Clocks at the Mount Vernon Hotel

In all my visits to New York City, I had never heard of the Mount Vernon Hotel Museum and Garden. One of the city's oldest buildings still in use, it was built in 1799 as a carriage house for a 23-acre estate named after George Washington's Virginia homestead. An original occupant was Abigail Adams Smith, daughter of John Adams.

After the manor burned, the stone outbuilding, now with a modern address of 421 East 61st Street, operated in the early 1800s as a resort hotel far north of the city boundaries at that time. It later was a private home, an antiques shop, and a museum currently owned and operated by the Colonial Dames of America.

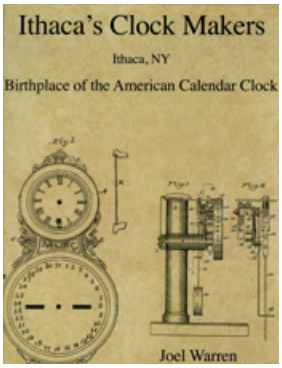
From November 5, 2019 to February 23, 2020, a small clock-related exhibit was mounted by Curator of Collections Ruth Osborne, who welcomed me on a cold December day. The museum has four antique clocks on permanent display, complementing the higher-end furnishings that would have appealed to 1820s hotel guests. There are two French mantel clocks, a Samuel Terry pillar-and-scroll (with later 8-day brass movement), and an 18th-century Japanned tall clock with dial signed by Francis De La Balle who was a 1743 listed London maker.

The exhibit, in the Orientation Room, was titled *Revolutionary Revolutions: Clocks & Industry in Early America*, and in four glass-front cases displayed objects loaned from the King Manor Museum and the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts. These included tools, movements and parts; an Eli Terry & Son transition-case shelf clock; a Jeromes & Darrow looking-glass shelf clock; and a gilt bronze French mantel clock under an oval glass dome. Accompanying wall labels provided historical context and a broader of view of American industrialization led in large part by Connecticut clock-making.

It was gratifying to see that a small museum would make the effort to assemble and create a clock exhibit and offer related programming. We encourage others to do likewise, and I am sure that many NAWCC members would be happy to lend their assistance, expertise, and pieces from their collections. For more information, Ruth Osborne may be reached via www.mvhm.org.

—Bob Frishman, FNAWCC (MA)

Ithaca's Clock Makers: Ithaca, NY Birthplace of the American Calendar Clock



Many NAWCC members know Joel Warren as an expert wood carver, clock case restorer, reproduction clock builder, and lecturer. He also makes replacement Ithaca parts and is extremely knowledgeable about the Ithaca Calendar Clock Co.'s history and clock production. Joel has now added another dimension: he is the author of the new book, *Ithaca's Clock Makers: Ithaca, NY Birthplace of the American Calendar Clock,* published in 2019. This 256-page, full-color book, along with the history of American calendar movements, is an invaluable resource for Ithaca calendar clock collectors. It is the most detailed publication available on the company, its history, and its products. Joel has arranged the book as a reference tool with several categories. It provides pages on which inventors or a particular clock are highlighted, allowing quick answers to questions.

His first chapter, "The Inventors," recounts the many calendar movement inventors and their patents dating from 1853 to 1930. Joel emphasizes Ithaca, NY, was the birthplace of the American calendar clock. He covers the many "contributing" inventors that lived in and around Ithaca, NY, that were not involved with the Ithaca Clock Co. It was not until 1853 that the first practical perpetual calendar was patented. Over the following years more calendar designs and calendar improvements were patented. Calendar clocks began appearing on the market via Ithaca inventors in 1854 through an agreement with Seth Thomas Clock Co.

The following 10 chapters deal with the Ithaca Calendar Clock Co. They begin with its founding in 1865 and continue to its end in 1919. Joel examines the company's growth in 10-year intervals illustrating the various clock models that it produced during each period. He includes excellent-quality color photographs of the cases and movements, technical data, and distinctive case features. He devotes a 19-page chapter to highlighting non-calendar clocks, which the company produced as the demand for and sales of its calendar clocks began a slow but steady decline around 1895.

