

Community Outreach

Over the years I have given more than 70 horological presentations, at no charge, at historical societies, adult education programs, library friends, etc. I always find great interest, and some future NAWCC members, from telling stories and showing pictures about the history, science, and cultural importance of timekeeping.

In February 2017 I gave two presentations at the historical society in my hometown of Andover, MA, in conjunction with an exhibit of its modest clock and watch collection. The first presentation was titled “History of New England Timekeeping.” The second was given to young children, who attacked the pile of old clocks that I brought for them to take apart and take home. I also wrote a short essay for its Spring 2017 newsletter (see below).

I encourage my fellow members to share their horological interests in various venues. Because nearly all of us got the bug by meeting or hearing a collector or repairer, we should try to create that same passion in others. We owe it to others who don't yet know how much pleasure horology can offer.

—Bob Frishman (MA)



Figure 1. Third-grader Hanzo Valentin really enjoyed working on the old clock movements and tools.

USED WITH PERMISSION.

This Is not a Clock . . . This Is an “Appliance”

by Bob Frishman, Bell-Time Clocks

This Seth Thomas pillar and scroll shelf clock, when brand new in the 1820s, was an exciting purchase. Most likely, it was the first clock for its owners, who probably lived in rural New England, not in a seacoast city where wealthier citizens preferred costly mantel and grandfather clocks from England and France.

Seth Thomas (1785–1859) did not invent this innovative style. It was another clockmaker from central Connecticut, Eli Terry, who sparked the American Industrial Revolution and the factory system of mass-produced interchangeable parts. Thomas worked for Terry and then went on to manufacture tens of thousands of these more affordable clocks for everyday people. The clock's elegant (but fragile) case veneered in mahogany and its colorful painted face and glasses added a

touch of class to homes unlikely to have any other domestic machine.



Figure 2. Seth Thomas pillar and scroll shelf clock. COURTESY OF ANDOVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY, AHS#1976.024.128.

Not only did mass production reduce the price but nearly all of these clocks' daily-wind and weight-powered movements were made from wood: cherry gears, oak plates, and laurel arbors and pinions. It was not until the late 1830s that clock mechanisms made from brass and steel became cheap enough to fully displace wood movement timekeepers.

Those original owners did not go to a store to shop for a clock. A traveling peddler stopped in, demonstrated a sample, took the order, and promised delivery on his next tour. With its steady tick and its ringing on each hour, the clock became a first and treasured household appliance.

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