An Introduction to E. Howard & Company Pocket Watches

By: Clint B. Geller, FNAWCC
The Howard “Mystique”: What Makes Early Howard Watches Collectable?

• **History**: One of two direct offspring of the Boston Watch Company – 1\(^{st}\) ever “mass producer” of watches

• **Quality**: Good timekeepers; Carefully adjusted; well finished; reliable; made for the luxury market

• **Innovation**: Reed’s patents; pendant winding and setting; Howard safety barrel; innovative finishes; many limited technical experiments

• **Distinctiveness**: Individual character; “custom” features; Moorhouse dials

• **Scarcity**: Limited production; unique cases required; many rare, or even unique varieties

• **Mystery**: Until past 15 years, there had been little published information or factory production data available
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<th>Howard’s Production Philosophy</th>
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<td>• Targeted the luxury market exclusively</td>
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<td>• All movements signed “E. Howard &amp; Co.”*</td>
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<td>• No other named grades*</td>
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<td>• Downplayed model distinctions</td>
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<td>• Heavy reliance on skilled labor</td>
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<td>• Each movement sprung, finished and adjusted by the same individual (Townsend)</td>
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<td>• Enfranchised Howard’s penchant for experimentation</td>
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<td>• Less aggressive pursuit of parts interchangeability</td>
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* Rare exceptions: Ball movements; Prescott, Eustis
Basis of Howard’s Philosophy

- Prestigious clockmaker since 1842
- Luxury market demanded/enabled liberal use of skilled labor in 1860’s
- Inefficient production practices were forgiving of perfectionism and experimentation
Howard Divided Plate Watches
The First Run

S# 132, 17 jewel movement

S# 132 inner case lid, matching S#

S# 133, 17 jewels, unique plates

Baldwin’s Patent

S# 133 dial, curved signature
Divided Plate Variations

S# 185, 7 jewels, 1 case screw, 5 cutouts

S# 1,853, cut-back barrel plate

S# 1,428, long regulator, 3 case screws, 3 cutouts

S# 2,364 with Mershon’s patent regulator
The First Howard ¾ Plates

K(14) Size S# 3,004, 4th ¾ plate movement

S# 3,302, 2nd N Size ¾ plate movement

I(10) Size S# 3,406, unique escapement
Nickel Plates and Damaskeening

• Howard experimented with damaskeening as early as S# 1,105 circa 1859.

• Damaskeened movements remained rare until introduction of the Model 1869 L Size

• Nickel plated production began at S# 21,561, circa 1869

• Approximately 428 +/- 15 damaskeened Model 1862-N movements were made in all, about 287 of which were gilded, and 141 were nickel plated
Early Damaskeening & Nickel Finish

S# 4,094, very rare early gilt dmk S-III

S# 15,703, gilt damaskeened S-III

S# 21,572, 1st Run nickel S-III

S# 23,469, rare nickel Cole’s esc.
Rare Nickel KW Howards

L Size S# 56,307 KW/SW transitional movt.  N Size S# 33,090 nickel KW

• 140 Nickel N Size S-III’s (Model 1862)
• 380 Nickel N Size KW S-IV’s (Model 1871)
• 30 Nickel L Size KW/SW S-V’s (Model 1869)
• Rare subvarieties: nkl. Coles III; 1\textsuperscript{st} run nkl. III
Josiah Moorhouse (1837-1914)
Moorhouse Dials
Signature Moorhouse Dial Features

- Fancy &/or Skeletonized numerals
- Finials and cartouches
- Signature embellishments or unusual logos
- Lacework enhancements around numerals
- Gothic characters in place of numerals
- “Berries” at 15, 30, 45 and 60 minutes
- Decorative outer rule beyond minute track

L (16) Size Model 1869 (S-V)
runic dial: “Hubert Dalsimer”
signed & dated on reverse

Left: Unique G (6) Size Model 1874 (S-VI)
HC-to-OF conversion dial; signed reverse
Some Unique Moorhouse Dials

18 Size dial for Model 1883 Waltham

Reverse signed: “Josiah Moorhouse,
Feb. 28th 1890, 7:30 PM”

