

# “The Carriage Way”



## International Carriage Clock Chapter #195 Founded 2013

The National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors

Volume 2021 No. 4



**Should I Replate a Carriage Clock?**

## President's Report



Stan Boyatzis

Welcome to our final newsletter for 2021. As the year draws to a close, I wish all members the joy of being with family and friends during the holidays and peace and good health as we enter 2022. The past two years have taught us that these are precious aspects of our lives that we greatly value and cherish. Although COVID and its impacts are far from over, we pray and hope that we will emerge safely in 2022 from the most severe impacts of the virus.

Keith Potter has decided to step down as a Director of Chapter 195. Keith was an inaugural member of the Executive Committee and instrumental in the setup of Chapter 195. The EC would like to thank Keith for his help and support during the past eight years.

Greg Cook from Harker Heights, Texas, has been appointed to fill the position. Greg was responsible for organizing the carriage clock display in March 2020 as part of the Chapter 124 Regional in Mesquite. He recently gave a Zoom presentation on the History and Development of Carriage Clocks to the Seattle area Chapters.

I hope you have enjoyed reading the articles published in this year's newsletters. In late October Leigh Extence from the UK presented a Zoom lecture on Henri Jacot. Leigh concentrated his research on the lives, clocks and working practices of the great carriage clock maker Henri Jacot, his family and associates. The talk debunked certain myths and previously published 'facts'. It brought to light the importance of Jacot as an early pioneer of carriage clock manufacture. If any member missed the lecture and is interested in viewing the presentation, please email me and I will provide the link.

Again, if there is a particular topic on carriage clocks that has not been covered in previous newsletters and is of interest, please email Ken Hogwood, our new secretary, or myself and we will research the area and have a specialist on the topic write an article.

This month there are two short articles. The first article is by Ken Hogwood on "Looking behind the Dial of a Drocourt Carriage Clock". This is a follow-up story to his article "Circa Dating French Carriage Clocks" published in "The Carriage Way", Volume 2021 No 1. The article is a good example of things to look for if you are trying to circa date a French carriage clock.

The second article is by Greg Cook, our new Director of Chapter 195, on "Replating a Carriage Clock. Should I"? Greg goes through the pros and cons of Replating a Carriage Clock Case and the various techniques utilized. Both Ken and Greg welcome any questions from the members.

The executive continues to work hard to promote the chapter and I again encourage current members to spread the word about Chapter 195 and invite friends with an interest in carriage clocks to join. Remember, this is your newsletter so if you have any helpful hints or unusual carriage clocks you own or have seen, please share these with the members. If you have any queries about a carriage clock, please do not hesitate to contact Doug or myself. Details are at the back of the newsletter.

Copies of previous newsletters, hints and a question page are included on our website. There are also carriage clock articles from the Bulletin and carriage clock videos from the NAWCC library. You will need to be logged in as a NAWCC member to access these.

<https://new.nawcc.org/index.php/chapter-195-international-carriage-clock>

A link to the 1stdibs website is included. This is a useful website to research retail prices of carriage clocks and what is currently for sale. The website is updated weekly. We are happy to include other websites that may be of interest to the membership.

The Executive Committee hopes you enjoy reading the newsletter and wishes you all, Season's Greetings and a Happy and Healthy 2022.

#### **Members of the Executive Committee:**

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Looking behind the Dial of a Drocourt Carriage Clock  
By Ken Hogwood, FNAWCC (US)

This is a follow-up story to my article “Circa Dating French Carriage Clocks” published in “The Carriage Way”, Volume 2021 No 1. This is a good example of things to look for if you are trying to circa date a French carriage clock.

Only if you are a proficient clock repairer should you attempt to uncase the movement and remove the hands and dial to look for the information on the back of a porcelain dial. But, as you will see in the case of this Drocourt, the back of the dial gives some very interesting information.



**Drocourt  
Carriage Clock  
Circa 1876**



This nice carriage clock, which has the Drocourt trademark and SN 11840 on the backplate, is a full size 7 1/8” high with the handle up. It is time, strike (hour & half-hour), repeat on the hour, and alarm, striking on a blued steel gong. It has a lever escapement and a porcelain dial with Breguet hands.



**Close up of trademark and  
serial number**

The case is corniche size three, approximately 7” high, gold-plated and the casting is of good quality. This was made in the mass production era, being produced in Saint Nicolas d’Aliermont, France, circa 1875-1900.



The dial is marked with a faded merchant’s name “Shreve, Crump & Low, Boston”.

Shreve, Crump & Low was founded in 1869. Their building was burned out on November 9, 1872. It was re-built and re-opened for business early in 1873.



**The dial is marked on the back by the dial maker showing the last 3 numbers of the serial number, 840.**  
**In a different color ink is the date 1893, and another inking of September 1900.**

the original dial, as it has the same serial number as on the back of the movement. The other dates are probably the dates the dial was re-marked with the merchant’s name, either 1893 or 1900, as it is printed on top of the original clear coat of porcelain, which also explains the fading. The clock was serviced on one or both of these dates.

