



## Mom's Great Grandmother's Pocket Watch

By Paul Skeels

A few months ago Mom said, "You know, I have my great-grandmother's watch in a box upstairs somewhere." Naturally I was interested I didn't remember seeing or hearing about this family heirloom before. She soon produced an old maroon jewelry box that was signed "Riggs and Brother, Philadelphia." Internet research revealed that this family was in the watch and clock trade from at least 1818 to the early 1900's. They sold many different manufacturers' watch and clock movements with the Riggs name on the dials.

The box holds a beautiful gold open face pocket watch, a jeweled winding key, a red coral charm, an 1851 gold dollar, and an 1862 three-cent piece, all attached to a braided black horsehair chain. The dial is very elaborate. The case back is engraved with a small monogram, "AFJ". Inside, the case is stamped with an assay, date, or maker mark "K", a diamond-shaped mark with worn-away letters or numbers, and the number "1884". One of two hand-scratched watchmaker's marks reads "1865 May-37".

There is a dust cover with a winding hole over an intact, unsigned, verge and fusee movement. The number "3" is stamped on both plates. Extra pin holes around the edge of the bottom plate indicate there may have been an earlier dial. The exposed balance cock is the French two-



screw design. The regulator reads "Avance" and "Retard". I found two French verge and fusee movements dated 1780-1790 on the Internet that look like this one.

Mom's great-grandmother, Almira Franks Jackson, was born in the 1830's. She lived most of her life near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her great-grandfather was a Dr. Franks, who studied medicine at the University of Heidelberg and then immigrated to America, settling in colonial upstate New York and later serving as a physician in the Continental Army. A family genealogy reports that Dr. Franks' wife was killed by Indians and that their two children survived by hiding in a hollow tree.

Based on all of the above, I suspect the movement is older than the case. Perhaps Dr. Franks owned the watch and eventually Almira inherited it. Almira might have had Riggs and Brother fit it with a new dial, re-case it, and engrave the case with her initials. We'll never know for sure, but apparently this practice was not

uncommon in the 1800's.

A couple of weeks ago, after fixing the hands (which were mashed against the dial) and performing a light cleaning and lubrication, I carefully wound the watch a few clicks. It ran smoothly and kept good time for about forty five minutes. Not too bad for a watch that may be over 200 years old. ■

## Santa Paula Tower Clock

By Ken McWilliams

Last month I wrote that we would be going to the Santa Paula Odd Fellows hall to look at their tower clock. Well, on March 16th Mike Schmidt, Bill Robinson, Paul Skeels and myself did just that.

The building was built in 1905 and is in very good condition with much of the original equipment still in place. For example, the dimmer switch for the lights in the main hall is a wall mounted rheostat about 12 inches in diameter, five inches thick and has a large lever in the center for controlling the lights. It must weigh 50 pounds but it still works.

The clock is a Seth Thomas model 15 and drives four dials and a bell. It is in a tower with reasonable access and adequate working space. Much more than many but is still cozy.

After examining the movement and discussing the options, we have determined that this is a repair project that we should take on.

I will be forming a team over the next few weeks to plan our strategy for the project. If you would like to be a part of this undertaking please contact me by phone (818) 718-8300 or at the meeting on the 15th.

Bringing this old clock back to life for the people of Santa Paula should be a very rewarding experience. ■

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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

This month the April program is "Watch repair tools, old and new" and will be presented by Jorge (George) Montoya. He is a Charter member of Chapter 190. He also belongs to Chapter 4 and Chapter 75. Jorge who is originally from Nicaragua, worked from the age of seven in the family business, and showed a strong interest and aptitude for watch repair. He was sent by his family for training to the Watch Repair Center in Mexico City. His training included working for Rolex in Mexico and the United States. Jorge has a family business that includes his wife Sophia and his son Jorge Jr. He has been a Watchmaker for 35 years and resides in Paramount, Ca. If you have an interesting watch or watches bring them along. It will be a fun and very interesting program.



