

## RE-TURNING DOORKNOBS back to TRINITY COLLEGE

By **Richard Turk '70**

Back in the day, the doors of Williams Memorial sported doorknobs with the college seal on them. When Dick Wyland '70 entered The General Theological Seminary in New York City after graduation he unexpectedly found one of these doorknobs placed on a seminary door. After a quick trip to the hardware store, he liberated the Trinity doorknob and for the last forty years it has resided in a cabin in the Adirondacks. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1970, that doorknob will finally be returned to its rightful home.



Class of '70 Antique Doorknob, recovered by Dick Wyland

Trinity's College seal is found on this antique doorknob. The history of the college seal can be found in Peter Knapp's book on the history of Trinity College and on the archived copy of the Watkinson Library webpage "Trinity Traditions":

#### 4. Trinity College Seal

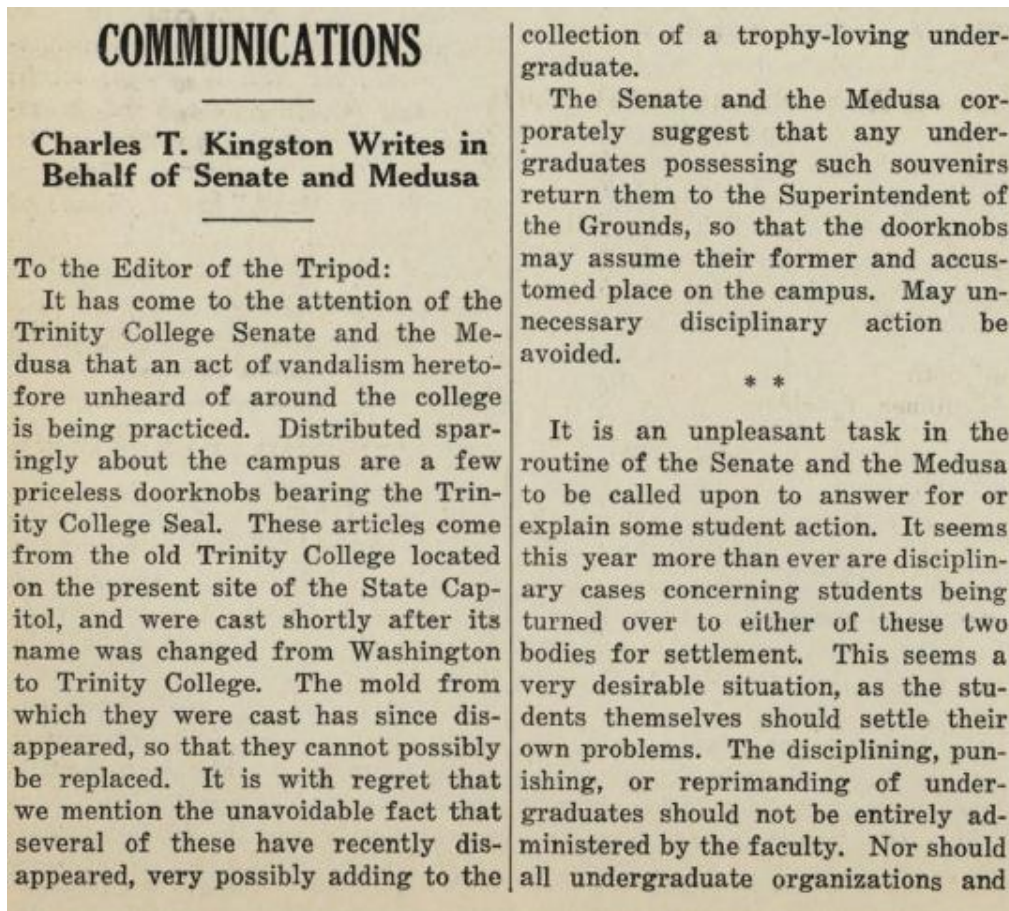
The College seal has been in use since the late 19th century, and reflects the change in the name of the institution from Washington College to Trinity College that occurred in 1845. The seal is black or blue in color, the lettering and various devices appearing in white or in a formal gold. In the center of the shield is the facade of a Greek-Revival building that represents Seabury Hall. The latter was constructed in 1825 on Trinity's first campus in downtown Hartford, and was used as a lecture hall, library, and chapel. It was named after the Rt. Rev. Samuel Seabury, the first bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. Surrounding the building are 13 stars symbolizing the 13 colonies. At its inception in 1823, Trinity was named in recognition of George Washington, and the stars call attention to his role as a founding father of the country. Crossed behind the shield are an ornamental key and a staff. The key connotes the physical property of the College, and to this day at presidential inauguration ceremonies an ornate key is presented to the new president symbolically entrusting to that person the care of the College's physical resources. The staff or crosier in the form of a shepherd's crook symbolizes a bishop's pastoral responsibilities. Surmounting the shield is a bishop's miter. The staff and miter signify Bishop Seabury as well as the principal founder of the College, the Rt. Rev. Thomas Church Brownell, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut and Trinity's first president from 1824 to 1831. The abbreviated Latin inscription surrounding the upper two-thirds of the shield reads "The Seal of the College of the Most Holy Trinity." The Latin motto at the bottom is "For Church and Country."



