

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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Books On Clocks

In a book published a few years ago "The Book of American Clocks," by Brooks Palmer, the Macmillan Company, the author writes: "Before the Revolution, the tall clock was the only clock made. The maker of the tall clock used only the simplest of tools, hammer, drill, file and sand for casting. After the Revolution smaller types of clocks, as "Wag-on-the-Wall" were made. The Willards of Grafton, Mass., brought the Banjo clock to its final perfection. Not until the beginning of the 19th Century was factory production of clocks begun in America.

A simple type of clock is associated with America, having beauty of design, dignified proportion and quiet ornamentation. At first clockmaking in America was considered an individual trade like that of a cobbler, but shortly before the beginning of the 19th Century it became an industry. Many clockmakers are known today for the examples of workmanship which they left behind. Names probably known best are Eli Teery, Seth Thomas, the Willards and Silas Hoadley.

Today after a century or more of service, a Willard clock can keep as perfect time as the best of the modern machine movements. Such clocks are in demand among collectors, especially if both works and case are genuine.

There are several interesting clocks on display in Monterey. In the Custom House there is a small mantel clock of delicate design, which is probably over 200 years old. It had been ordered in London by the Spanish government, along with two others, for three principal missions in California. When the possessions of the missions were sold, the three clocks were sold for \$500 each in Monterey. James Watson, W.E.P. Hartnell, and James McKinley were the buyers. The one clock was handed down from James Watson to his great-grandson, Paul Pioda of Salinas, who has loaned it for an indefinite period for display at the Custom House.

The Monterey History and Art Association has on loan to the Stevenson House, an old Dutch wall clock, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hill Gilbert, former Monterey residents and now residing in Stockton. It had been given to Mrs. Gilbert by her mother, Mrs. Eugene Sage

Abbott, who had commissioned a friend to purchase it in Holland.

When Dr. and Mrs. Gordon O'Neil of Seattle visited the Stevenson House a few years ago, they were delighted to see the old Dutch clock and, with great enthusiasm, told the curator there the history of its mate, now in their Seattle home. Very proudly the doctor told how he had met and become engaged to his Dutch wife in her native Holland, during World War II. He knew that 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 very highly.

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

Mrs. O'Neil, when asked why a pair of mermaids were painted on each side of the tin clock face, replied that the mermaid is a symbol of fairy land 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 rocky shores to be wrecked and then the people of Holland could collect the treasures from the wreckage as it washed upon the beach.

Also in the small upstairs in the Stevenson House there is a mantel clock in a walnut case 32 inches high including brass knobs on top; 17 inches wide and 5 inches deep. Door in front has two glass panels. A large label pasted on the back, inside, with "Waterbury Clock Co" etc. printed, and the date "Nov. 26, 1860" written in pencil. This clock once belonged in the Gonzales family. It was purchased by the History and Art Association and is on loan to the Stevenson House.

In Casa Serrano, the headquarters of the History and Art Association, there are two ancient and interesting clocks. A small mantel clock shows the evidence that it went through the San Francisco earthquake and fire. It still keeps perfect time when wound.

Another larger but still a mantel clock is on a windowsill in the parlor. When it was presented to the association by the Monterey Peninsula Volunteer Services, it was a complete wreck. A friend of the History and Art Association offered to try to put it back together again if

possible and make it keep time again. He did just that
and it also keeps perfect time in its new home.