

# Design notes

By Allison Eckardt Ledes



## A panoply of hardware

Above the noisy hustle and bustle of the recently transformed section of New York City known as SoHo there exists a serenely beautiful, Zen-like space that is the headquarters of the firm E. R. Butler and Company. Inside, rather than orange-robed Buddhist monks folded in prayer, one finds a showroom that glistens and gleams with all types of architectural and furniture hardware in drawer after drawer and on panel after panel. Here one can find replicas of seventeenth-century brass Venetian door pulls; French eighteenth-century gilt and chased locks and keys; finely etched American crystal doorknobs; rugged wrought-iron drawer pulls; and sleek, stainless-steel hinges designed yesterday—in short, just about anything one requires for the suc-

cessful completion of the perfectionist's interior. Moreover, if you do not find exactly what you had in mind, or the perfect match to the period example you hold in your hand, Butler will have it custom-made for you.

Of particular interest to readers of *ANTIQUES* are the fruits of E. R. Butler's partnership with W. C. Vaughan Company, which is the successor firm to four nineteenth-century Boston hardware manufacturers: Enoch Robinson and Company; L. S. Hall, William Hall and Company, and John Tein Company. Vaughan manufactures replicas of American hardware used in the colonial and Federal periods, drawing on its own historical designs and on examples that survive in period buildings in New England and on the Atlantic seaboard. The firm has supplied hardware to museums such as the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Williamsburg, Virginia. Butler has amplified Vaughan's historical line of furniture hardware by creating eight additional sizes of each available pattern and by designing complementary architectural fittings (including hinges, locks, cane bolts, cylinder rings and covers, key escutcheons



and covers, thumb turns, and doorstops).

What sets Butler apart from others, however, is that it offers more than seventy-five patination formulas that are applied by hand in order to achieve subtly different, yet consistent, finishes. Many of these are applied in studios behind the walls of the New York City showroom. All finishing, including hammering and stressing, is also done by hand.

In addition to being the exclu-



sive agent for W. C. Vaughan and Company, E. R. Butler is also the sole United States representative for Maison J. Vervloet-Faes of Brussels (founded 1905), Maison Bricard of Paris (founded 1782), Fonderia Giovanni Valesse of Venice, and the eastern states representative for the contemporary stainless-steel products manufactured by FSB of Brakel, Germany.

Butler is dedicated to preserving the artistic nature of decorative hardware as it was produced over centuries, and it maintains an extensive library for the study of metals and other materials, patterns, methods of production, and finishing. Butler offers design research and



analysis, conservation and restoration of antiques, the development of prototypes, and engineering and fabrication services. The company has the capabilities to polish, plate, patinate, lacquer; and otherwise add texture to hardware surfaces. It will also furnish custom lighting and plumbing fittings, molded and ornamental metalwork, and art glass. Butler is open by appointment to the trade only at its New York showroom and may be reached by telephoning 212-925-3565 or faxing 212-925-3305. Its Web site address is [www.erbutler.com](http://www.erbutler.com).

Examples of hardware available in reproduction from E. R. Butler and Company. At the center is the patent model for "Attaching Glass Knobs to Metallic Sockets," an Enoch and G. W. Robinson patent of 1837.

