

The Howard Banta Alarm Clock Chapter



Chapter 178 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors

www.acc178.org

September 2018

President's Message

It is now time for renewal of one of the best Newsletters and Chapters in the NAWCC. The Howard Banta Alarm Clock Chapter #178.

At this time we are offering a new format for the Newsletter. We will continue to offer a mailed Newsletter and membership for the normal cost to you of \$15.00 per year. You now have the opportunity to save some money and help the Chapter cover rising costs. For only \$10.00 per year you will be able to receive the Newsletter in an electronic form. This will enable you to receive the Newsletter on your computer with the idea that you could now keep it in a PDF file in your computer for easy access and also be able to print a copy of your own. We hope many of you will make this choice so that we can still offer to the membership a great Newsletter without raising the dues to cover costs.

Attached to the back of this month's Newsletter is the new renewal form with the option to receive it electronically with a savings of \$5.00 and know that you will be helping the HBACC #178 to continue.

The article 'Big Ben and the Westclox Name' was reprinted from Bill Stoddard's website www.clockinfo.com with his permission.

The second article was submitted by Chapter president Vince Angell.

Remember it is time to renew your membership in Chapter 178.

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Remember that there will be no newsletters unless the members of Chapter 178 send me information and pictures. I am sure that you all enjoy reading and looking at the various pictures in this and the other newsletters produced for this Chapter. Just remember unless you help there:

WILL BE NO NEWSLETTER

So please give some consideration to sending material with or without pictures.to

rlink3@juno.com, by phone at 951-898-5825
or mail at:
Chapter 178
7186 Calico Circle
Corona, Ca. 92881

Big Ben and the Westclox Name

Introduction

This article discusses how Western Clock Co. used the Big Ben alarm clock to introduce the *Westclox* trademark.

Summary

Western Clock Mfg. Co. (later Western Clock Co.) was known for good, low-priced alarm clocks. The promoters of Big Ben realized this, and decided not to put the company name on Big Ben, because Big Ben was in a better class of clocks. Thus, early Big Ben alarms don't have the company name at all. Big Ben was a huge marketing success, and so Western Clock Co., used it to improve their reputation, and to introduce the name *Westclox* (an abbreviation for *Western Clocks*). From late 1910 through 1917, many Big Ben alarms say *Westclox* on the back. A few Big Ben dials from 1911 through 1913 have *Westclox* at the bottom in small print. The full company name appears at the bottom of the dial starting in 1916. In 1917, the *Westclox* name moved to a prominent position on the dial.

Details

By the early 1900s, Western Clock Mfg. Co. was known for its good, low-priced alarm clocks such as the America. In 1908, advertising manager Gaston Leroy suggested the name Big Ben for a new alarm clock designed by George Kern. Big Ben was a better and higher-priced clock than their current alarm clocks, so LeRoy suggested that the company name not appear on Big Ben.

LeRoy wrote in his [1908 advertising report](#):

“In our new alarm, we have a clock that is on the contrary susceptible of being very successfully advertised, i.e., sold through advertising, through the public instead of the dealer. It is distinctive, new and attractive in appearance; therefore it will secure attention and be easily recognized and hard to substitute on. It is built on a good principle – The movement is all enclosed within the bell and the bell has a larger surface than any other clock, therefore the movement is better protected and the alarm more effective. It has on this account excellent talking points and selling points. It can be made at a relatively low cost, therefore sold either at a lower price than others, either with a larger margin of profit for the wholesaler and the retailer than the other makes and we can afford to put it up in an attractive manner in a good cardboard box and in a good shipping case, always a matter of great importance with the consumer. It is an absolutely new clock, one which has never been placed on the market and on which a special campaign of distribution and sales can be planned without having to tear down or change any previous policy and it is a clock that is important enough to justify a campaign for itself. It is a clock that will particularly appeal to the watchmakers because it can be easily taken apart and repaired and because it can be kept out of department stores, therefore one through which we can secure the jewelry trade, which is still keeping away from our goods and it is an article that will appeal to a higher class of consumers, the one that is the least affected by the cost of the goods, therefore a clock without the reach of the German peril.”

“The first step is to give the clock a good name that will at the same time be used as a trade mark. This matter is of extreme importance: a name has often made the success of an advertising campaign and frequently caused its failure.”

“I would for lack of better names, suggest the name “Big-Ben”. Big Ben is the name of a very well known Tower Clock in London, therefore appropriate for an alarm clock, it is a proper name, it is a distinctive name, it is a “jolly” name, short, pleasant to hear and pleasant to see in print. I shall therefore refer to this clock as the Big Ben in the balance of this report. Should we get out a small 2 inch alarm of the same style, we could call it “Bennie” or “Little Ben” and thus give it the benefit of any advertising we have done for the bigger clock.”

