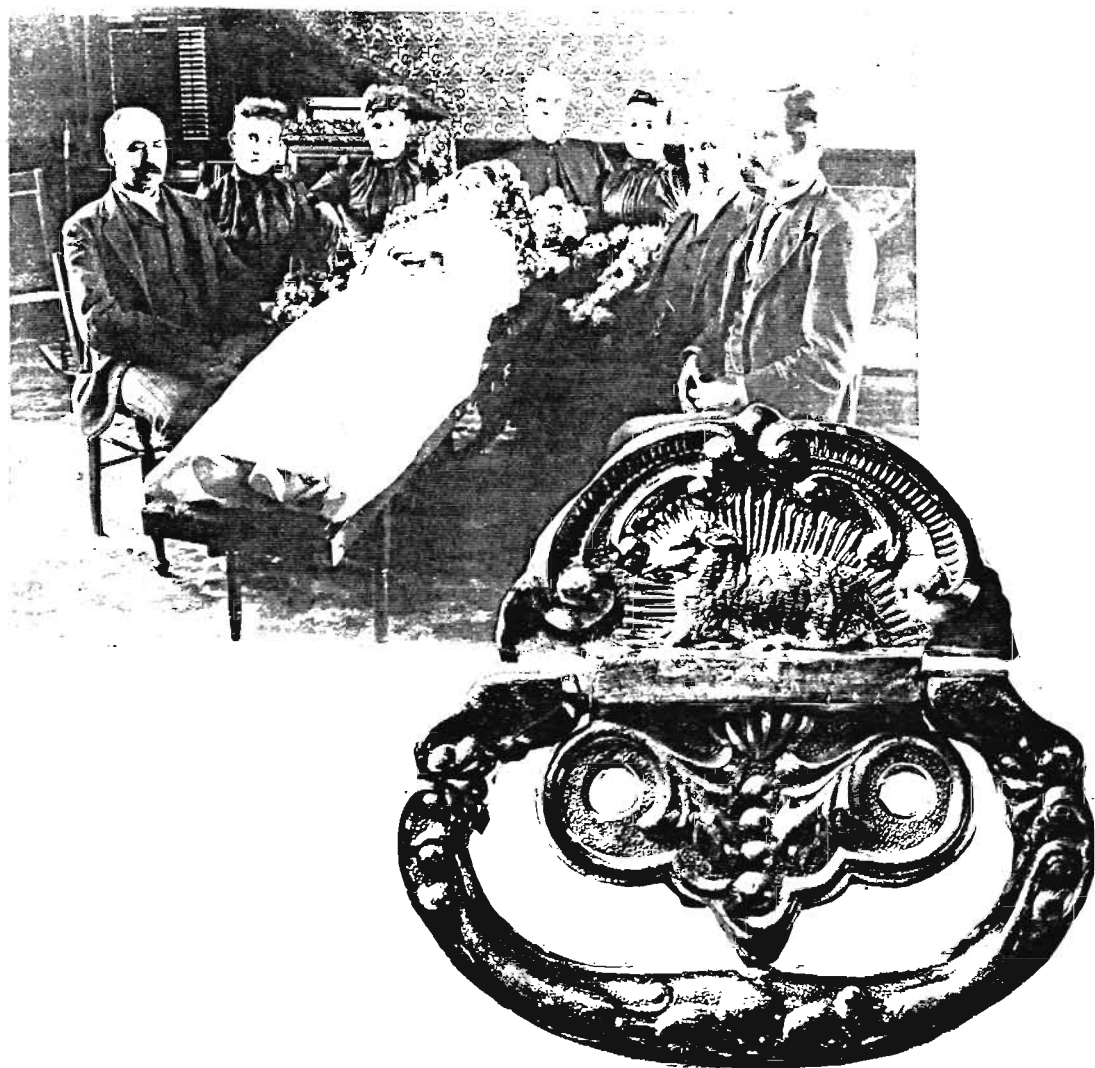


**REMEMBER MAN THOU ART DUST:
COFFIN HARDWARE OF THE
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY**



CHICORA FOUNDATION RESEARCH SERIES 2

REMEMBER MAN THOU ART DUST:
COFFIN HARDWARE OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

RESEARCH SERIES 2

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to those who never knew truth nor much
beauty, and small joy but the goodness of
endurance; to all those who in all times
labored in the earth and wrought their
time blindly, patient in the sun . . . to
those who have built this time in the earth in
all its ways, and who dwell in it variously
as they may or must: farmers and workers . . .
laboring in the land and in materials and
in the flesh and in the mind and in the heart:
knowing little and less of great and little
matters; enduring all things and most of all
enduring living, each in his own way of patience.

Agee, *Permit Me Voyage*

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Historical archaeologists increasingly recognize the potential of burials to answer not only questions concerning the physical attributes and health states of populations, but also questions concerning status and a society's perception of death and burial. Artifacts found with historical burials have always been realized to hold potential for dating the interment, although most artifacts provide only a broad time range (see, for example, Rose 1982:68). The significance of the casket or coffin hardware, however, has been of less concern. This is unfortunate, because the hardware can supplement dating procedures and can contribute to an understanding of economic and social status. We should note that some individuals have recognized the dating potential of coffin hardware (Randolph Richardson in Orser et al. 1982:460) and others have called for stylistic studies of the hardware. Orser, in the Millwood study, states

the study of burial goods from nineteenth century Euro-American cemeteries has the potential to make meaningful contributions to historical archaeology and anthropology. These data [on coffin hardware] seem to have the potential of contributing to a better understanding of the social and economic dynamics of the historic period (Orser et al. 1982: 463).

The purpose of this paper is to begin, in an orderly and logical fashion, the study of coffin hardware and as a beginning cannot be an exhaustive treatment of the subject. This brief discussion, however, should be of use to archaeologists and physical anthropologists who are involved in burial or cemetery relocation projects.

This work was born of the fortuitous discovery of a large "cache" of late nineteenth and early twentieth century hardware at the general merchandise store of A.L. Calhoun, Jr. in Clio, South Carolina and a further discovery of early and mid-twentieth century hardware at the Sumter Casket Company in Sumter, South Carolina by the authors. Following these discoveries the trade catalogs and journals available at the National Foundation of Funeral Service, Evanston, Illinois were examined, as well as a series of catalogs spanning the period from 1865 through 1966. This discussion concentrates on the Calhoun collection, although we will briefly describe both collections and how they may relate to the overall economic patterns of rural South Carolina.

The A.L. Calhoun, Jr. Store

In 1894 A.L. Calhoun, Jr., not yet of legal age, purchased a general merchandising store on the corner of Main and Society streets in Clio, South Carolina from Roper and Herring, through his father, A.L. Calhoun, Sr. (Figure 1). This store, a wooden L-shaped building, had several proprietors and the Clio crossroads apparently have been the location of a general store since the 1840s (Sherry Gillespie, personal communication 1984; see also Campbell 1854:316). Calhoun's purchase marks a new beginning for the store, which was completely restocked by a factor in Charleston, South Carolina (Sherry Gillespie, personal communication 1984). Calhoun replaced the wooden structure with a brick one in 1907 and as his prosperity grew he acquired the nearby Donehoe plantation. The plantation's business was directed from the store, so that it served not only the people in Clio and surrounding farmers, but also Calhoun's tenants.

Clio is a rural farming community in the central portion of Marlboro County (Figure 2). Its population in the 1890s was about 400 and had increased to 780 by 1910 (United States Department of Commerce 1913a). By 1930 Clio had grown to 1824 people, about half of whom were classified as rural (United States Department of Commerce 1932b). Marlboro County is situated in the northeastern portion of the South Carolina upper coastal plain and, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was oriented toward cotton monoculture. In 1910 over 69% of the county was farmed and 69% of that land was planted in cotton. Over 80% of the farms were operated by tenants, most of whom were blacks (United States Department of Commerce 1913b:511, 515, 519). These figures had changed little by 1930 (United States Department of Commerce 1932a:461, 483).

Calhoun's store, which today is still owned by the Calhoun family, was widely known for selling almost anything, from automobiles to coffins. This is captured in the store's slogan: "A.L. Calhoun - Dealer in Everything." The store's prominence in the community is partially evidenced by oral informants who specifically recall that A.L. Calhoun's was noted for "quality merchandise" and also by the store's size - over 4700 square feet. The two other competitors in Clio each boasted less than 1000 square feet (Sherry Gillespie, personal communication 1984; Sanborn Insurance Map of 1930).

A.L. Calhoun, Jr. was a shrewd merchant with somewhat unusual purchasing tendencies. On one occasion he bought an entire boxcar load of wooden toothpicks, not because of their demand in Clio, but because of the low, bulk price. We believe that his buying pattern of coffin hardware was similar (Sherry Gillespie, personal communication 1984). Calhoun may have purchased quantities of out-of-style hardware, because of the low price, from either jobbers, company salesmen, or catalogs. The jobbers were essentially wholesale dealers in undertaking supplies, purchasing in bulk from larger companies and selling to the businesses whose limited clientele may have required a small but varied range of hardware. Catalogs were sent on request to merchants who were free to submit large or individual "as needed" orders. The catalogs gave explicit directions on using the various "telegraph words" to order items. Prices were not included in the catalog, but printed separately on a price list which

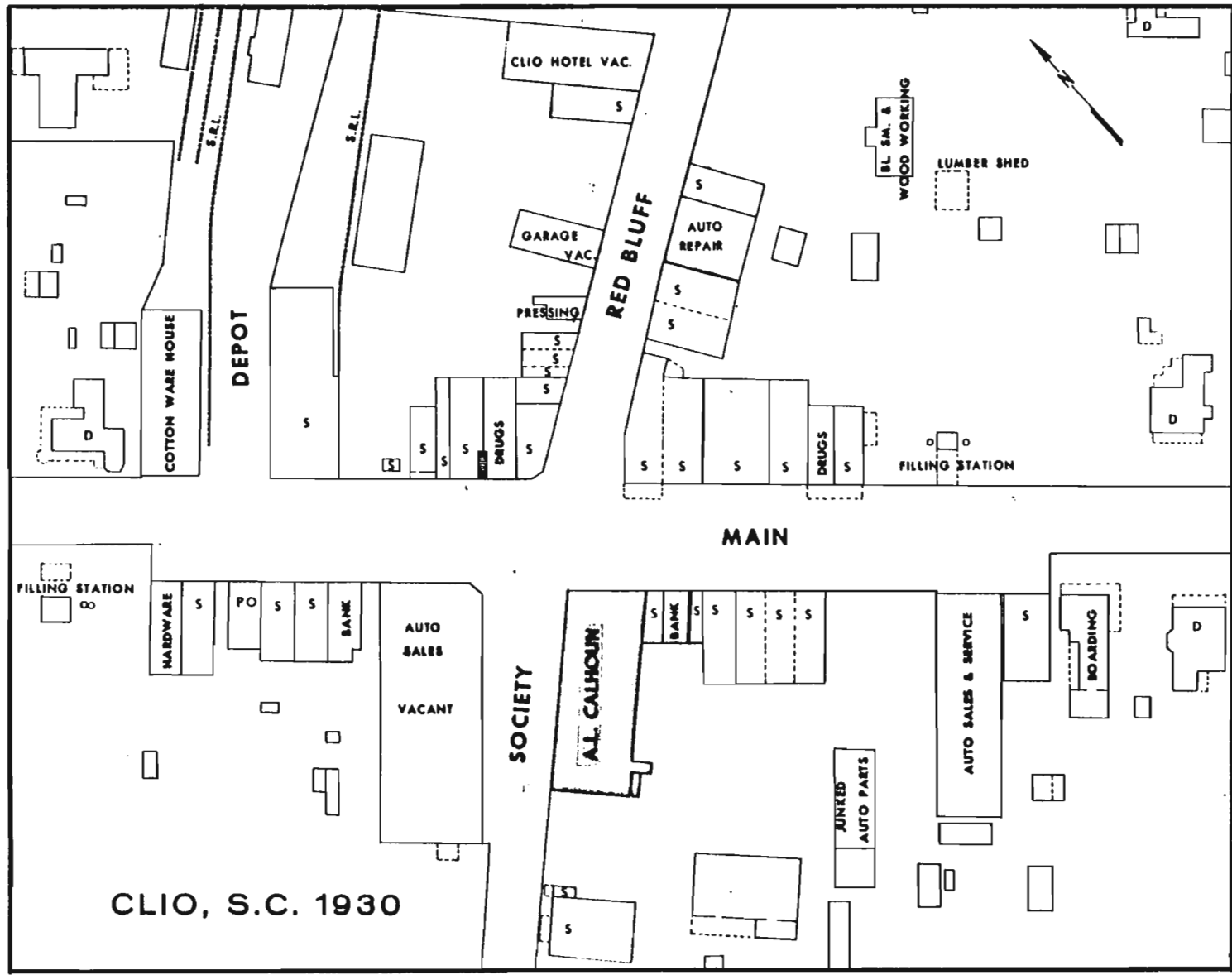


Figure 1. Clio, South Carolina. Taken from the 1930 Sanborn Insurance Map.

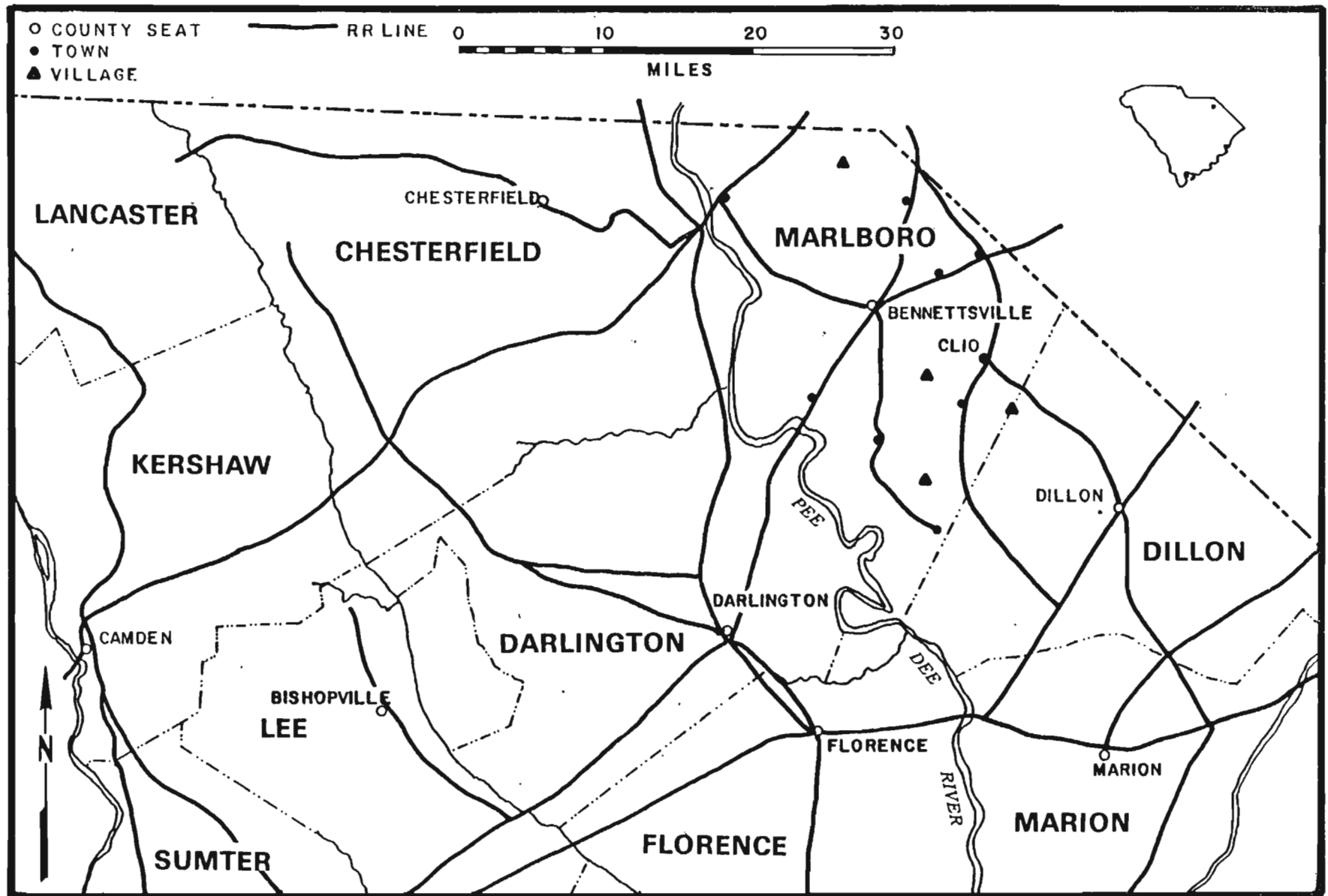


Figure 2. Marlboro County and vicinity. Taken from "Official Map of South Carolina, Issued by the State Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industries," dated 1912.

not only could be changed easily, but access to which could be carefully controlled. These catalogs routinely stated:

[t]he possession of this price list by any person is not to be construed as an offer to sell to him or to anyone else the goods listed herein, or to sell at prices stated in the list (Victor Casket Hardware Company 1956:front cover).

