

Research Activities and News

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MORE ON THE NOBLE JEROME PATENT 30-HR. BRASS MOVEMENT

Richard McCall (MI) sent a query to the Chairman, followed by a description and photos, pertaining to a round-sided corniced clock with a movement that seemed to match type 1.12 of the Chairman's December 1982 BULLETIN, Part II, article. It turned out that the McCall clock was the very same one for which the Chairman had obtained incomplete information and a very poor picture some years previously. All details of case and movement seem consistent with early Jerome production, say 1839-40. The case, with blue paper liner, once had a card label, now missing. The movement is quite remarkable. The plates, wheels (smooth, not ribbed), and escape wheel bridge are all made of dull silverish-colored metal. Dick McCall says careful scraping would seem to indicate that the color is *not* a plating. He feels the metal has the appearance of nickel, or German silver, or nickel silver. (Any metallurgists around that can tell us of the availability of such metals in Connecticut in 1840?) The rivets, washers, hour pipe, verge pin button and retainer, and hammer head are all brass. These stand out in clear contrast to the "nickel" in the color photo by Dick. Dick also provided the missing data for Table III, p. 715 of the Chairman's article: Column 7 — "80," Column 12 — "Ser."

Thank you, Richard McCall, for providing the information on this interesting movement.

THE POCKET WATCH NEWSLETTER

The Chairman is gratified to learn that The Pocket Watch Newsletter (Roy Ehrhardt [MO], Editor) has not gone out of business. Volume 1, No. 12, April 1983, has been received. It consists of four pages, and deals largely with conditions in the antique pocket watch business.

TERRY, DOWNS — & CO.

Joseph Bartels (CA) has written about a steeple clock with a peculiar label. From photos sent by Joe, the clock appears to be an 8-day spring-driven steeple clock of standard design. The tablet is of J. C. Brown's dwelling. According to Joe, the "original label is Forestville Mfg. Co. — J. C. Brown — etc." Another label is pasted over the lower portion of the original label, the last line of which states, "Terry, Downs [cut out] & Co., Bristol, Conn." Joe says the cut out appears to be intentional. Usual sources (Buell-Barr study, for example) gives Terry, Downs & Burwell, 1851-52, and Terry & Downs, 1853-55. Does anyone have a complete label without the cut out?

DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION

The following probate records have been transcribed, and, together with photocopies of the original documents (from the Connecticut State Library), deposited with the NAWCC Museum, Columbia, PA, and the American Clock and Watch Museum, Bristol, CT: Joseph A. Wells (1848), A. & E. Ingraham (1856), Atkins Clock Co. (1879), and Gilbert H. Blakesley (1881).

HIGHLIGHTS OF ATKINS CLOCK MANUFACTURING COMPANY BANKRUPTCY PROCEEDINGS

by Jacque Houser

Bankruptcy proceedings were initiated January 1, 1857, by Ezra Allen of Westfield, MA, when the Clock Co. failed to pay Mr. Allen's note for \$579.00. Mr. Allen secured a writ of attachment for \$700.00 in damages which was served

by Jarves H. Austin, Deputy Sheriff of Hartford County. When the writ could not be satisfied, Mr. Allen, through his attorney, requested that trustees be appointed to take possession of goods, estate, and property of the Atkins Clock Manufacturing Co., and distribute the assets of the Company among the creditors.

Elias Burwell & John H. Sutcliffe were appointed trustees of the estate by Samuel P. Newell, Judge of Court of Probate for District of Bristol and appraisers designated to make an inventory of the Company's property. The value of tools, equipment, materials, finished and unfinished clocks, and book accounts due was appraised at \$5,157.27 by Wm. W. Curtis and Sidney P. Burwell.

On January 13, 1857, Judge Newell authorized the Trustees to complete clocks in work and use up materials on hand for additional clocks and dispose of them to the best advantage of the Estate. In a further effort to liquidate the assets of the Company, Judge Newell ordered the Trustees to auction off the Accounts Receivable of the Company. This auction was planned for mid-April, 1858.