The last six chapters cover various topics including an interview with Harry Dean, the last surviving Ithaca Calendar Clock Co. employee, Poole electric clocks, and

Time of Our Lives: Sundials of the Adler Planetarium

Many years ago I was given a 1902 book, Alice Morse Earle's *Sun-Dials and Roses of Yesterday*. I later gave the book away but then was gifted another copy. I was glad now to pull it from my shelf as I review a comprehensive new book on the world-class collection of historic sundials at Chicago's Adler Planetarium. The author, Dr. Sara J. Schechner, was Adler's first professional curator back in the 1980s and now serves as curator of Harvard University's Collection of Historic Scientific Instruments (CHSI). *Watch & Clock Bulletin* readers may also look back at her two 1996 articles in issues 302 and 303.

Earle's century-old, 461-page treatise, written in Brooklyn, NY, joins an extended bibliography at the end Schechner's own 474-pager. Illustrations in Earle's book inspired early 20th-century sundials crafted by New York City sculptor Dennis Sheahan, several of which are in the Adler Collection. They are spuriously signed reproductions of centuries-earlier examples, and some have been assumed to be the originals. Sheahan probably did not intend to be a faker, but care has been taken to correctly attribute his work.

The 268 sundials exhaustively described in the new book are appealing instruments from the 15th to 20th centuries, nearly all European and many from the German cities of Augsburg and Nuremberg. As the author explains in her acknowledgments and chapter introductions, she is interested in far more about these artifacts than their antique decorative qualities. They represent advancing technology, expert craftsmanship and scientific applications, increasing time consciousness and timekeeping's growing regulation of daily life, and expanding travel and trade routes. Since she took charge of the Adler collection in 1983, and as she moved to other work venues, she has been intensively studying sundials and steadily working on this publication.

This book represents just 60% of the Adler's sundial collection and focuses on "hour-angle" instruments. A sequel about the remaining 40% is in process and should be completed within a few years. It will provide maker biographies and cover other types of sundials including extremely complicated versions, Asian models, and night time-finders using the moon and stars.

I especially note the book's American sundials. Because sundials must be made or adjusted to local latitudes, usually engraved on the instrument, their origin or planned location can be assumed from those coordinates. (Tide indications hint that the instruments were made for coastal locales.) Based on this, she catalog's Number 19, a circa 1770 pewter horizontal garden sundial, to likely be from the Boston area. Pocket sundials carried by British soldiers in North America could read local times and have been unearthed at Revolutionary battle sites. The author will be speaking about these at our next symposium, "Horology 1776," taking place October 1–3, 2020, in Philadelphia.

Dr. Schechner offers sundial-related references on four iconic Colonial Americans. The introduction of the chapter "Compass Sundials" reports that one of these in 1607 saved Captain John Smith. His Indian captors in Virginia marveled at his ivory portable sundial just long enough for Pocahontas to arrive. Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island after banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636, owned a similar sundial. In the 1757 *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Ben Franklin satirically proposed a sundial design that would blast 78 cannons as the moving sun, focused through magnifiers, ignited their fuses. Franklin also designed the first American currency; it portrayed a sundial and the word "fugio" (I fly) to remind spenders that time is fleeting as well as money.

In the Globe Sundials section, Thomas Jefferson's design for one at Monticello is detailed along with his drawings and handwritten 1816 letter to Benjamin Latrobe about it. The original sphere is lost but a reproduction was installed on the grounds in 2001. "T.J. Fecit Va. A.D.1807" is inscribed on catalog Number 36, suggesting that this sundial was made by Jefferson, but it is one of Dennis Sheahan's circa 1910 creations.

It is impossible to adequately describe or summarize the immense amount of material that this book provides on sundial history, makers, cultural contexts, and each densely catalogued object. Owning and reading the book is required, and would be valuable not only for specialized collectors but also for more general students of history. Viewing the Adler's collection, not just the book's excellent color photographs, would be best, with Schechner's tome in hand. Pedro M.P. Raposo, Curator and Director of Collections, begins the book with a history of the institution that visitors will find illuminating. Before entering the Chicago building, which houses the sole independent planetarium with its own significant astronomical collection, guests can admire an imposing bronze "equatorial" sundial produced in 1980 by sculptor Henry Moore. Of course, interior stargazing—courtesy of a Zeiss projector—is the most popular highlight.

