

# The Howard Banta Alarm Clock Chapter



Chapter 178 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors

[www.acc178.org](http://www.acc178.org)

2009 Volume 1



**What you say, a new president has been elected?**

Yes its true.

In this issue, the HBACC is pleased to announce a new president.

We're very pleased to welcome back Roger Royal with another of his poems with an alarm persuasion.

In addition, DK Stevenson's article on Mager alarms is a welcome addition to this issue.

And Vince Angell has another in his series on Darche Alarms.

## Dues Due

It's that time again. To ensure uninterrupted newsletters mail your dues (\$15.00) in the envelope enclosed to our Treasurer Mike Wilson.

Mike Wilson  
15508 East Chaparral Way  
Fountain Hills, Arizona 85268

Happiness isn't in getting what you want,  
it's in wanting what you got.

Author Unkown.

Thank you Sis

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**President's Corner**



**NEW CHAPTER 178 PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTORY LETTER**

Since it is impractical to meet all of you in person I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

I am a thirty year plus member of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, member number 58276. In that time I have served in many different offices at local chapters including at various times President, vice-President, Membership chair, Director at large, librarian and Treasurer. In addition I was the co-Chair for the 2002 National and currently am a candidate for NAWCC Director.

In 1977 while canvassing a local antique shop for old clocks that needed repair the owners asked me if I was a member of the Association. My immediate response was what Association. That was how I became aware of the NAWCC and immediately joined. Shortly after that at a meeting of Chapter 69 I spotted an early Big Ben alarm clock on one of the vender's tables. My grandmother had one of these when I was growing up and it was something I felt I really had to have. This was my introduction to alarm clocks as collectible items and particularly Western Clock Company (Westclox) clocks. Being a novice I thought it would be cool to collect an example of every model alarm made by Westclox. Well as you can image it didn't take long for me to come to the conclusion that it was an impossible task and it was best to just settle for what I could find that was different. This has been my practice since and now I roam the marts looking for that special Westclox which I have not seen before. Of course along the way I have collected other various styles of clocks and even some few watches. Our house, much like many of yours I'm sure, has clocks in every room and the tic-toc, chime and strike of multiple clocks fills out days and nights with joy. I would classify myself a generalist instead of a specific type collector. That doesn't mean I love my alarms less just put them in their place. My passion leans toward the repair side. The projects one sees on mart tables always catches my attention and the pieces I prize most are the ones I have saved from the trash bin.

That is enough about me however. What is happening at Chapter 178 and where is it going in the future? As of this date; February 18,

**Sell it Through the Newsletter**

Every member may submit one ad per newsletter. This includes a *Wanted to Buy* or *Wanted to Sell*. The newsletter comes out at the beginning of March, June, September and December.

**Author Instructions**



All are encouraged to submit articles for publication in the *Alarm Clock Chapter* newsletter. Please include your name, address and phone number with the article. Although certainly not a complete list, suggestions for topics are:

Although certainly not a complete list, suggestions for topics are:

- Specific alarm clocks or manufacturers
- Unique design - movement or case
- Special methods of cleaning
- Descriptions of interesting repairs
- History of a manufacturer
- Helpful tips on repair

Photos along with the text are always appreciated. Please email to the editor at:

saraandmary@sbcglobal.net

or send article on computer disk (MS Word) via snail mail

Mary Maier  
 530 Staples Avenue  
 San Francisco, CA 94112

Images of GLAR 2009



Member Bill Triska examining an unusual alarm clock at GLAR.



David Lindquist displays The History of Westclox in this fabulous display. He has new ideas for his display in 2010 - Watch for it.



Phyllis Angell getting the HBACC Alarm Clock Display ready before the Convention starts.



Treasurer Mike Wilson - New President Bob Linkenhoker - Past President Vince Angell



HBACC members Nile Godfrey, Cinde Godfrey and Chip Kumparak



Member Charlie Schubert and Phyllis Angell posing for the camera..

Continued from Page 2 - President's Corner

2009, we have fifty-two who have renewed their membership for this year. The Greater Los Angeles Regional this year was held on February 5-7, 2009. Both Vince Angell and David Lindquist had mart tables with extensive and impressive alarm displays. Vince has a large banner with the chapter logo and name which he puts up at his tables at every event he attends. This is quite an eye catcher and attracts many new members. At the National we will have a chapter meeting. If you come to Grand Rapids be sure and attend the meeting I would love to meet and have a talk with as many of you as possible. The program I plan for the National meeting is titled "The Joys of Alarm Clock Collecting" and will feature a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of some members unusual or prized pieces. Hopefully those in attendance will share some of their own collecting experiences also. Mary Maier has assured me she will continue to publish our excellent newsletter even though she has a very busy schedule. I believe this is one of the finest newsletters in the NAWCC. Mike Wilson will continue to be our treasurer and keep the records of membership. Hopefully those that have contributed articles to the newsletter in the past will continue to do so and other members will share their repair tips and unusual experiences while hunting for that must have clock.

