

December Report, 1965

Merry Christmas, Collectors:

IF SANTA WAS HERE---

He would smile with one of his big chuckles at what a few people in a small area of the World were doing. As his magic TV zoomed in on the States of Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, he would see a bussle of activity among a very happy group of people who had all kinds of activities going on, who were so busy having fun that they did not have time "to be had little boys or girls" as the saying goes, and who had rooms, houses, and even garages full of different types of clocks and watches all telling different times and running with some mighty crazy beats. Some of these people are "down in the workshop" repairing, repinning, repainting, readjusting, and rebuilding these oddities of antiquity; some are scurrying around with keys winding these recorders of Time's progress; and others are laughing and visiting with friends and relatives and you can tell by the conversation what they are talking about.

As Santa's TV zigzags back and forth across the Nation and the many continents of the present World, and his thoughts drift back to earlier times, we wonder if maybe he might remember the joys experienced about this same time in years long past when some young inventor might come bursting through the door to show his wife a new adaptation he had added to some earlier principle of timekeeping which he "just knew" would revolutionize the recording of time from now on, or of a proud father slipping under the tree the latest thing in clocks that he had spent a whole month's wages on to surprise his little family with. Oh, if only those interesting collections of ours could talk--I just wonder what merry Christmasses they could tell about.

THE SILVER BELLS WERE NOT RINGING---

Two months ago on October 10th when we held our last Heart of America Chapter Meeting at the Carousel Cafeteria...as a matter of fact, this was the last thing anyone was thinking of. As a matter of fact, for a period of almost an hour, we transformed a dining room into one of Santa's dreamlands and almost all of us were transported back in time to the days when the Father of American Clocks, Eli Terry, was making Christmasses a lot happier for the many people of our great Nation. Eli Terry originally started back in the 1780's and he and his sons carried on for the next century. In 1880, George H. Bliss took over the operation of the Terry Company which was reorganized in 1888 as the Russell and Jones Clock Company, and was eventually sold out a few years later. That has undoubtedly been the fate of many of America's biggest and most important industries down through the ages, and many times the contributions these pioneer companies made to our American way of life is soon forgotten as bigger and more advanced contributions are made; but let us not forget that there had to be a starting place, and Eli Terry was just that.

In 1831, Eli Terry Jr. originated the steel spring movement and that contribution alone enabled the clock industry to move forward with new adaptations. It also was in line with his father's goal. In the early days, Terry made a survey which revealed that only one family in ten had any method of timekeeping other than the town crier or the courthouse clock. Terry was determined to produce good cheap clocks. His idea was to mass produce a good clock which could be sold for a price of \$15. Eli Terry's first patent in 1797 was for a grandfather clock which would tell standard and mean time; this was not a cheap clock but it was his start in the clock industry.

Since Terry was only interested in the improvement of the movements, he consigned other men to making various parts and his company merely assembled them. Seth Thomas, who later started his own company, was Terry's cabinet maker and made the now-famous Pillar & Scroll Terry Clock Case. The wood used in Terry's movements was specially treated to protect the wood from moisture, termites, and act as a preservative. Vaneer was obtained either by getting it from China, or by boiling wood blocks in water and then cutting the vaneer by hand. Gunsmiths were the quality machinest of the day as all gun barrels of high caliber were made in halves and then pressed together. This made them naturals for also making clock parts.

With so many men involved in the making of clock and watch parts, everyone seemed to turn to inventions. The courts were not experts in the mechanical field so they would allow a patent with no more change than merely changing a screw from right hand thread to left hand thread whereas the Patent Office was more interested in the overall general design and turned down many of the patents only to have the courts approve them. Around 1817 Silas Hodge bought one of Terry's factories. In order to copy but not infringe on the patents, he inverted Terry's movement. Later on, Eli Terry sued Seth Thomas for infringement of patents. This was considered a "friendly suit" and was only brought about for the purpose of keeping other Connecticut clock makers from copying and infringing on patents. (Condensed review of the October Program with contributions by C. A. Wegner, Herman Tholen, Florent Wagner, Paul Holland, Bill Bauers, Orvil Johnson, and Glenn Blair)

I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS---(but I'm praying for a beautiful December 12th!!)

Dear Fellow Members:

As we approach the end of the year it is natural to look back and appraise the accomplishments of the past year. Our Chapter has moved steadily forward with our members increasing and improving their collections and our membership improving steadily.

Our last meeting was very interesting with the members showing and discussing the Terry clocks in their collections. As this next meeting Welch Clocks will be the topic for discussion and display. We hope all the members will bring some of their Welch treasurers to share with all of us at this meeting. The more we learn about clocks, the greater our appreciation of clock collecting. We can learn a lot from the experiences of our fellow collectors. This was very evident at the last meeting in the ideas presented by those present. (Editor's note--our hats are off to the way the members boned up on Terry in preparation for that meeting and for the excellent display of Terry clocks.)

Our next meeting will be the second Sunday in December, the 12th, here at 5802 Carfield. All our members are welcome including all auxiliary members. (Note--if you are avoiding the thought of Christmas, do not come as the President of H.O.A. informs me that they have ten Christmas trees up in their home and this is guaranteed to put you in the Christmas Spirit.) Someone voiced the opinion that it could be too crowded if the ladies came but with due respect for everyone's opinions, which we value very highly, we want the ladies to come and I am sure we will not be too crowded as we can spread over the entire house and there will be room for everybody. Sometimes there may be a little inconvenience but that is common place in a collector's day. Try to arrive after 1:00 o'clock and the short meeting will be around 2:00 o'clock.

This is the meeting that we bring door-prizes for the coming year. If everyone brings something with the items marked "Lady" or "Man", the Chapter will be set for another year. Remember, this is not a Christmas party with presents for everybody attending so articles to be given out throughout the year should not be Christmas wrapped. Articles that should be given away at early meetings should be so marked.

Another thing we would like is offers of "Open Houses" for our meetings. Most of the members enjoy the meetings more in the homes surrounded by clocks and watches. All of our home meetings have been well attended. Think and talk this over and let us know if you would like a meeting and open house. Remember the date, Sunday, Dec. 12th. We will be glad to see all of you. Hope the weather man is good to us. Drive carefully.

Your President, Caspar A. Wagner

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL---

The Officers of the Heart of America Chapter extend this greeting to all and wish you happy collecting.

See you Sunday!

Clement C. Wagner, Editor