atkins and Ladd, short in stature, a few inches over five feet. In the winter months, they all wore tall, black silk hats and frock coats to business each day and with the exception of G. H. S., were most fastidious in their attire. When Mr. Sargent arrived in the office, he immediately changed to a somewhat worn office coat and a straw hat that had seen better days. He required no stylish adornments to enhance his natural impressive mien.

GEORGE Henry Sargent was born in Leicester, Massachusetts, and came of a long line of English forebears. With his brother, Joseph Bradford Sargent, he was first engaged there in the production of cotton and wool cards, devices of flat wood with curved pins inserted for the carding of cotton and wool. They enjoyed a special popularity in the South and their sale there was continuous for many years into the 20th century.

Later, the city of New Haven offered the Sargents certain advantages in moving to that location and the first building of the present large group was erected. Then, G. H. S. became the head of the New York establishment where the administrative headquarters were maintained until, some years later, they were moved to New Haven.

Mr. Sargent, despite a rather gruff manner, had a keen sense of humor and was frequently amused by office incidents. When something of this type occurred, his laugh was loud and hearty. I recall one escapade when his amusement annoyed his manager, T. J. Atkins, who believed at times that G. H. S. encouraged delinquency by his tolerance toward the younger men in his employ. The mail desk was near his and over it hung a green-shaded light suspended from the ceiling by a wire. One day, and bored by inactivity, an office boy clipped the wire with a pair of shears, curious to see the result. It came quickly; a flash of flame and the entire office was plunged into darkness from a short circuit. Mr. Sargent had witnessed the act and, possibly sympathetic toward the idiosyncrasies of youth, laughed it off with a mild lecture and prevented the boy's discharge.

Although a wealthy man, he never lost his New England frugality. He lived well, maintaining a large house in the Fifties, just off Fifth Avenue and now a part of the site of Radio City. His carriage and team, his coachman and the servants headed by his butler, John Perago, brought him many comforts but, in small things, he frequently "pinched the pennies." In doing so, he was not mean; he abhorred things which appeared extravagances. For years, the opened envelopes were delivered daily to his desk and he slit them with a paper knife. They were distributed throughout the office for use as memo pads. This habit of his had a strange influence on me; even as I write this, it is on the reverse side of discarded letter paper.

G. H. S.'s coachman drove him to the office most business mornings; on others, he rode the trolley cars which passed the office building. Each day, he appeared with a package, wrapped in brown paper, containing his lunch which he ate at noon seated at his desk. When the Hardware Club was organized and located in sumptuous quarters on the top floor of the Postal Telegraph Building, Mr. Sargent, as the dean of the industry, was elected the first president. As day by day went by and as he rarely appeared at the luncheon hour, he was queried on his absence by some of his fellow officers. With the mayor, city officials and the heads of the large hardware firms lunching there daily, surely the president should be present also, they added. G. H. S. was not impressed by these arguments nor did he reform. He was reputed to have replied, "If you think I intend to eat that rich food and pay fancy prices for it, you are badly mistaken."

He wore the high silk hat until it appeared somewhat shabby and then he would visit a hat store to purchase a new one. A story went the rounds of the office one time that the salesman asked G. H. S. if he should deduct the clergyman's discount of ten percent. Mr. Sargent gave a snort of annoyance at being mistaken for a member of the cloth but the clerk took this as an assent and allowed the discount.

His straw hat was always worn in the office in all seasons. Although somewhat battered, he was reluctant to part with it. Late one winter afternoon, with a snowstorm swirling outside, G. H. S. departed on a trolley car in front of the office, absent-mindedly adorned with the straw. It caused a sensation among the personnel; bets were made pro and con that he would or would not return in the morning with the same hat perched on his head. His arrival was awaited with great interest and there were murmurs of delight from the winners when he

alighted from a trolley car, in the midst of a blizzard, with the straw hat set defiantly on his head.

He was always kind and friendly to me and when I traveled in the South as a representative for the firm, he wrote to me at intervals. G. H. S. never dictated any of his letters but wrote in a large scrawl on stationery of an odd size and specially printed for him, six inches wide and twelve inches long.

I still have the original of his last letter to me, written four or five years before his death when he was in his eighties.

Dear John Schoemer, (it began)

Your letter of the 14th rec'd to-day and is very acceptable, not only for the information it contains but also for the evidence it gives of your attention to details of affairs of Dealers in your territory. You are very comprehensive in your description of the conditions and intentions of the firms of whom you write.

The Stikes people owe us but $45.36 two bills of May, 1908 Southern H & S Co. $200.18 Jany 1909. Bills from which we made draft 14th instant. It may or may not be paid.

You seem to be doing well and are entitled to as much praise as will not spoil you. All here are interested in your welfare.

Very truly yours,

G. H. S.

To me, and to many others who adored him, he was the greatest man in the industry. A short time after the receipt of this letter, I was recalled to New York and I was shocked at the change in his appearance. He had lost weight, his cheeks were sunken and the great booming voice and laughter were heard only at intervals. He had relinquished the management to his nephew, John Sargent, and he arrived at his desk only a few days each week. He was a lonely man; Mrs. Sargent was dead for some years and he had suffered a great tragedy in his earlier life when his two sons, while at Yale University, had been drowned and their bodies never recovered when their sailboat overturned in a squall on Long Island Sound off New Haven. With his death, there remained only two remarkable personalities in the lock manufacturing industry, the elder Parsons in New Britain and Henry R. Towne.

THOMAS J. Atkins was the general manager of Sargent & Co., New York. He was short in stature, wore side, mutton chop whiskers and had a rather high squeaky voice, imitated by the boys when he was not present and with whom he was not popular because of his reluctance to grant raises in salary. He had been born in England and there were still traces of an English accent in his speech. In the warehouse when there were whispers that "TJ" was on the prowl, great activity resulted on all the floors. G. H. S. called him "Tommy" and a more inappropriate name was never devised.

Salaries in most categories were extremely low as was common throughout the industry those days; fifty-cent raises each six months was the custom. Those wishing to interview him gathered outside his office each Friday in a long line and he granted as few wage increases as possible by engaging the applicants in lengthy conversations regarding their work. At times, it was necessary to appear four or five Fridays in succession to secure the meager additional stipend.

John T. Barlow, now the owner of Clark and Barlow Hardware Co. in Chicago, out-foxed him one time and the lesson undoubtedly made an impression. Employees were checked in each morning and those reporting late a few mornings were notified to report immediately to Mr. Atkins.

"John, you have been coming in late for three or four mornings and I want to know the reason," said T. J.

"I know it, Mr. Atkins," replied Jack Barlow. "I did it on purpose because I have stood on line for five Fridays to ask for a raise and I knew the only way to see you was to report late for a few mornings."

G. H. S. was standing nearby and overhead the conversation. Trying to conceal his amusement, he sang out, "Give it to him, Tommy. He certainly has earned it." Atkins was visibly annoyed but did not dare to combat his employer.

The boys delighted in little tricks to plague Atkins. A favorite was the gift Thanksgiving turkey and it was repeated year after year. A few days before the holiday, a newcomer was approached by an older employee who had been a victim in a previous year.

"Did you receive the order for your turkey," he would ask. "T. J. is a very liberal man and he gives everyone a turkey for Thanksgiving. I got mine."

The unsuspecting youth would reply that he had not heard of it.

"Well, then you had better hustle down to his office before they are all gone."

Atkins' patience would become exhausted after the sixth or seventh explanation that "the boys are ribbing you. I never give turkeys away." At the eighth and thereafter, he added, "I hate turkey and never eat it."

But the most famous was the animal trap episode and only the difficulties to be encountered in training a new group of employees in the warehouse deterred him from discharging everyone there. Never had his dignity suffered more nor his authority flouted; the culprits were never discovered.

Paddy Dougherty was one of the Irish packers in the shipping room and the boys needled him to arouse his temper. In a rage, he would hurl his razor-edge hatchet (which he used to trim the packing straw after the box lid was nailed) like a tomahawk at his tormentors. We daily expected a visit from the police homicide squad.

Paddy had been abandoning his work sometime before the closing hour and washing up preparatory to departing. Atkins had heard rumors of this and decided to investigate but the underground tipped Paddy off that "Tommy" was in the vicinity. Unfortunately, the boys had selected that night to play one of their tricks on the Irishman and had planted an open animal trap under straw at the washbasin with the chain nailed to the floor. In his investigation, T. J. found Paddy hard at work and suspiciously he approached the basin. His resultant howls of pain and anger rang throughout the room.

Everyone froze in horror; they envisioned instant dismissal. One by one, they were interviewed next morning but no one confessed the deed or revealed the perpetrators.

My first contact with Atkins' somewhat penurious habits came when I was sent to Long Island to represent the firm. Before my departure, he called me into his office and handed me a mileage book for the Long Island Railroad. This was a book of coupons in common use

then which cost two cents per mile in lots of 500 or 1000 miles.

"Do you know how to use this?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I replied. "My father uses them."

"How does your father use them?" he continued.

"He hands the book to the conductor and tells him where he is going. Then the conductor tears out the right number of coupons."

Mr. Atkins showed his impatience at such stupidity.

"No that is all wrong. The conductor cheats you. You should secure a timetable where the mileage is shown, figure the number of miles to your destination, tear out the correct number of coupons and hand them to the conductor."

I tried the Atkins system on my first trip. The conductor glared at me.

"Who told you to do that?" he growled.

"My boss," I answered.

"Well, you tell your boss that if you ever do it again, I won't accept the tickets and you'll pay twice."

I decided there and then to abandon the Atkins system.

Later, when an accredited traveling salesman, I became better acquainted with T. J. Atkins and learned another phase of his nature, for at heart he was a kindly man. He had a difficult position with the firm for his was the duty to keep expenses at a minimum and this did not endear him to the employees. He scrutinized the expense accounts carefully but he insisted that the salesmen live well and stay at the best hotels.

I had an experience one time which taught me a lesson. I was on a trip to St. Louis and arriving there, found the leading hotels crowded with convention delegates. I registered at a small, side-street hotel and wrote the home office a report on its stationery. A letter arrived from Mr. Atkins chiding me for staying at a second rate hotel; he feared that it would harm the reputation of the firm.

WILLIAM J. Ladd, another member of the Sargent Big Four, was head of the catalogue department. He was only a few inches over five feet, with side whiskers and a somewhat florid complexion. Born in England, he came to America with his parents at an early age. Because his mother was widowed shortly after their arrival here, he was compelled to seek employment, when twelve years of age, to assist in her support and had little opportunity to secure more than a sparse education.

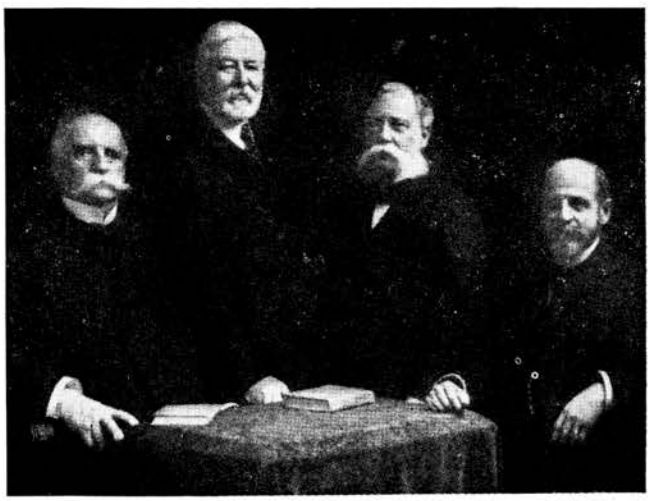
Ladd was a man of inborn culture and had an excellent command of the English language. Self-taught, he had the diction of a college professor. A religious man, he never touched liquor or tobacco although he tolerated these vices in others, including my dad. My father and he were friends and met almost daily as members of a luncheon group.

For years, he had worked on the preparation of Ladd's Discount Book which had a popular sale for a long period and from which he derived a steady income, although he never acquired the prosperity of his colleagues. His book reduced all discounts to convenient decimal figures. This was a period in the industry when manufacturers used ridiculous discounts from the list prices to secure the actual sales amounts. For instance, the discount on flathead bright screws was something like 87½-5-10-5-2½% with an extra 5% for large orders. Without the Ladd Discount Book, estimators, buyers and invoice clerks would have become psychopathic patients.

Mr. Ladd produced catalogues for the Sargent firm which were models of their kind. No page plates were ever printed which he did not first examine and correct in every detail; no task was ever too painstaking and nothing was ever slighted. A printer told me one time that Ladd was one of greatest experts on printing, wood-engraving and half-toning in New York City. This man was destined to be my first boss and I don't believe he ever understood or liked me; in fact, this was mutual.

GEORGE Munson was the buyer and his position was an important one for the company who were in the wholesale as well as in the manufacturing fields. He, with George Henry Sargent, was the other of the men of large frame in the quartet. He wore a closely-trimmed grey beard, his voice was soft and melodious and his eyes, generally twinkling and kind, were his best feature. I always liked him and when I became a contract salesman in later years, he gave me considerable freedom in purchasing items which Sargent did not catalogue or stock.

THESE were the men whom I came to know in my early days in the industry. The other three major lock manufacturers held, at that time, an equal or more commanding position in the industry under the leadership of such personalities as Charles H. Parsons of P. & F. Corbin; Ben Hawley of Russell & Ervin and Henry R. Towne of Yale & Towne. Their careers will receive attention in succeeding chapters.



(L. to r.) George Henry Sargent, one of the founders of Sargent & Company; George Munson, buyer; W. J. Ladd, head of the catalogue department, and T. J. Atkins, office manager.

Chapter 3

ON the territory which I traveled for Sargent & Co. from 1910 to 1912, I had to combat our most energetic competitor, P. & F. Corbin, in the cities which I visited. They had become well established in this section of the South and had acquired the majority of the leading builders' hardware distributing accounts. They, also, were firmly intrenched in most of the architects' offices and many times it was difficult to secure permission to estimate plans and specifications when

the Corbin dealers, with the architects' consent, stipulated that only the products of that firm could be furnished.

In later years, as I learned the history of the House of Corbin, this sales advantage became more understandable; they had confined their manufactured products mainly to one field, builders' hardware, while the traveling representatives of Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. and Sargent & Co. had their efforts divided between the sale of items of their own manufacturers and the jobbing lines.

In reviewing the early Corbin history, the personality and genius of one man, Philip Corbin, assumes an important position in the story of the founding of a builders' hardware producer. His untiring efforts eventually brought his firm to the position it occupies in the industry today but his early life was replete with vicissitudes. Nevertheless, these did not dampen his spirits or deter him in his ambition to succeed as a manufacturer.

PHILIP CORBIN was born in Wellington, Conn., on October 26, 1824. He was the third of ten children, eight of whom were boys. Philip was a strong lad and until he reached the age of nineteen, the greater part of his time was spent in farm work away from home, his wages being paid to his father, as was then the custom with minors. A man named Rowley advised him one day to seek work in one of the New Britain hardware factories, saying that he could earn more money there. His father gave a reluctant consent as he was ambitious to have Philip become a farmer.

On the 18th of March, 1844, he began work in the shops of Matteson, Russell & Co. (later Russell & Erwin), receiving fourteen dollars per month, out of which he paid his board and sent the balance to his family to aid in their support. To add to his earnings, he obtained work outside of his regular hours; one was sweeping out the entire factory once a week for which he received fifty cents. During this time, he returned home to help with the haying and because he was so eager to get it done, he finished in two weeks what ordinarily required twice as long.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to J. B. Comstock's "History of the House of Corbin" (1904) for the historical data contained in this article.

In the fall of 1844, Corbin returned to New Britain. This time, he was employed by Henry Andrews, who had a contract to make locks for North & Stanley, for which he received nineteen dollars per month. His knowledge of lockmaking was slight, but the same spirit that later made him a leader in his industry caused him to excel in his new field. There were in those days no cast lock cases, these articles being made throughout of wrought metal, and very largely by hand, the use of machinery being then but imperfectedly developed. To make a lock required the deft use of hand tools, some natural ability and a more thorough knowledge of locking mechanisms than was required of lock fitters in later years.

In the North & Stanley plant there was an expert locksmith named Bucknell, and Philip worked with him in the evenings learning the art. Finding him eager to learn, Bucknell took pains in teaching him and in sixty days he not only could make a good lock but also had absorbed a knowledge of the management of the workmen which later was to profit him.

A short time later he secured a contract from North & Stanley to make plate locks—a lock set into a wooden case or back which was cut to receive it. This began his career as a lockmaker and employer of labor. It was unprecedented for a young man of twenty to achieve such success but the work was performed so satisfactorily, North & Stanley awarded him additional contracts. On May 8, 1849, his brother Frank, then seventeen years of age, joined him as a partner. This, in later years, created the firm name: Philip and Frank Corbin.

In the summer of 1848, he also had taken into partnership a brass founder by the name of Edward Doen and the firm became Doen, Corbin & Co. Land was procured in the eastern part of New Britain. A history of that period relates an account of the early struggles of the partners to succeed in this venture.

"A contract was made for a two-story frame factory building with a stone foundation, and with a cellar extending under the entire building, the price for the land and building being about six hundred dollars. In October, the cellar was dug and the wall built. Philip Corbin spent Thanksgiving Day in 1848 banking the foundation to protect it from the winter frosts. In the following spring the building was erected.

"A horsepower treadmill which had seen some use had been contracted for in the fall before and was now installed in the cellar, and connected with the machinery, consisting of a grindstone, an emery wheel, and two lathes. A big black horse was bought to turn the machinery; two furnaces for casting were built in the lean-to in the rear, and by May of 1849 the plant was ready for operation. Everything was paid for in cash, and the three partners stepped into their establishment with a factory free from incumbrance together with a cash balance of somewhat less than two hundred dollars—with which to buy metal and conduct the business."

THE main source of worry for the young firm was finances and to secure ready cash, goods had to be marketed as quickly as possible if they were to remain afloat. Ox balls for tipping the horns of cattle were in demand, and the partners had invented a new pattern which was an improvement on anything then made. This provided them with their first orders and enabled them to continue in business. However, Doen grew dissatisfied in four months and sold his interest to Henry W. Whiting, Philip Corbin's father-in-law. The partnership was changed to Corbin, Whiting & Co.

Whiting was the first traveling salesman for the firm and made three or four trips during his two-year connection with it. In this period, goods were sold upon long time payments; settlements being made twice a year—in January and July—notes payable in four months being accepted. Customers naturally deferred making purchases until after the settlement period and then bought heavily; the result being that on a large portion of the shipments a year's time for payment would be given. To hasten payments, a five percent cash discount was allowed at settlement time. There was little money in circulation, and a quick return upon capital such as is demanded today was not possible. This made it correspondingly hard for a new concern with limited means to make rapid headway.

It also is interesting to note that now when foreign-made hardware is reentering our market, in 1849 American goods were not looked upon with favor. The domestic manufacture of hardware was in its infancy, the known brands and favored products coming from abroad. Importers and dealers, well stocked with foreign goods for which

a trade was already created, were not disposed to buy domestic wares of no general repute. To make articles already manufactured in this country would add to the discomfort in introducing his line, Philip Corbin thought, and decided to make goods not made in America and thus eliminate one source of competition. First, lifting handles were produced, these being used largely as coffin handles; then thread escutcheons, flush bolts, lamp hooks, buttons on plates, cupboard hooks, coat and hat hooks, trunk catches, spiral window springs, paste jaggers, stair-rod eyes, shutter screws and table fasteners. Corbin made improved jigs and tools to hold unfinished articles in process of manufacture and had the costs reduced to figures which enabled him to undersell the foreign producers and make an attractive profit.

In the fall of 1851, Henry W. Whiting sold his interest in the business to the two Corbin brothers and the firm became P. & F. Corbin. His reason for desiring to sell was his belief that the line was growing too rapidly—that too many new goods were being added instead of all the productive efforts being devoted to the manufacture and sale of the earlier items. Thus the first partner, Doen, left because the Corbin policy was not progressive enough and his successor because it was too progressive.

The business became a copartnership, owned solely by the Corbin brothers, Philip and Frank. In 1853, Frank began spending all of his time on the road, selling goods. Philip also made occasional trips in order to keep in closer contact with the market and its needs. The little factory was now being taxed to its fullest capacity.

It was in this period that three more of the Corbin brothers became identified with the business. George S., the youngest, came into the shop and was connected with P. & F. Corbin until his death. About the same time, Waldo Corbin joined his fortunes with his brothers and in 1853, at the age of thirty-one, was made a partner. Hezekiah, the oldest of the eight boys, also came into the factory but soon left to become a paper box manufacturer.

It now became evident to the Corbin brothers that there was a much larger field than they could cover with their limited means and facilities and that something, to give a greater scope to their business, should be done. At about this time, one of the local manufacturers proposed that the two firms consolidate but when it was learned that P. & F. Corbin's identity would be lost in the merger, the proposal was not entertained and another way was sought to secure the desired result.

The need for larger capital was becoming more urgent and, after some discussion, it was decided to incorporate the business and sell sufficient stock to acquire the money needed.

Members of the firm of North & Stanley, who owned the Corbin premises, were willing to buy stock in the new corporation as an investment. So, on Februray 14, 1854, seven men met in the small packing room and signed the articles of association. These men, who were thus the charter members of the company, were Philip, Frank, Waldo and William Corbin; Frederic H. North, Oliver Stanley and John B. Talcott of North & Stanley. The company was capitalized at fifty thousand dollars and the stock was divided into two thousand shares with a par value of twenty-five dollars each. The officers elected were: F. H. North, president; Philip Corbin, secretary and Frank Corbin, treasurer.

