

**Restoring An Adamantine Finish***by Mostyn Gale*

Probably most people that have been around clocks for long have seen a mantle clock with an adamantine finish. As far as I know, no one knows exactly what this finish is or how it was prepared. It is a kind of very thin plastic veneer on a wood base, often black, but sometimes with a marbled appearance. Over time this finish not only gets dirty but also grays with a kind of oxidation that does not clean off. Seems a shame to have a clock that is working very nicely but doesn't show itself off as well as possible. I was recently given such a clock for restoration. Other than the finish and the usual movement repairs, this is a nice Seth Thomas mantle clock from around the turn of the century. This article is about restoring this finish not just cleaning it.

***The clock as I received it.***

Realizing that this was a delicate surface, I searched the internet to see what I could find about how to restore it. Unfortunately, what I found was only effective at cleaning the old dirt and oils on the surface of the finish but nothing could address the "oxidation." So, I set about experimenting on unseen parts of the finish. I experimented with several different materials before arriving at one that I thought was safe and effective. I am sure that some of you will gasp when I tell you that the cleaner I used was paint remover! Of course, I did not use it in the way you would normally use it, i.e., splash a lot of it on with a brush and let it sit. Paint removers often contain acetone, which on plastic is a disaster! In essence, acetone melts plastic. I used it very sparingly on a rag, wiped off excess, and then rubbed it on, similar to what you might do if you were doing a French polish on shellac.

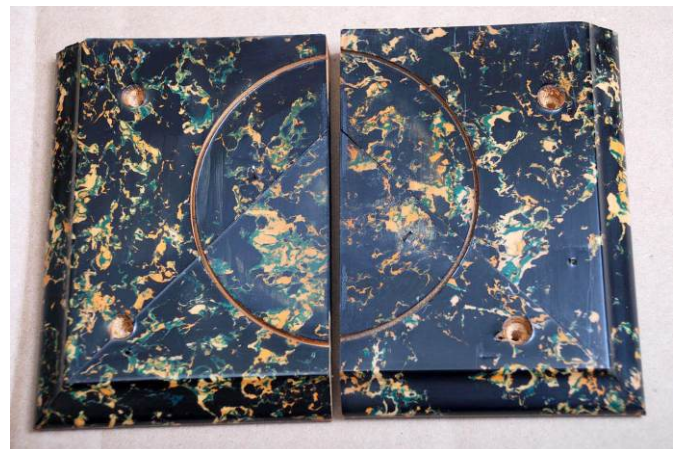
I believe that the contents of the paint remover were

actually able to penetrate the surface and remove the oxidation. This was not a case of removing some of the veneer to expose a new surface. While I did not try it, I don't believe that sanding the surface with fine grit sandpaper would have accomplished the same effect. Sanding would make the already thin veneer, that much thinner and dangerously close to penetrating through to the wood subsurface.

Since there was some acetone in the paint remover, I still had to be careful that I did not melt the adamantine with excessive remover or hard pressure that would mark the surface. As the remover dried, I kept rubbing lightly and this removed any rub marks that might still be in the finish.

After the surface was well dry, I polished it with 600 and then 1200 grit polishing papers and finally, with a coat of Renaissance wax, buffed it to a nice shine.

Caution: I hesitate to share this experience because I don't want anyone to run out and try this on their heirloom clock, in fact, I don't recommend it. This is not a reversible process and repairing a mistake is impossible. However, I am very pleased with the result that I achieved. ■

***The pedestals before restoring******The pedestals after restoring***

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Mike Schmidt

The October 21st meeting will be held in Santa Barbara at the Historic Santa Barbara County Courthouse for members who have RSVP'd. A docent led tour of the Courthouse and The Bisno-Schall Clock Gallery will be the meeting. Over 60 Chapter members, family and invited friends have made reservations to partake in a lunch and then the tours. The Santa Barbara County Courthouse, a designated National Historic Landmark, is the second most visited historical sites in Santa Barbara. The star of our meeting along with the Historic Courthouse will be, of course, the clock gallery and the restored Seth Thomas #18 three train tower clock.



There will be no meeting at Ventura College in October.

By now all of you who are NAWCC members in California will have received a message from me thru a bulk mailing program. The Ventura and Santa Barbara Chapter 190 has assumed the notification duties of the California Council of Chapters. We will be sending you emails in regards to activities that may be of interest to California members of the NAWCC. These will be announcements of California Regionals, Chapter Marts, Clock and Watch Field Suitcase Workshops, Auctions and other activities that may be of interest to all.