Finally if you see me at any of our events please come up and introduce yourself.

Bob Linkenhoker



Member Jim Gilmore almost ready for the crowds to buy his wares.

## Never the Last

by Vince Angell

As most of you know, I collect a variety of alarm clocks but my passion has been to concentrate on the unusual. This passion started my collecting of Darche Manufacturing Clock Company clocks.

I have written a few articles on Darche and, as recently as last year, wrote an article for the HBACC Newsletter on my find of an alarm clock that I had never seen. After collecting Darches for many years I thought that I had seen all the models in person or at least in catalogs.

Well, I should have known. Again I found one that I had never seen. As you can see by the scan from a catalog, this is very similar to the clock that I recently purchased but with major differences.

My new model is similar to the "Ringer" but has a much different look. The only things they both have are the external bell and the alarm clock on top of the box that holds the battery that powers the external bell.

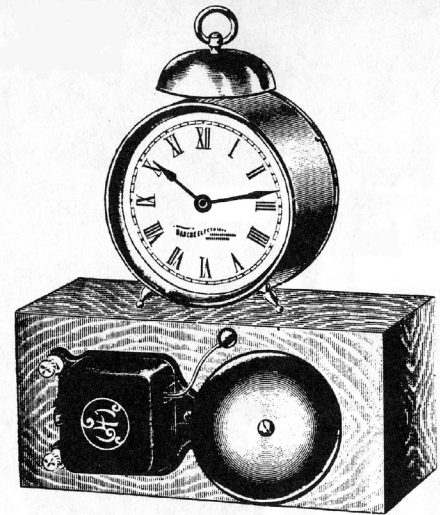
The differences are that mine has an oak case and not the mahogany one shown in the catalog, a more ornate base to the clock where it attaches to the box, and more importantly the material that surrounds the oak case as a decoration is a material known as Gutta Percha. Gutta Percha is a material from the mid 1850's that was used not only for decorations but had many other applications. It was produced from the sap of trees in Southeast Asia. It was used to insulate telegraph wire, was the center core of golf balls which revolutionized the game and within the 20<sup>th</sup> century was used in dentistry for filling and packing of the teeth after root canal therapy.

I am sure that this recent purchase does not complete my collection of Darches for as we all know we would not be collectors if we had all models of a certain alarm clock.

As I always say "it is the hunt that keeps us going". It is what we collectors cherish.

If you are interested in more information on the Darche Manufacturing Clock Company you can see a short article and picture on the internet at:

<http://www.acc178.org/a/darche/index.html>



### *"Ringer"*

Finished in mahogany.

Size — height, 9½ inches; width, 4½ inches; length, 8 inches.



**For Sale**

Westclox Big/Baby Ben Alarm Clocks

Most of the 1920's/1930's vintage clocks have been disassembled down to the motor. All motors are still assembled. Parts are mostly complete within each of the clock's plastic boxes to assemble a complete clock.

There are approximately 25 clocks and I would like to sell them all as a lot. I am asking \$150 + actual shipping cost from Eugene Oregon.

Will send pictures and greater detail upon request.

TOM ROGERS

trogers1@clearwire.net EMAIL ADDRESS  
541-343-3669 HOME PHONE

**For Sale**

About 50 alarm clocks for collecting and parts.

All for one price  
Contact Fred Adams at:  
fjadams1@yahoo.com



**Corner**

Poet's

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

By

Roger Royal

It's spring, and now  
the weather's fine  
It's also daylight  
savings time.

A time to go out  
in the yard  
to work and play  
but not too hard.

A time to do your  
Spring time chores  
and frolic in the  
out of doors.

But there's one chore  
that ain't much fun  
and you'll be tired  
when you are done.

You're going to have to  
take your knocks  
and change the time  
on all your clocks.

## THE MIGHTY MAGER ALARM

© DK Stevenson (USA)

[dstevenson17@cox.net](mailto:d Stevenson17@cox.net)

This second part of the series on Black Forest picture-frame clocks deals with a so-called *Mager-Wecker*, a robust wooden-plate alarm movement that lurks behind a painting of a romanticized landscape.

