

Thousands Lament Ailing Town Clock

Thousands of visitors and Cape Enders miss the message that the faithful old clock on Town Hall has ticked off to passersby over when to work and when to eat and when to play, and keeping many travelers from missing the boat or bus or plane.

The present clock was installed in 1956. Afflicted with mysterious ailments in its internal system, the Town timekeeper became paralyzed with motionless hands unable to pursue its career of telling the time to people along the center of town.

At the last annual Town Meeting voters appropriated \$380 to repair the clock and the I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, was awarded the contract, sent a man here to do the work for which they billed the town \$380.

But following repairs, the tower timepiece had a relapse and would not work. So, on July 10, Town Manager Walter E. Lawrence wrote to the company that payment was being held up because the clock has not worked properly since it was repaired. He also wrote that Herman Rivard of Pro-

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Town Clock Tolls Hour But Hands Still Missing

If you have looked up lately, when in the vicinity of Town Hall, you will have noticed that the hands on the town clock are missing, although the clock does strike the hour.

To explain this, in August of 1956 a new clock was purchased from the I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati for \$1,600 installed. In February of 1963 the town manager advised the company that repairs were needed. The company's representative examined the clock and advised for \$380 that the company would furnish three new drive shafts, completely overhaul the clock and replace any worn parts. This sum was voted under Article 10 of the warrant for the 1963 town meeting. On April 22 the company agreed to do the work and on May 22, 1963 the town was informed the job had been completed.

Tower Falling?

The tower on Provincetown's Town Hall may be falling down.

A recent inspection by the Department of Public Safety passed the building in all regards except the tower.

Selectman Marion "Rocky" Taves said the top part of the steeple moves in a high wind, swaying back and forth and turning around.

Selectman William White declared the situation "very dangerous." He suggested the board declare the problem an emergency and use the \$8,000 appropriated at the last Town Meeting to send a steeplejack up there immediately to make the repairs.

Ordinarily, any town construction has to go out on bids. But White pointed out that no construction firm would submit bids because of the cost and difficulty of getting up on the roof to examine the problem. An "emergency" declaration would allow the money to be spent without bids being received.

He suggested an open-ended contract with a steeplejack firm he knew to do \$8000 worth of repair work on the steeple, roof, and gutters.

Selectman Munro Moore objected to that

As the clock still did not function properly, Mr. Lawrence again contacted the company in June and was advised that the clock was in first class working condition except that it was impossible to keep the hands synchronized as they were unbalanced. Therefore, the company advised the town that they would furnish new sets of aluminum clock hands, black anodized, and finished in black enamel for \$490. This amount was voted at the March, 1964 town meeting. Installation was held up until July 1 of this year, when the town was informed that the new hands could not be installed because the gears that drive the clock hands were worn, and quoted the town a price of \$295 for the gears which drive the hands.

In a letter to the company the town manager pointed out that repairs have already amounted to \$1,165 and that it might have been far cheaper to purchase a new clock if the company's representatives had advised him properly. He asks that the company give the town a special quote on repairs to put the clock in working order, in view of the fact that the town has not been properly guided as regards these repairs.

kind of arrangement, noting that the board "had been burned before" on an open-ended contract.

Selectman Marion "Bert" Perry suggested that the tower be torn down and rebuilt on the ground since he was opposed to spending \$8000 on a job for which the town did not even have specifications.

When it was suggested that instead bids go out for drawing up the specifications, Town Manager Gardner Benson pointed out that architects are like doctors and do not bid

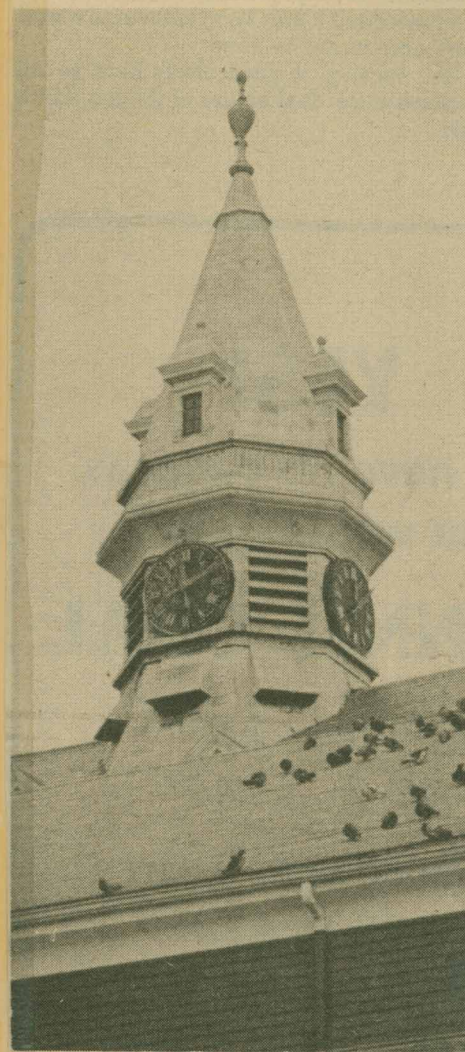
The board then decided to spend part of the available money to have an architectural firm draw up the construction specifications and then spend the rest on the actual work.

