



British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

News FROM CHAPTER 159

We will be electing new officers of the Chapter at the National Convention in Oklahoma City. Therefore this is my last President's message as my term is up in July. I wish to thank my fellow officers for their support and efforts that have made my term so enjoyable. My special thanks go to Paul Odendahl, our editor and publisher. A newsletter is the cornerstone of any special interest chapter and Paul continues to do an outstanding job of creating very professional issues year after year. Thank you, Paul.

The candidates for chapter officer positions are:

For president, Roger Gendron (MI)
For vice president, Lee Yelvington (NC)
For secretary, Ken Johnston (NC)
For treasurer, David Kern (NY)

I'm confident that our new officers will provide the leadership that will help our chapter become bigger and better. And each of you can help by submitting articles on some aspect of British horology to Paul for the newsletter. Even short articles on your latest acquisitions (especially the unusual ones) are encouraged.

Our annual meeting in Oklahoma City will be held on Thursday, July 1, 2004 from 1 to 3 PM in Room 5 in the Renaissance Oklahoma City Hotel. Dennis Radage will be doing a presentation on English longcase clocks.

This will be our 12th annual meeting. We've come a long way since Doug Cowan and Tom Spittler first dreamed of a British special interest chapter in a jet aircraft over the Atlantic Ocean.

- Frank DelGreco

EDITOR'S CORNER

Long ago, Sir Harry Lauder sang this song:

*"Oh, it's nice to get up in the morning
When the sun begins to shine,
At four or five or six o'clock
In the good old summer time.
But when the snow is snowing
And it's murky overhead...
Ohhh, it's nice to get up in the morning,
But it's nicer to stay in bed."*

I'll borrow a stanza from Sir Harry and sing:

*"Oh, it's nice to write appeals for new articles,
Anybody can do that.
But it's nicer to thank those kind souls who have responded."*

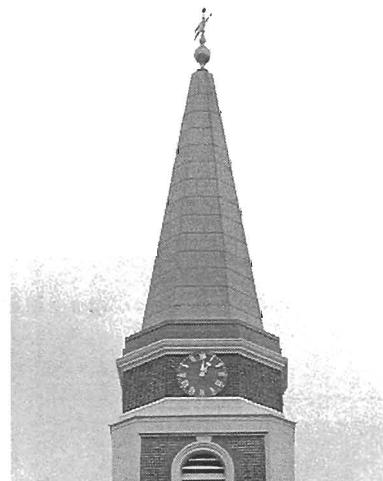
And that's exactly what I'm doing here. For your willingness to share your experiences and thoughts, for your determination to sit down and put them into writing, with pictures, for your caring about other members of the chapter and, yes, for the very survival of the chapter itself, we extend to the contributors who have decided to become an important part of the chapter, a very sincere

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Thanks to you we now have enough material to carry us through the March 2005 issue of BHT.

If it has been on your mind to send in an article, hang on to the thought. Even better, take action on it. We are determined to keep these newsletters filled with interesting, constructive and helpful articles.

-Paul Odendahl



Grosvenor Chapel, London

PHOTO BY FRANK DELGRECO

There's more about Sir
Harry Lauder on page 8.

FROM CLOCKMAKER TO RETAILER

There's a difference and **Tom Spittler (OH)** describes how to tell it and how it evolved.

I recently had the time to read William Linnard's new book *Wales - Clocks and Clockmakers*. It is a good book and I would recommend it. It has an interesting chapter "From Clockmaking to Retailing", which is the first time I can recall such a chapter in any of these recent books. Years ago there might be a chapter in a British clock book about the decline of the longcase clock which lumped all painted dial clocks together as Victorian and showed one example of a very late and very fat Yorkshire clock and declared them ugly and sold by retailers with movements mass produced in Birmingham factories. We now know that is not the case. However I am not completely in agreement

with Linnard on how he describes "retailing" and just how it affected clockmaking and clockmakers. So I thought I would give you my thoughts on the subject.