It was decided to open a sales office in New York City and Frank Corbin was sent there to become manager, taking with him his brother, George. William Corbin was made the first factory superintendent. Philip Corbin was thus relieved of much of the responsibility of the details of the business. Its rapid growth made increased care and watchfulness necessary and brought new problems before him constantly for solution, not the least of which were finances.

In 1856, the terms of payment were changed to thirty days net cash payable in funds at par in New York or Boston. There were still a number of accounts who were carried on the old basis of semi-annual payments. This basis for payment made it difficult for a concern with limited capital to do business. Notes were generally given, notwithstanding the inducement of a large cash discount, and these notes were discounted by the banks when the holders were in need of money and the banks had it to loan.

In addition, the fluctuating value of the currency then used was a constant source of annoyance and anxiety. The notes of first-class New York banks passed at their face value, good Philadelphia notes were subjected in New York to an exchange discount of from five to seven percent and the New York exchange discount on good Chicago banks ranged as high as twenty-seven percent, with a lesser deduction for nearby cities.

The corporation received its first check in 1857, three years after its formation, when the failure of the Ohio Trust Co. precipitated a panic which caused hard times all over the country There were no orders to be obtained and for the first time in its existence the factory was shut down because of the lack of trade. No work was done from August, 1857, until the following February. There was great privation in New Britain.

Just before the crash came, Philip Corbin went to a Hartford bank and drew out three or four hundred dollars in gold and used it for relieving unusual cases of distress among the company's workmen, doling out a dollar or two at a time to make the precious hoard go as far as possible, for no one knew when the tide would turn.

There were forty or fifty employees, many of whom had families, and much suffering ensued. One day, a fish net was borrowed and a party of six went with Philip Corbin to the junction of the Mattabessett River with the Connecticut to fish all day through holes cut in the ice; as a result, several bushels of fish were caught and distributed to the needy.

By late 1858, the panic was over and manufacturing was resumed on a more normal basis. The firm was rapidly becoming full-fledged builders' hardware producers. In 1870, they were making an assortment of locks and latches which contained:

23 types mortise knob latches
2 types mortise night latches
18 types mortise dead locks
33 types mortise knob locks
9 types mortise front door locks
4 types mortise vestibule latches
109 types rim locks and latches

In addition were the necessary keys of malleable iron and brass, knobs and roses, and keyplates. Mineral and porcelain knobs with japanned roses were then popular and were in considerable demand. The number of workmen had risen to five hundred. The 1872 edition of the catalogue contained 506 pages, devoted exclusively to illustrating items of builders' hardware.

Styles of ornamentation began to be classified by schools of design about 1878. Gothic, whose resemblance to

correct Gothic hardware is rather remote; Roman, Grecian, Louis XV and Louis XVI, Adam and a host of other so-called period designs were being added to their lines by the builders' hardware manufacturers. They were in execrable taste and no more resembled correct schools of design than I resemble a South African Hottentot. All the producers were guilty of creating abortions in hardware simply because they refused to engage the services of capable designers whose fees were costly in their opinion.

I recall one operation where it was necessary to submit design drawings in color and I decided that the firm's regular designer would be of no assistance in securing the contract. I knew of a young architectural designer who was rapidly acquiring a reputation in his field and without consulting anyone, employed him. I was called to headquarters, even though the drawings secured the order. "Why pay $150 for designs that students in the Yale School of Architecture will prepare for $25?" I was asked. I decided that our manufacturers were not design conscious and that it was foolish to attempt to explain my ideas.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, P. E. Guerin and Bayer, Gardiner & Hines, in New York City, sensed this lack of understanding among the hardware producers of good taste in designs and provided their trade with authentic reproductions of hardware schools of design. As a result, they enjoyed a considerable prosperity for some years.

But Yale & Towne and Corbin were both supplying architects of international reputations and rather than step aside for the products supplied by Guerin and B. G. & H., they began to make improvements which mainly embodied copying the originals. While the more permanent mercury gold finishes were lacking, some handchasing was performed upon the castings. Two jobs that I now recall as being of excellent design and material are: the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York by Y. & T. (now dismantled) and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel by R. & E. Hardware designs and finish in both buildings were good because no attempt was made to provide American adaptations for the originals.

Not that I do not appreciate the vast strides that our manufacturers have made in the postwar years in improving the appearance of hardware, particularly that of contemporary designs. I can well understand the statement made earlier in this article that, in the mid-nineteenth century, foreign hardware was preferred to that of American make. At the same time, visitors to our annual trade show must be impressed with the great progress that has been made in the past decade in hardware of contemporary design and with it, a realization that no nation has gone farther in keeping pace with modern architecture.

I HAVE devoted considerable space in this article to the early struggles of Philip Corbin to gain a foothold as a hardware manufacturer. It provides the reader with a knowledge that no man, or group of men, created the present large hardware plants without first encountering doubtful futures. These builders' hardware pioneers suffered acutely from hardships and privations which only their dogged Yankee will to succeed prevented them from becoming casualties rather than successful merchants.

When I came into the industry, Charles H. Parsons headed the Corbin firm; his son, Charles B., was sales manager. Philip Corbin died on April 13, 1913 and was succeeded by the elder Parsons. The firm had offices in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, each with contract sales departments.

The success of the company had been greatly aided by the acquisition of the patents for the "Unit" lock, the specification and sale of which spurred a great increase in the demand for aspirin by the competitors' salesmen, I to be numbered among them. The inventor emerged from a strange portion of the country—the West Coast. Considering the development of the Schlage lock in the same general locality, it provides wonderment as to where the center of modern lock creation is located.

It remained for the Hon. Byron Phelps, former mayor of Seattle, Washington, and ex-treasurer of the county, to evolve a new type of lock and to bring it forth complete, with the generic idea fully developed and the form established. In June, 1898, he came to P. & F. Corbin from across the country to find a manufacturer to produce his device. The value of the new lock was at once recognized and the control of the invention secured. Its greatest feature is its key-in-the-knob operating function. The unit lock was also produced by Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. when the American Hardware Corporation was formed in 1902. Upon expiration of the patents, similar locks were produced by Reading, Sargent, Yale & Towne and, I believe, one or two other manufacturers. Today, it is manufactured exclusively by Corbin and R. & E. To me, it is still a good lock (I have always been favorable toward key-in-the-knob locks).

Charles H. Parsons

Philip Corbin

The American Hardware Corporation, of which P. & F. Corbin became an important division, was organized in 1902, and Philip Corbin was elected the first president. He was succeeded by Charles Jarvis in 1910. In 1913 Henry C. M. Thompson became presi-

dent of the Corporation, and in 1925 George T. Kimball. E. J. Parker is the present incumbent of the office.

Three generations of Parsons have served the division and the corporation; Charles H. Parsons as the first vice-president of P. & F. Corbin; Charles B. Parsons, the son, as president, and the grandson, Geddes Parsons, the present general sales manager of the P. & F. Corbin Division.

P. & F. Corbin, after one hundred and four years of existence, is still going strong without having diminished any of the prestige which the firm has built up over the years.

Chapter 4

LOCKS and keys were known to the Egyptians and other ancient peoples. They are mentioned in the Bible; a celebrated passage is Matt. 16:19, "the bestowal of the keys of the kingdom of heaven upon Peter."

In the American colonies, locking devices of not too complicated construction were made locally, mainly by blacksmiths. When tumbler and warded locks were demanded, those of English manufacture were imported. Some of the German states of the 18th century contributed coach latches, which also served as door locks, and brass rim locks. These are still to be found in the Pennsylvania Dutch country.

Some years ago, a client sent us an antique brass rim lock to be cleaned and repaired. The interior of the lock case was beautifully engraved with scroll designs and inscribed in German were the name of the engraver and the date, 1762. It was one of the finest examples of lockmaking I had ever seen. The man performing the repairing was a German, having learned his trade in Munich, and it was his opinion that the lock had been made by an apprentice, anxious to display his skill to his master. What other reason would there be to spend days on work that would never be visible to the lock's owner?

UP TO the 1840's, American-made hardware and locks had made little inroads in the local markets; products of foreign manufacture were in greater demand. For years, it was my impression that Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. were the pioneers in the lock field on this continent, when they began the largest scale production of locks in 1849—and, in a way, they were. However, I was somewhat startled some years ago to discover that Eagle Lock Co. was producing some excellent rim locks with cast-iron cases in 1840.

Henry F. duPont was assembling his great collection of Early American hardware, now on display in the Winterthur Museum in Wilmington. When Mr. duPont purchased a number of items of antique hardware, he had me make an estimate of the value of each piece, to confirm his opinion that he was a collector not to be deceived by glib salesmen. His particular pride, one time, was twelve or fifteen iron rim locks with eagles embossed on the japanned cases. DuPont dated them in the middle or late 18th century; I was skeptical because of the cast-iron cases and set a price of $1.50 each as their value. The owner protested vehemently and I suspected that he had paid a considerably higher price for the locks. To confirm my opinion, I removed the cover on the case and on it was imprinted: "Eagle Lock Co., Terryville, Conn. 1840."

THE 118 year-old firm of Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. (at present the Russell & Erwin Division of the American Hardware Corporation) may have not have been the first manufacturer of builders' hardware in this country, but they were undoubtedly the first to produce it on a sizable scale. They also hold the honors in a number of other "firsts":

1. The first manufacturer to have patented, in 1869, a five tumbler mortise lock with steel keys.

2. An ornamented front, with scroll work, was applied to this lock and, believe it or not, a patent was obtained for it on February 23, 1869.

3. In the catalogue of 1875, there appears loose joint cast-bronze ornamental butts with scroll-work design and fancy tips. They were also steel bushed. In this same catalogue there appears: "real and compression bronze." No one has been able to decipher its meaning thus far. This type of butt attained a wide popularity in the latter part of the last century and the forepart of the present. Some years ago, I visited the capitol building in Austin, Texas, and beheld such hinges in a huge size. They do not intrude themselves as violently upon you after you have recovered from the first shock.

4. Manufactured the first wrought steel locks in quantity.

5. Was the first hardware manufacturer to cover the United States by traveling salesmen (1839). Prior to this period, it was the custom to have the buyers come to New York to make their purchases from the manufacturers or their commission brokers.

Early in its career, the firm adopted the motto, "Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis," a literal translation reading, "The times change and we have changed with them." Someone undoubtedly revived this slogan after World War II!

IN 1839, during the administration of President Martin Van Buren, the business of the New Britain Lock Factory was acquired by Henry E. Russell, Cornelius B. Erwin and F. T. Stanley. The firm then became Stanley, Russell & Co. A year later, Stanley withdrew and Smith Matteson and John St. Bowen became members of the firm, which changed to Matteson, Russell & Co. With the death of Matteson in 1842 and Bowen's retirement from the firm soon after, both Russell and Erwin were left in sole ownership.

Five years later, the firm became a partnership and in 1851 a joint stock company known as the Russell and Erwin Mfg. Co., with a capital of $125,000.

Cornelius B. Erwin was president of the company from its incorporation in 1851 until his death in 1885. He was a philanthropist who made possible in New Britain, and from his personal fortune, the Library Building, Erwin Home, Soldiers' Memorial, Cemetery Chapel, and the Fund for the Improvement of Walnut Hill Park.

H. E. Russell was the treasurer of the company and upon the death of Erwin, he became president. Mr. Russell spent most of his time in the New York office from which he conducted the sales of the company's products.

When I came into the industry, Benjamin E. Hawley was general manager and continued in this position until his death. At a Southern convention, I met him at a party one evening and was quite impressed; he appeared to be a very capable businessman. I fear I made no impression on him for I never saw him again.

Hawley was succeeded by Isaac Black who became associated with the company as general sales manager in 1917. He had previously been located

in Duluth, first with the Marshall-Walls Company and finally as buyer of builders' hardware and tools for the Kelley-How-Thompson Co. He later became vice-president and general manager of R. & E.

I always liked "Ike" Black, even though he blocked more of my pet schemes than any other individual in the industry. It was not a personal matter with him for I believe he knew I enjoyed visiting with him. We had mutual friends; my wife loved his great store of stories and he knew other members of my family. I sincerely believe he distrusted the motives animating the programs of a trade association, and that a too great cooperation with them would revert to the disadvantage of his own company. His firm can never honor him enough for the fine products he introduced from time to time. He was one of the first to appreciate well-designed contemporary hardware. Quality played an important role in his scheme of things. Black knew that I was interested in the unusual in hardware and that he had an appreciative audience. When he left his desk and we wandered through the plant, inspecting the development of some of his newer ideas, "Ike" took justifiable pride in the fine hardware which his company, and he produced for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York. Were there an industry Hall of Fame, I would nominate Isaac Black for a niche in it.

MY earliest interest in Russell & Erwin was aroused in 1907 when I was an inside salesman for Sargent & Co. A group of R. & E. men, in their contract department, resigned to form the builders' hardware distributing firm of Meyer-Cherry Co., with an office at 26 West 26th Street. Both Ed Meyer and Cherry came to our establishment to open an account and I was assigned to wait on them.

Their new venture interested me; it appeared so brave to face the horde of direct-bidding manufacturers, all hungry for the builders' hardware business in the metropolitan area. The firm was doomed from its inception. Both Meyer and Cherry knew that the competing manufacturers would snatch every morsel from their mouths, but their hopes for success were based on the idea that the architects and contractors, with whom they were friendly, would consent to paying premiums on contract jobs to secure competent service. But, alas, this did not come to pass frequently enough to pay the rent and the salaries.

Sadly, I viewed the demise of the Meyer-Cherry Co. Their hopes and ambitions shattered, Ed Meyer returned to manage the R. & E. New York office, and Cherry again became a contract salesman. Two brave men with a vision; the victims of unfair competition.

THE American Hardware Corporation was formed on March 13, 1902 by the merging of the organizations of Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co. and P. & F. Corbin, who were at that time separate and independent, and rivals in the market for builders' hardware. A writer of the period, referring to the merger comments that "of all the possible combinations, this one seemed to the average New Britain citizen the least likely to occur, for the memories of old rivalries were still strong." I might add that it continued in this manner for decades after the American Hardware Corporation was formed. I have been in competitions with them, when employed by Sargent & Co., and when inability to meet their prices caused withdrawals. But not the Corporation boys. They fought it out until one was compelled to cry, "quits." The general contractors adored them for they were the most popular bidders and the source of unexpected profits. Fortunately, all this lies in the dead and buried past.

THE time of the formation of the Corporation was a period when many consolidations of individual concerns were made, the manifest advantages being economies in administration, savings in purchases and elimination of duplication in manufacture. The stock of the two companies was very largely held by the same people, most of whom were residents in New Britain and whose interests would be served by a closer union. Philip Corbin, president of P. & F. Corbin, universally honored for his personal worth and business ability, headed the new organization and became the first president. Charles H. Parsons was elected assistant treasurer and his son, Charles B., assistant secretary. The latter was destined to become president of the Corporation in later years.

In the beginning, the American Hardware Corporation consisted of two divisions — P. & F. Corbin and the Russell Erwin Manufacturing Co. Later the Corbin Cabinet Lock Co., the Corbin Screw Corporation, and, on June 11, 1903, the Corbin Motor Vehicle Corporation were added to the Corporation roster. The motor cars were made and assembled in the R. & E. plant.

I can still remember the Corbin automobile. A school friend had been given one by his father and I traveled many miles in it, with the usual early mishaps, of course. It was one of the better made cars of the period but I do not believe the American Hardware Corporation declared any extra dividends because of this.

Today, the Corporation has grown to an impressive size. The Corbin Screw Corporation was discontinued as unprofitable. The Corbin Wood Products Division, producing nests of mailboxes, became a member of the Corporation. In 1957, Kwikset Locks and, this year, Savage Arms Co. were added, increasing the importance of this hardware combine. Under the farseeing and capable guidance of the present president, E. J. Parker, the American Hardware Coropration is diversifying its production so that it can cover a greater field of distribution in the hardware market. I am sure that its first president, Philip Corbin, would have approved.

Chapter 5

WHEN I returned to New York in 1913, after a spell as a traveling representative for Sargent & Co. in the Southwest, I considered myself a hot-shot as a builders' hardware consultant. I was soon disillusioned. I had been brought in from the road to secure some of what my employers considered the more desirable hardware contracts, then shared by Corbin, Russwin and Yale & Towne. For one year, I pounded the pavements, visiting architects unresponsive to my opinion of my knowledge of builders' hardware. It dawned upon me that I was not the genius I considered myself.

The experience was a valuable one for I learned that New York was a bonanza for those selling special hardware and that the unusual attracted the attention of the architects who, in those days, evinced considerable interest in builders' hardware. The line then manufactured by Sargent & Co. was limited in scope and I was compelled to draw upon the special hardware produced by Bayer, Gardiner and Hines and P. E. Guerin for my

hardware contracts. When Sargent & Co. awoke to a realization that this type of work was profitable, they manufactured many of the special items and did it quite well. My early tribulations with special hardware were not shared by the contract salesmen employed by Yale & Towne. As, in later years, I learned the extent of the items they produced I was greatly impressed. Their line contained any type of lock that was required for any condition and their designs were numerous and varied. The perfection of the various items was such that samples were drawn from stock and not specially manufactured as was the custom with some other producers. To complete the line, and to supply the then large market for French hardware, they became the American representatives of Bricard of Paris.

I recall an incident which brought home to me the fact that if Yale & Towne did not produce any type of lock, it was an oversight and would soon be remedied. I was seeking the order, when I was with Sargent & Co., for a large addition to the Prince George Hotel in New York. The owner stated that if any manufacturer could show him a sample of a hotel lock with a fixed outside knob, he would receive the order. I had our lock man pin the outside stopwork on a Sargent 6845 front door lock, and mount it on a block. As a result, I secured the contract. For years, I boasted that I was the originator of fixed-knob hotel locks.

Some time later, when I was with Ostrander and Eshleman, in New York, I was searching through the old patterns in the Yale & Towne plant in Stamford for a certain type of lock I was seeking when I discovered that Yale & Towne had made fixed-knob hotel locks some years before my "invention."

THESE developments in lock making were not sheer lock but because of the genius of two men, Linus Yale, Jr. and, later, Henry R. Towne. It is of them that I write because of an admiration for their share in bringing lock production to perfection and to the honor of America in the eyes of the world.

Linus Yale, Jr. was born in Salisbury, New York, in 1821 and there began his career as an artist but soon gave rein to an aptitude inherited from his father, Linus, Sr., for mechanics and became a designer and maker of locks. His first ventures in this field were in his father's factory, the "Yale Lock Shop," in Newport, N. Y. About 1855, he moved to Philadelphia and started business on his own account. Later, about 1861, he moved to Shelbourne Falls, Mass., where he lived until his death in 1868.

Linus Yale at first devoted himself to the development of bank locks, which in that day were of intricate construction and high cost, the better locks selling for $100 and $200 and even $500. Lock-picking contests were not infrequent, and the great "Lock Controversy" in England, in 1851, brought together some of the greatest lock experts in the world. The American Hobbs succeeded in picking, one after the other, all the best English bank locks which greatly stimulated public interest in locks as well the ambition of rival lock makers.

Among the locks which the younger Yale brought out during the period from 1860 to 1868 was the cylinder lock embodying the principle of the old pin-tumbler mechanism of the Egyptians in which a wooden key, having a series of small iron pins projecting from its surface, was inserted into the end of the bolt and lifted, thus pushing out of the bolt a corresponding series of iron pins contained in the block and permitting the bolt to slide endwise. When the key was withdrawn and the bolt returned to its first position, the movable pins dropped back into engagement with it, thus preventing its movement again until reset by the proper key. Linus Yale, Jr. adapted his pin-tumbler mechanism to modern conditions, producing a lock of greater security. The United States patents covering this invention were issued on January 29, 1861 and June 27, 1865.

Prior to the invention of the Yale lock the round key was in universal use, its size usually being proportionate to the size of the lock, and, of necessity, its length being proportionate to the thickness of the door. The weight and bulk of a bunch of keys can hardly now be realized. Moreover, the locks themselves were usually of crude and rather bulky form, of indifferent security and of inferior workmanship. Many of them were imported from England or Germany, and the old "stock lock," with the wooden frame and sheet iron working parts, was still largely used in certain sections of the country.

Linus Yale's inventions and improvements, which since have completely revolutionized the art of lock-making in America, contributed greatly to placing the industry in the position it occupies, far in advance of that of all other countries.

AT this time Yale, realizing that the work of his earlier years had laid the foundation for a large and successful business, was looking for someone who could organize and develop it, and who could contribute additional capital for that purpose.

Meanwhile, and in another place, another series of events was happening which, although apparently unrelated, was destined to merge with those of Linus Yale, Jr. In Philadelphia, during the critical period of the Civil War, a young man had begun his career as a student of mechanical engineering in the Port Richmond Iron Works, had worked his way through the drafting room and shops and finally had been given charge of the erection of the machinery of two of the then novel "Monitors." They were the largest in their class whose machinery the Port Richmond firm had built under contract with the Navy Department and from the designs of Captain John Ericsson. The work was completed in 1865, and thereupon the young engineer in charge, Henry R. Towne, desiring to qualify himself further as a mechanical engineer, made a tour of engineering establishments in Europe, studied at the Sorbonne, Paris, took a special technical course under the late Robert Briggs, C.E., and a practical course in the shops of William Sellers and Co., both of Philadelphia. He then began to look for a permanent business connection.