“The present trade mark could hardly be used on the BIG-BEN, because it already appears on the AMERICA which goes to a cheap trade and it would be bad policy to have on a \$1.50 or \$2.00 clock the same mark that appears on the 75¢ or 69¢ alarm. The name BIG-BEN would therefore be the trade mark. It would be mentioned conspicuously on every ad, placed on every dial, on every box and every case leaving our shipping room. It would be made so well known that the very same clock without the word BIG-BEN could not be sold for as high a price as those with the trade mark on. It might also be advisable to leave our name entirely off the dial of the clock because it already appears on the AMERICA and other low priced clocks.”

A relatively small number of Big Ben alarms were made from 1908 to mid-1910. They say “MADE IN U.S.A.” on the back and at the bottom of the dial. They followed LeRoy’s advice: there is no company identification on the clock.



The *Westclox* trademark was first used in November, 1909, according to its [trademark registration](#).



A few Big Ben dials made around 1911 through 1913 have *Westclox* at the bottom in small lettering:



In 1916, the company name appeared at the bottom of the dial, sometimes in very small print:



Finally, in 1917, *Westclox* appeared in a prominent position on the dial of Big Ben and their other clocks.



Thus, the company gradually introduced the name *Westclox* to the public on their clocks.

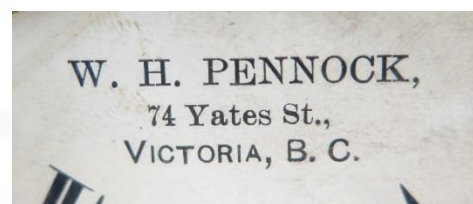
What's in a Name???

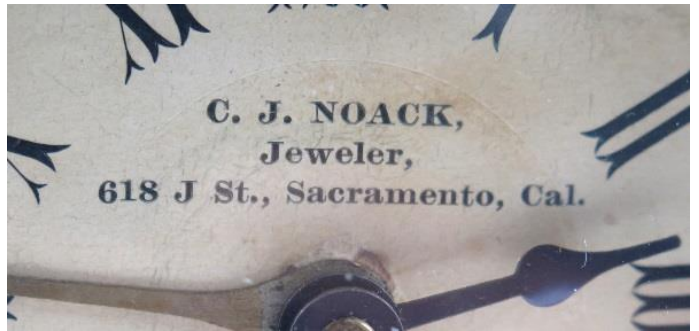
By Vince Angell

As I have mentioned in previous articles, I have been collecting alarm clocks for many years. In a previous Newsletter article in this Issue I stated that Original Alarm Clock Boxes have become a huge area of interest to enhance my alarm clock collecting. Since I noticed that I have a large selection of the alarm clocks which limits my search, I started collecting original boxes.

I also noticed in my collection that I have been fortunate to find alarm clocks that have jeweler's dials or advertising dials. The first Jeweler's dial I found was about 40 years ago on a trip to Victoria, BC. I have a friend there and on that trip I stopped at an antique store and saw a great dial that was for a jeweler in Victoria, BC. I asked the price and was told \$85. That was quite expensive and decided not to buy it at that price. I told my friend about what I found in the antique store. After leaving Victoria and after being home for a week or so I received a box from Canada. It was from my friend Larry and what I found was a surprise. It was the alarm clock pictured on this page. He had gone back to the store and purchased the clock for \$15. I guess that price was the Canadian price.

From then on, besides looking for alarm clock boxes, I started looking for alarm clocks with jewelers advertising dials. I zeroed in on dials from California and then decided to see what I could find in Sacramento. On the following page are the three alarm clocks that are from my home town of Sacramento. Interesting enough all three jewelers were located within the same two block radius of downtown Sacramento in the early 1900's. Unfortunately, I have discovered that when I see the name Sacramento I have such a great desire to own the clock that the price does not mean that much to me. The name is more important than the cost. What a terrible way to shop for an alarm clock. What's in the name is a good start to a collection but sometimes it's can be an expensive way.







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Jewelers,
518 K St.,
SACRAMENTO, CAL.

ASSAY OFFICE
WATERS & CO.,
No. 52 J street, Sacramento.
GOLD AND SILVER OF EVERY DESCRIPTION MELTED and ASSAYED, and returns made in BARS or COIN within six hours. Our Assays are guaranteed, and Bars discounted at San Francisco rates. j21-1m

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