Retailing in the clockmaker's world is by no means new. Clockmaking in early London is full of examples where very noted clockmakers were buying clock movements from other clockmakers. In fact if there was a trend it would be that the very largest concerns of the early 18th century in London might be the ones most likely to buy in movements.. The source of these movements was not always from other makers in London, but from as far away as centers in

Lancashire. But can we call this practice "retailing"? Probably not. The movements were probably bespoke items from one clockmaker to another. It seems that it was more common for this to happen with bracket clocks than longcase clocks, most shops being able to produce the standard London longcase weight driven movement. Bracket clock movements come in many variations and it might be easier for a London "maker" to have another clockmaker who specialized in the type of bracket clock movement he needed to make it for him to order. At no time would any clockmaker attempt to make the springs in these bracket clocks, that being a separate trade. Enough about this early London aspect of retailing; I just brought it up as a point of information.

Before I move on to 19th

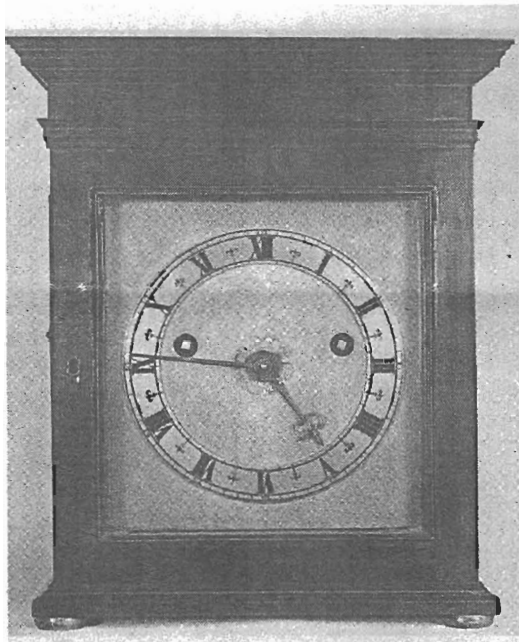


Fig. 1. Clock signed *Edward East Londini*, ca 1660. East is known to have collaborated with Ahasuerus Fromanteel in the making of clocks.

BRITISH HOROLOGY TIMES
IS A NEWSLETTER OF
BRITISH HOROLOGY
CHAPTER 159 OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
WATCH AND CLOCK
COLLECTORS

British Horology Times is published
3 times yearly by
THE ROYAL ARCHIVISTS
975 Topaz St.
New Orleans LA 70124

Editor: PAUL ODENDAHL

All correspondence, manuscripts and applications for membership should be sent to Frank DelGreco 13730 Braeburn Lane, Novelty OH 44072-9586, USA. e-mail: fdelgreco@jaol.com

Opinions expressed in articles in this newsletter are those of the writers and are not necessarily endorsed by the Chapter and/or by the newsletter and/or by the National Association.

Annual membership costs: USA \$5; Canada \$5 overseas \$6 — in US funds or equivalent.

Copyright© 2004 by
British Horology Chapter 159

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

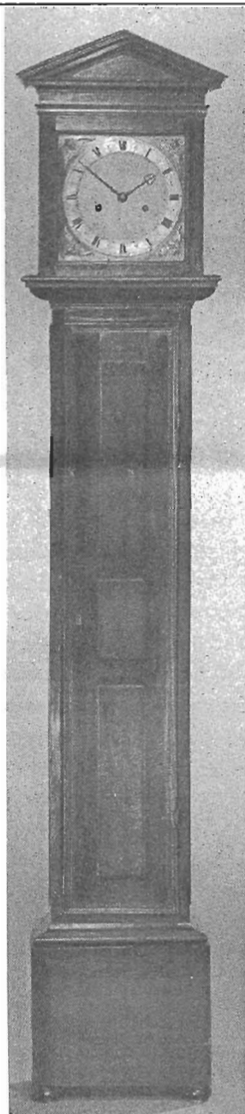


Fig. 2. Longcase clock signed Ahasuerus Fromanteel, ca 1665. He collaborated with Edward East.

century white dial longcase clocks, I would add that watchmaking was really "retailing" right from the start. Well, almost from the start. By the 18th century centers of watchmaking had formed and the industry was a sort of advanced cottage industry. Watch movements were "ordered" and the order was passed along with the movement during assembly from hand to hand. When, as an example, a pillar maker had made the pillars, he would pass the movement along to

the next individual to work on it and collect his money for making the pillars from the "retailer". In the end, and after a very long time, the "retailer" would have his completed watch, ready to sell.

