



The First One...

Where were you when you saw the clock or watch that became the first piece in your collection?

Tell us what it was, send in a photo, and share some of the memories that go with it: NAWCC Publications Department, 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512, or e-mail to Editor Diana DeLuca at ddeLuca@nawcc.org.

William J. Banner (CA)

I'll be 83 on my next birthday in June. I obtained my first clock when I was only 12 years old back in 1939. Let me tell you the story.

One of my best schoolmates was named Tom. Tom and I chummed together throughout our elementary school years. Tom's father owned a tavern, one of those gathering places so popular in America's Midwest.

One of Tom's regular Saturday morning chores was to gather all of the empty liquor bottles from the tavern and smash them in the ash box near the alley. The state liquor control board required that all empty liquor bottles be smashed so that they would never get refilled to avoid state taxes.

One Saturday when I was helping Tom carry the empty liquor bottles to the alley to be smashed, I noticed a green clock in the ash box. I carefully removed the discarded clock from the ash box before we began our bottle-breaking chore. After we finished, I carried the clock into the house to ask Tom's mother if I could have the clock. She agreed it was mine.

I excitedly found my way home to show my dad my newest possession. He showed me that the green paint was crudely applied over a beautiful walnut frame. Over the next several days my father showed me how to remove the green paint with paint remover. We then applied a coat of varnish. After refinishing the case we discovered that the movement failed to work, which was probably the reason that the clock was in the alley ash box in the first place.

My dad was a bookkeeper by trade (not a clock repair person), so he proceeded to show me how we would

clean the clock movement in paint thinner and then scrub the movement in soapy water. He used 3-in-One Oil where he thought necessary and the clock worked just fine.

But this isn't the end of the story. After I graduated high school I enrolled in a clock repair course in a local trade school. There I learned the fine details of clock repair. My collection of clocks began to increase.

After serving in the Navy I used my GI Bill to earn a teaching credential. Although my wife and I were both teachers, I continued my collection of clocks. My contact with Tom was reduced to a Christmas card each year.

One Christmas I included a snapshot along with the Christmas card. It was a photo of me standing in front of the piano. On top of the piano was that clock I retrieved from the ash box.

When Tom received my letter with the photo, he immediately wrote back saying he now knew who stole his grandmother's clock. He insisted that I return the clock to his family immediately. After much correspondence I failed to convince Tom that the clock came out of the alley ash box, and that his mother said that I could keep it as my own.

My wife helped to convince me to pack the clock carefully and send it back to Tom. After all, she reminded me, I had a large collection and several kitchen-type clocks just like it. What made the clock on the piano special was that it was my first clock and my Dad showed me how to bring it back to life.

After returning the clock to Tom, I never heard from him again.

Walter S. Newman (IL)

It was 1952; my wife and I attended our first auction while visiting friends in New Hampshire. It was crowded and we separated; I found a seat up front.

When the auctioneer held up the clock, he asked for an opening bid of \$1.00 but got 50 cents. I had no particular interest in it, but as an architect I appreciated the beautiful shape of its rosewood case, and so I raised the current bid by 25 cents, which was then raised another 25 cents by someone else. This continued in 25-cent increments until it reached \$5.75. The audience was mesmerized. When I bid \$6.00, the auctioneer asked if I knew the lady who was bidding against me. I stood up, turned around and saw it was my wife, who was unknowingly my competitor. I paid \$6 (no tax) for this "Venetian," produced in about 1860 by Elias Ingraham & Co. of Bristol, CT. We have bought many clocks since, but this little 18" gem has a very special place in our collection. And yes, it is still running.

Walter Newman's Elias Ingraham clock.





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Sol Tane (NY)

Early in the 1960s my brother-in-law, who was a bus inspector for the state, gave me an "International Time Recording Co. Endicott, N.Y." time clock. He had rescued it from a garbage dumpster, with the permission of the bus company who was cleaning house and discarding lots of "office junk." He said he thought of me and my wife because we had recently bought a home and were the recipients of every family member's castoffs. I had never owned a wind-up clock in my life, but it was the fashion at the time to either make a planter or a lamp out of anything old. We decided on a planter. I first removed all of the recording unit, saving every piece, nut and bolt. Then I figured out how to remove the clock mechanism. With the case (a real nice mission oak) empty, I refinished it, replaced the clock, hung it, put a plant where the time recorder had been, and presto we had a nice old planter. To this day I marvel at why the clock just started ticking away, since I did not know the first thing about clocks. It has always kept very accurate time. Some 40 years later I dug out the recording mechanism and reinstalled it, and with some adjustment, it too works very well.



International Time Recording Co. time clock owned by Sol Tane.

Douglas Cummings (IL)

When I was in junior high school I became good friends with a widow neighbor lady who was into antiques and had an incredible collection. A friend of hers ran a small antique shop in town where there was a beautiful shelf clock for sale. It was an 8-day Gilbert with walnut case, alarm, and Denver stops. I was smitten and had to have that clock! It was \$25 and the lady held it until I could earn enough money mowing lawns to buy it. It was a proud day when I finally took my prize home and set it to running in my bedroom. That was over 50 years ago and more than 100 clocks of various types have since followed that clock into my collection, including a rare, one-of-a-kind clock from my neighbor lady's estate. By the way, the Gilbert has run almost nonstop for those 50 years and has required only periodic cleaning and oiling.

Eight-day Gilbert clock belonging to Douglas Cummings.



First Ones Wanted!

This feature has become very popular with *W&C Bulletin* readers!

Help keep it going by sending in your story about the clock that started your collection.

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