



CLEANING ENAMEL WATCH DIALS

By Dave Coatsworth

It is inevitable that most enamel pocket watch dials will develop hairline cracks. This exposes a rougher surface that dirt, smoke and other contaminants will adhere to over time. The result is visible hairline cracks on what might otherwise be a very attractive pocket watch dial. Fortunately there are safe techniques for cleaning enamel dials that will, in most cases, make these hairlines virtually disappear.

First, a few words of caution. Do not use either of these techniques on painted or metal dials. The Comet Bathroom Cleaner is actually a very good paint remover when used undiluted. (Yes, I learned this the hard way!) Also, make sure everything on the dial is fired into the enamel. You may have seen pocket watch dials that have had photos or other decoration applied by the jeweler who sold the watch. These cleaning methods will most likely remove these decorations so dials like this are best left as-is. Finally, use these methods with great caution on early American dials that use shellac instead of solder to hold the seconds bit as you could very easily end up loosening the shellac.

In order to clean enamel pocket watch dials, you do not need to buy an expensive 'dial cleaner' from an online source. The two most commonly used, as well as best, cleaners are available at your local Walmart! The first cleaner, and the one that I prefer, is Comet Bathroom Cleaner. Note that this is the liquid cleaner. It is not a cleanser, nor does it contain any abrasives. I have only been able to find this at Walmart. The second cleaning substance is Polident which is, of course, available at any drug store. I have only used the overnight variety and can not comment on the 'fast acting' varieties. (No, if you use the mint flavored Polident you can not later claim that your dial is in 'mint' condition!)



Regardless of which cleaner you use, you will need a glass jar or plastic food storage container, a piece of brass wire and a stick or rod of some sort.

Bend the brass wire into the shape shown in fig 1.



Figure 1

You are going to suspend the dial from the hook end so the length of your hook needs to be long enough to completely submerge the dial in the cleaner but short enough to keep the dial suspended in the liquid. Figure 2 shows how the hook is threaded through the dial holes. The hook end is run through the hole in the seconds bit and back up through the center hole. The dial should be suspended face-down so dirt that is loosened will fall to the

bottom of the container. Once you have verified the length of your hook, remove it from the container.

Fill the container about 3/4 full of the undiluted Comet Bathroom Cleaner if that is what you have chosen to use. Place your dial face-down on the hook and suspend it from the top of the container using a stick or rod. (As shown in fig 3)



Figure 2



Figure 3

Let it sit for 10 to 15 minutes. At the end of this time, remove the dial. If you still see surface dirt, rub the dial gently with your thumb to loosen this dirt further, then rinse under room-temperature water. (Using water that is very hot or very cold could cause additional cracks to

develop.) Most dials will look very nice at this point. However, severely stained dials may need to go back for a second, much longer, soak.

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(818) 718-8300 • internut@socal.rr.com

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EDITOR

Ken McWilliams

Web Site:

www.nawcc-ch190.com

WEBMASTER

David Coatsworth

dave@biswebdesign.com

E-Mail For Newsletter:
internut@socal.rr.com

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

The May meeting had a great program and a very nice turn out, we added 5 new members to bring our total membership to 80. Again everyone in the Chapter is to be congratulated for taking good care of our visitors and new members.

The Chapter is now officially incorporated as a Public Benefit, non profit corporation for educational purposes. The Board wishes to make the Chapter financial report available to all members. These reports will be available at all Chapter meetings. The reports will also be available by individual request.

In the spirit of openness, the Board meetings are open to any Chapter members that wishes to attend. The Board meetings are held at 10:45 prior to the monthly meetings.

The Santa Paula Tower Clock project is well under way. Dick Henderson's committee has really been inspired with working on the 100 year old Seth Thomas clock. The committee members are having some fun up in the old Belfry at the ODD FELLOWS HALL.

An Educational committee chaired by Paul Skeels is working to set up classes and workshops at Ventura College. The committee consists of Ferdinand Geitner, Jim Chamberlain, Ken McWilliams and George Gaglini all gifted teachers. They have heard from some members as to what classes are needed. If you have an idea or class need please express it to a committee member.