So now we have arrived at the heart of the subject: retailing painted dial longcase clocks. Let's start with 1770 as a base-line. At that time the painted dial was not yet available and most clockmakers took orders from customers, bespoke, for clocks. Then they made the clock movement, and its hands, and brass dial if they could engrave. There were exceptions to this simple example, but for our purpose it will serve as our base-line. When he had finished the movement he would likely house it in a case a local cabinetmaker had fabricated for him, although there are examples where the movements were sold without cases. From here on I am going to give dates as I know them for England and America as to when advances occurred. You can probably assume that these items were available in England a few years earlier than in America when I have only American dates. Painted dials became available in 1772 in England and in 1784 in America. Interestingly it was Paul Revere who was first selling painted dials in America. Almost exclusively the painted dial was not made by the clockmaker, but by specialist dial makers. The next item to become available to the clockmaker was slit pinions in the late 1780s in America. Pinions were made of the best

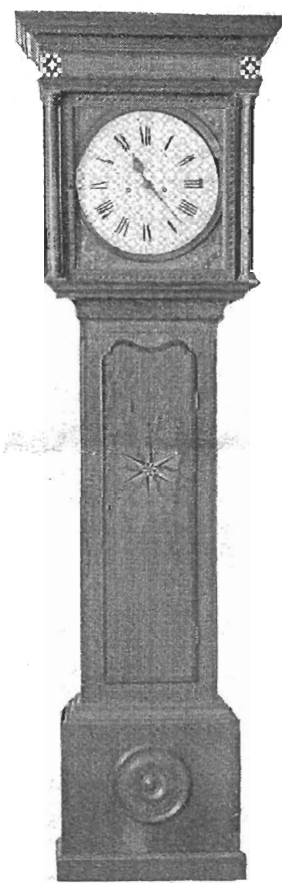


Fig. 3. A country clock signed Nathaniel Kirk, ca 1785.

Sheffield cast steel and were very difficult for a clockmaker to index and cut without very sturdy equipment. Most American clockmakers had to rely upon large workshops such as Woods of Philadelphia to cut steel pinions, but with the slit pinions the indexing was already done and the slit pinions were left soft enough for the clockmaker to finish out the leaves with a file and turn the pivots and then harden them. The next advance was clockmaking kits



Fig. 4. A pinion file from ca 1790.

which contained all the cast brass and forged iron parts for the longcase clock movement. These kits were available in America by the early 1790s and could be had with or without the slit pinions. Clockmaking engines were by now popular in both England and America and many lesser clockmakers would have one of the major, better equipped clockmakers in the city cut his brass wheels for him. The picture I'm painting is that advance after advance was occurring in clockmaking that made it easier and easier for the clockmaker to make better movements, and make them faster.

Another thing was happening at about this time, 1880, in America and Britain. I have noticed in America that apprenticeship indentures of the 18th century often described the four secret skills of the trade. These were clockmaking, watchmaking, goldsmithing and silversmithing. Often a new clockmaker in America would advertise himself as having served a complete apprenticeship in all four of these skills in, say, London. Makers would describe themselves in the 18th century as a clockmaker, or clockmaker and watchmaker, or even clockmaker, watchmaker, silversmith and goldsmith. They were not jewelers as we think of jewelers today, but by 1800 there were retail jewelers. A "jeweler" in 1800 was someone who operated a jewelry store much as we would know it today. The jeweler bought in much of his stock in trade such as stones, etc., but would usually have a goldsmith/silversmith and a watchmaker/clockmaker on premises. The watchmaker/clockmaker now repaired clocks and watches for the most part. So where did this leave the producing clockmaker? Often out of the picture. In both Britain and America the clockmaker now made up clock movements for the jeweler who became

the "retailer" in our story. Complete movements became available from Britain in America as early as the 1790s, but trade in movements was not at all common in Britain at that early time.

