

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Old Wall Clock

The history of clocks and clock making has been a fascinating subject for over 250 years of clock making in this country and of interest to nearly 6,000 American clock and watch makers. As early as 1650 tower clocks are mentioned in American annals and all during the 18th Century a clock in a home was considered a symbol of prosperity.

There is in the Stevenson House, on loan by the Monterey History & Art Assn., a Dutch wall clock, the gift a number of years ago from Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hill Gilbert. It had been given to Mrs. Gilbert by her mother, the late Mrs. Eugene Sage Abbott, who had commissioned a friend to purchase it in Holland.

Once upon a time a number of years ago, Dr. and Mrs. Gordon O'Neil of Seattle visited the Stevenson House and were delighted to see the old Dutch clock and with great enthusiasm told the history of its mate, now in their Seattle home. Very proudly the doctor told, how he met and became engaged to his Dutch wife in her native Holland during World War II. He knew he had been accepted as a future son-in-law when his mother-in-law-to-be presented to him, as an engagement present, the old clock which she prized so highly.

Throughout the war, for fear the clock might be stolen or destroyed, it was boxed, very carefully packed and buried in the garden. When Dr. and Mrs. O'Neil were married, the clock was again carefully packed and shipped to Seattle and put together. It keeps perfect time after 200 years of service.

Mrs. O'Neil, when asked why a pair of mermaids are painted on each side of the tin clockface, replied that the mermaid is a symbol of fairyland in Holland. They appear in a great many of the children's fairy tales, in picture books, and it is legend that in the old days the mermaids lured the Spanish ships to the rocky shore to be wrecked and then the people of Holland could collect the treasures from the wreckage as it was washed upon the beach.

In Casa Soberanes, my home, I have a very fine old grandfather's clock, manufactured by Silas Hoadley of Plymouth, Conn. The works in this clock are all of wood and I understand that no clocks made after 1835 had wooden gears. Silas Hoadley was an apprentice of Eli

Terry who lived 1772-1851. Silas Hoadley lived from 1788 to 1870. The information was obtained from the California Academy of Sciences Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

Silas Hoadley became a carpenter under the tutelage of his uncle, Calvin Hoadley. He worked for Eli Terry who had formed a partnership with Seth Thomas in 1809 in Greystone. Terry retired in 1810 and Thomas in 1812. Hoadley continued to make clocks, mostly cheap ones, until he retired in 1849,