Thus, Yale, seeking an associate, met Henry R. Towne. The late William Sellers, a noted mechanical engineer and a friend of both, brought them together. They met in July, 1868. Linus Yale's business at that time related chiefly to the making of bank locks but Towne was attracted to it by the conviction then formed that the cylinder lock contained the germ of a business of far larger dimensions and one which, if properly exploited, could be developed into a large industry.

By mutual consent the partnership was organized in October, 1868, in a corporate form, under the name of The Yale Lock Manufacturing Company and located at Stamford, Conn., thirty-four miles from New York City. This site was carefully selected as combining the advantages of the skilled

labor market in New England and close proximity to the commercial metropolis of the country. Towne went to Stamford to design and erect the proposed modest factory building; Yale continued to conduct the existing business at Shelburne Falls, pending its removal to the new location.

On December 25, 1868, Yale who had unexpectedly been detained in consultation over the plans for the vaults of the Equitable Building, then under construction, died suddenly of heart disease at the age of 47, in New York City. He left the young enterprise, still in embryo, the heritage of his brilliant inventions, the latest, and as it ultimately proved, the far most important, the cylinder lock.

In 1869, Towne succeeded to the presidency of the firm. In 1883, the present corporate title was adopted, The Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company.

IMMEDIATELY following Linus Yale's death, the business employed about thirty persons and a salesroom was established at One Barclay Street, New York. At that time, bank locks formed the principal product, the remainder consisting of the then new and little known pin tumbler lock.

The enlargement of the line, and the creation of a market for it, were the chief objects of the management. The growth of the business was such that, in 1872, the number of employees had increased to about 150.

In 1875; another line was added but one extraneous to builders' hardware. This was the Weston Differential Pulley, a portable hoisting device. An exclusive license under the American patents of Thos. A. Weston was obtained and it eventually developed into the Yale Chain Hoist. Then in 1876, the Bank Time Lock was invented and placed on the market.

The position of the firm was strengthened in 1879 by the purchase of two small competitors (The United States Lock Co. and the American Lock Co.) which resulted in the production of a complete line of padlocks. By this expansion, the number of employees increased to 300. Branch offices, in addition to the one in New York, were established in Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia. Additions to the plant at Stamford were made almost annually as the business steadily grew in dimensions.

At this period nearly all fine hardware was made of bronze, cast iron being rejected as an inferior and unsuitable material. Holding a somewhat contrary view, the firm sought to restore iron to its historical position as one of the noble metals. In this effort, it secured control of the then recent invention by two Englishmen, Messrs. Bower and Barff, for treating iron as to make it rustless.[1] A little later, the American invention of R. A. Tilghman, known as sand blasting, was purchased whereby it became possible to produce a new and beautiful finish on metallic surfaces.

PRIOR to 1894, the company's line of builders' hardware, including locks, comprised only the finer and expensive grades, its customers drawing their necessary supplies of the commoner and cheaper goods from other manufacturers who made the latter but not the former grades. It had become obvious, however, that this division of the business was not permanent and that some competitors were not content to make only the inferior hardware but were beginning to concentrate on the production of quality materials.

In view of this change in trade conditions, it was decided to further extend and complete the Yale & Towne line by arranging to produce all of the cheaper varieties of locks and hardware demanded by the trade and thus be able to supply its customers with everything required in builders' hardware.

This purpose was effected in 1894 by the purchase of the Branford Lock Works of Branford, Conn., with a capacity for the employment of over 500 persons. The Branford line was one of the oldest, best known and most extensive in the trade. It embraced a complete assortment of builders' hardware of the cheap and medium grades. The device, generally known as the door check or door closer, was becoming an important article of hardware equipment and, in 1895, the firm acquired control, by purchase from the Blount Mfg. Co., of the inventions and patents relating to the Blount Door Check, a combined door spring and check of the liquid type which had acquired a recognized position as one best devices of its kind on the market.

THIS then was the greatly enlarged Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company at the turn of the century. But what of its guiding genius, Henry R. Towne? Was he the cold and austere man that so many in the industry asserted him to be? For an analysis of the character of the man, I am grateful to Ellis H. Jones, now retired and living in Canada, who served with the company for many years during Mr. Towne's lifetime. He writes, "Mr. Towne, in the early days, was not only our president but was also superintendent, designer of products and tools, fixtures and jigs for the manufacturing operations, in addition to directing sales. Some of his original drawings are or were filed in Stamford and are examples of his skill as a draftsman.

"As a mechanical engineer, he took great interest in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. In 1882, he read a paper before the Society on the bonus system which he had introduced in his company and which was a forerunner of the incentive systems in use today in manufacturing operations.

"H.R.T. became president of A.S.M.E. about 1886 and all his life continued an active interest in its activities. He also served as president of the Merchants' Association of New York City in 1906.

"The late Fred. W. Taylor, the inventor of the Taylor Incentive Piecework System gave Mr. Towne credit for initiating the basic idea for time study of mechanical operations by determining the minimum time required for each cycle of operation. This was of great aid in arriving at costs.

"Somewhere between the years 1910 to 1915, the Congress of the United States considered the possibility of changing from the English system of weights and measures (pounds and inches) to the metric system. Mr. Towne was selected by a Congressional committee to act as chairman of a special committee to study the possibility of such a drastic change.

"After a long and careful investigation of the effect of such a change, the committee was strongly in favor of changing over to the metric system but finally decided to abandon the idea as the cost of the conversion, such as changes in machinery, etc., would be prohibitive as well as creating chaos and disruption in most manufacturing operations throughout the country."

Mr. Jones was requested to give his recollections of Yale & Towne, New York. He replied, "I had occasion to

(1) Note: This claim was greatly abused in later years. Bower barff finish was not rustless for exterior work nor in salt air climates. The disposition on the part of consultants to sell it as such resulted in many expensive replacements by the manufacturers. Bower barff finish has now been abandoned by most producers.

visit the Murray St. office many times. I recall that one time when I was leaving Stamford for St. Catherines, Canada, Mr. Towne invited me into his office and gave me some good fatherly advice which profited me later. Shortly after the company moved its headquarters to the new building on East 40th St. and again later to the plant in Stamford, Henry R. Towne and his son, J. H. Towne, retaining offices there as well as the board of directors.

"While our general offices were at 9 Murray St., the contract department was established at 5th Ave. and 28th St. to be closer to the offices of the New York architects and it was staffed by a group of expert builders' hardware salesmen. This was about 1909 or 1910. Some years later, the company decided to discontinue the practice of selling direct in New York. The contract salesmen were released and they established firms of their own to sell all Y. & T. products to the architects and contractors which, I recollect, did not work out too well."[2]

Asked as to his opinion of Henry R. Towne as a personality, Jones said, "He was very meticulous in his daily life. His command of the English language was perfection in itself and he strove to impart this accomplishment to the employees, particularly those in correspondence with customers, architects and suppliers of materials. One time, he employed an expert to review a duplicate copy of all letters in order to eliminate the use of unnecessary words or phrases. The corrected copies of the letters were returned to the writers with the expert's criticisms. This procedure was referred to as 'jargon.'

"Walter Allen, later president of the firm, was then superintendent of the Stamford plant and was requested to file a report on a certain subject. Mr. Allen used the words 'in my opinion.' Mr. Towne returned it to him with the order to state facts, not opinions.

"H. R. T. operated his life on a time-table basis and adhered strictly to it. On one July 4th celebration at his summer home in Litchfield, Conn., he bought a large supply of fireworks and, with his two grandsons, entered the fun wholeheartedly. As usual he had mapped out a timetable for the day and the fireworks period was from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. At 5 o'clock, some of the fireworks remained and the boys requested permission to shoot them off but the show had to stop as Mr. Towne had set 5:00 to 6:00 P.M. to dress for dinner, always in dinner jackets and black ties.

"Another time, Mr. and Mrs. Towne planned a trip abroad. The itinerary was arranged for one day in one place, two in another and three or four days at some. The schedule was carefully followed even though four days was too long in some places and one day too short in others. Upon docking in New York, Mrs. Towne immediately planned another trip to Europe at a more leisurely pace."

(2) Note: I dispute this statement. This change occurred in 1920 and two Y. & T. contract salesmen formed the firm of Ostrander & Eshleman in New York. I later came with them and I know for a fact, that they were one of the most successful builders' hardware firms in the country.

IN 1904, Henry R. Towne published his "Locks and Builders' Hardware." It is a remarkable work giving the history of his firm and the industry, descriptions of school of designs and a host of other information regarding builders' hardware, comprising 1117 pages. It, unfortunately, is now out of print.

In referring to the hardware consultant (whom he refers to as the hardware expert), he wrote: "Few of them (the architects) have that latest knowl which is needed to fit them for this work (the writing of hardware specifications) and probably none in active practice have the time to devote to it. What then are they to do?

"To answer this question, and to meet the want which it implies, there is coming into existence another specialist, namely, the hardware expert, that is, a person trained in the art, knowing all of its present possibilities and familiar with its latest products. Added to these he must have such personal character, and such connections, as will give confidence and assurance to the architect *who trusts him that the trust will not be abused.* (my italics) He must have the courage of his convictions so that on the one hand he will not hesitate, when necessary, to curtail expenditures within the limits consistent with due respect for the effect which should result even in the plainest and simplest work, and on the other hand, will not hesitate to insist on a more liberal expenditure in cases where mistaken economy, perhaps in minor matters, involves the danger of subsequent disappointment from incongruous treatment and lack of harmony resulting from unwillingness to authorize the expenditure reasonably needed."

The Late Henry R. Towne

Written in 1904, these quotes could become a creed for members of the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultants.

Henry R. Towne died on October 15, 1924 at his home at 420 Park Avenue, New York City at the age of eighty.

IN this and preceding chapters, I have traced the early history of the Big Four in American builders' hardware manufacturing: P. & F. Corbin, Russell & Erwin Manufacturing Co., Sargent & Co. and Yale & Towne Manufacturing Co., together with that of the industry giants who founded and guided them successfully through troublesome times. While the returns on their investments were never entirely satisfactory compared to other industries, they all prospered and handed down to their successors, firms who continued along the paths of righteousness and fair dealing, a policy which the founders initiated.

By the addition of Schlage Lock Co. and Lockwood Hardware Mfg. Co. in recent decades, the group has become the "Big Six" and of these I shall write in later chapters.

Chapter 6

THERE are two theories regarding the methods to be employed in teaching the techniques of builders' hardware: one, the greater stress to be placed upon disseminating product information, and the other, that major emphasis should be placed upon plan-reading; estimating; specifying proper hardware for all types of buildings; obtaining adequate profits, including some data on business management; designs and finishes and their relationship to architecture, and other technical data which enter into the everyday business life of a builders' hardware consultant, if he is to satisfactorily service his architect customers.

The Association's program of education is planned along the lines enumerated in the latter part of the foregoing paragraph, but I observe too many other training courses wherein product information occupies the center of the stage, to the students' loss, I believe. They are not eager to have the things they know rehashed, but are desirous of increasing the value of their knowledge to enable them to impart it to their architects.

These facts were vividly brought home to me in the late Forties, when training classes were being conducted in the College of the City of New York. One day, a delegation of students arrived in the Association's New York office. Their spokesman protested against the great amount of product information being given them. "We have already learned most of that at home," he added. "We want more about plan-reading, estimating, mark-ups and the writing of specifications. We have to go out and sell jobs, and this is the dope we came here to learn. Please give us more of it." The curriculum was changed, and this has culminated in the fine course conducted this year at Ohio State University.

Not that product information is invaluable and should be entirely ignored, but I believe that the majority of the students have absorbed most of it while working in stock or shipping rooms, handling contract orders.

WHAT is the value of technical data over product information? Why not analyze portions of the former.

Plan Reading

A student should learn the meaning of every line on a set of drawings. This includes knowing the relationship of builders' hardware to the full size details, which will result in the consultants being able to intelligently inform the architects of discrepancies affecting hardware. Too, there are many times when details and hardware do not jibe; then the consultants' knowledge of their trade is put to the test. The ready solutions of these problems does impress architects, and frequently is the basis for lasting business relationships.

Builders' Hardware Specifications

There are many sad examples of these written these days, and lack of training is the basis for it. I contend that a great responsibility to the architectural profession rests upon the shoulders of the A.H.C.'s and the apprentices. The architects, as we are all aware, are not too familiar with hardware, and depend upon our industry for assistance. Are they securing it 100%? Yes, from those who have the know-how, and who have a feeling of obligation toward these clients. They specify hardware appropriate for its intended use and of lasting quality. They are the boys who receive favorable consideration when the contracts are awarded. Not to the so-called consultants who are being turned loose these days with a limited knowledge of their profession. They are the ones who are failing the Society exams. They are the ones who write improper specifications: specs which ignore the quality necessary in reducing future maintenance headaches. They are the ones who damage the reputation of our industry, and perform a great disservice to their sources of supply.

I will cite several instances of improper specifications which I have seen or heard of recently:

1. A suite of offices, beautifully decorated and furnished; some rooms pine panelled, others in walnut. On every door, an overhead door closer, creating a jarring note in the ensemble. Didn't the industry spec. writer know that the industry produces a great variety of checking floor hinges or overhead concealed or semi-concealed closers? Also, an indictment against the architect, who permitted such an installation, is also included in this criticism.

2. A cathedral, costing millions, being erected in a large city in the U.S.A., noted for its good taste and culture. The design is a modernized Gothic, crying out loud for wrought iron hardware of special design. What was furnished? Entrance door handles of the conventional type. The hardware should have cost over $100,000.; the contract, on the specifications, as written, was awarded *at a fraction of one percent of the cost of the building.* If I live long enough, I shall track down the writer of those hardware specifications, and if he proves to be a member of the Society, my embarrassment will be greater.

Servicing the Architects

Theirs is a busy profession, and they should not be bothered unless absolutely necessary. The consultant who visits an architect's office, hands his card to the receptionist and inquires if work is to be figured or specifications written, is wasting his time. Visits should be made with a purpose; either to display a sample of an interesting piece of new hardware or in response to a request to furnish technical information or to write hardware specifications. The time devoted to discussions of any of these should be brief as possible.

I remember one large firm of architects whose chief designer was always interested in the unusual in hardware, and every time I called upon him I carried a sample of some item of hardware with me. One day, he phoned me to come up to write the hardware specifications for the Providence-Biltmore Hotel in Rhode Island. Taking a sample of a Rixson #81 olive knuckle hinge[1] out of my brief case, I said, "I have never seen this type of hinge installed on a hotel before. It is practical because it is made of malleable iron, and also will add to the decoration of the sleeping rooms." The idea appealed to the architect; it was specified, and I secured the order. I have not been in this hotel for some years, but I imagine the hinges are still functioning.

Then there is the approach used in the discussions preliminary to writing a hardware specification. Ideas differ as to how this should be done; I can best express

(1) At this time, Oscar C. Rixson Co. were the only manufacturers, in quantity, of olive knuckle hinges.

my own by reviewing it in a short playlet.

Scene: Architect's drafting room. As the curtain rises, an architect and a hardware consultant are bending over a drafting board inspecting a set of plans while, aside, a draftsman listens with close attention. The architect speaks:

A—This building is for the Blank Insurance Co. As they want the best and most modern in everything, I wish to give careful consideration to the selection of the hardware.

C—The doors to the offices probably should receive first consideration. What are they - - - custom-built hollow metal? What color is the finish?

A—Yes, to the first question. To the second, hardware should be finished in dull chrome or something like it.

C—How about dull stainless steel?

A—Wonderful. Accepted. Now what is your suggestion for the design? I would like something a trifle unusual.

C—Our factory has just sent us samples of some new contemporary designs. I'll bring in samples to-morrow. Can I suggest concealed or semi-concealed closers on the the office doors?

A—Won't they cost more than regular closers?

C—Yes, but you said this was the most beautiful building you had ever designed, and laid stress upon installing unusual features. I believe they should be specified.

A—Alright. Anything else?

C—How about the board room, conference rooms, officers' dining room and the executive suites? I note from the elevations that these are to be special rooms. Why don't you place the hardware for these under a cash allowance? Then later, when you have the time, you can give them special consideration.

A—Good idea. I am following the same plan by omitting them from the general contract.

C—Now for the office partitions. Same hardware?

A—I am specifying these to be furnished complete with the hardware.

C—Please don't do that. How do you know that the finish, quality and design will match? What about the master-keying? You will save yourself many hours of annoyance by inserting this hardware under finishing hardware.

A—I can see no objection. Go ahead.

C—Now for the entrance doors. I do not need to bother you with the stair doors, etc. I can take care of these when I write the specs.

A—The entrances are all to be equipped with glass doors complete with hardware. Omit them.

C—I am going to give you the same argument that I did on the office partitions. We have a much larger selection of exterior door hardware, and most of the designs are excellent. In addition, we will furnish you with a better grade of locks and floor hinges. An added reason is the master-keying; locks and cylinders should be of one manufacture.

A—You seem to be selling me more hardware than I originally intended in the hardware specs. I'll go along with you on the entrance doors. What else? I must be getting back to other work.

C—One more question. Masterkeying?

A—I was afraid you would ask that. I don't know a blessed thing about it. The insurance company has a very competent maintenance man in their present building. Go see him, make a lay-out from his suggestions, send it to me, and I will submit it to the owners for approval. By the way, I must have three bids on this job. I am only accepting bids from four selected general contractors.

A—Allow me to suggest member firms of the National Builders' Hardware Association. They have been selected as members for their reputation, service and know-how. In addition, they all employ consultants who belong to the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultants. All this is important to you; it will reduce your troubles to a minimum regarding finishing hardware.

A—That is satisfactory to me. Name the producers' brands that the three of you carry, and state that no other products will be accepted. Thank you for coming in.

CURTAIN

This consultant, upon his return to his office, phones his two competitors, tells them of the arrangements that he has made with the architect, and invites them to advise him of any discrepancies they later find in the hardware specifications. Result: hardware of lasting satisfaction; no cut-throat competition from pot-and-pan stores, and the architect happy because his clients are pleased with the hardware.

In teaching the writing of proper hardware specifications, lecturers should refer to the booklets suggesting proper materials for all types of conditions and published under the aegis of the Association and the Society. Also, there is the excellent "Handbook of Builders' Hardware," authored by Adon H. Brownell.

Hardware Schedules

I could write several chapters on this subject, but lack of space compels me to touch upon it briefly. However, I do recommend that any training curriculum devote some time to a careful study of scheduling. Improper and carelessly written hardware schedules are the curse of our industry. I sometimes wish that we could have a tape recording of the criticisms of some schedules received by the custom-built hollow door manufacturers, when we hold meetings with them.

Some of the suggestions for topics to be discussed are:

1. Consider both types of scheduling—vertical and horizontal. Review the best points of each.

2. Whether horizontal or vertical schedules are agreed upon, I like the idea of a summary on each. If its advantages are fully realized, the students will soon favor its adoption. The one I like is arranged as explained in Kenneth T. Wright's article in the June, 1958, issue of Hardware Consultant. In checking and storing hardware at the jobs, it alone materially reduces the costs to the distributor.

3. When the rules of procedure for handling hardware for custom-built hollow metal doors are adopted by that industry in cooperation with ours, each item should be carefully reviewed in a lecture period so that universal use can be secured. This will bring the blessings of the hollow metal boys upon our heads.

4. Careful explanation and study of the proposed hardware standardization program when its adoption is approved by the American Standards Association (not too many months away, I should add).

5. An idea that has been rattling around in my head for some time—every major training course should include a lecturer from the hollow metal industry—preferably, men familiar with their subject. Most of these fabricators are only too willing to assist in such work. The Association is always ready to lend its assistance in securing them.

Designs and Finishes

Thirty or forty years ago, experienced hardware consultants were required to have a thorough knowledge of modern and traditional periods of design if they desired to secure preferential contracts from the leading architects and interior decorators. Then the latter were important factors in the purchase of builders' hardware. Not alone was special hardware selected for palatial residences, but also for suites of executive offices, apartments, hotels and even in ocean-going yachts.

These days the problems involved in the selection of correct designs in hardware have been simplified by the fact that architecture is mainly Contemporary, Colonial or Georgian. With the great advances made in the post-war years by the designers employed by the lock manufacturers, the selections in either of these periods of design can be in excellent taste and aesthetically correct.

I believe that greater emphasis should be placed upon hardware designs in our major training courses. In these lectures, the services of members of the faculties of the architectural schools, assisted by industry experts familiar with this subject, should be utilized.

Simplification of finishes, and the addition of new metals used in producing hardware items, has added greatly to their attractive appearance. These have emerged in the period following World War II, together with preservative new lacquers.

Students have learned these facts early in their industry careers, and little can be added here to advance their knowledge of finishes. Personally, I do not like aluminum (bright or dull) but I welcome the addition of dull stainless steel. Polished brass is still popular, and I sense that it is slowly regaining its former popularity.

Overhead Costs

In planning the training programs in colleges and universities, the services of experts on business management are available and should be engaged. Too few in the industry know their actual costs of operation. Until they fully realize that this is a "must" for the successful conduct of a contract builders hardware business, they will continue complaining of the meager profits derived from its sale.