An earlier catalog warned:

[k]eep the Price List with the Catalog in a secure place, out of the reach of any chance visitors, otherwise the public will soon know your affairs (Paxson, Comfort and Company 1877:2).

Traveling salesmen could represent either jobbers or large companies, and worked in specific areas of the country, displaying their hardware and taking orders. A.L. Calhoun, Jr. dealt with Witherspoon Brothers and Company, Sumter, South Carolina; Burlington Coffin and Casket Company, Burlington, North Carolina; and the Atlanta Casket Company, Atlanta, Georgia. Informants also indicate that Calhoun purchased hardware from catalogs. It is unknown whether he dealt directly with any major companies or entirely with local jobbers.

Informants indicate that Calhoun offered plain wood coffins, cloth covered wood coffins (probably after c. 1906), and coffin hardware. Other details concerning the store's business are more sketchy. It is probable, based on informants, that the rural poor, including farmers and especially tenants, may have brought in "home made" coffins for a minimal amount of hardware, while the middle classes may have purchased one of the store's selections. The 1930 Sanborn Insurance map for Clio shows a wood working establishment and lumber shed, which may have been the source of the wood coffins used by the poorer segment of the population. Most revealing is that the Calhoun family, in spite of the store's reputation for quality, at least occasionally used other sources for the coffins of their own kin (a similar situation is reported in Anonymous 1914:3-4). Evidence from the store, however, indicates that it was set up to trim coffins completely. Further support is given by the listing of A.L. Calhoun, Jr. as an undertaker in the publication *Leading Funeral Directors of America* (Eckels and Mowbray c. 1911). This publication also lists the Bennett Company, another general merchandising store in Clio, located across the street from A.L. Calhoun, Jr.

High cotton prices and good farming years produced an economic boom for the years 1910-1915. As the farmers prospered, so did the merchants and the town. Calhoun was a double recipient of this prosperity, owning both the store and a large plantation. By the early 1920s, however, cotton prices were falling, the boll weevil appeared in the region, and business was suffering. In 1926 fire spread into the store from an adjacent building and damaged the store's second story. The coffin trimming room burned and much of the hardware was destroyed. According to Calhoun's sons, although he kept the undamaged hardware, he no longer sold it on a

regular basis. This terminal selling date for the hardware of 1926 is supported not only by the burned hardware, but also by the absence of styles known to occur during the 1940s and 1950s.

The Funeral Industry and Its Impact on Calhoun

While Calhoun's failure to resume the coffin and coffin hardware business may have been directly related to the fire and declining economy, it may also have been caused by gradual changes in the funeral industry. In the early nineteenth century furniture dealers and cabinet makers were the customary suppliers of wood coffins (see Campbell 1854: 370) with hardware manufacturers supplying the handles and related items (see Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980). The period from 1875 through 1900 was marked by the growth of professional and trade associations of the funeral industry and by 1900 a number of states were regulating burial practices (Habenstein and Lamers 1955:449). In addition, a variety of companies were formed which provided coffin hardware exclusively.

In spite of this, general merchandisers continued to sell coffins and hardware, especially in the rural areas of the Southeast, buying their wares from the factory or from jobbers (for example, two of the seven undertakers listed in the National Funeral Directors' Association Proceedings for 1927 are obviously furniture dealers [National Funeral Directors' Association 1927:220]). One of the major manufacturers described this situation:

there were undertakers who considered the business as a merchandising proposition pure and simple. These undertakers did not think of rendering any service, but simply sold the caskets just as they would a piece of furniture There was not embalming, no funeral directing, and mighty little interest taken in the whole proposition (Anonymous 1914:2).

Habenstein and Lamers state that professional associations were formed, at least in part, in response to destructive business practices by manufacturers and jobbers. They continue, noting that in the East, "nearly any merchant who sold furniture could include a line of caskets in his wares, and thus threaten the very existence of recognized establishments" (Habenstein and Lamers 1955:467).

The result of the associational impulse was an attempt to restrict trade only to "funeral director members in good standing with their respective associations" (Habenstein and Lamers 1955:484) and to discourage the production of less expensive items (Habenstein and Lamers 1955:489) in the late nineteenth century. By 1925 three undertakers were listed in the town of Bennettsville, about 8 miles west of Clio. Two were listed as black firms and one as a white firm. At least one was also shown under the "Embalmers" category (Commercial Service 1925: 57, 185). This suggests that by the time of the fire the Calhoun store was facing organized funeral service competition. That A.L. Calhoun

continued his business through the early 1920s indicates that the regulatory practices of the funeral industry were not successful until the further economic development of the rural south took place.

TYPES OF COFFIN HARDWARE

There are seven major categories of coffin hardware which frequently appear in catalogs: handles, thumbscrews, escutchions, plates, caplifters, decorative studs, and white metal screws and tacks. These items are described in general terms in this section and are illustrated in Figure 3.

Handles

The handles consist of up to four different parts (Figure 3). The lug, or ear, is the plate attached to the side of the coffin. The arm, or bracket, attaches the bar to the lug. The bar is that part of the handle which is held to transport the coffin. If made of steel tubes, the bars are frequently reinforced with a wood shaft. The tips cover the exposed ends of the bar as it protrudes from either side of the arms (Simmons 1975).

The two major categories of handles involve mobility. When the arm or bracket is used, the handle swings. When the bar is attached directly to the lug, the handle is in a fixed position and called stationary. There are two sizes of stationary bars, distinguished by bar length. The extension bar, which runs the length of the coffin, is used in the full length stationary handle. Smaller bars are used to individual stationary handles, usually attached three to a side.

In coffin catalogs handles may come already attached to a coffin, or be purchased separately. When purchased separately, the full length stationary handles come in a complete set for the coffin and are listed according to how many pieces are in the set, using two numbers separated by an "x." The first number indicates the lugs on each side of the coffin and the second number indicates the lugs on each end. For example, 3x0 denotes three lugs connecting the bar on the side and no lugs or bars on the ends, while 4x2 denotes four lugs connecting the bar on the side with two lugs connecting a short bar on the end (National Metal Products Company 1959:13).

The mobile or swing handle also comes in full length (extension bar) or individual (short bar) sizes, as well as two bar types: the straight bar and bail bar. The straight bar is directly attached to the arm, which has a swivel attachment to the lug. The straight bar requires tips to cover the ends on either side of the arm. This type of swing handle comes assembled and ready to attach to the coffin. The bail bar is curved, its ends reaching into the bracket of the lugs. Its ends may also be joined by a small bar which slips under the lug. The bail handle therefore comes in two or three pieces which are fitted together as the

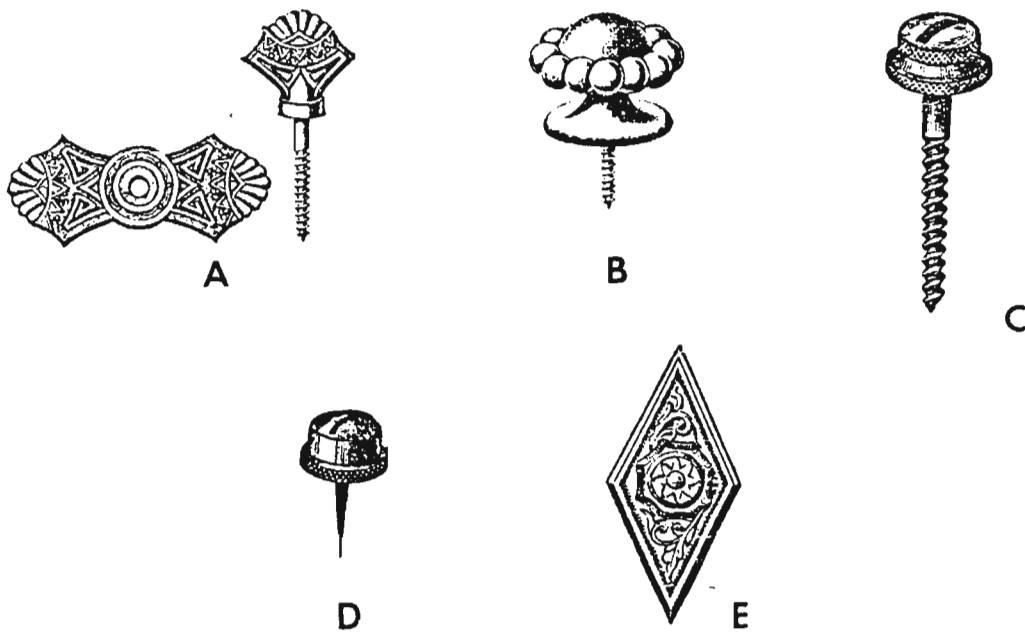
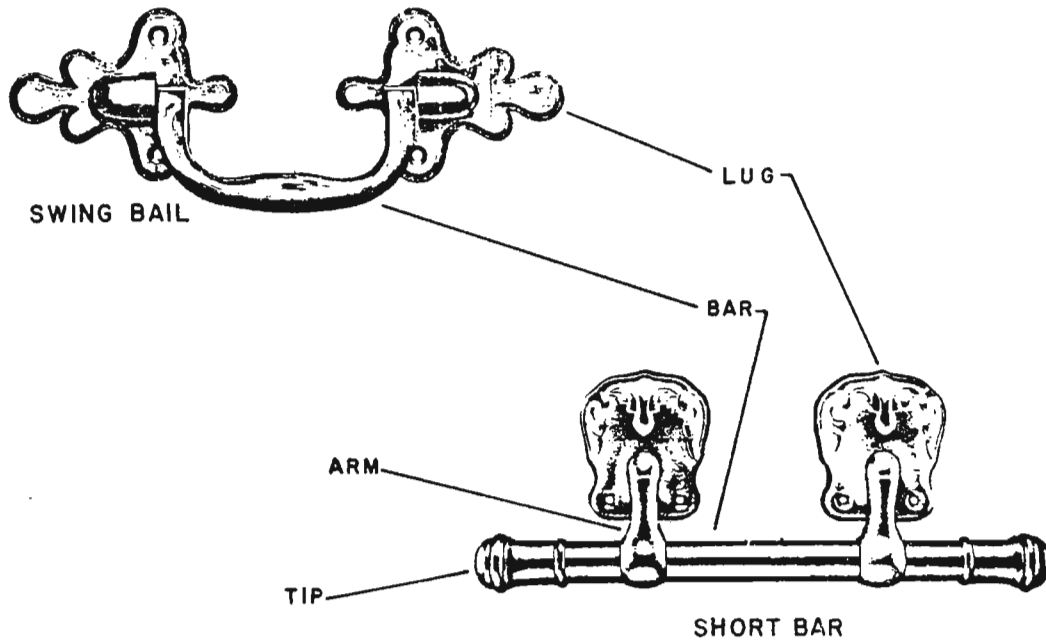


Figure 3. Handle parts of short bar and swing bail handles and miscellaneous hardware (A, thumbscrew and escutchion; B, caplifter; C, white metal coffin screw; D, coffin tack; E, stud).

handle is attached to the coffin.

Hohenschuh states that six handles were usually put on a coffin, three to a side. He notes, however, that "occasionally but four handles are put on an adult casket for the reason that there is often difficulty in securing a sufficient number of pall bearers" (Hohenschuh c. 1900:124). Hohenschuh, in recommending six handles, was advancing an industry standard, since almost all illustrated caskets, regardless of shape or construction, in both the trade journals and the catalogs show three handles to a side. The use of but two handles, however, may be related as much to the economic status of the client as to the availability of pall bearers.

The bars of short bar handles had a variety of forms: round, square, cloth, octagonal swell, plain and fancy swell, and rope. The round bar is simply round in shape, just as the square bar is squared in cross-section. The cloth bar is wrapped in white or black cloth, without padding. The swell bars are thicker in the center, narrowing down to the arm attachments. The plain swell bar has a smooth swell, while the octagonal swell bar is angled octagonally as it swells. The fancy swell bar is designed with concentric grooves encircling the bar. The rope bar is decorated with a continuous spiral design around the bar from arm to arm (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:116). A variety of companies offered white plush swell or round bars, which had the arms covered with a white plush fabric.

Handles for youths' coffins were smaller (usually denoted in catalogs as "child's size" or "smaller" as opposed to "full size"), but similar in style to adult handles. Children's handles were further reduced in size with the single lug swing bail lamb motif predominant. These handles were usually applied two to a side. Children's and youths' handles were available with a white finish, which in later years could be "pearl tinted" or shaded in pink, blue, or gold (Victor Casket Hardware Company 1956:19). In recent years children's handles have also been manufactured without reinforcing bars or of plastic, as they may be merely decorative and never used for carrying the coffin.

As interstate transportation of bodies increased, shipping boxes for the coffins became standard. Box handles used on these shipping boxes were single lug swing bails, frequently of japanned metal. Usually four handles were used, two on each side of the box. These boxes could be ordered zinc lined, equipped with rubber gaskets, and capable of being soldered shut. Such boxes would probably have been used also as outer boxes for the coffin (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:127). Outer boxes, precursors to today's cement and metal vaults, encased the coffin in the grave as additional protection. The outer box lies at the bottom of the grave shaft, the coffin lowered into it, and the lid of the box nailed or screwed shut. Although it is possible that box handles were used on the outer boxes as well as shipping boxes, we have found little documentation in either catalogs or trade journals. Outer boxes were equipped with coffin rests, or small projections on which the coffin would rest, to allow the coffin lowering straps to be removed.

Other Hardware

Thumbscrews and escutchions (thumbscrew plates) were used to attach the lid to the body of the coffin. Thumbscrews may have initially supplemented the use of nails, serving as decorative items. They eventually replaced nails altogether. The thumbscrews and associated escutchions were attached along the edge of the coffin at even intervals. The escutchions have three holes: two small ones near each end for its attachment to the lid using small nails or escutcheon pins, and a larger hole in the center through which the thumbscrew is attached. The thumbscrews and bases are frequently decorative and were sold either separately or as matching pairs. The earlier metal caskets continued to use thumbscrews, although their use declined as casket designs became more streamlined. Thumbscrews to be used on outer boxes continued to be advertised in catalogs through the 1960s (Stirling Casket Hardware Company 1961:111; Victor Casket Company 1956:234).

Another category of hardware is the metal plate which is attached to the lid of the coffin, usually in the center over the thoracic or pelvic area. These may be factory engraved or stamped with common inscriptions such as "Rest in Peace," "At Rest," "Mother," or "Our Darling." Alternatively, they may be custom engraved by the funeral director at an additional cost. Another type of name plate was a frame for paper or foil bearing an inscription.

Decorative studs, stamped from tin with small tacks soldered to the underside, were placed along the top and side edges of coffins, perhaps covering the coffin nails. Styles included large and small diamonds, ovals, and starred circles. Frequent decorative motifs were floral or starburst patterns.

Caplifters are door knob-shaped objects used to lift the top panels of the coffin for viewing. The F.H. Hill catalog offers several shapes, including round, rectangular, and square (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:122). They are decorated with matching cone-shaped bases. These now are obsolete as casket lids are hinged and balanced for easy lifting.

White metal coffin screws are gimlet screws with a cast metal slotted head. The shanks vary in length from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to 2 inches, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ screws most common. The heads are knob shaped, either plain or with filigree decoration. A common variety has a basal flange which may also be either plain or have a filigree decoration. White metal coffin tacks have heads identical to the screws, but with a tack soldered to the underside. These tacks, or "fake screws," were used both for decoration and to fill in along the edges between screws.

Metals

These hardware items may be manufactured from a variety of materials, including white metal, German silver or Argentine metal, steel, white bronze or "gun metal," antimonial lead, Britannia metal, tin, tinned copper, and wood. White metal is any of several lead or tin based metals and in coffin hardware was probably lead based, frequently with a silver

plate. The metal was cast for handles, thumbscrews, escutcheons, screws, tacks, and caplifters. German silver or Argentine metal is a combination of zinc, copper, and nickel which produces a white or silvery metal used as a substitute for silver (Hiscox 1968:69; Huntington and McMillian 1901:384; International Correspondence Schools 1956:92). This metal was primarily used for coffin handles. Steel, frequently stamped, is used for handles and became popular in the mid-twentieth century. White bronze, a copper, tin, and zinc alloy (Huntington and McMillian 1901:349) was cast for handles and has become extensively used for extension handles.

Antimonial lead, a combination of lead and antimony (Huntington and McMillian 1901:421), was commonly used in cast plates. Britannia metal, composed of tin, antimony, and copper (Huntington and McMillian 1901:352), was used for the production of plates. Tin is a malleable metal used to produce "struck-up" or stamped escutcheons, studs, and plates. Tinned copper plates were used as coffin name plates and were produced by applying a thin coat of tin over copper sheets (Huntington and McMillian 1901:348-349). This was a very simple process and was probably extensively used in the nineteenth century to produce "silvery" plates.

Wood was commonly used in the manufacture of handles, either as a reinforcement for tubular bars or as the arm in cloth covered handles. Wood not only has load bearing strength, but also the ability to be easily milled into swell and fancy bar designs. Although wood was used primarily in the late nineteenth century, it continued to be used as a reinforcement through the mid-twentieth century.

