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AMERICAN CLOCKS SET SAIL FOR ENGLAND

By Rich Newman (Illinois)

Contributing to the success of the American clock industry in the 19th century was the ability to export a large quantity of finished clocks and clock movements to England. In the past 15 years, or so, NAWCC authors have written about American movements cased in English-made cases, so called Anglo-American clocks, that was a very significant part of this business beginning in the early 1840's (to learn more, I recommend reading Bill Matthews' NAWCC Bulletin No. 337 article on Anglo-American Clocks). The business became so successful that according to Matthews' article, "within quite a short time thereafter the majority of clocks sold in Britain were of transatlantic origin."

Interesting accounts of early shipments of American-made clocks to England relay stories of customs officials seizing the entire cargo for underreporting the valuation to avoid import taxes. One reported in the book "Antiques on a Budget" by Tony Curtis, tells the story of a cargo of Chauncey Jerome clocks that was seized in 1842. The penalty comprised compensation of only 10% above the reported cargo value which, as learned later, returned quite a handsome profit to Jerome.

Much is still unknown about the trade. However, no doubt collectors who attend antique and flea markets or look at Ebay and other clock auctions in England have seen many examples for sale whether they realized it or not.



New Haven Clock Company rosewood drop dial wall clock with printed label stating "Jerome & Co.'s Superior 8-Day Anglo-American Clocks, for Home-Use & Abroad. No movement Genuine, unless Stamped with the American Factory's Trade Mark." Circa 1890. (Courtesy of the National Watch & Clock Museum, Columbia, Pa.)

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Officers of British Horology Chapter 159

Robert Pritzker, President
timeman@live.com
905-640-5197

Rich Newman, Vice President
rpnewman@yahoo.com
630-207-6616

Marion Krajewski, Secretary
marionkrajewski@comcast.net
219-769-8247

Peter Stipanovich, Treasurer
1305 Aviara Place
Gibsonia, PA 15044
440-476-9776
pstipanovich@gmail.com

Frank Del Greco, Advisor
fdelgreco@aol.com
440-338-8261

Editor - Open position – please volunteer!

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Chapter 159

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James Mott, NY watchpaper that interestingly states that he imports levers and English watches direct from Liverpool & London factories. Circa 1820's.



President's Message:

It won't be long now before the 75th Anniversary NAWCC Celebration and Convention in York, Pennsylvania. Our hard working secretary, Marion Krajewski, along with Lu Sadowski are organizing what is likely to be the best ever Convention. As part of the celebration, our chapter will have a display in the mart room to show our interest and activities. We would really appreciate you giving an hour or two of your time at the Convention to help with the display. If you have a relevant article that we could put on display at this time it would be most helpful. Please let us know by emailing us at BritishHorology@gmail.com.

At the Celebration in Columbia, Doug Cowan, Past President of both our Chapter and the NAWCC has agreed to lead a British Horology focused tour of the NAWCC museum. Please add this to your list of must do activities at the Convention.

Our thanks go to Andy Dervan for making the presentation at our meeting during the Southern Ohio Regional in Wilmington, Ohio in April. Our next meeting will be at the Convention in York and our speaker will be Jim Cipra who will talk on George Graham's Mean Solar clocks. Jim is a well-regarded authority on Graham's clocks and this should be an opportunity not to be missed.

This fall you will notice some changes with respect to the British Horology Times. We are going to reduce the number of issues per year from three to two. One in the spring and one in the fall. The reasons for the reduction include our inability to find an editor which has placed an undue amount of work on our Vice-president, Rich Newman as well as the difficulty in obtaining articles for publication.

Please consider submitting an article so we can continue with our newsletter. If you have an interest in British Horology that you would be willing to share we'd love to hear from you. We can help with the writing and preparation. We need your contribution.

Hoping to see you all in York and Columbia in July. Until then,

Cheerio

Bob

(Continued from page 1)

Apparently, the Connecticut firms New Haven and E. N. Welch supplied most of the English imported movements but all the larger makers including Seth Thomas and Ingraham participated to some extent. Upon arrival, the movements were cased in English-made cases by several clockmaking firms. It seems the largest or one of the largest was the London firm Holloway & Co., that was in business from 1845 to 1885. While the most common case design was drop dial wall clocks, bracket clocks, so often associated with British Horology, were also produced.

Clearly, England continued to produce high quality clocks that appealed to more affluent clients that included, for example, fusee skeleton clocks and bracket clocks. A bracket clock example, circa 1860-70 is shown in Figure 1 and features an exquisitely engraved silver dial. Interestingly, “Thomas Wilson & Co., Cockspur Street, London” the name and address prominently engraved on the dial, is listed in directories as gunsmiths. Apparently, they also retailed clocks, or, perhaps they exhibited this bracket clock at their premises to demonstrate their high-quality engraving skills to generate gun sales.