Probably, as a result of the above instructions from the Judge, it was discovered that A. P. Plant, the President of Atkins Clock Manufacturing Co., had been collecting debts owed to the Company and, according to a complaint filed by the Trustees with Judge Newell, had collected over \$900.00 from creditors and had appropriated the money for his own use instead of making it available to the Trustees. Mr. Plant was ordered to appear before Judge Newell where a settlement was agreed upon with the Trustees. Judge Newell agreed that the Trustees should retain for the benefit of the estate \$300.00 of the dividend he would receive as a creditor of the estate. This would discharge all claims of the estate against him. It must be assumed that he also retained the \$900.00.

Settlement of the estate was completed June 19, 1858. The Trustees reported that \$5,550.27 was available for paying creditors and the expenses of closing the estate. The expenses amounted to \$2,389.00, leaving \$3,161.26 to be distributed among the creditors. (The one-cent difference is in the record — not in the transcribing.) No list of creditors is given in the Court proceedings, but the total owed is given as \$15,053.65. Creditors were paid off at the rate of twenty-one cents on the dollar.

The Probate Court records reveal that A. P. Plant was President, E. S. Porter was Secretary, and that the Atkins Clock Manufacturing Co. was a joint stock company organized in CT. Other officers and stock holders are not listed. The Atkinses involved in the Company are not identified but if Atkins Clock Manufacturing Company was the successor of Atkins, Whiting, & Co., it is possible that Ireneus Atkins and his nephew George Rollin Atkins were involved. Kenneth Roberts (*The Contributions of Joseph Ives to Connecticut Clock Technology 1810-1862*, American Clock and Watch Museum, Inc., Bristol, CT, 1970); reports finding documents proposing the change of Atkins, Whiting, & Co. into a joint stock company in about 1853, but concludes that the change was not made at that time because he found no record of the new company in the Bristol Corporation Records. These Probate Records indicate that the conversion to a joint stock company was indeed made before 1857. Roberts gives the date as October, 1855.

THE ATKINS CLOCK CO. — THE END OF AN ERA

by Jacque Houser

On December 19, 1879, Ireneus Atkins, as President of the Atkins Clock Co., assigned all the assets of the company to a court-appointed trustee for the purpose of satisfying the claims of the creditors of the Company. The Company was described as a "joint stock company organized according to the laws of the State of Connecticut."

The Trustee at the time of assignment was Henry Beckwith, but, for reasons not given in the probate records, he was replaced by Wallace Barnes in a meeting of the Probate Court, January 1, 1880. Wallace Barnes continued as Trustee for the estate until the estate was finally settled, October 27, 1880.

Claims against the Company by the creditors amounted to \$13,346.09. The Commissioners, however, did not allow all of the claims and classified those accepted as follows:

Preferred claims	\$ 1,860.51
Common claims	11,361.97
Total allowed	\$13,222.48
Claims rejected	123.61
Total claims	\$13,346.09

To offset this large indebtedness, the appraisors found the Company had the following assets:

Tools, equipment, materials, finished & unfinished clocks	\$ 6,564.72
Factory Buildings, & Land	5,700.00
Residential Real Estate	4,900.00
Farm equipment, etc.	56.45
	<u>\$17,221.17</u>
Corrections & Additions	1.26
Total Land & Buildings	<u>\$17,222.43</u>
Accounts receivable	25.80
Total assets	<u>\$17,248.23</u>

The total of the accounts receivable was slightly over \$1,000, but the appraisers considered only \$25.80 of the total to be collectable.

The above summary of the credits and debits of the Company indicates that the Company was not in too bad a condition financially, but the property was encumbered by \$6,000 in mortgages not considered in totaling the assets. However, when the estate was closed, October 27, 1880, all creditors were paid off in full and all assets of the Company were liquidated. When all expenses associated with handling the estate were paid the balance was reduced to zero.

