

Origins of the Waltham Model 57

Concluding Comments

by Ron Price

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(references are denoted with symbol [ref...])

Chronology of the Waltham Watch Company

1842	Edward Howard and Aaron Dennison became acquainted [ref.13, p.3] & [ref. 94, p.67]
1849	Initial capital of \$20,000 arranged from Samuel Curtis [ref. 47, page 739]
Sep 1850	Construction begins on factory building [ref. 16, p. 925]
Jan 1851	American Horologe Co. [ref. 47, page 739] , Howard to Keith [ref. 94, p.70]
1851	Warren Manufacturing Co. [ref. 47, p. 740] & [ref. 94 page 70]
Sep 1853	Boston Watch Co. [ref. 58, p. 73]
Mar 1854	Formation of the Waltham Improvement Company with BWCo [ref. 47, p. 740]
05/09/1857	Tracy Baker & Co. - Boston news articles May 12/13 [ref. 106] & [ref. 6, p. 275]
07/17/1857	Appleton Tracy & Co. per [ref. 65] ; 09/01/1857 per [ref. 48, p. 23]
02/17/1859	American Watch Co. [ref. 56, pp. 24 & 74]
1885	American Waltham Watch Co. [ref. 56 cover page] & [1885 Materials Catalog]
1907	Waltham Watch Co. [1907 Materials Catalog]
1923	Waltham Watch and Clock Company [ref. 51, p. 12]
1925	Waltham Watch Company [ref. 51, p. 12]

Author's Note: Wesley Hauptman's series of articles in NAWCC Bulletin ([\[ref. 15\]](#), [\[ref. 16\]](#), & [\[ref. 18\]](#)) are quite useful, especially considering the information available at the time he wrote them (several corrections are noted herein). These articles, Michael Harrold's [\[ref. 29\]](#) & [\[ref. 63\]](#) and Moore's *Timing a Century* [\[ref. 51\]](#) would satisfy most readers' desires for more details not found herein.

While the above recommended references provide a comprehensive background on the history of the Waltham Watch Company and of the watches the company made, if you want to see real examples, pick up all the books you can that Roy Ehrhardt wrote on "Waltham" watches (for example my bible, [\[ref. 78\]](#) *Waltham Pocket Watch Identification and Price Guide*, 1976, Heart Of America Press). Although author received an unbelievable amount of inspiration from many people for this project, only one person, Roy Ehrhardt, showed him by his examples how to conduct research. You will notice a similar process, except author focused only on one model from one manufacturer, where Roy covered many models from many companies.

Hopefully the above information and following data tables will enable collectors to direct their quest of Model 57 pocket watches in a more orderly manner. Perhaps the historical value of these watches will take on more significance.

This report will also better enable collectors to recognize movements with mixed parts, and to recognize imitations (commonly called fakes). Features on movements with mixed parts or on imitations will not likely line up correctly with the real object.

Another value of having data tabulated is that the data can help identify and date an unknown or private label Model 57 movement. For example, see the custom watch S/N 1859 listed in the data table. For a rule of thumb, if you have a private label movement with real jewels settings, it probably is an Appleton Tracy & Co. grade; 15Js with garnet jewels in fake settings, a Waltham Watch Co. grade; 11Js with translucent jewels in fake settings, a P.S. Bartlett; burnished jewels, a Wm. Ellery.

In retrospect, many of the new features or changes on the Model 57 were probably unnecessary, but the vast number of them sure make collecting Model 57s a joy. Considering all of the improvements, and all of the design changes for marketing purposes, the company probably would have been better off not replacing the Model 57 with the next introduced full plate Model 70, Model 77 and Model 79 watches. The Model 57 could have likely satisfied the market until the Model 83 was introduced (but of course the powers to be didn't know that at the time).

Nevertheless, by 1879, 25 years after the Waltham watch factory open its doors, and after producing nearly a million Model 57 pocket watches, the company was producing a large number of quality industrialized watches in a variety of models, grades and sizes, and made its mark as a world-class manufacturing company. This was a magnificent achievement for the mid-nineteenth century. The Model 57 had done its job!

