The Answer Box

With Answer Box Volunteers Chris Bailey, Carter Harris, and Kent Singer.

Do you have a question about a particular clock, watch, tool, or other horological item? Send your question, photographs of the item, and a self-addressed stamped envelope, to: NAWCC Publications Department Q&A, 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512, or email ddelucca@nawcc.org

Tall clock with Ashby-type movement

From J.P.

This tallcase clock has no protection (glass or door) over the dial and no signs a door had ever been there.

The dial is marked "Alex T. Willard, Ashby." I learned he lived in Ashby, MA, from 1800 to 1830, according to The Book of American Clocks *by Brooks Palmer.*

The clock currently does not run, owing to no weights and pendulum. When I opened the lower door to view the weights, etc., and the movement, I could not determine whether the movement was brass or wood since there is a wooden shelf below the movement which blocked my ability to see it.

I am curious to learn more about this clock and would be grateful for any information you can provide. I was puzzled there was no sign that there was ever a door over the dial.

Tall clock with Ashby movement.

I would say the clock has a 30-hour wooden movement, most likely with maple plates, as did most of the Ashby-type movements. From the photo of the hood, it looks like it has a door, though I have seen some wooden tall clocks without. To set the clock, you would have to remove the hood by sliding it forward and off. By removing the hood, you can see if there was provision for a glass, and what kind of movement it has.

Two clocks very similar to yours belong to Old Sturbridge Village and are illustrated in *Clock Making in New England, 1725-1825*, by Philip Zea and Robert C. Cheney, pp. 114-115. One is by John Edwards, and the other is by Alexander T. Willard, both from Ashby. Their movements are almost identical, and it is likely that the Edwards, Abraham and Calvin, and the Willards, Alexander T. (1774-1850) and Philander J. (1772-1840), learned clockmaking from the same source, perhaps Jonas Fitch of Pepperell, MA. John and his brother Samuel Edwards were most likely trained by their father Abraham. Information about the Ashby makers is covered in this book.

An interesting article, "The Clockmakers of Ashby, Massachusetts," by Laurence Luther Barber, appeared in the May 1933 issue of *The Magazine Antiques,* and was reprinted in the *The Cog Counter's Journal*, No. 3. Issue No. 2 has an article on the identifying features of Ashby-type movements, and Issue No. 4 has a follow-up article. The Garvan Collection at Yale University has an Alexander T. Willard clock, which is illustrated in *The American Clock, 1725-1865,* by Edwin A. Battison and Patricia E. Kane. All of these are available from the NAWCC Lending Library.

—Carter Harris
NWCM Curator

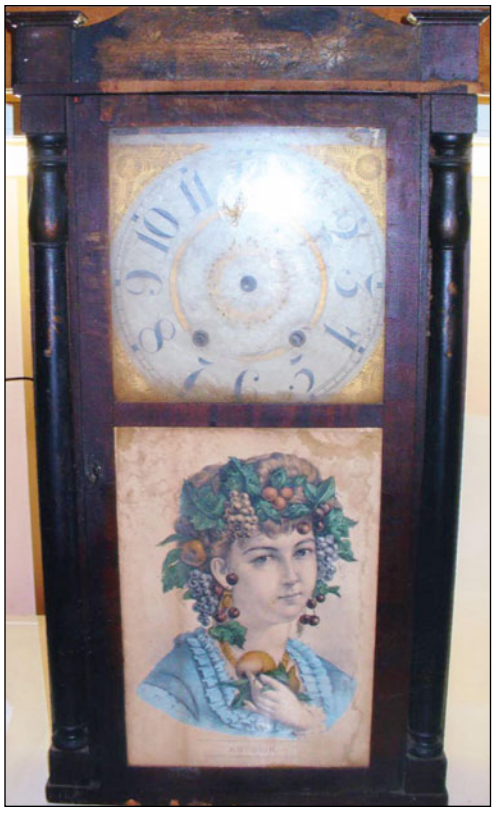
Jeromes & Darrow 30-hour wooden shelf clock

From G.B.

I recently purchased a Jeromes & Darrow clock. Are there any books with this clock pictured? What should I do for restoration? What is the pendulum length and how heavy are the weights? At first I thought it was a marriage but after closer exam, I believe it is all original and correct. Any information would be appreciated. I am also looking for a book on the American Cuckoo Clock Co. I am trying to date some clocks that I have.

I find that your Jeromes & Darrow 30-hour wooden movement shelf clock seems to be in quite original condition. The dial is nice and the movement is brass bushed and a Jeromes & Darrow movement, so it is the original one for the case. The firm of Jeromes & Darrow was formed by Chauncey Jerome and Elijah Darrow about 1828 to succeed an earlier firm known as Jerome, Darrow & Company, which manufactured wooden gear clocks until late 1833 or early 1834 when the firm was again reorganized as C. & N. Jeromes. Your clock dates about 1832.

