

Board Talk

Board Talk

1. ORRS Vs Brotherhoods

2. I had always assumed that Brotherhoods sold for a premium but can find no documentation for that assumption. Out of a total production of about 4600 ORRS in the first decade of Hamilton Ball production (Ball & CO) , I estimate that about 600 were converted to Brotherhoods by replacing the barrel bridge and dials, leaving 4000 ORRS sold (including about 700 Private Labels or Jewelers/RR inspector watches). If we add those 600 converted watches to the known factory produced Brotherhoods (700) , we have a total of about 1300 early Brotherhoods sold in that decade.

That would mean that the ORRS outsold the Brotherhoods by slightly over a 3 to 1 margin. Wouldn't that indicate that the general public was the target of the ORRS designation? Why would a union member choose the ORRS over a Brotherhood? Perhaps Ball didn't really abuse his position as much as some have thought!

happy hunting

1. Bill Kapp

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- 07-03-2013, 11:15 AM [#2](#)

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1. Originally Posted by **BILL KAPP**

"I had always assumed that Brotherhoods sold for a premium but can find no documentation for that assumption. ..."

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The catalogs show that the prices were the same for the both the ORRS and brotherhood watches. This [1905 catalog excerpt](#) shows the lack of distinction. The watches shown are 16-size Waltham-Ball watches but other pages show 17, 19 and 21 jewel, 18-size, Hamilton-Ball Watches.

"... the ORRS outsold the Brotherhoods by slightly over a 3 to 1 margin. Wouldn't that indicate that the general public was the target of the ORRS designation? ... "

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The watches were probably sold to the people to whom they were marketed, the railroaders. I've seen only a very few Ball ads in other than the brotherhood journals, railroad employee magazines or the Jewelers' Circular. Some of them are closely aligned with either the railroads of the

brotherhoods whose members came under time service rules. Two of these are shown below. The only "civilian" journal I've found a Ball ad in was the [July 1907 American Federationist](#), the Official Magazine of the American Federation of Labor (AF of L). So I don't buy the concept of Ball targeting the general public for the sale of ORRS watches.

"... Why would a union member choose the ORRS over a Brotherhood? ... "

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I don't know. I've seen comments that a number of railroaders anticipated advancing and so preferred the more general ORRS watch. After all, you had to buy the watch when you first hired on. Would you would want to have to get another one if you promoted from brakeman to conductor or fireman to engineer? I've also heard (read?) that there was a belief that an ORRS would be more likely to be widely accepted. On the other hand, I never read a direct quote from a railroader under time service rules on the issue.

 Attached Thumbnails



Kent

That guy down in Georgia

1. 07-03-2013, 02:01 PM [#3](#)

1. • _

Kent

Thanks for adding the thumbnails to the discussion. Like yourself, I am dubious that portability had much to do with the decision on whether to buy an ORRS over a Brotherhood. The desire for promotion and becoming a member of a different union does seem to be a valid reason. I wonder though, if the individual Jeweler/inspectors including Ball would not advertise there wares in local media and be inclined to use the ORRS designation as a selling point to the general public. In general , we know the railroaders resented the pressure to buy the Ball products and I am

speculating that just as the 21J became a great marketing device to the general public, the desire to own a RR quality watch may have had a similar effect.

Bill Kapp

1. 07-03-2013, 02:57 PM [#4](#)

1. • _

1.

 **Originally Posted by BILL KAPP** 

"... Like yourself, I am dubious that portability had much to do with the decision on whether to buy an ORRS over a Brotherhood. ..."

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I didn't say that I was dubious about portability being a factor. I said (well, I wrote) that I haven't seen anything on the subject directly quoted from a railroader under time service rules.

"... I wonder though, if the individual Jeweler/inspectors including Ball would not advertise there wares in local media and be inclined to use the ORRS designation as a selling point to the general public. ... "

•

Perhaps, but I'll reserve judgement until I see an actual example of such an ad. As more and more material gets digitized (and hence, searchable) we may eventually get to see this. Robert Sweet has managed to come up with [one of the few examples of this sort of advertising](#) (local ads for railroad watches) that I've seen, but I don't think that it promotes railroad standard watches to the general public.

"... just as the 21J became a great marketing device to the general public, the desire to own a RR quality watch may have had a similar effect. ..."