Attachment of Hardware

According to Hohenschuh, handles were attached to the side of the coffin with screws or, less desirably, with wrought iron nails that were clinched on the inside of the coffin. The latter had a white metal head to imitate the preferred screws. The handles were placed low enough on the side that the coffin would be carried higher, and spaced evenly from each other, both for a balanced look and for ease of carrying by the pall bearers (Hohenschuh c. 1900:123-124). The F.H. Hill catalog shows their selection of screws, nails, pins, and tacks, including oval head casket handle screws from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $1\frac{1}{4}$ and box handle screws of 1 inch to $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:123). The Victor Casket Hardware Company included screws and pins for attaching some children's handles and all box handles, but all other screws had to be ordered separately (Victor Casket Hardware Company 1956:19, 34-35). This was apparently common, as Hohenschuh laments "[t]he manufacturer who will place handles on the market with screws that belong to them packed in the same box . . . will certainly be called blessed by the profession at large" (Hohenschuh c. 1900:125). Early handles required no nails or screws, as either the lug or the arms had nail-like projections, enabling them to attach directly to the wooden coffin (Handler and Lange 1978:151).

The lid of the coffin could be nailed or screwed shut, although screws may have been preferred. A trade journal advertisement by Strong Manufacturing Company refers to the lid fastenings of the 1860s:

the top of a case in those days was held down by

six or eight screws, then the "hardware" or dummy screw heads, which were ornamental were tacked on top of the casket three inches apart in line with the actual screws (*American Funeral Director* 43(2): 13, February 1920).

THE A.L. CALHOUN COLLECTION

Description

In this section we describe the materials found at the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store, relying on the previously offered definitions to develop general categories for discussion. Three basic assumptions need to be made explicit. The first is that the fire did not selectively destroy any class or category of hardware, i.e., that all hardware was equally exposed and had an equal opportunity for survival. Informants remember the fire and where it spread. They remember its intensity and its containment to the corner of the store where the trimming room was located. Second, we assume that all surviving hardware was salvaged by Calhoun. This assumption is supported by Calhoun's style (Sherry Gillespie, personal communication 1984), the size of the collection, and the presence of damaged (and unusable) hardware items. The third assumption is that the status of the hardware is unchanged since 1926, i.e., that no new stock was added, nor was any significant amount of salvaged stock sold. This assumption is based on the informants who indicate that because of the declining economy and fire, Calhoun did not handle coffin hardware after the mid-1920s.

If these assumptions are accepted, then the collection may be viewed as a very accurate representation of what Calhoun had for sale immediately prior to the 1926 fire. While we are unable to make any specific reconstruction of the quantity of stock, it is possible to reconstruct the proportions of various types of hardware. As previously stated, however, it is not possible, because of Calhoun's purchasing practices to assume the collections represent what was most popular at that time, but only that they represent what Calhoun offered a relatively "captive clientele."

The remnants of Calhoun's once prosperous coffin hardware business include over 650 hardware pieces discovered in the casket trimming room, including coffin handles, box handles, decorative studs, coffin plates, thumbscrews, escutcheons, and caplifters. All of these items were found mixed together in several large boxes where they were placed after the 1926 fire. We first sorted out the various categories of hardware and then sorted each category by styles. Although the handles were routinely sold in pairs to the retailer and then in sets of four or six to the client, we discovered a large quantity of single handles, which provides a further suggestion that quantity of Calhoun's stock was destroyed in the 1926 fire. We also identified several box labels from the mixed hardware and debris, including labels from Witherspoon Brothers and Company, a coffin hardware jobber in Sumter, South Carolina; Crane and Breed Manufacturing Company, a large coffin and coffin hardware company in Cincinnati, Ohio; and Burlington Casket and Coffin Company,



A



B



C

Figure 4. Box labels recovered from the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store. A, Crane and Breed Manufacturing Company; B, Wither Spoon Brothers and Company; C, Burlington Casket and Coffin Company.

Burlington, North Carolina (Figure 4). A shipping label for a cloth covered casket identified a fourth company, Atlanta Casket Company, Atlanta, Georgia.

The Calhoun collection contained a single swing extension bar handle and a single matching one lug short bar handle (Figure 5A). The single extension bar was found in a wooden packing crate, but presumably the remaining extension and short bar handles were destroyed in the 1926 fire. The single set may have served as a display item for Calhoun, which suggests that the style was either not widely accepted in the rural area of Clio or, more likely, that it was beyond most of the clientele's price range and therefore unprofitable for Calhoun to stock.

A single, large stationary handle with a black cloth covered rope bar also was found in the collection. The ornate decorations and large size suggest that this was an expensive item, which may explain its rarity. Once again, this may represent a display item, or perhaps the remnants of a single six piece set.

Short bar handles were more prevalent, with 29 items representing 17 discrete styles (Table 1). These would have been sold in sets of four or six, although no more than three identical items were found in Calhoun's store and eight styles (47%) are represented by a single handle. The dominant style is a round or swell bar, either fancy cloth covered rope style with highly decorated lugs, tips, and arms. Very few plain, round short bar handles were found in the collection. It is presumed that the price differential between these items, and the extension and stationary short bars, is minimal. Only one child's swing short bar style (Figure 9A), represented by only three items, was identified in the collections. This was a very simple style which lacked decoration and had a white plush bar. This represents only 6% of the styles and 10% of the total short bar handles.

The largest collection consisted of swing bail handles and lugs (Table 2). A total of 139 pieces, including 51 separate handles, 76 separate lugs, and 12 matched sets were recovered. Of these, 36 handles (71%), 53 lugs (70%), and eight sets (69%) were adult two lug swing bail handles. The collection represents 26 styles, 18 (69%) of which are adult styles. This suggests that the Calhoun stock was heavily oriented toward adult trade.

The lugs evidence fairly intricate designs, as do the handles. Handles may be divided into three styles -- fully rounded (e.g., Figures 10D, E, I, J; 11C, D, E, I), squared (Figures 10B; 11F), or squared round (e.g., Figures 10F, G, H; 11A, B). Of special interest is the lug illustrated in Figure 11A, which is a highly stylized death's head. The lug shown in Figure 10A, the acorn and lead motif, is unusual and does not seem to match any of the recovered handles in style. All of these handles are of cast metal, with all representing good workmanship except the specimen illustrated as Figure 10B. The single lug swing bail children's hardware contain only lamb motifs as illustrated in Figures 11 and 12. Items in Figure 11F and G are the only items with finishes (white plated and nickel or silver finishes, respectively), suggesting a somewhat later date than the other items.

	Lug		Bar Shape			Tip Shape					Bar Motif			Dec.			number in collection	Notes/mold stamps	
	single	double	square	round	swell	square	round	complex	grooved	rope	fancy	plain	cloth	plush	arm	lug			tip
Figure 5A	x		x			x			x						x	x	x	1	"SMC Co. 176/Patent July 1895"
B	x		x			x			x						x	x	x	3	
C	x		x			x			x						x	x	x	2	
D	x		x			x			x						x	x	x	2	
Figure 6A	x		x			x			x			x			x	x	x	1	thread wrapped bar
B	x		x			x			x			x			x	x	x	2	"145" thread wrapped wood bar
C	x		x			x			x						x	x		2	"1087" metal bar with wood reinforcement
D	x		x			x			x						x	x	x	1	thread wrapped bar
Figure 7A	x			x		x				x	x				x	x	x	1	"SMC Co 130/Patent ----" double swivel
B	x			x		x				x	x				x	x	x	1	
C	x			x		x				x	x				x	x	x	3	"S & Co. 1793" fire damage
D	x			x		x				x	x				x	x	x	2	"S & Co. 2010/Patent July 10, 1906"
Figure 8A	x			x		x				x	x				x	x	x	1	
B	x			x		x				x					x	x		2	"987" - tip is marked "775"
C	x			x		x					x				x	x	x	1	"6250" fire damage
D	x			x		x					x				x	x		1	"WCH 280"
Figure 9A	x			x		x							x		x	x		3	

Table 1. Short bar handles from the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store.

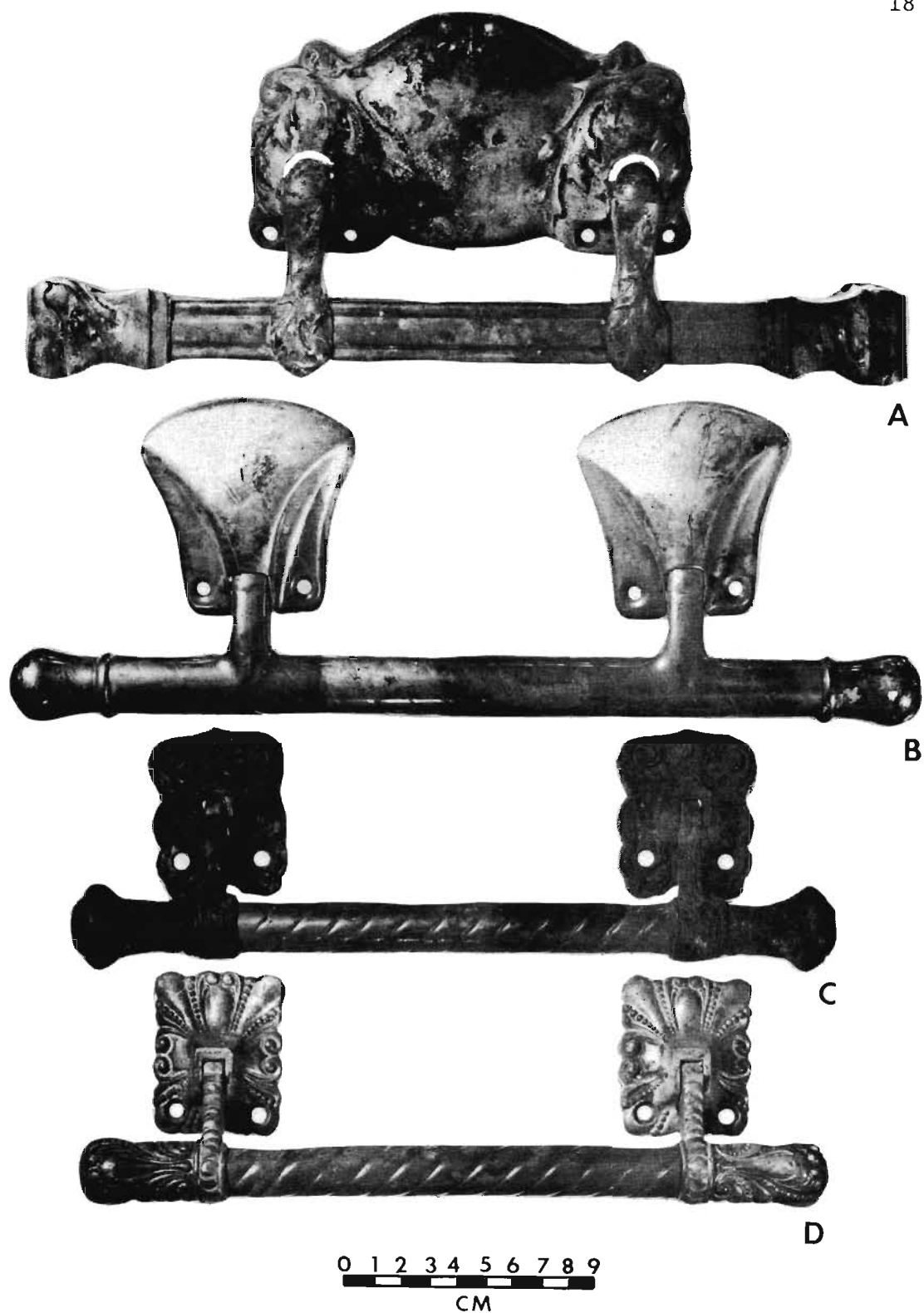


Figure 5. Short bar handles. A, single lug, end handle for extension bar handle set; B-D, two lug swing short bar handles, rope style bars.

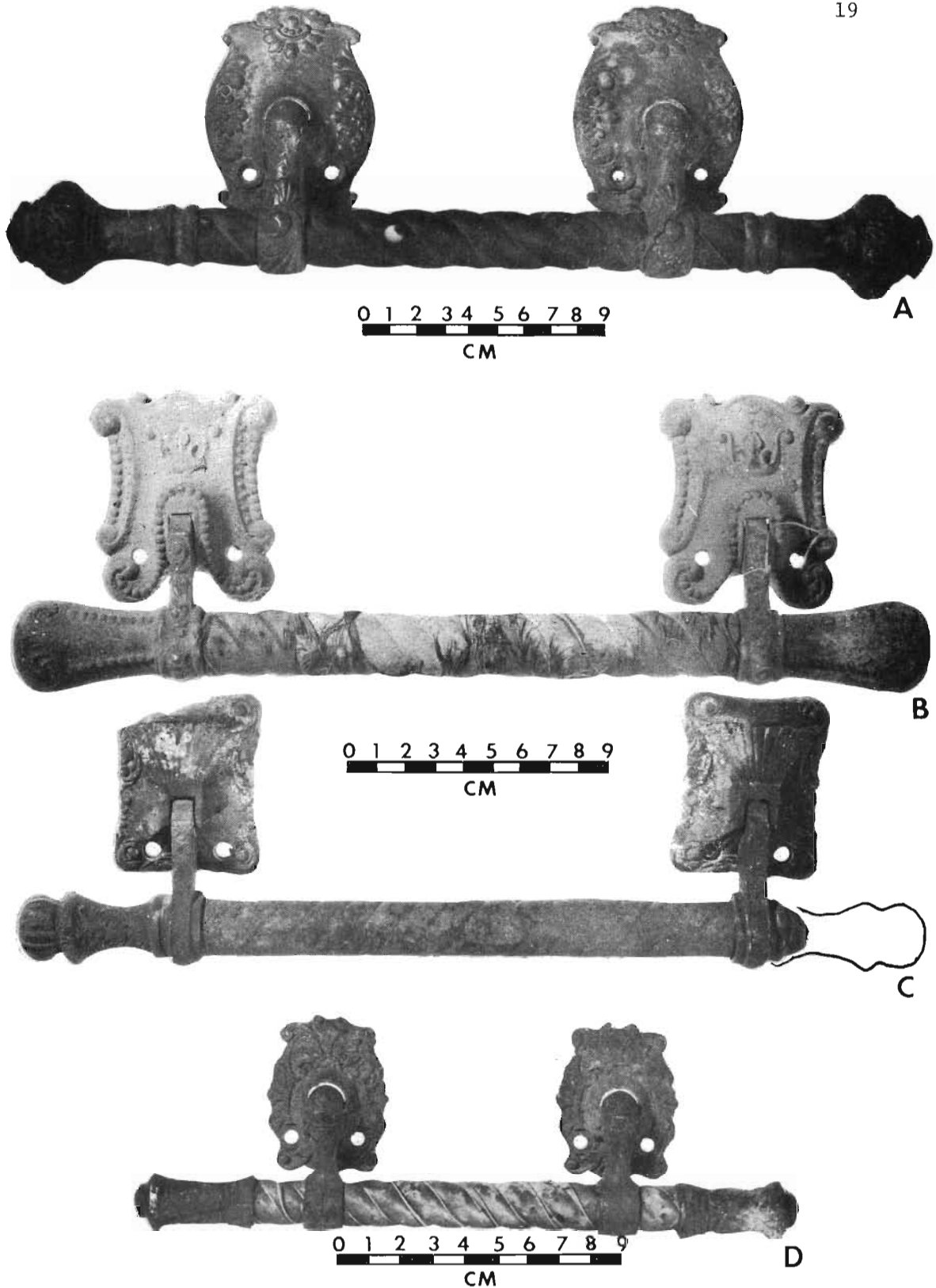


Figure 6. Short bar handles. A-D, two lug swing short bar handles, rope style bars. A, B, and D are black cloth covered with thread in the roping; C has the right tip broken, exposing the wood reinforcement.

