

**Men's Pocket Watches:** I don't know when the first wristwatches appeared, but my guess is about 100 years ago. Mechanical clocks with conventional faces were certainly around in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Fine tall and shelf clocks were made, mostly by hand with beautiful cases, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. My impression is that the first pocket watches also appeared in that century, and with the coming of the railroads in the 1830s, it became absolutely necessary for those involved in moving trains to know exactly what time it was. Although fine clocks and watches were made in Europe, this story is what little I know about American pocket watches.

In the mid-1800s, a good pocket watch was an essential part of a successful man's jewelry. Like the latest shelf and wall clocks of the period, it was activated by a mainspring that normally required winding every 24 hours. This was usually done by turning a small knob that extended through the case of the watch opposite 12 o'clock. Pulling the knob out until it clicked made it possible to set the time, which also needed to be done frequently. A watch's accuracy often depended on the quality of its movement, and by 1900 pocket watches were available in all price ranges. Good watches were advertised as having 17 jewels, or even 21 jewels, which meant the number of tiny jeweled bearings that made up the movement.

Next to a pen knife, a pocket watch was the most important item needed by a successful man. Businessmen and those in high society wore business suits with a vest, and in one of the front vest pockets, with appropriate gold chains attached thereto, they carried their time piece. It was easy to pull out the watch to check the time, and this was often done as a matter of habit rather than of necessity. Working men bought trousers that had tiny watch pockets, accessible just below the belt. Sears Roebuck & Co. sold pocket watches through its catalog for under \$10; fancy high-quality watches could cost \$200 or more. Some had a "double case," with a snap hinged door covering the crystal lens that had to be opened to see the face. A very good Hamilton, Elgin, or Waltham pocket watch, all American-made, was in the \$35 to \$75 range; its accuracy would not compare to a modern Timex wrist watch, and it had to be wound at least once each day (most were wound several times a day).

Railroad watches carried by members of train crews were slightly different and had a safeguard to prevent the time from being set incorrectly by mistake. Instead of the winding stem being pulled to set the time, these watches were "lever set" by an interior lever accessible only by opening the case. The faces of these watches had very bold numerals and black hands, making it easy for engineers, conductors, and trainmen to read the time in subdued light. All main line railroads had contracts with watchmakers along their routes to check the accuracy and condition of the watches worn by those in train service. It was mandatory for such employees to check in with the approved shop once a month to have their watch checked over, cleaned, and adjusted if necessary. The Pennsylvania Railroad had such a watchmaker on Market Street in Wilmington.

I was given my first watch about 1928, when I was four. It was a small but bulky child's pocket watch commemorating Lindbergh's transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. On the back was engraved the Statue of Liberty on one side and the Eiffel Tower on the other, and a tiny airplane between. I could never understand how the two cities could be so close together, but I could soon "tell time." As mentioned last week, in the late 1930s my father gave gold pocket watches as the prizes in the Handicap the last day of the Yorklyn trapshoot each year. I won such a Hamilton watch in 1938 (retail value \$45), which is still in our collection. After World War II, good wrist watches superseded pocket

watches as prizes, but they still had to be wound every day. Their accuracy was inferior to pocket watches, as the movements were much smaller.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, October 13, 12 volunteers were on hand in addition to those who attended the Events Committee meeting. They were Jerry Lucas (in charge), Tom Marshall, Steve Bryce, Brent McDougall, John Bacino, Jerry Novak, Ted Kamen, Ed Paschall, Mark Russell, Dave Leon, Bill Schwoebel, and Mark Bodenstab.

Another track section was assembled to complete the rebuilding of the rear grade crossing on the A.V.R.R. The gasoline was drained and the pressure tanks blown out on the Models CX and EX. The tool boxes on all the cars were cleaned out and the tools returned to their correct places in the shop. Work progressed on fabricating a new vaporizer for our Model CX.

Work on the Cretors popper continued, and this is getting ever closer to completion. More towels were cut up for shop rags. New sanding belts were brought in (by Bill Schwoebel), and one was installed on our bench belt sander. The burner and bonnet were removed from the Model 735 in order to hydrostatically test the boiler. One tube was defective, which was plugged, top and bottom. The hydro still showed tubes in the area to be leaking slightly on the top head. This will be addressed at the next work session.

On Thursday, October 15, again 12 volunteers were in attendance: Tim Ward (in charge), Devon Hall, Geoff Fallows, Jim Personti, Bob Stransky, Mark Bodenstab, Dave Leon, Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Kelly Williams, and Tom Marshall.

Work continued on removing the pesky running board trim molding on the '37 Packard, passenger's side. The oil leak near where the cylinder oil enters the steam pipe on our Model 71 was addressed. Believing that the leak was where the nipple screws into the pipe, the nipple was removed, and the adjacent check valve cleaned before all was re-assembled. Gasoline was drained from the fuel tank on the Model K, but the pressure tanks still need to be blown out.

Several attempts were made to swage the leaking boiler tubes on the top head of the 735's boiler. This effort was less than 100% successful, so the future life of the boiler will have to be evaluated. On the Cretors project, the burner for the peanut roaster, which had never been used in the 55 years that we have operated the popcorn machine, was repaired with a venturi found from another burner, and the piping was installed. This machine is very close to being operational for our Steamin' Halloween Sunday on October 25.

Steve Bryce, with help from Mark Russell, Ted Kamen, and others has spent a lot of time on the Cretors project. On Friday, Steve fired up the unit, ran the rebuilt engine, and tried out the new burner for the popping pan. He has pronounced the mechanical restoration complete. Two panels need to be re-painted and the wood-frame glass doors, beautifully refinished by Mark Russell, need installation. A test run of the unit is planned for this week.

The Model 71 was also fired up on Friday to test the repair made on the oil line. It still leaked, so on Saturday Tom removed the steam pipe and found a crack through the thread where the nipple from the oil line screws in. On Saturday, Brent McDougall, John Bacino, Dave Leon, and Mike Ciosek did more track work to connect the rear curve at the grade crossing.