There is a great quote from Rees's *Clocks, Watches & Chronometers 1819-20* that goes like this: "...if we wish to be introduced to the workman who has the greatest share in the contribution to our best clocks, we must often submit to be conducted up some narrow passage of our metropolis, and to mount into a dirty attic, where we find illiterate ingenuity closely employed in earning a mere pittance compared with the price which is put on the finished machine by the vendor of more crafty circumstances, though the latter has little more trouble than to order his name to be inserted before it is placed for public notice in his bow fronted window."

This is an absolutely great quote and it describes completely the situation in 19th century England. The clockmaker is now not the man whose name is on the

dial of the clock although it can still sometimes be the clockmaker. The jeweler gets that privilege as he caused the clock to be made. He financed it, and he financed it on speculation. It is not a bespoke item, it is "placed for public notice in his bow fronted window" in the hope that it will attract a buyer.

As time goes by the situation worsens for the clockmaker. In an 1844 example 40 some of the 60 or so clockmakers (movement makers) in Newcastle-under-Lyme try to collectively agree to keep the prices they charge at least high enough so they can live. They say that the average clockmaker can make one and a half clock movements in a week of 66 hours; some can make two and some only one. They say that if they cut the price any further they will starve. This puts production in Newcastle at about 75 movements per maker per year, or about 5,000 movements per year for all of Newcastle—quite a number. It would seem to me that would be in excess of all the jeweler "retailers" in Newcastle and some movements must have been purchased by "retailers"

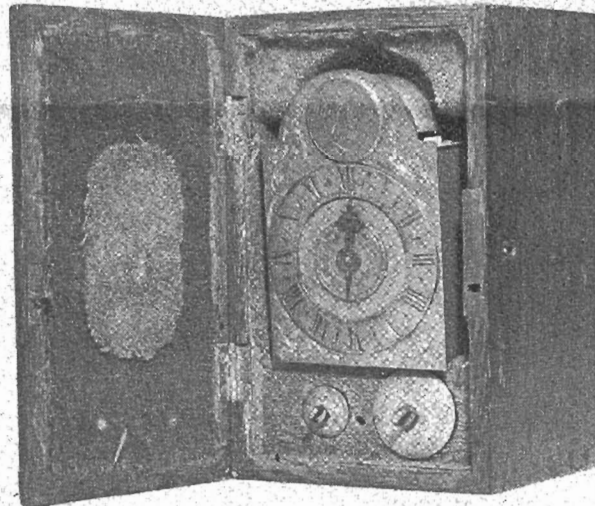


Fig. 5. A London clock signed *Willm Allam London*, ca 1675. Did it sit in a bow fronted window?

outside Newcastle. This is only my speculation.

When researching lists of clockmakers of the 19th century in England it is the minor figures who likely actually made the movements. These would be the individuals who listed themselves as clockmakers in, say, the 1820 census, or in their death notices. Likely there are no known signed clocks by these clockmakers. It is the large well known stores who advertised clocks and watches for sale who never made a clock, both in 19th century Britain and America. The 19th century firm of Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy (1780-1854) never made a clock although many beautiful clocks are known with their name engraved on the movement and nicely numbered. They bought in everything as is evidenced in their workbooks. In David Vulliamy's *The Vulliamy Clockmakers*, the author states on page 34: "It is important to note that by the end of the 18th century anyway, it is probable that, apart from exceptional and unusual items, none of the clocks, watches or furnishing pieces were actually made on the premises in Pall Mall.

Though perhaps surprising to the average reader, this role of Vulliamys as retailers of clocks and watches chiefly made by others to their designs and detailed specifications was not in any way unusual and was practiced by all the most reputable 'makers' in

London and even the Provinces."

