

San Fernando Valley REGULATOR

Chapter 75 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.

How to Determine the Age of a Connecticut Shelf Clock

by Kim St. Dennis

This article is a follow up to the program I gave at the Chapter # 75 November 2011 meeting on identifying the age of Connecticut Clocks. Connecticut & its Western Reserve was the main area of early American clock making and Bristol, Connecticut was its heart. Of course there were clockmakers in every state and territory in the United States, but the concentration of so many talented and ingenious clockmakers and businessman in and around the Bristol area is amazing. Starting with Eli Terry and the Porter Contract in 1807 and ending with the Session brothers in the 1970's, they produced millions of movements and cases over a span of 150 years. Some of the case styles were in production for years and it can be difficult to determine the age of a particular clock made during the 19th Century.

But there are clues we can look for on the clock, books and websites to help us narrow down the date range or even come up with an exact date. The clues in no particular order are as follows:

Labels or tablets:

Paper labels or tablets give a good indication of how old a clock is and the possible dates of manufacturing. The first most obvious thing of course is

the manufactures name. But even this is not a final answer. I have several clocks in my collection, that were produced by the Atkins Clock Company, with labels from other companies. They include Waterbury (case only) and two (2) Daniel Pratt & Sons Clocks (cases and movements made by Atkins). There may even be a couple of Ansonia that were made by Atkins. Tran Duy Ly's book "Ansonia Clocks & Watches" Second Edition 1998 has a "Drop Octagon" # 543 and a "Drop Octagon Round Corner" # 544 from Ansonia's 1874 catalog on bottom of page 168, that are listed in earlier Atkins catalogs by the same model names. I have not seen these "Ansonia's" in the flesh, but have heard rumors of them in several on-line postings.

Another clue from these labels is the printers. A check of the local business registries or journals can help and/or census data. I know that this is a very good indication of date range of a clock manufacture. I am currently researching the printers who made labels for the Atkins Clock Co. and have so far indentified three (3) printers. A recent researcher was able to narrow down the date range of a particular model of clock just based on the printer alone. Same clock, different printed label



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jim Chamberlain

Now that the new year is upon us, we look forward to providing a series of meetings which will be interesting and educational to all of you. Most of you will always have a clock or watch in your collection which doesn't run. Are you interested in getting it going again? Our Chapter desires to assist you in analyzing the problems and provide you with the methods of cleaning and repair of the timepiece. As membership is a two-way street, your active participation assures that both the strength of our chapter and the interest to all of the membership is maintained. Programs that appeal to your interests and weekend workshops can all be created if your officers and directors are informed.

Our Mart is in need of items by more of you since the larger number of items there are to shop, the better the chance for you to find something to purchase (or sell). In that same thought, if there is a particular item you are seeking, you can place an ad in our Regulator and the entire membership is then informed.

Our "Ladies Table" member Jeanne Van Ausdall has notified us that she will no longer be setting up that activity. If anyone of you would like to step up to continue the table, please let me know so that Jeanne can assist you in getting started. It also operates as a consignment sales service as well.

It needs to be said again that our editor Robert Gary is always in great need of articles for the Regulator. Please think about events, clocks, or watches which you have found interesting and simply put them to paper or email in any form. All of us can then enjoy the experiences gained by your horological activities. Pictures of some of your special collection pieces along with a brief bit of information about them are welcomed.

Purchased your table(s) for the June 13-16 National Convention yet? Sales of tables are going fast so to procrastinate is to lose out. The registration form and all other information is available at our entry table and in the January-February MART, page 13. Have you restored a clock or watch, a case, or made a watch or clock? If so, enter it in the 2012 Crafts Contest – see page 70 of that issue. As you know, Chapter 75 and Chapter 133 will be calling upon you and others to assist in putting on this highly important and valuable event for the NAWCC. Stand by for volunteering your time and skills to perform the many tasks that must be accomplished.

This month Kim StDennis will present our program on the use of a video microscope for clock and watch repair work. These microscopes have become much less costly and their output can be into a laptop or pc, making them handy for both shop and field use. Next month we will be informed by Robert Gary of how a gear driven rack is used for the strike control instead of the usual gathering tooth system. Then in March Bill Robinson will tell us of the rare Briggs rotary pendulum clock design and its history.

In the future we will be holding workshops to educate you on how to best mine the vast resources of the NAWCC on-line system. There are several ways for one to find special items, get books, and locate sources of parts and many other valuable bits of knowledge.

Because we have not had a librarian and also no demand for book check-outs, we have decided to begin sell-off of the vast collection of Chapter 75 books. Look at the list that is included in this Regulator and following issues for what is to be presented at each meeting.

Jim

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How to Determine the Age of a Connecticut Shelf Clock

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showed that they were manufactured years apart from one another.

Mounting of the movements to the case:

Here you have only two (2) choices to choose from Wooden Blocks or Metal Feet attached to the movement post. The consensus currently is that Metal Feet used in mounting movements to cases started circa 1880 to



1885. I cannot find any hard copy evidence to support this currently, like a patent or such. But the empirical evidence does support this view. I have seen an Ansonia Round Top Gothic with a Jewelers label dated 1874 that is wooden block mounted and have several circa 1880 to 1890 "Kitchen" clocks with metal feet mounted movements.