Figure 1: Mahogany 8-day time and strike fusee bracket clock. The intricate asymmetrical engraved silver dial is signed “Thos. Wilson & Co, Cockspur Street, London, No. 639.” Circa 1860’s. (author’s photographs)



Two other late bracket clocks are shown below in Figure 2. Both are well proportioned 8-day clocks with white dials, beveled glass and veneered cases. I wonder if you can tell which one is the Anglo-American example having a relatively cheaply made (imported) American movement?



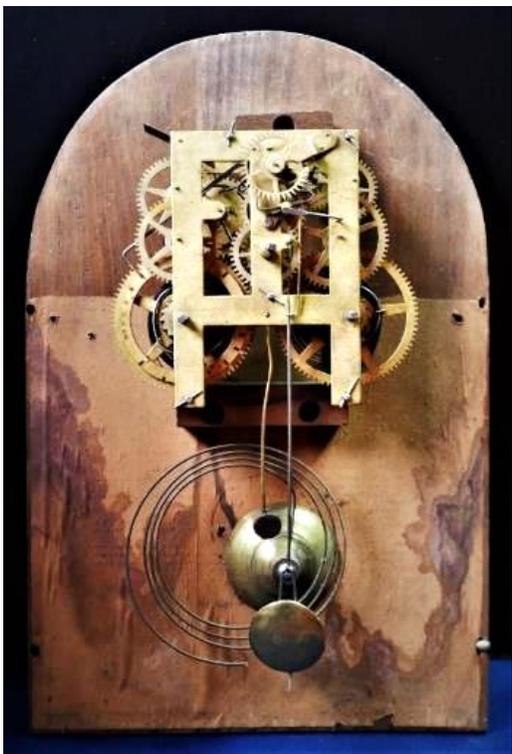
Figure 2: Two similar style 8-day bracket clocks. The time only example on the left has a mahogany veneer case with brass inlay. The time & strike example on the right has a burl walnut veneer case. Both cases were made in England. Which is the Anglo-American? (author's photographs)

Turning the clocks around to see the back of the cases answers the question quickly (Figure 3). The clock on the left, an all-English product, was retailed by King, Loddon (Norfolk). It features a well-made fusee and chain movement mounted on a seat board and has solid plates that appear to be twice as thick as the Anglo-American example. The Anglo-American clock, on the right in both Figures 2 and 3, was retailed by Holloway & Co., London. Its movement, shown in Figure 4, was likely made by Noah Pomeroy (as published in Research Activities and News by Snowden Taylor, NAWCC Bulletin, No. 341).

It is screwed to the backboard as one would expect in an American-made product at the time and has many other cost-saving design elements including relatively thin and cutout brass plates, exposed springs, count-wheel striking, and a simple pendulum bob that is accessed through a hole at the bottom of the case. The backboard is impressed with a stamp, "H&Co" under a crown, for Holloway & Co. of London, and a paper label is affixed to the inside but glued face down. One can just make out the words "Eagle Manufacturing, Portsoken" bleeding through that documents a connection of some kind with Holloway & Co. (Figure 4).



Figure 3: The back of the clocks shown in Figure 2. The English movement bracket clock is on the left (with open door). Its heavy movement is supported by a seat board. The Anglo-American is on the right; no need to spend money on a door. Its light-weight movement is screwed to the backboard and the pendulum is accessed through an aperture cut into the bottom of the case.