The serial number, 11840 dates the completion of the clock to about 1876, but probably no later than 1880. Charles Allix's book pictures almost the same Drocourt carriage clock with the later serial number 18650, circa dated 1880 on page 167.



**The false bottom plate is marked:**

**“Restored October 5, 1973 by Bill Mason, Long Meadow Mass”.**

**It is also marked with the repairman's mark TA OH 4/07. TA OH is probably the serviceman's initials, and the date probably means it was overhauled in April 2007.**

It is very unusual to find such detailed information on any restored carriage clock.

In June 2021, I serviced the movement, replaced one glass, and re-plated the case with 24-carat gold. I have not been so bold as to have inscribed my restoration date on the closure plate of this clock.

All parts appear to be original.

The backplate is not marked “made in France”, which would have been necessary if the clock was made for export to the USA after 1891, or to the UK or Canada after 1887.

The leaves us with the following unanswered questions:

1. When was the dial marking “Shreve, Crump & Low-Boston” – 1893 or 1900 added and by whom, as both dates are on the back of the dial? This imprint was added on top of the clear porcelain glaze at one of these later dates. This accounts for the fading of the ink imprint.
2. When was it exported to the USA and by whom?

I am sure we will never know the answers to these questions, so I will be content with what I do know about this clock. It is now over 140 years old and still looks as good and works as well as when it left Drocourt's factory in Saint Nicolas d'Alhiermont, France so many years ago.

My conclusion is this clock was completed and left the Drocourt factory about 1875 or 1876.

References: Carriage Clocks. Their History and Development by Charles Allix

Article: “Circa dating French Carriage Clocks” by Ken Hogwood, published in “The Carriage Way, Volume 2021 No.1.

## Replating a Carriage Clock. Should I?

By Greg Cook (US).



### **A Short History of Electroplating**

In electroplating, a layer of one metal is applied over another by use of an electrical current. Electroplating is considered to be much less hazardous than the fire-gilding process, as it uses fewer poisonous chemicals.

Electroplating experiments were performed as early as 1772 by an Italian professor named Giovanni Battista Beccaria, but the process didn't come into its own until after the development of electricity. In 1836, the British chemist John Frederic Daniell developed the Voltaic pile (battery), which allowed for a sustained, constant electrical output. His battery then enabled a variety of scientists to experiment with metals. For example, George Richards Elkington purchased and filed patents to develop an electroplating business in 1841. By 1881, Mr. Elkington's company had over a thousand employees.

## Should I Replate a Carriage Clock?

Before deciding to replate a carriage clock, I suggest cleaning the case in an ultrasonic cleaner to see exactly what you're working with. In the picture above, the case was fire-gilded and turned out very well after cleaning.

Plating a clock is an individual decision. Conservative collectors may not want to replate, but others may like the outcome.

Here are several factors I would consider:

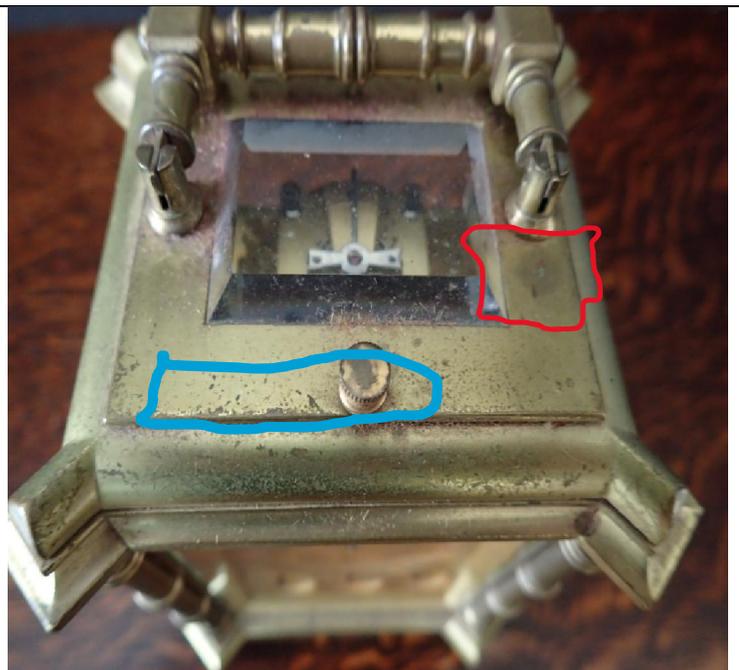
1. Is the clock museum quality? If yes, I would not replate.
2. Replating a carriage clock (especially using tank plating) will be obvious, and it will never look like an "old clock" again.
3. Tank Replating is a destructive process. Fragile pieces may be damaged.
4. Cost in terms of both time and dollars is a factor. Is the clock worth it?
5. Understand that different plating processes (tank and brush) can yield different outcomes.

