

# Horology 1776: Part 1

by Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

Horology 1776 is the theme of our 2020 NAWCC Ward Francillon Time Symposium. Focusing on timekeeping and timekeepers during the U.S. War of Independence, the historic event will take place October 1–3 in Philadelphia at the Museum of the American Revolution.

No conference until now has addressed this unique subject, and an impressive roster of international speakers has been recruited. We will consider not only watches and clocks from the period, but also many references to timekeeping found in private journals, ship's logs, and battle reports. This is not just an American story, so we will hear about the British, French, and Hessians. In the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*, I will preview a few of the many related tales and objects. Readers also may look in the September/October 2017 issue at my *Horology in Art 34*, which features Howard Pyle's painting of Thomas Jefferson, with tall clock behind him, drafting the Declaration of Independence.

Everybody knows the name Benedict Arnold. We learned how this American war hero became an infamous traitor by attempting to betray our fort at West Point. Fewer of us have heard of Major John Andre, his high-ranking contact and chief British spymaster whose capture on

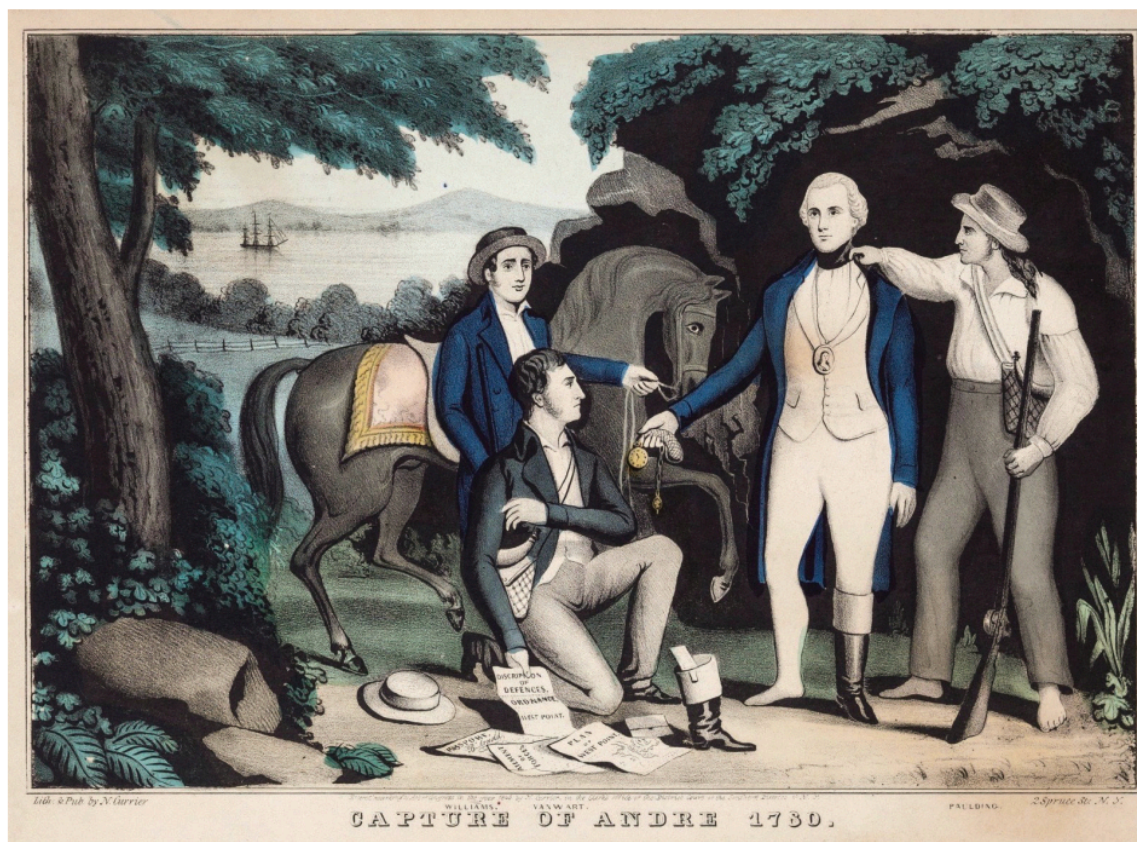
September 23, 1780, revealed the plot and led to his execution. But who knows the key role of a pocket watch in the affair? This circa 1845 Currier & Ives lithograph portrays the scene.

We see Major Andre displaying his gold watch and chain. Near Tarrytown, NY, he was intercepted by soldiers claiming to be Hessians. Disguised in civilian clothing and attempting to prove that he was a British officer, he dangled his costly watch. The soldiers, also in disguise, then disclosed that they actually were Americans. We see them examining the incriminating papers found in Major Andre's boot, evidence that was fatal to the officer and to Benedict Arnold's treasonous plans.

This is just one of many intriguing stories of horology in the American Revolution. More are coming in these pages and at the symposium. Please save the dates and watch for registration details.