Now, if today you wish to purchase a 19th century British longcase clock and you want it to be made by the clockmaker whose name is on the dial, what should you look for? I would suggest a simple 30-hour country clock. One in a very plain case. One that looks as if it never sat in the bow fronted window of a "retailer".

Notice I have never said that any of these clocks made in the 19th century were not hand made and each unique. They were hand made but not always by the hand of the person who signed the dial. John Robey has documented that many movements were made by Harlowe in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, England, near where John lives, but he has never found a movement that was not hand made, and there are always little differences from movement to movement that show their individuality.

I could go on and on with examples but I have to stop somewhere. I hope you have a better understanding of "retailing" and how and why it occurred. I would love to hear from any of you on the subject. ☺

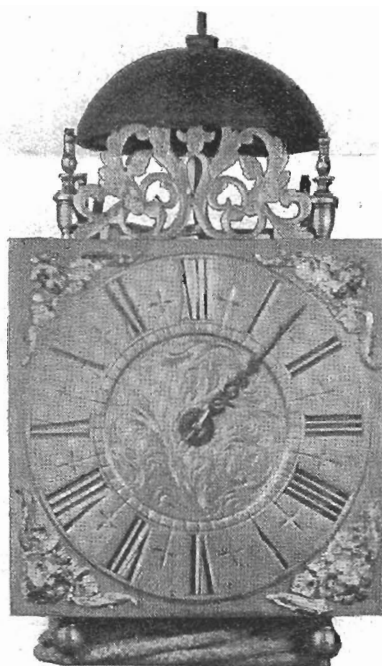


Fig. 7. A "brass clock" ca 1695 signed Roger Lee Leicester.

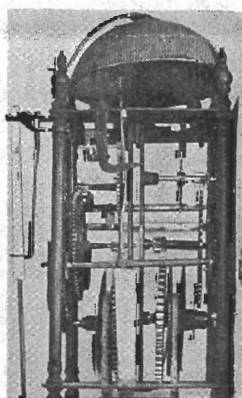
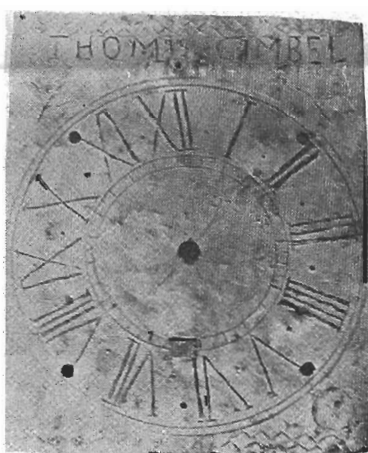
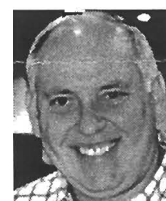


Fig. 6. This country clock signed Thomas Gambel, ca 1704 probably did not sit in a bow fronted window.

Tom Spittler is a prolific writer of books and articles for the NAWCC Bulletin, *Clocksmagazine* and others. He is a storehouse of information on British horology.



In a conversation after this article was written by Tom, he pointed out that he does not belittle clocks signed, but not actually made, by the retailer. In fact, he says, such 18th and 19th century clocks can be very well made because the retailer has carefully chosen what he regards as the best artisan(s) in order to achieve a high grade result. So the large, well known retailers generally sold top quality clocks, but they didn't actually make them.

-The Editor

HENRY - Part 11

Abridged from *The First Henry*, copyright © by The Royal Archivists. Used with permission.

In the previous Part 10 we saw that by 1675 both Henry and Tom were free and operating their own shops. They were in good company: Daniel Quare, Joseph Knibb, Joseph Norris and Joseph Windmills were their contemporaries. Now Paul Odendahl (LA) describes activities as things settled down and the glory days of English clockmaking carried on.

By the year 1680 clockmaking was thriving in London. The Clockmakers' Company was a protection against foreign competition. Most of the clockmakers were busy and they all were friendly competitors. So busy, thought Henry, that there was no real exchanging of information about their craft or about themselves. Henry thought up a plan. One day he found himself exploring the current situation with Joseph Windmills.

