

Horologica

Contributors this issue are Bob Frishman and Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki.

Member submissions are needed! Share reviews and announcements of new and interesting books, websites, digital media programs, periodicals, exhibits, and all else pertaining to horology. Please send contributions to the editor at ddeLUCCA@NAWCC.org or NAWCC, Inc., 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512-2130, c/o the Publications Dept.

Marking Modern Times by Alexis McCrossen

Published 2013 by The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, ISBN 13:978-0-226-01486-9, 255 pages, \$45.

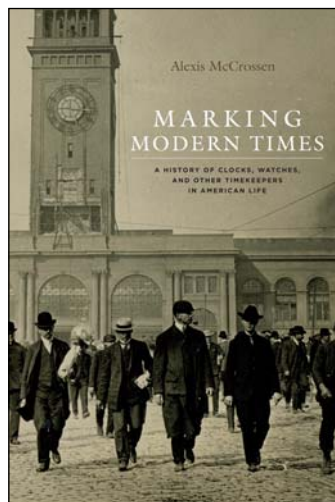
Luckily for us, timekeeping occasionally captures the attention of academics, curators, and journalists who otherwise do not share our members' lifelong passion for clocks and watches. In recent years, I have been happy to read informative and well-written volumes such as *A Republic in Time* by Thomas Allen, *Selling the True Time* by Ian Bartky, *On Time* by Carlene Stephens, *Revolution in Time* by David Landes, and others, which have been reviewed in these pages.

Alexis McCrossen, an associate professor of history at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, now has added to my list her excellent new book, *Marking Modern Times: A History of Clocks, Watches, and Other Timekeepers in American Life*.

I first became aware of her interest in horology in 2010 when I happened upon the spring issue of *Winterthur Portfolio* and noted her lead essay "The 'Very Delicate Construction' of Pocket Watches and Time Consciousness in the Nineteenth-Century United States." She included detailed research on nineteenth-century watchmakers in Northampton, MA, and because I owned four old watch papers from that town, I began communicating with her.

The new book focuses primarily on nineteenth-century America and its transition from a largely agrarian culture, in which time telling was casual and relied mostly on the rhythms of nature, to an urban and mechanized society permeated by large public clocks, ubiquitous household clocks mostly from the factories of Connecticut, watches in nearly every pocket, and standard time zones. Much of the information is familiar and available in the other published texts to which she often refers, but the book presents the material in a well-organized and compelling manner.

Many of the book's details, however, are not as well known and indicate the intensive digging the author has done. Her text demonstrates that she spent countless days examining ledgers, business records, and archives,



and the listing of those sources provides a road map for future scholars. Within her opening acknowledgments are troves such as the American Antiquarian Society, Harvard Business School's Baker Library, the Smithsonian Institution, and our own NAWCC Library.

She also cites the Independence Hall National Historic Park's Archives and devotes much attention to the history of the timekeepers in that iconic building's tower and its associated Liberty Bell. (My related article on the Isaiah Lukens movement in that tower appeared in the December 2008 *NAWCC Bulletin*).

The book offers many relevant illustrations, including old photographs, lithographs, trade cards, and patent application drawings, culled from those archives mentioned above. She also compiled her own tables summarizing public clock types and customers associated with the firms of Seth Thomas and E. Howard.

Sixty-one pages (!) of footnotes follow the final chapter, and these provide nearly another book's worth of information. I encourage all readers to spend time with those pages, too, digesting the facts and references she devoted years to accumulating. I learned, for example, about the 1876 public auction of 45 second-hand chronometers by Boston's William Bond, the report on horology at the Centennial Exhibition that same year, and the order four years later of 36 Howard No. 70 regulators by the U.S. Lighthouse Department.

Of course, with all studies of this depth and scope, a few errors are bound to appear. Page 33 tells us that the Willard banjo clocks had "simple wooden works," page 48 implies that Bond chronometers could be "regulated while at sea," and a footnote on page 207 states that "Since the 1760s, Black Forest clockmakers had been making small clocks without pendulums." Compared with bloopers I find in other writing by non-horologists, these cast no real shadow on the overall work.

Professor McCrossen has made a major contribution to the literature on our subject, and it should spur greater interest in the general public about the history and artifacts of timekeeping. We all should be reading this book and sharing it with our family and friends.

—Bob Frishman (MA)

A Comprehensive—although Francocentric—History of the Watch Key

The Keys of Time – The Comprehensive Book of Watch Keys. By Yves Droz, published in 2012 by the author (simultaneously in English and French language editions of 650