

For the Clockslist

I attach an article I wrote for NAWCC Chapter 72 Newsletter last April on the “Marine” clock (a “marketing” rather than an accurate description). You will find this reference by Jerome in Chapter X of his account.

“I will now give the true statement of facts and particulars of his (PT Barnum) connection with the Jerome Manufacturing Company—which, however, was not his first experience in clock-making. Some time before this, he was interested in a Company located in the town of Litchfield, Connecticut, and, I believe, owned about ten thousand dollars worth of stock. They made a very poor article which was called a marine clock, if I am rightly informed. That Company failed, and Barnum took the stock as security for endorsing and furnishing them with cash. I do not suppose the whole of the effects were worth transporting to Bridgeport, although estimated by him at a large amount.”

Last September I found some examples in the clock Museum in Bristol CT, here’s one of them similar to my clock. This one has the addition of an Alarm.



One of the examples in the Bristol clock Museum

Graham Mitchell 26 January 2006

April 2005

Unusual escapement in a junk clock bought at the auction

Graham Mitchell

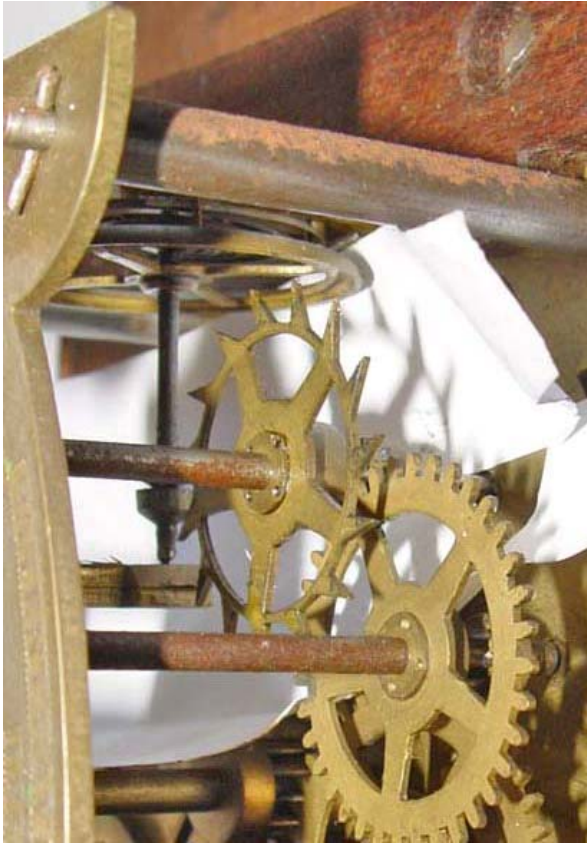
One clock in a lot consisting of 4 wrecks intrigued me enough to “buy another lot of junk”. The escapement looked so unusual; I had to satisfy my curiosity.



The clock is American with Litchfield Mfg Co LITCHFIELD CT and Patent Caveat filed 1851. The case has a papier-mâché façade with inlaid mother of pearl and floral painting. In poor shape and no dial. The movement was like nothing I'd seen before, so I was hooked.

The NAWCC Bulletins are a tremendous resource for information on American clocks and watches. The NAWCC website has a search facility on Bulletin articles. Type in Litchfield and hey presto! -37 hits. I soon found articles in 1989 and 1996 journals, discussing this clock.

I discovered that my clock has a “Litchfield Type 1 Sully escapement. Henry Sully was apprenticed to Charles Gretton (hadn’t heard of him) about 1694 and was friendly with Sir Isaac



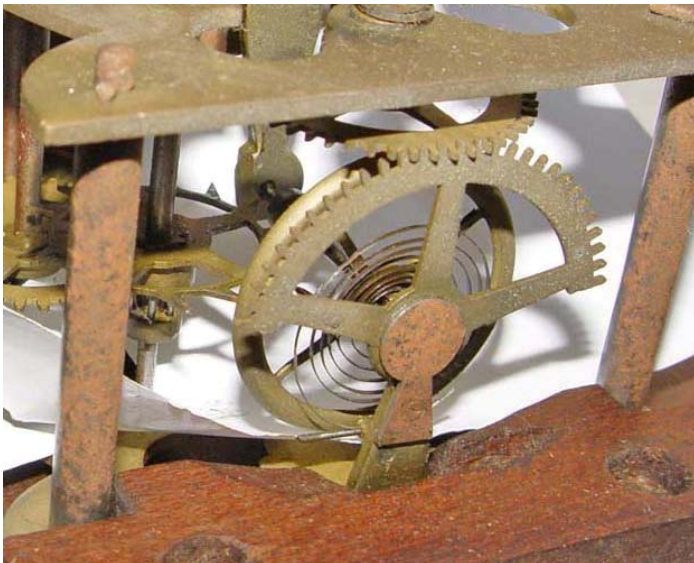
Newton and Christopher Wren (I’d heard of them!). Sully even submitted an example to George Graham who found fault with the mechanism, also called a DeBaufre escapement. I read further and that an escapement described by Richard of Wallingford that was the progenitor of the DeBaufre. Heavens above, my simple little clock has a pedigree, who would have believed it.

So how come a variant landed up being made by Litchfield? In December 1851, the Litchfield Manufacturing Company announced they were producing 8-day “marine” clocks with a Sully type escapement. Jerome criticized the Litchfield movement, calling it a *poor product*, nevertheless included an example in his 1852 catalog!

I find my unit is a Litchfield type 1 with a single escape wheel, cylindrical pallets and mainspring attached to the spring guard – it’s a massive spring too.

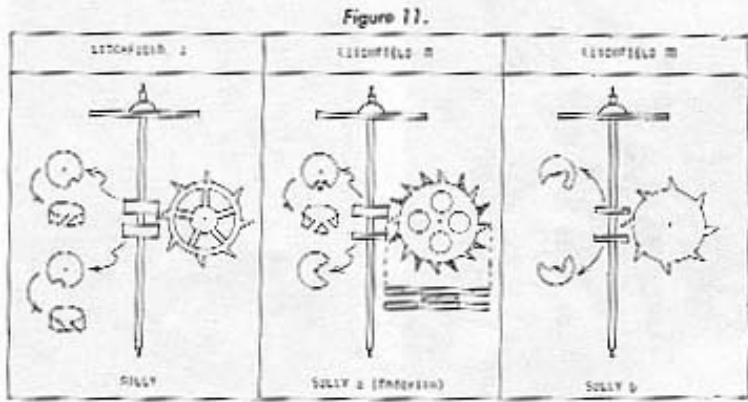
The pallets are attached to a large balance wheel and spring
Fast/slow adjustment is through the dial through a wheel and rack.

My clock is filthy but with a little bit of oil on the pivots and escapement away it went with a solid but noisy beat – maybe the noise of the action gave this type of escapement a short life. Litchfield died in 1856 and that was the end of the firm anyhow. It’s still a great restoration



project. I have used warm soapy water sparingly on the case to remove the dirt and applied Curator case finish with not too bad a result.

Now I will hunt around for a 5 ½ inch dial pan and bezel with only the centre hole drilled, and then attach a suitable paper dial.



Explanation of the escapement types extracted from the Bulletin