So...how did this doorknob end up at the General Theological Seminary sometime before 1970?

A search of the Trinity College Archives uncovered a theft of Old Campus doorknobs from Jarvis Hall in November

1933, as reported in both the *Trinity Tripod* and the *Hartford Courant*. The student Senate of Trinity and the secretive Medusa suggested that the doorknobs had been stolen from Jarvis Hall.



(*Trinity Tripod*, November 28, 1933, p. 2)

Brought from the old college located at the present site of the State Capitol building, the knobs were said to be priceless and irreplaceable because the original molds were lost. Then President, Dr. Remsen Ogilby, said the

## ATHENAEUM ASKS FOR SENATE APPROPRIATION

### Body Rules That No Fraternity May Have Managership for Two Years in Row

At the Senate Meeting of November 20, several questions of importance were discussed, among these being a request by Senf, President of the Athenaeum, for fifty dollars to be used for purchasing books for the Society's prospective library.

In his request Senf pointed out that the only books available to the Society were those in the College library, and since these volumes can only be used for a limited amount of time before they have to be returned, they are not very practicable for the Athenaeum's use. The speaker also mentioned that the Society hoped to be able to present several of its older members with charms. The money for these tokens would be included in the fifty dollars originally requested. No definite action was taken on the question at the meeting, and it is still being considered.

During the course of the meeting it was suggested that no fraternity house be allowed to have the managership of a sport two years in succession. In other words, the manager and assistant manager of any one sport cannot come from the same house. It is, however, permissible for a house to have the managership of any number of sports in the same year.

The College's participation in the Community Chest program was brought up, and after some discussion it was decided that each fraternity and the Commons Club would give five dollars apiece. The neutral body will make whatever contribution it can through the medium of money boxes to be placed in the Union and in the Dining Hall.

There was an investigation of the lost doorknobs, which have disappeared from several of the doors in Jarvis Hall. These knobs were brought up from the old College, that was located downtown and are practically priceless because they cannot be replaced. Dr. Ogilby pointed out that the punishment of the offenders would be quite severe if it was ever found out who took them. During the same discussion, the disappearance of the Wesleyan flag and of a doormat from one of the fraternity houses at Middletown was likewise investigated.

(Trinity Tripod, November 28, 1933, p. 1)

## Old Doorknobs Stolen From Trinity Building

Several valuable doorknobs, that date back to when the name of the college was changed from Washington to Trinity, have disappeared from Jarvis Hall at Trinity College. It is believed that they are the spoils of a souvenir collector. Originally part of the old college on the site of the State Capitol the moulds from which they were cast have been lost and it is impossible to replace the knobs. President Rensen B. Ogilby has threatened the culprits with severe punishment if caught. The Trinity Tripod this week, in an article written by C. T. Kingston for the Senate and Medusa, pleads for the return of the doorknobs.

(Hartford Courant, November 1933)

punishment for the theft would be quite severe if the offenders were ever found.

Eric Stoykovich, Trinity College Archivist, checked Glenn Weaver's book, *The History of Trinity College* (1967) and found some reference (p. 186) to the demolishing and removal of the Old Campus, but no special mention of the doorknobs:

During the summer of 1878, the old buildings were quickly demolished. No stones from the old buildings were sentimentally incorporated into the new Seabury and Jarvis, but one of the large Portland stone bases of the chapel columns was rescued by the Alumni to be made into a tombstone for Professor Jim, who had died in May, 1878.<sup>127</sup> As the buildings were being destroyed, "relic hunters" gathered bits of wood, stone, and metal, and canes made from the spindles of the bannisters of Jarvis Hall were especially prized.<sup>128</sup> After the buildings had been removed the ground was ploughed over, and the grading of the Old Campus as part of the State Capitol grounds was begun, leaving no trace of the institution which had occupied the site for over half a century.<sup>129</sup>

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Two pictures of the Trinity College doorknobs appeared in an online version of the book by Leonard Blumin, *Victorian*

*Decorative Art*, published in 1983. In the Antique Doorknob Photo Library ([antiquedoorknobs.us](http://antiquedoorknobs.us)), editor (and President of the Antique Doorknob Collectors of America) Paul Woodfin describes these pictures:

First, know that we are a non-profit charitable club which was founded in 1981 to aid collectors of antique hardware and educate the public about antique hardware. Our website is part of our education effort and is based on a 1983 book (*Victorian Decorative Art*) written by one of our members. There is scarce documentation about antique hardware. Some of our members are in the custom hardware manufacturing business, including E. R. Butler & Company in NYC and Tice Industries in Portland, OR. They have made hardware replicas for many historic buildings across the country, along with custom hardware for the residences of prominent people.