Time of Our Lives: Sundials of the Adler Planetarium, by Sara J. Schechner. Adler Planetarium, Chicago, 2019, 474

Making Marvels: Science and Splendor at the Courts of Europe

Horological collectors and scholars from around the world have long been mesmerized by the one-of-a-kind, over-the-top, unique, and complex timekeepers featured in the top tier of European horological museums. Their splendor is often completely out of proportion to their horological or practical functionality.

To understand this disconnect one must understand the concept of the "princely wunderkammer." Often the term is translated into English as "royal curio cabinet," but that does not fully explain it. Between 1550 and 1750, nearly every continental dynasty amassed huge collections of rare, curious, or amusing objects. The royals and lesser nobility competed for status not only militarily but also by adding unusual and rare items to their collections. At the same time, it was important to them to be seen as educated and interested in science, astronomy, and technical innovation. Complex timekeepers, scientific instruments, and other complex mechanisms became material expressions of power. Studying astronomy or engineering became fashionable for rulers and their offspring.

The book under review, while technically a catalog of a temporary exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York from 2019 to 2020, really is the first comprehensive scholarly text examining all these "wunderkammer" objects, stored for many centuries in various castles and now dispersed among mostly European museums.

The author, Wolfram Koeppe, is a native of Germany, an art historian, and for many years has been a member of the staff of the Museums Department of European Decorative Art (where organizationally horology is attached). He is now responsible for European clocks and watches as well as scientific instruments at the Met.

The exhibit is much more than just a fabulous assembly of 154 historic "princely toys" and assorted mechanical and artistic amusements. One of my favorite objects is the Nürnberg-made 1565 wire-drawing bench (Catalog Number 80) by Danner. It is not only a high-quality tool to manufacture gold and silver wire, but also one of the best and largest surviving example of German Renaissance marquetry furniture. Its permanent home is the French National Museum of the Renaissance near Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris.

Timekeepers and scientific instruments, as well as other clockwork driven mechanisms such as automatons, account for about one-third of the exhibited objects, images, and documents of this special exhibit. The overall quality is extraordinary and in numerous cases they are among the most valued objects in their home museums. The exhibit includes many objects that have not left their home museum in decades, including what this reviewer considers the most innovative timekeeping mechanism of the European Renaissance: the Equation Clock (Mondanomalien Uhr [Lunar anomaly clock]) by the Swiss clock maker Jost Buergi (1591), which is the pride of one of Germany's best horological museums, the Orangerie in Kassel. To see so many unique, world-class mechanical marvels together in one gallery of the New York Met is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

The exhibit's curator Wolfram Koeppe and the Met deserve the gratitude of all horological enthusiasts and scholars globally for suggesting and curating this extraordinary exhibit and making these "princely toys" known to more people, beyond just historians of timekeeping.

The book is not just a scholarly catalog, with often multiple images of the 154 exhibited items, but also includes nine stand-alone essays on related subjects. As expected, given the reputation of the publisher, the end-matter in the book is also of superb quality and most useful. This includes 317 endnotes (mostly sources of quotes), a bibliography listing nearly 700 relevant publications, and a very detailed alphabetical subject index of several hundred entries, as well as comprehensive image credits.

The effort to conceive and execute the exhibit and the catalog must have been tremendous. This reviewer wishes more museum would—or could—document their temporary exhibits as thoroughly as the Met did for *Making Marvels*. Thank you, well done.

Making Marvels: Science and Splendor at the Courts of Europe. Edited Wolfram Koeppe (Exhibit Initiator & Curator). ISBN 978-1-58839-677-8. Published in 2019 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven & London. 30 × 24cm. 308 pages. Hardcover (Brown Linen/Purple imprint, Dustjacket). Available at the Met museum store in New York, or at Amazon.com for $65.

Contributors to *Horologica* may review a horological book, article, website, exhibit, or similar offering. Photographs are encouraged if possible. Submissions should be sent to *Watch & Clock Bulletin* Editor Christiane Odyniec at editor@nawcc.org.