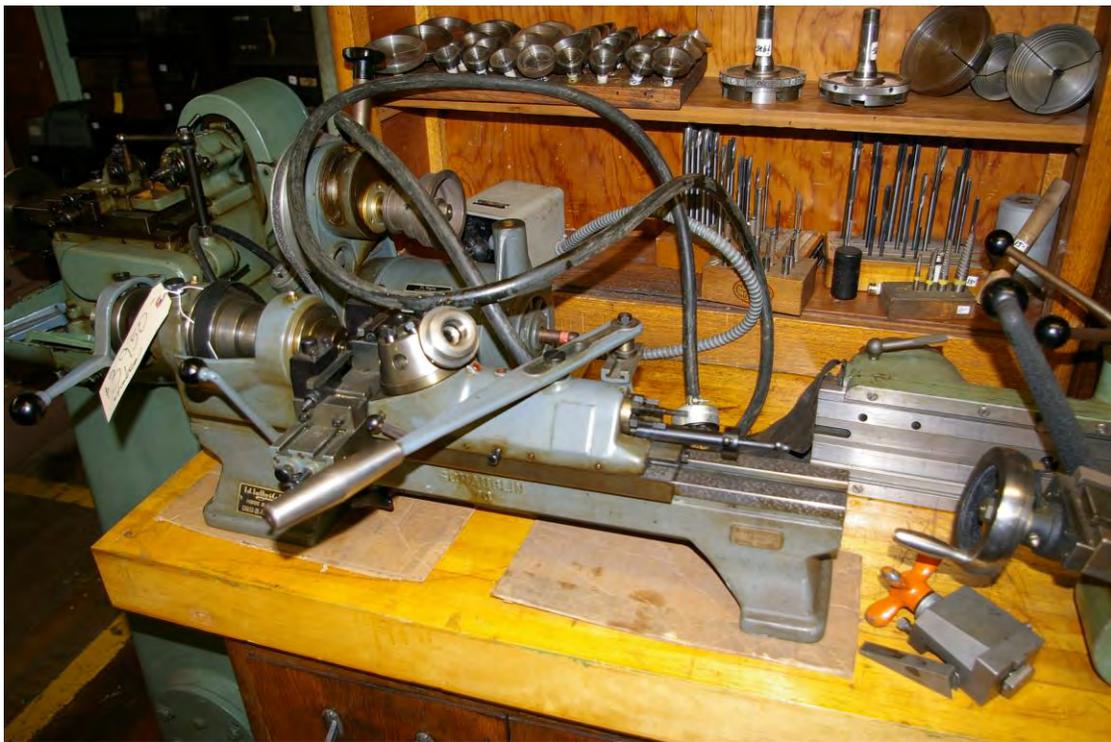


Newsletter of the Horological Tool Chapter #173 of the NAWCC

Tool Enthusiasts' Round-Up

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Upcoming Chapter Activities and Classified Ads



A Schaublin Model 70 Lathe

Summer 2015

No. 24

The Horological Tool Chapter of NAWCC

The Tool Enthusiasts' Round-Up is the newsletter of the Horological Tool Chapter #173 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors Inc., a non-profit educational organization. This chapter and its newsletter are intended to foster interaction among NAWCC members who share a common interest in the use and collection of horological tools of all sorts. If you have an item you have researched, a book of interest, or notes on a project you have made, please consider sharing your knowledge with others through the newsletter.

The annual chapter dues of \$10 will ensure that members receive the newsletter and are included in the Membership Directory when it is published. Members are also entitled to one classified ad in each issue.

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Dues are Due

Every year we ask members to fork over \$10 to keep the chapter going. This is a small amount considering the entertainment value of TER and the potential knowledge one can get from reading. We publish a wide variety of topics, that we hope appeals to you. This I think reflects the diversity of our membership who submit articles.

If your mailing label has this year printed on it, then it is time to pay again. A membership form was mailed with this issue, as well as a copy of the financial report. If you get your TER by email, we will mail you a bill, if you need to pay. This is another benefit of the email system. Remember, you can check a box in the membership form if you would like to transfer from snail mail to email moving forward.

Editor
Bruce Forman



A pantograph die grinder from the Harmon Estate Sale

The Harmon Estate Sale

Large horological tool collections are not sold every day. Sales of this type normally occur when a lifelong collector dies and his estate must be settled. The last big tool sale took place in 2010 when the Ted Crom estate sold a large collection of 18th and 19th Century horological tools at Skinners Auction Company. What the Ted Crom auction was for 18th and 19th century horological tool collectors, the Harmon Estate Sale was for collectors of watch factory tools from the 20th Century. The core of this collection appears to have been purchased by Dennis Harmon at the auction of the Bulova Watch Company. We can tell this because many of the machine tools and gauges were color coordinated with the familiar Bulova green factory paint. Some of the larger machines still had their cut power cords, severed when the machines were removed from the Bulova Watch Factory and never appear to have been reconnected. The condition of the tools ranged from fine condition to those removed from the production-line because of damage.



