

# American Craftsmen

## KNOB APPEAL

Whether you're interested in historically accurate replicas or artistic originals, customizing the hardware in your house takes metal to the max. BY BART BOEHLERT



### TEST YOUR METAL

Customized hardware can be made in a myriad of designs and finishes.

ABOVE: Sterling silver-plated doorknobs and levers come from E.R. Butler, a New York City specialist in period style.

When William K. Vanderbilt Sr. built the colossal Marble House in Newport, Rhode Island, for his wife Alva in 1892, doors throughout the mansion were installed without knobs, as they were meant to be opened from the inside by a footman. Newspapers noted that guests need never touch a door and proclaimed the gesture the ultimate in opulence.

Today, even demanding Vanderbilts could be pleased: Hardware has evolved well beyond its utilitarian roots and has emerged as the final decorative detail in a well-designed house. From doorknobs to lock sets, clients are requesting everything from intricately cut crystal knobs to

silver-plated switch plates. A number of specialty shops, eager to meet the demand, are designing and manufacturing historically accurate period hardware as well as artistic originals. E.R. Butler & Co., in New York City, is considered by many to be the preeminent manufacturer of original pieces. "Custom hardware is great for a homeowner or architect who wants to build a residence with historical accuracy," says Rhett Butler, president of E.R. Butler.

From English Adams to Art Deco to Arts and Crafts, the company offers a lot to choose from, including 75 different patinas.

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# Homestyle