

## Part 10

# Horology *in* Art

By Bob Frishman (MA)

Edward Hopper is one of America's best known and best loved artists. Four of his major paintings—*New York Interior*, *Tables for Ladies*, *Hotel Lobby*, and *Seven A.M.*—are in my collection of fine-art images with a clock in the scene and can be viewed online. The fourth is our focus in this series installment.

We know much about Hopper's work, thanks to ledger books that he and his wife Joe kept. They contain details about the setting, materials, price, and description of each painting. The Whitney Museum, repository of these ledgers, has kindly made this image available for our publication. The original 30" x 40" oil on canvas artwork may be viewed at their gallery in Manhattan.

The artist spent most of his life in New York City, but he summered on Cape Cod nearly every year between 1930 and his passing. The ledger entry for this painting includes not only the type of paints and the fact that it was painted in his Truro studio in 1948 but also Jo's comments on the contrast of the store's stark white with the forest's dark green. She also wrote about the mysterious nature of the store, because it is not clear what is being sold, and the possibility that it is a speakeasy or front for some shady business.

Hopper began as a magazine illustrator. His realist style was refined while studying with other famous American realists, including Robert Henri and William Merritt Chase, and most of his subjects are views of everyday life. However, it is the light, the silence, the isolation, the unrevealed drama, and the heavy tranquility that make his artwork so compelling. Many of his paintings include a still human figure or two, lost in thought; in an early preliminary sketch of this scene, there was a woman in the upstairs window. She was omitted in the final version, forcing even more attention on the effects of the early morning light and on the opposition of the white paint and the nearby ominous foliage.



Edward Hopper, 1882-1967. *Seven A.M.* (1948). Oil on canvas, overall: 30-3/16" x 40-1/8" (76.7 x 101.9 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase and exchange 50.8. © Whitney Museum of American Art. Photography by Sheldon Collins.

As always with artworks in this series, the clock is not an accidental player, and certainly not here, where it is nearly dead center on the canvas. In many Hopper paintings, time seems to be arrested, waiting to restart when some thought is completed or some decision is made. Here, the long-drop school clock indicates a time—the painting's title—although we cannot be sure that its pendulum has been swinging and that its hands are telling the real time of that moment. We are left holding our breath, hoping to hear the ticking that would prove there will be life after seven a.m.

## 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. He is head of publicity for the upcoming NAWCC Symposium "Time for Everyone," November 7-9, in Pasadena, CA. Bob can be reached at [www.bell-time.com](http://www.bell-time.com).