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I don't think that there's any doubt that associating watches with railroads was used as a marketing tool. A couple of such ads, from Hamilton, are posted below. BUT, with the one exception I posted above (the AF of L ad), I've not seen Ball put out these types of ads in non-railroad publications.



Attached Thumbnails

Kent

That guy down in Georgia

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1. •

07-05-2013, 03:31 PM [#5](#)

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From the March 2, 1898 Jeweler's Circular (I don't know how to save as a pic and make a thumbnail out of it.) Sure would like to see the Feb 14 copy of the Indianapolis Sentinel that is referenced. This may have been cited or referenced here or elsewhere by others but I couldn't remember it. Seems to remove any doubt that the RR workers were unhappy with Ball Products and sales techniques.

1. 07-05-2013, 06:37 PM [#6](#)

1. • _

1.

At the 2006 seminar, John Scott posted a 1913 AD where Ball is touting his prior success in selling the RR watches as prestige items to executives, bankers et al. The AD seems to reflect Ball's desire to wholesale items to jewelers/retailers. Possibly a trade publication like the Jeweler's circular. I have

emailed John for info on where the ad appeared or he may read it here and reply. http://www.awco.org/Seminar2006/WebbCBall/Ads/ball_ads.htm

**50000 TRAINS
ARE RUNNING ON
BALL WATCH
ACCURACY**



Ball Time Inspection Service is in force today on 125,000 miles of American railroads. The beginning and development of railroad time inspection is inseparably connected with the Ball name.

The logical watch for railroad service is the Ball Watch, designed and made by the same men who have made railroad time inspection service what it is today. This fact is recognized by railroad men everywhere.

**Ball Watches
The Railroad Standard**

Accuracy, dependability, long life—these are the qualities that make BALL WATCHES appeal not only to railroad men, but to business and professional men, bankers, travelers of every class. These are the men whose watches mean money.

Ball's "Official R. R. Standard," 16 and 18 size, 17, 18, 21 and 23 jewels, with only 10 Ball Model Cases. Standard Selling Prices \$75 to \$100. Ball's "Commercial Pattern," 15 size, 17 jewels, 17 20-year case, to retail at \$75; in 1914, case to retail at \$85.

Ball Watches will help you increase both your watch sales and your watch profits. Let us tell you how to turn Ball Watch prestige to your profit. Write now.

The Webb C. Ball Watch Co.
BALL BUILDING, CLEVELAND

Railway Exchange, Chicago Flood Building, San Francisco Dominion Bank Building, Winnipeg

Bill Kapp

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• 2013, 07:43 PM [#7](#)

 Originally Posted by **BILL KAPP** 

" From the March 2, 1898 Jeweler's Circular (I don't know how to save as a pic and make a thumbnail out of it.) Sure would like to see the Feb 14 copy of the Indianapolis Sentinel that is referenced. This may have been cited or referenced here or elsewhere by others but I couldn't remember it. Seems to remove any doubt that the RR workers were unhappy with Ball Products and sales techniques. ..."

Bill:

Here's an [earlier posting of the article](#) which includes the December 15, 1897 time inspection rules for the Big Four (the NYC Lines CCC&StL).

<http://mb.nawcc.org/attachment.php?attachmentid=52232&d=1264259819>

Kent

That guy down in Georgiq

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1. •

1. •

07-05-2013, 08:09 PM [#8](#)

1. _

 Originally Posted by BILL KAPP 

"At the 2006 seminar, John Scott posted a 1913 AD where Ball is touting his prior success in selling the RR watches as prestige items to executives, bankers et al. The AD seems to reflect Ball's desire to wholesale items to jewelers/retailers. Possibly a trade publication like the Jeweler's circular. ..."

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This ad is everything you say it is and Ball watches are **seemingly** being promoted to bankers & etc. This [March 1, 1913 copy of it](#)

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The Keystone, March 1, 1913, Courtesy NAWCC Library

50000 TRAINS ARE RUNNING ON BALL WATCH ACCURACY



Ball Time Inspection Service is in force to-day on 125,000 miles of American railroads. The beginning and development of railroad time inspection is inseparably connected with the Ball name.