I do not see the pendulum bob in the photos. It would be a lead bob with a brass front, usually about



Left. Jeromes & Darrow shelf clock.

the size of a silver dollar and only a few ounces in weight. The repros for wooden works bobs are not very good, but originals are often sold on eBay. You asked about the cast-iron weights. They are usually about 3.5 pounds. You can buy reproductions through the clock parts supply houses, but, again, there are original ones that are very often sold on eBay (put wood movement clock in the search box and wooden movements and parts will often appear).

Other than the finish getting old and covering up the stenciling on the columns and splat, the case appears in original condition. This old finish can often be rubbed down with pumice and oil or other products and the stenciling can often be saved. I will note that the paper picture in the bottom of your clock is probably not original. If it is a print by the Kellogg firm of Hartford, it could be original to the clock as they were as early as the 1830s and occasionally their prints are found in clocks of this type. However, if it is a Currier & Ives print, that would be 1840s or 1850s and it would have been put in the clock to replace a broken decorated glass or a mirror. These clocks came with either mirrors or reverse painted glasses. Mirrors were actually more costly, but collectors generally like the folk art paintings the best. However, the print is quite old and you may not wish to replace it since it has probably been in the clock at least 150 years.

You asked about a book that shows this type of clock. The book *Eli Terry and the Connecticut Shelf Clock* by Kenneth D. Roberts and Dr. Snowden Taylor, 2nd edition, 1994, tells about these clocks and shows similar examples. This book is available from the Time Shop of the American Clock & Watch Museum at Bristol, CT, or by contacting co-author Snowden Taylor (see address at top of Research Activities column in this issue). Lending copies are available from the NAWCC Lending Library. I hope these comments answer your questions.

—Chris H. Bailey

Movement mystery solved

The mystery New Haven movement that "DC" inquired about in the December 2009 Answer Box was used to operate a machine that keyed a telegraph sounder to provide random Morse Code characters on a telegraph sounder for practice and learning Morse Code. It is called an Omnigraph.

The machine has 15 discs containing saw tooth projections cut around the rim driven by a clockwork motor. These teeth actuate an electric contact that follows a pattern on the discs and generates a random set of dot and dash signals on a telegraph sounder for practice.

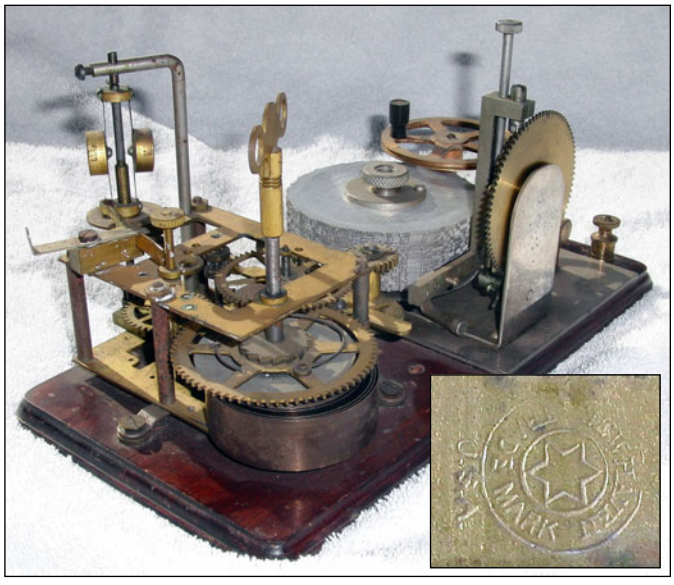
The governor was used to obtain a wide range of speeds provided by a fly-ball governor, from about five words per minute to over 60 words per minute, which held the speed constant after it was set.

Each disc has different codes cut into it and only one disc is read at a time. As the discs rotate the machine has a mechanism that shifts the contact from one disc to the next. By interchanging the disc many combinations of signals can be obtained.

One winding of the clock spring runs the Omnigraph about 45 minutes.

—Sherm Wolf

Left. Omnigraph and (inset) New Haven trademark



Model 2, Grade No. 4 Illinois pocket watch

From J.B.

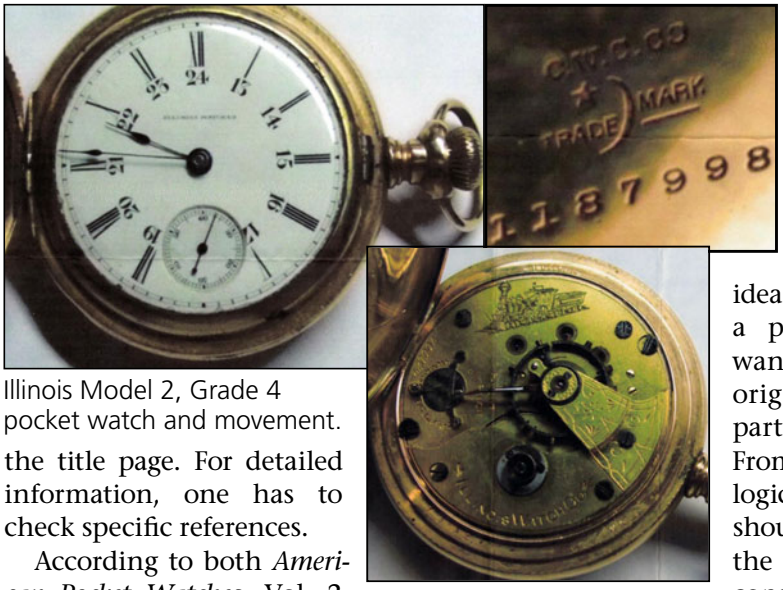
I recently purchased the watch shown on page 361. It is listed in the Complete Price Guide to Watches *by Shugart, Engle, and Gilbert, as a "4 Railroader," although my watch is not exactly like the one shown.*

