

Part 4

Horology *in* Art

by Bob Frishman (MA)

Jamie Wyeth's "Screen Door to the Sea," painted in 1994, continues my favorite artistic tradition of the inclusion of timekeeper renderings in fine art. One of America's best-known realist painters, who represents the third generation of an artistic dynasty starting with his grandfather N. C. Wyeth and followed by his father Andrew, Jamie's frequent model, young Orca Bates, shares this scene with a stately mahogany longcase clock.

I first saw this large canvas at the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, ME, where it remains on exhibit. The view is on Monhegan Island, a small bit of rocky land ten miles off the Maine coast where Wyeth lived and worked for many years, painting scenes of everyday life while inhabiting the Lobster Cove home built by another eminent American artist, Rockwell Kent.

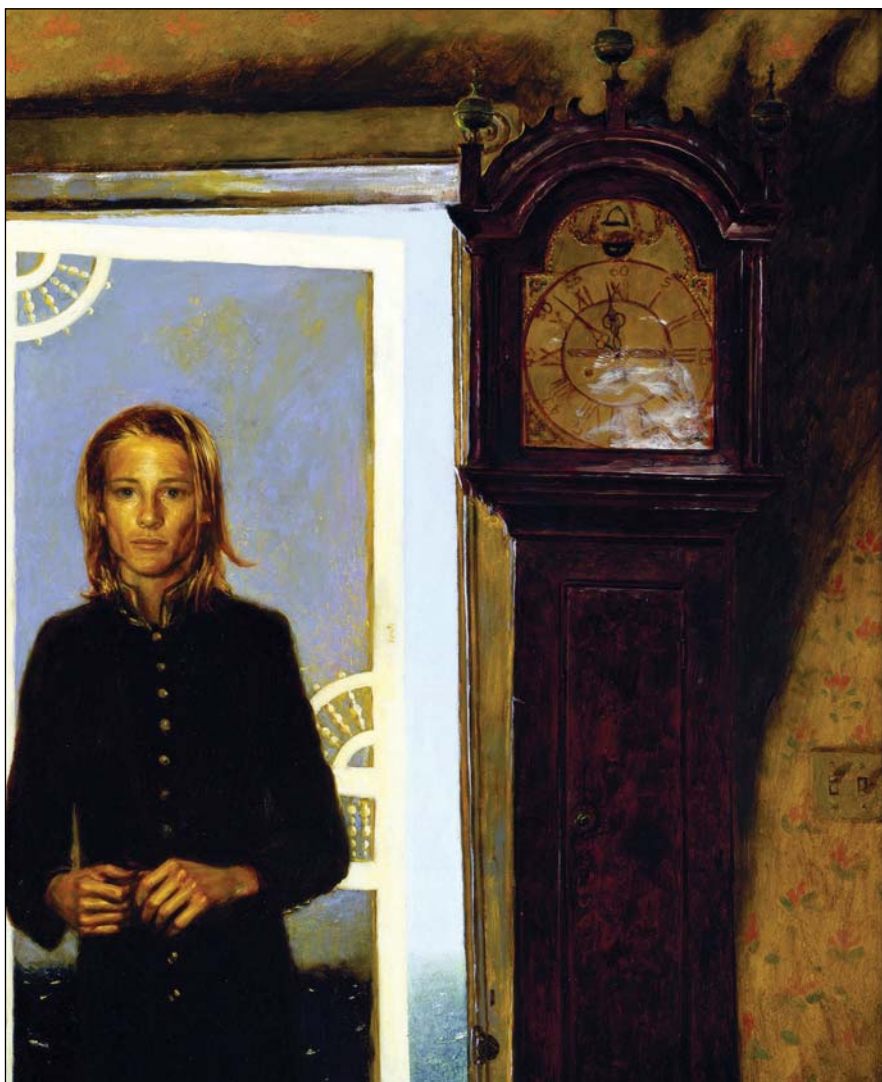
For more than a hundred years, this island has attracted well-known artists, including Robert Henri, George Bellows, and Edward Hopper. My recent summer visit there nearly made me want to trade clock-repair tools for brushes and paint tubes to capture the intense scenery of granite cliffs, crashing waves, the tiny harbor, and sun-bleached New England buildings.

This painting only hints at the dramatic setting, showing us blue sky and old-house decorative elements inside what probably is Wyeth's island home, but the boy's story is interesting in its own right. His "wild-child" existence and innocent good looks made him a frequent model for Wyeth, and there is a revealing article about him by Cindy Anderson in the September 1996 issue of *Yankee Magazine*.

It is easy to speculate that the clock is by a Maine maker although we cannot make out a name or see the entire length of the case. In Joe Kutra's *Clockmakers & Clockmaking in Maine 1720-1900*, published by the NAW-

CC in 2008, we can study several similar examples by James Carey, Edward Moulton, Paul Rogers, Nathan Adams (who also made clocks in my town of Andover, MA), and one by Frederick Wingate on the book's rear cover. I especially appreciate the distinctive carved crest and the painted white dial with a symbolic beehive in its arch.

Born in 1946, Jamie Wyeth gained fame earlier in life for his portraits; his posthumous portrayal of John F. Kennedy is one of the most famous images of that president. Today, he continues to paint at Tenants Harbor Light on Southern Island in Maine, sold to him by his parents, who also appreciated the site's picturesque solitude. Special thanks are due to him for permission to reproduce this image of his painting without charge.



COURTESY OF JAMIE WYETH.

About the Author

Bob Frishman has restored and sold vintage clocks since 1980 and is a past-president of New England Chapter 8. He is a frequent contributor of articles and newsworthy items to the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*. His "Clocks in Art" program was presented at the 2011 NAWCC National Convention. Bob can be reached at www.bell-time.com.