The May lunch was well received and will be a regular part of the meeting. Lunch is optional for \$5, children free; the basic entrance fee of \$3 still includes coffee and dessert.

The June meeting topic will be "American Wood Works Clocks" and will be presented by Bill Robinson.

The Show and Tell portion will be Wood Works Clocks and Your Favorite Wrist Watch.

See you all at the next meeting

Mike



Happy Birthday

**Richard Banks, Darrell Jones,
Tom McKnett, Glen Webb.**

*"Our character is what we do when
we think no one is looking.."*

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Ventura Chapter 190 people

Each issue of our newsletter will feature members of our chapter with a short biography or some of their horological interests to help us get to know each other.

Syed Zaki Salahuddin

By George Gaglini

The watches and clocks that show up at the Chapter 190 meetings are very interesting but our members can be downright fascinating to say the least. Take, for instance, new member Syed Zaki Salahuddin.

Zaki was born in India and educated in Bangladesh. As a child, he was old enough to remember the genocide that killed approximately eleven million inhabitants of his homeland after the British divided the country into three major sections: West Pakistan, East Pakistan, and India. A second genocide that took place when he was a young adult convinced Zaki to migrate to the United States where his devotion to scientific research flourished at the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, and the University of California, Los Angeles.

Zaki is CEO and Director of the Ventura based California Institute of Molecular Medicine. He is a scientist with major interests in Hematopoietic cells, regulatory events, viruses and cell-virus interaction.

In 1997 he joined the California Institute of Molecular Medicine as head of Basic Science Research focusing on human hepatitis C, liver diseases and other complex molecular subjects. He has authored a book, one hundred-forty scientific articles, and holds forty-two patents in the field of molecular medicine.

In addition to science, Zaki enjoys birds and is an ardent admirer of "boutique" watches with an extensive collection that includes hundreds of some of the most unique and precious watches in the world. The research students who come from all parts of the globe to study with the master in Zaki's state-of-the-art Ventura science laboratories will find, among the centrifuges, test tubes, cryogenic canisters and other sophisticated gear, drawers full, bags full, cases full, and boxes full of the most fascinating examples of the watchmaking art. And, with collector friends all over the world helping him, Zaki has no plans to quit collecting watches. He is a most welcome new member of Chapter 190. ■



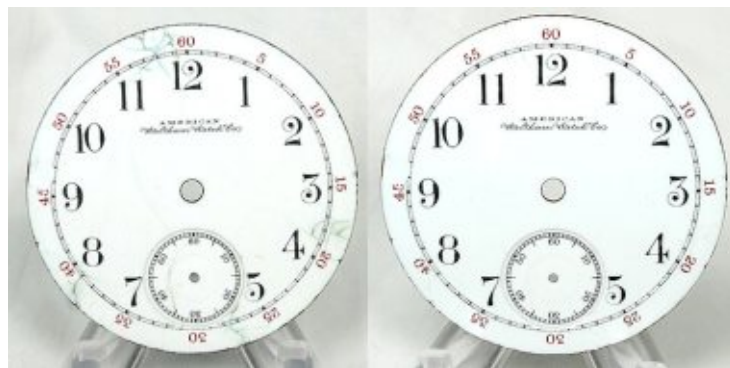
Zaki (left) shopping the mart

(Dial cleaning. continued from pg 1)

You may also want to try the Polident method if the Comet Bathroom Cleaner is not producing the desired result. The Comet cleaner may be capped and re-used until it becomes too dirty.

If you are using Polident, fill the container 3/4 full with water. (If you live in a hard water area, you may want to use bottled water.) Next, suspend the dial on the hook and suspend the hook from the top of the container so that the dial is completely submerged. Again, the dial should be face-down. Drop in the Polident tablet and leave it overnight to do its work. Some people who use this method place the container on top of their refrigerator as the vibration from the refrigerator motor will provide some agitation. The next morning, remove the dial and rinse in room temperature water.