The Trinity College knob was first shown in a 2000s printed version of this publication, although that particular knob is domed shape, unlike the one in Wyland's possession.

[P-62020 \(antiquedoorknobs.us\)](http://antiquedoorknobs.us)



[P-62600 \(antiquedoorknobs.us\)](http://antiquedoorknobs.us)



Photos from Antique Doorknobs Photo Library, courtesy of ADCA and Paul Woodfin.

Perhaps there were two types of knobs with the Trinity seal on them. Emblematic hardware was designed and used in buildings starting in the 1880s and into the 1930s (though there are a few examples from the 1870s).

Therefore, Woodfin's guess would be that at least two large college buildings with many doors probably used these hardware designs. He has not researched Trinity's campus spaces exhaustively, but a classroom or dorm would be likely candidates. Given the drum style of this doorknob, he thinks P-62020 (see picture above) probably was made before 1900.

In 1824 Trinity's first campus, founded as Washington College, consisted of two Greek-revival buildings. The new Seabury and Jarvis buildings were built in 1878, and Northam a few years later, after the college sold their prior campus to the state of Connecticut for a site to build the new Capitol. Paul Woodfin has seen one of the drum type knobs before and it might be from around 1880, but there is no possibility that this one can be assigned an earlier date. Connecticut manufacturers (Russell & Erwin, Corbin, Yale, Mallory Wheeler, and Yale & Towne) were early doorknob and hardware manufacturers and usually these manufacturers kept the casting molds, but unfortunately those were lost before or during the 1960s, when they were all bought by modern companies and moved to new factories after purging their past inventories by sale or by dumpster. If they were from the old campus, Woodfin can guarantee these knobs are not from the 1850s or earlier.

Unfortunately, most institutions of Trinity's age would renovate and replace old hardware, even though the older hardware was of far greater quality than modern hardware, even back in the 1930s. Woodfin's guess is that



both knob designs were plentiful in the 1878-1880s buildings, but some or all may have been removed in renovations over many decades.

Paul Woodfin adds that "a picture of the second doorknob is also attached" (see P-62600). "This doorknob was saved from an eBay sale many years ago and was just cleaned up so it could be added to the photo library. It is difficult to locate one of these Trinity seal knobs in good condition that someone would be willing to sell. If a reproduction is needed, [Woodfin] would suggest talking to Butler or Tice about casting copies. Wilmette Hardware north of Chicago also makes castings, and there may be others."

Evidence of the date of the doorknob can be found by examining changes made in the seal over time. Below are pictures of the seal dating from 1880 to the present.

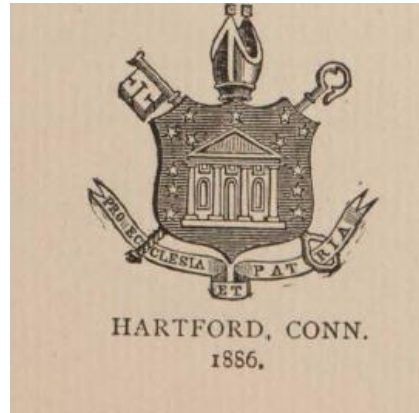
1880



1882



1886



1904



1932



1942



1966



Current Seal:



Several changes observed to the seal from 1880 are the position of the staff (or crozier) over the letters 'Pro Ecc' in Pro Ecclesia, the position of the key over the letters 'ria' in Patria, and the size of the door and windows in the Greek-revival building (the first Seabury Hall). The antique doorknob matches the seal from 1880 taken from the *Trinity Ivy* published in 1879-1880.

Ironically, for the Class of '70, the doorknob story was not finished after Wyland reached out to the Class. Another doorknob has surfaced from our classmate, Joel Greenspan, on the occasion of our 51st anniversary! Joel

writes: "A day or so before graduation in May 1970, I walked across the Quad from Woodward to Jarvis Hall to visit a classmate. As I recall, the entry door to Jarvis was intact as I entered. However, as I departed the building after my visit, through the same door, and placed my hand on the inner doorknob, the knob came off in my hand. I discovered that the outer doorknob was (recently) missing, but the inner knob (apparently an original and decorated with the College Seal) and its attached spindle was in my hand. I have kept this artifact safe since then and it seems appropriate to return it in commemoration of the Class of 1970 50th Reunion."

Repatriated Jarvis Doorknob



Jarvis Doorknob with spindle



Perhaps, in 1970, a few of the antique artifacts still could be found on campus. As Joel questions: "Is the (missing) outer knob being kept safe by another classmate?" We may never know.

The Class of 1970 now is pleased to present these antique doorknobs to its rightful owner, Trinity College, where they will be preserved in the College Archives by the staff of the Watkinson Library.

Like a doorknob, Trinity indeed does open many doors. And does it with style. These antique doorknobs will be re-turned to the College during celebration of our 50th reunion at Homecoming/Reunion on October 1st to 3rd in 2021!

**Richard Wyland** (presenter)

**Joel Greenspan** (co-presenter)

**Richard Turk** (researcher)

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