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Samuel G. Jones of Baltimore Edward Massey & The Market for English Watches Abroad

By Rich Newman, Allen Richardson & Richard Watkins

Imagine the likelihood of finding three early nineteenth century English watches with the name of the same American “maker” and with serial numbers within thirty points of each other? This has been the case for three NAWCC members, one in Pennsylvania, another in Illinois, and a third in Australia. We each had a nicely finished English watch with the name, “S. G. Jones” in our collections and that there were uncanny, interesting similarities between the movements. All three are within 51 serial number points of each other (#1123, #1137, and #1173), have similar movement layouts, and were cased by Samuel Packwood of Coventry in 1817-1818. At first glance, they also seemed to have rack lever movements. Upon closer inspection, they appeared to be early Massey conversions. Wrong again! It seems these timepieces were originally fitted from the start with Massey escapements by Edward Massey himself. A clue was finding Massey’s mark under the balance table (Figures 1 & 2). When we realized what we had, questions immediately arose. Who was S. G. Jones? Was he an American maker? The possibility of a U.S. connection was evident because two of the three watches have a beautiful American eagle engraved on the balance table. Did he manufacture or finish these watches? What were his connections with the English watch trade?



Figure 1: Samuel G. Jones short train (3 wheel) movement with 15 seconds dial and nicely executed American eagle on the balance table

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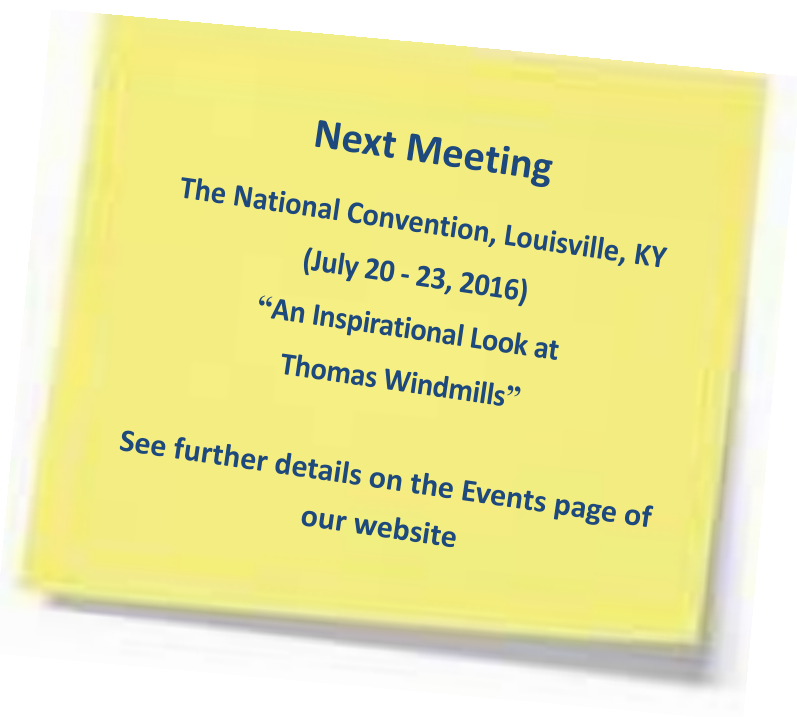
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Delightful words of wisdom recorded in Alice Earle's 1902 book, *Sun-dials and Roses of Yesterday*:

Die when I may, I always want it said of me by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle, and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.

Abraham Lincoln



President's Message:

Dear Friends, you will be electing new officers for British Horology at the July, 2016 National Convention. In accordance with our bylaws, a member can only serve two terms as President and therefore I will be stepping down from that role. Tom Spittler recruited me back in 2010 to volunteer for a "two" year term that somehow morphed into three and then to six! All kidding aside, I want to acknowledge the wonderful help that prior leadership has, and continues, to provide to the Chapter. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to Dennis Radage (VP), Marion Krajewski (Secretary), Pete Stipanovich (Treasurer) and Frank Del Greco (Advisor) for serving with me for the past six years. We've accomplished many of the financial, publication and Internet goals we set out to do and had a nice mix of learning and fun in the process. And, without question, if it wasn't for all of your support I would never have considered serving on the Board to represent members who have horological interests beyond America's shores.