The logical watch for railroad service is the Ball Watch, designed and made by the same men who have made railroad time inspection service what it is today. This fact is recognized by railroad men everywhere.

Ball Watches The Railroad Standard

Accuracy, dependability, long life—these are the qualities that make BALL WATCHES appeal not only to railroad men, but to business and professional men, bankers, brokers, executives of every class. These are the men whose minutes mean money.

Ball's "Official R. R. Standard," 16 and 18 size, 17, 19, 21 and 23 jewels, sold only in Ball Model Cases. Standard Selling Prices \$35 to \$100. Ball's "Commercial-Paragon," 16 size, 17 jewels, in 20-year case, to retail at \$30; in 14-kt. case to retail at \$45.

Ball Watches will help you increase both your watch sales and your watch profits. Let us tell you how to turn Ball Watch prestige to your profit. Write now.

The Webb C. Ball Watch Co.

BALL BUILDING, CLEVELAND

Railway Exchange, Chicago—Flood Building, San Francisco—Dominion Bank Building, Winnipeg

- is from a different source than the ad that John Scott posted (as evidenced by the different border). The March 1, 1913 ad came from **The Keystone**, a jewelry trade periodical, not something that bankers & etc. would be reading. Now if John's ad was from **National Geographic** or one of the magazines placed on passenger trains (much like those magazines found on airplanes today) then I'd agree that the intent was to market the watches to the bankers & etc.

Notice that in the March 1, 1913 ad Ball claims that Ball Time Inspection Service is in force on 125,000 miles of American railroads. Only a few months earlier, in December, 1912, a very similar Ball ad (see below) claimed 150,000 of American railroads. By the way, this is one of the earliest, if not **THE** earliest, ad showing the 20th Century Model case with its distinctive Safety Stirrup Bow.



Attached Thumbnails

Kent

That guy down in Georgia

1. •

07-05-2013, 10:37 PM [#10](#)

1. _

Kent.

I didn't make it clear enough. I am aware that the purpose of the ad is to attract retailers to Ball's wholesale operation, which is why I thought it might have been in a publication such as the Jewelers circular. I didn't think the AD itself was intended as a marketing tool to the general public. The content in the ad that mentioned Bankers and executives was a selling point to these retailers.

Assuming Ball was telling the truth in the AD, these "prestige " sales had to have taken place in previous years and in sufficient quantity to be noteworthy. Hence, the bankers/executives

had been the subject of some sort of previous marketing campaign. Even if there was no direct marketing thru ads for RR watches to the general public, The watch inspector/ jewelry stores would advertise locally to attract upscale customers for all their non watch inventory, and I imagine the salesperson would take the opportunity to present the ORRS as a prestige item to a banker/executive type who might have been browsing through the various items available.

Bill Kapp

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1. •

07-05-2013, 10:43 PM [#11](#)

1. [johnbscott](#)

1. _

Bill

I purchased an original hard copy of that ad, on line. The name of the publication is not shown on either side of the sheet but the ad is on page 130. On the reverse side of the 9³/₄" x 12³/₄" sheet (on page 129) is the beginning of an article entitled "The Naval Observatory Time Service and How to Use its Radio Signals" by Captain J L Jayne, USN. Penciled on the sheet is the date 01 September 1913.

My internet searching has revealed that the article was published in The Keystone, Sept. 1, 1913 and also published in The American Jeweler (September 1913). My conclusion is that the answer to your question is that the ad came from The Keystone for 01 September 1913. Kent has identified that the same ad was published in March of the same year in the same journal - sorry, not the National Geographic magazine, or similar.

You have raised a great question as to why the proportion of Brotherhoods is so much less than the proportion of ORRS. I don't know the answer but I am inclined to agree with the thought that perceived breadth of recognition and, possibly, of portability may have come into it. I think that the introduction of Brotherhoods was a conciliatory gesture on the part of Ball and he would not really have minded which watch the men bought, as long as it was one of his.

JBS

- - -

1. •

07-05-2013, 10:58 PM [#12](#)

1. _

John,

Thanks for the swift reply. I suppose it takes a warped mind like my own to even care who bought the watches, but we now know through Ball's own words that at least part of the disproportion can be attributed to prestige sales.

happy hunting

Bill Kapp

1. •

07-08-2013, 05:23 PM [#13](#)

1.

