



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 email to Editor Diana DeLucca at ddelucca@nawcc.org.

Dave Brown (OH)

I've had many store-bought wristwatches in my life, but growing up, I always wanted a gold pocket watch—not just any old pocket watch but one with an intricate case design and a large white face. It was just something that always appealed to me from a very young age; however, not many people are going to give an eight year old an antique watch to play with.

When I was in my late twenties, and newly married, I went to a sportsman show with my good friend, Bob. We had been looking around at the various items for sale, when something shiny caught my eye. It was almost a surreal image. In the middle of a table loaded with sporting equipment, and a rifle or two, was a small pile containing three pocket watches. Almost as if they were invisible, no one was looking at them or even stopping to see why they were there. Excitedly, I spoke to the tableholder, and was told that he had taken them in trade, didn't know anything about them, and wanted a hundred dollars for the lot. Two were very worn and not very interesting, but the other one was magnificent. It was an Elgin 18S pendant wind/lever-set movement in a heavy gold hunting case, with delicate hands, and a flawless single-sunk porcelain dial. Of course, at the time, I didn't know any of these terms; I just knew it was the most beautiful watch I had ever seen, and I wanted it. There were just two problems. First, being newly married, I really didn't have a hundred dollars to spend. Second, none of the watches ran, and I didn't know anyone who



Above and right. Dave Brown's Elgin 18S pocket watch.



could fix them, or if they could be fixed. My friend, Bob, looked at me and just said, "You know they don't work, right?"

After what seemed like an eternity, I walked away, knowing it was a mistake not buying the watches. I kept looking back at the table to see if they were still there as we walked up and down the aisles. After the show was over, I couldn't take it anymore and chased the vendor down in the parking lot, bought the watches, and immediately started thinking about how to explain to my wife that I had just paid a hundred dollars for three watches that didn't work. Fortunately for me, my wife realized early in our relationship that I'm still a little kid at heart. She could see what this meant to me and was very supportive, even though I'm sure she thought I was crazy at the time.

I knew just enough to remove the watches from their cases without causing any further damage and realized immediately that although being very handy with tools, I needed to find a watchmaker. I went to a jewelry store in town that had been in

business for decades and asked them for an estimate on what it would cost to fix these three watches. This is where everything went wrong. What I didn't know at the time was that the store had recently changed hands, and the original owner, and watchmaker, had retired. The new owner was a jeweler who sent out all the watch work to some unknown place in another state. None of this was told to me before I entrusted them with the watches.

Days turned into weeks. Frequent calls for updates yielded little in return. At one point, they said two of the watches were back. I replied, "Back, when did they leave?" This is when everything unraveled. They hadn't called in all those weeks because the third watch was missing in transit, and they didn't want to face me. When they finally found the watch, I went to retrieve them and get my quotes. They wanted \$1,500 to clean all three watches and replace the mainsprings! To make matters worse, after getting home, I discovered someone had removed a few of the internal parts and hadn't put



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them back. This started a series of heated discussions with the jewelry store that were both unpleasant and unprofessional.

I now look back on that moment as a changing point in my life. I decided I would try to fix one of the watches myself, thinking I couldn't do any worse than the butchers I'd just finished dealing with. After all, the watches were already broken and I couldn't make them any worse. Searching through all of my tools, I found the smallest of each type, hoping it would fit the infinitely small screws and other assorted parts on the movement. Gently, I took each screw out, wondering the whole time if the movement would come apart in an explosion of gears and watch bits, whose names I didn't know, and end up lost or scattered in the carpet. Eventually, the broken mainspring was in my hands, and I set forth trying to fix it. This was long before realizing you could buy new mainsprings or that you could still buy anything for a watch that was over a hundred years old. After annealing the broken end and somehow drilling another tiny hole in the end of the spring, I reassembled the watch and gave the pendant several cautious turns.