The disposition of the Atkins Clock Co. assets provides an interesting insight into business procedures around the 1880's. The factory buildings, land, and water rights were sold at private sale to the Barnes Brothers Clock Co. Tools, machinery, materials, and finished and unfinished clocks were sold at private sale to an unidentified buyer, presumably the Barnes Brothers Clock Co. One small piece of property of about one-quarter acre with a dwelling was also sold to the Barnes Brothers Clock Co. Another small property of about one-half acre with a dwelling was sold at private sale to Janie Lupine. The remaining two pieces of real estate with the dwelling house and buildings thereon were sold at private sale to Ireneus Atkins. The other pieces of property were sold for even hundreds of dollars, \$9,300.00 and \$12,000.00 respectively, but the property bought by Mr. Atkins was sold for the unusual amount of \$2,226.37. Could there be a reason for such an unusual selling price? Probably! The principals of the Barnes Brothers Clock Co. were Wallace Barnes and his sons, Carlyle F. and Harry. Wallace Barnes was, of course, the Wallace Barnes acting as trustee for the Atkins Clock Co. It appears that Wallace Barnes and his sons took over the Atkins Clock Co. in return for assuming the obligations of the Company and numbers were put into the Trustee's Account to balance the books after claims and bills had all been paid. Mr. Atkins received the property that probably had been his residence and the price assigned for the "sale" was no doubt that needed to bring about the balancing. Another likely suspect for book balancing is the reported selling price of the factory, tools, machinery, materials, finished and unfinished clocks. These items were carried in the inventory at \$6,703.31, but were reported sold at private sale to an unidentified buyer for \$7,200.00.

In reporting these peculiarities in the settlement of the Atkins Clock Co. bankruptcy we are not implying that anything illegal or improper was carried out. From our position, removed by about 100 years, the settlement appears to have been quite equitable. The creditors were paid in full, Mr. Atkins retained his house (he lived only about 1½ years after the settlement); and the Barnes

Table I

Brothers took over an established clock factory and, no doubt, its accounts. The fact that the Barnes Brothers Clock Co. ceased to operate in 1884 really has no bearing on the settlement of the Atkins Clock Company bankruptcy.

The inventory of so-called personal property of the Atkins Clock Co. is a gold mine of information related to the clock manufacturing industry in the last quarter of the 19th Century. From a study of the items listed one can determine what machinery and tools were needed to produce the movements and cases for Atkins clocks. Also, that both water wheels and steam engines were used as a source of power to drive the machinery in the Atkins plant. One can also develop a feel for the scope of the plant and define the number of finished and unfinished clocks waiting to be sold.

The appraisers listed the inventory by building and room. From this breakdown we can infer that the factory was made up of the following: store room with attic; main shop with: 2nd saw room; finishing saw room; old east room; north store room (contents @ 50¢); rub room; sandpaper room; old movement shop garret; varnish room; scraping room; Main garret: front room; north room (contents \$4.00); south lower room; kiln dry; dip room; vacant room (contents \$1.00); veneer room; store room for varnish; turning room; rolling & barrel room; Shed with attic: boiler room, engine room; blacksmith shop; Movement shop: attic; second floor; garret; lower room; Barn.

The store room contained 321 finished 30-hour, 8-day and 30-day clocks and timepieces, some with alarm, some damaged. (See Table I.) The inventory of the movement shop listed jillions of bits and pieces, but fortunately, the appraisers inserted headings at appropriate intervals to identify the purpose for which the parts were intended. These headings show that the movement shop was in the process of making: parts for 3 8-day regulator timepieces; parts for 318 #1 8-day time movements; parts for 415 #2 8-day timepieces; parts for 658 1-day strike movements; parts for 2,450 1-day timepieces, 8 movements completed (@ .30); parts for 1,280 ear and frame alarms; parts for 28 30-day timepiece regulators; parts for 39 30-day fusee movements.

The gems of the appraisers' search turned up in the attic of the storeroom. Here they discovered 29 movements produced by A. S. Platt & Co. (@ .10). This company had ceased operations in 1857 so it is quite possible these movements had lain forgotten in the dusty attic for over 20 years.