We all thank Mary Ann Wahlner for her past service as President of the California Council of Chapters. For many years Mary Ann provided the above announcement information service. Mary Ann, who now resides in Scottsdale Arizona, is presently an officer on the NAWCC Board. As Secretary, she continues to stay busy and very involved in the NAWCC.

I want to thank our member Chris Martin, from Palm Dessert, who has taken on the task of setting up and maintaining the bulk mail programs. Chris will be sending the information notifications to approximately 1,800 California NAWCC members.

To all Chapter presidents or those in charge of a Regional, you can send your announcements to me and I will forward them to Chris Martin.

Here is a chance to save \$35, just go to page 72 in the current MART. The NAWCC is offering to reduce your annual dues by \$35 if you recruit a new member. Help yourself, help the NAWCC and help your chapter grow.

Next month we will resume our normal schedule with the November meeting. We will be back at Ventura College, Sunday, November 18 with workshops, lunch, and a Winter Mart. The program will be "Making Clock Weights" and it will be presented by Ray Marsolek.

I hope to see you Sunday Oct 21, in Santa Barbara or next month in Ventura.

Mike Schmidt



Happy Birthday

Larry Lopes, Marco Perez,
Richard Purnell, and Richard Schall

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by Ken McWilliams

Question.

I recently inherited four antique mantel clocks. Two have labels on the back that show the manufacture and model names. The other two are Seth Thomas and do not show anything in the way of identification. I did notice however, that there is a stamp on the bottom of each clock with what I suppose is the model number code. I would like to learn as much about my clocks as I can, so is there some sort of conversion for these numbers? The numbers are 9881C and 5091A.

Answer.

The numbers on the bottom of your clocks are actually the manufacturer's date code. For some reason, Seth Thomas decided not to just print the date, but instead created an encryption. It's not difficult to break their code. The numbers are simply the year backwards, and the letter is the month, starting with A and ending with L. So the number 9881C would be March, 1889, and 5091A would be January, 1905. Seth Thomas applied this code to many of their clocks from 1881 to 1918.

Question.

I have been to many clock repair workshops and suitcase classes, but have left confused over one aspect of clock repair. That area is about lantern pinions. I have had instructors who vehemently insist that the trundles (pins) should be loose and free to turn, while other instructors claim that just the opposite is true. Most of the clocks that I have seen have tight trundles. Is there a right or wrong on this issue.

Answer.

I have heard arguments on both sides of this subject as well. And yes, there is a right or correct way to make or repair lantern pinions. The common lantern pinion is designed to roll on the tooth of the wheel as it turns. The trundle should be fixed, or immobile, in the pinion housing. It should not be free to turn. In the early 1800s, clockmaker Joseph Ives did invent a rolling trundle lantern pinion to reduce overall friction. These were very short-lived due to the fact that they had to be lubricated, just like a pivot, and would wear out prematurely.

Lantern pinions get a bad rap, as they are considered cheap and inferior to cut pinions. The truth is, they are very well suited for step-up gear trains such as we find in clocks. They have low friction, not as susceptible to dirt as cut pinions are, and are very forgiving of small errors of alignment. In step down gear trains, where the pinion is driving the wheel, they would fail miserably. Ward Goodrich's book, "Modern Clock," has a very good section on lantern pinions.

Question.

I have a Tiffany never-wind clock that will only run a little over one month. I always use fresh 4.5 V batteries, and I have checked the mechanism and wiring dozens of times but without any success. What am I overlooking?

Answer.

This is a difficult one to troubleshoot long-distance. First, there are several Tiffany never-wind movements. You said that you are using 4.5 V batteries which suggests that you have a double contact model. The single contact model will run

quite reliably on 3 V. The most probable culprit is that the contacts are staying closed too long, or the pin is not insulated and is making contact with other parts, thus draining the battery prematurely. Watch this area very closely as the clock operates and you will most likely find the cause. Even the best running clock will only run for about nine months on new batteries.

Question.

I learned in the NAWCC suitcase classes how to repair strip pallets. I have one from a New Haven clock that has me puzzled. The pallets had deep grooves which I knew had to be corrected. I annealed the pallets by heating them and let them slowly cool, filed the grooves out, and polished them to a mirror finish. I then heated the pallets to cherry red and plunged it into cold water to harden them. After I did this, they remained soft and failed the file test. I have done this several times, with the same results. The finish on the pallets is very good so I will probably use them as he is.