Don't really want to beat a dead horse but as I have way too much time on my hands, two additional thoughts came to me.

(1) What position would a conductor or engineer aspire to that would discourage him from buying an ORC or BLE watch?

(2) Was it really common for an engineer or Conductor to switch railway lines? I never thought of them as being nomads like salesmen or cooks, but have no real clue. If they were nomads, with Ball inspectors covering 125 to 150,000 miles of line, wouldn't they be likely to still be under his inspection?

Bill Kapp

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1. •

07-08-2013, 08:23 PM [#14](#)

1. [onsite](#)

1. _

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Bill,

This probably won't clear anything up and keep in mind it is from a Canadian perspective, perhaps I have too much time on my hands as well.

If you hired on as a Trainman you could not write up as a Conductor until you had 4 years of service.

That was true from at least the very early 1900's until about the late 60's when it was shortened to 3 years.

Some but very few Trainmen did not write up as a Conductor mostly because they didn't want the responsibility. They were called PUPs (Passed Up Promotion). I suppose there was the odd one who just couldn't pass but the Conductor's exam ("A" Book) wasn't much harder than the Trainman's ("B" Book)

In the steam days a traincrew consisted of 1 Hoghead, 1 Fireman, 1 Conductor and 2 Trainmen (3 if the train was long enough)

Fireman just like Trainmen were hired off the street. Firemen were promoted to Engineers; Trainmen were promoted to Conductor's. Conductor's were never promoted to Firemen or Engineers (Well, until the late 60's but that's a different story).

If you were a written up Conductor but could only hold work as a Trainman you still considered yourself a Conductor, same deal with Firemen/Engineers.

I can't see why anyone would have even bought a Trainman's or Fireman's Brotherhood watch knowing he would most likely take a promotion at some point. I suppose buying an ORRS would cover everything then if necessary to buy another watch later in your career a Brotherhood would make sense.

This may help explain the preponderance of ORRS.

I think there was more moving from road to road in the USA than Canada . There were less roads in Canada but it probably had to do with pension portability. We never had it in Canada but they do/did in the US, as to when it began there I don't know.

Most of the moving would have been done by Trainmen because when work slowed down the youngest (seniority) were laid off because the Conductors who couldn't hold would bump them.

Guys who worked a lot of different roads were known as "Boomers" (following the boom?).

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1. •

7/9/13, 03:56 AM [#15](#)

1. _

Bill:

You made two good points!

Kent

That guy down in Georgia

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1.

2.

1. 7/9/13, 12:17 AM [#16](#)

3.

1. _

Lets beat that dead horse a little harder. I am only guessing here because I don't really know how the journals were distributed. I am assuming that all the union members already receive a copy, otherwise how would they know about the premium offers that gave away free Ball Regalia and watches for selling a certain number of yearly subscriptions? I know every organization with a magazine that I have ever belonged to sent me the magazine as part of the membership.

The Journal offers the following prizes for subscriptions secured during the year, 1902.

These Prizes will be sent postpaid upon receipt of the required number of paid yearly subscriptions.

LADIES' AUXILIARY EMBLEMS, GOLD.

- No. 059 for 20 subscriptions.
- No. 59 for 12 subscriptions.
- No. 57 for 7 subscriptions.



No. 059



No. 43



No. 45



No. 12



No. 14



No. 59

BROTHERHOOD EMBLEMS, GOLD.

- No. 43 for 6 subscriptions.
- No. 44 for 7 subscriptions.
- No. 45 for 8 subscriptions.
- No. 47 for 8 subscriptions.

BROTHERHOOD WATCH CHARMS, ROLLED PLATE.

- No. 12 for 8 subscriptions.
- No. 14 for 6 subscriptions.
- No. 16 for 10 subscriptions.
- No. 23 for 10 subscriptions.



No. 57



No. 44



No. 47



No. 16



No. 23



WEBB C. BALL, B. R. T., STANDARD WATCH.

This Fifty Dollar, B. R. T., Standard, the same watch advertised by Webb C. Ball Company in this issue for Fifty Dollars, will be sent to any member of the Brotherhood sending the JOURNAL seventy-five paid yearly subscriptions.

A Brotherhood Constitution, handsomely bound in leather, with the name and lodge number of the member printed on the cover, will be sent for five paid yearly subscriptions.

