



PROVINCETOWN'S TOWER CLOCK



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Picturesque Provincetown, the last town on the Lower Cape, primarily a fishing and tourist community, has a tower clock installed in the tower of its Town Hall. This building is located in the center of the village on the corner of Commercial and Bradford Streets.

The tower clock has three six-foot dials facing east, west and south, which are approximately sixty feet above ground. The hands and figures are gilt on a black background. The hands are counterpoised. The clock is not illuminated.

The original clock works were installed in the tower after the building was completed in August, 1886. This clock was weight driven, and it was probably an E. Howard works, as it is known that Company men came from Waltham, Massachusetts, to repair it.

The cables for the weights ran from the center of the building over the upper part of the top floor ceiling, and thence down the inside of the front wall, all the way to the basement. This clock struck a bronze bell located in a louvered section near the top of the tower. The clock was donated by Joseph P. Johnson, a State Representative from Provincetown.

The bell was cast by William Blake & Co., formerly H. N. Hooper & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, A.D. 1886. (It now strikes on the outside.) The bell was donated by John H. Nickerson of Boston, Massachusetts. William Dunham of Provincetown was the caretaker of this clock for twenty-five years, followed by several other caretakers.

In the year 1956, this mechanism was replaced with an electric clock made by the I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. The dimensions of the electric clock are: width 22"; length 44"; and height 46". It has a 1/6 H.P. 1725 RPM Bodine electric motor to operate the driving and striking mechanism. The indicating mechanism is driven by a 1/50th H.P. Bodine electric motor that turns a rod with a universal joint, turning one revolution in one hour. This leads to three rods leading to the center of the three dials. Under each dial is a typical under-the-dial mechanism for driving the hour hand from the minute hand.

The works of this clock are attached to two steel I-beams. The I-beams are attached to a cast iron frame (probably a left-over from the original weight driven works). The gears are cast iron mounted on steel cross shafts, and are held in place by lead lined cast iron pillar block bearings.

This clock was donated and the installation paid for by an anonymous group of people from Provincetown.

Sometime around 1975, Provincetown's clock stopped. Upon investigating the cause, it was found that pigeons were coming in through the louvers and using the tower for a roosting area. It has been stated that a small mackerel was dropped between the gears, thereby jamming the works. It has also been stated that more than one ton of droppings were removed at that time. However, the louvers have now been covered with wire screen, and at the present time the clock is running and in good repair, thanks to Thomas Rand of Provincetown, the present caretaker.