Dials, Hand Painter or Printed Paper:

Hand painted dials seem to have been the industry standard from the early 1800's right through to the 1870's. Printed paper dials were used quite a bit in the early 1800s, but were phased out within a few years. I believe this was a cost saving measure as printing was largely hand done in this era and it was cheaper to hire young girls to do this work. Also Roman Numerals on older hand painted dials are thinner than and not as heavy as the Roman Numerals of the later 19th Century.



Movement, pinned, screwed or bolted:

Here, we run into that magic date of circa 1880 to 1885 again. The current consensus is that pinned movements



(movement held together by taper pins) were phased out sometime between 1880 and 1885. Again we have no documented proof of this, but a lot of empirical evidence seems to support this conclusion. A number of higher grade movements were still held together with taper pins right through the 20th Century. Bolting a movement together with nuts started sometime in the late 19th Century

and continues to this day. But using screws to secure the plates is the current standard for factory produced movements.

Clock Hands:

The use of the "club" hand started sometime in the 1840's and seems to have been phased out in the 1860's. I believe that that they were made by a local clock hand maker in or around Bristol Connecticut as they show up on several different clockmakers clocks from that area. This style of hand is a dead giveaway that the clock dates from the 1840's to the 1860's and was made in the Bristol / Forestville area.

Striking only on the hour:

The striking wheel is a great way to ascertain the age of a clock movement. The Striking brass clocks produced in Connecticut from 1830 to 1885 were mostly hourly strikes only. I believe that this was probably due to poor quality springs and the cost of metal.

There were some "hour/half hour" striking American made movements of the early 19th Century, but this feature does not seem to have caught

on. It is only in the last quarter of the 19th Century that the hour/ half hour striking clock were in vogue.



Horological literature:

I cannot overstate the importance of a good horological library. Once you have established that you have an “Old” or Antique clock, your next step would be to find out if it is listed in any of the horological publications. A lot of times this can help you pin point a date range or circa dates easily, but not always. I recently purchased a rather ordinary looking Atkins Connecticut Shelf Clock on Ebay. But a check of “The Clocks of Irenus Atkins” by Gregory & King showed it to be a “Rare 1860 #1 Cottage XX Rosewood” cottage clock that was only in the Atkins catalog for 2 years! Without our Library, the NAWCC Library and my personal book collection, I would be lost. I have thumbed through my signed copy of the Clocks of Irenus Atkins so many times that the book is falling apart. Unfortunately not every clockmaker or model is in the horological literature available currently, which brings me to my last source of knowledge, the NAWCC Message Board.

The NAWCC Message Board:

The Message Board is a great on-line source of

knowledge with thousands of members who are willing to give what information they have gathered over years and years of collecting and studying horology. Members can be very helpful when you run into a clock or watch that is unknown and not published in the horological publications or data. See the NAWCC web site and click on the Message Board and join in the hunt. Also the folks at the NAWCC Library are very helpful and the Library is a wonderful source of horological information. I used the extensively when I was researching several of my clocks and I would highly recommend using their service.

There are still lots of clockmakers and companies we don't know much or even anything about. What we do know is still open for improvement. I am currently researching two clock companies from the last half of the 18th Century. The Message Board and the NAWCC membership is invaluable and extremely helpful expanding what we do know about these two companies and the clockmakers.

As Mrs. Little of the American Folk Art Museum once said “As long as you collect knowledge along with your teapots you will never be bored.”

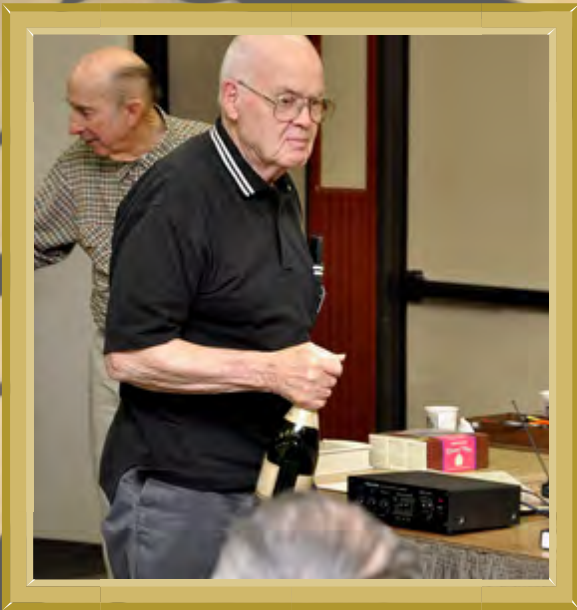
Book List for Sale

1. **Repairing Quartz Watches** by Henry B. Fried. *Second edition, 1988, 248 pages.*
2. **Repairing Quartz Watches** by Henry B. Fried. *First edition, 1983, 241 pages*
3. **Clockmakers of Lancaster county and their clocks, 1750 to 1850** by John J. Snyder Jr. *223 pages.*
4. **Thomas Cole, Victorian Clockmaking** by J. B. Hawkins. *Australia copyright 1975, 253 pages.*
5. **Dutch Antique Domestic Clocks ca 1670 - 1870** by Dr. J. L. Sellink *1973. 367 pages.*
6. **Uhren von Patek Philippe** by H. Vogel. *Copyright 1980. German with some English text. 164 pages.*
7. **English Dial Clocks** by Ronald E. Rose. *Second edition 1988, 255 pages.*
8. **400 Day Clock Repair Guide** by Charles Terwilliger. *1984 Ninth edition revised and updated. 225 pages.*
9. **Geneve, 105 photographs of the city, its sights and surroundings,** by the Rolex Corporation.