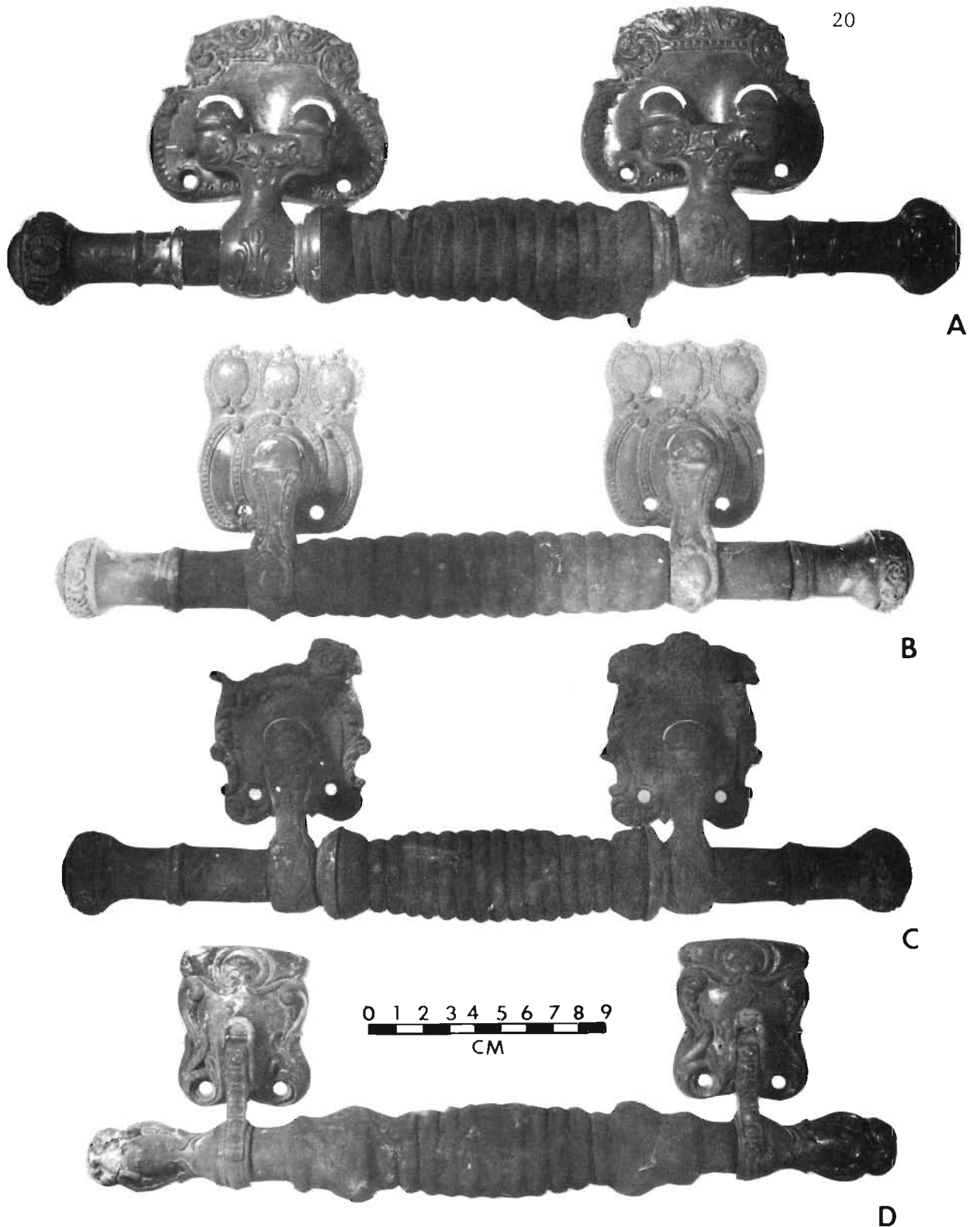


Figure 7. Short bar handles. A-D, two lug swing short bar handles, fancy swell bars, black cloth covered. A is an unusual double swing arm attachment to the lug; C has fire damage to the left lug.

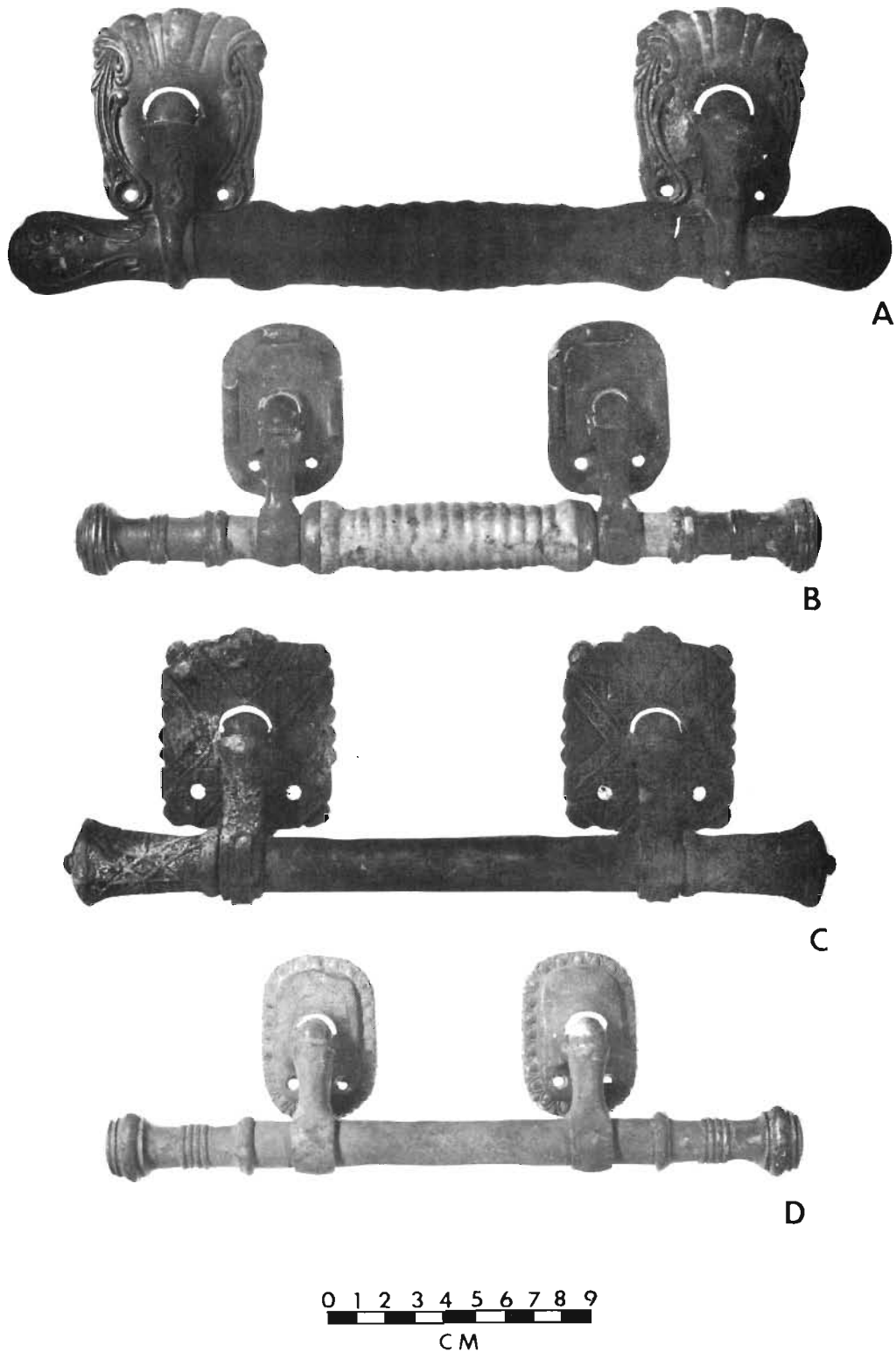


Figure 8. Short bar handles. A, two lug swing short bar handle, fancy swell bar, black cloth covered; B, two lug swing short bar handle, fancy swell wood bar; C-D, two lug swing short bar handles, plain handle styles.

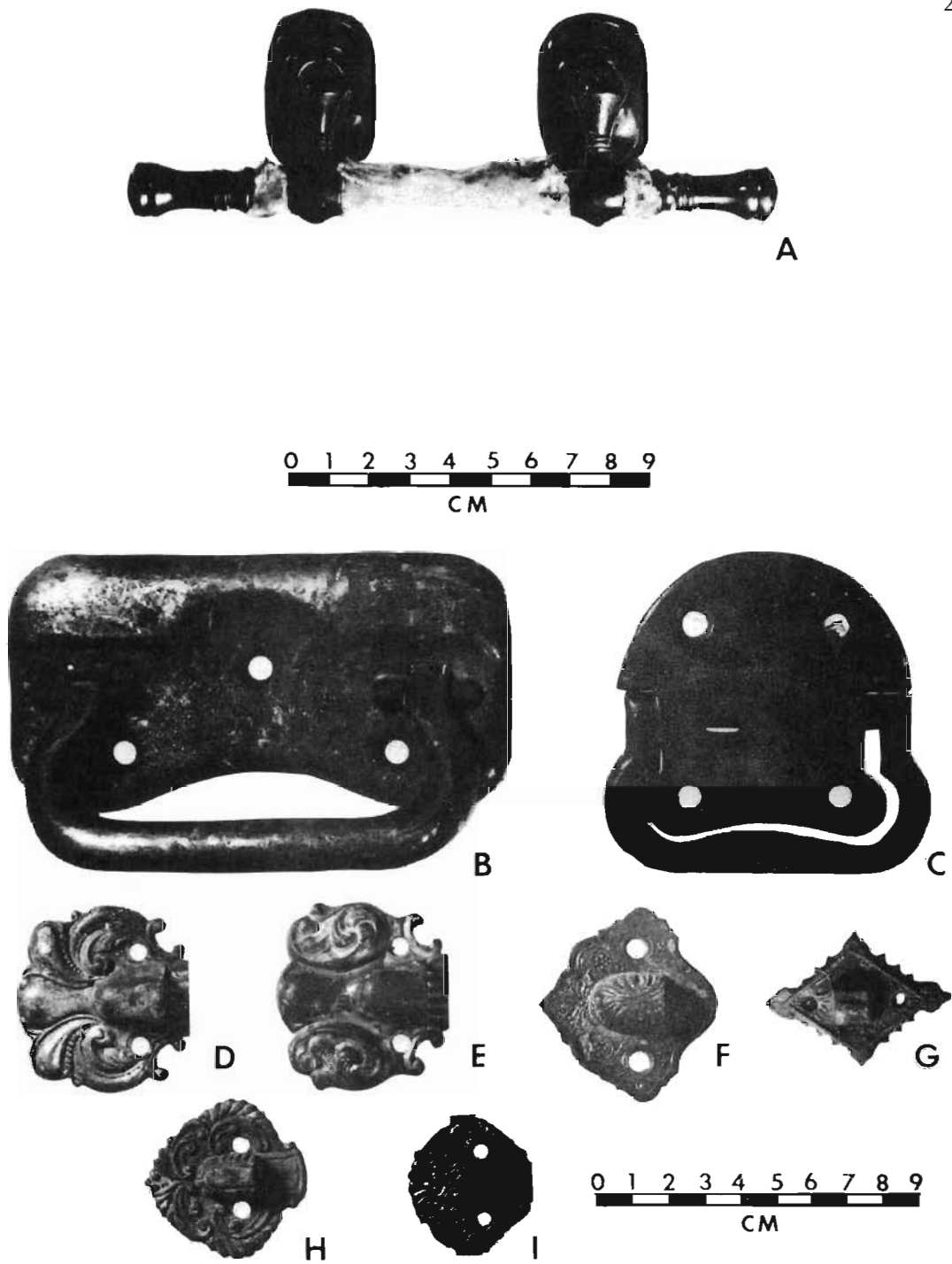


Figure 9. Short bar handle, box handles, and swing bail handle lugs. A, two lug short bar handle, white plush bar; B-C, shipping box handles (B is nickel plated, C is japanned metal); D-I, swing bail handle lugs (handle attachment is to the right).

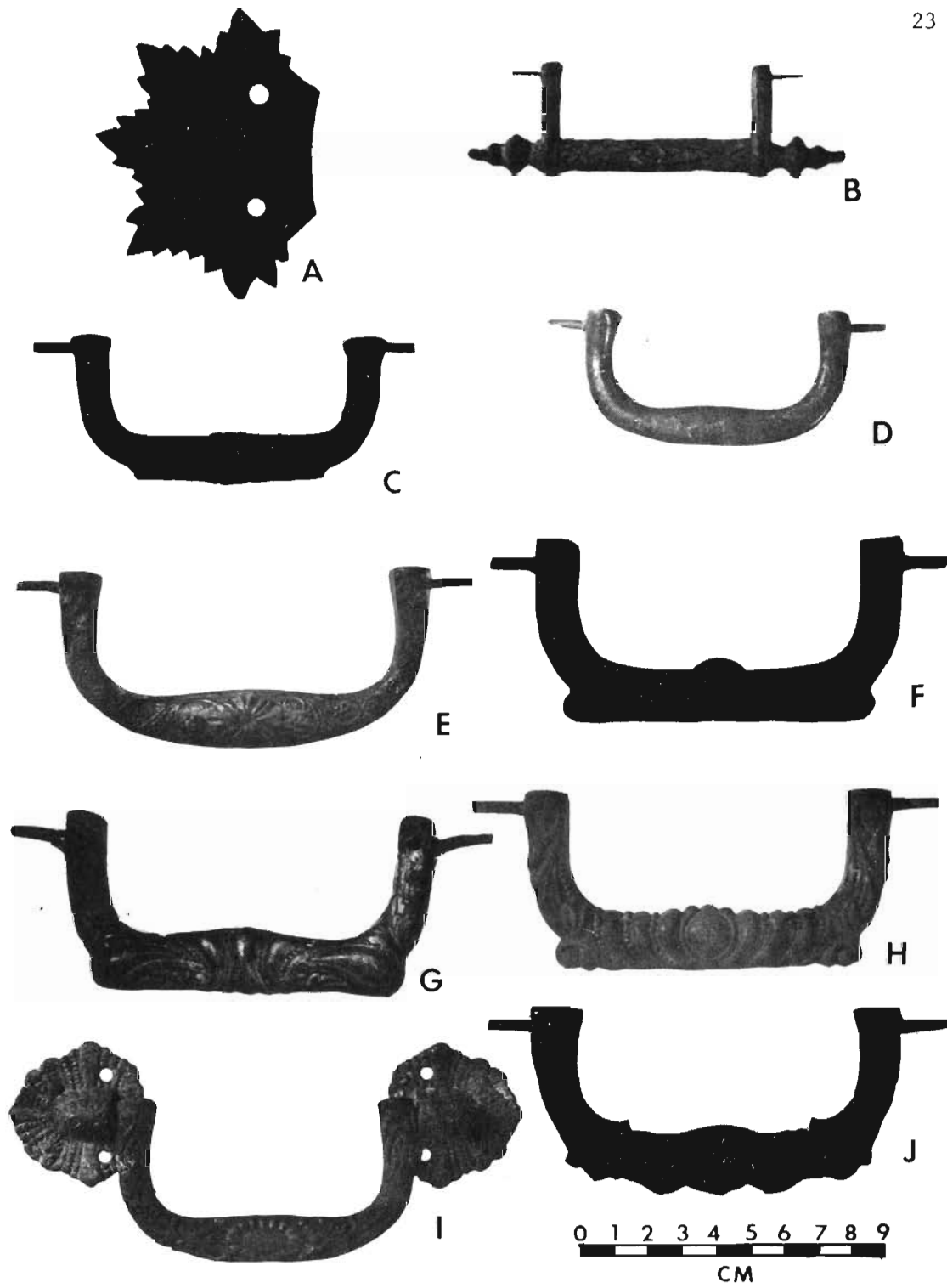


Figure 10. Swing bail handle lug and swing bail handles. A, lug; B-J, handles.

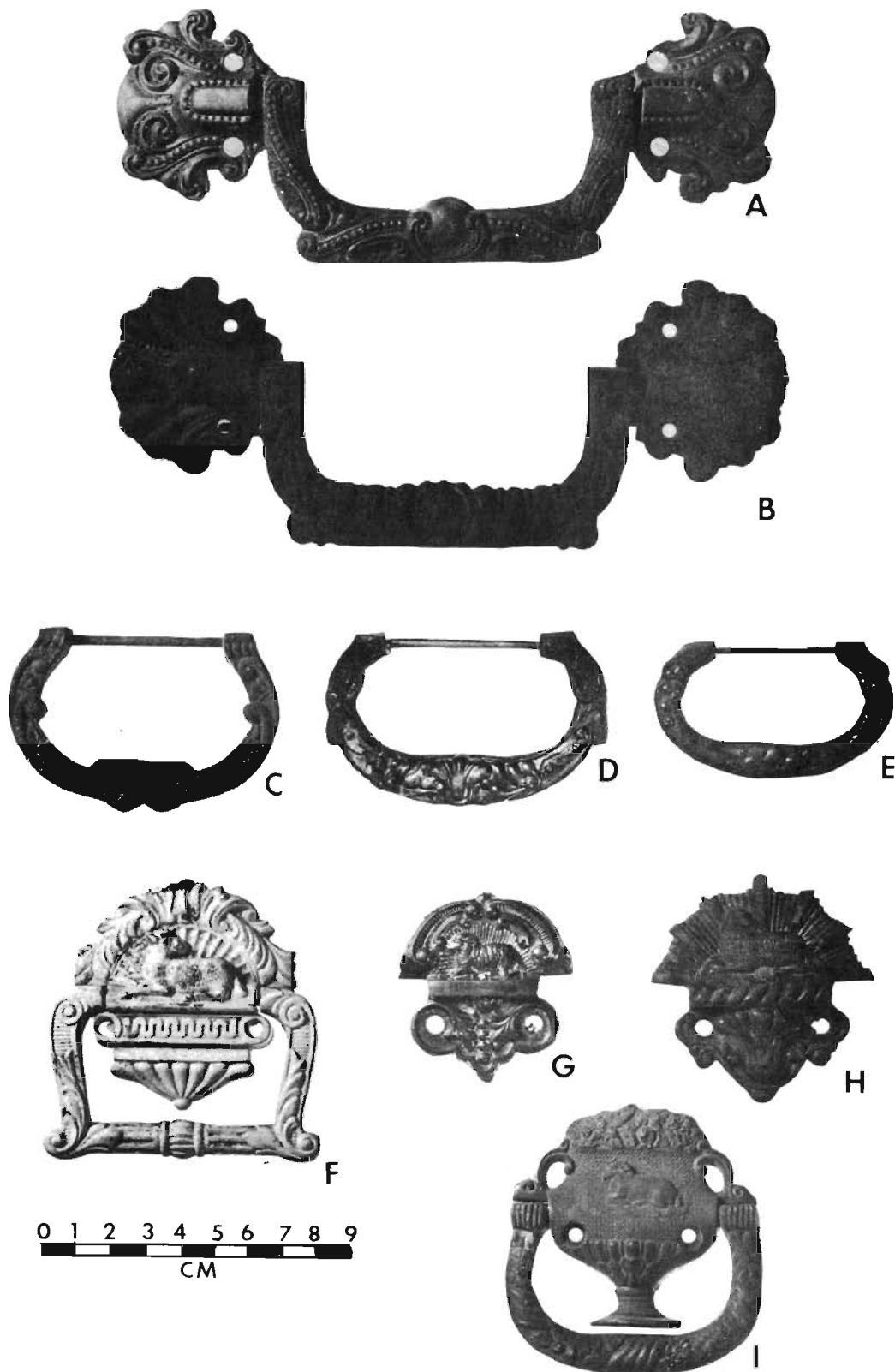


Figure 11. Swing bail handles and lugs. A-B, swing bail two-lug handles; C-E, swing bail handles for children's single lug handles; F, I, children's swing bail single lug handles; G-H, children's lugs for swing bail single lug handles.



