

2010 Volume 2  
June 2010

The Howard Banta Alarm  
Clock Chapter NAWCC

# *The Howard Banta Alarm Clock Chapter*



*Chapter 178 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors*

**IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE SO YET!!!  
ITS TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN CHAPTER 178**

Look for the renewal form in this newsletter and return it to Treasurer Mike Wilson along with a check for \$15.

## **Editor for the newsletter**

Mary Maier has done a fantastic job of publishing the newsletter for our chapter for many years. Personal and professional duties however required that she give up this job. I have agreed to take on the task in the interim but my duties require that I not make a long term commitment.

With this in mind we need a member to volunteer to step forward. I can offer some guidance and I'm sure Mary will give a hand as her time permits.

If you can help in this important job please contact me at [rlink3@juno.com](mailto:rlink3@juno.com).



Entrance to the Burritt Museum in Birmingham, Alabama. See the article and pictures of the clock display from this summer. Any one knowing of a similar event please contact me with the information so it can be included in future issues.

Chapter 178 Member Lee Powers has sent information on a display at the Burritt Museum in Huntsville Alabama titled **"TIMEKEEPING THROUGH THE CENTURIES"**.

The Huntsville Chapter (Chapter 61) of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors (NAWCC) has showcased a collection of antique clocks and watches for Burritt Mansion's summer exhibit. On display were wall clocks, mantle clocks, and a circa 1900 American electric clock and of more interest to our membership the display included 14 alarm clocks made by Westclox and one from each of Ansonia, Waterbury, New Haven, Friedrich Mauthe and Zenith.

**The exhibit ran from April 30 through August 15**

More information may be obtained from their website at [www.burrittonthemountain.com](http://www.burrittonthemountain.com)  
There is an article with pictures in this issue of the newsletter starting on page 3.

## Officers and Contacts

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## 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's newsletter. Please include your name, address, e-mail address and phone number with the article. Although certainly not a complete list suggestion of topics are:

- \* Specific alarm clocks or manufacturers
- \* unique design- movement or case
- \* Special methods of cleaning
- \* Descriptions of interesting repairs
- \* History of manufacturers
- \* Helpful tips on repair

Photos along with the text are always appreciated. Please e-mail to the editor at:

Rlink3@juno.com

Or send article on computer disk (MS Word) via snail mail to:

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## President's Corner

### President's Letter for June 2010

The National Convention was in York Pennsylvania this year. Since I didn't know whether it would be possible from me to attend till three months before the event no chapter meeting was scheduled. I did however get to see Chapter 178 members Gayle and Cindy Loos, Charlie and Annie Banks and Kim and Chris StDennis. I'm sure other members were in attendance but I don't remember seeing them.

I will be sure and schedule a meeting for the next National in Overland Park, Kansas though. Also if enough of our members will be at the 2011 Greater Los Angeles Regional in February I will have a meeting setup. Please contact me if you plan on attending this regional.

On another note, and I can't emphasize this enough we are in desperate need of a newsletter editor, if you can help out with this vital function please contact me by phone or e-mail. My number is 951-898-5825 and e-mail is rlink3@juno.com. This is an important job as being a special interest Chapter with no geographical area it is the main contact we have with each other.

We are always in need of material for the newsletter. If you send something and it isn't in the next letter it has probably been saved for a future one, so keep sending those pictures and articles.

In the next issue there will be pictures of some West-cloz Big Ben alarms with Jeweler's names on the dial with any information that can be found about them. If you have a similar clock send a picture of it and I will include it in the article.

Until next time goodbye and good collecting.

Bob Linkenhoker

Clock and Watch Exhibit  
 Burritt Mansion  
 April 30 through August 15

Chapter 61 of the NAWCC sponsored an exhibit of clocks and watches that included a cabinet dedicated to Alarm Clocks. The exhibit filled two Galleries of the Mansion with about 120 clocks and watches. Most of the alarm clocks that are displayed were loaned by Lee Powers and Don Wohlfort.

These photos show some of the displays in the Gallery where the alarms clocks were located. A case with wrist watches is in the foreground with a second case containing some novelty clocks behind it. The gallery has six window wells, each containing two shelf clocks and one wall clock. There were two closet displays and the alarms clocks occupy one of them.



The exhibit consisted of 14 alarm clocks made by Westclox and one from each of Ansonia, Waterbury, New Haven, Friedrich Mauthe and Zenith. The alarm clocks were displayed on three shelves with descriptive text located behind each clock.

