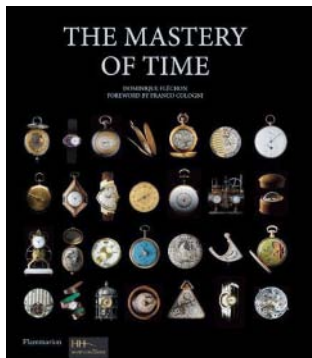


The Mastery of Time by Dominique Flechon

Published 2011 by Flammarion, Paris, ISBN 978-2-08-020080-8, 455 pages, 9.25" x 11", available for \$61.49 from Amazon.com.

It has been some time since an author attempted a truly comprehensive summary of the history of timekeeping, and this new hefty volume represents a worthy effort. Underwritten by the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva, an organization founded in 2005 to enhance and promote fine watchmaking, the book is far more than another costly coffee-table picture book.



There certainly is no shortage of high-quality full-page color illustrations and photographs throughout this edition printed in Italy, but its first words, "Some 13.7 billion year ago" alert the reader that the full story is about to unfold. To start, we see the 22,000-year-old Ishango Bone with possible moonphase markings scratched on it and progress all the way to the Pont Des Amoureux sector wristwatch offered by Van Cleef & Arpels in 2010.

The early history may be the most compelling, and much of it has to do with the calendar, astrology, astronomy, and navigation as much as with timing the minutes of each day. The author is a historian and watchmaking expert, with several specialized published studies, and he leaves no clepsydra unfilled as he advances through timekeeping technologies. Each topic—there are dozens within the six major chapters—presents a clear brief discourse reinforced with visuals and their captions. I especially enjoyed studying horological drawings from the Diderot *Encyclopedie*.

Understandably, because of the author's and sponsor's focus on today's fine watchmaking, watches get more attention than clocks, especially in the second half of the book. The final chapter reminds me more of a glossy sales catalog, but the "rebirth of the watchmaking culture" and similar words are rightfully reverential about the complications, tourbillons, advanced designs, and new materials now available to well-heeled buyers of mechanical watches.

Also understandably, American history and achievements receive only sketchy attention from these Swiss promoters, and our nation's successes sometimes are attributed to visiting or immigrant Europeans. More worrisome, some factual bungling in this section—"In Bristol, the Chauncey Brothers and Noble Jerome...." (page 237)—leads me to question the accuracy throughout on subjects unfamiliar to me, but I hope other better informed readers do not find similar gaffs. On that same page, an image of the Ingraham factory is reproduced; its caption describes it as a nineteenth-century engraving, but modern automobiles are clearly visible in the scene.

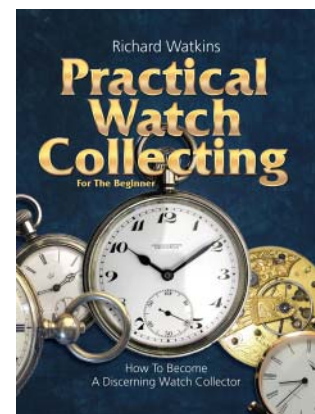
Although I examined every page, most readers perhaps will not and instead will search for subjects of highest interest. If so, they will be assisted by a detailed glossary as well as three separate indices: People, Places and Companies; Main Technical Terms; and Timepieces. However, even casual perusal of random pages will be rewarding for all from beginners to the most knowledgeable horologists.

—Bob Frishman (MA)

Practical Watch Collecting For The Beginner by Richard Watkins

Published by the NAWCC. Copyright 2012. Full Color. Paperback, 132 pages. ISBN 978-0-9823584-5. Available for \$29.95 plus shipping through the NAWCC Museum Store; member discount price: \$27.

Although there are thousands of books on mechanical watches (the author of this new book has listed 2,823 of these in detail in his previous book *Mechanical Watches: An Annotated Bibliography*, available as a free download on this webpage or at Richard Watkins' website <http://watkinsr.id.au/watkins.html>), surprisingly, there is no other book in print that starts



at the very beginning, assuming the reader knows nothing about the history and technology of watches, and teaches in a logical and thorough manner what a budding collector should learn in the first few months of collecting watches.

Richard Watkins is the ideal source for such instruction. He is foremost a teacher, not only by profession but also by mindset, and he is also one of the most systematic, meticulous, and thoughtful persons I know. In addition, he is one of the most thorough scholars of horological history I have ever met. Furthermore, he is an excellent and exceptionally clear writer, one of the very few who was awarded the Fellow designation by NAWCC for his horological writings rather than for service to the organization.

After the introductory chapter (8 pages) the book is organized into five chapters: The Looking Game, 25 pages; The Dating Game, 15 pages; The Movement Game, 28 pages; The Condition Game, 26 pages; and The Collecting Game, 24 pages.

Each chapter is copiously illustrated with detailed closeup photographs of watches from the author's collection. Most photographs are inserted into the text pages to illustrate a specific idea in the text, and the majority have superimposed arrows or captions highlighting the point made.