### Problems with 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Electroplating

When the industry went from fire-gilding to electroplating, the process was typically flawed. Many carriage clocks were plated with gold directly over the brass. You will often see in carriage clocks that the brass has tarnished beneath the gold plate. This leaves the gold finish looking dull and tarnished. Below is a very nice Drocourt clock that shows the bleed-through and tarnishing effects.



The dial also needs strengthening.



The red circle shows bleed through, and the blue circle shows poor adhesion. The overall appearance is dull.

## Modern Plating for a Carriage Clock

Today's plating process involves plating a bright strike nickel onto the brass first and then applying the gold gilding. The nickel acts as a barrier over the brass, meaning that the gold plating will last a very long time and look very luxurious.

Below is an Art Nouveau carriage clock that was purchased for Matilda Hays at Christmas of 1895 from Tiffany's of New York. The clock is stunning when viewed in person.



## Types of Plating Advantages and Disadvantages

The two commonly used types of modern electroplating are brush and tank (immersion) plating.

The advantages of brush plating:

1. It can be done at home.
2. It is cheaper (\$100-\$200 per clock).
3. It can be applied to individual parts without affecting their surroundings. An example, is that a repeat button that takes a lot of wear can be plated without a noticeable difference made to other parts of the clock.
4. It is thinner, so some of the imperfections of the case can show through, giving the clock a newer but still "aged" appearance.
5. It is easier to assemble a case that has been brush-plated.

The disadvantages of brush plating:

1. You must purchase plating equipment (although it isn't too expensive).
2. Polishing and plating take a lot of time with this method.
3. The finish is not as thick and will not last as long as when tank plating.
4. It requires expertise (trial and error) and can be frustrating at first.

Below is a clock that was strengthened with brush plating. It still maintains the appearance of an old clock. Parts of it were cleaned, the nickel columns were replated, and most of its brass pieces were polished and replated. However, you can still see imperfections, giving the clock an older appearance



The advantages of tank plating:

1. It is far superior to brush plating and will last several lifetimes.
2. The contrast can be stunning in certain clocks, especially those with enamel panels.

The disadvantages of tank plating:

1. Typically, it is not done at home. You must rely on a commercial vendor.
2. Tank plating involves dipping the case parts into a corrosive to clean them. 19<sup>th</sup>-century brass production was not perfect, and the corrosive can find holes in the brass. In some clocks, the result will show tiny pits.
3. Care must be taken to keep the corrosive or plating from getting into any screw holes.
4. Most carriage clock cases are hand-fitted. Tank plating places a much thicker coat on the case. Reassembling the clock is usually problematic because the placement marks have been covered. The pins and holes will need to be refitted. Putting the case of a clock that has been tank plated back together can take hours of trial and error.
5. It is much more expensive (\$400-\$1,000).

Another example of tank plating.



### **Is There an Alternative to Plating?**

Yes. Many clocks look very good with just the brass cleaned and polished. You can apply an acid neutralizer to the brass and then lacquer it. This will last a good many years.

Below are two clocks. The one on the right has been tank replated, but the Paul Gardiner on the left has simply been polished. As you can see, they look very similar.



## Conclusion

Replating a case takes time, effort, and money. You will spend as much or more time on the case as on rebuilding the movement. After having gone through the experience, I find that brush plating works well but is highly frustrating in the beginning. I now only consider tank plating with clocks that have a colored porcelain dial or panels, as the brighter, shinier plating can offset the colors to create a stunning appearance.

## Resources

I have found YouTube helpful for brush plating. Gold Plating Services (GPS) is another excellent resource (<https://www.goldplating.com/>). GPS does tank plating as well as sells supplies for brush plating.

If members have any questions or comments please email Greg Cook.

Email: [gcookie16@yahoo.com](mailto:gcookie16@yahoo.com)

## Do you own a carriage clock?

If so, you may have questions about your clock. Such as,

1. When was it made and by whom if it is not signed by a maker?

Many carriage clocks are marked by retailers, such as “Tiffany”. Many times, the maker is not identified. However, the maker can often be identified by the construction style and other tell-tell signs found on the movement.

2. Should I clean the case, or not?

3. And the greatest question of all, what is its value.

This is the hardest question to answer because of the many variables, such as the condition of movement and case, the name and standing of the clockmaker, & the quality and rarity of the clock. We are not licensed, appraisers. We can only advise you where to look for comparable clocks so you can make your own "best guess" as to the actual value, always remembering the oldest approach to a value is "Willing Buyer, Willing Seller".

Members of our chapter have many years of experience collecting, researching and restoring carriage clocks. Many are willing to help you answer some of these questions.

This free service is for NAWCC members only.

Email questions and pictures of your carriage clock (one clock at a time, please) to:

**Tom Wotruba:** (USA) [twotruba@sdsu.edu](mailto:twotruba@sdsu.edu)

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**Link to the 1stdibs website:**

<https://www.1stdibs.com/search/?q=carriage%20clocks>