

Queer Town Clock

WHEN the four faces of Provincetown's Town Clock took to disagreeing with one another, they started one of the old town's liveliest Town Hall debates in many a year. They reminded one of the man who was asked why the town clock had four faces, anyway. He answered, "So that more than one person can look at it at the same time." Another was reminded of the old conundrum, "If the town clock runs eight days without winding, how long would it run if it were wound?"

Provincetown's town clock is an eight-day clock, and is wound by hand. At times the high winds have caught the hands and thrown the gears out of mesh. There is some danger incurred in winding the clock. Once one of the large and heavy weights came right through the side of the building.

- August 2, 1956 -

ACTIVITY AROUND THE clock tower on Provincetown Town Hall roof doesn't mean, as it first seemed, that the clock is being restored to use. The work being done consists in roof repairs for which \$400 was voted at the Town Meeting. However, the company doing the work suggested that the clock faces be painted now. There were no funds, but the same anonymous donor who is putting up the cash for the new striking mechanism was contacted and with the same generosity a sum of \$500 was made available for painting the faces and gold-leafing the numerals and second marks. Wish it were possible to say "thank you" to this A. D. . . Town Manager James V. Coyne said that the clock was to have been restored to service, with new electric works, early in August and he will, at once, look into the delay. In the meantime we have a clock somewhat like that in Rupert Brooke's "Grantchester" which "always stood ten to three". At least if we don't tell our guests the time, we imply that it's not really important . . . here in Provincetown . . . on their vacations.

New Clock Coming  
For Summer Time  
May 19, 1956

Bids are being asked for electric works to replace the worn out mechanism of the Town Hall clock, according to Town Manager James V. Coyne Jr., who explained that there has been some delay in drawing up the specifications for the work because of technical details involved. He said that bids will be closed on June 4 for the job authorized by the voters at the last annual Town Meeting when \$1,000 was appropriated.

Mr. Coyne said that he had been informed by manufacturers that parts have been coming through slowly and that it would be unsafe to predict that the replacement would be made much before August 1.

-August 30, 1956-

Thanks to Restorer of Clock

Editor, the Advocate

I should appreciate it if you will print the following letter in your paper. Thank you.

To Anonymous:-

May I take this opportunity to publicly thank you for bringing an old friend back to Provincetown? Yesterday afternoon the long-silenced clock in the Town Hall steeple peeled forth its welcomed voice after a period of many months.

What a happy experience it was to glance at the face and to see the hands in their rightful place! It lifted one's pride and made one feel that, after all, someone in the town had enough civic pride to dig down into his — or her — pocket and make it possible for us to have the friendly chime and know that, at long last, the clock had come alive!

In these days when folks are all too prone to boast of their achievements and charities it is, indeed, refreshing to know that there are those whose kindness and thoughtfulness are not overcome by boastfulness.

I know it's not possible for us, the townspeople, to give you a physical rising vote of thanks — but, I'm sure many of us are doing it mentally.

Sincerely,  
Peter Hand

Cut from the Yarmouth Register - May 1, 1891  
Mr. Johnson gave Provincetown the  
clock in the Town Hall Tower.

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DEATH OF HON. J. P. JOHNSON.

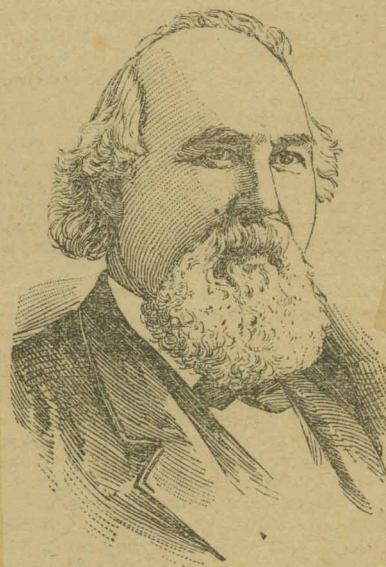
Died in Provincetown, April 28th, Hon. Joseph P. Johnson, aged 77 years, 9 months, 10 days.