Answer.

It is hard to guess what may have gone wrong in the hardening process. It sounds like you have done everything correctly and it may not have been your wrongdoing. Assuming that high carbon steel was used to make the original strip pallet, someone may have greatly overheated it at some time, and it will now be impossible to harden. You will have no option other than replace the strip pallet.

Do not even consider using the strip pallet in its present state. New groove marks will begin forming within weeks.

Question.

I recently overhauled a grandfather clock movement. It is an Ergos, chain drive, triple chime, that is about 20 years old. The overhaul went well, ran for several days on my test stand and then installed it into my customer's homemade case. After about 10 min. running, the pendulum bob started to hit one side of the narrow wasted case. I rechecked everything, the movement is centered on the seat board, the pallets are set at the correct depth for equal drop, and it is in beat. What alteration can I make to reduce the pendulum's arc?

Answer.

First, let me say that it sounds like you have done an excellent job of overhauling the movement and it is running at peak performance. Anything that you may do to alter what you have done, will degrade the efficiency of the movement. Since the clock has been running for 20 years, we have to assume that something has changed.

Two things come to mind. It may well be that the movement was never properly set up when it was originally installed. By cleaning the gunk off the pallets, polishing the pivots, and applying fresh oil, the movement may be transmitting a bit more energy to the pendulum than it did before. Another possibility, and this is an easy one to check, you may have mixed up the weights when you reinstalled the movement. The time train, center weight, requires the least amount of weight to operate. The chime train, right weight, requires the heaviest to operate. The strike train, left weight, is usually slightly more than the time weight or the same as the chime weight. If the chime weight was put on the time train it could easily account for the over swing. Hopefully, this is what happened, If not you may have to find a smaller diameter bob for the pendulum. ■

2012 Time Symposium Report

by Mostyn Gale

I went to the Ward Francillon Time Symposium this year for all the wrong reasons - well not entirely. I came back from the Symposium with a very different perspective. Let me explain:

Carriage clocks, the subject of this year's symposium, are not a category of clock that I have paid particular attention to. I like carriage clocks but would probably not have chosen to go to this symposium for that reason alone. Of course, I knew that I would learn something even if I don't have many carriage clocks myself. (I actually only own one.) The main reason I went was because I am the chairman for next year's symposium and I felt somewhat committed to support this forum. How could I expect others to come to "my" symposium if I am not willing to go to theirs. I also wanted to support Jim Cipra who has put so much time and effort into making these happen and to making them quality events for education.

That's why I went but what did I come back with? Of course, all the reasons I went were fulfilled by definition but I gained so much more that I didn't expect. I learned far more educationally than I ever expected to and I also gained other things of more importance.

First, I had the privilege to listen to and learn from some world experts in their areas. Some of the details they shared will never be read in a book and certainly the passion with which they spoke will never be communicated on paper. Do I need to remember all the things they shared - NO. but some things I probably will remember and more importantly, when I listen to them, I am encouraged to go back home and do what I do with as much vigor as these folks have done what they do.

Second, I am broadened by getting another glimpse into how big this world of horology is. As I listen to the different talks I am filled with ideas about things that I could do or ideas about how to solve a problem that I have had or just made aware of things to look out for. Perhaps identification techniques or resources available for research. The list is very long. There are so many really important things that can be done in horology that would be both fun and beneficial to everyone. From repair techniques and materials to historical research.

Third, there is the getting to know other people who have similar interests. If you know me, you know that I am not the most outgoing, gregarious type of person. However, I push myself and make a little effort to meet new people and what I learn is that many of them

are very friendly and our discussions are an encouragement to both of us. you gain energy and enthusiasm from others who have the same interests as you. This is not a quantifiable thing but is significant all the same.

Fourth, I got to see the best collection of carriage clocks in one place that I may ever see in my lifetime. You have to see these things in person - photos don't do them justice.

There are too many things to mention in a writing like this but I leave you with two challenges: (1) plan now to attend next year's symposium - you will likely never get the opportunity again to hear so many experts speak about our favorite topic. (2) I challenge any reader that does not have a particular focus of something they are doing to find something and get to it so that we can all learn from you. You will be surprised how quickly you can become the expert!

Things die if you don't feed and water them, your interest and ability to participate in horological activities grows as you feed and water it, don't let it die, get involved in a learning activity and go to a symposium! ■



Tales From the Bench

by Ferdinand Geitner

How Old Is It? Who Made It?

