

LONDON TIMES Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

AYLMER TOWN HALL CLOCK

CHAPTER 92 UPDATE

By Rick Robinson

Hello Everyone,

Sitting here on a raining Sunday in December, during COVID, it's kind of hard to get into the Christmas spirit, let alone write a Newsletter when there's not much to report on. But I did come up with a few interesting items I'd like to share.

I was talking to Dave Dazer the other day and I didn't realize where he worked. I knew that along with collecting clocks, he was also quite involved in collecting old phonographs. He is also the site manager for the Edison Depot Museum in Port Huron. It's located under the Blue Water Bridge right along the river. We were there quite a while ago and it's worth checking out once the world gets back on track. Check out this story on c-span, narrated by Dave himself.

https://www.c-span.org/video/?413628-1/thomas-edison-depot-musuem

Cathy and Gerry Koolen have some very fine clocks coming up for auction at Miller Brothers in March. They include some Dutch tall case, large wall clocks and a couple of tower clocks as well. They are also hoping that some of us will also put in some fine clocks, paintings etc. that will help fill out the auction. This will be an auction of quality merchandize, so it might be a good time to liquidate some of your better clocks. Check them out.

https://www.millerandmillerauctions.co m/

Finally, if you have some extra cash after Christmas, check out Gardner's Auctions in London, Ontario in January. They're offering 8 very fine fussee bracket clocks. Everyone should have at least one!

https://gardnergalleries.com/auctions/antique-bracket-clocks

Check out the article on Bob Dickson, Bob Russell and Ted Arthur. Three local heroes keeping the tower clocks running in Chatham Kent.





Antique clock fixers keep things ticking

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Ted Arthur and Robert Russell were busy recently setting the Dresden and Thamesville tower clocks back an hour from Daylight Saving Time to Eastern Standard Time. (Pam Wright, Local Journalism Initiative)

By Pam Wright, Local Journalism Initiative

The Thamesville Herald

There are a select few in Chatham-Kent who know how to turn back time.

Magically, they know how to move it forward as well.

Ted Arthur, Robert Russell, Bob Dickson and electronics wizard Ron Bolohan have taken on the task of keeping a few of the municipality's antique public square timepieces in working order.

The timepiece aficionados make sure that when the bell tolls — it's right on time.

Arthur and Russell reset the Thamesville and Dresden tower clocks, while Dickson travelled to adjust the Tilbury clock to its "fall back" position.

It's a job that sees them scaling ladders and stairs every spring and fall, making the switch between Daylight Saving Time and Eastern Standard Time.

The clock experts — all members of the U.S. based National Association of Clock and Watch Collectors — have developed precision skills when it comes to fixing and maintaining the timepieces of yesteryear.

In 2008, the group came together to fix the Thamesville tower clock, which hadn't been in working order for about six years.

In 2012, the group got the hands of Dresden's tower clock moving again.

"Neither one were functioning," says Arthur, a former Chatham machinist, who says fixing clocks is a well-loved hobby for the men who do it.

Both of the clocks were "completely pulled apart" by the group, says Russell of Thamesville, but adds the timepieces "don't really show their age.

"They don't wear very much," the former Navistar employee explains. "They'll run for another 100 years."

Although they do their best to keep the machinery "historically intact," says Arthur, some modern additions are made to help with labour-intensive practices such as winding the clocks — a chore that was done by hand in days of old.

The complexities of the machinery are evident in the twirl of gears, pulleys and weights that could only make sense to someone with a finicky and deep understanding of how clocks operate.

Before everyone had watches and clocks in their homes, tower clocks played a huge role in society. The bells signalled a call to worship or they served to let people know of important news or events.

All of the local clocksmiths are paid by the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to keep the tower clocks going, but it's not a big money maker for those involved.

Both the Thamesville and Dresden clocks were manufactured in Europe. Dresden's tower timepiece was built by the Soho Clock Factory in Birmingham, England.

In addition to maintaining the status quo, there comes the uncomfortable question of who will do the work when the group no longer can. Arthur at 72, is the "baby" of the group and he wonders what the future holds for the tower clocks.

Good job guys!

If anyone has an interesting story or article you'd like to share, please send it my way and I'll put it into a future Newsletter. Without any meetings going on, it's tough to find any content. And, if you're bored, give one of your fellow members a call. It might be the highlight of their day.

Rose and I would like to wish you, your family and friends a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Stay safe.



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