On every order or contract secured there should be an exact knowledge of the cost of the materials plus the actual cost of operation before any anticipated net profit is arrived at. Every job should be tabulated separately so that the profit or loss on each can be readily determined. This will soon become a deterrent to accepting contracts with insufficient mark-ups.

One expert on cost allocation advises that "every business reserves to itself the right, in specific instances, to knowingly cut a price on a given job, on the theory that partial overhead absorption is better than no overhead absorption. This can be a good business decision, *but only when the full amount of the overhead rate is known*, so that there is advanced knowledge of what exactly the cut price means."

The above should be memorized by every consultant addicted to cutting prices.

Business Ethics

The Society is making an honest endeavor to enforce the code of ethics which it endorses, and which is so badly needed in these days of unethical conduct on the part of some consultants. In each training course, I believe that an officer, ex-officer or a regional director of the Society should appear on the program. It need not be a lengthy discussion, but one of sufficient duration to drive home the salient points.

Possibly such promotional efforts will stop one evil practice which annoys me intensely. Distributor A has the master-key system of his producer installed in a building or group of buildings, for which a large addition is planned. "A" writes the specifications, stipulating that the grand and sub-master systems are to be continued in the new structure. He estimates the job, and submits a fair and honest bid. Then one or two of his competitors, aided and abetted by their suppliers' salesmen, make strenuous efforts to break down this master-key system, and have their own substituted. Or committing the cardinal sin of all by offering to supply cylinders set under the existing system, when they have no access to the factory records. Added to this is the nefarious practice of not informing the architect or owner that, in so doing, they have seriously reduced security.

Then also, the entire ignoring of any form of ethics when competitors bid jobs at cost or less so that a favored hardware distributor cannot secure a semblance of a profit. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" has never penetrated the ethics of such an industry group.

An exposure to a talk on ethics in a training course may bring forth a generation of consultants who regard them as more than high sounding phrases.

THE foregoing is my idea of comprehensive builders' hardware training in an age of specialization. I repeat, I do not wish to imply that product information should be entirely ignored, but rather that it is my firm conviction that technical education should mainly include subjects which will assist the student in his chosen career, retain his interest in it, and eventually bring him the prosperity that he so richly deserves.

Chapter 7

IN THE preceding chapter, I have outlined my ideas for educating a builders' hardware consultant in this day and age of specialization. I believe that every man who has encountered vicissitudes in his early business career is ambitious not to have those who follow him suffer from the same difficulties. This is the reason, since I became connected with the Association in an official capacity, I have been interested in having the young men entering the industry obtain advantages which were not available to me in my younger days. Men of established reputation today as builders' hardware consultants, and with more than the average knowledge of their profession, are generously volunteering their services as teachers and lecturers in our training courses.

Do the embryo consultants appreciate the advantages that are now offered them? I believe both the employers and they are beginning to realize that one week of guided education is worth more than six months of on-the-job experience. I know whereof I write, for my own education as a consultant was typical of others in the early part of the century.

WHEN I was employed by Sargent & Co., New York, in 1905, I was first assigned to the catalogue department, then managed by William J. Ladd. I worked in a long and badly lighted room, and my duties consisted of running errands, preparing shipments of catalogues and pamphlets to the customers, carrying mail to the post office and other menial tasks. I was kept busy five days each week from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.; as a concession, the closing hours on Saturday were 4:30 P.M. For this arduous labor, I received a weekly stipend of $3.00, which barely paid for carfare and lunch.

After a few weeks, I became disgusted with work which gave me no opportunity to learn the business, and I began to consider looking elsewhere for a position. My father, who was designing trade catalogues for Sargent & Co., Yale & Towne and Norwalk Lock Co., among others in the industry, suggested that I try it out for another few weeks, and added that he would match my salary each week so that I could live decently.

I approached Robert Shelton, manager of the order department, for a transfer to the warehouse stock rooms, and, shortly thereafter, attired in old clothes, I began handling the hardware regarding which I was anxious to learn. This was followed by a short career as an order clerk, pushing a truck throughout the warehouse floors, and filling customers' orders.

Reporting to Shelton in the morning, the clerks were handed stacks of recently edited orders, and it was their duty to select the items listed and rush them as quickly as possible to the delivery room. Trucks and wagons of the dealers began lining up on Leonard Street by mid-morning, and the hustle and bustle began. Orders taken by the city traveling salesmen the day before, were generally delivered before night-fall the following day. These prompt deliveries were the basis for the success and prosperity of Russell & Erwin and Sargent & Co., both in New York City.

Questions regarding items on customers' orders often brought me in contact with M. R. McCausland, manager of the city sales department, and I soon decided that he was the type of man for whom I wished to work. One day I told him so, and shortly thereafter, I became a desk salesman in his department. My salary was increased to $5.00 weekly.

However, despite starvation wages, I was contented, for I finally was learning the hardware trade, and would shortly become a builders' hardware expert. I was soon disillusioned for my work consisted of editing orders, waiting on the retail trade and taking phone calls from the customers. The hours were long, and the work arduous; two or three nights each week we remained until nine or ten o'clock. Fifty cents was the allowance for supper and, from this, we contributed toward the supply of beer in large cans from the Italian grocery across the street. Near the office was Naughtons, a saloon popular with the politicians from nearby City Hall. A State law provided that bars must provide free lunch, on the theory that food would reduce drunkenness.

Naughtons was famous for its hospitality and its excellent free food. The lunch counter was always laden with roast beef, ham, tongue, turkey or chicken and other delicacies, set beside the platters were huge stacks of white and rye bread, together with plates, knives and forks. Beer, in large glasses, was five cents; cocktails, two for twenty-five cents.

During the supper hours, the late Fred G. Hammer and I would depart for Naughtons. Our plates overflowing with food, we strolled to the bar and ordered Manhattan cocktails, of which we each had two. The tab for food and drinks for both of us amounted to fifty cents. The remaining half dollar was contributed to the "kitty" for the evening's replenishment of beer. A pail containing two quarts cost ten cents at the "Bucket of Blood", as the Italian establishment was then known. The Italian s wife, a fat and unkempt woman, was openly addressed as "Bloody Mary"; she always seemed pleased with this friendliness. Turns were taken by the workers in "rushing the growlers" across the street, and as we labored at our tasks, the beer lightened our spirits; none of us thought it a bad or hard life.

Alas, this camaraderie came to an unhappy end. Our beloved chief, McCausland, called us together one morning and informed us that he had resigned; he was becoming president of Norwalk Lock Co. His successor was Fred L. Stellwagen, former sales manager for Reading Hardware Co. The grapevine soon told him of the evening beer parties, and a strict disciplinarian, he soon told us to confines ourselves to water. Fred Hammer and I decided he had no jurisdiction over our supper hours, and our pleasant visits to Naughtons were continued.

HOWEVER, Stellwagen did me one favor; one which eventually led to my becoming a builders' hardware consultant. One of the outside city salesmen complained that his territory was too large, and it was decided to reduce it. I was selected to cover Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, together with three or four cities on the east bank of the Hudson River above Yonkers. Long Island was then on the verge of the great home building boom, which increased its population many times over in later years. Little salesmanship was required, as the hardware dealers were eager to place orders for case lots of locksets, butts and other items of builders' hardware, together with the jobbing goods that

the firm sold. The main difficulty was travel, which was by train and horse and carriage. This slowed up the number of calls on customers that could be made each day.

I was now nineteen years of age, liking my work, but with few opportunities to estimate and sell contract builders' hardware. I was smart enough not to inform my employers that I was an order taker because of the building prosperity on my territory, and I received considerable praise and a raise in salary when I doubled the territory sales the first year.

After two years of local selling, I was informed by the general sales manager, George F. Wiepert, that I had been selected to represent the firm on a large Southern territory from which the present representative had been dismissed; I was to prepare myself to depart quickly, for it was an emergency appointment. The territory, I learned, consisted of Alabama, Northern Florida, Mississippi, Western Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas. I inwardly decided that Mr. Wiepert was selecting a boy for a man's errand, but I was not too dismayed, as I was ambitious for advancement.

This was my first business relationship with George Wiepert, and his kindness to me in this and later years is something I have never forgotten. Up to the time of his death, on November 24, 1947 at the age of 92, I visited him at intervals. In his 76 years in the industry, he had acquired a host of friends.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, he was employed in the New York office of Sargent & Co. as an entry clerk in his early youth. He became assistant to the sales manager in 1884, and when the firm moved its general offices to New Haven in 1912 he became a resident of that city.

I often marveled at his memory for names and faces. Frequently, a casual visitor was amazed to be greeted by name. He carefully drilled me not to ever forget this in meeting my customers, and he insisted that it was a cardinal offense to misspell a name. Many hardware men are still alive who were trained by George Wiepert, and they owe him much of whatever success they have attained in life.

IT HAD been suggested to me, before I left for the South, that I make my headquarters in New Orleans, and when I stepped off the Louisville and Nashville train, one bright and sunny morning, and rode up Canal Street in a hack to the hotel, I decided that the choice was the right one. I fell in love with that Southern city at first sight.

Later in the day, I had my first view of the strange establishment of G. Pitard's Sons at 1031 Canal Street. It was a long, badly-lighted and dingy hardware store with an L-shaped wing on Rampart Street. There seemed to be no order to things, and, to the day I left New Orleans for New York permanently, I never solved the mystery as to how the sales clerks located the stock items. The store was always crowded with customers, and the firm did a marvelous business, being patronized by the majority of the French-speaking citizens, including contractors, in the city.

The owners were Dan Pitard and his younger brother, Gus. Dan was a huge, slow-moving man, and, although I never knew his weight, I judged it to be 250 pounds. Gus was volatile, and a great talker. He had the reputation of being something of a sport, and the frequent poker parties in his home, where he relieved the visiting hardware peddlers of their expense money, were famous throughout the South.

René Brou, from the French Quarter of the city, was manager of the builders' hardware department, located on the second floor of the Rampart Street ell. His heart was not in contract builders' hardware; he preferred to repair locks and other items of builders' hardware. The bulk of the estimating and selling devolved upon the late John Worner. He was about my age, and from the first we became friends, a friendship that continued for 48 years, until his death last year.

The salesmen that represented the hardware manufacturers in New Orleans were a clannish lot, and frequently met together when in town. Their favorite meeting place was the Pitard store, and when a sufficient number had gathered, they adjourned in a body, accompanied by Gus and Dan, to a saloon conveniently located on the first floor of the Rampart Street building; the proprietor owed his prosperity mainly to the hardware and allied industries.

A ritual was followed. When a new salesman arrived, he automatically became the host for the morning or afternoon sessions, timed by the arrival of the victim. Word was soon passed around that the new Sargent man had arrived, and, tipped off by John Worner, I invited the growing gathering to partake of my hospitality. The response was instantaneous and cordial; my guests numbered about twelve.

Drinks were quite cheap there in those days—beer, five cents; cocktails, two for a quarter and high-balls, fifteen to twenty cents. Rye whiskey was the favorite, and the then expensive Three Feathers brand was preferred above all others; drinkers marveled that people were willing to pay $1.25 for a quart of it, when most whiskies sold for ninety cents.

At Pitard parties, ordering beer was frowned upon, and salesmen lost orders for ignoring the taboo. At my christening, I placed a bill upon the bar, and my change consisted mainly of coins. As I picked it up, I received an electric shock, which caused the hair to rise on my head. A roar of laughter from the guests followed, and I then learned that when a tenderfoot arrived, his money was placed over a pin set in the bar, and, at a signal, the bartender turned on the current. This was my initiation into a group of whom I grew fonder as the months went by.

DAN Pitard sold me a second-hand desk, chair and filing cabinet, and Pitard's became my headquarters. The ritual for securing an order from Dan was a difficult one. He made an appointment several days in advance and, opening the "want book" on his desk, thumbed through the pages. The result was an order of amazing proportions, and I learned to have great respect for the amount of merchandise sold in that store.

John Worner ordered the hardware contracts and, even in those early days, he was an excellent consultant; he taught me many things regarding builders' hardware which profited me in the days when I resumed my first journey through the territory.

I will wager that few consultants have had the experience of furnishing hardware for a house of ill-repute, as some nice nellies refer to them, and gold-plated hardware at that! One day, while I was in my office in New Orleans, a contractor phoned John Worner that Emma Johnson, the proprietor of one of these establishments, had bought a large house, and was redecorating it in a sumptious style. He suggested that we call upon the madam with samples of the best examples of builders' hardware; cost was no object, he added.

Gathering together a number of samples, John and I departed for the bordello. A colored butler opened the door and invited us into a beautifully furnished drawing room. Mrs. Johnson soon appeared and invited us to join her in a cooling drink, which we accepted. She selected cast knobs and escutcheons in a so-called Louis XVI design, and insisted that all the hardware must be gold-plated. We secured a very nice order without competition. Also, we were the butt of amused comments from our competitors in New Orleans for some time after.

I REMAINED for nearly three years in the South and Southwest. It was here that I received my first education as a consultant. In 1913, I returned to New York to enter the Sargent contract department, and later to work as a salesman for a distributor. It was in the latter role that I learned the fascination and pleasure to be encountered in selling specialty builders' hardware, together with its more profitable phases.

Chapter 8

TECHNICAL education in builders' hardware has made great strides in the postwar years, and lucky are the young men who can avail themselves of its advantages; those which were denied me in the early days of my consultant career. In the first quarter of the present century, it was the theory of the employers and department managers, of both the manufacturers and the distributors, that there was no better way to learn the business than through on-the-job training. Some of the veterans in the industry still hold to these beliefs these days.

The experiences which I have garnered through the years in my present connection with the Association have convinced me that the latter type of training is often productive of more harm than good. However, if an instructor in either a manufacturer's or distributor's establishment solely trains students, he communicates the knowledge which he has gathered over a period of time to these young men, and he is the exception to the foregoing comments.

Training courses conducted by the Association in the past twelve years have improved in quality and worth, way beyond the general knowledge of average consultants or employers; 1958 is an excellent example. One hundred and thirty-seven were enrolled in the June course in Ohio State University, thirty-five of whom were from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and all mainly from local regional offices. The urge to learn the rudiments of builders' hardware was the incentive that caused many to travel long distances to attend the university classes.

A FEW years after I became employed by the Association in 1944, I began to consider the possibilities of organizing training courses. Letters were coming into the joint Association-Society office appealing for help in securing trained men who were then in short supply. It became evident that the only solution to the problem was to attract young veterans of World War II into the industry. But a difficulty still remained which seemed impossible of solution; many of the veterans were married men with growing families, and the salaries offered, because of their inexperience, were too low to enable them to combat the rising costs of living.

The only answer I could arrive at was that our two organizations must undertake the task of training these young men. But how? I had no knowledge or experience in professional training. Investigation disclosed the fact that the colleges and universities were adding business extension courses, and were loaning the services of their faculties to various industries. Within this lay the opportunities to avail ourselves of the technical knowledge of their architectural schools, business management courses, and, the main objective, expert advice on technical training organization. Added to this was the possibility of securing the services of the top consultants in the ranks of both the manufacturing and distributing industries. It was an attractive prospect.

Our first four or five years of training groups were held in the College of the City of New York. As I view the programs these days, I realize that some of the methods employed were somewhat amateurish, but at least we obtained two major results, viz. (1) three or four hundred men were graduated, many of whom now occupy important positions in the industry, and (2) the then untrained, and splendidly cooperative, industry faculties became aware of teaching techniques; many are the backbone of the groups in our training programs these days.

WITH this somewhat experimental effort in technical education, the movement has grown over the years, and the improvement in methods has been marvelous. It has developed into three categories:

1. The former courses in the Universities of Delaware, Houston, and Ohio State which have become basic, intermediate, and advanced training, with the huge enrollment in 1958 in the latter university.

2. Evening classes conducted by the builders' hardware clubs.

3. Training by the lock manufacturers in their individual plants.

I FAVOR the university courses over all others for these reasons:

1. Directing heads of the leading architectural schools impart a knowledge of architecture, design, and the viewpoint of the architects toward builders' hardware.

2. Experts in business management (mainly in its relation to profits) are available to impart to the students the idea that the main objective is to produce profits for the employers, so that adequate wages can be earned. These two paragraphs constitute important subjects which cannot be covered adequately in the other types of courses.

3. The reat value to the students when taught by distributors of years experience, who have attained success

and prosperity in their own business. By this comment I do not wish to detract from the credit due the fine and capable men employed by the producers, who volunteer their services so unselfishly. I have been in both the manufacturing and distributing fields, and I have learned to realize there is a vast difference in the viewpoints of the two groups.

An embryo student must learn that one of his main objectives is to include a profit in his sales, and that jobs sold at cost eventually lead to bankruptcy. This knowledge can best be imparted by distributors and not by the manufacturers' representatives.

In the discussion regarding technical training by professional and semi-professional experts, I do not wish to detract from the advantages of on-the-job experience, but I believe that if the footsteps of the student can be guided into the proper paths in their early years, all that follows will develop them into creditable members of the Society and the industry. Had I these advantages in my early years, the many costly errors that I made could have been avoided. It was a long and hard road that I traveled with many of my fellow craftsmen, before I actually learned my trade. My education was in the school of hard-knocks.

EMPLOYED in 1905 by Sargent & Co., New York, I made a rapid trip through the warehouse as stock clerk, followed by employment in the order department filling customers' orders from stock. Then service as floor salesman in the city department, writing phone orders and waiting on the dealers. At no time, in this two-year period, did I even learn that locks were comprised of parts other than labels and catalogue numbers.

With this limited experience, and at the age of nineteen, I was assigned a territory on Long Island, comprising the counties of Queens, Nassau and Suffolk. The Island was then on the verge of the boom, which resulted in the teeming beehive it became in later years. I was not required to estimate any contracts for my customers, for this work was performed by the manufacturers' builders' hardware salesmen from New York, who sold any sizable contract direct to the contractors, or added ten percent for dealers having influence in securing the orders. None of my customers employed men capable of estimating other than residential jobs, and these were supplied from their stocks. I was simply an order-taker, but I did accomplish a sizable increase in sales on the territory, and this slated me for advancement. However, my builders' hardware knowledge was that of the average stock-boy of today.

When I was twenty-one years of age, I was transferred to a large territory in the South, consisting of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Western Tennessee, Arkansas and Texas—filled, I soon discovered, with dissatisfied customers because of the inattention of my predecessor, but still loyal to Sargent & Co. I knew I had a job on my hands, not the least of which was to learn plan take-off, estimating, scheduling and the preparation of hardware specifications, on all of which I had only the vaguest ideas. I was fortunate in having some excellent consultants employed by the distributors, and they were the ones who undertook my initial training; John Worner, Sr. in New Orleans, Clarke Thompson in Memphis, Ed Krebs in Little Rock, among several others. I had to learn, for Corbin, Russell & Erwin and Yale & Towne all employed capable men. Several of my larger dissatisfied customers, about ready to change their line to one of the other lock manufacturers, were willing to give "the new kid from Sargent's" a chance before making a final decision. I realized that I had to learn builders' hardware techniques or else.

My first stop was in Montgomery, Alabama, where Snow-Tullis Hardware Co. was the Sargent account, and one of the unhappy ones. In fact, I was informed by Clayton Tullis, the firm's president, that they had placed an order for samples with one of the other major lock manufacturers. There were two strikes against me even before I had stepped to the plate. Continuing the comparison, I felt like a rookie pitcher in the majors headed for the minors.

Then came the final blow—I was handed a set of plans for a small post office in Anniston, Alabama, and requested to prepare an estimate. Federal specifications were difficult to interpret at that time, and those for post offices were a Chinese puzzle to the average consultant. I can still recall my dismay. Here was I, a young and ambitious salesman, with not the faintest idea as to the proper take-off and scheduling of a small residence, and I was now confronted with a U.S. post office. I wished that I was dead.

I returned to my hotel, and for five days and nights I struggled with those plans and specs, finally coming up with an estimate. I called upon Algernon Blair, the contractor, sold him the job, pleased my customer, and retained the account.

I should conclude this tale with an account of the scathing letter received from my factory for the costly errors made. To disappoint the reader, I must admit I received a complimentary letter from the home office on the excellent first order I sent them. This was my baptism in builders' hardware, and was the inspiration for my future devotion to the builders' hardware business.

I BELIEVE I indirectly owe the appreciation of the value of marketing quality builders' hardware to the late E. A. Peden of Peden Iron & Steel Co., Houston. It happened this way—Sargent & Co. had lost their lock account there through bankruptcy, and were seeking a new outlet for their products. After some negotiations, Peden Iron & Steel Co. decided to add contract builders' hardware, which they had never handled before. In concluding the arrangements, Mr. Peden stipulated that I was to train one of their jobbing salesmen, and also remain in Houston for indefinite periods to organize the new department. I moved my headquarters from New Orleans to Houston.

The man selected for builders' hardware buyer and manager developed a distaste for it after a short time, and, to preserve the account for my firm, I took his place along with my other duties on the territory. I instinctively knew that I had to produce results or E. A. Peden would either secure another line or abandon the sale of builders' hardware altogether. After some hard work, I sold a number of very nice contracts, such as the Houston Terminal Station (Warren & Wetmore, New York architects); Houston Auditorium, and the three first buildings for what is now the huge Rice Institute in Houston (Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston, the architects). The Rice Institute job was sold without competition, and was the beginning of a grand masterkey system, which has continued for years. In addition, the hardware was largely of special designs in verde antique finish. Mr. Peden was quite pleased with these sales.