Mager alarms have been somewhat mysterious in that although Mager is almost certainly a surname, from whence the clock cometh hasn't been clear. A Mager that made alarms doesn't show up in standard German references to clockmakers and clockmaking. There's also a nominal irony in the name since *mager* can mean 'thin, lean, or meagre' yet a Mager-Wecker is anything but.

To get a feeling for the size of the clock, we can refer to the one that I bought at the local auction mentioned in the first part of this series — where the clocks had been stored in a barn in the Arizona desert heat for 30 years. The previously



Figure 1

published illustrations of Mager alarms I've been able to find only show the dial front, and not the movement. As a result, more and more complete views are

This article appeared as the second part of a three-part series on Black Forest picture-frame clocks in the April 2007 issue of *CLOCKS Magazine*. Reprinted by permission.)



Figure 2

provided here.

**Figures 1 through 9** show the clock as found. The painting on a sheet of zinc, whereby the more detailed top half was applied through a printing process and the bottom half brushed in, was not in bad shape. Interestingly, the smearing of the numerals near VI, VII and VIII was under a coat of varnish, **Figure 2**. There was some small flaking east of the II.

By contrast, the nasty bit to the right of the III-to-IV arc was quite recent and clearly vandalism. Someone had taken a penknife and scraped the paint off down to the metal in order to see...well, what? If the paint would flake off? If there was wood underneath? If someone had misplaced a Dürer engraving plate?

The more natural and understandable wear wasn't that bad, all considered. What there was of rust and corrosion was under the dust, **Figure 5**. This was an indication that it stemmed from when the clock was still where rain is not an exciting change of weatherly pace. When puddles form hereabouts they appear on the local TV news.

The back of the sheet-brass pendulum bob has a small '14' on it, **Figure 8**. The number is also on the frame, the back board, and on all parts that might be packed separately for shipment, including the alarm work in front. File marks from handwork are still visible on the back of the half-moon shaped, 48cm rod. The front side had been polished.

**Figure 9** shows the heavy alarm-setting disk which, with the hour hand riveted to it, is a first-glance marker of a Mager alarm. The disk is not the thin brass that is often found pressed over a wood core on older Black Forest shield-type alarms. Nor is it like the just-thick-enough disks on later American and

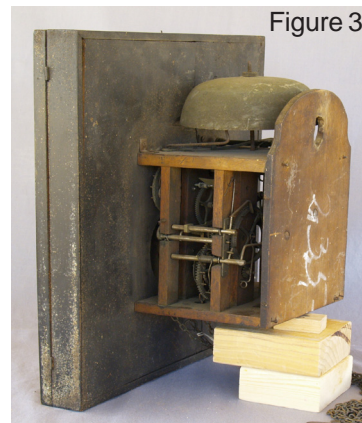


Figure 3



Figure 4

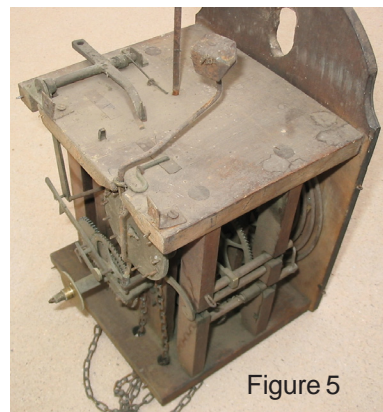


Figure 5

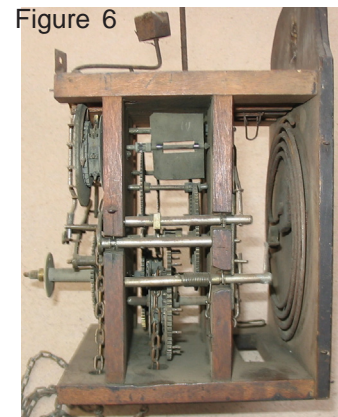


Figure 6

Figure 7



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Black Forest factory-made clocks. The Mager's disk is fully 6cm in diameter and 2mm thick.

If you look carefully you can see that the '5' on the disk had been bungled by someone when stamped. Part of a lighter '6' is still visible. I think of such errors as 'burp marks', done after lunch and a brew or two by a weary but cheery apprentice.