The "CHRONO TIMES", prepared by Editor Ken McWilliams, has been acclaimed by all who have received and read it. What keeps the newsletter interesting is the talent and experience of Ken and the supply of articles and photos. Ken is a professional and he says "My job is much easier when I have a supply of articles to choose from." So, our task is to keep him supplied and happy. If you have a favorite clock, watch or interesting story about an acquisition or how you became a collector, etc., we want to hear about it. Your story does not need to be long or grammatically correct; Ken will wave his magic wand and make you look very good.

Your "CHRONO TIMES" is printed and mailed to you on a monthly basis. The cost of printing has been donated, along with some of the postage. Many of you are receiving a color copy of the newsletter thru your e-mail address. The newsletter is also available on the Chapter Website. The question we need to ask is how many more can give up the mailed version of the newsletter? The mailing cost is soon to go up to \$0.42 per letter and the cost of printing is also rising. A few have notified me without asking. So we ask all who have e-mail to please consider receiving the newsletter electronically. Please respond to me thru my e-mail. [EagleCreekClocks@msn.com](mailto:EagleCreekClocks@msn.com).

We are always looking for ways to improve the monthly meetings and a thought occurred to me. Most of the officers and directors start the monthly meeting preparation at 10:00 and finish after 2:30. We get hungry, and attending members may also get pangs of hunger. Many organizations combine meetings with lunch and we have decided to give it a try. Since we are a new chapter, it will be a nice way for us to get to know each other.

So, for our April 15th meeting we will provide **Free** Pizza and Salad at 12:30. (Ken and I will pick up the tab on this one.) If it is something that you want to continue we will add an additional charge to cover the cost of food for those wishing to participate. If you would like to join us for this lunch please call or e-mail me at [EagleCreekClocks@msn.com](mailto:EagleCreekClocks@msn.com) so that we can plan accordingly.

See you all at the next meeting

Mike

*"Too bad all the people who really know how to run the country are busy driving taxi cabs and cutting hair"*

*George Burns*



## Happy Birthday

**Laren Miller**

# Tails From the Bench

by Ferdinand Geitner

A Customer brought in a silver cased repeater/musical cylinder pocket watch for repair. It had a nice Champeve Dial and a very nice engraved cover plate over the back of the movement. Winding was achieved through openings in the back with a key.



The first clue that something was not quite right was the placement of the winding holes in the back cover of the silver case. It was obvious that the holes were placed to align with the movement (very necessary) but cut through some engraving on the inside cover and looked new.

The next clue appeared when I took off the fancy engraved back cover to examine the movement. It was screwed on with three long screws and the placement of the screws on the movement meant that the positioning was not very precise. (One could twist and slide the back plate before tightening the screws.) If you tightened a screw just a little the watch would stop immediately.

On closer examination I noticed that the backplate pushed down the balance bridge squashing the balance staff. There should be spacers between the movement and the backplate keeping it in place and giving the watch parts enough room. Just common sense right!

The next clue came when I removed the dial. It was screwed on from the front and the screw holes were obviously newer than the rest of the watch. The movement had some play (side movement) in the case and did not fit as exact as it should. Some movement within the case can be attributed to age and wear but one can usually tell the difference.

It appeared that someone had an interesting movement and no case or dial, which does not have much value, so they found a silver case, made an enamel engraved dial, an engraved pierced back cover and sold it as a price piece.

The moral of the story? Check out the finer details and if in doubt let a watchmaker take a look, he'll notice small anomalies that are not always so obvious!!! ■



## Ventura Chapter 190 people

Each issue of our newsletter will feature members of our chapter with a short biography or some of their horological interests to help us get to know each other.

### David Coatsworth - Webmaster

Unlike many others, my interest in horology did not start with a handed-down watch or clock. I had always been interested in old mechanical things. Obviously, antique clocks and watches fit this bill and that led to the purchase of my first antique clock (a Gilbert Falmouth crystal regulator) about eight years ago. Several more clocks followed, along with an interest in learning how to repair them. I bought my first pocket watch about three years ago. Of course, I had to learn how to repair these, as well, and an addiction was born! (I have since found that one can never have too many watch repair tools.) Today, I repair watches for my own collection and also sell restored watches, parts and tools on eBay and at Marts.