Figure 1. Some inspection gauges and presses from the Bulova Watch Factory.

If you were interested in buying factory watchmaking machine tools there was a Hauser pinion polisher, Lienhard engraving machine, snail spotting machine, Peterman screw cutting lathe, vertical lathe, Schaublin 120 VM toolmakers lathe, Schaublin 12 milling machine, Optima drill grinder, and a SIP optical comparator. Many of these larger machines were offered on-line before the sale with a high reserve price.



Figure 2. A gang drilling machine from the Bulova Watch Factory.



Figure 3. A what-is-it tool from the Bulova Watch Factory.



Figure 4. A Swiss Schaublin model 70 lathe with attachments.

Aside from the Bulova machinery, there were also machine tools Mr. Harmon picked-up at auctions and tool sales. There was a nice Schaublin model 70 lathe and many Schaublin attachments. The author had just purchased a Schaublin model 102 lathe and he was able to buy some of the tools he needed. Harmon collected all sorts of bits and pieces from Schaublin, Levin, and Derbyshire lathes. If you needed lathe parts you may have found something you needed but if you were looking for a complete lathe, you would have been disappointed.



Figure 5. Several tool grinding machines, some lacking parts.

Many of the more specialized machines came with a generous supply of tooling. A nice Hauser pinion polisher came with a wide assortment of original laps in all shapes and sizes and this made its selling price palatable. On the other hand, there were many specialized tools that lacked any tooling or were missing critical parts. These machines appeared to be priced as if they were complete and they remained unsold during the two days I spent at the sale.



Figure 6. A SAFAG gear cutter grinding machine (left) and a radius grinder (right).

The wide variety of machinery indicates that Dennis Harmon intended to have the capability to make any watch part he liked. He selected several key pieces of Bulova machinery from their jewel bearing making department for his shop. This included a centerless grinding machine, jewel drilling lathes, and laps. It does not appear that he actually used any of this equipment but, he had the best of intention of doing so in the future. If you wanted to start a business to make watch jewels, this sale was your chance to acquire the needed tools.

If jewel making is not your thing, how about starting a business to make commercial gear cutters? Harman had three SAFAG machines for this purpose. One was a backing-off tool to make constant profile cutters and a second machine was for making rotary file cutters for escape wheels. These are the same machines still used by P. P. Thornton to make their horological cutters. Neither machine was under power and the rotary file making machine appeared to be missing some parts. A third SAFAG machine was a new old stock grinding machine to

put the finished edge on the constant profile cutters made by the backing-off tool. Although a tempting business opportunity, making commercial grade cutters is a more complex task than it initially appears. Doing some simple math, the author figured he could purchase many sets of cutters from P. P. Thornton for the asking price of these machines.



Figure 7. A section of the shop with watch jewel drilling lathes.



Figure 8. A centerless grinding machine. Possibly for making round jewel blanks?



Figure 9. A SAFAG backing-off tool to make constant profile gear cutters.

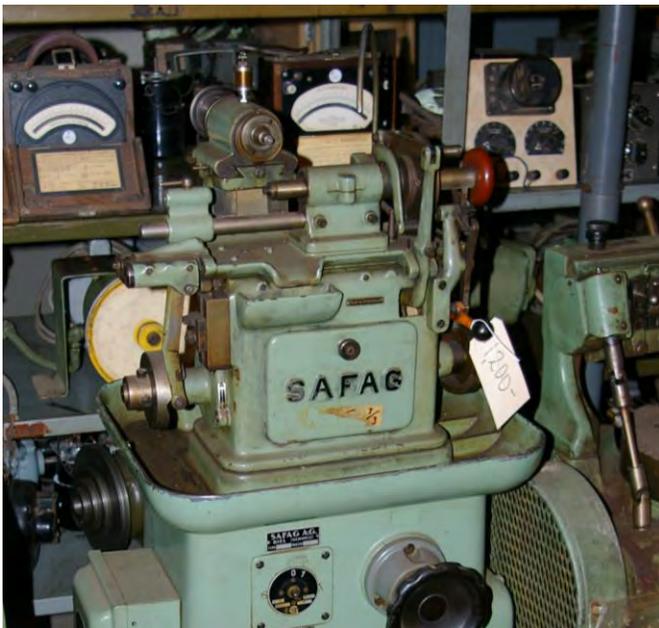


Figure 10, A SAFAG rotary file cutter making machine.



Figure 11. A portion of the shop contained a plating outfit purchased from Bulova.