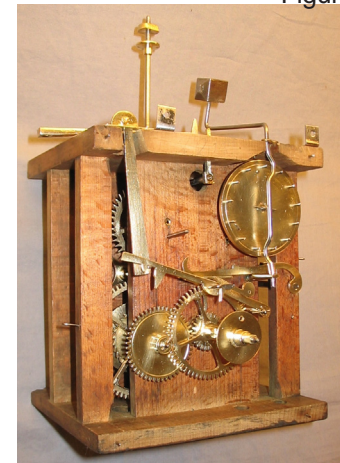
My own interest in the Mager-Wecker was first roused by a full-page illustration in Gerd Bender's (1998, 4th edition) *Die Uhrenmacher des hohen Schwarzwaldes und ihre Werke, Band I* (page 413). It is reprinted here through the kind permission of Herr Bender, **Figure 10**. I never came across a Mager when in Germany, and was surprised to see one here in the American West.

In the Bender example the name **Mager-Wecker** (the M and the W as here in a bold font) appears just above the distinctive alarm disk. Some Mager-Weckers are so identified, some have just 'Mager' and some have no identifying marks, but why this is so I don't know. It can be assumed that the minute hand, which doesn't match the hour as it does on 'ours', is not the original. Bender dates the clock, which was in a private collection, to about 1870.

Another Mager-Wecker received a full-page colour photograph in Wolfgang Heck and Wolfram Metzger's (1995) *Und ewig ticken die Wälder: Uhren aus Schwarzwaldstüben*, the very well-done, 225+ page catalogue to a special exhibition by the Badisches Landesmuseum. The volume was dedicated, by the way, to Herr Bender.

This example has a painting that has detail in both its top and bottom halves. It shows a Burgenland (*ie* Austrian) landscape, and is described as a '*Hinter Glas Abziehbild*', a transfer type picture that was applied to the back of the glass. The clock's hands are of the same design as ours and matching. In what is surely an understatement, the caption notes the '*besonders kräftiger Wecker*', the especially powerful alarm.

Figure 14



Please look now at the Mager shown in Figure 11. Although these are young paragraphs yet when it comes to Mager alarms, it might already look familiar. Yes, it's the same clock, in colour, that is shown in Figure 10.

The clock had been part of the collection of Hugo Maier of Furtwangen, and was sold at auction in December 2002 after he passed away. I'm grateful to the Auktionshaus Michael Zeller, of Lindau im Bodensee (<http://www.zeller.de>) for allowing the photograph from their on-line catalogue to be reproduced here.

The clock went for a respectable 990 euros, about £630 or \$1000 at that time. The Mager in Figure 1 didn't reach that level at the auction here in Arizona, but then again, one could hope that a Mager alarm wouldn't attract as much attention at a local auction on the 'left' side of America.

What is most interesting about the

Mager movement is not how the alarm works. As Berthold Schaaf points out (personal communication) it is reminiscent of the

Stiftenwecker, the 'pin' alarms of the older iron and wooden-wheeled clocks. Rather, it is how solidly the movement was built.

Of all the wood-plate Black Forest movements I've seen or handled, from the smallest through to the well-built 8-day weight-driven movement of a Lorenz Bob (we'll leave wood-framed tower clocks out of this) it is the most solidly constructed. Moreover, it is heavier in some parts and ways than it needed to be functionally.

The alarm-setting disk for example had to be somewhat thick because each of the little holes was threaded to take the threaded brass-headed setting pin. The bell on top is larger than normal for a Black Forest clock at 13cm in diameter and about 5cm high. But then it is also abnormally effective. That the 'wire' gong on the backboard is more of a spiralled rod, and boldly bongs where few clocks have bonged before, can also be explained by a form and function fit.

But it's hard to justify other parts on functional grounds. There's that other thick disk for instance, also just over 2mm, that takes the pins that wag the alarm hammer rod, and it was turned from one cast piece. There's the heaviness of the cross-like piece up

Figure 15



Figure 16

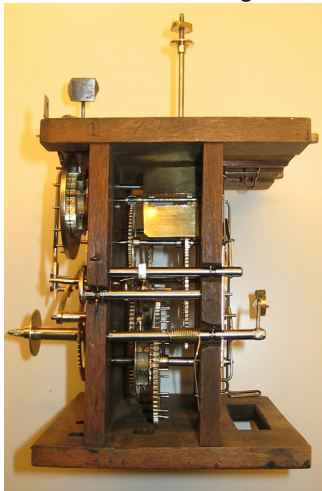


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



on top, and the two cast-brass pieces in which it is mounted, Figure 5. Overall there's a surprising amount of heavy metal in this wood-framed alarm, with Figure 12 showing all that came out before cleaning.

