SAFE ID REPORT

Safe Report with Value and Next Steps

A Diebold Safe & Lock Co. vault door with a painted landscape, sold through the company's San Francisco agent, in the old City Hall of New Whatcom (now Bellingham), Washington.

IDENTIFICATION · VALUE · PLAN

PREPARED FOR
Sample: written as if the owner had sent us this photo

OBJECT
Vault door and frame, Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, WA

PHOTO
Joe Mabel, 2017, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia Commons

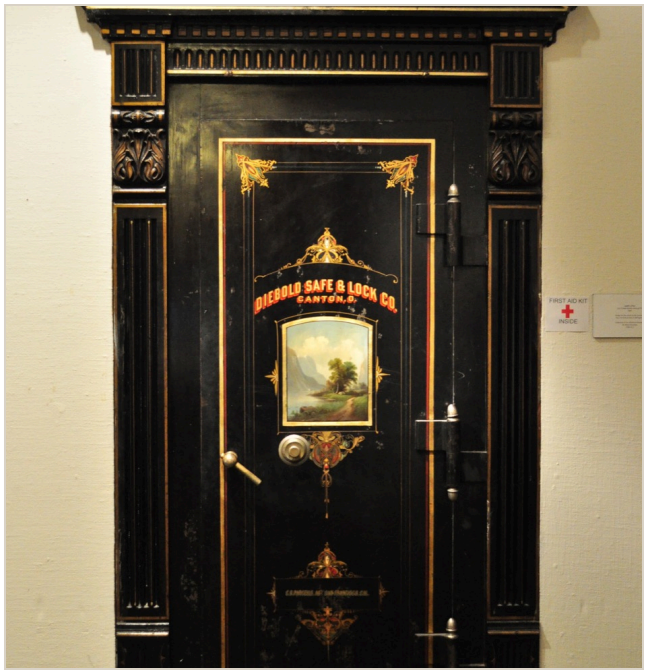


Fig. 1. The door in its painted surround.

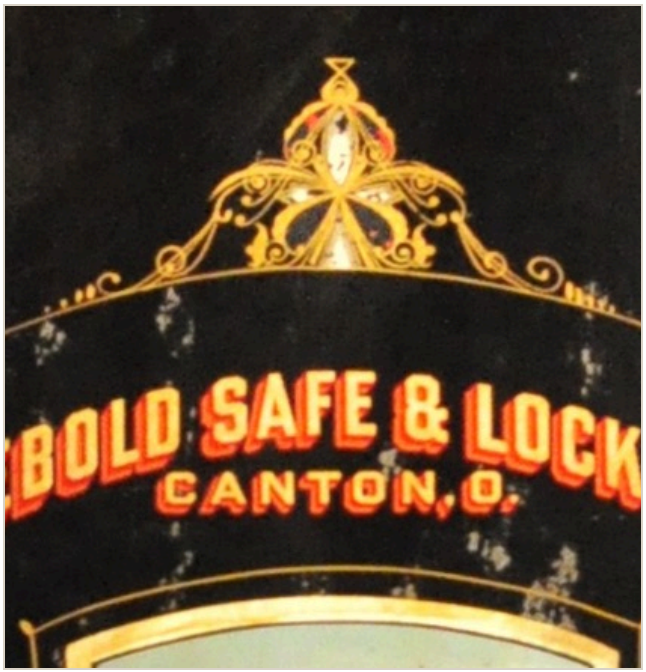


Fig. 2. "Diebold Safe & Lock Co., Canton, O." in gold with red shading.

MAKER	Diebold Safe & Lock Company, Canton, Ohio
SOLD BY	Charles B. Parcells, Diebold's Pacific Coast agent, San Francisco
MADE	About 1888 to 1900, most likely 1892 to 1893 for the new City Hall
TYPE	Single vault door with frame, combination lock, original painted decoration
VALUE	About $1,000 to $3,000 as it stands, removed and ready to collect
SAFETY	Several hundred pounds to over half a ton with its frame. Removal is a job for riggers.