During the sale I had an opportunity to talk to someone who knew Dennis Harmon. Apparently, he was a long time watchmaker and very skilled at making small parts. He reportedly restored a complicated minute repeating wristwatch that had lost a large portion of its movement. These parts he designed many times their original size. A pantograph die grinding machine was then used to reduce the design to the correct size and grind the parts from solid steel. The results were so good that the parts were reported to be indistinguishable from the original factory parts.

Harmon is known to have enjoyed repairing singing bird boxes and making just about any part imaginable for a watch. This is probably why he enjoyed buying and hoarding so many tools. So many in fact, that I understand it was virtually impossible to move around inside his shop. By the time of the sale, however, things had been cleaned up a bit. Several larger pieces of equipment and some of his tools had been sold privately or on the internet.

There were still tons of equipment left, including blacksmithing and silversmithing tools. Also, there were rolling mills, a heat treating plant, and electroplating equipment. Harmon allegedly purchased the Bulova plating department for only \$3,000 at auction. Unknown to the other bidders was that the precious metal anodes were housed in some cabinets along with the other plating equipment. The anodes were reportedly worth far more than the plating equipment he purchased.

The Harmon shop was located in Wolcott, Mass., on a small road flanked by brick industrial buildings. All the buildings are somewhat dilapidated and the Harmon shop looked almost abandoned when I arrived for the sale. The building was the size of a small machine shop and included a basement. The first floor was where his shop was located. The basement had a darkroom, a glass grinding room, and storage for his collection of electronic and machine parts.



Figure 12. The Harmon basement full of electronics and machine parts.

The Harmon Estate sale was held on-site, June 11-14, 2014. A long line of about 30 or 40 people had gathered before the public were allowed into the shop to purchase items. Someone had spent months before the sale to research and price every single item inside the building. On average, I thought everything had a strong retail price, i.e. what you would expect to pay from a horological tool dealer. Hence, my buying was limited to items that I really needed or rarely come up for sale. On day two of the sale, there was a 15% price reduction on all items and further reductions were promised over the days that followed.



Figure 13. Transfer printing equipment used to print small watch and clock dials.



Figure 14. Hairspring winding tools.

I suspect that there were a lot of local people who came back the last day of the sale, when a discount of 40% was given off the sale prices. However, even with this discount, many items did not sell and the family consigned what was left to the Cabin Fever Auction Company.

The author attended the Cabin Fever event this year. Cabin Fever is a large model engineer's show held in York, Pa.. The Friday before the event (April 10, 2015) there was a large tool auction with over 1,500 cataloged lots. Three auctions were going on at the same time and many of the lots were leftovers from the Harmon Estate Sale.

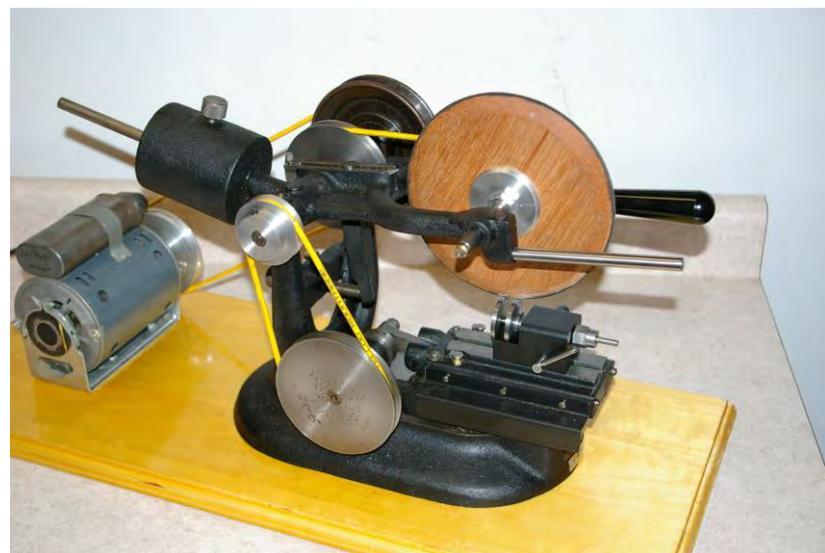
At auction, it appeared that all of the items brought far less than their asking price when offered at the Harmon Estate Sale. I think this reflects that some of the specialized "factory" tools are of little use to the average repairman and many of the tools Harmon had were not complete. In addition, the sheer quantity of material quickly saturated a small market which has already been influenced by a poor economy. Still, if you had a need for certain items there was a bargain or two to be had at the Harmon sales. This assumes that you did not include the cost of your time, plane ticket, car rental, hotel and meals.

Happy Tool Hunting!