"Joseph, how is work in your shop? Are you behind in your promises? Are you short of help? Have you a complaint against an outside worker?"

Joseph answered the questions and both men were delighted to exchange information to their mutual advantage.

Henry then asked. "What do think about talking in this way to others in our trade? What if we could exchange information all 'round?"

"I would relish that. We could all profit."

"Let me ask our colleagues. Let me see if I can organize something."

Henry was careful not to plan for an official association. The Company would not like that. He envisioned an informal group of

friends discussing their mutual interests and perhaps their mutual problems. After further polling he sent a letter to all of the active London clockmakers inviting them to have coffee together at an appointed date and time at Garroway's in Exchange Alley, Cornhill. He got the idea from Tom who said that Robert Hooke and Tom had many discussions in the relaxed surroundings of the coffee house.

The meeting was a complete success. All of the invitees were there. Tom said a few brief words to the effect that the meeting was not a meeting at all. It was simply a group of friends coming together for coffee and conversation. There was to be no leader, no membership, no money paid except for what each individual paid to the coffee house. One could come and go at will. No records of any kind were to be kept. All that was needed would be to determine when and where most of the men would like to have coffee together. It was decided that the first workday of the month around noon would be suitable.

"Come again next month if you can," said Henry and casually strolled off.

Next month, June 1680, they all came again. This time to the Sultanness Head by the Royal Exchange. They had decided at the first non-meeting to rotate the coffee houses: Garroway's, Sultanness Head, Joe's in

Fleet Street, Child's in Saint Paul's Churchyard and Man's in Chancery Lane.

Henry's idea proved to be a popular success. Even Thomas Tompion came, proving that "being busy" is often just a matter of mind.

"Tom, do you find it feasible to employ an in-house casemaker?" asked Joseph Knibb.

"Yes," answered Tom. "I can control the quality so much better."

"Do you pay him when you cannot keep him busy?"

"I pay him as an employed journeyman. It's up to me to keep him busy. I have him do a certain amount of work in slow times on clocks that are not yet sold, But in actual practice I find that sometimes I am so busy that I have to give outside case work to Joseph Clifton to keep current."

Clifton. Isn't he up in Cheapside? Is he still working?"

"Yes, he doesn't take in much work but he keeps at it."

Then there was a typical discussion such as that between Joseph Windmills and Daniel Quare:



Joseph Clifton the casemaker

Joseph: "Daniel, are you finding your engraver to be prompt and punctual with the work?"

"No. Never on time and sometimes things are spelled wrong. I have learned that I must put up with it."

"Same here. There seems always to be the same excuse: sickness."

Daniel looked at Joseph with a stern eye. "Sickness, eh? It's not the kind of sickness I ever have. They don't call me 'The Quaker' for nothing. Have you ever smelled your man's breath when he finally delivers the work?"

"Yes."

And does he seem overanxious to get his money?"

"Yes."

Joseph Knibb was sitting alongside and joined in. "Speaking of getting paid, why do we have to wait so long for our money? I supplied a turret clock to Windsor Castle three years ago and I haven't been paid yet. (He had no way of knowing that he would have to wait for another two years be-

fore seeing the money.) It's the Crown. They take liberties." He was tempted to say more, but he didn't. The conversations ranged from the technical to the practical. If one posed a question he usually got a good answer. They did talk about money but they never tried to set prices or wages. They would not raid each other for customers or workmen. They were a congenial group of craftsmen helping each other for the mutual benefit of themselves and their trade. No wonder, they were doing work for each other.

One subject that was discussed just about every time the men met was engraving - particularly the engraving of backplates. It was common practice for any one of them to buy a movement from another, usually complete but unfinished, and then to finish and sign it as the clock-maker. The finishing process included the decoration of the backplate and of the dial plate.

The patriarch of the group, Edward East, and his former apprentice, Henry, were seated together one day at Child's.

