

Provincetown Advocate, Thursday, December 15, 1977

Clockman offers some timely advice

By Gregory Katz

The clock in the steeple of Town Hall must be kept running, according to a unanimous vote of the Provincetown selectmen Monday.

Norman Tierney, clerk of the works on the Town Hall roofing project, told the finance committee last week the clocks would be "strictly for ornamentation" once the roof job is done. Tierney said the

high cost of maintaining the clock during the high winds of winter is prohibitive.

In another development, "Clockman" Jonathan Sinaiko informed Town Manager Charles Cobb he would continue to maintain the clocks. Four years ago, Sinaiko removed an eight-inch layer of pigeon droppings from the tower, disassembled the electric clock mechanism and fixed it at home. He has kept it in working order ever since.

"I like to see the clock going, and I'll continue to work on it. It's a simple clock and not expensive to maintain," Sinaiko said. He receives about \$100 a year for the service.

Tierney said high winds during the cold months cause the clock's hands to move, making it inaccurate. He said the clocks needed some kind of covering to protect it from the weather. But he said a conventional plexiglass cover would not do the trick, because it would fog up with moisture and yellow in the sun.

Last year Sinaiko solved this problem to his satisfaction by disconnecting the hands. They stood at the same place on the clock all winter. However, the clock mechanism continued. Its bells strike the hour.

"To me the bells are the most important part," Sinaiko said. The bell in the steeple is made of cast bronze and weighs about 500 pounds. It was cast in 1860. Disengaging the clock's hands does not affect the ringing of the bell.

The clock now runs on electricity. It used to run with the help of 18 clock weights that are now kept in the Heritage Museum.

The three faces of the clock are run by one mechanism driven by an electric motor. Sinaiko said the entire mechanism is as simple as a child's erector set. He said anyone with a reasonable amount of skill could work on it and keep it running.

Sinaiko says he fixes the clock when he is told that it is out of whack. Sometimes he doesn't have to be told. One July night last summer the clock rang 80 times and it was obvious to the entire town that something was wrong.

Some people aren't satisfied with the prospect of the clock's hands being disconnected every winter. They expect the clock's face to keep time throughout the year.

Former Acting Town Manager Ann Phelps was approached during her term in office by several people claiming to have solved the problem by constructing an elaborate cover with holes that would allow moisture to seep out.

Sinaiko has two suggestions. The first is to build a small windshield. The second is to replace the clock's hand with similar looking hands made of one-half square-inch mesh wire. This would allow the wind to blow through the hands without blowing them out of line. Sinaiko said there are plenty of experts in Boston who are happy to help with such problems and offer advice.

The Advocate, Thursday,

October 12, 1978

DING-DONG. Provincetown residents have learned the hard way not to rely on the Town Hall clock for the correct time. The huge bell, located in the Town Hall steeple, is likely to ring half a dozen times at two o'clock or, for that matter, at a quarter after two.

Despite the able and willing maintenance work of Jon Sinaiko, known around town as The Clockman, it doesn't surprise anyone when the clock takes time into its own hands.

But enough is enough. Joe Krysovaty, who for a year-and-a-half has lived directly below the chiming bell, was settling back late Tuesday night after an evening-long celebration with friends. Monday was his last day of arduous work for the season at Cape Tip Seafoods and he was looking forward to a restful slumber.

Then the bells started ringing. It was 1 a.m. so Joe didn't consider it unusual. That is, until the bell had rung more than six or seven, then 12 or 13 times. He counted 50 rings before giving up. Other neighbors tallied more than 85 chimes.

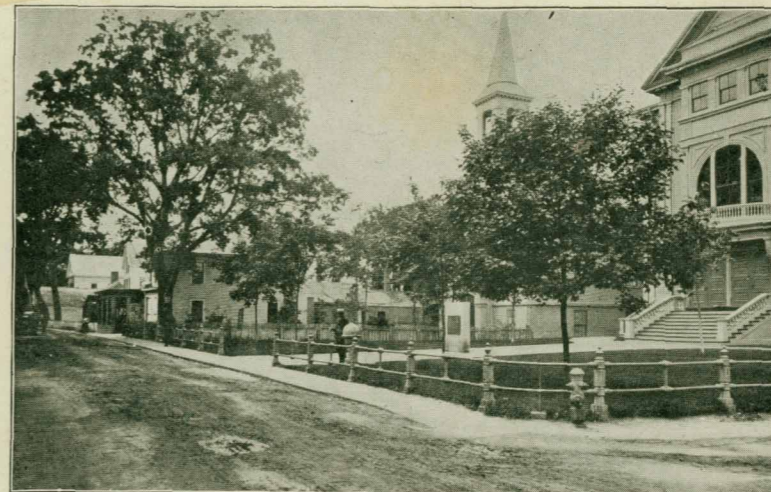
The police—whose headquarters is the basement of Town Hall—didn't need the phone calls that poured in. The bell was eventually muffled and fixed, at least for a time.

Two hours later, the bell was right on the money again and as of yesterday afternoon was marking time precisely.

- October 25, 1980

BROKEN ARM. The hurrican-force wind during Saturday's storm carried off an important part of Provincetown Town Hall—the minute hand on the west face of the hall's four-sided clock. Tom Rand, who maintains the clock, crawled all over Town Hall roof in search of the missing hand and he searched the grounds.

Rand wants residents in the center of town to watch for the piece in their yards or perhaps on their rooftops. If it is found it can be dropped off at Town Hall. Rand isn't sure the broken arm can be replaced with a new part. But he will make a new one to hang on the clock if the old one isn't found or replaced.



Commercial Street, Congregational Church and Town Hall. Provincetown, Mass. First Landing Place of the Pilgrims, Nov. 11, 1620.

Town Hall and Pilgrim Church - 1904

The clock