The Western  
 Clock Company,

La Salle, Illinois made Westclox a household name in alarm clocks between 1908 and 1935. The beginnings of the company can be traced to the United Clock Company of Peru, Illinois. It was formed after Charles Stahlbug of Waterbury, CT. obtained a patent in 1885 for die casting gear bodies and other clock parts allowing for the mass production of clocks. Production elevated to 25 clocks per day but the company went bankrupt in 1887. The remains of the company were acquired by F.W. Matteson & Heggler Zinc Company to form the Western Clock Company, which became one of the most successful known companies of the time. The trade name of Westclox was established.



The company hired a German clock maker to head the development of a sturdy, reliable, inex-

pensive alarm clock. His final design became known as “Big Ben” which went into production in 1908. You will find four Big Ben alarm clocks in this exhibit. Production of the Big Ben got as high as 6000 per day and it was produced in a number of versions until 1956. Reproductions occurred again in 1970. Over 20,000 jewelers were selling Big Ben with over 60 million units sold. Many of the clocks had the price of \$2.50 stamped in the metal backing of the clock. They were considered 30 hour clocks so they had to be wound every day.



A patent was awarded in 1909 for a smaller version of their Big Ben alarm clock, which they called the “Little Ben” or “Baby Ben”. It was about a third of the size of the Big Ben version. The Baby Ben was also made in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada along with the Big Ben starting in 1912. Production grew and in 1921, records show 10,000 units per month of both Big Ben and Baby Ben were being produced.

You can find six of the Baby Ben alarm clocks in the exhibit. They provide a example of the variety of colors and finishes that were sold.

The early Big Ben and Baby Ben versions rested on 3 legs, later they came out with a new version that had the solid base and were built until 1956. The exhibit includes both the early and later styles. The running time remained at 24 hours.

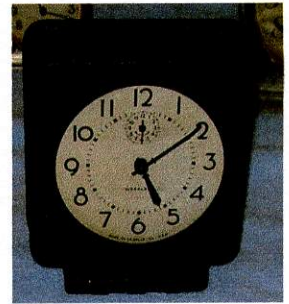


An earlier Westclox Alarm clock was also on display in the exhibit. The clock was manufactured around 1900. It has an iron case that weights about 2.5 pounds. The clock is known as an "ironclad" The clock in this exhibit has "Will Woodson, General Merchandise, Eoline, AL" printed on the dial.



The clock to the left was made by Westclox. This travel alarm clock, called a Spur, was introduced in 1938 along with the Orb and Trav-alarm models

Another example of a Westclox alarm clock was provided by the Waralarm clock you could find in this exhibit and shown to the right below. It was manufactured by Westclox about 1943, during World War II. The clock in this exhibit is an example of the limited use of materials for domestic products during the war. The manufacturing process required about 7 pounds of brass per 1000 clocks instead of the normal 300 pounds. This clock sold for about \$1.65.



The most recent example of Westclox that you will find here is the "Clock of Tomorrow" that was manufactured in 1955. This black alarm clock includes a new single key wind chime movement



The exhibit included a rare Ansonia Clock Company version of Big Ben. This clock is an Ansonia Repeater Alarm Clock (circa 1910 - 1925). Ansonia got started later in the alarm clock business with their Big Ben and Little Ben than the Western Clock Company. Their production of these clocks was limited because of higher price and/or popularity. The quality appears very good but there are very few available.

The New Haven Clock company made one of the finer alarm clocks of their day and one can be seen in this exhibit. The "Intermittent" alarm clock made by the New Haven Clock Company, between 1910-1926. These apparently were not priced competitively or promoted aggressively. Judging from what remains of these alarm clocks, their sales were nowhere near those achieved by the Western Clock Company with their Big Ben and Little Ben alarm clock.



The clock to the right is a “Spasmodic”. This clock was made by the Waterbury Clock Company, Waterbury, Conn. about 1902. The Waterbury Clock Company had a very good reputation for building quality clocks. Alarm clocks, however, were not a big part of their business so their production and availability today is limited. Waterbury named their alarm clock “Spasmodic” and according to Webster’s dictionary it means – “resembling a spasm esp. in sudden violence – acting or proceeding fitfully – intermittent – subject to outburst of emotional excitement”. It was meant to wake you up and it did. It has patent dates stamped on the back of 1901 & 1907 which means they also developed or improved the technology that was developed in that time frame allowing for mass production.



Finally there are two alarm clocks in the exhibit that were manufactured in Europe. One is a small copper travel alarm clock was made in Germany around 1910 by Friedrich Mauthe. The second is a travel alarm clock made by Zenith Co. in France around 1910. It has its own red leather travel case.



The exhibit at Burritt had as its theme “Timekeeping through the Centuries” and includes clocks from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. Chapter 61 hopes that visitors enjoyed the exhibit and that it stirred interest and increased appreciation for all types of antique clocks and watches.

