

HARDWARE CASE STUDY

Historically significant museum is restored to former glory with Richards-Wilcox Door Hardware.

Foundation of the Salisbury House

In the heartland of Des Moines, Iowa, there exists a gem of a museum called Salisbury House. Built in 1928 as the family home of Carl and Edith Weeks, the 42-room mansion graces a 10 acre estate.

Carl Weeks made his fortune in the cosmetics industry as one of the first inventors of women's facial powder and foundation. Mr. Weeks was determined to build a splendid manor patterned after the king's house in Salisbury, England.

Scott Brunscheen, Director of Salisbury House, "I tried to find the very best people and products for the restoration." Brunscheen chose Richards-Wilcox Hardware to meet that demand.

Salisbury House Interior of Visitor Center Showing Bi-Fold Doors with Richards-Wilcox hinges.



Salisbury House

Historically Significant Museum Restored to Former Glory with Richards-Wilcox Door Hardware

The Weeks family occupied Salisbury House for 26 years, then donated the home to Drake University. However, the University could not take advantage of the property and sold it to the Iowa State Education Association in the 1950's for use as office space.

Many rooms were converted to offices to house over 50 staff members. The maintenance and costly repairs to such a unique structure soon began to overwhelm the association, and they were faced with selling the property.

Local preservationists recognized the value of this beautiful estate and formed the Salisbury House Foundation in 1993 to negotiate its purchase and restoration.

A New Beginning

Renovation of Salisbury House started in 1996. Restoration plans called for the creation of a visitor center in what was formerly the carriage house. This segment of reconstruction, initiated in 2001, presented some serious challenges.



Salisbury House, Des Moines, IA
Historic Preservation Project.



Workers install doors with Richards-Wilcox hinges in the historically accurate original design.



Construction Challenges

The carriage doors had been removed and replaced with windows. Separating walls had been dismantled, the brick, painted. Although the archives at Salisbury House contained original house blueprints, these documents were not necessarily a reflection of reality.

Scott Brunscheen, Director of Salisbury House, "I tried to find the very best people and products for the

restoration. My challenge was to honor the original design, yet meet the new usage as a gathering place for tours. The Carriage House turned Visitor Center would have to allow safe entry and egress for large crowds, while complying with current codes."

The Process

Using a combination of blueprints and old photos, the architectural firm determined the original composition and design of the unusual bi-fold carriage doors and hardware.

Drawings from 1928 referenced Richards-Wilcox product, so the architect contacted the company to inquire whether track, hangers, support brackets, handles, strap hinges, backplates, and spring bolts were still in production.

Dan Lorden, National Sales Manager, was consulted to find a solution. "Most of Richards-Wilcox hardware manufactured today has a more modern look, but some of the pieces are actually identical to the original design in Salisbury House. With input

from the Richards-Wilcox Engineering Team, we committed to create the missing specialty items to match the original design."

New laser cutting technology resurrected designs that had been made obsolete. Within a short time, the 'antique' hardware was ready to ship and install on the new carriage doors.

Seeing the hardware in place drew this reaction from Dan Lorden. "When I visited Salisbury House after the installation, it was incredible to see the restored beauty of this museum. I was very proud that Richards-Wilcox had been part of the original construction in 1928, and was delighted to help in providing continuity and authenticity in the restoration."

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