My other passion in life, which I share with my wife Mo (see photo above of our wedding party), is for Siberian Huskies and this is, indirectly, how I came to be the Chapter 190 webmaster. Several years ago I decided I wanted to learn how to design websites. Some friends of mine who bred Siberian Huskies needed a website and I figured this was the opportunity to learn. After designing their website, other breeders asked me to design websites for them and this led to my forming *Best in Show Web Design* as a side business to build websites for dog breeders and animal rescue organizations.

When the Chapter was born, I volunteered to create the Chapter 190 website and what you see at [www.nawcc-ch190.com](http://www.nawcc-ch190.com) is the beginning of this effort. This website belongs to all of us and I look forward to working with each of you to not only add content but to make sure the site accurately represents what our Chapter is all about.

Today, my wife, her daughter and I share our home in Camarillo with 11 Siberian Huskies. (Or, more appropriately, I probably should say that they share their home with us.) This adds the extra challenge of keeping dog hair out of the movement when repairing watches! ■



## Welcome New Members

Gary Benoit, Jean Benoit  
and Paul Highfill



## COMING EVENTS

### Chapter 75 Meeting & Mart

Sunday, April 22nd  
Call Kim St Dennis for info.  
(818) 349-8031

### 11th Inland Counties Fair

#### Ch 81's Watch & Clock Annual Mart

Saturday, April 14th. 9:00 am to 1:00pm  
Palomares Park senior Center  
499 East Arrow highway, Pomona, CA  
For info call: Al Umbrello, (626) 339-8129

### Central Coast Watch & Clock Show

**Saturday, May 5th**

Arroyo Grande Community center & Woman's Club  
211 Vernon Ave, Arroyo Grande, Ca  
For info call (805) 349-2030

### Next Chapter 190 Meeting

May 20th

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Basic Pocket Watch Repair Class

The NAWOC sponsored  
FSW 301 Pocket Watch class  
May 4-7 (Fri, Sat, Sun & Mon)

**The next Meeting & Mart for Chapter 190  
will be April 15, 2007**

**Sellers may start setting up at 11:30**

**The Mart is open from 12:00 til 1:15**

**The Meeting starts at 1:30**

### PROGRAM

by Jorge (George) Montoya

**"Clock repair tools, old & new"**

**This is a "How to use" and an evolution of watch  
repair tools for old and new watches.**

### SHOW & TELL

**Bring anything that you would like to share with us**

## Wicked

By Ken McWilliams

The Los Angeles production of "Wicked" opened at the Pantages theater in February. Wicked is the story of the witches of Oz before they knew they were witches and before Dorothy "dropped in."

It opens with Glinda, the good witch, arriving in her bubble and announcing "The wicked witch of the west is dead." The residents of Emerald City cheer and dance upon hearing the news, but Glinda doesn't seem to share in the joy. Instead, she begins to reminisce to a time when she and the other witches were young prep-school students and friends. This is where the story begins.

About now you are probably wondering "What in heck does this have to do with horology?" Well, I'll explain the connection.

Lynn and I went to see the show a week after it opened. We had read the rave reviews from London and Broadway and were anxiously awaiting it's L.A. debut. We both needed a change of pace and I, especially, needed to get away from clocks for a while.

When the curtain opened I couldn't believe my eyes. Towards the back of the stage was a 15 foot clock dial complete with hands, roman numerals, moon phase, several sub-dials and "Sideral Time" written on it's face. On both sides of the stage and across the top were wheels and pinions of all sizes. I stopped counting at fifty. Whenever there was a time change in the story, gear trains would come out from the wings and all of the wheels and gears would turn indicating the passage of time.

Well, so much for getting away from clocks for a day. The show was very entertaining and well done. It has already broken all box office records. If you get the opportunity to see it, you won't be disappointed. ■



*The above photos are from the touring set. The L. A. set is much better done but you get the idea.*

# Recap of March's Meeting

By Robert Gary

Two very nice collections of Lux clocks were presented to those in attendance at the March meeting of Chapter 190 at Ventura College.

