

Thursday, June 14, 2007

Refurbished clock symbol of city's future

Helping hands collaborate for bank timepiece's redo



Tom J. Miner, left, and Matt T. Miner install the face of a restored E. Howard & Co. clock on Front Street Tuesday before yesterday morning's dedication. (T&G Staff / TOM RETTIG)

By Lisa D. Welsh TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

E. Howard & Co. clocks installed in Worcester

Year of installation and location of 12 clocks



1871 School of Technology School House* Armory Square or possibly Wheaton Square	1877 Union Depot, Washington Square
1878 City Hall Old South Church, near current City Hall	1883 Whittier Carpet Factory, 692 Southbridge St.
1887 City Hall W. A. England's*, 44 Cedar St.	1892 Old Fellows Home, North Ave. Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank, 316 Main St.
1893 Park Congregational Church, Elm & Roswell streets	1897 E. M. Holmes, 203 Main St.
1898 Worcester Brewery, 75 East Worcester St.	

* Exact location unknown

Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank street clock timeline

1892 Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank installs E. Howard & Co. clock at 316 Main St. The bank's name remains on clock's face throughout many transitions.	1990s No one knows the date, but the hands on the clock stopped moving one day. One side showed 3:48 and the other 9:27.
1952 Eight-day wonder is electrified.	2006 Declared abandoned property and ownership assumed by city of Worcester. Receives top priority on Preservation Worcester's list of most endangered landmarks.
1953 Consumer Savings Bank purchases Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank and takes ownership of its street clock.	2007 Yesterday, a collaborative effort of Preservation Worcester, the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, the Worcester Cultural Commission, the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the city of Worcester results in unveiling the restored streetscape feature.
1977 Motorist backs into the clock and topples it.	
1985 Moved from the corner of Walnut and Main streets to 50 Front St. when Consumer Savings Bank opened its Front Street branch.	

Sources: Preservation Worcester; 1910 city directory; TAG Staff/DOV LANGREN, JPL

WORCESTER — At 10 feet high, the Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank clock on Front Street doesn't tower over the city, but it's become a symbolic giant of downtown renewal.

The E. Howard & Co. model arrived in Worcester in 1892 as one of the era's most esteemed street clocks. But by the time it was removed last October, it had become obsolete. Yesterday, the restored clock was unveiled before city and elected officials, and members of Preservation Worcester, the Worcester Cultural Commission and other community supporters.

"This is one more great amenity that the city can take pride in," said City Manager Michael V. O'Brien. "With it, we remember the past and acknowledge our bright present and even brighter future."

Between 1871 and 1898, 12 E. Howard & Co. clocks were installed in Worcester but few remain. The clocks were considered eight-day wonders because they would be wound every Saturday, with one day remaining before the clock would stop.

Saving the Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank street clock became a collaborative effort of Preservation Worcester, the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation, the Worcester Cultural Commission, the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the city of Worcester. Through their efforts, \$10,450 was secured to restore the clock.

"This not only marks time for our city, its focus is on bringing downtown back to life," said Mark W. Fuller, chairman of the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation. "This is important for keeping the momentum of the city going."

During the unveiling ceremony, a proclamation was read by George Bernardin, representing Save America's Clocks, a nonprofit organization based in New York City. The group maintains that non-working clocks betray the public trust and send out a message that "nobody's home. When these clocks are left to deteriorate, we all lose part of our rich heritage."

"This street clock served the townspeople for many years," Mr. Bernardin said. "For too long it sent out a signal of neglect and loss. Now it will send out a message of concern and respect."

John Rives, owner of The Clock Man, was hired to do the restoration and completely installed new works, including a new environmentally friendly lighting system with bulbs that will last 12,000 hours. A new photo cell provides a solar powered timer. The two original clock faces are mounted on newly carved mahogany.

"Mr. Rives comes highly recommended," said Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester. "He is a member of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, is a respected authority and lecturer on clocks, and is the official clock person for the city. The project really became a reality when he stepped up. He has a strong commitment to area clocks and was eager to assist in this project."

In addition to the restoration of the internal mechanisms, authenticated aesthetic changes bring the clock back to its original color.

"Sometime along the way, this clock was painted brown but it was originally black and gold," Mr. Rives said. "Now, the new gilding has real gold in it that glistens in the sunlight. At night, the lighting gives off a warm glow. It's almost timeless."

"Everything went just fine," he continued. "It wouldn't have happened without everybody getting behind it. Right down to the man on the street."

Mr. Rives explained that as he was working on the clock's installation this week, he was stopped by a passer-by at 6 one morning.

"He said, 'You're not bringing the clock back are you?' He was real excited about it," recalled Mr. Rives. "A lot of people really care about the clock."