Figure 12. Swing bail handle lug and coffin plates. A, children's lug for swing bail single lug handle; B-D, coffin plates.

	Lug		Handle Shape			Handle Motif	number	Notes
	single	double	round	square	mixed	plain dec.		
Figure 9D	x						8	
E	x						8	
F	x						4	
G	x						2	
H	x						10	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:277) #4066; match to Figure 10C
I	x						18	
Figure 10A	x						3	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:275) #4121
B	x		x			x	6	poorly cast iron
C	x			x		x	1	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:277) #4066; match to Figure 9H
D	x		x			x	4	
E	x		x			x	1	
F	x			x		x	3	
G	x			x		x	3	
H	x			x		x	11	
I	x		x			x	2	
J	x		x			x	3	
Figure 11A	x			x		x	6	3 with lugs, 3 without lugs
B	x			x		x	4	3 with lugs, 1 without lugs
C	x		x			x	8	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:277) #26; match to Figure 12A
D	x		x			x	4	
E	x		x			x	3	
F	x			x		x	4	lamb motif lug
G	x					x	8	lamb motif lug
H	x					x	4	lamb motif lug
I	x					x	4	lamb and urn motif lug
Figure 12A	x					x	7	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:277) #26; match to Figure 11C

Table 2. Swing bail handles from the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store.

The Calhoun collection may be viewed in terms of the number of styles present, or the number of pieces of each style. Given Calhoun's purchasing tendencies and the probable clientele, reference to the proportionate styles may provide information on the broad popularity of the styles, while reference to the proportionate number of the items of each style may provide better information on clientele purchasing ability, or at least Calhoun's stocking for public consumption. Ignoring children's hardware, there are 36 adult styles (82%) and 122 adult items (77%). Of these styles, 6% are either extension or stationary bars, 44% are short bars, and 50% are swing bail handle styles. If, however, the number of pieces is considered, less than 2% represent extension or stationary bars, 21% are short bar handles, and 77% are swing bar handles. It is also possible to calculate the minimum number of four handle sets. The Calhoun collection contains, at a minimum, one extension bar set (5%), seven short bar handle sets (37%), and 11 swing bail handle sets (58%).

While A.L. Calhoun, Jr. may have stocked a few "new" or "stylish" hardware items, it appears that his stock was strongly oriented, even in 1926, to swing bail handles. Whether this indicates that these swing bail styles continued to be sold frequently until 1926, or that they represent unpopular, and hence unsalable, stock cannot be interpreted directly from the evidence. We suggest, however, that Calhoun did commonly sell the swing bail hardware in Clio. If they were unpopular it is less likely that Calhoun would have salvaged them after the 1926 fire. The primary customers would have been the rural poor who could not easily afford the more "stylish" short bar, stationary, or extension handles. By the mid-twentieth century the new swing bail bars still advertised were one-half to two-thirds less expensive than the short bar handles (National Metal Products Company 1959:28; Victor Casket Hardware Company 1956:14-15).

Plates consist of four styles represented by one item each, and the eight styles of decorative tin stamped studs are represented by 171 pieces (Table 3). The four plates are illustrated in Figures 12B-C and 13A. Items shown in Figures 12B and C are suspected to represent extreme ends of the price range, with the silver plated cast metal "In God's Care" plate expected to cost four times as much as the nickel plated steel "At Rest" plate. It is understandable, in a rural community such as Clio, that the name plates carried by A.L. Calhoun, Jr. were pre-engraved by the factory. Further, both plates offer sentiments fitting for the burial of any family member because they are not kinship or gender specific. If a specific sentiment or name were requested, Calhoun had two options: either to order the requested item from a jobber or hardware company, or to use the nameplate holder illustrated in Figure 13A. The decision was probably dependent on the economic well-being of the client.

The decorative studs may be divided into four broad categories: oval, small circle and star, large diamond, and small diamond. Of these the large diamond style was the most common, accounting for 71% of the collection. The stamped motifs are all elaborate, but combine similar elements, such as vines, flowers, and scrolling. They are a thin metal and were probably produced quite inexpensively. Based on several wrapped

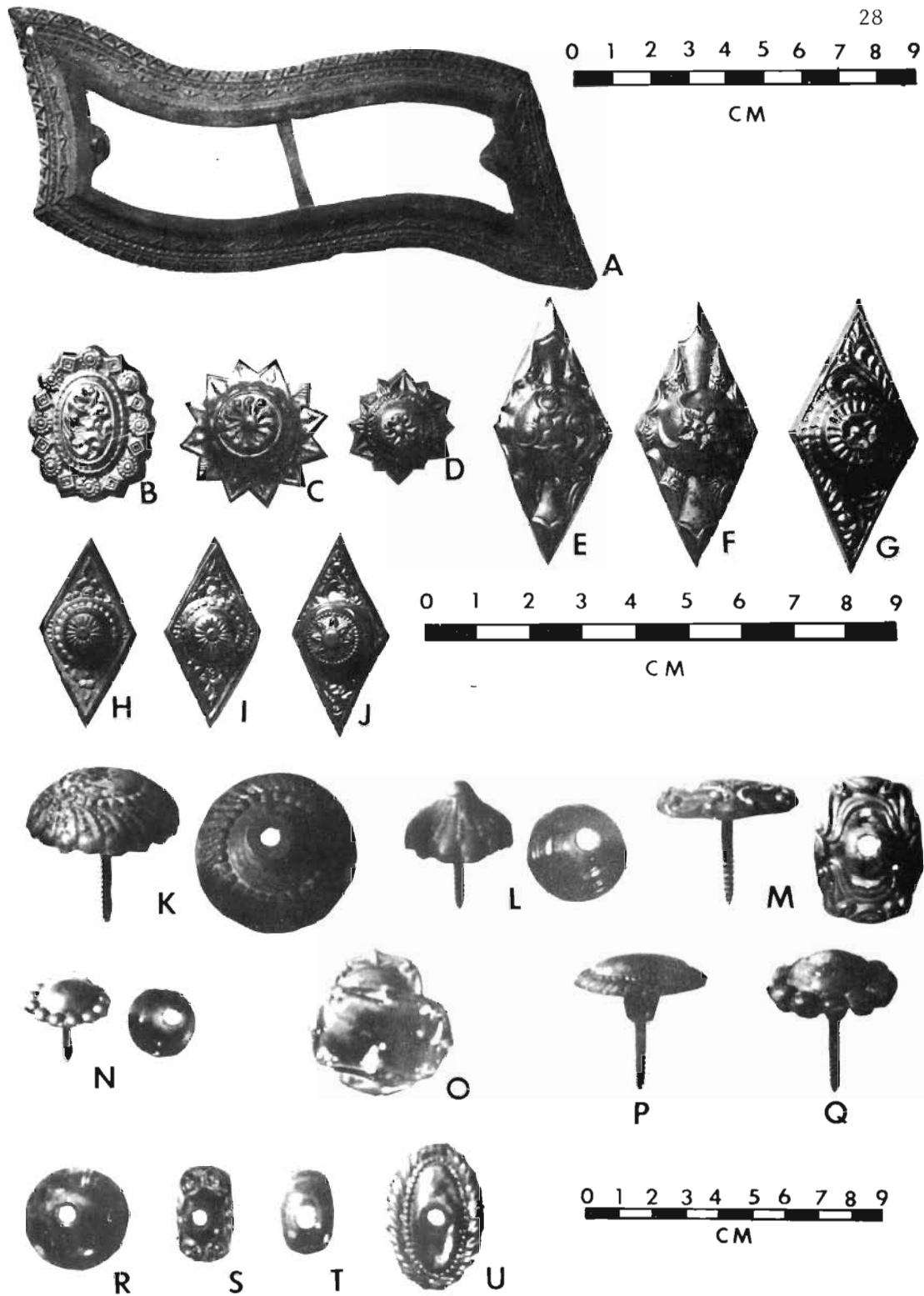


Figure 13. Plate, decorative studs, and caplifters. A, name plate holder; B-J, decorative studs; K-O, matched caplifters (screws and bases); P-Q, caplifter screws; R-U, caplifter bases.

	Item	No.	Notes/Mold Stamps
Figure 9C	japanned cast iron outside box handles	3	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:891) #211J
Figure 12B	silver plated coffin plate	1	"SMC Co./Design Patent Dec. 11, 190-"
	C nickel plated coffin plate	1	
	D nickel plated coffin plate	1	fire damage
Figure 13A	sprayed metal coffin plate	1	
	B oval decorative stud	4	
	C large circular decorative stud	12	
	D small circular decorative stud	4	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:879) #62
	E large diamond decorative stud	18	
	F large diamond decorative stud	1	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:880) #79
	G large diamond decorative stud	10	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:879) #72
	H small diamond decorative stud	21	
	I small diamond decorative stud		
	J small diamond decorative stud	101	Sargent & Co. (c. 1920:879) #70; 7 wrapped sets of 6 each
Not Ill.	"T" wrench for sealing metal lining	1	nickel plated
Not Ill.	Steel outside box handles	2	

Table 3. Miscellaneous hardware from the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store.

sets at the Calhoun store, they were apparently sold in sets of six, although we do not know how many would normally have been used on a coffin. Because of their construction and the use of a light metal, these items could only have been used on a soft wood coffin, where hand pressure alone would be sufficient to impress it into the wood.

Caplifters, which come in two pieces, are common in the Calhoun collection (Table 4). Thirty-eight complete two-piece sets representing seven styles were found, as well as sixteen top screw section styles (52 pieces) and seven base section styles (38 pieces). These represent, at a minimum, 45 coffin sets composed of two caplifters each. All were cast metal, most of which were nickel finished (Figure 13K-U; 14A-I, K-Q, X-Z).

Thumbscrews and escutchions are the largest portion of the non-handle hardware found in Clio (Table 4). The collection includes 356 pieces representing 25 styles. Thumbscrews account for eight pieces (2%) and five styles. Escutchions account for 348 pieces (98%) and 20 styles. The thumbscrew designs are ornate (Figure 14R-V) and with the exception of Figure 14R, which is white plated, all are cast white metal. Figure 14W is an example of 18 white metal coffin screws found in the Clio collection. No examples of white metal coffin tacks (fake screws) were found.

The escutchions are rectangular or circular with edge or central designs (Figure 14AA-TT). While many of these plates are represented by only one or two specimens, several designs are represented by over a hundred pieces (Table 4). Escutchions are much more common than the thumbscrews and only one of the bases evidences fire damage. It is probable that because of their small size only those which were obviously intact were collected.

A number of escutchions were found still in their original wrappers, six to a package. This suggests that three thumbscrews and escutchions commonly were used on each side of a coffin. The bulk of the material represents cast metal, although one category of escutchions is silver plated (Figure 14AA) and another represents a less expensive "struck-up" or stamped variety (Figure 14PP). Only one escutcheon style with a white finish, for use on infants' or children's coffins, was found (Figure 14SS). This may match the thumbscrew illustrated in Figure 14R.

Thumbscrews and escutchions, in the c. 1920 Sargent and Company catalog, were sold as separately packed matched sets, usually $\frac{1}{2}$ gross to a box. Although two escutchions have been identified from this catalog, the matching thumbscrews are not present, which again suggests that after the 1926 fire the smaller items were not uniformly collected by Calhoun. Alternatively, several earlier catalogs (Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980; Sargent and Company 1871) fail to illustrate thumbscrews, although escutchions may be purchased by the gross. At this date escutchions were apparently used with white metal coffin screws, which are illustrated in both catalogs (and which in the 1871 catalog are labeled as "White Metal Coffin Thumbscrews"), although they have slotted screw heads.

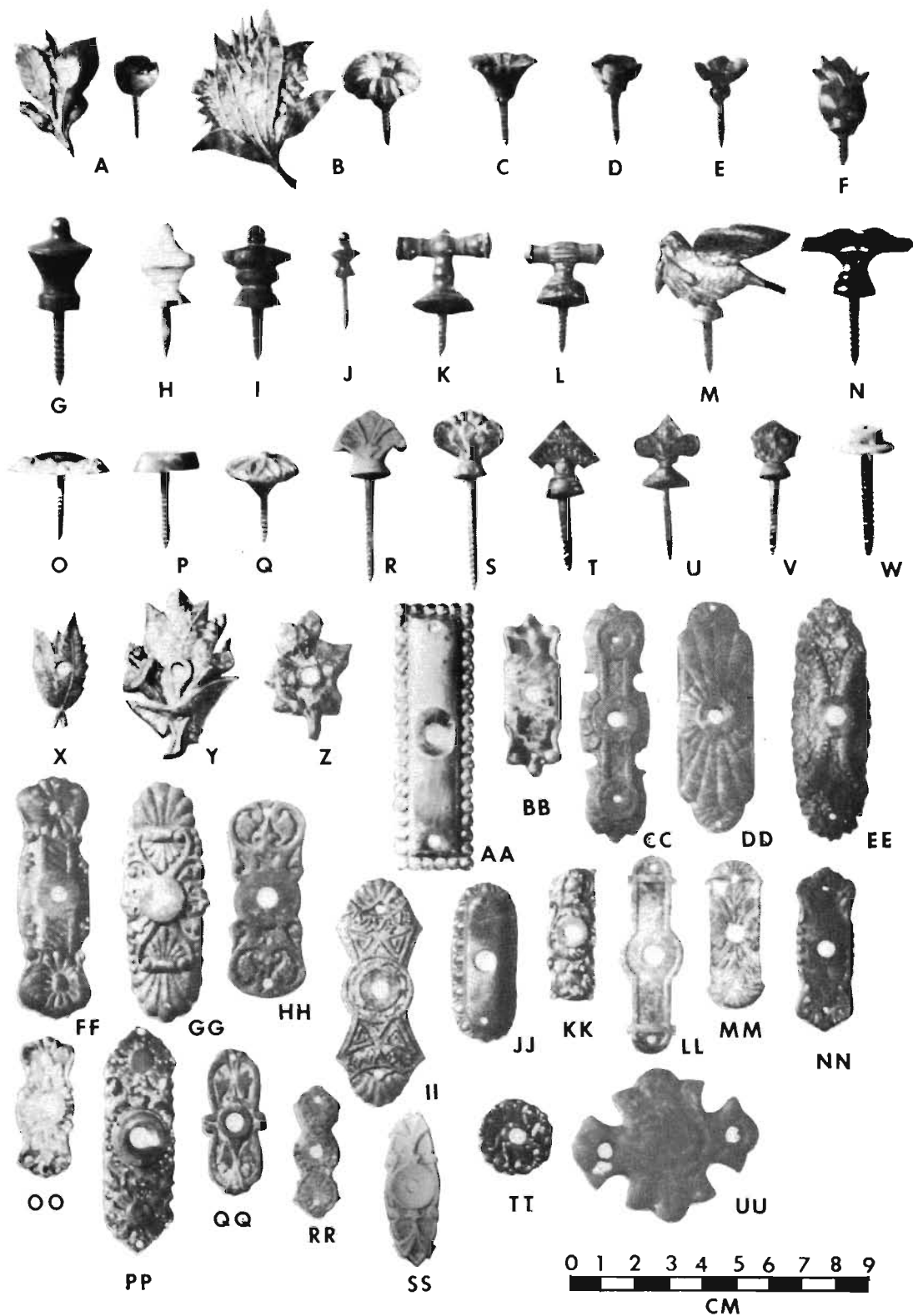


Figure 14. Caplifters, thumbscrews, and escutcheons. A-I, caplifters; J, plate screw; K-Q, caplifters; R-V, thumbscrews; W, white metal coffin screw; X-Z, caplifters; AA-TT, escutcheons; UU, ornament.