November Meeting Pix







MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

for San Fernando Valley Chapter 75 of the NAWCC



New Membership Renewal

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Date: _____

Name: (First) _____ (Last) _____ Phone: _____

Street address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Birth Day: (Month) _____ (Day) _____ NAWCC # _____
REQUIRED TO RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL No Year, just month & day *Membership in the NAWCC is required*

Person to contact in the event of an emergency: Name: _____ Phone: _____

What is your clock/watch interest? (Check all that apply)

- I collect clocks I collect watches I have a basic understanding of clocks watches and have repaired a few as a hobby.
- I have studied clock watch repair via books, videos, or by attending classes. I repair clocks mostly as a hobby. I have been repairing clocks watches for over 5 years and am familiar with many types of movements. I repair clocks for pay and as a hobby.
- I have a well equipped shop and can repair most clocks watches. I have an extensive knowledge of clock/watch design, function and repair techniques. Most repairs are for pay. I am a serious collector of clocks watches and have a very good knowledge of their history, models and value.

How can we improve Chapter 75? _____

Would you like to volunteer to help Chapter 75 achieve its goals? Yes, how can I help? No, not at this time

Membership in chapter 75 of the NAWCC requires that you also be a member of the parent organization, The National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. If you are not a member, you may join online by going to their website at www.nawcc.org, or you can contact us and we will send you an application.

Chapter dues run from January 1st to December 31st. Annual dues are \$15.00 for family and \$10.00 additional to receive the newsletter by US mail.

Please make checks payable to;
Chapter 75 NAWCC

Mail this form & check to:

Kim St Dennis
7344 Bonnie Pl.
Reseda, CA 91355

Primary Member dues \$15.00

Includes spouse and Newsletter by e-mail

To receive the Regulator Newsletter
by US Mail add \$10.00

(To cover printing and postage)

TOTAL

NOTE: Family members do not have to be a member when accompanying the primary member to chapter events.

Signature _____

FOR CHAPTER USE

Date received _____ Amount received \$ _____ Member ID number;

Added to mailing list. Date _____ Membership card sent. Date _____

Notes: _____

If undeliverable, return to:
7344 Bonnie Place
Reseda, CA 91335

Our Meeting is Sunday, January 22nd

11:00 Workshop

12:00 Mart & \$5 Luncheon

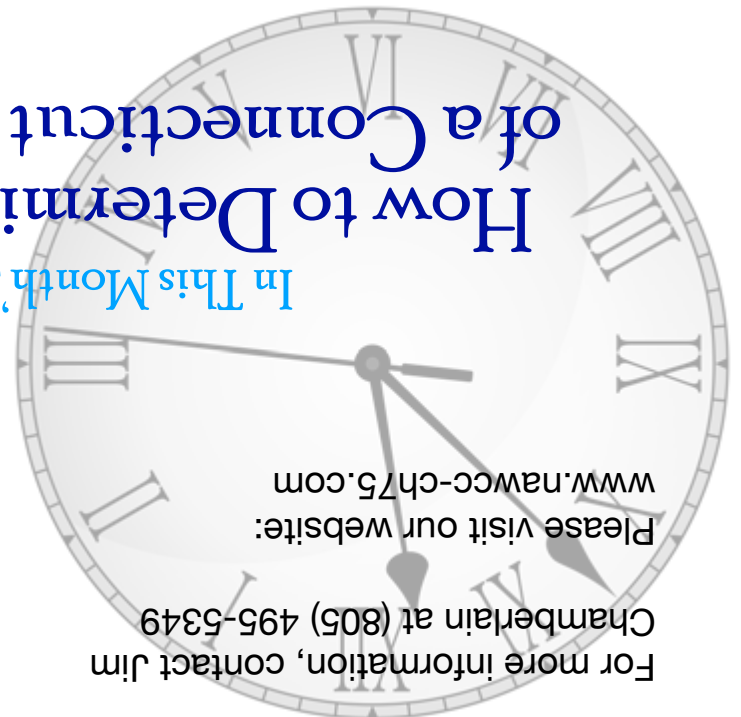
1:30 General Meeting & Program

**This Month's Topic:
Using Video Microscopes for Clock
Repair.**



How to Determine the Age of a Connecticut Shelf Clock

In This Month's Issue:



For more information, contact Jim Chamberlain at (805) 495-5349
Please visit our website:
www.nawcc-ch75.com

Visitors are welcome!

**Chapter 75 meets 4th Sunday of
each month. There is no meeting
during the month of December.**