"I notice," said Mr East, that backplate engraving is growing

more elaborate and I am searching for the reason why the other men are embracing this."

Henry replied, "I have always liked to decorate the countwheel on the backplate when I sign a clock. As to further decoration, I have ordered a little more engraving than was our usual practice. Now that you ask, I suppose it is because I see more decoration appearing on table clocks signed by some of the others."

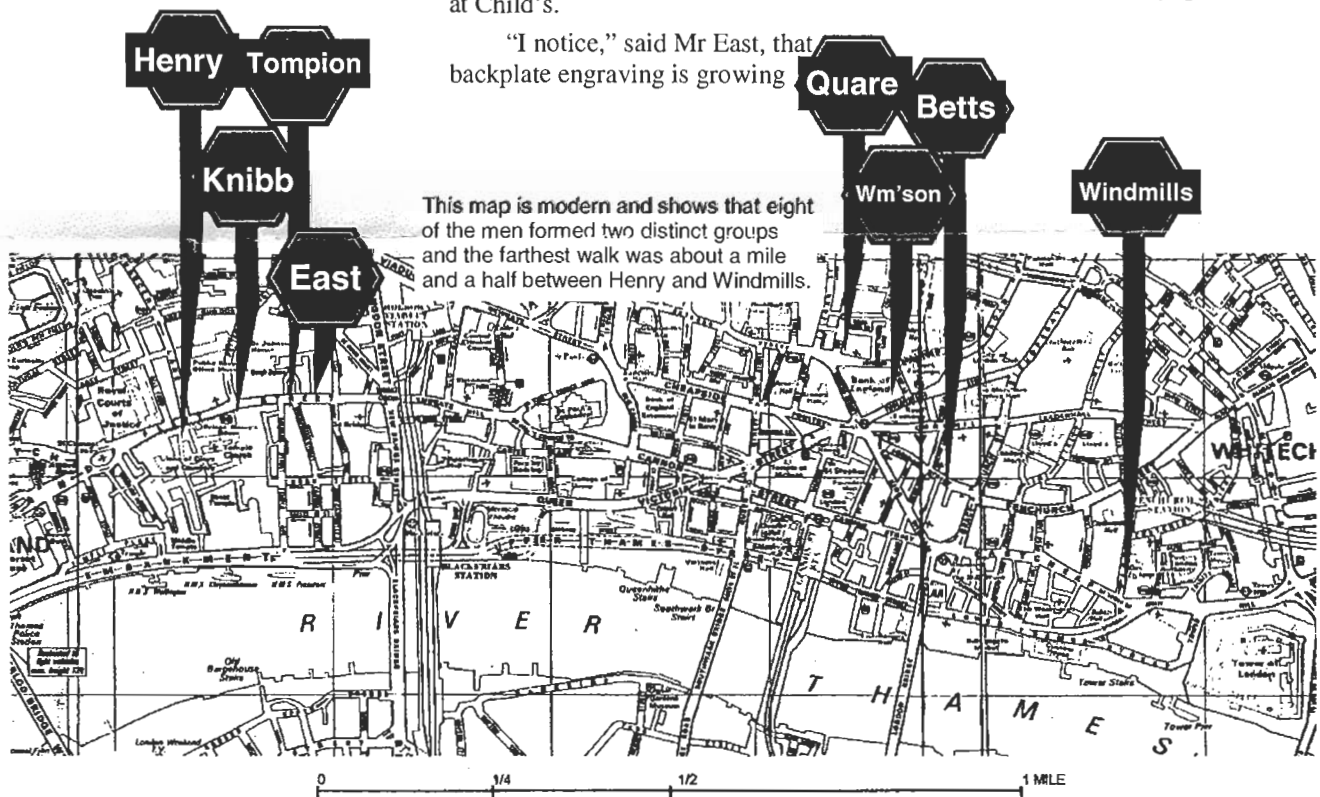
"So, you are copying."

"Well... I suppose you might say that. But it does add beauty. Don't you agree?"