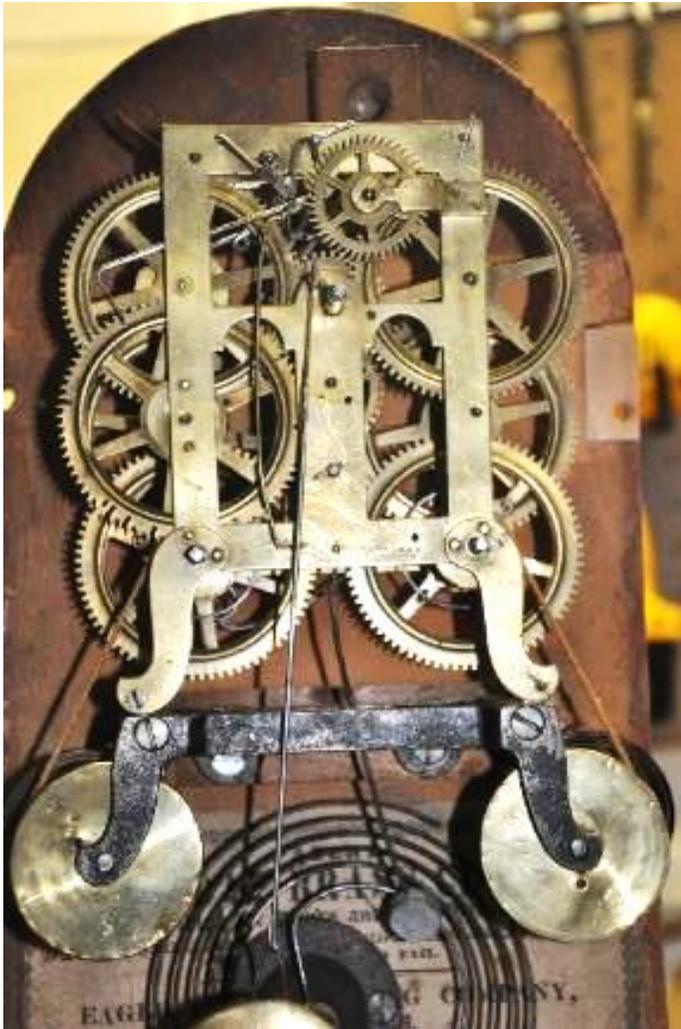
However, as owners of antique American clocks well know, these comparatively cheaply-made movements ran well and kept good time. And, that was the point - - attractive looking clocks were increasingly becoming affordable to English middle-class consumers who, for the first time, could even buy a traditional-looking bracket clock at a fraction of the normal price.

Figure 4: Noah Pomeroy (Bristol, Connecticut) time and strike movement and paper label of the Anglo-American example (author's photographs)

Figures 5 and 6 show another interesting Anglo-American shelf clock that features a burl case and fine striking fusee movement made by Chauncey Boardman (Bristol, Connecticut). The movement was patented January, 1847 according to a stamp on its front plate. It runs for 8-days and the clock was retailed in England by “Eagle Manufacturing Company, Port Soken, U.S.” Interestingly, there is a Portsoken in London, England but the identity of Port Soken, U.S. is a mystery. I should mention that it is unclear exactly who had an ownership stake, both in England and America, in the many partnerships that facilitated the Anglo-American trade. The label on this clock, that can’t be read without taking off the back board, promotes the clock’s “equalized springs and metallic lines.” The pendulum is accessed by a simple, clever swing-up door on the front of the case.



Figure 5: Retailed by Eagle Manufacturing Company, this Anglo-American shelf clock contains a high quality Chauncey Boardman fusee movement. The pendulum is accessed through a clever swing-up door on the front of the case. (courtesy British Horology Chapter member, Safwat Wahba).



The English clock making industry apparently did not envision or appreciate the opportunity that the growing middle class presented fast enough, and Connecticut makers who were investing in factories and equipment in America were quick to capitalize. Not only were their movement designs more cost-efficient to make and used less material, but their mass-production mind-set allowed them to relatively quickly respond to increased demand both domestically and abroad.

Interestingly, as the clock in Figure 5 and Figure 6 shows all too well, Anglo-American clocks attempted to not only appeal to the middle class but to a wide range of English buyers. ❀

Thanks to Safwat Wahba and Dennis Radage for contributing to this article.

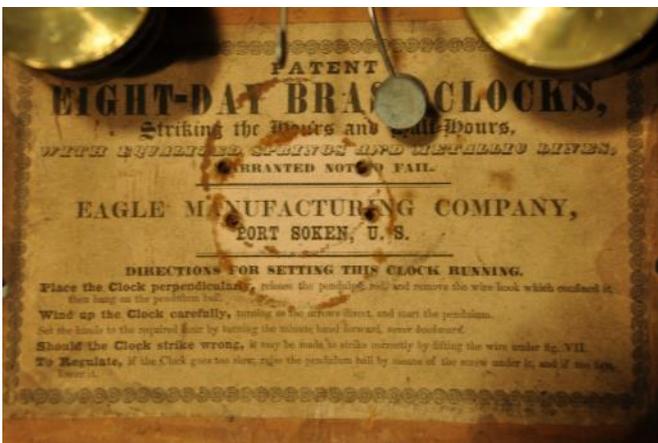


Figure 6: Additional pictures of the Anglo-American clock retailed by Eagle Manufacturing Company; the bell was removed in the bottom photograph to display the full label. (courtesy British Horology Chapter member, Safwat Wahba).