After two years on the territory, I was learning rapidly, but my education lacked any definite ideas regarding the mark-ups necessary to obtain a profit from the sale of contract builders' hardware. The majority of my customers were either jobbing or retail establishments with builders' hardware departments, the latter frequently inadequately staffed. Consultants' salaries were low, many acting as department managers at fifty dollars per week. Consequently, the factory salesmen were expected to write the specifications, and estimate and sell most of the larger jobs. My idea of a profitable contract was one with a ten percent mark-up for the distributor.

Few of the latter maintained bookkeeping systems that enabled them to determine if their contract departments were profitable or not. An awareness of this lack of knowledge of operational costs on the part of many in the postwar years has been the incentive which has prompted the Association to induce the members to adopt proper business management methods. But, in the days of which I write, there was no industry trade association, and the dealers were dependent on the factory salesmen for advice on profitable mark-ups, with the latter having only the faintest ideas on the subject. It was the fault of a system in vogue at that time, and is reflected in the present rash of selling at prohibitive prices. If the Association can ever bring to the distributing industry a realization that there there is no glory in large sales without profit, in contrast with smaller, but profitable sales, it will have accomplished miracles.

The problem is not one easy of solution, because of various factors which tend to defeat many of the efforts made to place the distribution of builders' hardware on a profitable basis. Let's face the fact that there are too many distributors in many localities, with each seeking a portion of the potential business to be obtained, limited when divided between five or even six accounts. I firmly believe that the recent changes in distribution of stock hollow metal doors and frames from local agents to contract builders' hardware firms, will eventually prove a great boon to the latter. Gone are the days when the distributors can depend solely on builders' hardware sales for a living, except, of course, in some localities where the volume is sufficiently large.

SOME of the foregoing was penetrating my mind in those early days in the Southwest. I had secured some contracts where special hardware was required, and I began to realize that there must be a demand somewhere in this vast and wealthy nation for the services of a specialist. I sensed that many of the large and famous architectural firms were centered in New York City, and if I wished to give vent to my ambitions I must locate there. The need for hardware of this special type was limited in my present territory. In other words, I was in a minor league, and I desired to move to the majors.

I wrote George F. Wiepert, the sales manager, and while he was reluctant to make a change, he stated that they were willing to have me enter the New York contract department, but that I must depend entirely upon my own efforts to secure new customers. Little did I then realize the difficult task I set for myself.

I returned to New York in late 1912.

Chapter 9

IF builders' hardware consultants, and particularly those employed by NBHA firms, will concentrate to a greater degree on cultivating the confidence and cooperation of their architects in place of devoting precious business hours to meeting low prices, they soon will learn that selling quality builders' hardware is a joy rather than a task. I learned this fact, affecting my future business life and happiness, early in my career as a consultant.

A competent A.H.C. is more a specialist than the term consultant implies. He must become a jack-of-all-trades, when confronted with problems affecting either architectural details or construction. His must be a knowledge of local fire laws and building codes; of detailing, scheduling and specifying hardware and a host of other items, an experience which can prove invaluable to the architects and contractors upon whom he calls. The statement is frequently made, and I believe it to be a true one, that ninety percent of the hardware specifications are written for the architects by members of the hardware profession.

Therefore, it is obligatory that our industry obtain the best possible knowledge of the products of our trade, in order to fulfill these obligations. This does not imply that the architectural profession should not respond in kind. I believe that if consultants devote time and effort in writing specifications, they are entitled to some form of special consideration. Specification writing is expensive for the distributors, and architects, unwilling or unable to check samples or hardware installations, should not expect service, without cost to them, for which they show no appreciation and often take for granted.

Here is an example of the savings to the average architect when a hardware specification is written by an expert A.H.C.:

Cost of high school construction	$1,000,000
Allowance for builders' hardware	$ 18,000
Amount of architects commission assigned to total cost of the hardware specifications and their supervision	$ 1,080
Cost to distributor firm for writing builders' hardware specifications	$ 150

Therefore, the consultant's services are a source of added profits to the architects. In addition, there is the confidence and peace of mind created by the A.H.C.'s expert services in writing specifications, free of gimmicks and containing hardware of lasting quality, properly coordinated to the satisfactory operation of a school building.

ALL of the foregoing began to penetrate my mind as I gradually increased my builders' hardware education. I had acquired a great distaste for cut-throat competition, wherein the low price won the jobs from the contractors, and when little attention was paid to the intention of the low bidders to fail to comply with the specifications by substituting materials of an inferior quality.

Securing the hardware contracts without competition early in my career in Texas, for the first three buildings at Rice Institute and the Houston Terminal, both under hardware allowances, whetted my desire to continue in this type of work. I knew many such opportunities did not exist on my territory in the Southwest, and my thoughts were directed toward the possibility that they did exist in New York. I was then employed by Sargent & Co., and applied for a transfer to their New York office in 1913. When it was granted, I was informed that I could expect no help from the New York contract department in assigning me customers, and that I would be entirely on my own.

I will never forget the first year of this venture. I came East buoyed

with a belief that I possessed a magical gift, which would open the doors of the New York architects' offices to me, and that they would welcome this young genius, who had come to rescue them from the ineptitude of the other manufacturers' salesmen. I was soon disillusioned, for I learned that my competitors were men of sound ability, and firmly intrenched in the architects' offices. I pounded the pavements for one solid year with few results to reward my efforts, and then the first break came.

When I was in Houston working on the contract for the Houston Railroad Terminal, the clerk of the works there for the New York architects, Warren & Wetmore, was Paul B. Tallman. During the construction we became fast friends, and, both being bachelors, spent many evenings together. When he left for the North, I never expected to see him again, although we promised to correspond, but either because we were too busy or too lazy, we never did.

One day in 1914, weary and tired, I was plodding along Fifth Avenue when I was hailed by Paul Tallman. After an exchange of greetings, he informed me that he had become head of the specifications department in Warren & Wetmore's New York office, and that among his duties was the purchasing of the builders' hardware for their buildings. He was ready to buy the hardware for the new Aeolian Building on West 42nd Street, he told me. Did I want the order? Does a hungry man want to eat?, I mentally reflected, without revealing my lack of prior success as a contract salesman.

I learned later that it was an experiment with him to ascertain my ability in handling a large job for his firm. The contractors were George A. Fuller Co., and their superintendent was Carl Brandt, who became vice-president of this large contracting firm some years later. Upon completion of the Aeolian contract, Brandt wrote a letter to the architects praising the builders' hardware deliveries and service. Tallman decided that, as his experiment had proven satisfactory, I was entitled to additional orders.

I thus secured one of the largest accounts I ever had or was destined to have in the future. Warren & Wetmore purchased their hardware on allowances, and these were prepared by me. Their draughting staff was a huge one, for they were designing buildings from coast to coast. They were the largest firm of hotel architects in the world. There were future years when my sales to them totaled over $200,000 annually, which measured in today's dollars is over $400,000. Lady Luck was with me that day on Fifth Avenue.

WHITNEY WARREN, who headed the firm, was born in New York City, and studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He began practice in New York in 1894. Later he joined with Charles D. Wetmore in a firm which had one of the most extensive practices of its time, and was best known for the designing of large hotels.

Warren and Wetmore's New York works include the Grand Central Terminal (1913), a group of office buildings in the New York Central area, the Chelsea docks, and the Ritz-Carlton, Biltmore, Commodore and Ambassador hotels in New York City; the Ritz-Carlton, Ambassador and Shelburne in Atlantic City; the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu, together with commissions from coast to coast.

After the First World War, they were entrusted with the reconstruction of the historic library of the University of Louvain, Belgium, which had been thoroughly destroyed by the Germans.

As I reflect upon the past, I am convinced that Houston, Texas, was the luckiest city in the U.S.A. for me. For not only was I able to secure Warren & Wetmore as a customer through a contact made there, but I also eventually secured an entrée into the office of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, one of America's leading and most famous architects, through the Rice Institute job in Houston.

Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston were the architects for the Rice Institute buildings, and William Ward Watkin was manager of their Houston office. (Later he became director of the Rice School of Architecture.) The hardware consisted mainly of special designs, and Watkin was pleased with my firm's execution of them.

When I informed him of my projected return to New York, he gave me a letter of introduction to Mr. Goodhue. Upon visiting the latter, he told me he had a cousin working in the Russell & Erwin New York contract department, and that he placed all of his orders for hardware with him. However, continue to call at his office, he advised. I took the advice, and I visited the Goodhue office for about a year, figuring one job, a hotel in the Canal Zone for the U. S. Government, the order for which went to the R. & E. cousin.

One morning I read in the New York Times of the death of the Goodhue relative, and ghoul that I was, I was in the Goodhue office bright and early. Did they have any jobs that I could assist them on, I inquired. Yes, they replied to my joy, the Kitchi Gammi Club in Duluth, Taft School in Watertown, Conn. and the Chapel of the Intercession in New York City, all under substantial hardware allowances. I submitted bids on all three jobs, and awaited the results.

It nearly had a tragic ending. I was going to be married on April 9, of that year, and my fiancée's family had planned a large wedding, to which the invitations had been sent far and wide. On the morning of my wedding day, I visited the office to complete some tasks, and found the three contracts from the Goodhue office on my desk, with a request for immediate delivery of the templates. My pleasure was dimmed by the thought of abandoning the wedding and honeymoon to remain home to write the orders, the total of which were the largest I had ever secured.

In desperation, I visited Mr. Goodhue's office, and explained my dilemma. He listened sympathetically, and said he would handle the contractors to prevent delays. This was the beginning of connections with his office, which continued until I retired as a distributor in 1944 to become an employee of the Association.

BERTRAM GROSVENOR GOODHUE was then on the brink of his future reputation as one of the world's great architects. Commissions for buildings in all parts of the United States and Hawaii flowed into his office in an unending stream. Some of the better known were: Nebraska State Capitol; West Point Military Academy (when the firm was Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson); National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D. C.; St. Thomas', St. Bartholomew's, Heavenly Rest and St. Vincent Ferrers' churches in New York City, and the University of Chicago Chapel. In California: the San Diego Exposition, Los Angeles Public Library, California Institute of Technology, and numerous large residences. In Hawaii: Honolulu Museum, Bank of Hawaii and the University of Hawaii.

C. Howard Walker, in his book "Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue" writes:

"His desires led him into the minor arts which embellish all materials and objects. It is a long and fascinating list of works in these arts that accompanies the architectural work of Bertram Goodhue. The variety and scope is unusual. Whether he sought his expression in Printing and Engraving, in Textiles or Metal Work, in Stained Glass or in Carving, his skill was equally manifest.

"A collection of his book embellishments alone, whether on type-fonts, borders or colophons, would mark him as an accomplished designer. His pen and ink drawings for this work was unexcelled, as are the perspectives which expressed his architectural work."

BERTRAM GROSVENOR GOODHUE was born April 28, 1869, in Pomfret, Connecticut, of a family long distinguished in American history. One of his forebears, John Grosvenor, left Cheshire, England in 1688, and with others, bought 15,000 acres of "wilderness land in the Connecticut Colony." Goodhue's mother's great-grandfather, Colonel Thomas Grosvenor, fought at Bunker Hill, and his portrait occupies a prominent position in the famous battle picture by Trumbull, which hangs in the Monument at Charlestown. Colonel Grosvenor built the first fort at West Point, where later his great-grandson was to achieve such renown as the architect.

From his mother, Goodhue inherited his love of design. She sketched and painted, and in the attic floor of the house at Pomfret there still may be seen the two small rooms which were the studios of mother and son. At nine, he announced his intention to become an architect. At ten, he was sent to the Russell Collegiate and Commercial Institute at New Haven, where most of his school hours were spent in drawing dream cities or in caricaturing his fellow students. He remained in New Haven for two years, and upon his return to Pomfret, was tutored by the Reverend Burgess, later Bishop of Long Island.

At an early age, he went to New York City, and entered the office of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell, where he acquired his first training as an architect. He remained in this office for seven and a half years, and his pen and pencil began to win him a secure position as one of the greatest designers America had ever produced.

While at work in Renwick's office, he entered an open competition for a cathedral in Texas, and won the award. Goodhue had become interested in the work of the architectural firm of Cram and Wentworth in Boston, of which Ralph Adams Cram was a partner, and decided to seek a position there. He was successful, and at twenty-two became a member of their office force.

After ten years, Charles Wentworth died. Frank Ferguson and Bertram Goodhue took his place, and the firm became Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, destined to become one of our great architectural firms.

Goodhue here began to exert his extraordinary talent in ecclesiastical ornament and detail, and when, twenty-five years later, the firm was selected as architects for St. Thomas' Church in New York City, he decided to withdraw from Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, and open his own office in New York, taking the St. Thomas' Church commission with him by mutual agreement.

By this time, he was being called the greatest of American Gothicists, and his rising fame as an architect brought the office many new commissions. This necessitated a large staff in New York, and men from all parts of the world were drawn to him for study and inspiration. His draughtsmen were American, Irish, English, Scotch, Australian and Armenian. It was quite natural that this should create a picturesque atmosphere.

The draughtsmen occupied two large rooms in the office on West Forty-seventh Street in New York City. The year after my first architectural hardware contracts from Mr. Goodhue in 1913, he decided to assign a draughting table to me. I was instructed to visit his office daily, and place my initials on all full-size details after I had examined them for possible difficulties affecting the application of hardware.

Mr. Goodhue made a practice of visiting the draughting rooms about ten in the morning, and passed from table to table, criticizing or approving the work of each man. When he reached me his greeting was: "Well, how is my hardware expert getting along?" He drew up a high stool, and listened to my suggestions for a few minutes, corrected or approved the detail and passed on to the next man. Invariably that short contact would create some new idea in architectural hardware. The greatest value in my relations with him was the appreciation it gave me of the design of correct period hardware. Goodhue took a keen interest in hardware, and was delighted to find an interested pupil.

WORLD War I was over, and the country was about to enter an era of wild speculation and spending. I sensed that the demand for hardware of an unusual character would furnish an opportunity for me to secure some

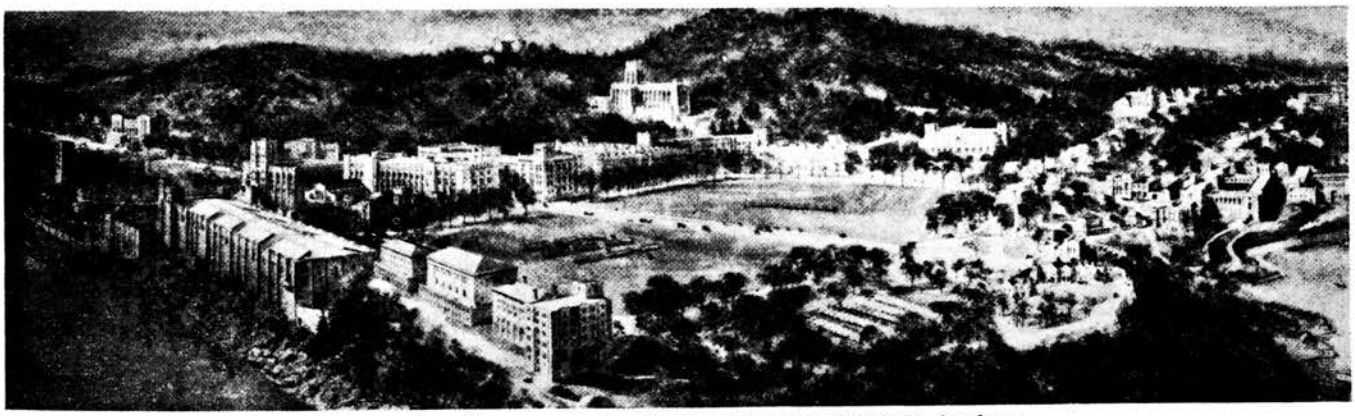
Nebraska State Capitol

profitable contracts. My desire was to become associated with a builders' hardware distributor, as I realized that a lock manufacturer was not equipped to handle jobs, a large portion of which consisted of items which they did not manufacture. Producers expected their salesmen to specify and sell the materials which they manufactured, and which were most profitable to them.

Architects, of the type whom I was

B. G. Goodhue

servicing, were not content with Americanized period hardware, but were insisting upon authentic copies of the originals. Surface door closers were not acceptable for special rooms, but were required to be of the floor checking type (overhead concealed closers had not been developed at this time). A competent contract salesman had before him the problem: should he specify and furnish hardware in accordance with the design requirements of a building, or should he ignore this and furnish the products of his employer. I decided the former condition was the one to which I would adhere, and to do so, must enter the distributing field. It was the end of a long connection with the manufacturing industry. I became a distributor's salesman.



Perspective of proposed plan for the West Point Military Academy

Chapter 10

CONTRACT builders' hardware distributors in New York City were practically non-existent in the early part of the present century. Two courageous men, in 1907, who were employed as salesmen in the New York contract department of Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., resigned to form the distributing firm of Meyer-Cherry Co. Unable to breast the tide of direct selling by the lock manufacturers, the firm was disbanded after a year of discouraging failure to operate profitably. Fof over a decade this deterred others from attempting a similar venture.

Four lock manufacturers of major importance were competing for the larger hardware contracts—P. & F. Corbin, Russell & Erwin Mfg. Co., Sargent & Co. and Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. All maintained excellently manned contract departments, and some of the consultants employed by them ranked among the best in the country. Hardware for construction of lesser importance, and more highly competitive, was supplied by Chantrell Tool Co., Lockwood Mfg. Co., (the predecessor of the present Lockwood Hardware Mfg. Co.) Norwalk Lock Co. and Reading Hardware Co. Cut-throat competition often forced quotations to low levels, reducing profits to a minimum.

It was not an economical method of distribution for the manufacturers. Contract orders were not conducive to maintaining full-packaged stocks; accounting was radically different with the retained percentages and partial monthly charges and collections over periods of months. In addition, there was the expense of maintaining contract departments in a high-cost area—New York City.

When the armistice was signed in in 1918, terminating World War I, I returned to the Sargent New York contract department from Washington. D. C., where I had been managing the office on Sixteenth Street, NW, handling government contracts during the war years. My competitors in New York, Charles Gregoire, P. & F. Corbin; Clifford McKenna, Russell & Erwin and Fred Bishop, Yale & Towne, returned about the same time; they had been performing like tasks for their firms in Washington.

Construction was starting to boom; we were on the verge of the Lush Twenties, that era of wild speculation and spending. I was beginning to secure many large hardware contracts without competition, the majority requiring hardware of special design and manufacture. My desires were aroused, more than ever, to join a contract distributing firm as I realized that, in the vast market that was New York, many opportunities would be available to specialize profitably in contract builders' hardware; that the majority of the architects, whom I was servicing, would welcome this type of specialization. I resigned to join the organization of the Ford Hardware Division of Greene. Tweed & Co., as a contract salesman and one of the principals in the division.

LAWRENCE Ford had formed the Ford Hardware Co. in New York, shortly after his return from service in World War I. He was a tall, handsome man with an exceptional gift for selling, although with so many others in his profession, he only had a vague idea of the proper methods to be observed to operate profitably. When employed by Sargent & Co., I assisted Ford in securing contracts, and because of this, a friendship developed between us. He was constantly urging me to join his firm, but because of its shaky financial status, I hesitated. In 1922 he sold the Ford Hardware Co. to Greene Tweed & Co., who had recently purchased a factory in Newark, New Jersey, where they were producing a line of builders' hardware somewhat similar to that manufactured by H. B. Ives Co., but not of the same high quality. I learned this later, after I joined the Greene-Tweed-Ford combine.

This new association gave Ford financial stability, and he began to seek consultants with established reputations and experience in the contract hardware field. The late W. Harry Whittaker, formerly contract salesman for Reading Hardware Co., New York, had been a partner for several years in the now defunct Ford Hardware Co., and he joined the new organization. Charles A. Hetzel, at one time contract sales manager for Yale & Towne Mfg. Co., and later assistant to John Towne, son of Henry R., was another attracted by the rosy picture of future prosperity painted by Lawrence Ford. I also fell a victim to his persuasiveness.

A large office was opened at 70 W. 45th Street, together with a well equipped sample room. Whittaker was a natural artist with a talent for design, particularly of unusual items in builders' hardware. He was assigned the task of decorating the sample room, and the result was quite beautiful. The Ford Hardware Division of Greene, Tweed & Co. was off to a running start. With the Yale & Towne line and the products of other leading manufacturers available to us, we anticipated having our competitors on their knees begging for mercy in a few months.

Alas, it did not turn out as we expected it to. Ford, as vice-president of the division, was drawing a large

salary, and liberal salaries and commission were being paid to Hetzel, Whittaker and me. The overhead exceeded the profits.

One night in December 1923, Charlie Hetzel stayed to examine the books, and he revealed his discoveries to me the next morning, including the supposition that when the parent company (Greene, Tweed) discovered the financial condition of the division, we all would be fired. Charlie and I tendered our resignations that same day. It was the week before Christmas, and it was the saddest holiday we had ever spent; we were both without jobs, and with little prospects of securing them.