Please join me in thanking Dennis Radage for his many years of guidance as VP of the Chapter. Dennis will not be running this year, but has graciously agreed to continue to be an active contributor to BHT and Chapter lectures. Looking forward to Chapter elections in July, Bob Pritzker has expressed an interest in the President role, and Marion Krajewski and Pete Stipanovich have offered to continue to serve if elected. Well done! I've also agreed to run for the open VP role to help the next President ease into his/her role. As a reminder, any member can run and is encouraged to run to help guide BH's progress for the next 3 years.

Our last meeting was at the Southern Ohio Regional (SOR) and Bob Pritzker gave an outstanding presentation on the clockmaker Sir William Congreve and his unusual clocks. We also reserved time to have a quick show-and-tell session that featured early watches and an unidentified bracket clock, perhaps early American, with a pin wheel escapment. In my experience, SOR is always an outstanding, well run and fun regional, and nearly every seat in our meeting was taken, close to 70 members. We are expecting no less at our next meeting at the National Convention which I hear is nearly sold out. I'm pleased to announce that Ken Rockwell, the 2013 NAWCC Pritchard Award Winner and master gold and silversmith, will be giving the BH lecture on the renowned London maker Thomas Windmills (1672-1737).

The March newsletter included a small review of Dennis Radage's new book, CHARLES GRETTON • CLOCK & WATCHMAKING THROUGH THE GOLDEN AGE, and the chapter has procured several copies to use as donations for significant events, such as the National Convention and SOR (that BH co-hosts). This is an outstanding piece of work and, in my view, a must read for anyone interested in early British timepieces. Further information and purchase details can be found at www.grettonbook.com. We're truly lucky to have a number of world-class authors in our Chapter.

This issue features an article about one of my collecting passions, (British) colonial and early American watches. Ironically, in my very first BHT President's Message back in November, 2010, I included a photograph of a watch by S. G. Jones, serial number 1173, stating that at least two others were known and that several chapter members were collaborating for a possible future article. Six years later, Allen Richardson, Richard Watkins and I, with valued input from Michael Edidin and Alan Treherne finally got around to sharing what we've learned about this interesting watchmaker and his connection to Edward Massey in the early 19th century. I hope you enjoy it; you can be sure that we're happy to finally get it off our desks!

See you in Louisville! *Rich*

The road to learning more about this early American watchmaker and his connections with the English trade is important components in a subject that has little documented history. The majority of colonial and early American watches that appeared in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were made in England. What were the internal dynamics of this trade and what were the skills and knowledge of the earliest of the American watchmakers? While these questions are still very much open, the three of us have learned a lot about one early American watchmaker, Samuel G. Jones, who had interests in both Philadelphia and Baltimore. We have also learned that he likely had intimate connections with the English watch industry and possibly with the renowned inventor Edward Massey.

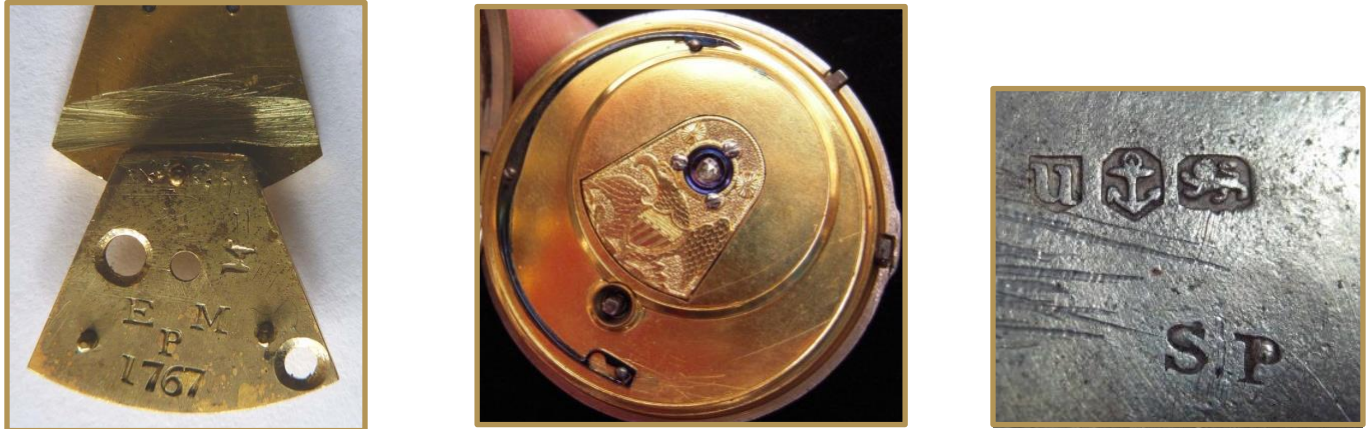


Figure 2: (left) Example of Edward Massey's mark and number on the back of the balance table; "EM P" for Edward Massey Patent; (middle) dust cap with diamond end stone and American eagle showing from movement (cap maker's initial "TF" not shown); (right) Birmingham assay for 1818 with case maker Samuel Packwood of Coventry