The movement's beech frame, Figures 13 had to be strong enough to support not only the weight of the 37.3cm by 31.5cm 'shield' dial with its wood frame, glassed-in door, and metal-backed painting. It had to be sturdy enough so that it wouldn't sag under the three weights. The total of the weights which allowed it to go, strike and alarm easily after the movement was cleaned is 2.7kg, about 6 pounds.

The movement frame's height of 16.6cm, width of 15.2cm, and depth of 13.5 are close to the movement-frame measurements of a 12-hour, side-by-side train so-called Normaluhr, one of the types that they tried (and failed) to standardize. The top plate's thickness of 12mm however is closer to that of the larger 8-day movements. Notice the '14' stamped into the front edge of the top plate.

The beech frame also had to be sturdy because it was going to be literally jerked about while doing its duty. By for instance the grouchy railway station clerk who was 'only resting his eyes' when it clanged off, and who then yanked down on the alarm chain in revenge when resetting it. And by the less aggressive who would be pulling down on the chains of the wall-hung movement day-in and day-out, year after year.

Just before I cleaned the clock I ran across a tip in a late-1870s German clockmaker's journal, the *Allgemeines Journal der Uhrmacherskunst*, about how to clean these wooden-plate Black Forest movements. It was sent in by a Meister, who'd certainly be older and wiser were he alive today, and I was eager to learn his method. Alas, he was a dunker of yore. He poured Benzine into a metal bucket, sloshed the movement about, ran string through the pivot holes and that was disappointingly that.

By contrast, my own picky-picky approaches seem prissy. They are not appropriate, needless to say, for those





Figure 20

who are unable to invest the time and effort and still turn a profit. Nor for those who set the level of their work to a clock's status. The movement however did come out fairly well as seen in Figures 14 to 21.

As a personal preference, and not as a question of a clock's quality, I enjoy seeing traces of how someone worked on a clock, as opposed to a machine. A prejudice for mensch-made as opposed to machine-made is romantic if not just naïve, but there it is. Some of the framemaker's marking-out score lines, for instance, can be clearly seen in Figure 18.

Another matter of taste is how clean brass and steel and old stained wood all seem to glow so well with one another, Figure 19.

Less an individual taste – in fact something we all hope for — is that kick that comes when a clock is finally put back together, it's clean and weight-cocked, its pendulum is given a push, and it actually runs as it should, Figures 20 and 21. In this case however, although I was pleased that the Mager-Wecker really did work well as an alarm, there was cause for family complaint.

It is the loudest most demanding alarm I have ever heard. It would deafen the quick and roust the dead. One shouldn't exaggerate. But every Dalmatian from here to Mexico sprang to his paws when that alarm bell rang, eyes wild, and ready to run with the horses, hook & ladder. In short, we've agreed (haven't we) to leave that little alarm pin out.

As mentioned at the beginning, who the Mager was that made or sold these Mager alarms has been a bit of a mystery. Herr Bender for example wasn't aware of any information (personal communication) about him or them. And although the standard reference Meister der Uhrmacherkunst listed one Mager, he'd been a maker of chronometers.

There are no Magers among the over 2,000 firms listed in Hans-Heinrich Schmid's superb Lexikon der Deutschen Uhrenindustrie 1850-1980. An MW trademark that's listed, the M over the W, was for the Metallwerker GmbH.

The entire clock does look very Schwarzwaldish, so to speak, yet there's not a Mager among the over 3,000 names in Berthold Schaaf's listings in the Appendix of his Schwarzwalduhren. Herr Schaaf believed that the Mager-Wecker had been sold from Munich, and perhaps even built there (personal communication).

Nor was there a Mager among the some 3,000 firms in the 1904 Adreßbuch für die deutsche Uhren- und Mech. Musikwerke-Industrie, which has been copied onto a CD through the good works of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Chronometrie's Library. So I started to search through the 160-page list of clockmakers. There are some 15,000 clockmakers (who were active in 1904) listed by town or city, starting with Aachen, Aalen, Abbach, Abbehausen and Abbenberg, and ending with Zwiefalten, Zwiesel, Zwischenahn, Zwönitz and Zwätzen an der Elster.

There were no Magers in Munich, which of course meant nothing. One could have been and gone, or be in a small village just outside. Then, having gone through the 160 pages of small-print names without sighting a Mager anywhere – however thin, lean or meagre — I realized that twixt Aachen and Zwätzen I could have easily missed one. Which as it turns out I had, Figure 22.