From the Provincetown Beacon.

JOSEPH PROSPER JOHNSON, son of William and Jerusha (Cary) Johnson, was born in Essex, Middlesex county, Conn., July 18, 1813, and was one of a family of thirteen children.

His early education was gleaned from two months' attendance each year in the district schools of those days.

His father, once a prosperous mariner and shipmaster, was forced to retire from the sea on account of ill health, and when death came, the widowed and fatherless were obliged to economize to keep the family in comfortable circumstances. At the age of fourteen Joseph left home, June 17th, 1827, with nothing outside his brains and hands but the ex-



THE LATE J. P. JOHNSON.

ample and counsel of a fond mother to invest as capital in the great mart of human activities. He embarked in a small trading vessel and went to Provincetown, where he bound himself out for seven years as apprentice to a sail-maker. At that time, sail-making was a flourishing business in the town.

Long hours of work and short minutes of recreation gave young Johnson scant time for reading and study, but what time he found to spare he improved, and by perseverance and close attention he laid the foundation of a practical, hard-earned education, which in after years brought rich reward.

After learning his trade, he carried on the business until July, 1850, when he retired with a comfortable competency. He then entered into a co-partnership with others in mercantile pursuits, but their ventures proving unfortunate, the accumulations of years were swept from him at a blow. He began again. He went to North Bridgewater, (since Brockton), to manufacture shoe boxes. He was at first successful, but reverses came, and he sold the business and again removed to Provincetown. He now engaged in the wrecking business as underwriter's agent, etc., and was

very successful, and he again retired with a small fortune. His creditors of former years of failure were now paid in full.

Mr. Johnson was president of the Union Marine Insurance Co. for several years and general agent for the Boston board of underwriters. At the age of seventy he resigned. He has been a director of the First National bank of Provincetown from its organization, selectman for many years, member of the Mass. House of Representatives for eight terms, between the years 1850-1880, a member of the State Senate 1882 and 1883, and moderator of every town meeting for twenty-eight successive years. When he felt that he could no longer serve, he received a series of resolutions, adopted in town meeting, thanking him for his just and impartial rulings. He has been forty years a Mason, Odd Fellow, Sir Knight of Boston Commandary, K. T., and has held several appointments of D. D. G. M. of the I. O. O. F.

Mr. Johnson was first married in 1835, to Polly Cook, who died seven years later. His second marriage was to Susan Fitch, in 1843. She lived but a few years and at her death left two children, Mary and Susie Johnson. In 1848 he married Mary Whorf. She died in 1869, leaving three children, Josephine, George and William W. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson, for the past two years, has been failing in health; for the past month he has been confined to his bed, with a complication of diseases. Very patient under these afflictions, he felt that his time of usefulness was over and that he had fulfilled his mission. His religious convictions were deep and fervent. He believed in humanity and spent his life in its service. He was an attendant at the Centre Methodist church, although not a member. His profession of religious life was devoid of cant or show. He was a positive lover of men. His favorite poem, Abou Ben Adhem, was often read to him by his children and he breathed the good impulses of that poem. The last part of the last verse was a source of great satisfaction to Mr. Johnson. We quote the poem, below:

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)  
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,  
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,  
An angel, writing in a book of gold;  
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold;  
And to the presence in the room he said,  
"What writest thou?" The vision rais'd its head,  
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,  
Answer'd, "The names of those who love the Lord."  
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so;"  
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerily still; and said, "I pray thee, then,  
Write me as one who loves his fellow men."  
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night  
It came again, with a great wakening light,  
And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,  
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

During the last days of his sickness his mind wandered back to his old home in Connecticut. Last Monday night he was as comfortable as could be, and through the first of the night was resting very quietly. His daughter Josephine, at about 1 o'clock Tuesday morning, noticed a change in his features, and at 2 o'clock the good man, the upright citizen, the helper and lover of men answered the call of the black-winged angel of death, quietly and peacefully passing on to his reward. Thus leaves us a man whom the town will universally mourn and his memory will be cherished by many hearts.