

# W&C The Answer Box

With Answer Box Volunteers Alan Bloore, Scotty Dean, Tom Spittler, and Al Stevenson.

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 Diana DeLuca at ddelucca@nawcc.org.

## Case with floral decoration

From P.D.

*I am wondering about this case as I have not seen this before and it is not depicted in Tran Duy Ly's books.*

*The case is black with a gold floral design, which is dull. The floral pattern is done in gesso, like an old frame, with what looks like original gold leafing (the gold is not nearly as bright as in the photo; that is the flash).*

*The standard movement is patent June 13, 1882.*

*Any info would be appreciated.*

I did some additional research on your clock and only found one clock that could remotely come close to yours in Tran Duy Ly's *Ansonia Clocks*, page 444, clock number 1761. Obviously, your clock is much more elaborate than the one in the book.

I would have to say, and constantly remind myself, that the clock industry in America in the nineteenth century would do almost anything to make a sale, including offering some "one-of-a-kind" items now and then or custom work that involved selling small to large quantities of clocks to whoever had the money. Remember also that Henry J. Davies was quite creative before and after he became superintendent of Ansonia in 1878. In addition to that duty, there is a picture of him and his brother at work in the design department at Ansonia. If he designed a clock case (he did many) and put his name on the dial, say, it is likely that the movement was made by Ansonia and will be original to that case.

When I see a clock that isn't pictured in any of the available clock catalogs, I always suspect a put-together or marriage item. The best way to tell a clock's originality is to



**Above.** Floral case clock.

**Above right.** Closeup of floral side decoration.

**Right.** Dial and floral top decoration.

see if there are additional screws or plugged holes in the back of the case, where the movement is mounted, or under the dial pan. If every screw hole matches up with what's on and in the case, in all likelihood the clock is completely original. Remember, though, that there are always exceptions to almost everything, and your clock could be the creation of a very talented artist and cabinetmaker.

Your clock is quite stunning and attractive. I'm sure it is the focal point in the room where it sits. It was probably made by Davies or Ansonia or both in combo; it is a limited or custom production clock. With the patent date of 1882 (which applies to the strike-trip mechanism and not the movement design or production date), it was made on or after that year. The door design matches those used on other Ansonia shelf or kitch-



en clocks then in current production.

Someday a picture or catalog may surface featuring this exact clock, and then you will know a lot more than conjecture, which is all we have at present.

In the meantime, enjoy it for what it is—a nice example of Victorian clock design.

—Al Stevenson (CO)

## A Pennsylvania-made movement and hard-to-define case

From P.H.

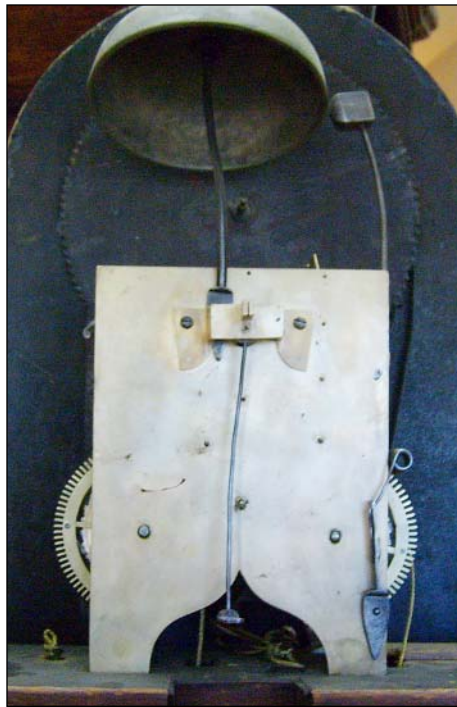
*I have a question on the maker and age of the antique floor clock pictured here. I could not find any information on the manufacturer or date.*

The movement of this clock is American, probably from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania features include the very high bell stand with possibly a slightly larger-than-usual bell, likewise a long bell hammer, an ogee cutout in the bottom of the back plate and a somewhat lower than usual mounting of the pendulum cock on the back plate. The dial and seat board look as if they came with the movement.

The hands are replacements and the moon dial has been repainted. The dial is by William Jones of Philadelphia (working 1825, possibly slightly earlier, to about 1842). Most Jones dials have Arabic hour numerals and not Roman like yours, but he sometimes used Roman numerals. The seashell corners are typical of Jones dials. The borders of the moon maps bothered me, but the right edge of the right-side map has the typical Jones border. The giveaway that it is a Jones dial are the triangles in the minute track, which point inward at the top of the dial and outward at the bottom.

I don't know what to say about the case. It is not typical of a Pennsylvania clock. Some of the carved molding looks like stock, modern moldings. The treatment of the swan neck pediment at the top of the hood is of an incorrect form for a clock from 1825 to 1845. It is too long and steep, much like some Seth Thomas clocks from about 1900. I don't think the case is original, or it has been improved.

—Tom Spittler (OH)



**Above.** Tall clock movement.

**Above right.** Dial.

**Right.** Case.

**Below.** Swan neck pediment of hood.



## Mysterious master clock

From S.V.

*I would like information on a clock I recently purchased.*

*This is a master clock manufactured by the Self Winding Clock Company of New York. The clock was originally owned by the Union Pacific Railroad and may have come from a depot in the North Platte, NE, area. I purchased the Tran Duy Ly book, American Clocks Volume II, which includes a special section on Self Winding clocks, and this clock was not listed in this book.*

*The clock has the same case as the*

*Seth Thomas regulator no. 19 and is approximately 6' long. Is this clock documented in any clock book? I am not planning on selling the clock, but for insurance purposes is there anyone who could give me an approximate value on this clock? I have seen the Seth Thomas Regulator no. 19 sell for as high as \$29,000; would this clock have a similar value since the case is essentially the same and appears to be more rare than the Seth Thomas version? I would appreciate any information that can be provided, including the approximate age of the clock. Thank you again for your reply and any information you can provide.*



**Left and right.** Side and front views of master clock.

The question of value would need to be answered by a certified appraiser.