A few days before the New Year Hetzel phoned to state that the new contract builders' hardware firm of Ostrander & Eshleman was beginning to prosper, and was seeking several consultants to add to the then small organization. We were interviewed by Lemuel Ostrander and "Doc" Eshleman, and told that if we were willing to draw modest salaries and share in the net profits of the work we secured, they were interested in having us come with them. Financially, and in other future aspects, it eventually became the luckiest move in our lives.

In 1920, Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. were occupying sumptuous quarters on East 40th Street in a building specially designed and built for them. That year, Henry R. Towne decided to close down the contract department, and the personnel were given the opportunity to move to the main plant in Stamford, Connecticut, or resign with a salary bonus. A number decided to adopt the latter course; others to form contract builders' hardware distributing firms. These became Ostrander & Eshleman, Peter & Neale (Henry Peter, now employed by Yale & Towne, recently was regional director for the A.S.A,H.C. district #2) and Smith & Karch. J. B. Hunter Co., the distributor of Y. & T. products in Boston, also opened a branch office in New York, but shortly thereafter closed it to return to their New England headquarters. The formulation of these firms was the first major venture at distribution through contract dealers in New York City, and despite the direct competition of the other lock manufacturers, they prospered. Ostrander & Eshleman, in a few years, was to become one of the most important distributing firms in the United States, with important contracts in the States from coast to coast and in the Hawaiian Islands. Their clientele was numbered among the prominent socialites and wealthy in the country as their reputation for furnishing the unusual in builders' hardware spread; architects, decorators and owners flocked to their doors and, with this, the staff grew in proportion.

When I came with Ostrander & Eshleman they occupied three small offices at 2 W. 47th Street, just off Fifth Avenue. One was used as a reception and sample room, another for Eshleman, Hetzel, Ostrander and me. Our desks were crowded together and as one wished to leave the room, another arose to allow him to pass. The shipping and stock room was adjacent to our office, and the occasional profanity of the shipping clerk was plainly audible to our ears.

In the beginning, I was fearful of being able to retain my architect customers. Some were large firms, and I was doubtful as to the reception I would receive as a representative of a small distributor. I need have had no fears, although I did make it clear that we were not interested in jobs involved in cut-throat competition. A few, including Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, told me that they intended to retain their policy of no competition in hardware for their work, provided the service and quality remained the same, or better. Others stated that while they were required to seek competition on some jobs, my writing of specifications for them would be rewarded with non-competitive work. As a result, my fears for the future were dispelled.

By 1928, the firm had grown at an amazing rate; the original quarters had been added to, office after office, as the personnel increased. A search for more adequate space began, and an entire floor in a new building at 40 East 49th Street was decided upon. It had the added advantage, then and now considered desirable, of being located in the area east of Fifth Avenue.

The services of Southern & Marshall, decorators and cabinet makers, were engaged and plans were drawn for what was then the most luxurious builders' hardware sample rooms and offices in the country. The idea behind the creation of these was sound; it was believed and later confirmed, that architects and decorators would welcome such surroundings to which they could bring clients to make the hardware selections.

In the entry, sat a colored male receptionist, who announced the visitors. The main sample room was pine panelled with the samples behind concealed doors, equipped with Soss hinges and Glynn Johnson concealed latches. No hardware samples were ever in evidence except when being displayed; the idea being that customers would become less confused in their selections if only samples which they desired to inspect were shown to them.

The room was wall-to-wall carpeted, equipped with appropriate antique furniture, and had the appearance of a well appointed Georgian living room. Off this space were two smaller sample rooms, decorated and furnished in period styles, and which could be used for clients when the main display room was occupied. Corridors and private offices were also heavy pile carpeted. An innovation was the main drafting room. Here were located the large force of detail men who were assigned in groups to assist the four major salesmen. Each had a desk, drafting table, telephone, and other necessary equipment.

In the beginning, the new quarters were viewed with misgivings by some of the local members of the industry. (One small manufacturer sent his first shipment there C.O.D. and never received another order.) The majority—architects, decorators, clients and out of town manufacturers—were impressed. I recall a conversation, a few years before his death, with E. H. Johnson, then president of Glynn-Johnson Corporation, and it was typical of the awe created upon officials and salesmen of the producers. "I'll never forget the first time I visited the O. & E. offices," Johnson said. "I stood for a few moments in amazement. I had never seen anything like it in my travels around the country. My first impression was to wonder if it wasn't too extravagant."

But the great increase in the firm's business soon proved that it was a wise investment.

A new market was opened for me by the O. & E. connection, which I had never explored before—the interior decorators. Everyone had money to spend in the decade before the Great

Depression, and the decorators were reaping a harvest; little did they then anticipate the business mortality rate in their profession during the recession years. Many of their commissions were large and their purchases of builders' hardware considerable. Quotations to them always included their fifteen percent commission.

Rumors of the rich market for decorators in America spread abroad, and branches of famous English and French firms were established in New York City. The large ones were particularly ethical in their practices, and were delightful to deal with because of their knowledge of correct period decoration. I recall two prominent American decorating firms who sent clients to me when I was with Ostrander & Eshleman, and the resultant hardware contracts amounted to over $100,000 for each. These same decorators instructed me not to add their usual commissions to the contract prices, but to credit them to their clients because they had only made the recommendations. Match that for ethical conduct!

O. & E. were the favorites of the decorating fraternity. They had beautifully appointed sample rooms to which clients could be brought, had a large and varied selection of domestic and foreign hardware, and could furnish period materials correct in every detail and finish. In addition, the four staff members were so well versed in the techniques of their profession, they could provide valuable information in the selection of hardware to conform to the room designs.

At times, this extended into fields beyond our usual knowledge. A woman decorator was selecting gold-plated French hardware for the large yacht being constructed for one of the Fisher brothers, of automobile body fame. She confessed that she was confused by the ship-designer's drawings; by the angles and curves created by the shape of the boat's body. I suggested that our architect-designer could greatly assist her by making the scale drawings and full size details. This was so ordered, and we obtained a customer who later decided we were the only firm in the country with a knowledge of builders' hardware. Naturally, we did not disabuse her mind of the idea.

These experiences comprised the advanced course in my education in contract builders' hardware. I was associated with men in the firm, and others with whom I came in daily contact, who taught me things I had never known before, and of which I was eager to learn. I was interested in designing hardware, and, although always a poor draftsman, I could draw sufficiently well to communicate my ideas to those so talented, and in this latter classification we employed the best in the city. The things that O. & E. sold had to be of the highest quality, and brought prices consistent with it; cost was no object in obtaining them.

One thing I did learn in those days, and it left an impression upon me which I have never forgotten, i.e., if a sale or a hardware contract does not carry a fair profit, do not make the sale. Sometimes the impact of this very practical idea caused me to lose orders which others, who had not been indoctrinated with it, would consider poor salesmanship. In the depression years, I was estimating upon a large hotel for which my samples and suggestions had made the owners and architects give us preferential treatment. A short time after our price had been submitted, a manufacturer came in with a direct bid below my cost. We were offered the job at the low price, and I declined it, even though we had invested time and money in the preliminary missionary work. Upon notifying the producer, whose line we handled, of our rejecting the order, he was annoyed because we did not give him the opportunity to assist us in matching the other bid. I have never been able to see any glory or advertising value in a contract wherein manufacturers and distributors cooperate to suffer losses.

I credit the knowledge of the value of operating a profitable contract builders' hardware distributing business to I. Stauffer Eshleman, and I believe he is the first man in the distribution industry who developed the idea fully and always adhered to it.

Shortly after the incorporation of Ostrander & Eshleman, an accurate cost of operation was ascertained, and this was added to the sum total of the estimated items. The result was only then known as the cost of the sale. To this was added a percentage, which was adopted as a margin of fair profit. It was simplified in this manner: the gross profit, under the foregoing plan was arrived at, and a minimum gross percentage determined. The four men acting as salesmen could not sell below this gross percentage without securing the permission of Eshleman, the firm's president. In fact, they had little desire to do so as it reduced their commissions. It had an effect which is sadly needed, at times, in these days—we all became salesmen, in every meaning of the designation. Faced with the direct competition of the manufacturers, we were frequently faced with competitive bids from them at our cost. In all the years I was connected with O. & E. I cannot recall an instance wherein we lowered our original price. Our theory was that once we met competitors' prices, we reduced or lost the architects' confidence in us. Knowing that our prices were fair for what we were offering, we started selling. Rarely was an order lost, because we stressed service, knowledge, experience, past reputation and the quality of the materials we furnished. Then too, there were always many items of special design or manufacture scheduled: we invited the architects to compare our samples with those of our competitors. Perhaps these tactics were somewhat ruthless, but we were in a tough, hard-fighting market.

Some of our favorite jobs were the ones where gold-plated hardware was required and, believe it or not, it was frequently selected for hotels, suites of private offices, apartments and residences. We even sold gold-plated bathroom fittings such as faucets, hot and cold tap handles, etc. We offered, if requested, a thirty-year guarantee on the mercury gilding, knowing that it was prohibited by law to be produced in the U.S.A., and could only be secured from France.

Silver-plating was another of our favorite finishes. Silver plating on hardware was usually obtained by an electro process; it was not permanent. We located a plater on Maiden Lane, New York, then the center of the jewelry and silver district, who did work for Tiffany, Gorham and other famous firms in that field. His prices were high, but his silver-plating was accomplished by the burnishing process. Silver leaf was applied in layers, and burnished onto the brass metal. Except for unusual hard usage or abuse, the plating remained unmarred for years. We had several experiences with silver and gold finishes, where the demonstrated value of their permanence impressed the architects.

The head of a New York banking house had sold his home on Park Avenue, New York, and was building

new residence nearby. Forty years earlier, his father had equipped the original house with mercury gold-plated French hardware of elaborate period designs. The owner was desirous of reusing this hardware if the finish could be restored. In the shop which performed work for us, it was washed in Ivory soap and warm water, brushed with camel's hair brushes and wiped dry with chamois cloth. The finish was completely restored to its original beauty, and was good for another forty years.

Burnished silver finish had been supplied by us on a yacht for Edsel Ford. One day, the ship's captain arrived in our office with a package of samples of plumbing fixtures. "Mr. Ford wanted to know why the hardware had retained its silver finish and that on the plumbing had worn off," he told us. He added that the owner wished us to silver plate all the plumbing for him. We immediately recognized the trouble—the hardware was finished in burnished silver and the fixtures in electro-plated silver. We suggested that Mr. Ford have the plumbing contractor perform the work, and, if he would have him contact us, we were willing to instruct him in proper silver plating. We received a letter of appreciation from Edsel Ford and, until his death, retained his patronage.

It was a good life, this sale of the unusual in builders' hardware, and I enjoyed every moment of it. Something new occurred every day, and this was a constant challenge to the imagination, experience and ingenuity of the consultant. Too, it was an education which imbued me with even a greater attraction to the profession in which I was engaged.

Chapter 11

He is a salesman without any of the conventional salesmen's attributes, but what he is selling is unusual too. Martin Mayer, in "Madison Avenue, U.S.A."

DISTRIBUTION by capable contract dealers never got off to a good start in New York City until Yale & Towne Manufacturing Co. closed down their contract department on January 1, 1920. Then firms, owned and staffed by Y. & T. contract salesmen were organized; some fell by the wayside after a period of operation, but an outstanding example of success in the distribution of builders' hardware was the firm of Ostrander & Eshleman, New York.

Both men, I. Stauffer Eshleman and Lemuel J. Ostrander, who planned the organization of the company, were experienced salesmen, but in addition exhibited an exceptional acumen in adopting proper business methods to obtain adequate profits. They sensed that their existence would be short-lived were they to join in the cut-throat competition of the lock manufacturers. They knew that their future success must be founded upon careful initial planning and thus did two men, with no previous distributor experience, create a concern which later belied the often repeated assertion that contract builders' hardware distributors could not exist in the highly competitive New York market. Who were the men who performed such a feat?

I. Stauffer Eshleman was born in New Orleans. His father, the late Benjamin F. Eshleman, was president of the wholesale hardware firm of Stauffer, Eshleman & Co., located in the same city. Upon graduation from Tulane University, the younger Eshleman was employed by his father's firm, where he later became connected with the contract builders' hardware department.

Desiring to obtain a broader knowledge of builders' hardware, he sought employment with Yale & Towne Mfg. Co., in New York City, and was assigned to their contract department in 1911. This connection ceased in 1920 upon the formation of a partnership with L. J. Ostrander, a fellow contract salesman.

Lemuel J. Ostrander had been manager of the Y. & T. metropolitan contract department, but, about 1918, relinquished it to the late Fred Bishop because of the claims upon his services by his host of architect customers and to enable him to devote more of his time to them. He died suddenly after a minor operation in 1929.

Lem Ostrander was an idol of mine. I liked him for his wonderful personality, and I admired him for his marvelous knowledge of builders' hardware. Working with him provided an understanding of the reasons why so many of the prominent architectural firms in New York would discuss builders' hardware with no one but him and, except in a few instances, accept no competition.

He could take any item of builders' hardware and analyze its potentialities to an uncanny degree. I had several instances occur wherein I ignored his advice to my later discomfort. A concealed closer, which mortised into the door or the frame on the hinge side, was offered to the firm on a representation basis. We were enthusiastic about its possibilities, but not Ostrander.

"You just cannot control a door from the heel. This mechanism will not survive such punishment. I know it for I took one apart," he argued.

He continued, "Here, take hold of this door from the hinge edge and swing it. Now, grasp the knob and move the door. Notice the vast difference in the resistance?"

I ignored his advice and sold quite a number of the closers. I later wished I had heeded the opinion of an expert.

Another time, I watched him dissect a new cylinder entrance door rim lock which had been purchased recently. His comments were that the construction had flaws in it, and he pointed out how they could be remedied. I had previously sold some on contracts, and the troubles he predicted later developed.

Ostrander was an expert on period hardware, and all I ever learned regarding it was from him. When I had any doubts regarding a correct period of design for a room, I appealed to him, and he always supplied the correct answer.

His untimely death was a blow to the consultant profession, in which he was one of the most talented.

OSTRANDER & ESHLEMAN became a partnership in early 1920 and, in April of that year, were incorporated. The paid in capital did not permit of a rapid expansion of the business if its financial stability was to be maintained. It was decided to confine the sales efforts to a gross of $50,000 for the first year. This decision was shot full of holes upon the receipt of one of the early contracts.

One of Ostrander's most favored architects was the office of John Russell Pope, then at the height of his fame. Upon Mr. Pope's death, the firm became Eggers & Higgins, one of the top ranking architectural firms in New York City. He told Pope of the formation of the new firm, and the latter

expressed the desire to give him the first order. It was for the twin Laughlin houses on Sixteenth Street, N.W., in Washington, D. C. The owners were connected with the Jones & Laughlin Steel Co. in Pittsburgh. The hardware order exceeded $30,000, using in large part Bricard of Paris materials in mercury gold finish.

Thus, the young firm started in high, and it was only at the height of the Great Depression that they were compelled to shift into second gear.

IN 1924, Charles A. Hetzel, formerly contract sales manager for Y. & T., and I joined the firm as contract salesmen, and throughout the years of our connection with O. & E., four comprised the sales staff—Eshleman, Hetzel, Ostrander and me. Each had his own customers to service, and each was assisted by capable consultants, referred to as detail men.

Service was a big and important word in the scheme of things which would make the operation attractive to architects, contractors and decorators. Even the hollow metal door manufacturers favored us in their recommendations because of the speed with which they received templates and correctly written hardware schedules. Good-will was another important asset in the stock of trade of a New York City distributor.

Service, and its relative good-will, had many ramifications in the program to retain existing customers and to acquire new ones. Some of the efforts toward this goal were varied and covered a wide field, but, in the main, they were successful.

As an instance: the writing of hardware specifications was considered an obligation; to be performed without any charge for services, if the architects favored us with the major portion of their patronage. I recall that when Mayers, Murray and Phillip received the commission to design some hundred odd buildings from Secretary Ickes, of the Department of the Interior, for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I was requested to assist them in a portion of the planning. This architectural firm's work consisted mainly of churches and monumental buildings, and they were unfamiliar with construction for the Federal Government.

Would I secure a capable general specification writer with past experience on this type of work?, asked Oscar Murray. I responded to this request without too much effort. Next came the question as to the preparation of the hardware specifications. The structures consisted of hospitals, grade and high schools, recreation buildings, hogans and others. The sites were in the west and southwest, and the hardware was to be purchased locally. Nevertheless, as these architects were loyal customers of the firm, I offered to write the hardware specifications, a considerable task, without charge, but the architects refused the offer and paid us for them. This was an exception to the general rule under which we operated.

Another service that we rendered the architects was the checking of scale and full-size details, so that trouble would not be encountered later when the hardware was installed. In one office, that of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, a drafting table was permanently assigned to me, and all details were checked, and corrected if necessary. Then I placed my initials in a space in the job title box, indicating approval. This scanning of the drawings was necessary in this office as many of the draftsmen were from England and some of the European countries, and details that they prepared were not suitable for American hardware. For instance, doors which contained eight or ten panels and narrow stiles, were to be equipped with rim locks of various sizes, a Goodhue favorite in hardware. Then wood blocks, commonly known as "dutchmen," were inserted, and the panel moulds were carried around them. Hence, determining the correct dimensions of the blocking was the function of the consultant.

Doors were frequently designed by the architects with stiles, rails and panels differing on each side. If rim locks were required on the crossrail and lever handles or knobs on the reverse side, mortise followers with knob-hubs in two backsets were furnished. If mortise locks were stipulated, double-backset locks with hubs and keyholes in different positions; at times, one hub had french springs for the lever handle and the other, easy springs for the knob. It required the services of a consultant, very expert in hardware, to solve these problems.

A service, popular with some architects, was the preparation of special designs in hardware. A few prepared these in their own offices, but the majority desired the hardware supplier to furnish them. Early in the career of O. & E., the services of Elliott L. Chisling, A.I.A., were retained on an hourly basis. Chisling was a product of the Goodhue firm and, while in its employ, designed the special hardware under the eyes of the master. On large jobs, the cost of the drawings of the special hardware ran into thousands of dollars and was included in the contract price.

THEN there were extracurricular services. A replica of Independence Hall, Philadelphia, donated by Henry Ford, was being built in Dearborn, Michigan, and the architect requested that we duplicate the hardware on the original building. I went to Philadelphia for two or three days to copy the hardware, accompanied by our architect-designer. In pursuance of this task, the designer discovered that some of the architect's full size details were not correct. Some of the brick courses varied from the originals; mouldings and panels on some exterior doors differed and there were other, but minor, variations. He made sketches and notes of these, and upon my return to New York, I advised the architect of the discrepancies; he then corrected his details.

The hardware for the exterior doors (undoubtedly installed when the building was constructed in the 18th Century, and which consisted of wrought iron strap hinges, rim locks, etc.) was quite good, but that on many of the interior doors was execrable. (We were told that the original hardware had been stolen or had disappeared in some manner, and had been replaced with cheap hardware by the city of Philadelphia). Clues were located as to the originals, and the architect permitted us to adhere to them on the Dearborn reproduction. Under these circumstances, the hardware on the Dearborn Hall of Independence is more correct as to the original hardware. Service of this type is one of the things that endear the architects to hardware consultants.

IN the period of which I write (the 1920's) it was unusual for a contract builders' hardware firm to radically depart from the sale of products other than builders' hardware. The time had not arrived when the dealers were venturing into the sale of a variety of building products. Ostrander & Eshleman were willing, in the name of service, to undertake tasks which assisted their architects and, incidentally, from which they derived a profit. The Church of the Heavenly Rest, with a

wealthy and fashionable congregation, on Fifth Avenue, New York City, was an example of this.

Wrought iron strap hinges, rim locks, ring handles, rim bolts and studs, of special designs, had been furnished by O. & E. several years earlier. Because of the humidity and acid-poisoned atmosphere in New York, rust had attacked the surface hardware, and marred the finish on the doors. The architects requested us to investigate the possibility of supplying a rust-proofing protection for the hardware. It was a problem that had been confronting the firm for some years on jobs where wrought iron had been supplied.

First, we had tried a thin coating of light machine oil, but it was soon learned that, unless frequent applications were made, it did not successfully combat rust. It was then suggested that we experiment with clear spar varnish but, again, it did not prove a successful deterrent to rust. About this time, we heard of the successful use of cadmium on automobile parts, etc., and also that it was claimed by the du Pont Company to be an efficient enemy of rust. Experiments on iron hardware were begun and it was believed, after various tests, that a solution to the problem had been found. Wrought iron hardware on a building at Jones Beach State Park, on the Atlantic Ocean front of Long Island, was selected for the test, and it proved successful in this salt-air atmosphere. The method used was to apply a .0010 coating of cadminum (heavier than the U.S. Government minimum of .0008), then a coat of black oxide, which was buffed lightly so that the bright undersurface appeared in spots, and the whole gave the appearance of half-polished iron.

We reported these findings to the Church of the Heavenly Rest architects, and they instructed us to refinish the hardware and, somewhat to our surprise, the doors on a cost-plus basis. A high-grade firm of cabinet makers was engaged; hardware and doors were removed (the latter one pair at a time, and the opening boarded up) and sent to the shops to be refinished. It was a very successful renovation.