The watch is an HC, KW, LS, 18-size and is listed as a Model 1, 11 jewel.

My watch is S/N 700024. What has me a little confused is that it has a 24-hour dial and appears to be both "Stem Wind" and "Key Wind" (if that is possible). It is also "Lever Set" where the book says it should be "Key Set."

Can you give me any information on this watch?

The Complete Price Guide to Watches by Shugart, Engle, and Gilbert is just that, only a guide, not an absolute document. It says that right on



Illinois Model 2, Grade 4 pocket watch and movement.

the title page. For detailed information, one has to check specific references.

According to both *American Pocket Watches,* Vol. 2, *Illinois Watch Co., Encyclopedia and Price Guide,* William Meggers Jr. and Roy Ehrhardt (Heart of America Press, Kansas City, MO, 1985), and Russell W. Snyder's Illinois Data Base CD (which may be obtained by an email to Jon Hanson at jonontime@aol.com), Illinois S/N 700,024 is a model 2, grade No. 4, 11-jewel, stem-wind, lever-set movement, fitted with a Roman dial having an inner ring of 13-24 hour figures.

I'm not an expert on the early Illinois watches, but this one seems to be a transitional model, built with both key- and stem-winding parts.

There were three production runs of the hunting case version, totaling 5,000 movements:

700,001 - 701,000
702,001 - 704,000
705,001 - 707,000

—Kent Singer

Two responses to April answer about batteries for a Self Winding Co. clock

I have concerns about the April 2010 *W&C Bulletin* Answer Box response on pages 220 and 221, "Choosing batteries for a Self Winding Co. Clock."

My initial concern was for the use of "purist" in the reply. This left a feeling that only a few horologists are purists who want to maintain clocks as original as possible while the rest feels it is okay to "put whatever you want on a clock" because no one cares. As a clock repair person and a personal property appraiser, I take issue with the idea that only a purist would want to place original-looking parts in a clock. From a horological view, we should explain the pros and cons of keeping the clocks as original as possible.

We know the "old No. 6 Battery" is no longer available, but there are options for batteries that look similar to the original No. 6 while incorporating modern electronics to provide an even current flow and longer life than the suggested "solution."

Also, I am not sure what is meant by "green battery," a term used in the response. Is the battery green in color? Is he is referring to a battery that provides longer life by using all the energy inside the replaceable alkaline battery cell rather than the suggested configuration where the batteries fail with 30-50 percent of their power left.

Whether something is "expensive" or not is a personal decision.

My experience has been when people use the electric store battery holders they fail to wire the clock correctly, they connect the wires improperly and then wonder why the clock does not function up to standard. The initial cost savings is generally lost many times over due to a shortened clock life and a very high repair bill to restore the clock to working condition. From an appraisal "value" standpoint, one must deduct the cost to undo their electric store battery package and restore the clock to an original-looking system to establish a price, less the cost of repair. This expense is much more than what it would have cost to do a proper battery system in the first place.

The final comment that "the synchronizer circuit is not needed for the clock to keep time" is true. The commentator made it sound like it would be okay to take it off and dispose of the part. There are synchronizers made by NAWCC members that are available on the Internet and they will keep the clock running within seconds per month. Why would someone not want to keep the clock "original" and accurate?

—James Holloway

Ken Reindel also sent comments about Self Winding Clock Co. battery replacements after reading the April item. His points listed below augment Mr. Holloway's comments above.

1. Use No. 6 style replacement batteries or equivalent with connection, size, and electrical performance designed to as closely match the original devices as possible.

2. Do not alter or remove any wires or synchronization components from these clocks.

3. Never use alligator clips or twisted connections to connect a power source to a self winding clock. This will create reliability problems.

4. Avoid bare battery holders or D batteries inside the clock. If they should leak (and many batteries do, especially the so-called "heavy duty" cells), they will do damage to the metal or wood cases. Note also that bare battery holders in a metal-cased clock are a formula for disaster due to the potential for accidental short circuits against the metal interiors of these clocks.

4. As the author correctly states, never use voltages that are above those originally intended for the device (especially 6-volt lantern batteries). Substantial damage to the mechanical and electrical components of these clocks will result and has been observed.

—Ken Reindel
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