The Atkins Clock Co. was Ireneus Atkins' last venture in the clock business. Between 1830 when he was in partnership with George Mitchell, and 1882 when he died at age 90, Ireneus Atkins was involved in at least seven or eight clock companies all having Atkins in the name. All the companies in which he was involved, except his last, had relatively short lives; under ten years. The Atkins Clock Co. was in business approximately twenty years and its demise is probably directly related to Mr. Atkins' advanced age. It has been reported that he was essentially blind when the Atkins Clock Co. was terminated.

It may be appropriate to make the following corrections or additions to the entries in the *Book of American Clocks*, by Brooks Palmer. Palmer states that Wallace Barnes was Trustee for the liquidation of Atkins Clock Co. and gives a date of December 25, 1879. The Probate Court records indicate that Mr. Henry Beckwith was nominated for the position of Trustee on December 19, 1879. Mr. Wallace Barnes was approved for the Trustee's position at a meeting of the Probate Court on January 1, 1880. In addition, Mr. Palmer's comment that the Atkins Clock Co. did not fail is perhaps expressing it a bit too kindly. As far as the records are concerned, the Atkins Clock Co. was an insolvent debtor and its assets liquidated by order of the Court to satisfy the claims of its creditors. None of the creditors suffered losses, but Mr. Atkins' personal wealth was sharply reduced. These comments are not offered to belittle the work of Mr. Palmer. In fact, we find his accounts to be amazingly accurate — especially considering when he did his research. Many of the research tools we have were not available to him. Nevertheless, we bring these items to the attention of the reader in the interest of improving the quality of the historical data available to the horological student.

Summary of clocks in Atkins Clock Co. inventory:

Finished clocks in store room.

8-day

18 #2 Centennial	@ 2.25
2 #2 Centennial	@ 2.00
1 #2 Centennial (damaged)	@ 1.50
1 Gilt Centennial	@ 1.75
18 Octagon-Top Gilt Centennial	@ 2.25
12 Octagon-Top Plain Centennial	@ 2.00
1 Octagon-Top Plain Centennial (damaged)	@ 1.50
12 Round-Top Centennial	@ 2.00
12 #xx Round-top	@ 2.00
6 Octagon-Top	@ 2.00
6 Diamond	@ 2.00
12 Diamond alarm	@ 2.25
4 Diamond time only	@ 1.40
4 Victoria	@ 1.75
6 Victoria alarm	@ 1.65
19 Pinafore	@ 1.75
5 Pinafore alarm	@ 2.00
6 Gems	@ 1.50
8 Diamond-Top time	@ .50
1 Round Cor Drop Oct	@ 1.00
1 Round Cor Drop Oct	@ 1.20
2 Indicator Clock Boxed	@ 1.00
12 Cowper. Imp	@ 1.75

30-day

2 #2 Centennial Gilt & Rose	@ 1.60
1 18-in. Regulator	@ 5.00
1 18-in. Regulator	@ 3.00

1-day

12 Victor #3	@ 1.60
6 Victor #3 Myrtle	@ 1.25
1 Victor #4 Myrtle	@ 1.00
1 Victor #4	@ 1.00
6 Victor Gems	@ 1.10
3 Oct Top #2	@ 1.00
1 Oct Top alarm	@ .50
1 BW Gem Alarm	@ 1.50
18 Gem	@ 1.40
2 Diamond Top	@ 1.00
1 Diamond	@ 1.00
6 Pinafore alarm	@ 1.20
2 Pinafore finished	@ 1.60
1 Oct Top Centennial	@ 1.00
1 #4 Centennial unfinished	@ .75
1 Diamond alarm	@ 1.00

1-day timepieces

14 Oct Top	@ .75
1 Oct Top #2	@ .50
3 Oct Top alarm	@ 1.00
2 Cottage	@ .50
4 Dolly Dutton	@ .40
24 Dolly Dutton	@ .75
4 Dolly Dutton (damaged)	@ .50
24 Dolly Dutton alarm (damaged)	@ .70
9 Dolly Dutton refuge	@ .40