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Barn Find

One of our members was looking for a pinion leaf polishing machine. While visiting a friend, he was told that the machine he was looking for was stored in a local barn; so, he went to take a look. It was not exactly the “dream machine” he was looking for. It looked more like a piece of the legendary Titanic than a watchmaking tool. Reluctantly, it was rescued from the barn and taken home for restoration. Below are the before and after pictures. Who reading this would have seen the potential? A brass plate was found attached to the machine indicating that it was purchased by the Hamilton Watch Company, in 1946.



Classified Advertisements

Wanted

Levin and Derbyshire headstock and tailstocks (lever feed) in 10 mm sizes, any condition, running or not. Also 10 mm Levin collets and other related equipment. M. L. Shetler, Watchmaker, 7676 Route 62, South Dayton, N. Y. 14138

Deckel, Aciera, Rivett, Schaublin, Lorch, Hardinge, Levin, lathe or mill accessories wanted. Will trade, or sell if I have duplicates. Mark Fulmer (330) 877-2021, Markusfu@hotmail.com

Derbyshire Elect model lathe attachments- pivot polisher, screw cutting attachment, roller file rest, and screw feed tailstock - will trade - for sale: tools from the Elgin watch factory, lathes, grinders, millers, etc...some made by American Watch Tool. J. Dill, 2117 22nd St. Road, Greeley, Co. 80631, Tel: 970-353-8561, jimdle@yahoo.com.

Antique Clock and Watchmaking Tools, Bruce Forman, 234 Eagle Ridge Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46385, (219) 763-4748, email: forman21@netzero.net will buy or trade.

For Sale

Now available on CD is a partial reprint of the A. C. Becken Company Catalogue. This catalogue is undated but is believed to have been printed in the early part of the 1900s. There is a lot of detailed information on watch and clockmaking tools. Please send a check for \$13 to Chapter #173 Secretary/Treasurer: Dave Kern, 5 Hilltop Drive, Manhasset, NY 11030

Waltham Thread Mill, \$650 and Waltham Spur Gear Cutter, \$650, the gear cutter headstock appears to take W15 collets. Mark Fulmer (330) 877-2021, Markusfu@hotmail.com

Ever wonder how watch jewels were made? Elgin Watch Factory Filmed the entire process and now it is available on CD. Send \$13 to Chapter 173 in care of Dave Kern, 5 Hilltop Drive, Manhasset, NY 11030, Email: dkern@optonline.net

Watch Pivot Polishing Machine, from Bulova Watch Factory, \$450, Bruce Forman, 234 Eagle Ridge Drive, Valparaiso, IN 46385, (219) 763-4748, email: forman21@netzero.net will sell or trade for antique tools I want but do not need.

Horological Tool Chapter 173, NAWCC
 Financial Comments
 Year Ended 6/30/15

Fiscal year ended 6/30/15 showed a net income of \$142 on Revenues of \$758. The year saw a mixture of cash flow timing and some different real experience. Revenues were lower due to lower Dues receipts, mostly timing of payments by Members and a drop off in CD revenue. Our biggest selling CD is the collection of reprinted Chapter Newsletters which many Members purchased in the past and by its very nature has a natural decline. Expenses for Newsletter publication is significantly lower due to both Members getting the Newsletter via Email rather than print and lower printing costs. Bruce has found less expensive ink sources while maintaining a high quality publication which I'm sure you will all agree with. Bruce continues to do the printing himself, no small effort. Anyone agreeable with Email delivery should switch allowing for both lower cost delivery and relieving Bruce of some dog work. Membership was down slightly from 103 to 99. We still have three CD's, the Newsletter Collection, the Becken Catalog and the Elgin Jewel Manufacturing video. The Newsletter is our main expense. 60% of the Member's Dues expire at 6/30/15 so we are counting on you to promptly remit your Dues for the new year. We are in sound financial condition with \$3,431 in cash, the Chapter's only asset. The cash basis operating statement simply shows cash in and out. Notionally, 99 Members paying their annual dues should give us enough revenue to cover 4 newsletters and about break even. Selling CD's helps also. Bruce is very resourceful in coming up with interesting articles and often seems to find interesting tool guys to write about. Of course, he still needs articles for the Newsletter so please continue to send them in. Any suggestions positive or otherwise are welcome. A summary of results of operations follows:

Respectfully,
 Dave Kern, Treasurer

Tool Chapter 173, NAWCC
 Operating Statement
 June 30, 2015

Cash Balance - June 30, 2014	<u>\$3,289</u>
Revenues	
Dues	\$670
CD Sales	88
Total Revenues	<u>\$758</u>
Expenses	
Newsletter costs	\$ 616
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 616</u>
Net Income	\$ <u>142</u>
Cash Balance - June 30, 2015	<u>\$3,431</u>