	Item	No.	Notes
Figure 13K	Caplifter/base	7	cast metal
	L Caplifter/base	14	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:871) #53
	M Caplifter/base	2	"S&Co 185" Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:870)
	N Caplifter/base	6	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:871) #189
	O Caplifter/base	1	possibly silver plated
	P Caplifter	2	"S&Co 168"
	Q Caplifter	2	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:871) #190; match 13R
	R Caplifter base	4	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:871) #190; match 13Q
	S Caplifter base	3	nickel plated
	T Caplifter base	8	"33 NTQ 73"
	U Caplifter base	8	"S&Co 168"; match to 13P
Figure 14A	Caplifter/base	7	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:872) #20, flower motif
	B Caplifter/base	1	"5 CP"; flower motif
	C Caplifter	5	nickel plated; flower motif
	D Caplifter	6	nickel plated; flower motif
	E Caplifter	1	nickel plated; flower motif
	F Caplifter	4	nickel plated; flower motif
	G Caplifter	3	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:872) #196; knob motif
	H Caplifter	3	white plated; knob motif
	I Caplifter	5	silver plated; knob motif
	J Plate Screw	6	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:878) #982
	K Caplifter	1	"32"; "T" shape
	L Caplifter	2	"MB Co 60"; "T" shape
	M Caplifter	2	bird motif
	N Caplifter	1	book motif
	O Caplifter	10	ornate motif
	P Caplifter	3	ornate motif
	Q Caplifter	2	ornate motif
	R Thumbscrew	2	
	S Thumbscrew	1	
	T Thumbscrew	1	
	U Thumbscrew	1	
	V Thumbscrew	3	
	W Coffin screw	18	white metal
	X Caplifter base	6	nickel plated; flower motif
	Y Caplifter base	8	Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:872) #21; flower motif
	Z Caplifter base	1	"17"; flower motif
	AA Escutcheon	54	"S&Co 936"; Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:874)
	BB Escutcheon	5	"69"
	CC Escutcheon	1	"45"
	DD Escutcheon	1	"No°89"
	EE Escutcheon	1	"870"
	FF Escutcheon	18	nickel plated
	GG Escutcheon	6	"59"
	HH Escutcheon	115	"S&Co 1001.31"
	II Escutcheon	32	nickel plated
	JJ Escutcheon	2	"35"
	KK Escutcheon	1	fire damaged
	LL Escutcheon	2	
	MM Escutcheon	3	"WMM SMITHS PATENT June 8 1884 No 50"
	NN Escutcheon	2	"500"
	OO Escutcheon	57	"73"; wrapped 6 to a set
	PP Escutcheon	20	stamped tin
	QQ Escutcheon	1	
	RR Escutcheon	19	"168" also "60"
	SS Escutcheon	3	"10"; white plated finish
	TT Escutcheon	5	"S&Co 564" also " 1006 "; Sargent and Co. (c. 1920:877)
	UU Ornament (?)	1	cast metal "X"

Table 4. Caplifters, thumbscrews, and escutchions from the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store.

The final item recovered from the Calhoun store was not a hardware item, but a nickel plated "T" wrench tool. This tool would have been used to secure the fastening device on metal casket liners (Figure 15). These liners, frequently made of zinc, fit inside wooden caskets and were used for additional protection and security. They were a substitute, although less satisfactory, for the increasingly popular metal caskets. This tool would have been used by the undertaker to seal the metal liner prior to closing the coffin. As such, it provides some modicum of support for A.L. Calhoun, Jr.'s listing in the *Leading Funeral Directors of America* (Eckels and Mowbray c. 1911) and suggests that he did more than simply sell coffins and hardware.

Identifying Marks

As well as the few boxes and the shipping label found in Clio, the hardware provided information on makers. Tables 1-4 list various catalog numbers, maker's marks, and patent information obtained from the hardware items.

Identified marks include "MB Co" and "WMM SMITHS PATENT June 8 1884 No 50" on a thumbscrew and an escutcheon. An article in the 1883 *Casket* states that William M. Smith was the "acknowledged champion in original conception of all the choice articles in Undertaker's hardware." Smith retired from the conduct of his own undertaking firm in 1866 and began manufacturing his hardware. In that same year he joined with Meriden Britannia Company of Meriden, Connecticut as a designer (Anonymous 1883: 19). *The Casket* also contains an advertisement for Meriden Britannia Company, in which they state they are the "Manufacturers of Wm. M. Smith's Original Designs of Casket Trimmings" (*The Casket* 8(12):page between 8-9, December 1883). "MB Co" is presumed to be Meriden Britannia Company, which was formed from William A. Rogers, Rogers and Brothers, William Rogers Manufacturing Company, and Rogers, Smith and Company, all noted Connecticut silverware companies. In 1898 Meriden Britannia Company became the International Silver Company.

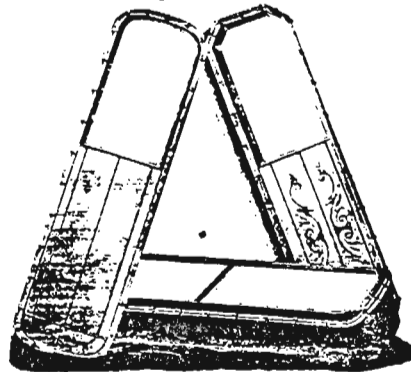
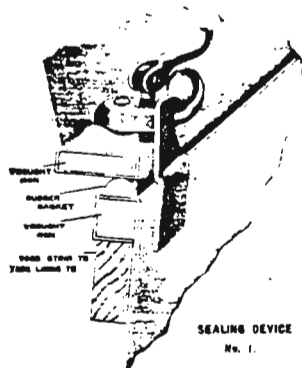
Another mark frequently found on the hardware was "SMC Co," several with patents from 1895 and one from 190-. This mark probably represents Springfield Metallic Casket Company, Springfield, Ohio, a leading manufacturer of both metal caskets and coffin hardware. Springfield Metallic Casket Company listed only one Southern salesman in 1920 (*Southern Funeral Director* 3(6):59, December 1920), but listed three by 1923 (*Southern Funeral Director* 8(1):n.p., January 1923).

The mark "S&Co" was the most common and one item had a patent date of 1906. This mark represents Sargent and Company of New Haven, Connecticut. Sargent was advertising coffin hardware as early as 1883 (*The Casket* 8(12): 22, December 1883). Sargent stopped coffin hardware production about 30 years ago, selling their molds to Stirling Casket Hardware Company (Tom Bailey, personal communication 1984; Bill Tobelman, personal communication 1984).

Three marks were never identified: "SCP," "NTQ," and "WCH." Advertisements in both nineteenth and twentieth century trade journals, and lists

Springfield Metal Linings.

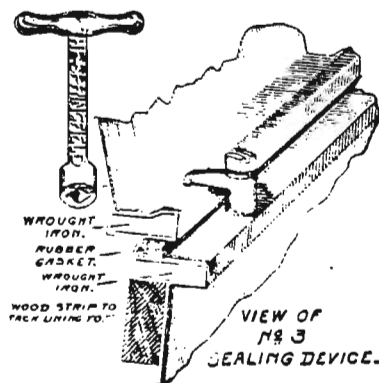
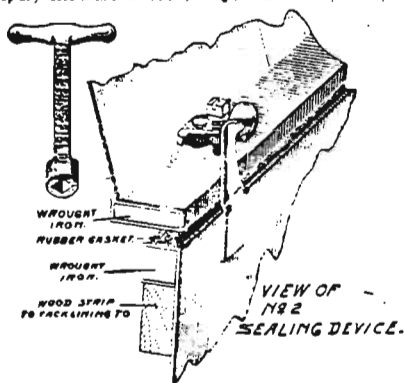
ALL KINDS AND ALL VARIETIES.
 Improved and in the Lead. The Best in the United States.
 Only One-inch Space Occupied Inside Wooden Caskets. Best Sealing Device Ever Conceived.



PATENT APPLIED FOR.
 SECTION SHOWING FULL SIZE SEALING DEVICE AND PARTS OF CASKET.

We beg to call the attention of our patrons and friends to our vastly improved Metal Interior Linings for Wooden Caskets. We manufacture them in all shapes and sizes, and make them up and finish them in Zinc Bronzed, Zinc Copper Electro-Plated, or Solid Copper. We furnish our Linings to the trade in either plain panels or fancy scroll panels, as desired. We show a Sectional View of our No. 1 New Sealing Device, which is sure and positive. No screw-driver needed, as we have a strong lever on the set screw, making Lining positively air-tight. We also manufacture No. 2 and No. 3 locking device with "T" wrench.

We guarantee to furnish the strongest, best constructed and most highly finished Metal Interior Lining ever offered to the trade. In ordering our Metal Interior Linings, add to telegraph word word of our Cloth Caskets, "Zinc Bronzed," "Zinc Copper Electro-Plated," or "Solid Copper," as desired. We can fit any casket made if the dimensions are properly filled out by sending for our dimension blanks. In ordering always state if No. 1, No. 2, or No. 3 is wanted. No. 1 and No. 2 take up less space in a casket than any other man-ufactured; No. 3 does not take up any more than other makes, being similar to old style clamp fastener.



ALSO MANUFACTURERS OF

THE LARGEST AND MOST COMPLETE LINE OF METALLIC BURIAL CASKETS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The New Baker Patent Burglar-Proof Grave Vaults. High Grade Cloth Covered Wood Caskets of the Very Latest Designs. Manufacturers of the Finest and Largest Line of Casket Hardware in the United States. Send for Catalogue.

THE SPRINGFIELD METALLIC GASKET CO.

THE SPRINGFIELD SILVER PLATE CO. (Consolidated).

SPRINGFIELD OHIO.

Open Day and Night.

Figure 15. Advertisement for "T" wrench fastening devices, from Sunnyside, October 1, 1899.

of known hardware manufacturers were consulted, without success.

Although it has been possible to identify at least three major northeastern coffin hardware manufacturing companies -- Meriden Britannia, Springfield Metallic Casket, and Sargent -- it is difficult to determine how much of A.L. Calhoun, Jr.'s buying was done from the manufacturer and how much was done through the jobbers. Since at least three jobbers are represented by labeled goods at the store, it is probable that the bulk of this hardware came from "local" jobbers or their salesmen, rather than directly from the manufacturers. This, however, requires documentation from Calhoun's day books, which, while still in existence at the store, were not available to us. If this analysis is correct, then there is evidence for commercial activity radiating out from Clio to only nearby states -- Georgia and North Carolina.

Pricing

Although a number of the Calhoun hardware items are specifically identified from the c. 1920 Sargent and Company casket hardware catalog, this source provides no prices for the items. At present we have access to five price lists which span the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries: Markham and Strong (1865), Sargent and Company (1871), Paxson, Comfort and Company (1877), J.M. Hutton and Company (n.d.), and Victor Casket Hardware Company (1956). Some general comments on pricing and status reflection are offered. These discussions reflect only wholesale hardware prices and we presume that retail costs might be two to three times as great.

During the late quarter of the nineteenth century adult coffin handles, based on the 1871 Sargent and Company catalog, are divided into three price ranges, regardless of style: silver plated brass (eight styles which range in price from \$7.00 to \$12.85/dozen pairs), silver plated white metal (20 styles which range in price from \$3.80 to \$14.50/dozen pairs), and white metal handles (four styles which range in price from \$3.25 to \$5.75/dozen pairs). It will be noticed that the silver plated brass and white metal handles show a considerable overlap in price. In fact, the average price of the brass handles is \$9.56/dozen pairs (\$.40 per handle) compared to \$9.31/dozen pairs (\$.39 per handle) for the silver plated white metal handles. The non-plated white metal handles show a considerable savings and average \$4.25/dozen pairs (\$.18 per handle). Not only could the greatest variety be obtained in the silver plated white metal category, but these handles could be purchased for as little as \$.15 each.

Children's coffin handles, from the 1871 catalog, are available in the same metals and finishes, although less variety is present. Only one silver plated brass handle (\$3.75/dozen pairs or \$.16 each), four silver plated white metal handles (\$3.50 to \$7.50/dozen pairs for an average of \$4.39 or \$.18 each), and one white metal handle (\$2.65/dozen pairs or \$.11 each) are available. Children's handles are not noticeably less expensive than their adult counterparts.

Coffin closures, including white metal coffin screws and thumbscrews/

escutchions, have a narrower range of prices. Thumbscrews range from \$2.00 to \$2.55/gross with an average of \$2.29/gross or \$.016 each. Coffin screws are slightly less expensive, ranging from \$1.14 to \$1.50/gross (\$3.10/gross average or \$.01 each). Escutchions are available as either filled (probably silver finish) or unfilled metal. The filled escutchions range from \$2.20 to \$2.75/gross and average \$2.29/gross or \$.016 each. The unfilled escutchions range from \$1.90 to \$2.20/gross for an average of \$1.96/gross or \$.014 each. If the thumbscrews and escutchions are combined, their prices range from \$3.90 to \$5.30/gross for an average of \$4.60/gross or \$.03 each, about three times the price of coffin screws.

Decorative elements include studs, coffin tacks, and coffin plates. The 12 styles of studs range in price from \$1.00 to \$1.80/gross and average of \$1.20/gross or \$.01 each. Coffin tacks with fake screws heads (seven styles) range from \$.42 to \$.67/gross with an average of \$.55/gross or less than ½ cent each. The 12 styles of coffin plates range from \$1.50 to \$2.50/dozen for an average of \$2.03/dozen or \$.17 each.

Given these price ranges and the variety of elements which could be used to decorate a coffin, it is difficult to estimate the average cost of a trimmed coffin. Table 5 makes the choices and their respective wholesale costs more clear. A relatively elaborate coffin, trimmed with six silver plated white metal handles, six filled escutchions and thumbscrews, 24 studs, 24 coffin tacks, and a coffin plate, would have a wholesale cost of about \$3.04 (using the 1871 data). Of this, about 77% represents the cost of handles. Consequently, by simply reducing the number of handles from six to four, the cost is reduced to \$2.26. White metal handles could be used instead, for a total price of \$1.78. These data strongly suggest that a coffin would be made less expensive primarily by the reduction in the quality or number of handles, and not by a reduction in the number of decorative elements.

A further suggestion of status may be inferred from the use of handles on a child's coffin. Simple trimming with four silver plated handles and a coffin plate would cost \$.89. This expenditure could be reduced to \$.61 by using white metal handles and further reduced to a mere \$.44 by eliminating the coffin plate. The failure to spend these small amounts for a child's burial may be related to the concept of achieved rather than ascribed status. Children with high rates of mortality, as opposed to both youths and adults, may have been perceived to have so little economic value or to have made so little economic contribution that the expenditure of even a small amount for coffin trimmings was a frivolous use of family resources.

A price list for J.M. Hutton and Company (n.d.), issued as "No. 4," and dating from 1900 to 1920, lists steel extension handles selling for \$5.15 to \$7.85 per set. The better quality hand cast extension handles, however, cost \$12.45 to \$22.20, or about two and one-half times as much. Steel swing bail handles are listed for \$4.75/dozen pairs or \$.19 each, little more than the least expensive handles in the 1871 Sargent and Company catalog. While no prices are listed for the various closures or decorative elements, we assume that the prices had changed little. A similar range of elements is still listed in the c. 1920 Sargent and

	Markham and Strong 1865		Sargent and Company 1871		Paxson, Comfort & Co. 1877
	adult	child	adult	child	
Silver plated white metal handles	.42	.23	.39	.18	.28
White metal handles	.14	-	.18	.11	-
Silver plated brass handles	-	-	.40	.16	-
Extension handles	-	-	-	-	4.13
Thumbscrews	-			.016	.03
Escutchions, filled	-			.016	-
Escutchions, unfilled	-			.014	.01
White metal coffin screws	.01		.01		.006
Caplifters	-			-	.05
Studs	.009		.01		.007
Coffin tacks	.004		.004		.003
Coffin plates, Britannia	.14		.17		.23
Coffin plates, silver plated	.32		-		.59

Table 5. Average wholesale prices of coffin hardware from 1865 - 1877 catalogs.

Company catalog, although both white metal coffin screws and coffin tacks are no longer found, and caplifters have come into use. Coffin plates range from \$18.00 to \$24.00/dozen or \$1.15 to \$2.00 each for Britannia and \$3.50 to \$4.65/dozen or \$.29 to \$.39 each for composition metal plates.

Somewhat better data are available from the Victor Casket Hardware Company (1956) catalog. Fifty-two styles of 3x0 steel adult extension handles are offered, with a range in price from \$2.80 to \$8.90 and an average price of \$5.77. The better grade 3x0 antimonial lead adult extension handles are offered in 16 styles with prices ranging from \$8.90 to \$17.60 per set, for an average of \$11.74. Adult short bar handles range from \$8.90 to \$32.60/dozen pairs in 13 styles. The average price is \$15.30/dozen pairs or \$.64 each. Adult bail handles are offered in only four styles, ranging in price from \$6.70 to \$20.75/dozen pairs for an average of \$10.38. An average price per bail handle is \$.43. Children's short bar handles, surprisingly, are now more expensive than the adult handles. The five offered styles range in price from \$12.20 to \$23.70/dozen pairs, for an average of \$.81 each.