Harry Larson was originally scheduled to present the program but was a little under the weather and couldn't make it. A Power Point presentation of Lux clocks, with photos from Dan & Diana Lockett's collection, was narrated by Ken McWilliams in Harry's absence.

The presentation began with a history of the Lux Clock Company. At its peak in the 1930s, the company produced 3,000 novelty clocks per day. It was noted that a competing company, Westclox, also produced similar novelty clocks during this era. The products of the two manufacturers can be differentiated by the placement of the winding arbor; Westclox arbors were always at 9:00 O'clock, whereas, Lux Clocks always had their arbors at either 12 or 6 o'clock.

The Lux cases were made from a composite of wood flour and resin, known as "Syrocowood," which was cast into the desired shape for all cases prior to 1945, after that, plastic replaced the wood composite material.

More than 100 specimens from the Lockett collection were shown during the presentation. In addition to those shown on the screen, 22 actual clocks from the collection of Sylvia Griswold and 10 from Harry's collection were on display in the meeting room for all to examine.

Jim Chamberlain displayed a cute cat-shaped Lux novelty clock for "Show-and-Tell." As it turns out, this was Jim's very first clock. He acquired it as a boy and it was the start of his outstanding clock collection.

Thanks go to Sylvia, Harry, and to Ken for pinch-hitting for Harry, for a most enjoyable presentation.

Bill Robinson presented a very interesting reverse fusee Gothic clock at show and tell. ■



*Bill Robinson's reverse fusee gothic style clock.*



*Harry Larson Lux collection*



*Jim Chamberlain's first clock. The one that started it all.*



*Sylvia Griswold's Lux collection*

## Early Explorers & Settlers Timekeeping

By Ken McWilliams

Ever wonder how Columbus and other early explorers kept track of time, how their day was divided or for that matter, how they could navigate at all without accurate chronometers?

Sailors could more or less figure a ship's north-south position by gauging the angle of the Pole star or the midday sun against the horizon. However, this only told you how far north or south you were. It gave them latitude.

It had been known since the beginning of the second millennium that a magnetized needle floating freely would always point north-south. But not if the needle was close to iron objects - like cannon balls or any other iron object on a ship.

Estimating longitude depends on accurate time measurement. No such reliable chronometer existed in the 14th and 15th centuries. Time was kept on board ship by the use of sand filled hour glasses which had to be watched and turned.

If the sand glasses were not carefully watched and turned on time, it could be a disaster, especially for the sailor charged with making sure it was done.

They used sand glasses, running thirty minutes, to keep track of the daily duty watches. These started at eight, twelve and four o'clock. Thus, it appears, they adhered to a two cycle sequence of twelve and twelve hours.

A bell was rung every time the sand glasses were turned, denoting the progression of the watch. One bell at the first turn (30 minutes) two bells at the second turn (one hour) and so on till the end of the four hour watch. (Eight bells) Since there were no clocks, this was the only means the crew had to know the time.

Magellan had eighteen sand glasses on his flagship, and it is interesting to note that as late as 1839, they were still used in the British navy.

Columbus in his journal occasionally uses expressions such as, "the first hour of the night," and also references time by the changes of the watches.

The speed of a ship was often gaged by guesswork

or watching weed or flotsam floating past. A wood chip, thrown over the bow and timing it's journey to the stern would crudely calculate a ship's speed. Later a line was tied to a piece of wood. This line had knots tied in it at regular intervals and the sailor would relate the knots slipping through his fingers to the time elapsed on a one minute sand glass. He then calculated the ship's speed in "knots".

If you know how fast you're traveling, and you take that measurement several times a day, you can then estimate how far you've traveled in a day.

Barents, the Dutch navigator, is said to have been the first, in 1596, to have used a watch at sea, although the idea of using them to ascertain the differences of longitude was thought of about 1530.

What kind of timekeeping did the Pilgrims use and how was their day divided?

While clocks did exist in the early 1600's, only the very wealthy could afford to own and maintain them.

