

IMAGES

... *then and now*

From The Indian Hill Historical Society



**Buckingham Lodge
1861**

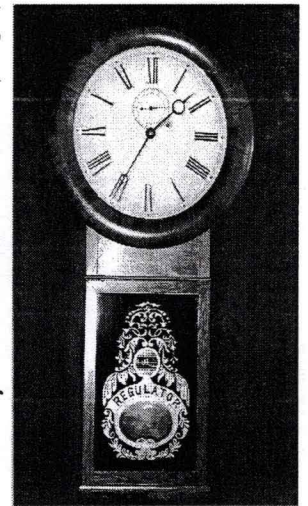
The Story of the Schoolhouse Clock

Between the blackboards on the north wall of the Little Red Schoolhouse is a Seth Thomas No. 1 Regulator clock. Its history recently came to light after a routine cleaning.

In 1974 the hundred year old schoolhouse became the office of the Indian Hill Historical Museum Association, now DBA as the Indian Hill Historical Society. After a two year restoration project, the Board of Trustees furnished it using items that pertained to the period. Architect Addison Clipson, the consultant for the renovation, and a long time supporter of preserving historic structures, had a friend, Dick Hartlieb, who was a member of the Buckeye chapter of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. Mr. Hartlieb was friendly with the owners of Ken-Hav Clocks, a local firm established in 1930, which was expert at service and repair of old timepieces. The company moved from 408 Main Street to Newtown in 1973 when their downtown building was razed. In a collection of old clocks which had been stored in the firm's basement for decades was a Seth Thomas No. 1 Regulator.

Clipson persuaded the local NAWCC chapter to purchase it, have Ken-Hav restore it, and donate it to the museum in 1977. This accession, valued at \$1100 then, was presented to the Board and has been proudly displayed at the Schoolhouse ever since.

In very good condition and continuing to keep time well, the clock is 33" high, 15 ½ "wide, and 3 ¾ " deep. The face is enclosed in a round case, and there is a second hand. Of mahogany rosewood veneer, it has a brass pendulum, and a gold painted motif of anthemion leaves on the glass. The Roman numerals on the face are balanced, with IIII (not IV) to match the four digits VIII on the left side. The interior label has directions on hanging the clock and positioning the pendulum and is marked *Seth Thomas - Thomaston, Conn – Warranted good*.



Seth Thomas (1786-1859) was one of the leading clock makers of his era. As a young man he apprenticed with Eli Terry, a pioneer of mass production whose water- powered clock factory produced standardized components in Plymouth, CT. Thomas bought Terry's operation with another clockmaker in 1810, and then sold his share and set up business in nearby Plymouth Hollow. Here he made tall case clocks with wooden movements. By 1844 he had discontinued wooden movements, and switched to brass; and around 1850 he began installing springs in place of weights for power in some of his clocks. Soon he was producing 20,000 brass clocks annually, and he incorporated the Seth Thomas Clock Company in 1853, so that the business would continue after his death. When he died in 1859, his three sons carried on the firm, introducing new innovations. New styles of clocks were designed, and calendar clocks became an important part of their line. In 1866, the citizens of Plymouth Hollow renamed their town Thomaston – as a tribute to the man and the industry he had established there. The Seth Thomas Clock Company employed over 800 people in the 1880s, producing over \$700,000 worth of clocks annually. It still is the longest established American clock making company.

A close look at the clock tells more. The words "Warranted good" imply that it was well made, of honest design. The term Regulator indicates that it was a precision clock, one that was accurate enough to use to set one's watch. The long drop case and classically inspired gilt design on the glass connote its quality. Because it was manufactured in Thomaston, the clock must have been made after 1876, as earlier models were labeled Plymouth Hollow or Thomas Town.

This Seth Thomas timepiece is a treasured possession of the Indian Hill Historical Society. Similar in age to the building, the Regulator marks the passage of time and symbolizes the value of antiquity.