4	19	7	8
details read from the photo	city directories checked, 1881 to 1902	sources listed at the end	prices compared, sold and asking

1 Who made it

The door was made by the Diebold Safe & Lock Company of Canton, Ohio, one of the big three American safe and vault makers of its day. The firm started in Cincinnati around 1859, moved its works to Canton in 1871 and 1872, and took the name on this door in 1876, when it became a joint-stock company. It kept that name until 1943, when it became Diebold, Incorporated.[1]

Diebold didn't sell direct on the West Coast. It worked through agents, and their names were painted on the doors they sold. The panel near the bottom of this one reads "C. B. Parcells, Agt., San Francisco, Cal." Charles B. Parcells had managed Hall's Safe & Lock Co.'s San Francisco branch through the early 1880s. From 1888 the city directories list him as Diebold's general Pacific Coast agent.[2] He sold to town halls as far north as Seattle: in September 1889 he quoted Seattle's council $2,225 for two steel jail cells on Diebold letterhead.[3]

2 How old it is

There's no published list of Diebold serial numbers, so the date comes from the words on the door, the agent and the building. Three things line up:

WHAT WE SEE	WHAT IT TELLS US
"Diebold Safe & Lock Co., Canton, O."	Made between 1876 and 1943. On its own, that's a wide window.[1]
"C. B. Parcells, Agt., San Francisco" KEY CLUE	Parcells is Diebold's agent in every San Francisco directory from May 1888 to 1900. From 1901 the agency trades as Parcells, Greenwood Co., and before 1888 Diebold had other agents there.[2] That narrows the door to about 1888 to 1900.
The building	New Whatcom chose its City Hall design in late 1891, started building in February 1892, and the council first met there on 9 May 1893.[4] A vault door ordered for the new building fits that window.
Painted landscape, gold and red lining	Typical of American safes and vault doors from the 1870s to the early 1900s. By 1933 Diebold's catalogued vault doors were plain olive green.[5]

Best estimate: about 1888 to 1900, most likely 1892 to 1893. The last step is my inference. No record we found names this door, so it could in theory have been bought earlier for another building and moved here.

3 What the door tells us



1. **Maker's name.** Gold with red shading on an arched scroll, the usual Diebold placing.
2. **Painted panel.** A landscape with a large tree and a cliff or mountain, in a gilt frame. Hand-painted scenes like this were part of the price of a good door.
3. **Combination dial** with a decorated escutcheon below it.
4. **Lever handle** with a ball end, which throws the bolts.
5. **Exposed hinges** with finials on the right-hand edge.
6. **Agent's panel:** "C. B. Parcells, Agt., San Francisco, Cal." The key to the date.
7. **Surround** with fluted pilasters, dentils and an arched pediment. From the photo we can't tell whether it is cast iron or wood painted to match.



Fig. 3. The agent's panel, enlarged from the full-size photo. The second initial is small, but every record of the agent gives "C. B."

4 What it was built to do

A city hall of the 1890s kept its cash, tax rolls and council records in brick vaults, and a door like this closed the vault. The museum still shows the outlines of the comptroller's and treasurer's vaults in the old building.[4] Most of the fire protection came from the vault's walls; the door's job was to close it tightly and keep out casual thieves. No fire or burglary rating for this door is recorded.

5 Safety and weight

BEFORE ANYTHING MOVES

A vault door and frame is anchored into the wall. Diebold's own 1933 catalogue gives single vault doors with frames of about 375 lb, 1,000 lb and 1,650 lb, depending on the grade.[5] Expect this one to sit somewhere in that range. Taking it out of the wall is a job for riggers or a safe and vault company, not a weekend with friends. Don't cut, grind or sand it: the original paint is most of its value.

6 What would sharpen the date

A serial number, stamped on the door edge, a hinge or the bolt work, would help if a dated Diebold door with a close number turns up. New Whatcom's council minutes for 1892 and 1893 may record the vault order, and the Whatcom Museum's archive is the place to ask. If you find either, send it to me and I'll update the report at no charge.

7 What it's worth

Painted vault doors are a small market. Most are sold by salvage dealers or turn up at general auctions, and the price depends heavily on whether the door is already out of the wall. These are the closest records I found:

SALE	WHAT IT WAS	PRICE
O'Gallerie, Portland, Oregon, July 2021 CLOSEST	Webb Safe & Lock vault door and frame, painted landscape panel, 93½ × 44¾ in	**$1,300 sold**
EBTH online auction, October 2022	Diebold, Bahmann & Co. painted floor safe, worn	**$580 sold**
EBTH online auction, October 2016	Hall's floor safe with a landscape on the door	**$773 sold**
EBTH, Ohio, September 2015	Hall's painted safe, over 500 lb, "will require professional movers"	**$45 sold**
Harp Gallery (dealer), Wisconsin	Hall's and Herring-Hall-Marvin safes in original paint	**$1,575 to $1,650 sold**
Aurora Mills Salvage, Oregon, Nov 2026	1910s Diebold vault door, plain finish	**$6,995 asking**
BankEquipment.com, Wisconsin, June 2026	Ornamental Diebold vault door, removal included	**$24,750 asking**

Asking prices are what dealers hope to get after removal, cleaning and delivery. They are not what an owner receives for a door still in the wall. The $45 Hall's safe shows what happens when a heavy piece has to be collected by the buyer.