Mr East: "If the engraving is beautiful it does indeed add beauty. But is it beauty lost? Who can see it if a clock is against a wall, even with a glazed back door? And if the clock is on a mantle in front of a mirror, can the clock be placed far enough out from the mirror to see the reflection of the backplate?"

"You are correct, Mr East."

Please see HENRY on page 8



HENRY from page 7

"So who sees the decorated backplate? Do you think the owner will pull the clock away from the wall and rotate it just so he can admire the engraving now and then?"

"No, I don't think he will. But he knows it's there."

Then after a moment's thought Henry added, "I know it's there."

"Aha, pride then. Pride of workmanship perhaps."

"Yes, that's it! Pride, because while I still have the clock I am proud to show it off to a customer and even more proud to show it to one of our colleagues. I also hope that it is as beautiful, or perhaps more beautiful, than the last one that I saw come from another shop."

"Thinking of the others," added Henry, "Tom will still produce a clock with a simply signed plain backplate, but on his finer productions he is using much delicate engraving. I think he has been influenced by Joseph Knibb and perhaps by the Quaker. They are using increasing amounts of engraved decoration on their backplates. So I suppose we are all being influenced by one another. If our decoration is escalating it must be because nobody wants to be outdone by his competitor. Bit by bit we are all trying to stay ahead."

Mr East understood. Pride, beauty, competition. The pathway to fame for the world's foremost horologists. ☺



Henry MacLennan Lauder, (Sir Harry Lauder 1870-1950) was born in Portobello, a suburb of Edinburgh, Scotland and rose from poor

and simple beginnings to a renowned music hall comedian and singer and composer of simple-hearted Scottish songs.

He began working as a child laborer in a flax mill and in a coal mine for 10 years, then began singing. With a large repertory of his own songs he toured the world, entertained WWI and II troops and gave concerts for charities. He was knighted in 1919. In 1916 he said,

"Go on in a way that you are going. Leave your lights burning behind you so that others coming after you may benefit thereby. Perchance your boy or girl passing that way someday, may point to a lamp you left and say gratefully and with pride... 'My Dad left that light burning'."

**Are you galloping off
If so, don't
forget -**



to OK this summer?

1. Chapter 159's annual meeting, Thursday, July 1, 2004, 1 PM, Room 5, Renaissance Hotel.
2. Dennis Radage's presentation on longcase clocks at the meeting. Dennis is a retired engineer who came

from the UK to Canada 36 years ago. He collects mostly English clocks and restores his own. He is President of BC Chapter 121 and lectures in Canada and the U.S.

3. The election of officers.
4. To come prepared to take off the buckskins and enjoy yourself.

MART

MART ADS are free to members and should pertain to British or Anglo-American horology.

Doug Cowan will be taking several good English timepieces to the National in Oklahoma City for sale, including marine chronometers and bracket clocks. Doug also has a ca 1790 musical longcase by Edgecomb of Bristol for sale, striking 7 tunes on 17 bells with 23 hammers. In a beautiful Sheraton style mahogany case. He will not carry the longcase to the National. Call or email for more details if interested. Phone: 1-513-821-7569, email: dcclock@juno.com

Paul Odendahl has 63 old clock and watch auction catalogs for sale:
5 Christie's, London and New York, 1981-82;
27 Sotheby's, London, Chester, Geneva, Belgravia and Holland, 1981-82;
10 Ineichen, Zurich, 1979-84;
8 Stolberg, Graz, 1979-83;
4 Neidheid, Dusseldorf, 1979-81;
9 UTO, Zurich, 1979-84.
\$200 for the lot, I pay for packaging and shipping.
Phone evenings: 1-504-288-2479, email: peoden@webtv.net

CONTENTS

ELECTION nominees
From President **Frank Del Greco** 1

**IT'S NICER TO LIE
IN BED** says **Paul Odendahl** 1

**FROM CLOCKMAKER
TO RETAILER**
by **Tom Spittler** 2

HENRY
Part 11 of a 17th century historical
story by **Paul Odendahl** 6

**MART
NEXT MEETING
SIR HARRY LAUDER** 8