These questions are on everyone's tongue when looking at an exquisite, unique antique. As we all know, often there is not an easy answer to these questions.

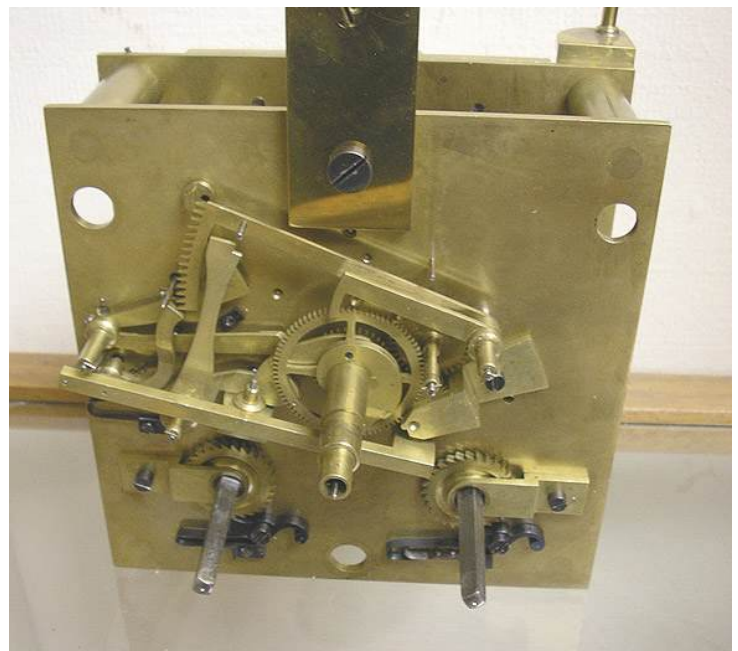
I recently picked up an exquisite movement for service and was obviously impressed (see picture) by the grandeur and detail of the case and movement. The

movement has a different layout than the “normal” design of French movements. It is spring driven by large barrels and has a 1/4 and hour strike on two bells with a mechanism that changes the hammers from a two bell strike at the quarters to a single (bigger) bell strike on the hour. There is a roller on one lifting arm so that there is less friction than a pin on a pin. That's attention to detail. The escapement is different, too (see picture). There are two extra levers behind the dial that facilitate the change-over of the hammers. One works off the cannon pinion to restrict the movement of the rack, making it drop only 1 to 3 spaces at the quarters and the other lever works off the minute wheel engaging and disengaging one hammer, changing it from a ting tang strike to a single hour strike on the big bell.

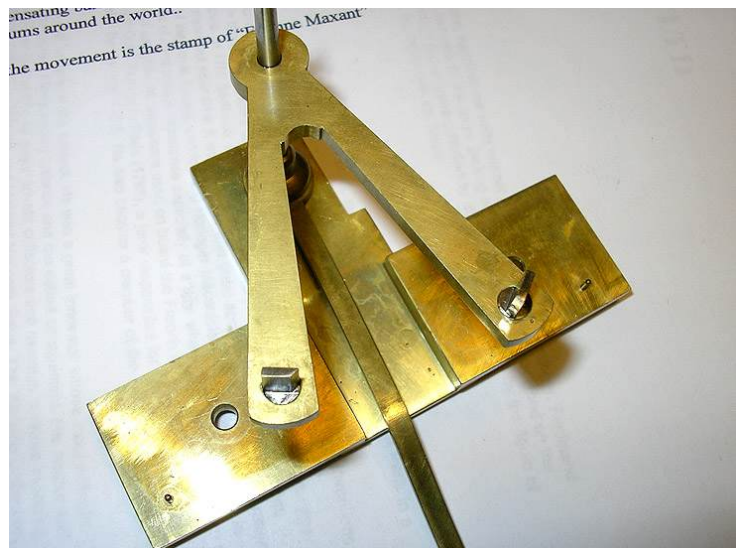
On the dial it said, “Ferdinand Berthoud,” who was one of the finest makers of the period (1727 - 1807) and the quest for accurate timekeeping owes much to his numerous inventions, innovations, and writings. Berthoud not only made many complex and quality pieces but also wrote more than 4,000 pages on horology. Some of his notable inventions included are the “Oeuvre Compensating Balance” and the “Detent Escapement.” His clocks are displayed in major museums around the world.

On the movement is the stamp of “Etienne Maxant” who has his own patents and innovations such as, the keyless clock “winged winding,” but is of a later period. (1800's) So one has to work out the discrepancies and do a lot of research.