I BELIEVE that the strangest of these undertakings was one where we became the general contractors on an estate near Portchester, New York. William Rosenwald, son of the founder of Sears, Roebuck & Company, had purchased a large country home with an acreage of ample proportions. He was making extensive alterations on the existing building in addition to adding a new wing, a recreation building, superintendent's cottage, garages and a farm building. A meeting was arranged, attended by Mr. Rosenwald, the architect and me. It developed, early in the conference, that the former had a fear of the kidnapping of his infant child. There were reasons for this: the Lindbergh case had not then been solved. (Incidentally, Ostrander & Eshleman supplied the hardware for the new home of Charles A. Lindbergh, from which the child was stolen. During the search for the kidnapper, a member of the O. & E. staff was queried for information by a representative of the New Jersey State Police). Rosenwald was in charge of the Rosenwald Foundation, for which some millions of dollars had been willed by his father to construct negro schools, and to generally assist the colored race in both the North and South. Many of these people misunderstood this, and made application in person at the Foundation's office for loans and financial assistance. Some rejected applicats departed, voicing threats or disappointments. This worried Rosenwald, and he developed a complex regarding kidnapping.

The outcome of the meeting was that we were to undertake the rehardwaring, which included installation, furnishing of hollow metal exterior doors, screens, etc. In short, we became the general contractors with a cost-plus contract. As outlined at the meeting, the work to be performed was:

1. All locks to be cylinder mortise with two cylinders for exterior and interior doors, except that bedrooms, toilets, bathrooms and closets were to have cylinders outside, thumb turns inside.

2. A special cylinder keyway was to be supplied, with sub-master-keyed sets as directed, and only one grand masterkey for the owner's own use. To this was included an agreement that no additional change or master keys would be furnished except on Mr. Rosenwald's written orders.

3. All openings to the master's portion were pairs of wood french doors. These to be replaced with hollow metal doors with the muntins so spaced that no one could break the glass and pass through the opening. The doors to be equipped with Hagstrom two cylinder, five point cylinder locks and concealed door holders. We had the hollow metal doors specially made by the Art Metal Co., in Jamestown, N.Y., who also installed them.

Trouble developed here later. The wires connecting the top and bottom latches with the cases of the locks vibrated against the steel tubing when the doors were opened or closed. It was found necessary to wrap the wires with adhesive tape.

4. The casement windows (and all windows were of this type) had the existing hardware removed, and Hagstrom five point casement hardware installed, together with friction adjustors. Windows or hinges, worn by time and use, were replaced.

5. The nursery wing in the main house provided the greatest problem. Here were located the governess' suite, together with the child's bedroom, dressing room and bath. Mr. Rosenwald insisted that hollow metal screens, each with a cylinder lock operated by one of the submaster-keys and the grand masterkey, be supplied. The screen wire had to be of a type that could not be cut with wire cutters. A search for such material was finally successful. A manufacturer was located who made screen wire of special tool-proof steel for psychopathic wards in hospitals. It was expensive, but proved satisfactory.

At one time, during the course of the work, we had carpenters, locksmiths and hollow metal door installers at work on the job, all supervised by one of my assistants. This contract presented a challenge to test the ingenuity of a hardware consultant, and this made it all the more interesting.

IT was the theory of I. S. Eshleman, the company's president, that salesmen should devote the major portion of their working hours in producing orders and contracts. He always believed that their higher salaries and commissions did not permit their giving attention, in time-consuming hours, to the minor details and the ordering of the hardware. He imbued me with these ideas, and I often marvel these days when I observe consultants, highly skilled and with salaries commensurate with it, working days and long hours into the night, on work which they could far more economically assign to assistants. I hope the day will soon come when these men realize the economic waste in such methods.

The operation of estimating, scheduling and ordering followed a carefully planned system in the O. & E. office. We will follow a contract order from its inception in the architect's office until its departure to the suppliers.

Johnson & Jones, an architectural firm, phone for a hardware allowance on a university dormitory. The salesman calling upon them discusses briefly, with one of the firm, the general outlines of the type of hardware to be estimated. About one hour of the consultant's time is required for the preparation of a hardware allowance.

When the general contract is let, contact is again made with the architect, and it is suggested to him that the hardware selections should be decided upon at once, particularly because of the issuance of templates. Also, that instructions for master-keying and other minor details be settled.

Now the preparatory work is begun. The scheduling for the estimate is carefully prepared as the job is non-competitive, and thus repetition of the work is prevented. The schedule is then given to an estimator who prices it, and the salesman adds a gross profit which includes the overhead and anticipated net profit. A price is quoted to the architect, he accepts it in writing, and states that he is instructing the general contractor to forward a contract to us.

Nothing unusual in this; we do it ourselves, you probably reflect. Ah, but the following procedures are radically different from those followed by most consultants who devote valuable hours to the pricing, scheduling, ordering, etc. Our consultant's work on this contract is completed except for occasional conferences with the detail man assigned to the work or with the architect when the necessity arises.

An instruction sheet is attached to the estimated schedule containing the name of the general contractor, hollow metal door fabricator and other related sub-contractors, together with a list of notes and special instructions. Then a detail man, generally an assistant to the salesman, is assigned to recheck the plans and details, prepare the schedule and supervise the ordering from the suppliers. He visits the architect's office, orders a set of blueprints and goes to work. The salesman has little further relation with the job except general supervision.

The detail man proceeds as follows: after rechecking the manuscript schedule, he notes in the left hand column, a code letter assigned to each supplier to assist the typist in ordering, viz: S for Stanley or M for McKinney; Y for Yale & Towne; I for Ives; R for Rixson; SK for items to be drawn from stock, etc.

After this, typed schedules are prepared and sent to the general contractor, hollow metal door manufacturer and any other trade interested in hardware. The detail man was an important cog in the machinery, and his was the duty to keep it working smoothly.

As each invoice arrives, the amount is noted on a sheet attached to the manuscript order and other items of expense are added, such as the cost of the stock items, freight express, parcel post, etc. The percentage of overhead cost is then included, thus arriving at the actual cost. Deducting this from the contract price easily determines the net profit and the amount of the salesman's commission.

RENTS, even in that period in the 1920's, were high in New York and it was necessary to keep the stock at a minimum, but quick delivery of some contracts had to be met by keeping stocks of the more important items. These included locks in a variety of types: cylinder, mortise bit key, french window in five or six backsets, brass rim in several sizes and horizontal bit key. The 3½ inch and 4¼ inch three-tumbler bit key mortise were mastered to a stock master-key. Also there were Colonial, Georgian and French cast knobs and roses. French paumelles in various sizes also were popular.

An order for a fair-sized residence could be shipped in three or four days with a master key for the owner, a feat that could not be duplicated by any other distributor or manufacturer in New York City.

A LARGE portion of this type of distribution of contract builders' hardware disappeared in the days of the Great Depression. It is pleasant to note that Ostrander & Eshleman are still operating, and are prospering on a more limited scale. The firm of Elmer T. Hebert, Inc. has grown, from small beginnings, to sizable proportions in recent years. They carry a large stock of both domestic and imported special hardware, and operate on a plan similar to that in vogue when I was with O. & E.

There is still plenty of life and prosperity in the distribution of quality builders' hardware, as so many firms in this country and Canada are proving.

Chapter 12

IN previous chapters of this series, I have reviewed the early history of four of the full-line manufacturers—Corbin, Russwin, Sargent and Yale. A comparatively newcomer to this group is the Schlage Lock Company of San Francisco. Theirs has been the role of introducing the cylindrical lock to the industry; a lock, which by its revolutionary features and general acceptance, is now in production in the plants of the majority of the lock manufacturers.

But is was not a path free from obstacles that was traveled by those endeavoring to sell these locks to the architects and contractors in the 1930's; I speak from personal experience. At first, its adoption met with serious resistance and, in addition, there was the low price competition of the tubular locks marketed by the major producers. Tubular locks of pre-war vintage—I am not referring here to those produced today that have deservedly established a market for themselves—were in most instances makeshift contraptions designed, at a low production cost, to meet the increasing demand for locks of the bore-in type. Because of their then inferior component parts, I have always believed that most of the pre-World War II tubular locks did much to publicize cylindrical locks in the Great Depression days.

I FIRST came in contact with Schlage locks in the mid-thirties. Construction was at a minimum and substantial builders' hardware contracts were scarce; those that were available were, in the majority of cases, for federal construction. This permitted the direct competition of the lock manufacturers, and of distributors who could compete and survive the drain upon their financial resources. We were not in the latter category and our survival depended upon securing a lock line that was non-competitive. Schlage locks appeared to be the solution to our distress and we sought and secured an exclusive distributorship. Then began the heart-breaking task of convincing the architects that the cylindrical type was the lock of the future. New York architects

were steeped in tradition and the abandonment of the use of mortise locks was not within their most remote consideration. But gradually their prejudices were removed and an appreciation of the many attractive features of cylindrical locks was established.

SCHLAGE Lock Company was founded in 1924 at San Francisco, California, by the late Walter R. Schlage, inventor of the modern cylindrical lock that is installed by simply boring two intersecting holes. The Schlage patents covered the key hole in the knobs of cylindrical locks, the panic proof feature of locking which allows immediate exit without use of a key, the push button lock feature which indicates visually whether or not a lock is secured and the elimination of all exposed screws including the set screws for attaching the knobs to the spindles. Schlage pioneered the use of coils and compression springs as opposed to the traditional use of flat leaf springs, in addition to producing locks composed entirely of punch press steel parts, making for complete interchangeability. As a result, cylindrical locks could be produced on a belt system of assembly and thus avoided the costly hand-filing and fitting necessary for mortise locks. Schlage truly revolutionized the entire field of lock production.

ALTHOUGH Schlage Lock Company fixes its official origin from 1924, actually its history began with the turn of the century; for here, indeed, is a company which is the lengthened shadow of a single man. That man is the late Walter R. Schlage, inventor of the lock bearing his name.

Patented in 1909, Walter Schlage's first invention was a door lock that turned room lights on and off. When this, with other locks of his design, caused interest in the electrical and hardware fields, Schlage, in 1920, decided to organize a small company to manufacture his devices.

Taken from the beginning, the story of Walter Schlage the Man, is the story of a quest, of adventure, of long hours and hard work, of imagination and genius.

Born in 1882, at Thuringia, a hamlet in Central Germany where his father was a hotel keeper, Walter Schlage was exposed to the vicarious thrills of travel at an early age through his contacts with travelers who came to his father's hotel. It was only natural that his first schoolboy interests were centered in geography.

But when young Schlage graduated from public school, at the age of 14, his father inspired in him an interest in science; he arranged for his son to visit the Carl Zeiss Optical Works, in Jena, not far from his home town. Fascinated with the precise operations involved in the manufacture of fine lenses and optical instruments, Walter was eager to learn more about the practical application of things he had studied at school. And so when he applied for training at the Zeiss plant, Schlage was accepted after passing the entrance examinations in physics and mathematics. His apprentice course at Zeiss required four years of on-the-job training in all branches of applied mechanics and included daily attendance at the Zeiss Technical college under tutelage of prominent engineers and scientists.

Equipped with a fine technical education, Schlage, at 18, crossed the English Channel to London where he found work at Hilger, Ltd., makers of scientific instruments. Despite the fact that he knew little English, Schlage's first year away from home was one of excitement and absorption. But one of his early ambitions had been to see the United States; so after a year in London, Schlage sailed to New York where he found work in the laboratory of the Western Electric Company.

Still only 19, Schlage wanted to see more of the world; and so he shipped on a Brazilian coffee steamer as assistant engineer, making several round-trips to South America. From New York, Schlage worked his way as an itinerant mechanic, to Western America, getting as far as the Grand Canyon of Arizona, where he labored in a copper mine for a year. Meanwhile, Schlage spent his spare time studying electrical engineering as a student enrolled in a correspondence course.

Returning to New York again, the young German immigrant visited the West Indies and Central America, sailing on to San Francisco.

The year was 1905.

In San Francisco, Schlage joined the Western Electric Company, again; he remained with that corporation for twelve years, advancing to superintendent of the machine shop and metal finishing departments.

WHILE working in the Western Electric plant, he also rented and equipped a little shop on Bush Street in San Francisco where he could work nights developing several ideas which his inventive mind had created. He was a very observing young man and one of the things that impressed him was that you could press a button to turn on or turn off an electric light, whereas you required a key to unlock a door.

He saw no good reason why a door lock should not have a button in the knob which, when pressed, would lock the door and by a turn of the knob could be unlocked. After working on this problem for a year or two, he came upon an entirely new and revolutionary concept. He decided to do away with the flat steel case which heretofore contained the door lock mechanism, the installation of which required mortising a deep opening in the edge of the door. He felt sure he could develop a lock that could be installed by simply boring two connecting holes, one through the edge, and the other through the face of the door. He determined also that he would so engineer this mechanism that it could be locked by merely pressing a button in the center of the knob.

To do all this, he knew he would have to arrange all working parts so that they could go into a small cylinder, preferably not over three-fourths of an inch in diameter. He was also aware that this would require much greater mechanical perfection and much closer tolerances than in the past had been customary in the production of door locks. Not daunted by the difficult problem which he faced, he finally created what is now known throughout the trade as the "cylindrical lock". It is also popularly known as the "button lock".

Schlage made it possible to install his lock by inserting the body of the lock through a hole in the face of the door and then connecting it to a latch inserted through a hole in the edge of the door. These two parts hooked up automatically, and by merely snapping on an inside and outside rose and knob, the installation was complete and the door lock operated with a smoothness never before experienced. He succeeded in getting a basic patent on his invention which protected the manufacture of Schlage locks for seventeen years.

SCHLAGE'S determination to improve his opportunities, led him to spend much of his spare time at night technical schools. Out of his practical experience and his training in theory, Schlage's early inventions grew.

In 1921, Schlage moved his small manufacturing plant from 229 Minna Street to a loft building at 461 Bush Street, San Francisco. Here, tools for manufacturing the first lock with a push-button locking device entered in the door knob were designed and manufactured. Favorable response to the revolutionary lock by the building trades, was immediate and reassuring. In consequence, two years later, in 1923, it was necessary to rent larger quarters; these were found at 49 Shotwell Street, San Francisco.

Schlage's push-button "A" lock proved so popular that within another three years it became necessary to move to larger quarters. On June 25, 1926, the first unit of Schlage's modern plant at 2201 Bayshore Boulevard, South San Francisco, was completed on a two and one-half acre tract.

Early in 1926, Charles Kendrick, a San Franciscan investor then engaged in manufacturing other products, acquired a substantial interest in the Schlage Lock Company. Shortly after dedication of its new plant, the company, over-extended, fell into serious financial difficulties; an urgent appeal was made to Kendrick to help save the company from disaster. This Kendrick succeeded in doing, by using his own personal credit for a period to maintain the company's solvency.

In 1927, Kendrick became president of Schlage Lock Company; and from that date until Walter Schlage's death in 1946, some 20 years later, Schlage, the inventor, and Kendrick, the vigorous organizer, worked together as a team.

In 1940, Walter Schlage received the "Modern Pioneer" award, an honor given only to outstanding American inventors.

In October, 1953, Mr. Charles Kendrick was elected chairman of the board and his son, Marron Kendrick, was named to the presidency.

Although the company's growth has been substantial, it has been a growth based on engineering and product integrity and sound business principles coupled with far-sighted and capable planning.

With the opening of World War II in Europe in 1939, plans were made for conversion of the plant from commercial to war production, if necessary. Two years later when the first blow was struck at Pearl Harbor, the Schlage Lock Company was fully prepared to produce armament. Machinery and equipment were converted to the making of munitions.

Today the work of Walter Schlage is being carried on by his son, Ernest Schlage, vice-president. A new door closer, the invention of Ernest Schlage, and as revolutionary in design as the first Schlage cylindrical engineering lock, was introduced in 1956.

Schlage products are protected by more than 200 United States and foreign patents.

Schlage factories in San Francisco now consist of three large factory buildings and several warehouses along Bayshore Boulevard. Schlage operates a branch plant in Vancouver, Canada, and in 1958, purchased the California Lock Company of Downey, California.

THUS was created an American saga of a young German immigrant coming to the United States, and by virtue of his imagination and inventiveness, succeeded in revolutionizing the lock industry not only of the United States but of the entire world. This is proven by the fact that on the expirations of his patents, lock manufacturers everywhere adopted the principles of his inventions and the Schlage type lock is now practically universal in its application for all types of doors.

Chapter 13

IN 1929, the advent of the Great Depression wrecked the fortunes of many firms and individuals, and some in the builders' hardware industry were not immune from its evil effects. At the time, I was connected with Ostrander & Eshleman in New York City. The years 1928 and 1929 had been our best in point of sales, and I was enjoying a prosperity that I had never dreamed possible in my early days in the industry. Late in 1929, I had many large contracts, among them the order for the hardware for the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Alfred G. Wilson at Rochester, Michigan. This was a house of 200 rooms, the perimeter of which was one and three-eighths miles, on an estate of 1500 acres, together with an indoor riding ring, stables, garage, superintendent's and gate keeper's houses and other out-buildings. The architects were Smith, Hinchman & Grylls of Detroit. The total contract price for the hardware exceeded $100,000, and was secured without competition.[1] It requires little computation to estimate the cost of comparable hardware on a residence of equal size these days.

One of my assistants, the late Elmer M. Batchelder, was in charge of the scheduling and ordering and, late in 1930, as he was preparing the final records for storage in the vault, he remarked that the handling of the Wilson job had been the pleasantest experience in his entire business life, but undoubtedly that both of us would never secure another order of its type again. His pessimistic prediction was proven false within two weeks, for we then secured a hardware contract for a residence of even greater proportions.

One morning, as I arrived in the office, the receptionist told me that Mr. Henry F. du Pont had phoned and that I was to come to his New York apartment at 270 Park Avenue at once. Here I found that a portion of the apartment had been cleared of furniture and was occupied by tables containing his famous collection of antique hardware, which he had been acquiring, piece by piece, for some years. He informed me that he desired to install it in the new home he was building in Winterthur, Delaware. (This is now the Winterthur Museum which attracts visitors from all over the world. Mr. du Pont, as did the Wilsons, found it too expensive to maintain as a home in recent years.)

The final contract for the hardware, on a cost-plus basis, was greater than the Wilson by approximately $25,000. One assistant, Herbert Schmitt, was busily engaged scheduling and ordering for about a year, and another, James Cornell, remained at the site from the beginning of the installation until completion, at Mr. du Pont's expense, for a period of some months.

We were busy during the early years of the Depression, and it wasn't until the latter part of 1932 that we began to realize that a honeymoon does not last forever; luxury construction ceased abruptly and reductions in the staff began; overhead costs were preying upon the profits. My income was drastically reduced by these conditions.

About 1930 the late W. Harry Whittaker joined the Ostrander & Eshleman organization. He had been with the Ford Hardware Division of Greene, Tweed & Co., in New York, contract builders' hardware distributors. Upon their dissolution, he became employed in the New York office of Fontaine & Cie. of Paris. Lack of a demand for costly French hardware caused the latter to terminate the American branch.

[1] Mrs. Wilson, the former Mrs. John Dodge, deeded the house and grounds to Michigan State University, in Lansing, last year. When I visited her in Rochester several years ago, she told of considering this because of excessive taxes and inability to secure sufficient domestic help to maintain the large establishment.

Late in 1933, Whittaker informed me that Reading Hardware Corporation was desirous of entering the New York market again, and that he was joining the new organization. He added that George E. Horst, the owner of the corporation, and John Lawlor, the president, were interested in talking to me toward becoming manager of the new office on a salary and commission contract; Whittaker was to be my assistant and a competent staff engaged. It appeared attractive in view of the then diminishing demand for luxury hardware. After a number of conferences, a contract was drawn up but, at the last moment, Whittaker withdrew, stated that he had changed his mind and was remaining with O. & E.

An office was opened for the Reading Hardware Corporation at 420 Madison Avenue, with the late Harold Fairchild, formerly employed by O. & E., as my assistant. The plan of operation was a failure practically from the start. The Reading firm and I were soon at loggerheads. They were not equipped by previous experience to handle the contracts that I sold for them. However, they did generously add many items to their line which I requested. Mr. Horst, the owner was a wealthy man with numerous interests, the principal one being the Nolde & Horst Co., a large hosiery manufacturing concern. He never could understand the difference in cost in marketing contract builders' hardware and hosiery.

Upon receiving a particular critical letter, I drove to Reading and informed him that I was willing to terminate my contract if he would consent to it. I shall never forget the look of pleasure that came over his face as he agreed. He was as anxious to be rid of me as I was of him. (Later, when I became a substantial customer of his firm, we again became quite friendly. Although a millionaire, he had the frugality of his Pennsylvania Dutch heritage.)

Now I was again unemployed and my hard luck period, the Christmas holidays, was approaching. In December 1934, Albert Guinier,[2] manager of Fontaine & Cie's New York office, suggested that I represent his firm in the United States, and that he would be interested in joining a new distributing firm. With the addition of Carroll L. Lowe, A.H.C., then manager of the New York office of Sargent & Greenleaf, Rochester and, at present vice-president and sales manager of that firm, John R. Schoemer Co. was organized. An entire floor was leased at 420 Madison Avenue and rebuilt to our specifications. Portions were assigned to friends; Elliott L. Chisling, A.I.A. and Morgan, Hamel & Engelken, engineers for the New York World's Fair. A receptionist for all three was employed, and the well-appointed space had the appearance of being the headquarters of either one firm or individual.