Below you will see before and after photos of two dials. The first dial is a rather extreme example. This dial was soaked in the Comet cleaner for about one hour. The hairlines were still visible after this, so I also soaked it overnight in Polident. While the dial looks much better, some of the hairlines are still visible. Further soaking may improve this. The second example is a more 'normal' example. This dial was simply soaked in the Comet cleaner for a couple of hours which produced very nice results. ■



Welcome New Members

Richard Banks, Clara Jackson

Robert Mell, Syed Zaki Salahuddin

Phillip Sandoz, Jack and Teresa Upton



MAY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

By Mike Schmidt

The meeting started with members buying, selling, bargaining and trading at the Mart. A few nice watches and clocks were exchanged. These activities were rewarded with a nice lunch of pizza, salad and a delicious piece of carrot cake for dessert.

The program “Evaluating and Dating Clocks” was presented by Ken McWilliams. Ken gave a PowerPoint presentation that demonstrated how to use a numerical system to grade clocks. This method takes out some of the emotion that sometimes clouds our judgments when buying a clock. The system can also be used for selling a clock. Ken emphasized the importance of rarity and quality when valuing a clock. By utilizing this system and the pricing resources available, we can all do a better job of buying and selling.

The pricing resources suggested were, “Tran Du Ly' clock books, AntiqueClocksPriceGuide.com and EBAY.

Ken gave a demonstration on how to use the advanced search on EBAY to find detailed prior sales records. The listings for specific types of clocks were several pages long. This information was absorbed with much participation by all who attended.

The SHOW and TELL this month was Seth Thomas Clocks, City series, or your favorite Seth Thomas clock. Mike Schmidt offered a city series clock “Minster” an 1883 clock with a 15 day movement. Dave Coatsworth presented a favorite Seth Thomas Double Dial Calendar clock, Terry Flynn offered 4 very nice city series clocks, a Chicago, Chester, Athens and Nashville.

We also learned about how to date these clocks from Ken McWilliams. Seth Thomas stamped the back of the wood cases with a letter and the year in reverse order. Example A9781 the “A” stands for January and if you reverse the number you get January 1879. It so happened, that Terry's clocks were all made in January of different years.

The last to show was Tom McKnett, who presented a favorite Seth Thomas Hanging Ships Bell Clock.

We had 43 people attend the meeting, with 35 people attending the program. We also gained 5 new members for Chapter 190 and 2 new members for NAWCC. ■



The Digital Camera as a Repair Tool

By Dave Coatsworth

Sitting alongside my many vintage and antique watch repair tools is one very modern tool: my digital camera.

The first use of the digital camera is as an aid in re-assembly of the watch. Most early watch repair books suggest making sketches of the movement as you take it apart. For those of us who are artistically challenged, this may prove to be of very little help when it comes time to reassemble the watch, especially if several weeks or months have passed while you searched for a hard-to-find replacement part. Instead of sketching, I simply have my digital camera ready as I disassemble the movement and snap photos as I expose hidden areas of the watch. Perfect lighting and a perfect camera angle is not important here. These photos are for your own use and are only intended to jog your memory as you are reassembling the watch. I just snap photos of the movement as it lies on my bench. The photos below show typical train and pillar plate photos that I take during disassembly.



Lighting and camera position are more important with these photos as you want to provide a clear image of the parts and of the serial numbers. I take these photos against a white background and under my photo lights.

Finally, a digital camera may allow you, in certain cases, to get a better look at a small part if the camera has a good macro capability. The photo below is of a pallet fork from a 0-size Waltham watch. I had suspected that the guard finger was slightly off-center but was having trouble getting a stable and perfectly perpendicular look at this with a loupe. Instead, I positioned the pallet fork where I could a photo from directly overhead to clearly see the relationship between the guard finger and the fork slot.



Another useful example is the case where you need to count the number of teeth on a wheel. In this case, you can take a photo directly above the wheel, blow it up with your favorite photo editor and print it.

The camera I use is the Nikon Coolpix 4800. The Nikon family of digital cameras seem to be one of the most appropriate choices for watch collectors due to their extraordinary macro capabilities. The Coolpix 4800 allows me to get within one-half inch of my subject.