Thumbscrews range from \$8.50 to \$11.20 per gross for an average of \$9.85/gross or \$.07 each. Escutchions range from \$7.80 to \$9.00/gross for an average of \$8.40 or \$.06 each. Silver finished screws cost \$1.00/gross or about \$.007 each. No studs, coffin tacks, or caplifters are offered. Eight styles of plain coffin plates (available pre-stamped as well) range in price from \$1.75 to \$12.00/dozen for an average price of \$7.42/dozen or \$.62 each. More elaborate plated coffin plates are available in five styles at an average cost of \$1.47 each.

Table 6 gives the average wholesale prices for various mid-twentieth century coffin trimmings and should be compared with Table 5. Bail handles have increased in wholesale cost by about 239%, thumbscrews have increased by 438%, escutchions by 375%, and plates by 364%. A relatively elaborate coffin, trimmed in six short bar handles, six thumbscrews and escutchions, 24 coffin screws, and a coffin plate, would have a wholesale cost of \$5.41, or 178% more than its 1871 counterpart. The price could

	McClung 1905		McClung 1912		Victor 1956	
	adult	child	adult	child	adult	child
Extension handles, steel	-	-	-	-	5.77	-
Extension handles, antimonial lead	-	-	-	-	11.44	-
Short bar handles	.32	-	.73	-	.63	.81
Bail handles	.13	.08	.33	.21	.43	-
Thumbscrews				.04		.07
Escutchions		.03		.04		.06
Coffin screws	.01		.03			.007
Coffin tacks	.005		.02			-
Studs	.008		.02			-
Coffin plate	-		-			.62

Table 6. Average wholesale prices of hardware from 1905-1956 catalogs.

be reduced to \$4.15 by using bail handles, again suggesting that "cost cutting" would be attempted primarily by reducing the quality or quantity of the handles rather than reducing the quantity of the other trimmings.

THE SUMTER CASKET COMPANY COLLECTIONS

Background

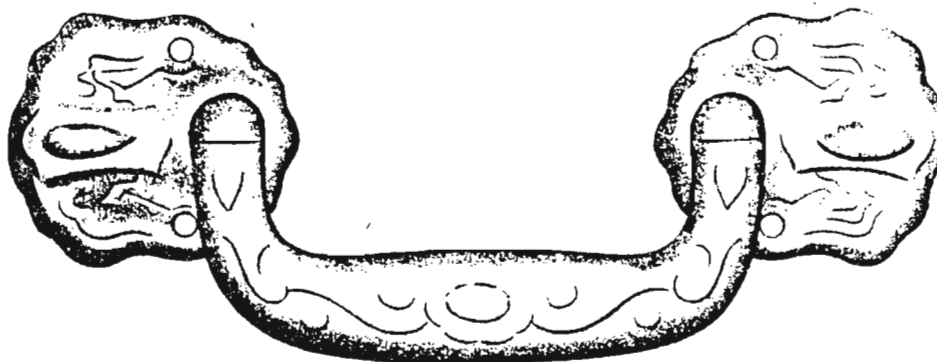
The Sumter Casket Company collection is relevant to this study because it provides a collection of relatively well dated mid-twentieth century items, many of which could be identified in the Victor Casket Company (1956) and Dixline Casket Hardware Company (1966) catalogs. A discussion of the parent company, Witherspoon Brothers and Company, also provides a better understanding of the business practices of A.L. Calhoun, Jr.

Witherspoon Brothers and Company of Sumter was founded in 1894 by M.B. Witherspoon, son of J.B. Witherspoon, who was a dealer in "furniture and undertaker's goods" in Kershaw, Kershaw County, South Carolina. J.B. Witherspoon's other son, E.D. Witherspoon, was also a dealer in "caskets, coffins, and undertaker's supplies" in Kershaw during the late nineteenth century. Witherspoon Brothers and Company appears to have been a jobber in undertaker's supplies, purchasing from a number of large manufacturers and then selling to small establishments such as A.L. Calhoun. They also operated under the name Sumter Casket Company, with Witherspoon primarily selling parts and Sumter Casket Company selling the finished products (Bubba James, personal communication 1984). In spite of this, a Witherspoon advertisement (*Southern Funeral Director* 2(2):42, August 1919) states, "When in Need of a Neat, Cheap Coffin or Casket Remember Us," while a Sumter Casket Company advertisement (*Southern Funeral Director* 8(1):n.p., January 1923) indicates that they are a "jobber of undertaker's supplies."

During the early twentieth century Witherspoon Brothers and Company handled Sargent, Stirling, Burlington, National, Victor, Dixline, and Bridgeport hardware. Our discussions with Bubba James (personal communication 1984) indicated that a small quantity of this early hardware was still at the company offices. This collection included handles, escutchions, plates, and ornaments.

Description

Handles included nine short bar styles, two swing bale styles, and one stationary bar style (Figures 16 and 17). Six of these styles are for infant or children's coffins and are finished in white. Five of the short bar handles were made by Sargent and all have identical lugs. They, however, have different length and style bars and different arm lengths. Three are plain round bars, one is a round rope bar, and one is a cloth covered fancy swell bar. Three different types of tips, with two different finishes, are present.



Number 100—Bail. STEEL.

Packed in a No. 10 Carton.

12 dozen pairs in bulk--88 lbs.



**Number DX2—Child's Swing Bar Handle.
HAND CAST.**

Cut shows $\frac{1}{2}$ actual size.

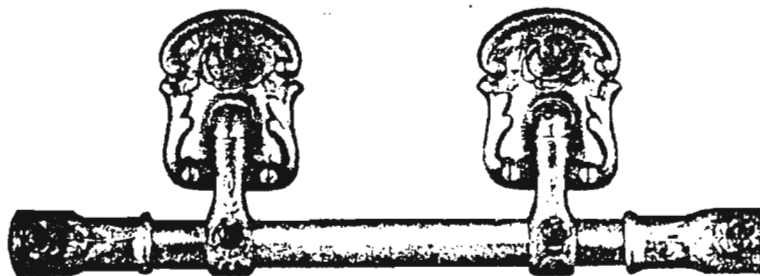
Packed 1 Dozen Pairs in No. X3 box.

No. $5-\frac{7}{8}$ " screws needed for attaching.

Suggested for use on 2' 6" or 3' Caskets.

Finished in Non-Tarnish, Purity or Pearl Tinted.

Shipping weight is 10 lbs. per dozen pairs.



**Number X26—Handle. $\frac{1}{2}$ " Round Swing Bar.
HAND CAST.**

Overall length of handle is 8".

Packed $\frac{1}{2}$ Dozen Pairs in a No. 708 box.

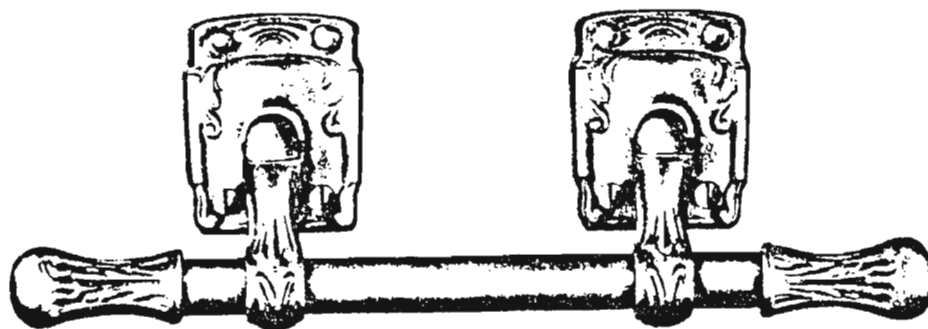
Finished in Non-Tarnish, Purity or Pearl Tinted.

Suggested for use on 2' 6" or 3' Caskets.

Handle is not steel braced.

Shipping weight is $6\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. per box.

Figure 16. Handles from the Sumter Casket Company. A, Victor adult's swing bail handle, 1956 price: \$7.20/8 doz. pairs; B, Victor child's swing bale handle, 1956 price: \$13.10/1 doz. pairs pearl/purity; C, Victor child's short bar handle, 1956 price: \$19.10/ $\frac{1}{2}$ doz. pairs pearl/purity.



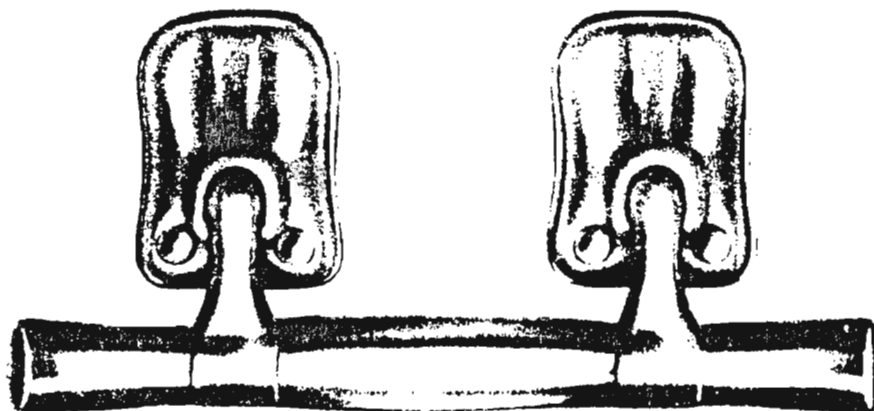
Number X29—Child's Swing Bar Handle.
HAND CAST.

Bar is $\frac{5}{8}$ " Round.
Suggested for use on 2' 6" or 3' Caskets.
Short bars packed $\frac{1}{3}$ Dozen Pairs in No. X31 box.
No. $5-\frac{7}{8}$ " screws needed for attaching.
Shipping weight is $7\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. per box.
THIS HANDLE IS ALSO MADE IN EXTENSION.
Handle is not steel braced.



Number X7—Youth's Handle. DIE CAST.
STATIONARY.

Overall length of handle is $8\frac{1}{2}$ ".
Packed $\frac{1}{3}$ Dozen Pairs with screws in No. 708 box.
Finished in Purity or Pearl Tinted.
Suggested for use on 3' 6" to 5' Caskets.
Shipping weight is $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. per box.



NUMBER X70 HANDLE.

STEEL.

Figure 17. Handles from the Sumter Casket Company. A, Victor child's short bar, 1956 price: \$22.50/ $\frac{1}{2}$ doz. pairs pearl/purity; B, Victor youth's stationary handle, 1956 price: \$12.60/ $\frac{1}{3}$ doz. pairs pearl/purity; C, Dixline child's short bar handle, 1966 price: \$10.30/1 doz. pairs enamel finish.

One handle from a box with a Sumter Casket Company label has a satin covered fancy swell bar with the metal finished in gold and silver. Two handles, made by Victor, have plain round bars and are finished in white. The remaining handle, also by Victor, is a modern stamped steel type.

One swing bail handle, with a squared arm and bar design (Figure 16B), has an "Our Darling" motif and is finished in white. The other is a large stamped steel swing bail handle (Figure 16A), also for infant or children's coffins.

Two types of escutcheon plates were found. One is round, the other is rectangular, but both have a nickel finish. A single ornament style, packed in Witherspoon boxes, was found. This ornament is a hand clasping a rose with leaves. A large collection of both plain, engraved, and stamped plates were found. Inscriptions include "Our Darling," "Mother," "Father," "At Rest," and "En Paz Descanse." The plates varied in size and were made of tin, nickel plated steel, and antimonial lead.

Materials from this collection, based partially on direct catalog identifications, probably date from c. 1900 through the mid-1960s. The oldest items appear to be the small "Our Darling" plates, the ornaments, and the escutcheons. The plates were found in boxes with only descriptive labels. Although a catalog number was stamped on the label, no manufacturer was listed. The condition of the box suggests a pre-1950 date when the sale of hardware by Witherspoon Brothers and Company to undertakers ceased. Neither the styles nor the catalog number could be matched to any of the 1950s catalogs. The ornament, because of its associated Witherspoon box, definitely predates 1950. It is also very similar to ornaments illustrated in a *Progression* advertisement (*Progression* 1(5):13, July 1891) and may date from the late nineteenth century. The escutcheons quickly lost popularity in the early twentieth century as metal coffins became more common. The most recent items are the stamped steel handles, which date from the late 1950s and early 1960s.

DATING ASPECTS

While the examination of hardware styles can be used as a dating technique, too often other factors, such as local popularity, availability, expense, and wholesale purchasing habits are ignored. Local popularity and availability are exemplified by the comment, describing the undertaking business in a "small town . . . in a county of only average wealth," that "people always wanted 'Something like what Father had,' and the other undertakers in the neighborhood never attempted to change their minds." As a result, the stock carried "consisted of very few designs of coffins and cheap caskets" (Anonymous 1914:2). It is probable that rural individuals would be conservative in their taste and prone to retain styles longer than individuals in more urban areas. Obviously, individuals, especially in rural areas, cannot buy what is not available to them, regardless of taste. It is unlikely that many merchants were willing to experiment with new and expensive coffin hardware styles. But perhaps most importantly, price is a major consideration. Regardless of the respect, piety, or veneration a farming family might have for their deceased loved one, it is unlikely that an expensive coffin or hardware would be purchased on a monthly income of about \$20 (Anonymous 1940:1154; Branson 1923:214; Johnson et al. 1935:11-12). In fact, Branson (1923:14) indicates that only \$6 of monthly income was seen by a tenant farmer, with the rest "being held back till the end of the year." Finally, we have noted that with the purchasing habits of A.L. Calhoun, Jr. he might well have purchased out-of-style hardware at low prices. It is doubtful, in a rural community which already was naturally conservative, that such a practice would be noticed, or objected to. Schiffer et al. (1978) note a similar situation in eighteenth century furniture brass and state,

catalogs often show designs from 1730 to 1780
on the same page. Possibly people were replacing
lost brass, but the chances are that in the
country they would still accept designs consid-
erably out of period (Schiffer et al. 1978:413).

Consequently, while hardware styles certainly have broad chronological boundaries, it is probable that other factors will affect their use in dating. The primary result is expected to be an attenuation of style occurrence and/or popularity.

In dating coffin handle styles several primary temporal changes are obvious, based on our review of catalogs and trade journals. Between 1880 and 1890 there was a shift in emphasis from the swing bail to the two lug short bar, with the short bar popular during the 1880 to 1920 period. Apparently by 1912 extension handles were becoming more popular as evidenced by Crane and Breed sales records of 1911, in which

short bar handle sales outnumbered the extension bar handle sales 7 to 5. By April 1912, however, the proportion of sales had reversed (*Crane and Bread Quality Talks* 3(10):n.p., October 1912). Extension handles, however, were available at least as early as 1877 (Paxson, Comfort and Company 1877:6).

Some of the earliest datable archaeological coffin materials are from the eighteenth century Newton Cemetery, Barbados, where the skeletal remains of slaves and coffin materials were excavated. The handles recovered were round and square bail bars, with either lugs or arms that were hammered directly into the coffin (Handler and Lange 1978:151). The earliest catalogs examined offered only swing bail handles. Markham and Strong (1865) offered 21 styles of double lug swing bails, while Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company offered 20 double lug styles and 25 single lug types (Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1865:333-336). By 1871 the Sargent and Company catalog, though still offering only swing bails, emphasized the double lug by offering 26 different styles as opposed to only five single lug handles (Sargent and Company 1871:n.p.). Although the Paxson, Comfort and Company catalog does not distinguish between single and double lug styles, nor between swing bails and short bars, 68 non-extension handles were offered, as were eight styles of extension handles (Paxson, Comfort and Company 1877:4-6).

The earliest reference found to swing bail and short bar handles in the trade journals was in a Taylor and Company advertisement in which "old style" bail and short bar handles were compared to the new stationary extension handles (*Sunnyside* 4(40):n.p., November 1888). After this point no more advertisements of bail handles were found. The Stirling Casket Hardware Company offered one style of swing bail in their 1961 catalog and F.H. Hill's 1925 catalog showed only two swing bails, both in children's sizes and styles, as opposed to eight children's short bar handles (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:122).

In 1892, McCarthy's Patent Brace, a guaranteed stationary short bar handle was advertised (*Progression* 2(2):16, April 1892). In 1900 the National Casket Company catalog offered both extension and short bar handles, with the reminder that all short bar styles were also available in extension styles. By 1912, as previously mentioned, Crane and Bread's sales records indicated that extension handles were quite popular. F.H. Hill's 1920 catalog showed ready made caskets, trimmed with 12 different short bar handles and 14 different extension handles. The individual handle sets were to be placed on undecorated coffins, with the reminder again that any of the short bar handles shown were also available in extension sizes (F.H. Hill Company 1920). The c. 1925 catalog showed 29 extension handles and 10 short bar handles, only one of which was available in the extension size (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:117-120).

Some of the hardware from the Calhoun collection had patent marks on the reverse faces, which provide date ranges for their manufacture. Design patents, for the protection of ornamental designs, may be taken out for three and one-half, seven, or 14 year terms, after which they must be renewed. Articles manufactured with the design after the end of a patent term could no longer carry the patent date or number without

this renewal. It is unlikely, although not impossible, that many of the designs would be renewed after almost two decades of use. If we assume that the maximum design patent term was issued to the Calhoun hardware designs, we can estimate when the articles were no longer manufactured, or when their molds were changed to removed the dates. Two of the Calhoun short bar handles had patent marks. "Patent July 1895" was found on the single lug handle shown in Figure 5A. Consequently, this item would date between 1895 and 1909. "Patent July 10, 1906" was found on the double lug handle shown in Figure 7D, which indicates a manufacture date between 1906 and 1923. None of the swing bail handles had patent marks.

