

An Interview with Howard Banta

By Mike Wilson

When Howard Banta Started collecting clocks over 40 years ago, he worked delivering bread and baked goods



Seth Thomas Drum Alarm, last patent date 9/9/1879. Brooks Palmer "Book of American Clocks", page 276 shows one, the second hand is different than the one shown here. Which is the original? The hands are in

the shape of snare drum sticks. Two of these clocks are in Southern California, one somewhere on the East Coast and the one in the book for a total of four. Says Howard "If anybody knows of more I would like to hear about it. I have no clue about how many were made but think the production was very small. The detail on the clock is outstanding."

From the H. Banta Collection



This Seth Thomas Anvil Alarm, circa 1890/1900, is animated. To have it work properly the time/ alarm have to be wound. When the alarm rings the man starts pounding on the anvil until the alarm spring runs down (no shut-off). "I haven't seen it but have been told there are two types, the

man faces left and the man faces right. There are no patent dates on this clock and I think that I have seen only about 6 or 8 in all the years I have been collecting clocks" says Howard.

From the H. Banta Collection



father clocks after which he decided to down-size to miniatures. In about 1965 he finally found his true interest - alarm clocks.

Howard was an officer and founding member of the San Fernando Valley Chapter #75 and was a National Director from 1977-1981. Members of the board would have council meetings and everyone always wanted to see the host's collections. It was during one of these visits Howard noticed what would come to be the start of his new-found alarm clock collection.

Alarm Clock Chapter : Annual Dues \$15.00
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The owner of an alarm collection numbering approximately 30, had lost interest in them. He found a willing, inter-

ested buyer in Howard. Over the years, the collection has grown to over 300 alarm clocks many of which were bought at garage sales before the advent of eBay. Now, he is always looking for the unusual, and rare piece to add to his collection of alarms manufactured between 1870 and 1936.



The Parker Clock Co., Meriden CT. This Parker is much different from the other ACTO alarms. The case is cast instead of being pressed and is very heavy. The last patent date is 12/27/1903. It has a round bell on the back, shut off, alarm and silent-

switch on the back. The dial is black and gold. Parker was a prosperous business and when he started making alarms and closed the clock operation in late 1936. His other items included flat ware, coffee grinders, piano stools, very ornate oil hanging lamps and his world famous shot guns. One of his shotguns was on eBay about 2 years ago and it went off at \$4,000/\$5,000. No relation to Parker Pen Co.



From the H. Banta Collection

The most common questions he and we as alarm clock collectors face are:

Why would you want to collect alarm clocks... all they do is get you up in the morning?



Says H. Banta "I believe this clock and its companion with the white dial were the biggest sellers of the Seth Thomas line of alarms. Its well made, with a rugged case and loud bell. The alarm key was marked (I don't know why) that you had to wind both sides every night for it to be reliable. The black dial version has brass time

hands as well as alarm and second hands. Even the dial numbers are brass. The Tran Duy Ly Seth Thomas book shows and "Echo" being produced in 1886-1910, but it has no alarm shut-off. The white dial version has black hands for every function. Mass production by Westclox soon eliminated the market for these clocks."



From the H. Banta Collection

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Howard Banta - Alarm clock enthusiast and founder of the NAWCC's chapter #178 for Alarm clock Enthusiasts. Howard is the current president the chapter.

Part of Howard's large collection is shown throughout this newsletter. The collection includes pieces manufactured between 1870 and 1936.

OR

Isn't it true that alarm clocks are all just the "Big Bens"?

Howards' response is

"We have an uphill battle to inform the watch and clock collector and the public about alarm clocks and their place in the world". Howard states his philosophy as

"Clock collection, specifically Alarm Clocks, does not have to be a rich man's hobby."

You can start collecting alarm clocks costing from a very few to many thousands of dollars. Most of all, you can have a wonderful time in the process and meet and share with other collectors.

-- Mike Wilson --



The Alarm clock Chapter is beginning a new year with a novice editor - any and all suggestions are greatly appreciated.

- 1 Any articles about alarm clock hairsprings (how to straighten, replace and manage them) would be of interest.
- 2 Any articles specific to a particular manufacturer, design or mechanics are of interest.
- 3 Any tips on cleaning, repair, conservation and restoration are of interest.
- 4 Any items desired to sell or purchase will be listed in the following issue. Include as much information as possible, a photo in the case of a sale would be great.
- 5 Any 'time related' jingles to go in our quote box.

In summary - any contributions are gladly reviewed. Again, being new to newsletter editing, apologies in advance for errors and oversights.

-The Editor