N Size, threaded leg S-IV dial:
“Thomas P. Drown”

Reverse signed: “J. Moorhouse”
More Signed Moorhouse Dials

← Webb C. Ball, Cleveland, OH

G. C. Shreve & Co., S.F. →

← Personalized ("runic") dial with Gothic EH&Co Signature

24 hr dial →
Howard Escapement Experiments

Upright Pallets, S# 1,428

Cole’s Resilient Esc., S# 24,032

Lange-style single banking pin esc. S# 3,882

Pallet bridge banking

Photo by Harold Visser
Manner of Pallet Banking

- First single-pin escapement: S# 2,943 circa 1861/1862
- First Cole’s resilient escapement: S# 3,345*, 1862
- Gerry replaces Reed in 1868 – Cole’s escapements mass produced
- Learned replaces Gerry – 1877; introduces Pallet bridge banking around S#’s 44,145, 56,992, and 101,154 in the N, L, and G sizes, respectively

* as reported by Townsend; possibly a unique early experiment, but not verified
The “Problem” with Banking Pins

- A “short-cut” alternative to accurate depthing of pallet stones
- Temptation to set banking pins too wide apart, to “cure” setting problems
- Howard wanted to make his watches tolerant of shock without increasing friction, or compromising isochronism.
Cole’s Production Facts

- ~40 Model 1862-N’s known; 3,345* to 24,556
- ~40 Model 1869’s known; 50,001 to 53,862
- 2 known Model 1871’s: 30,001 and 41,677
- Not mentioned in factory records
- All but four known examples have gilded finish
- 11 of ~80 adjusted to H&C; 14 of 80 are HCI&P
- Only 15% of known M 1869 Cole’s movements are stemwind

* All confirmed N Size Coles movements have S#’s above 23,000
Total Cole’s Production

- Overall ETDB recording rate is about 3%
- ETDB recording rate for most “rare” varieties is just over 10%
- Estimated recording rate for un-reconverted Cole’s movements is about 8%
- Resulting estimate: 400 M 1862-N, and 500 M-1869
A Special Waltham

16 Size 1899 Bridge Model, S# 12,000,000 with Cole’s Escapement, reportedly made for President Theodore Roosevelt in his inaugural year, 1902
Other Howard Experiments

S# 3,120, Side Lever with Helical Hairspring

S# 3,840 with Helical Hairspring

S# 3,208, half plate with Breguet hairspring, balance under center, and marked “Adjusted”*

* Photo by Chris Abell
G. P. Reed’s Chronometer
Signed E. Howard & Co., S# 7

Reed’s “Chronometer,” S# 7

Coded Date: “AD AHFF”
Close-up of S#7 Dial Signature

“AD AHFF” stands for 1866 AD
A Unique Howard – The Eustis Model

- S# 150,002 !?
- Signed “Eustis”
- Exposed winding wheels
- Going barrel; lever set
- Unique safety pinion on third wheel
- Made between 1877 and 1881
Eustis Mdl 3-Point Compression Safety Spring on Third Wheel
Understanding the Eustis Model

ETDB: First butterfly pallet bridge, 
～ S# 56,992 finished September, 1877

ETDB: Last threaded leg dial 
～ S# 57,743 finished March, 1881

Factory Records: First solid 
(i.e., 1-piece) pillar plate, 
S# 56,901
More Information on EH&Co Watches

- NAWCC Chapter 174 (Pocket Horology) Website: www.pockethorology.org
Chapter 174: Pocket Horology

**Pocket Horology** is a national NAWCC chapter devoted to collaborative pocket watch research conducted in an atmosphere of collegiality and mutual respect. All research supported by the chapter is intended for broad based dissemination through publication in the NAWCC *BULLETIN*, NAWCC special publications, or the *Pocket Horology Newsletter*.

We meet twice a year, at the national convention and at the Florida Midwinter Regional, and we publish an informative semiannual newsletter. We have an informative website, where chapter members and guests can publish, or request assistance with ongoing research, and we sponsor NAWCC seminars on American Watch Making.

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