## About the Author

Bob Frishman chairs the NAWCC Ward Francillon Time Symposium Committee. *Horology 1776* will be the fourth symposium he has created and organized for the NAWCC. See more about him at [www.bell-time.com](http://www.bell-time.com).



Currier & Ives  
lithograph ca.  
1845. PUBLIC  
DOMAIN.



# Horology 1776: Part 2

By Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

“Horology 1776” is the title of the 2020 NAWCC Ward Francillon Time Symposium, which will be held October 1–3 in Philadelphia, PA. In the November/December 2019 *Watch & Clock Bulletin*, I began a series of articles on the symposium theme. I continue with the intriguing story of the heavy gold pocket watch presented to the Marquis de Lafayette by General George Washington after their October 1781 victory over Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown. This defeat and surrender led to the end of the long war and our nation’s independence from British rule.

In December of that year, Lafayette sailed back to France with the watch and did not return to America until he was invited by President James Monroe to visit in 1824. He extended his stay to more than a year and visited all 24 states then in the Union. In 1825, while in Nashville, TN,

the treasured watch was stolen and disappeared despite the offer of large rewards for its safe return.

Decades later in 1871, John R. Ward of Austin, TX, stumbled across the watch at a pawnbroker’s auction sale in Louisville and purchased it for \$75, but he did not announce the find. Within a few years however, the story reached the U.S. Congress that, in 1874, authorized \$300 to purchase the watch and return it to Lafayette’s descendants. At a ceremony at the American embassy in Paris that year, the watch was handed to Lafayette’s grandson. I own an original of the February 6, 1875, issue of *Harper’s Weekly* with an article about the famous watch and a large illustration of the formal presentation ceremony.

The inner rear cover, or cuvette, of the open-face watch was engraved, “G. Washington to Gilbert Mottiers De Lafayette. Lord Cornwallis Capitulation Yorktown. Dec.r 17th 1781”. The outer back cover had a complex scene, in deep bas relief, representing Mars and the Goddess of Peace. The verge-fusee movement was signed “E. Halifax, 1769”. The current location of the watch is unknown.

This is just another of many compelling stories of horology in the American Revolution. Many more are coming in these pages and at the symposium. Please join us in historic Philadelphia for this groundbreaking conference. Details, including a list of prominent international speakers, can be found at [www.horology1776.com](http://www.horology1776.com).

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Bob Frishman chairs the NAWCC Ward Francillon Time Symposium Committee. “Horology 1776” will be the fourth symposium he has created and organized. See more about him at [www.bell-time.com](http://www.bell-time.com).



Illustration from *Harper’s Weekly Supplement*, February 6, 1875. COURTESY OF BOB FRISHMAN.



# Horology 1776: Part 3

By Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

Time is money. A penny saved is a penny earned. We all know these adages attributed to Founding Father Benjamin Franklin. The first saying he did write in his 1748 essay, *Advice to a Young Tradesman*. The second quote is not his, although in the 1737 *Poor Richard's Almanack* he wrote something similar: "A penny saved is two pence clear."

Much less familiar is Franklin's 1776 creation of the first Continental currency, known as the Continental Dollar, or Fugio Dollar, or Franklin Dollar. The design appeared in that year on printed paper notes of various denominations and on one-dollar coins. Reproductions and restrikes of the coin are available, but if you find one of the estimated 6,000 first minted, you can stop buying lottery tickets. Few of these coins survive (whether in pewter, brass, or silver), mostly because those metals were needed for other purposes during the Revolution and afterward. Elisha Gallaudet of New York City is thought to have engraved the original dies, but because the coins were hand-struck with multiple dies, all were slightly different and had versions with misspellings and corrections.

The horology connection, if not spotted already, is the sundial receiving the rays of the sun. As in many historic "Horology in Art" images that feature timekeepers as symbols of mortality, Franklin's sundial reinforced the bold message: *Fugio*, which is Latin for "I fly" or "I flee." This unsubtle reminder of the brevity of human life received an extra motivational boost with the words "Mind Your

Business." Franklin was not admonishing us to refrain from interfering with the business of others, but instead that we should put our noses to the grindstone. The message resounded throughout Franklin's writings, extolling the virtues of smart and steady labor for personal advancement and for the good of the community.

The reverse side of the coin states that "We Are One," surrounded by a chain of linked circles containing the names of the 13 colonies. This plea for unity came at a time when the Colonies were unsure of their identity as a single new nation. Franklin's original ink-on-paper drawing of this motif is at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia.

In 1787, the coin design reappeared on the Fugio cent, and many more of these first official copper pennies still exist. After the 1789 ratification of the U.S. Constitution, our coinage motto transitioned to *E Pluribus Unum* and there were no further warnings of *Fugio*.

Please keep in mind the coin's advice about the flight of time and register now for the 2020 symposium, October 1-3, in old Philadelphia. Details are at [www.horology1776.com](http://www.horology1776.com).



IMAGE COURTESY OF BOB FRISHMAN.

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