A Brotherhood Chart will be sent for three paid yearly subscriptions.

D. L. CEASE,

EDITOR AND MANAGER, JOURNAL.

N. B. These goods are on sale by the Webb C. Ball Co., Cleveland, Ohio.

4.

So, who are they selling them to? Barbershops, dentist and Dr. offices or any business with a waiting room? Or to members of the general public? Hard to imagine they are

selling them to each other. Ball ads in the journals give testimonials from RR workers and generally tout the superior quality and reliability of Ball Watches. If these journals were widely sold to non railroaders (or browsed in waiting rooms) that could explain large sales to the general public and also Ball's willingness to cooperate with the journals in providing regalia and watches.

I know other jewelers and watchmakers also had ads in these same journals but only Ball had the "OFFICIAL RR STANDARD" and that might have impressed John Q Public!!

Way to much time on my hands 😊

Bill Kapp

5. 7/10/13, 02:13 AM [#17](#)

🗨️ Originally Posted by **BILL KAPP** 🗨️

"... I am only guessing here because I don't really know how the journals were distributed. I am assuming that all the union members already receive a copy, ... So, who are they selling them to? Barbershops, dentist and Dr. offices or any business with a waiting room? Or to members of the general public? Hard to imagine they are selling them to each other. ...,"

6.

Bill:

I think that you're letting your imagination run wild.

The brotherhood journals were monthly newsletters, sent to the membership. I think that they were sent to the other brotherhoods as a courtesy, or perhaps the other brotherhoods subscribed, since I've seen occasional references to material from other brotherhood journals appearing in the pages.

By and large, these journals are pretty boring. Yeah, they've got a few general interest

stories, and for a while in the early 1900s, the Locomotive Engineers' Journal had an interesting series of letters from the membership about the pros and cons of the newfangled electric headlights over the tried and true oil headlights. But most of the material is about the goings on of various lodges and the ladies' auxiliary. You have to read through an awful lot of cr*p to come across a [scarce tidbit like this](#)

APRIL 1, 1887.

Courtesy Google Books

203

RAILWAY CONDUCTORS' MONTHLY.

TOPEKA, March 6, 1887.

EDITOR MONTHLY:—As I am a new correspondent to the MONTHLY, if I get to taking up too much room, you must "side-track me." Topeka Division No. 179 still flourishes; we met to-day and took in a new candidate. Bro. Chas. West who has been East for several weeks took his run to-day. We are all glad to see Bro. Sam Black back on his old run. Sam is a great favorite, not only with the boys, but also the traveling public. We had two visitors to-day, Bro. Brown from No. 103, and Bro. Fleming from No. 31. We are always glad to have the brothers call on us.

All conductors and engineers now have to have their watches examined every 30 days, and if they vary more than 30 seconds per week they have to buy a new one of the Peoria Watch Co., Santa Fe Standard. A great many have had to get new watches. The Waterbury's "have to go." Will close for this time.

E. N W.

7.

I'm sure that they provided subscriptions to whoever else sent them the annual cost (I think around a dollar in 1902), the members themselves received it as part of their dues. However, other than those barbershops, doctors and dentists who focused upon railroaders' trade (and I'll bet d*mn few of those), they never appeared anywhere else, especially on newsstands. When you get right down to it, they're not really any different from monthly union newsletters today. When was the last time you saw one of these on a newsstand or in a barbershop?

Kent

That guy down in Georgia

8. _____

9. _____

7/11/13, 12:30 AM [#18](#)

Kent,

Thanks for all the comments and time you have taken on this thread. I do have an active imagination and I find that this board is a great place to explore ideas, learn from others and validate or debunk theories. Sometimes talking (writing?) leads to inspiration and sometimes not. Either way, it is a lot of fun and makes the hobby a delight.

happy hunting,

Bill Kapp

Added 12/25/13

I totaled up the subscriptions distributed vs the memberships of the 4 unions in the 1897-1902 era and it seems that about 30- 50,000 more were distributed annually than there were members. This might also explain why Ball participated in the premium giveaways! That's a pretty large non union readership and potential market even if they weren't found in barbershops. BTW, I think the BLE journal at least was quite interesting and had a number of interesting articles in that era!