Lessons From The Trenches

by Paul Skeels

As one who started collecting and repairing watches only last year, I'd like to share with my fellow newbies a few painfully revealed truths. I learn everything the hard way, and sometimes required several lessons, but perhaps these tidbits will help you avoid some unnecessary pain and suffering:

1. Don't squeeze the tweezers. The instant you squeeze too hard, that screw or jewel will fly off into space, rarely to be seen again.
2. Hunch over your work bench when manipulating small parts to increase the chances that when they do try to fly into space they will bounce off of you and onto the bench.
3. Spread a white towel over your lap when you work to improve your odds of catching a falling part before it hits the floor and gets lost in the carpet fibers.
4. When a part misses the towel and hits the floor - especially if it is an escape wheel - and you are going to have to get down on your hands and knees to do a carpet search, do not move your foot until you are positive the part does not lie at the exact spot where you want to put your foot.
5. If you use a brush to clean a small part, be careful to hold the part in such a way that it will not fly off into space when the bristles spring back with greater than expected force.
6. When loosening or tightening a screw, brace your fingers, thumbs, etc., in such a way that you do not allow your screwdriver to slip and scrape across the plate, case, or bridge.
7. Be very careful to brace your fingers, screwdriver, and work firmly when you attempt to loosen a hairspring stud, so that your screwdriver does not slip into and ruin the hairspring.
8. Remind yourself that pivots are delicate and easy to break, and take plenty of time to tighten each bridge very gradually so you can be sure that all pivots are properly in their jewel holes, otherwise one or more pivots will snap.
9. If a screw does not go back easily into the hole from which you removed it, you are probably trying to put it into the wrong hole.
10. When you go to show your spouse your newly repaired pocket watch, do not allow it to slip from your fingers and hit the floor because a balance pivot will break and you will have to start over.
11. When you get frustrated, don't take it out on the poor watch. Take a breather instead. ■



COMING EVENTS

Chapter 75 Meeting & Mart

Sunday, June 25th

For info call Ken McWilliams
(818) 718-8300

Next Chapter 190 Meeting

July 15th

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Will be June 17, 2007

Sellers may start setting up at 11:30

The Mart is open from 12:00 til 1:15

The Meeting starts at 1:30

PROGRAM

"American Wood Works Clocks"

**Bill Robinson will present a slide show
and narrative on these fascinating clocks**

SHOW & TELL

Wood Works Clocks and Your Favorite Wrist Watch

CLASSIFIED PAGE

This page is dedicated to advertising for Chapter 190 members. It is, of course, free to members.

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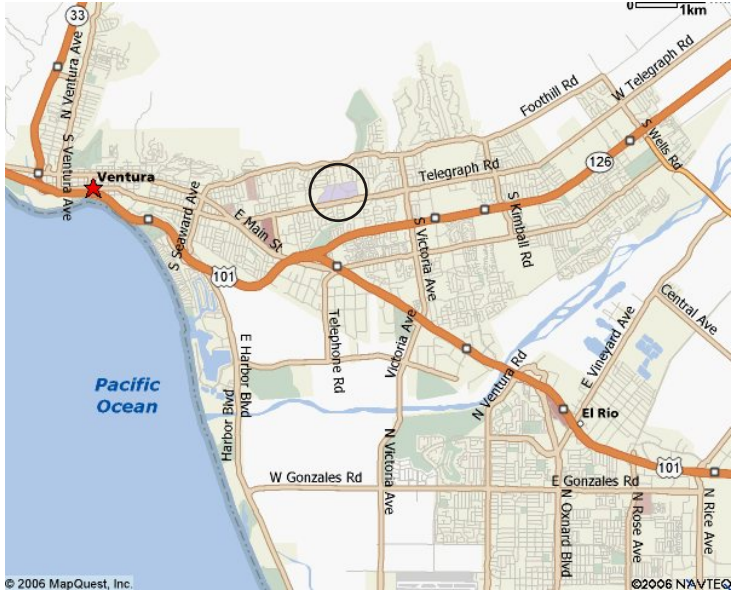
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**The Chapter 190 meetings are held the third Sunday of each month. (No meeting in December)
 We will meet in the cafeteria on the Ventura College campus. The cafeteria is located in building "B", east of the gym and athletic field.**



Hope to see you there!

June 2007 Issue

JUNE 17
NEXT MEETING

Chrono Times
 If Undeliverable return To:
 17738 Superior St. Unit 21
 Northridge, CA 91325