My informal range for a door like this, removed and sold as it is:

$1,000 to $3,000

Under $1,000	$1,000 to $2,000	$2,000 to $3,000
Still in the wall, so the buyer pays for removal; or paint damaged or overpainted.	Out of the wall with its frame, original paint, combination unknown.	Combination known and working, paint and panel in good order, its City Hall story documented.

Only one close sale exists, so treat this as a guide rather than a firm figure. The Diebold name, the painted panel and the San Francisco agent all help. A restored door sold by a dealer to a restaurant or wine cellar can fetch far more, but the dealer carries the removal, restoration and selling costs.

8 Plan for selling or rehoming it

Before you list it

1. **Get a removal quote first.** Ask a safe and vault company or a rigging firm what it costs to take the door and frame out and put it on a pallet. That figure decides whether selling makes sense.
2. **Sort out the combination.** If it's unknown, a safe technician can usually recover or reset it. A working door sells for more.
3. **Leave the paint alone.** Dust it with a soft brush. Don't repaint or polish the panel; a paintings conservator can clean the scene if needed.
4. **Take six photos:** the whole door, the maker's name, the painted panel, the agent's panel, the door edge and bolts, and the back of the frame.

Where to sell it

- **Architectural salvage dealers** on the West Coast. They pay less but handle removal.
- **A regional auction house** that holds Americana or architectural sales.
- **Vault door specialists and restorers**, who buy doors to restore for wine cellars, restaurants and safe rooms.
- **A local museum or historical society**, if you would rather it stayed in the area. Ask before you offer delivery.

Ready-to-use listing

Antique Diebold vault door with painted landscape, 1890s

Made by the Diebold Safe & Lock Co. of Canton, Ohio, and sold by its San Francisco agent, C. B. Parcells, about 1888 to 1900. Original black finish with gold and red lining, hand-painted landscape panel, maker's name and agent's panel. Combination dial and lever handle, with its frame and painted surround.

Size: [height] x [width] in overall. Weight: [estimate from the remover].
Combination: [known and working / not known].

[Already removed and on a pallet / Buyer arranges removal]. Collection from [town]. Serious buyers welcome to view.

$[price] or best offer.

Price and terms. If the door is out and on a pallet, list at about $2,500 and be ready to settle near $1,500. Take payment in full before collection, by bank transfer or cash. Ignore offers above your price with a "shipping agent": that is a common scam on large items.

Scope and limitations

- This report is based on one photo and published records. Nothing was examined in person.
- Dates are estimates from the evidence listed. Where a step is my inference, the report says so.
- The value range is an informal opinion from recorded sales and listings. It is not a certified, insurance or tax valuation.
- The report does not cover opening, repairing or moving the door. For those, use a safe technician or a rigging firm.
- This is a sample. The door belongs to the Whatcom Museum and is not for sale.

Sources

1. History of Safes, "Diebold safes", with its sources: historyofsafes.com/diebold-safes/ (The Trade Review, 19 Mar 1881; Comley & D'Eggville, 1875; Business Week, 12 Jan 1946).
2. San Francisco city directories (Langley 1881 to 1894; Crocker-Langley 1895 to 1902), entries for Parcells and for Diebold Safe and Lock Co. Internet Archive, e.g. archive.org/details/langleyssanfranc1888sanf, archive.org/details/crockerlangleysa1901sanfrich.
3. C. B. Parcells to the Mayor and Council of Seattle, 14 Sept 1889. Seattle Municipal Archives, City of Seattle Records item 990483.
4. Whatcom Museum, "The History of Old City Hall", whatcommuseum.org/2017/; City of Bellingham, Downtown Bellingham Historic Walking Tour, site 1.
5. Diebold Safe & Lock Co., Triumph Line, in Sweet's Catalogs 1933, vol. C. archive.org/details/SweetsCatalogs1933Vol.C00011.
6. Sales: O'Gallerie lot 1056 (26 Jul 2021); EBTH items 13177800, 4522260, 2333152; Harp Gallery sold listings; Aurora Mills Architectural Salvage; BankEquipment.com classifieds (asking prices).
7. Photo: Joe Mabel, "Whatcom Museum - City Hall safe 01.jpg", 2017, CC BY-SA 4.0, commons.wikimedia.org. Details cropped from the original.

Greg

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