The statement "This is a master clock manufactured by the Self Winding Clock Company of New York" would be difficult to confirm without a detailed examination of the case and the components. The Self Winding Clock Company was willing to install its self-winding mechanisms in a customer-supplied case, and it is possible a Seth Thomas no. 19 case was provided to Self Winding Clock Company for outfitting with a Self Winding Clock Company master clock system. It would then seem correct to say this clock was made by Self Winding Clock Company. Many authentic Self Winding Clock Company clocks exist that are not seen in any clock publications.

It is also possible that this clock was originally manufactured by

Seth Thomas as a Regulator no. 19 and the clock was retrofitted with Self Winding Clock Company components to create a master clock. A careful examination of the case for evidence of a previous installation that does not use the exact same holes as the Self Winding Clock Company mechanism would lead one to believe that the clock was not originally a master clock. It would then not be correct to say this is a Self Winding Clock Company master clock, but is in fact a "marriage," albeit a very beautiful one.

The Seth Thomas Regulator no. 19 clocks were manufactured between about 1880 and 1910. The Self Wind-

ing Clock Company "F"-type vibrator movements were placed in service by 1900, so the mechanism and the case certainly are contemporaries. If the "F"-type movement that is in the clock now was the original type of Self Winding Clock Company movement to be placed in this clock, the clock could date as early as 1900. Earlier types of Self Winding Clock Company movements were in service by the late 1880s.

A Seth Thomas Regulator no. 19 with an original factory movement and in excellent condition would most likely be much more valuable than a comparable Seth Thomas no. 19 Regulator with a Self Winding Clock Company master clock mechanism. If evidence of the clock being previously owned by the Union Pacific Railroad could be documented, this would add greatly to the desirability, regardless of the originality of the master clock.

—Alan Bloore (CA)

### A French Lincoln

From R.C.

*I have a French clock with an alabaster base featuring a figurine that might be Abraham Lincoln. There is a pair of candelabra that may not be original to the clock set.*

*The alabaster-based case is approximately 18.5 inches wide by 7 inches*



A Japy Frere & Cie mantel clock with Lincoln figurine.



**Left.** Side view of clock.

**Above.** Grand Medaille d'Honneur on the back of movement shown at right.

**Right.** Movement.



deep by 15.5 inches high. There is a broken corner on the alabaster and the piece is not available.

The clock has Japy Freres works with the number 23 on the left back side of the works. Pendulum length/weight shows on the back side as 6 9. The works are stamped with the Japy/Frere & Cie stamp. The works shown need to be cleaned and realigned in the clock case.

The casting appears to be of a white metal composition coated with copper and a finish material that gives a bronze effect. The casting at the back of the clock works casing shows "HEMART 74".

Can you tell me who made this clock and when? Is this really Abraham Lincoln?

Your photographs are great, and it is always important to include any medallion information as well as any names in the casting. Japy Freres & Cie received the "Grand Medaille d'Honneur" in 1855 and 1867. They may not have listed their wins from expositions outside of Paris (1873 and 1879) and so their next Paris win was in 1879, the Grd Prix d'Honneur Expo Universelle Paris. According to Nicolas M. Thorpe in his *The French Marble Clock*, Japy started also making their own cases in 1882.

I agree that the candelabras may not have started life together as part of this three-piece garniture set. The dial, too, with the beaded surround probably did not have a glass bezel over it to start with.

The number 23 on the left cannot be taken as sequential and thus a date-able serial number—they did indeed use the numbers to match the plates to the case to the barrels, etc.

The 6 and the 9 at the bottom, most often straddling the bottom post, are an indication of the pendulum length in French inches. They mean 6 pouce and 9 lignes, or 6 and 9/12ths French inches. Gross that up by 6.6 percent and you will have the length in inches within the English system.

In researching your question, I see that you had already posted your inquiry on the NAWCC message board—good for you for using all resources at hand! And, I think from the myriad of responses that were given, you will have all of the information in hand that I am trying to share with you here. If Lincoln is indeed holding the Emancipation Proclamation, then the clock cannot date before 1863. Since Lincoln has a full beard, then it has to be taken from materials late (at the very earliest) in his 1860 campaign.

Given the possible dates for your clock, I am inclined to believe that it is not an older ormolu gilt (mercury method) over true bronze, but rather an electroplate over a spelter (white metal or pot metal or zinc-based metal) under casting. One way to check is to remove the figure and scratch the underside that is always concealed with a penknife, and see if the metal starts to appear brassy underneath (thus bronze) or sort of silvery (spelter and thus zinc).

I am glad that you noted the name on the cast for the foundry, though unfortunately, I could not locate anything specific to them; 1874 may indeed be the date, and if they are referring to the Japy win in 1867, it still places the movement before the 1879 win, and so the date stream seems to work.

This is indeed an uncommon case and would have been targeted almost exclusively for the American market, and for a market either late in the Civil War or else very soon after his assassination in 1865 (again, dates are all tying together). Being uncommon and a very specific subject, there may be people who would greatly desire to have this clock; however, being a later Japy make and nonmatching, the intrinsic value then drops.

—Scotty Dean (AZ)