E. M. Batchelder, Harold Fairchild and Herbert Schmitt, all former Ostrander & Eshleman employees, were employed as detail men. The late J. Howard Judd, A.H.C., and his assistant, Charles G. Smith, A.H.C. (now a contract builders' hardware distributor in Newburgh, N.Y.) also occupied quarters with us, handling their own work exclusively.

To enlarge the distribution of special foreign products, connections were made with Anton De Vries Co., of Amsterdam, distributors of contemporary Dutch and German hardware.

We were in the midst of the Depression and the demand for quality hardware was limited, with competition constantly increasing. The situation was helped somewhat when the line of Schlage Lock Co. was added, and this gave us a new non-competitive market, but our doom was sealed with the advent of World War II in 1939 and the loss of the sale of the products of foreign manufacture. When Pearl Harbor caused our entry into the conflict, my secretary and I were the sole occupants of the offices, all my associates becoming engaged in war work of one form or other. Boredom for eighteen months nearly drove me to distraction, particularly after an active life as a consultant. I became so desperate, I applied for a position as a city salesman with a New York jobber, but because they decided I lacked the necessary qualifications, I, fortunately for me, was rejected.

THE National Association of Contract Builders' Hardware Distributors (now the NBHA) was incorporated in 1934 and the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultants in 1940. In December of the latter year, Frank H. Sherwood was appointed executive secretary-treasurer of both organizations, and the headquarters were moved from Pittsburgh to 441 Lexington Avenue in New York City. Because of the war their struggle for continued existence was a difficult one.

Frank Sherwood, in September 1943, invited me to a luncheon with Robert L. Dohrmann, vice president of Palace Hardware Co. in San Francisco (Bob Dohrmann was to become a NBHA president in 1946). During the lunch, I dwelt at some length upon my ideas as to the methods to be employed to revive interest in the Association. I was expressing these as a representative of a member firm with no idea then that they would eventually be adopted under my guidance.

A few weeks later, Ralph F. Barber of Chandler & Barber Co., and president of the Association, asked if I could come Down East to see him. He told me that the Executive Committee was worried as to the future of the Association, and desired to have a research made as to the postwar possibilities of a betterment in the financial status of this trade group. Would I accept the appointment of coordinator to conduct a research program at a modest stipend and expenses?, he asked. I accepted with no hesitancy, for here was work and a lessening of the drain upon my modest principal.

The work required for the investigation was extremely pleasant, and in performing it I received the wholehearted support of Ralph Barber, the Executive Committee and Secretary Sherwood. I interviewed both distributors and producers, and they were mainly unanimous in offering encouragement. I then prepared a detailed report, and it was decided that a members' meeting should be called in November 1943, in the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, for its formal submission.

At this session I reported on various details of a promotional program which I proposed being adopted. In conclusion, I said:

"The greatest need of our Association is an increase in income. At present both organizations are existing on peanuts. The annual income of the Association and the Society combined is now less than $13,000., and from this it is impossible to pay an adequate salary to a secretary, not to mention the expense of maintaining a headquarters.

"Even with a large postwar increase in membership at the present twenty-five dollars annual dues, we cannot hope to operate programs for the members. Other means must be sought to obtain funds to properly

[2] Guinier was a reservist captain in the French Army and was recalled to duty in 1938. As his wife and he sailed from New York, they were on the verge of tears at having to leave this country; he had been negligent in applying for his citizenship papers.

operate our trade association so that it can benefit its members. I have two suggestions:

"1. Establish a high-grade trade magazine, selling advertising and subscriptions. The present Profit Bound has a ridiculous title, always inviting investigation by the Federal Trade Commission, and its free distribution of five hundred copies monthly is no invitation to advertisers to buy space in it. I believe that the builders hardware industry, now without a magazine, would welcome a good trade publication.

"2. Conduct a large trade show each year after the war. Not one of twenty-five exhibitors at twenty-five dollars per booth as you have been doing, but one comparable with those in other major industries. Few of the larger manufacturers have ever exhibited with us, and offer them an opportunity to display their postwar products, they will all sign up. Then, too, new producers will be entering the industry, and they will be anxious to participate in all exhibitions.

"Do these things, and the Association will become a power of influence for the benefit of its members."

After an informal discussion by the members present, it was decided to continue the work of the coordinator, and a resolution was presented (by the late Joseph R. Raymer, as I remember it) suggesting that the hat be passed for contributions to establish a Coordinator's Fund. In less than one-half hour, $4,500. was pledged.

My work as coordinator was continuing when, in April 1944, I was requested to appear before the Executive Committee, who were meeting in the Hotel Lexington in New York. I was informed that they were considering a change in the secretaryship of the Association and, as the position was a voluntary one in the Society, the latter's officers were in accord with the Association. Would I accept the position of executive secretary-treasurer of both groups?, I was asked. The salary would be a modest one, it was added.

I requested two weeks in which to make a decision. When I revealed these plans to my family, intimate personal and business friends, I found considerable opposition to my accepting the offer. The late John Worner, Sr., of New Orleans, whose advice I always accepted, was very much opposed for certain reasons which he explained in detail. But, regardless of this, I was tempted to accept, for my work as coordinator had revealed to me the possibilities of a great postwar future for the Association and Society. I stipulated in my acceptance that I wished to be released as secretary as soon as a successor could be appointed after the close of World War II. I was desirous of again becoming a contract distributor, as I anticipated a prosperous future in New York in that period.

I became executive secretary-treasurer of the National Contract Hardware Association at an annual salary of $6,000., and of the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultation (without compensation) on June 1, 1944.

Chapter 14

There is no recorded history of the National Builders' Hardware Association other than very sketchy minutes of the meetings held in the early days after its formation. The predecessor to the present *Hardware Consultant*, Profit Bound, is the best source of information regarding the founding of a trade group imbued with the conviction that united efforts by the contract builders' hardware distributors could improve conditions created by a depression and the constantly increasing direct competition of the builders' hardware manufacturers. As the Great Depression increased in intensity in 1933, some of the distributors faced disaster because of the lessening demand for builders' hardware, and the fact that many of their bids on construction contracts were in direct competition with those of their sources of supply. Producers of builders' hardware, desirous of keeping their plants even in partial operation, were beginning to have their sales representatives bid directly on contracts at prices which the distributors could not hope to match and obtain any semblance of a profit. These were the industry's darkest days.

Determined not to allow these conditions to continue to a degree whereby contract builders' hardware dealers would cease to exist in whole or in part, a group of determined men met in Chicago to discuss the possibility of the organization of a trade association comprised of the principal distributors in this country. Their major objective was the elimination of direct bidding by the manufacturers, and the restoration of the contract dealers' role as the main source of supply for builders' hardware. Thus, in a period of adversity, the National Association of Contract Builders' Hardware Distributors was born, the father of the present National Builders' Hardware Association.

In September 1934, four representatives of Chicago contract distributors (John T. Barlow, C. J. Cobb, Andrew Hoffman and H. H. Walsh) met in the offices of Clark & Barlow Hardware Co., and agreed to act for the charter members in the incorporation of a builders' hardware trade association, to be organized under the laws of the State of Illinois. The headquarters of the new trade group were designated as 123 West Lake Street, Chicago, the location of the Clark & Barlow firm.

The first recorded meeting of the newly formed National Association of Contract Builders' Hardware Distributors was held on July 10, 1935, in the Palmer House, Chicago. On the following day the Board of Directors, composed of the ten regional directors and three directors at large, met to elect officers and, as a result, the following were chosen: J. H. Dumbell, president; I. S. Eshleman, first vice-president; J. R. Raymer, second vice-president; J. H. Freeman, treasurer and L. B. Hunter, secretary. It was also decided that the five officers would constitute the Executive Committee.

As I have heard it, the first suggestion that the new Association publish a trade magazine, with that organization as owner and publisher, came from Rodman W. Chamberlain, then with The Stanley Works. At the June 22, 1935, meeting of the Executive Committee, it was decided "we should put out monthly a magazine or bulletin to all contract builders' hardware distributors. This bulletin to have sufficient space for advertising in it to defray the expenses." The title "Profit Bound" was selected: (one more likely to invite the interest of the Federal Trade Commission was never devised).

The first issue of the new publication appeared in September 1936. It consisted of sixteen pages, had fifteen advertisers and was mailed without charge to the Association members and a few others. Because of the small circulation, the advertising rates were extremely modest. It did, however, provide additional revenue to enable this small trade group, struggling for continued existence, and imbued with an ideal, to operate. This must have involved the strictest economy, for the total receipts, October 1, 1937 to September 30, 1938, were only $9,304.50.

of which $1,712.50 was for members' dues.

Nevertheless, on September 19, 1938, the Board of Directors voted the expenditure of $4,400. per year to pay the salary of an executive secretary, with an additional sum of $600. to be allotted annually for the editor of Profit Bound. The retiring president, J. H. Dumbell, was appointed to both positions.

At the same meeting, I. Stauffer Eshleman, of New York, was elected president; J. R. Raymer, St. Paul, first vice-president and Paul Easby-Smith, Washington, D. C., second vice-president.

THIS action was taken at the 1938 convention which was held in the William Penn Hotel, Pittsburgh. The early records reveal that the first official convention and exhibition was in St. Louis, September 23, 24 and 25, 1936, in the Coronado Hotel. There were seventeen exhibitors in the show, and eighty-five attended the banquet. The total convention attendance is not noted.

A reference to the pre-World War II minutes of the Association reveals that the major promotional programs were the efforts to stop direct bidding by the manufacturers, and that they were not entirely successful because of the existing economic conditions throughout the country.

By September 30, 1939, the gross income had increased to $10,339.10, of which $8,904. was from advertising in Profit Bound. With the increase in operating expenses, there was a net loss that fiscal year of $2,019.30 as the total income from members' dues was only $1,195. It was evident that the distributing industry was not supporting the small but determined group of men who were devoting hours, weeks and months of their time to build up a trade association for their industry. As I write this, I feel a renewed sympathy for them. The builders' hardware distributing industry compares favorably with the leading trades in the country but, as a whole, it was not conscious of the need of a trade group. In recent years, the growth in membership has been marvelous, but there still remains approximately one hundred eligible contract firms who should be NBHA members. Many are free-riders in the programs which the Association members support financially. There are a number who reply to invitations to become members by stating that, as one or more of their personnel are members of the Society, they are not interested in joining us.

To our annoyance, we received letters stating that the one-third cost of the Society dues, compared with Association, makes the former more attractive to them. The fallacy is that these firms are *not* members of the Society nor is the Society a rival trade association.

THERE is a gap in the records of the Association from October 3, 1939 to September 17, 1941, but Profit Bound, in December 1940, states that J. H. Dumbell has resigned as secretary and that, beginning January 1, 1941, Frank H. Sherwood would succeed him, acting in the new capacity of executive secretary-treasurer of both the Association and the Society. Sherwood had been with Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. and Schlage Lock Co.

With our participation in the world conflict in the offing, he started his career with the Association under the most inauspicious circumstances. Until he resigned to become advertising manager for Lockwood Hardware Mfg. Co. in May 1944, he labored under conditions that would have long since discouraged a less optimistic trade secretary. Both membership and income were declining steadily, and only by practicing the strictest economy was he able to hold the Association together. I believe that when he turned the position over to me on June 1, 1944, he breathed a sigh of relief. Within a few weeks, I discovered that I had not inherited any prize and, at times, I thought I detected the ghostly chuckles of Frank Sherwood.

THESE memoirs would not be complete did they not include an early history of the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultants.

Shortly after the formation of the Association in 1934, the consultants employed by the member firms were being urged to refer to themselves as Builders' Hardware Engineers. The first suggestion that a technical Society be formed within the industry, came on September 20, 1938 when Adon H. Brownell, then vice-president of H. D. Taylor & Co. in Buffalo and, at the present, vice-president of Lockwood Hardware Mfg. Co., addressed the 1938 Association convention in Pittsburgh.

Quoted are excerpts from Mr. Brownell's talk. "The other day Ted Davidson, Yale & Towne salesman, who calls on us in Buffalo brought into my office a suggestion which has appealed to me, and which I offer to you. He said, 'Why shouldn't builders' hardware engineers be registered just the same as architects and engineers?'

"It is a splendid suggestion. Every real builders' hardware man should be for it. Any building of sufficient importance to use a registered architect should require a registered builders' hardware engineer. Any registered builders' hardware engineer working with the registered architect would be adequately paid, which has not been true in the past. He would be responsible for the work he specified, as is the heating and plumbing engineer. Here is an objective for the good of the industry."

Acting on this very excellent suggestion, a committee, consisting of Howard MacCarthy, Jr., Baltimore; John H. Freeman, Detroit and Paul Easby-Smith, Washington, D. C., was appointed by the Association president, I. Stauffer Eshleman, to investigate the possibilities of organizing the American Society of Hardware Engineers.

At the annual convention in the Hotel New Yorker, on October 5, 1939, Howard MacCarthy, Jr. spoke, outlining the recommendations of the committee.

He said, in part: "We believe there is definitely the need of two strong organizations in the industry. The National Contract Hardware Association includes the broader field, taking in all types of hardware, and there will be many eligible for membership in the Association who will not be qualified for membership in this Society. There will be owners of businesses, jobbers, wholesalers and retailers who employ hardware consultants to manage their contract departments, and this, of course, makes the owners eligible for membership in the NCHA, but very probably they couldn't qualify for the Society. On the other hand, their employees (the architectural hardware consultants) would be members of the Society rather than the Association. The NCHA is for the firm—the Society for the individual. Then there will be hardware consultants in the employ of hardware manufacturers who would not be eligible for membership in the NCHA but who would be eligible for membership in the Society."

MacCarthy then went on to explain the difficulties encountered in deciding upon a name for the new or-

ganization. Bernard F. Garvey, a patent and trademark attorney in Washington, D. C. had been retained to investigate the use of the title "hardware engineer." He submitted this proposal to the National Council of State Boards of Engineering Examiners, who replied that they feared that the Engineering Registration Authorities in the various states would object, and suggested that the chairman of the Legislative Committee of the National Society of Professional Engineers be communicated with. The latter stated that objections would be raised if any applications were made for a charter allowing the use of the word "engineer."

Faced with the problem of either finding a new name for the proposed Society or dropping the idea entirely, the committee visited Washington, D. C. and called upon Theodore I. Coe, technical secretary of the American Institute of Architects. He suggested that architectural hardware consultant be adopted.

Thereupon, it was recommended to the Association's Board of Directors that the new organization be known as the American Society of Architectural Hardware Consultants and the Board authorized the committee to proceed with the organization under this name.

The Society was incorporated in 1940, under the laws of the District of Columbia. At the first meeting on September 26, 1940, in the Palmer House, Chicago, Howard MacCarthy, Jr., of Baltimore, was elected the first president; I. Stauffer Eshleman, New York, first vice-president; Paul Easby-Smith, Washington, D. C., second vice-president and Carl D. Himes, Dayton, Ohio, secretary-treasurer. Mr. Himes resigned his office in 1941 and was succeeded by Frank H. Sherwood, who became the permanent executive secretary-treasurer, without salary, and I replaced him on June 1, 1944, on the same basis.

IN 1944, I was invited to take the position, by the Executive Committee, of executive secretary-treasurer of the Association and the Society. I assumed office on June 1, 1944, disposing of the business of John R. Schoemer Co. My first act was to employ a firm of certified public accountants to examine the books of account. I was considerably dismayed by their report; the Association apparently was bankrupt. For some time the unpaid dues accounts had been carried on the books as assets, and when these were eliminated, on the advice of the accountants, such items as salaries, rent and miscellaneous items could not be paid. I racked my brains to locate a source for a loan, and it occurred to me that the Society could come to our rescue. With the exception of postage, stationery and other minor items, they had no other expenses (all others being paid by the Association) and had acquired a small surplus. I phoned John H. Freeman, the A.S.A.H.C. president, in Detroit and negotiated a loan of $1,500.

I knew that if the existence of the Association was to be continued, additional sources of revenue must be found. A drive for new members, in the war years, was not feasible. However, the Association had a valuable property in the trade magazine, Profit Bound, and I believed that it could be converted into an income producing agency. The Executive Committee granted my request to revamp the publication, and the first issue of Hardware Consultant and Contractor appeared in September 1944. At the request of the Society, it was also noted on the masthead that it was their official publication. In granting this request, the Association remained solely the owner and publisher.

I did not have the faintest idea as to the necessary techniques to be employed in compiling a trade publication, but I haunted the offices of people in the publishing and printing fields, and the first edition produced some favorable comments. It is a well established fact that there are many kind individuals in our industry!

It was a one man job producing the magazine each month. The staff consisted of a woman secretary and me. Copy was prepared and galleys edited, and when the completed copies were received from the printers, they were placed in envelopes prepared earlier. I then borrowed a push cart from the printer and, dodging through traffic on Lexington Avenue, traveled five city blocks to the post office.

In the meantime, I was phoning, writing and visiting prospective advertisers, and many were responding splendidly. It was a seven days a week job as, in addition, the routine work of the Association and the Society had to be maintained. The work was too heavy for a staff of two, but funds were lacking to enlarge it.

IT is often said that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread". In September 1944, W. E. Peterson, of St. Louis, succeeded Ralph F. Barber as president of the Association, and he and I began developing ambitious plans to enlarge the membership. A convention was planned for October 1945, in the Palmer House, Chicago. Permission was secured to draw upon the balance of a fund, previously assigned for the exclusive use of a former coordinator, to enable Peterson and me to embark upon a trip from coast to coast seeking new members and organizing local groups. We departed in May 1945, and visited Pittsburgh, Cleveland, St. Louis, Kansas City, Denver, San Francisco and Los Angeles. It was quite successful; many new members were signed up and chapters, now designated builders' hardware clubs, were formed.

The first experiment in organizing chapters occurred in January 1945, in New York City. I was convinced that if those in both the producing and distributing industries could be induced to meet locally at frequent intervals, the promotional work of the Association and the Society could be greatly enhanced. I invited an old friend, the late Clifton McKenna, then manager of the P. & F. Corbin New York office, to act as chairman of the first meeting to be held in the Hotel New Yorker. Came the meeting night and with it a blizzard, but sixteen hardy souls appeared and formed the Metropolitan Chapter.

This was the beginning of the builders' hardware movement which has since spread throughout this country and Canada. In 1949, the Association's attorneys objected to the close affiliation between the Association and the chapters, fearing possible legal complications should any of them wander off the reservation. A divorce was arranged, and the chapters became builders' hardware clubs; the Society then forming regional chapters of their members.

THE Association was now beginning to prosper and was growing rapidly in membership and in influence in its industry. V-J Day arrived in August 1945, and with it, the cessation of hostilities. I informed the Executive Committee that I was holding them to their promise to release me within three months after the end of the war. I was working for a small salary, I told them, and could no longer afford to do so. In addition, my former business associates were returning from their war duties and were urging me to formulate plans to

return to becoming a distributor. The builders' hardware future appeared attractive in New York, and there was an excellent prospect to enjoy profits which were denied us during the depression and later, the war.

The Executive Committee were reluctant to allow me to depart, and delegated President Peterson to confer with me. He had one persuasive argument to influence me; he knew that I was fascinated by the work I was performing for the Association. As a consequence, a five year contract was drawn up under the terms of which both the Association and I were willing to gamble.

As our income increased, the administrative staff grew. In 1946 Robert G. Ryan was employed to work on the magazine. He had been employed as a reporter on the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger* and later, the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. During World War II, he became South American editor of the Army's magazine, *Yank*. Since that time he has grown in experience and a knowledge of our industry. The result: our very excellent publication, *Hardware Consultant*.

Although I was treasurer, I was unsuccessful in obtaining a satisfactory assistant to handle the books of account and to assist me with the financial problems. Knowing my difficulties, the late Ernest J. Winters, our C.P.A., sent a young man to me, Ronald J. Winters (no relation) to apply for the position. I hired him in 1950, and he has since become assistant treasurer. He has solved all my difficulties.

In 1953, the Executive Committee began to urge me to obtain an assistant who could replace me should an emergency arise. I sought far and wide for the perfect man for the position, and was delighted when an application arrived from William S. Haswell, who was then representing the Russell & Erwin Division in Texas. He was a "natural" for the job. He had a gift for trade association work, and his organization of our technical training has been outstanding.

Some of my industry friends say that I have done a good job for the Association; they are being too generous. A large portion of whatever success we have attained has been due to the loyal support of my associates in the New York office, and to the fine officers and directors who have worked with us over the years. To me, there are no finer people in the world than those in the builders' hardware industry, both distributing and producing.

Now I retire October 31, 1959, after more than fifteen years of service in the Association's employ. I have no intention of sitting on my rear end, and reconciling myself to an unjust fate, that of a man growing old and made unhappy by idleness. One night a friend inquired if I had a hobby to occupy me, and my wife replied for me, "Yes, he has two hobbies—the National Builders' Hardware Association and *Hardware Consultant*." I am going to miss both.

Maybe I will do some consultant work; after fifty-three years in an industry, I surely have acquired some knowledge of the products. Several years ago, I bought an interest for my younger son in a wholesale liquor distributing firm in Connecticut. Recently, they elected me president, and I now may be able to devote some time to this corporation, which I have never been able to do heretofore because of my duties in the Association.

Bernard Baruch has said that he "is a firm believer in the philosophy that a man my age can match wits with anyone, regardless of age, for a diminishing number of hours each year." I have not encountered the diminishing hours as yet, but I will—I probably will.

The End