



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

James Arthur Clock and Watch Collection

NMAH.AC.0130

NMAH Staff

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	James Arthur Clock and Watch Collection
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0130
Date:	1743-1967.
Extent:	15 Cubic feet (32 boxes)
Creator:	New York University Arthur, James, 1842-1912 ((machine shop owner))
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Collection donated by New York University, 1964.

Ownership and Custodial History

Arthur's collection of clocks and watches was administered by New York University (NYU) until 1964, when the collection was sent to the Smithsonian on a permanent loan.

Processing Information

Collection processed by NMAH Staff, undated

Preferred Citation

James Arthur Clock and Watch Collection, 1743-1967, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Lent by New York University.

Restrictions on Access

Portions of this collection are stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to access it.

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Biographical Note

James Arthur owned and operated a New York machine shop for patent models. He came to the United States from Scotland in 1871. Fourteen years later he established Arthur Machine Works in New York City for the construction of original and special machinery. He was a skillful, ingenious, highly trained mechanic. While not technically a clockmaker or a watchmaker, he was especially interested in horology and timekeeping devices. From boyhood, clocks and watches were his hobby and he was a discriminating collector.

For more than forty years, he collected watches and clocks from many countries and periods. Arthur was quick to recognize any features of a clock or watch that gave it a distinctive character. His fondness for the fine points of the machinery did not blind him to distinctions of form and beauty in the cases, to originality in the maker, or to the historical significance of the work. He was devoted to the science no less than to the art of timekeeping. Arthur's collection contained some 1,200 watches, 300 clocks, and numerous accessories.

Scope and Contents

These records contain material on the Arthur collection of clocks and watches. Includes publications, inventories, manuscripts, reports, photographs, advertisements, catalogues, newspaper clippings, patents, and business records; correspondence files of NYU curators concerning the administration of the collection; a watch record book of sales of Ezekiel Jones, carried on bookkeeping, 1822 and 1825; and a copy of the Smithsonian-NYU permanent loan agreement, 1964.

Arrangement

Divided into 7 series: (1) Correspondence, (2) Patent Specifications, (3) Horological Pamphlets and Articles, (4) Miscellaneous Articles, (5) Clock Makers Directory, (6) Press Clippings about Watches and Clocks, (7) Photographs.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Clocks and watches
- Collectors and collecting
- Horology
- Models (Patents)
- Watches

Types of Materials:

- Advertisements
- Business records -- 19th century
- Clippings

Inventories
Manuscripts -- 19th century
Patents
Photographs -- 1850-1900
Photographs -- 20th century
Press releases
Publications
Reports
Sales catalogs

Names:

Jones, Ezekiel