Samuel Jones

It would be a mistake to conclude that Jones was just a watch retailer. He always referred to himself as a watch maker and in fact had a number of apprentices bound to him to learn the art of watch making. There were at least three over a 13 year period (assuming 7 year apprenticeships) - - Henry Williamson, 1799; Richard Spalding, 1803; and John Howard, 1805, minimally indicating a fairly robust watch repair business. We also know that in addition to the watches signed "S. G. Jones," watches signed "Patton & Jones, Philadelphia" also survive. That is not surprising. Watch makers with connections in England were able to offer their own line of watches by using the same well established supply centers that apparently all watch makers in England utilized. From quite early in the 18th century, makers were able to order unfinished movements, finished movements, and complete watches to their specification and desired finish quality, even complete with their name engraved on the back plate. That is probably what Jones also did. There can be no doubt that one thing Jones had was extensive English connections as discussed later in this article.

Jones' working history was complicated by increasing tensions and conflict between the United States and Great Britain making trade difficult. In the decades between the end of the American Revolution and the commencement of hostilities during the War of 1812, U.S. – Anglo trade was complicated by growing fear. The British navy routinely stopped merchant vessels and impressed any sailor who they deemed to be English into years of servitude within the British navy. Increasing tensions between the two nations had led o the U.S. embargo of 1807 which halted trade. Subsequently, the War of 1812 increased the difficulty of trade as Britain attempted to fight both a war with its former colony and at the same time prevent Napoleon's further encroachment in Europe.

By 1817-1818, when the three watches were produced, these tensions had eased considerably. The war was over. The Convention of 1818 had been signed seeking to increase and regulate commerce between England and the United States. It had been preceded by the Rush-Bagot pact which further eased tensions along the Great Lakes. For large wholesalers and retailers, such as Samuel Jones who had close connections to the English watch trade, the period offered hope of increased profits in the rapidly expanding watch industry. Although having interests in both Baltimore and Philadelphia, Jones' workshop was located in Baltimore, a city shelled by British forces only a few years earlier, the site of Francis Scott Key's unforgettable "Star-Spangled Banner" composition that was later to become the national anthem of the United States of America. As evidenced by Jones' distinctive American eagle balance table, he appears to one of the few to offer a watch designed to appeal visually to patriotic Americans (another was the maker Luther Goddard).

Samuel C. Jones (1789 - 1842) had a number of partnerships. It appears he was first hired by the firm "Robert Leslie & Company" in about 1796 that operated in Baltimore and comprised Robert Leslie, Isaac Price and Abraham Patton. This firm was closely affiliated with the Philadelphia inventor Robert Leslie and Leslie's large clock, watch and materials importation business from England. The Baltimore firm was renamed to "Patton, Jones & Company" and then "Patton & Jones" upon the death of Isaac Price in 1798. Abraham Patton and Samuel Jones conducted business in Philadelphia and Baltimore until Patton's retirement in about 1813. An advertisement from the Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser, on November 23, 1798 marked the end of "Patton, Jones & Co." and beginning of "Patton and Jones."

Patton, Jones & Co. The partnership of Isaac Price, Abraham Patton, and Samuel G. Jones, watch makers; trading under the firm of Patton, Jones & Co. being dissolved on the 18th of September last, by the death of Mr. Isaac Price, all persons having demands against them, are desired to bring in their accounts, and those indebted, to make immediate payment to Samuel G. Jones, No. 93, Market-street. Abraham Patton, Samuel G. Jones, Surviving partners. The business will in future be carried on by Abraham Patton and Samuel G. Jones, at the same place, who will as usual keep a large supply of Clocks, Watches, Chains, Seals and Keys of every description...¹

Without question, Patton and Jones were major wholesalers and retailers and they advertised extensively between 1800 and 1813. Even their watchpapers tout a large assortment of clocks, watches and materials (Figure 3). What they produced versus retailed is not known; if they produced anything it was apparently a fraction of their overall business. Interestingly, a tall case bearing the Patton & Jones signature, ca. 1797, was purchased by none other than George Washington. This next advertisement in the Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser, on November 19, 1800, by them is fairly typical. Other surviving examples during the period also promoted the sale of chronometers and surveying equipment:

Patton and Jones, No. 93, Market-street, Have received by the late arrivals from London and Liverpool, Gold, silver and gilt Watches; eight day and table Clocks; eight day and thirty hour Clock Brass Pinions, and forged work; eight day Clock Movements, Bells, Hands and Dials; a large assortment of Watch Glasses, from no. 5 to 40; Main-Springs, Gold, Gilt and Steel Hands, with a general assortment of Watch and Clock Materials and Tools; ladies' and gentlemen's Gold Chains, Seals, Keys and Pebble Seals, &c. all which they offer for sale at reduced prices, wholesale or retail. ²

Patton and Jones last advertisement was dated January 8th, 1813. Abraham Patton died in 1819. Samuel G. Jones continued the business under his own name and from the same location at 93 Market Street in Baltimore (where he also apparently lived). An ad in 1814 stated “Samuel G. Jones, Late Patton & Jones, has on hand a few Patent Lever Gold and Common Silver Watches.” He continued to advertise fairly regularly until 1820.

Another advertisement read,

*Samuel G. Jones, 93, Market Street. Has imported in the ship General Hand, Patent Lever and Detached Gold & Silver Watches, particularly made; also, Common Watches, ornamental Mantle & Eight Day clocks, Clock Movements, Clock Dials and a choice assortment of all the materials and tools, used by Clock and Watch Makers.*³



Figure 3: (left) Circa 1798 Patton & Jones watch paper; “Patton & Jones, Watch Makers, Imports & sells Wholesale & Retail Clocks & Watches of every description and all kinds of TOOLS and MATERIALS. 93 Market, between South & Calvert Streets BALTIMORE”; (right) Circa 1814 Samuel G. Jones watch paper; “Samuel G. Jones, Watch Maker: No 93 Market Street Baltimore. Imports & Sells Wholesale & Retail Clocks & Watches of every description and all kinds of watch makers Tools & Materials”

Linkages to Edward Massey

Edward Massey (1768 – 1852) was a clock and watchmaker who also held patents for nautical instruments. Massey designed “...taffrail logs, electric logs, and deep-sea sounders.”⁴ In addition to developing tools and a number of horological devices, Massey created detached lever escapements. There were some important clues in the history of our three watches. Samuel Jones had considerable skills as a watchmaker and undoubtedly also had significant connections with the English watch industry from his past affiliations with Robert Leslie, Isaac Price and Abraham Patton. A clue to these connections between Jones and England contained in these watches was the Birmingham case hallmarks and the identification of the same case maker, Samuel Packwood of Coventry. Coventry was an important center of the trade at the time and it was here that the young, enterprising Edward Massey sought to market his new escapements. A more exciting clue, as already mentioned, was finding Massey mark and serial number under the foot of the balance table.

Edward Massey was an important name in the early history of the English lever and created a series of variations in escapement, each identified by a different configuration in the roller table and jewel. Massey levers are often encountered before 1830 (Tobias used Massey levers into the 1840's) and sometimes included Massey's initials and his own number stamped into the underside of the balance table, evidencing that the escapement was likely fitted by Massey himself. . Alan Terherne reports, "It is interesting to know that Edward Massey of Newcastle-Under-Lyme chose in 1813 to go to Coventry to exploit his recently patented detached lever escapement rather than to Liverpool or London, and many of the earliest Massey escapement watches were finished to a very high standard in Coventry (in most cases using high quality movements brought in from Lancashire...)"⁵


Terherne continues, "Clearly by the third quarter of the eighteenth century most of the watches sold in the UK were manufactured in one of the main finishing centers, although many were signed with the vendor's name and location. The same was true of watches exported from the UK. Broadly speaking, the manufacturers were quite willing to add the vendor's or importer's name and location to the movement or dial, or to add fictitious names such as Bullingford, Champion, Edmonds, Fairplay, Fondling, Goldmith, Hicks etc. which became very familiar in America. Coventry manufacturers normally added 'London' or Liverpool" as the location as both these centers had a high reputation for producing good watches throughout much of the world."⁶