Hinges for coffins are not found in either the Calhoun or Sumter collections, but are illustrated in the four earliest catalogs examined. Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company (1980:332) offers seven different styles, Markham and Strong (1865:22-26) offer 11 styles, Sargent and Company (1871:n.p.) offer four, and Paxson, Comfort and Company (1877:16) offers four. Hinges are not mentioned in any other catalogs nor in the trade journals. Caplifters are not seen in the catalogs prior to Paxson, Comfort and Company (1877:11), but one example from the Calhoun collection is marked with "MB Co" for Meriden Britannia. This company changed its name to International Silver Company in 1898. It is therefore probable that this item (Figure 14L) was manufactured prior to 1898. The F.H. Hill Company (c. 1925:122) continued to offer seven styles of caplifters through the mid-1920s. None are found in catalogs dating to the mid-twentieth century (Stirling Casket Hardware Company 1961; Victor Casket Hardware Company 1956).

Caplifters, thumbscrews, and escutchions were found together in an advertisement from Crane and Breed (*Quality Talks* 3(1):back cover, January 1912) and on a metal casket from the National Casket Company catalog (c. 1900:305). No thumbscrews or escutchions were found in the Russell and Erwin 1865 catalog, although diamond plates, which may be the forerunner of escutchions, were illustrated for use with either white metal coffin screws or with coffin tacks (Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980:331). There were two simple thumbscrews and five ornate escutchions found in the Sargent and Company (1871:n.p.) catalog six years later. Six years after that, the Paxson, Comfort and Company (1877:17-18) catalog offered eight thumbscrews and 28 escutchions. An advertisement from 1888 mentioned that thumbscrews were "superseded by our New Fasteners" (*Sunnyside* 4(40):n.p., November 1888). Thumbscrews continued to be manufactured into the 1960s (Stirling Casket Hardware Company 1961:111). While thumbscrews and escutchions may not be particularly useful for dating, an escutcheon (Figure 14MM) was marked "WMM SMITHS PATENT June 8, 1884." Consequently, this item would have a date range from 1884 to 1898.

The Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company (1980:331-332) illustrates white metal coffin screws in a variety of styles and lengths, as does the Sargent and Company (1871:n.p.) catalog. These same sources also offer coffin tacks (fake screws). Neither are illustrated in the presently available twentieth century catalogs and it is probable that they were replaced either by thumbscrews and escutchions, or silver-headed screws.

The decorative studs are equally difficult to date. They lack any patent or manufacturer's information, perhaps because of their light weight or their inexpensive cost. Three styles of studs were offered by the Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company (1980:331), six were offered in the Markham and Strong (1865:5, 8) catalog, 12 were illustrated by Sargent and Company (1871:n.p.), and 41 were offered by Paxson, Comfort and Company (1877:15). The Sargent and Company (c. 1920:879-882) offered 78 styles into the twentieth century and F.H. Hill Company (c. 1925:122) offered four different styles. An 1891 advertisement also illustrates studs (*Progression* 1(15):13, July 1891), although the 1888 Taylor and Company advertisement uses studs as examples of "relics" (*Sunnyside* 4(40): n.p., November 1888) and Hohenschuh states that "the home-made coffin and stamped trimmings have about disappeared forever" (Hohenschuh c. 1900:40).

Although of limited use in dating, Hohenschuh (c. 1900:124) notes the use of a slotted nail to attach coffin handles. Such nails are illustrated in the Sargent and Company (c. 1920:914) catalog and probably span the period from 1890 to 1920. A variety of other coffin items, such as lining tacks (Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980:331; Sargent and Company 1871:n.p., c. 1920:917-918), furniture nails, trunk nails, and silk head tufting nails, were also used through the mid-twentieth century (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:123).

The coffin hardware from A.L. Calhoun, Jr.'s store may also be dated by comparison with archaeological collections. Two reports were located which contain sufficient detail for such a comparison: the Cedar Grove, Arkansas cemetery, which dates from c. 1890 to 1927 (Rose 1982), and the Millwood, South Carolina cemetery, which dates c. 1860 to 1920 (Orser et al. 1982). Both cemeteries appear to have been used by tenant farmers, although the records are far from clear.

Of the nine illustrated coffin handle types from Cedar Grove, there are three identical matches in the Calhoun collection (Rose 1982: Figures 5-24 [Type II], 5-22 [Type IV], and 5-56 [Type VI] and Calhoun Figures 11B, 9E and 10J, and 11A). In addition, the Cedar Grove Type V handle (Rose 1982:Figure 5-62) matches the Calhoun collection lug shown in Figure 11A, but is matched with the Calhoun bar shown in Figure 10G. Two identical matches were found between the Millwood collection (Orser et al. 1982:Figures 91C and 92E) and the Calhoun collection (Figures 6B and 10E).

In addition, the box handle illustrated by Rose (1982:Figure 5-23) from Cedar Grove is identical to our handle shown in Figure 9C. Two of the Cedar Grove escutchions (Rose 1982:Figures 5-3 and 5-27) are identical to Figures 14FF and 14TT from the Calhoun store. One of the Millwood escutchions (Orser et al. 1982:Figure 90G) is matched by the Calhoun example shown in Figure 14AA. Two of the Cedar Grove caplifters (Rose 1982:Figures 5-52 and 5-73) are matched by our Figures 13K, and 13Q and R.

We have also examined a small collection of hardware, which consists of handles, thumbscrews, escutchions, decorative studs, coffin screws and tacks, and plates, from a Charleston, South Carolina cemetery removed by Dr. Ted Rathbun (Trinkley and Hacker-Norton 1984). This cemetery was apparently used by blacks from c. 1840 to the early twentieth century.

Although only two handle types were found at the Charleston site, one bar is identical to a specimen illustrated in Orser et al. (1982:Figure 92E) and was also found in the Calhoun collection (Figure 10E). The lugs from the Millwood specimen, however, are not found in the Calhoun collection. The other style handle from Charleston, while not found in the Calhoun store, was identified from the Millwood site (Orser et al. 1982:Figure 88D).

The high degree of similarity between the Calhoun collection and the hardware recovered from Cedar Grove and Millwood is significant, since all are presumed to date from the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries. The discovery of an identical handle from the Charleston site, however, is perplexing since that site was expected to be older than the others. Three alternatives present themselves: the Millwood site and the Calhoun collection may be older than previously thought, the Charleston site may include more recent burials than anticipated, or hardware styles or their use may span considerable time. The "mismatching" of lugs and arms found in two instances suggests the latter interpretation, with handles and lugs mixed and matched as available stock permitted.

A final point which has been noticed by Orser et al. (1982:462) is worthy of our comment. Much of the hardware from Clio, like that found at Millwood, is more elaborate than the hardware illustrated in early twentieth century catalogs. There appears to be a significant reduction in detail and design quality from the late nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. Judy Heberling (personal communication 1984) notes that hardware styles in general become cleaner and less ornate early in the twentieth century. It appears that coffin hardware simply follows this trend. While this is hardly sufficient for dating the recovered hardware, it provides some general framework for further research.

The presence of more elaborate than expected hardware at presumably early twentieth century sites, we believe, supports our argument that coffin hardware in rural, poor areas, will show a greatly attenuated range of styles. Consequently, we would expect that the hardware being sold in 1900 might easily have been manufactured in the 1880s. Certainly this was the case with A.L. Calhoun, Jr., who, at the time of the 1926 fire, still had items in stock which are dated to the late nineteenth century.

RAMIFICATIONS AND SUMMARY

Perhaps the most significant ramification of this study concerns the dating of coffin hardware. The A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store sold coffin hardware between two well established dates -- 1896 and 1926. Thus, it might be reasonable to assume that all items found in the store will date from this period. The 1926 fire does provide a good TAQ date; however, we have attempted to illustrate that some of the hardware predates 1896. More significantly, the assemblage, taken as a whole, does not appear representative of the styles popular in the early twentieth century. Rather, the collection suggests some considerable "stylistic lag." Based on the best information available to us, it appears that the Calhoun collection, although purchased during the first quarter of the twentieth century, contains items which may predate the store's opening by up to two decades. Whether this represents solely the merchandising of A.L. Calhoun, Jr., or it reflects the poor, rural nature of Marlboro County, or some other undetermined factor, or a combination of these, could not be readily discerned. Certainly Calhoun had an idiosyncratic buying pattern, regardless of his success. Marlboro County is also a poor, rural section of South Carolina and it is difficult imagining the farmers, most of them tenants, spending any significant sum for funeral services. Regardless, these data should caution archaeologists to the pitfalls of dating burial hardware (e.g., Rose 1982:103, 106, 113). It may be possible, on stylistic grounds, to date coffin hardware, but it is much more difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the prevailing cultural and economic biases.

Coffin handle styles show a temporal shift in emphasis from the swing bail to the two lug short bar around 1880. By 1912 the extension handles are gaining popularity and hardware is becoming "cleaner" with straight lines and simple designs. Considerable overlap, however, is noted. Studs are difficult to date, but are offered in catalogs from the mid-nineteenth (Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980:331; Markham and Strong 1865:5,8) through mid-twentieth centuries (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:122). At the turn of the century, however, they are no longer commonly accepted by the funeral industry. They are illustrated as "relics" (*Sunnyside* 4(40):n.p., November 1888) and frowned upon by professionals (Hohenschuh c. 1900:40). Their continued use after this date is probably related to conservative rural traditions and the low price of the items. Escutcheons are available from at least the mid-nineteenth century (Sargent and Company 1871), but are apparently used with white metal coffin screws. By the early twentieth century thumbscrews are observed as decorative styles distinct from coffin screws (F.H. Hill Company c. 1925:122; Sargent and Company c. 1920:873-877). White metal coffin screws and coffin tacks are found as early as 1865 (Markham and Strong 1865; Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980),

but disappear sometime between 1877 and 1920 (Paxson, Comfort and Company 1877; Sargent and Company c. 1920). Caplifters, which appear by 1877 (Paxson, Comfort and Company 1877), may be associated with the rise in the popularity of embalming and the need to repeatedly open the casket. Coffin hinges are pictured in 1865 catalogs (Markham and Strong 1865; Russell and Erwin Manufacturing Company 1980), but by 1900 are no longer illustrated. The relatively short popularity of hinges may be associated with the sudden interest in embalming and viewing the body, prior to the full development and use of hidden hinges on caskets.

The catalogs published prior to 1900 show an array of intricately designed coffin hardware, including pieces with cherubs, angel heads and wings, emblems of fraternal orders, rich details of flowers, vines, and background texture. By 1900, the styles become simpler with cleaner lines. Although fraternal order emblems remain popular, they become more understated.

A second ramification of this study concerns the price structure of the coffin hardware offered at the A.L. Calhoun, Jr. store. Although some "stylish," and hence "expensive," goods were offered, such as the steel extension bars, even they were at the less costly end of the scale. Both the J.M. Hutton and Company (n.d.) and Victor Casket Hardware Company (1956) catalogs list two different quality extension bar handles. The less expensive sets range from \$5.15 to \$8.90, while the hand cast sets range from \$12.45 to \$17.60. The one example from the Calhoun store falls into the less expensive category. Further evidence of this merchandising pattern may be observed in the predominance of swing bail handles at Calhoun's store. Similar handles were offered for as little as \$.19 each in the J.M. Hutton and Company (n.d.) catalog and as late as the mid-nineteenth century bail handles were 33% less expensive than short bar handles.

Previous discussions (see Table 6) indicate the wide range of costs associated with trimming coffins. Calhoun appears to have stocked only a few of the less expensive steel short bar handles (such as that illustrated in Figure 5B). Most are hand cast white metal in fancy designs. The cast short bar handles, according to the Victor Casket Hardware Company (1956) catalog, might have been twice as expensive as the steel handles. All of Calhoun's swing bail handles are cast metal, but they probably represent a wide range of prices. Regardless of the type or style, handles were the most expensive items used in trimming a coffin. All of the other items combined, including thumbscrews, escutchions, caplifters, screws, coffin tacks, studs, and the coffin plate, would rarely cost more than the four or six handles.

These data explain two observations in the archaeological record. First, the reduction from six to four handles could account for a significant savings and, we believe, this savings to the family of the deceased is a better explanation for the reduced number of handles than the inability to find a sufficient number of pallbearers (see Hohenschuh c. 1900:123). Second, a plain coffin, with only four handles, could be given a "richer" appearance through the liberal use of ornate, but

inexpensive, studs, white metal screws, and coffin tacks. Metal plates could be very inexpensive and could be used to impart a sense of opulence. Consequently, archaeologists should be aware that coffin hardware may denote "apparent" status as well as "real" status. "Real" status would be reflected by the use of either extension or fancy cast metal short bar handles, caplifters, and a heavy coffin plate. "Apparent" status would be reflected in the use of steel short bar or cast swing bail handles (probably four rather than six), decorative elements such as studs, white metal coffin screws and tacks, and a stamped metal plate. It is not probable that the economic status of an individual could be underrepresented by the availability of only the less expensive goods. Given the use of the telegraph and express rail service, goods of any style or price range could be delivered quickly.

As previously mentioned, children's coffin hardware is not appreciably less expensive than adult hardware, with mid-range children's handles costing about the same as the least expensive adult handles (Sargent and Company 1871). By the mid-twentieth century the cost differential had disappeared and children's hardware was no less expensive than comparable adult hardware. These data, coupled with the inability of children to make an economic contribution to the household and the prevalence of childhood diseases, may account for the rare occurrence of trimmed children's coffins in the archaeological record. These data may also explain why only 31% of Calhoun's handle styles and 30% of the minimum number of sets were children's sizes. Children only rarely were given the luxury of a trimmed coffin.

Failing to obtain access to a complete early twentieth century price list we have extrapolated the prices for coffin hardware at the time of Calhoun's fire from the Sargent and Company (1871) and Victor Casket Hardware Company (1956) catalogs. These figures are based on an average wholesale price increase of about 350% over the 85 year period or a 202% increase to 1920. Silver plated white metal bail handles are estimated to have a cost of \$.78 each, thumbscrews and escutchions would cost \$.03 each, white metal coffin screws and studs would cost \$.02 each, coffin tacks would cost \$.008 each, and coffin plates would cost \$.34 each. Consequently, trimming a coffin with minimal hardware (four handles, 24 studs, six escutchions and thumbscrews, 24 tacks, and one plate) might have a wholesale price of about \$4.59. This would closely approximate the estimate of \$10 by Orser et al. (1982:462).

These data suggest that Calhoun, as a wise salesman, ensured that his stock reflected the price his patrons were able to pay rather than the newest styles as illustrated in *The Casket* or *Southern Funeral Director*. As Hohenschuh states,

The funeral director should have an ample stock for his requirements from the very plainest coffins to such as would be an average demand for his community Finer goods, for which there may be a demand in only rare cases, can be ordered by telegraph or telephone and received by express. Better sell a low priced casket and

get paid for it, than to sell a high priced one and wait a long time for the pay, or perhaps never get it (Hohenschuh c. 1900:39-40).

Consequently, Calhoun stocked abundant swing bail handles, studs, and coffin screws for the "very plainest" (i.e., least expensive) and fancier short bar handles, caplifters, and plates for the "average casket" (i.e., more expensive and affordable by the middle class). If stationary or extension handles were called for, it appears that they were ordered.

Finally, this research has shown some very practical archaeological implications. A number of misconceptions or confusing issues can be resolved. For example, Orser et al. (1982:Figure 88) identify a "cast iron casket handle," which, in fact, is a shipping box handle. The "composite wood and metal casket handle," illustrated by Orser et al. (1982:Figure 91) probably represents either a cloth or metal covered bar with the outer surface completely decomposed. Rose (1982:176, Figure 5-52) describes a "two piece cast ornament" whose "function is unknown." The item is a caplifter. Rose (1982:80, 84) note a number of "plaques" found in the thoracic or pelvic area and suggest they may have been placed on the lid of the coffin, or within the coffin. Occasionally, fragments of metal have been found overlying the vertebrae, but were not recoverable (Ted Rathbun, personal communication 1984). This research suggests that these items are coffin plates and that they were usually placed on the center of the top lid. Burial and coffin slump can account for the plates' eventual position in either the thoracic or pelvic regions.

A more thorough knowledge of coffin hardware, its various functions, and its placement would be of considerable benefit to archaeologists charged with burial removals. This study has attempted to describe the more common hardware items. Archaeologists should endeavor to excavate burials in such a way that it is possible to find all hardware items and to accurately record their position within the grave. The number of items, such as handles or thumbscrews, may provide significant information on the individual's economic status. The use of nails to secure the handles rather than screws may also be an indication of economic status. The presence of shipping box handles may indicate that the individual was shipped from the place of death to be buried with other family members.

Finally, coffin hardware should be as rigorously and thoroughly analyzed as any other historical artifact. There are a number of hardware catalogs which span the mid-nineteenth through twentieth centuries. While it is unusual to correlate a specific archaeological item with a catalog, they do provide information on stylistic change and pricing. They are difficult to locate and to this end Appendix 1 of this report lists the more common ones by date, with information on the manufacturer and the source library.

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APPENDIX: SELECTED TRADE CATALOGS

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