There are moments in a person's life he/she doesn't or can't forget—the day you get married, the day your kids are born, the day someone you love dies. This was one of those days. While winding the watch, wondering if I got everything back into place, it happened. It began to tick! I was so shocked I almost dropped it. After putting the watch down, I began shouting in joy and dancing around the table. It's a good thing my wife wasn't home or she would have called the police, thinking someone was trying to break in. I was elated. The gold watch I had always wanted as a kid was now sitting on my dining room table, ticking away. With a great deal of luck and a little, "I did it because no one was around to tell me

it wasn't possible," I had just fixed my first pocket watch!

I still have that watch, and the other two as well. All of them work and keep reasonably good time. Over the years I have read everything I could get my hands on about watch repair and eventually found the NAWCC. It was a real surprise to discover, literally, tens of thousands of people who loved watches as much as I do, and, better yet, that you could still buy watch parts! I have repaired hundreds of watches since then and have become known as the Mad Watchmaker to friends and family. Working by word of mouth, I take great pride in helping others get their family heirlooms running again. The look on peoples' faces when they get back a working watch that belonged to a deceased relative reminds me of that day when I first heard my watch talk to me. And I've been listening ever since.

As a final parting thought, I would like to thank my wife, a.k.a., the Watch Widow, for her support and understanding. I can't count the number of times she has helped me search for parts that have leaped off of my desk or waited patiently for me to finish just one more step on yet another watch before heading out to dinner or some other place. Without her endless understanding and love, I know that I would not be where I am today.

John Teeter (MI)

Back in 1967 I was interested in making pottery and especially interested in the formulation of glazes. I heard about a woman in a nearby town, Northville, Michigan, who taught the making of glazes, so I signed up for her class. She lived in a charming old house in the town's National Historic District. When the other students and I were quietly working, I noticed the pleasant sound of a clock ticking. It intrigued me and I inquired about it. It turned out that the lady was also a genealogist and had found that one of her forebearers had been the clockmaker George Marsh, and the clock that I heard ticking was a George Marsh, 30-hour, column and splat. When I later related this to my wife, we thought that it might be nice to have an old clock in our home. A couple of weeks later, in a local antique shop, we saw a small Seth Thomas shelf clock that we liked and subsequently purchased. However, much to our disappointment, the clock refused to run.

When I returned for my next glazing lesson, I told the lady about our problem. She recommended that I take it to a neighbor who worked on clocks. His name was Mel Anderson, FNAWCC. I took the clock to him and he took me into his shop and let me watch while he lubricated it and set it in beat. Being a mechanical engineer, the mechanism intrigued me. Sensing my interest, Mel suggested that I join the NAWCC and offered to sponsor me, which was a requirement for membership 44 years ago, and I have been a member ever since.

My wife and I began attending meetings of our then local Chapter 6, in Detroit, MI. We enjoyed meeting and learning from these like-minded members. In ensuing years, we have met many fellow NAWCC members from across the country at regionals and national conventions. Through these horological contacts I learned

Every clock and watch has a story.
Share the story of your first one!



Tell us what it was, send in a photo, and share some of the memories; send to NAWCC Publications Department, 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512, or email to Editor Diana DeLucca at ddelucca@nawcc.org.



John Teeter's 30-hour George Marsh column and splat clock.

clock repair and restoration techniques. After relocation to the west side of the state, we attended meetings of Chapter 101, Western Michigan. I went on to participate as chapter secretary and chapter president.

I developed a special interest in early American wood movement clocks, which led me to join the Cog Counters (now NAWCC Chapter 194) where I served as secretary/treasurer for several years. All of these associations led to the meeting of more and more friendly and interesting people. I have always been interested in the life and times of makers and am especially interested in researching the makers of the clocks that we are caring for.

What has become of our "First Clock" you ask? We have two daughters and we told them, that as part of their wedding present, they could have any clock from our collection of more than 80. Our oldest daughter selected the Seth Thomas. As we currently live relatively close to her and her husband, we get to visit it often, and it is pleasantly ticking away in their house. Happily, our grandchildren have also shown an interest in clocks and have examples from our collection, proving that interests, not only heirlooms, can be passed on.

The National Watch and Clock Museum Continued from pg. 10.

by Stuart Fleishman, Larry Crutsinger, and Library and Archives Supervisor Sara Dockery.

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Donations

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