The early settlers had sundials outside, and indoors they used hour glasses, candles with half hour marks, and rarely clepsydras. (water clocks.) Old journals mention homemade sun-dials, and pins or marks on south facing window sills as common timekeepers.

It was customary to make appointments for high noon or early candlelight as these times had some degree of exactness. Sundials were often set near the street in front of houses, and noon marks on the threshold of the front door or window sill helped to show the hour of the day.

From an early Ipswich court proceeding is recorded an incident in these terms: "About two or three o'clock in the afternoon" Another report in the Boston Record Commissioners office in 1649 refers to a man whose duty it was to ring the bell at nine at night and at half past four in the morning.

Albree, quoting from a "History of Medford", suggests that exact timing was not too important, and they kept time according to the way a baby does, that is, by the sensations of hunger and fatigue. But, they also frequently spoke of hours in terms such as, "about morning," or, "after it was light" or, "about an hour by the sun," or, "toward night," etc. He also finds references in court proceedings and public notices which were more specific, and

which indicate that the early colonial day was in two cycles, counting from midnight to noon, and from noon to midnight, even though their workday began with sunrise.

I wonder who benefitted the most from their timekeeping? The pilgrims with their inaccurate methods and casual attitude toward schedules, or us with our precision timekeepers that have made us slaves to time? ■



# CLASSIFIED PAGE

This page is dedicated to advertising for Chapter 190 members. It is, of course, free to members.

There are two ways to get your ad listed here.

1. The quickest way is to e-mail it to [internut@socal.rr.com](mailto:internut@socal.rr.com). Text should be in MS word, MS notepad or RTF format. If you want to have a photo in the ad attach it to the e-mail. (JPEG or TIFF Format)
2. Bring your ad to the monthly meeting and give it to Ken McWilliams or Mike Schmidt. Pictures can be scanned into your ad at no charge. If you want it returned provide a stamped self addressed envelope.

When you create your ad remember to describe the item or service clearly. When possible, include prices. ALWAYS include a way to contact you. Phone number and e-mail address if you have one. Just give us the information and we will help with the layout. If you prefer to create your own ad, provide it in an EPS format or hi res jpeg.

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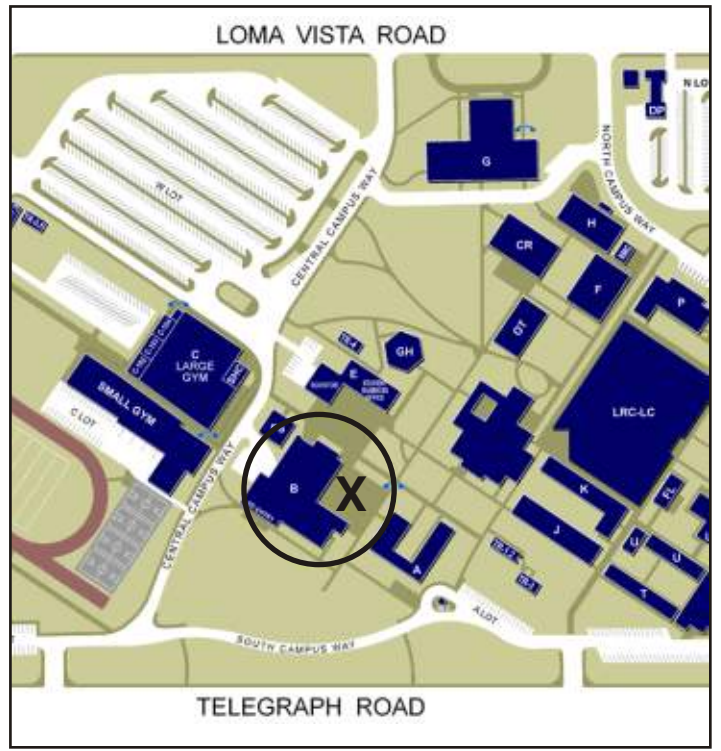
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The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)  
 We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.



*Hope to see you there!*

**April 2007 Issue**

**APRIL 15**  
**NEXT MEETING**

**Chrono Times**  
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 Northridge, CA 91325