In closing author would like to pay homage to a certain person for the success of the Waltham Watch Company. Many historians in the past have given credit to Dennison at the expense of Howard; this certainly was inappropriate as we now know. William Keith wrote his *A Family Tale* in 1883 in response to a news article [\[ref. 95\]](#) that claimed Aaron Dennison was the "father of watchmaking". Keith gave appropriate credit to Edward

Howard for his "mechanical and horological skills", to Samuel Curtis who "probably sacrificed more money in this experiment at watchmaking than all others combined except Mess. Howard & Davis", and to Royal Robbins who was "by far the most prominent agent, and the one most successful in organizing and developing American watch-making" [\[ref. 94\]](#). However, author would like to point out that it was Keith who concocted the ingenious scheme to establish the Waltham Improvement Company; this got the watch company to Waltham in the first place. It was Keith as treasurer of the Improvement Company that arranged three successive yearly mortgages for the financially troubled watch company. It was Keith who courted Robbins upon hearing rumors of Robbins wanting to move the watch company to New York. It was Keith who accepted favorable terms for the watch company in the merger to form the American Watch Company. And Keith served the Company admirably as its president during its formative years.

In my book, William Keith is the "unsung hero" who helped make industrialized watchmaking a success in Waltham.
Enjoy! -- Ron Price

Aaron Lufkin Dennison Epitaph:

No article on the first "Walthams" would be complete without a commentary on Aaron Lufkin Dennison. Many commentaries have already been written; the best this author has seen was not in a book about Aaron, but rather in a book about his brother, Eliphalet Whorf Dennison.

Before his watchmaking endeavors, Aaron saw an opportunity to make and sell boxes to the jewelry trade. He established such a business venture with his father and family. The business expanded to include tags. Years later Eliphalet bought out his father and eventually turned the box and tag business into a very successful enterprise. His building still stands as the Dennison Manufacturing Company, in Framingham, Mass.

The Dennison Company commissioned a memorial book to be written on Eliphalet [\[ref. 50\]](#). In it the author describes Aaron in the following manner: *"Mr. A. L. Dennison was a man of most attractive and interesting personality. He was tall and slender, with a full beard except that the upper lip was shaven. His face wore a severe expression, but his smile was very sweet. Meeting him for the first time, one would not suspect the persistence and patience that had carried him so far and so long against overwhelming difficulties. It was easy to see that he was a dreamer, but not so easy to see that he had the courage of his dreams."*

"In every way a simple man, he loved plain and comfortable ways of living and had no taste for luxury. He was particular about his own dress, that it should be neat and suitable, and had an especial liking, in his own case and others, for a good hat. He was a vegetarian, though, as he said, not a bigoted one."

Eliphalet looked up to his brother and felt indebted to him, as should the world, he said as he wrote of Aaron's accomplishments. In a letter to Aaron on January 14, 1874, Eliphalet wrote: *"Your brow is crowned with laurels of success as a great inventor, as a man of indomitable courage, push, and industry, and of incorruptible integrity; one who has sacrificed his life to the science that he was early wedded to -- sacrificed home, country, and all that selfish men surround themselves with, called comforts, for your love of that science, and your love of mankind."*

Edward Howard Epitaph:

For a commentary on Edward Howard, the author would like to mention 12 significant medals Howard received for his and his partners' achievements in various fields. Note the dates; Howard was a busy man. These medals are documented in [\[ref. 13, p. 7\]](#).

Quote [...] *the first four were awarded by the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association to Howard and Davis, the first, in 1847, for "Regulator Clocks;" the second, in 1850, for "Clocks;" the third, in the same year, for "Gold Standard Balances;" and again, in the same year, for "Fire Engines." The fifth and sixth were awarded by the Maryland Institute for the Promotion of Mechanic Arts, in 1852, for "Bankers' Scales," and in 1855, [...], for "Sewing Machines." In 1855 the Metropolitan Mechanics Institute awarded Dennison, Howard and Davis a medal for "Watches," while, in 1856, the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association awarded two medals to Howard and Davis, one for "Eyelet Sewing Machines," and another for "Hand Sewing Machines." The Metropolitan Mechanics Institute gave Howard and Davis a medal in 1858, for "Sewing Machines for Tailors' Use." [...] Again, in 1860, the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association cited Edward Howard and Company for "Superior Watches and Watch Movements." The last medal was from the same association, in 1869, at their eleventh annual exhibition.* End Quote.