- March 21, 1974

MAN IN THE CLOCK. We've spent many timeless afternoons sitting in the sunshine underneath the 88-year-old Town Hall clock which has remained stuck at 2:45 for longer than anyone can remember. But time marches on, even in Provincetown, and mysteriously last Thursday the hour hand on the clock began to advance slowly, imperceptibly toward the hour of five. When the hand reached twelve, five loud chimes rang triumphantly through Town. The event probably passed unnoticed by many but for John Sinaiko it was a major victory. Sinaiko and Dennis Minsky were hired by the Town last December to clean out the Town Hall tower. After they had removed over 4200 pounds of pigeon dung, Sinaiko stayed on and set about the task of restoring the clockworks. Since that time he has spent the days quietly working high above the Town in the wind-swept belfry. We decided to drop by the cupola this week to offer our congratulations for a job well-done. We found him waiting for us in the dark attic of Town Hall, leaning against one of the eaves that make up the superstructure supporting the building's slate roof. Sinaiko, a slight, bearded young man in his twenties, greeted us warmly and led us through the wooden labyrinth leading to the tower. We could see the huge mouth of the bell hanging overhead. Sinaiko assured us that it was a good thirty minutes before it would strike noon and, trying hard to forget our almost overwhelming fear of heights, we followed him up to the top of the tower.

"I like working up here," Sinaiko said as the sound of the wind swirled around us. He then opened up a small peep-hole on what was the face of the clock and showed us the view from above. Extensions from the clock led to a small enclosure that houses the clock works. Sinaiko explained that it was the ringer that had prevented the clock from working and showed us the arm that glides into position in a groove on a wheel ten minutes before every hour in anticipation of chiming.

Death knell for town clock



12:10 in the good old days

Clerk of the Works Norman Tierney, who is supervising the Town Hall roof project, told the finance committee Tuesday that the Town Hall clocks will no longer work and will be put back on the steeple strictly for ornamentation.

Tierney said high winds and the lack of a protective covering caused maintenance of the clocks to be very expensive. No members of the finance committee commented and the issued appeared to be forgotten.

But when Chairman Paul Christo called for public comment at the end of the meeting, Town Moderator John Snow said he thought it would be tragic if the clocks no longer worked.

"When I was a boy, and when my father before me was a boy, the old town clock would strike on the hour. Wherever you were in town, on the waterfront, at home or in the woods, you could hear the clock strike. I think every effort should be made to keep it running," Snow said.

Tierney replied that it would be expensive to install plexiglass covers on the clocks and that moisture would probably form on the inside of the plexiglass. He said the plexiglass would also yellow in the sun.

Tierney suggested putting a smaller, electric clock in the steeple. He admitted this would not be a very historical-minded solution.

Snow pointed out that the hands were never covered before the roof project began, and the clocks had worked for nearly 100 years.

Tierney said the town would need someone to maintain the clocks if they are to be kept running. He said prevailing winds cause the hands to shift, making the clocks inaccurate.

Sinaiko, who is a carpenter, told us it was the first clock he had ever fixed. "It was a fantasy. I'd just keep driving by and had an urge to fix it. It was really suffering from neglect more than anything else." He said that two pigeons kept him company during the day.

After a while we climbed back down and went outside with Sinaiko to watch the clock strike noon. Sinaiko removed a small watch from his pocket and checked the time against the tower clock. "I worry about it," Sinaiko said as we stood gazing up waiting for it to strike. A few minutes passed in silence and as the two large hands closed over the twelve suddenly the clock began to chime, the pigeons on the Town Hall lawn took flight, and we looked at Sinaiko, who

was smiling and counting strokes. "It's a thrill," Sinaiko said after the twelfth bong.