Finally finding our Mager of the Wecker however came through the magic of the Internet, or more precisely, through Googling. A simple search with 'Mager-Wecker' turned up only a single 'hit', to a genealogical website. But goodness, there was an English translation of a detailed family



Figure 21

Eichstätt, Bayern (7800 E.),  
 Koller, Gg.  
 \*Bauer, Wilhelm (1856), (7. 8. 2. 3.)  
 \*Mager, H. (1862), (5.)  
 \*Müller, Otto (1866), (2.)  
 \*Zinglwälder, Euseb (1876), (1. 4. 7.)

Figure 22

Figure 23



Figure 24

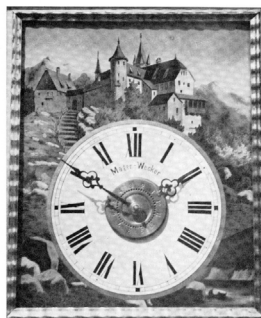


Figure 25

The author's text in the original article appeared in Figure 25. Here the text appears on the previous pages.

Figure 26

**Beachtenswerth!**  
**J. G. Mager & Sohn**  
 zeigen an, daß sie gegenwärtige Dialekt nicht bes  
 ziehen, sondern daß in ihrer Wohnung (eben  
 maligen Söterbrühlstraße) alle Stadtungen Waren  
 zu haben sind; selbe machen noch besonders auf  
 ihre Weckeruhren, ganz eigener und höherer  
 Construction aufmerksam; alle Uhren werden  
 gegen Zahlung angenommen, wie auch repar  
 rirt.

Figure 27



Figure 28

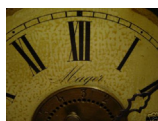


Figure 30

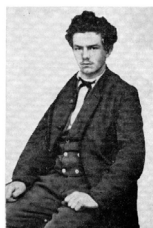


Figure 29



chronicle from 1935 written by Dr Ewart Mager, and expanded in 1972, called Das Mager-Buch. Among all was a photo of a Mager-Wecker dial, Figure 23.

Our alarm Mager we discover in the second volume was Johann Baptist Mager (1818-1873), the youngest son of Andreas Mager (1777-1839) of Zepfenhan. Zepfenhan is today part of Rottweil which – as nicely fits a clock-making Mager – is along the Deutsche Uhrenstraße, the German Clock Route in the Black Forest.

There's little said in the on-line translations about how Johann Baptist Mager learned his trade. Rather, there's an ink-sketch by the artist Bruno Schley (1895-1965), Figure 24, one of several said to have been commissioned by Johann Sebastian's son, Franz Xaver Eduard Mager (1843-1910). According to the caption, it shows Johann Baptist Mager setting out 'into the countryside from the Eagle Inn [Gasthaus Adler?] the residence of his mentor in Furtwangen-Katzensteig'.

It would be nice to know who Johann Baptist's Meister was, but as there were some 20 clockmakers and clock traders listed in an 1841 Furtwangen survey as in Katzensteig, it would be difficult to identify him without further information. Das Mager-Buch however does give quite a bit of information about Johann Baptist and his clock-making sons. Some of the most relevant information is brought together and quoted here through the kind permission of Mr Joseph Martin Zellner, Figure 25.

An advertisement for JB Mager & Sohn from between 1862 and 1865 is shown in Figure 26. All types of clocks are available, but they would draw special attention to the Weckeruhren, 'the alarm clocks of their own reliable construction'.

Just like that H Mager in Eichstätt listing in the 1904 Adreßbuch that seemed obvious once I went back and looked for it there, Mager clocks now seem to be more common. A quite different looking picture-frame Mager-Wecker, Figures 27 and 28, recently turned up on the German eBay for instance

Another Mager-Wecker had somehow made it to Chicago. It was in a fire there, was sold without its picture-frame frame to a friend in Ohio, who then sold it at the NAWCC Convention in Cleveland to a fellow from Canada. Who kindly sent this photograph to me of the frame he's fit to the dial, Figure 29. Because when I was sitting at that friend's table, I'd finally realised that the painting is the same as the one on my clock, Figure 1.

Which brings us round to where we started. Except that the clock has become personalized because of the information I now have about the Magers who made it. It's not everyday that you find a picture of someone who worked on a picture-frame clock, but there he is, Franz Xaver Eduard Mager, that lean young man in Figure 30.

Acknowledgements

In addition to those mentioned in the text, I would like to thank 'Bayerischerholzwurm' for permission to reproduce his eBay photographs, John Farnan for the picture of his reframed Mager, and Gary W. Marklund for his photos of the unrestored clock.