"Sometimes manufacturers supplied watches with the barrel bar or top plate gilded but plain, so that a purchaser could have any name and location added locally. This is often indicated by the engraving on the barrel bar having been executed after the plain barrel bar had been gilded, or before the engraved bar was gilded or regilded in a manner which did not match the gilding that the movement initially supplied."⁷

There is evidence that other retailers also obtained movements from Massey in the same way as Jones. A similar movement by Waterfall was identified that also displays an American eagle on the balance table and carries the nomenclature "EM P 1996," under the balance table. This suggests that Waterfall, like Samuel Jones, was able to purchase a number of watches containing Edward Massey's high-quality escapements in frames that were originally designed for rack lever escapements. There is no evidence that any of the movements were actually converted from rack lever escapements, which supports the thesis that Massey utilized a supply of rack lever plates which he could easily adapt for his levers.⁸

Together, this data points toward a robust watch industry in which Massey levers were rapidly taking the place of the older, and less efficient rack lever movements. Interestingly, many rack lever movements were short train (three wheel) and lack a second's dial which was perceived not to be a requirement of the market; however, apparently all S.G. Jones signed watches have a seconds dial. Even Jones' short train movements have a 15 seconds dial.

Undoubtedly, American watchmakers with direct contacts in the English watch industry or working through agents ordered entire lots of watches to satisfy the needs of the growing middle class and their demand for the latest technology in watches. As the development of the lever escapement began to supplant older escapements, American watchmakers like Samuel Jones maintained a brisk trade with England, selling their wares to a new country with an expanding need for timepieces.

Since the authors initially shared information and collaborated on this article, a survey of S. G. Jones watches was conducted and revealed nine surviving examples. About half, five of the nine, are emblazoned with an American eagle on the balance table. All are signed “S. G. Jones” and lack an engraved city name on the back plate which gave Jones the flexibility to sell his watches either in Philadelphia or Baltimore without having to order and maintain separate inventories. They were apparently made over a relatively short period of time, about 3 years judging from the case assay dates, and likely ordered through an agent in Birmingham and supplied from Coventry, cased and “ready to sell” with Jones’ name engraved on the movement. It is almost certain that these examples were his top-of-the-line offering having advanced Massey escapements and, sporting S. G. Jones’ own signature on the movement, intended to appeal to his most affluent clients. 

Serial Number / Massey Number	Escapement	Balance Table Design	Pair Cases ⁹ (Silver unless noted otherwise)	Dial
#1031 / EM P 395	Massey 1	Urn/Rosettes	1816 Birmingham assay, Samuel Packwood (Coventry)	60 seconds dial
#1061 / EM P 555	Massey 3	Urn/Rosettes	1815 Chester assay, gold pair cases, WR maker’s mark, gold dial	15 seconds dial
#1123 / EM P 1786	Unknown	American Eagle	1817 Birmingham assay, Samuel Packwood (Coventry)	15 seconds dial
#1137 / EM P 1767	Unknown	Urn/Rosettes	1817 Birmingham assay, Samuel Packwood (Coventry)	15 seconds dial
#1140 / Unknown	Unknown	American Eagle with “July 4 1773” on foot	1818 London assay, John Williams (London)	60 seconds dial
#1144 / EM P 1815	Massey 1	American Eagle	Unknown	Unknown
#1173 / EM P 2067	Massey 1	American Eagle	1818 Birmingham assay, Samuel Packwood (Coventry)	60 seconds dial
#1208 / Unknown	Unknown	Rosettes	Movement only	15 seconds dial
#1210 / EM P 2150	Massey 3	American Eagle	1818 Birmingham assay, Samuel Packwood (Coventry)	15 seconds dial

Acknowledgements: The authors are grateful for information provided by Michael Edidin and Alan Treherne.

Footnotes:

¹ *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, Baltimore, November 23, 1798.

² *Ibid.*, November 19, 1800.

³ J. Carter Harris, *The Clock and Watchmakers American Advertiser*, Antiquarian Horological Society, 2003.

⁴ A. Alan Treherne, “Massey family (per. C. 1760-1891) makers of clocks, watches, and nautical instruments,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2014-16.

⁵ Alan A. Treherne, “The Contribution of south-West Lancashire to Horology: Watch and Chronometer Movement Making and Finishing,” (part 1), *Antiquarian Horology*, June 2009, 461.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 462.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 464.

⁸ We are indebted to Dr. Michael Edidin for this observation.

⁹ Philip Priestley, *Watch Case Makers of England 1720-1920*, NAWCC Bulletin Supplement No. 20, 1994