But in the end, whoever made this clock did not follow the “norm” but created an outstanding timepiece. ■



Hour and quarter hour strike movement



Pallets and arbor

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

October's Meeting will be at the Santa Barbara Courthouse



Where:

The Mural Room in the Santa Barbara Courthouse

Address

1100 Anacapa St. Downtown Santa Barbara

When:

11:00 am Sunday, October 21, 2012

Parking:

There is a parking garage across the street from the courthouse. Easy walking distance.

Lunch:

Chapter 190 is catering the lunch, which will be the first thing on the agenda, so be on time.

Tours:

After lunch, we will split into groups for tours of the courthouse and the clock gallery.

Registration:

You must be registered in advance with Mike Schmidt to attend this meeting.

See last page for map

The following workshops will be scheduled for 2012 and 2013:

Sherline Lathe Workshop - Intermediate tool making.
Instructor: Ken McWilliams (Date to be determined)

FSW 301 Beginning Pocket Watch Repair Workshop-
December 7-10, Instructor Ferdinand Geitner,
Contact Mike Schmidt 805 988 1764
email: eaglecreekclocks@msn.com

FSW 302 Beginning Wrist Watch Repair Workshop
-January 11-14, 2013, Instructor Ferdinand Geitner,
Contact Zaki Salahuddin 805 654-8552
email: phoenix@cimm.net

FSW 101 Beginning Clock Repair, Dates to be
announced, Instructor Lex Rooker
Contact Mike Schmidt 805 988 1764 email
eaglecreekclocks@msn.com

F510 Clock Camp I- This is 2 day course for students
who have completed the F101 and 102and want a
Refresher course of that material

F511 Clock Camp II- This is a 2 day course for students
who have completed the 103 and 104 and want a
refresher course for that material

*Suggestions for chapter 190 workshops,
demonstrations, or programs are always welcome.
Contact any board member with your ideas.*



CLASSIFIED PAGE

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

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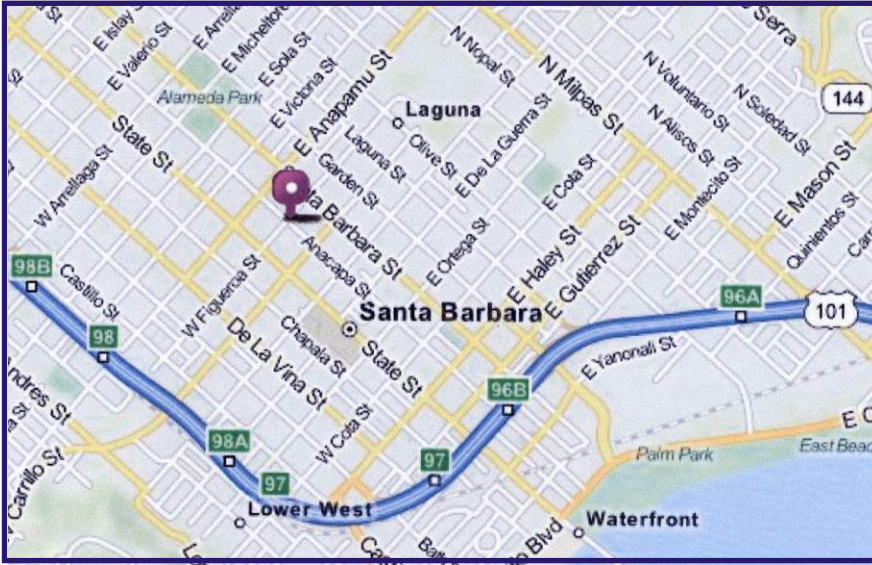
Loren Miller, **Pacific Coast Clocks**
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Located in Firehouse Plaza (Main St. & Telephone Rd.)
Tel. 805-650-8800

- Chronometer -

Hamilton 21 Marine Chronometer in running condition, with
inner box and gimbals; outer box not essential.

Please contact: Giorgio Perissinotto
E-mail: giorgio@spanport.ucsb.edu

The Courthouse is located at 1100 Anacapa Street, in downtown Santa Barbara, California. Anacapa St is a **one way** street, approach from Anapamu St. There is a parking garage directly across the street from the courthouse.



October 2012 Issue

NO MEETING AT VENTURA COLLEGE THIS MONTH

NEXT MEETING
OCT 21

**At the Santa Barbara
County Courthouse.
You must be previously
registered to attend.**

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

Chrono Times