

McLean County Museum of History

McLean County Courthouse Clock Collection

Processed by Torii Moré
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Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 Box
COLLECTION DATES:	1922-2005
RESTRICTIONS:	None
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	None

Historical Sketch

The first courthouse was built in Bloomington in 1832 and lasted until 1836. This wooden structure was located on the same square the McLean County Museum of History occupies today. In 1836 a brick courthouse was built. The third courthouse (which was of a similar style to the present-day building) was built in 1868, was in service by 1871, and that same year a bell was placed in the tower to summon parties to court sessions. A clock was installed in the courthouse tower in 1878, and that year it was decided that the bell would toll on the hour and half hour. In those days, people who came to the court house would carry the proper time back to the community they came from. This courthouse was gutted in the June 1900 fire that destroyed much of downtown Bloomington. As a result of this fire the bell fell straight through the building, landing in the basement. A new courthouse was built and according to an article in the May 7, 1902 *Pantagraph*, the bell was again in place and had been rung by a workman to test its sound.

The clocks in the 1868 courthouse were run by weights totaling 1800 pounds which had to be raised by a windless. The original clock in the current courthouse building (now the McLean County Museum of History) was a Standard Time by the Johnson Pneumatic Time System. With this system, a gallon of water released every 60 seconds created air pressure that moved the clock hands forward. This system was replaced sometime between 1926 and 1936

with an electric motor driven compressor. In 1948 the county authorized a new tower clock system for the courthouse, but 5 years later new gearboxes had to be installed as the clocks had been consistently losing time. In August 1959 the dome of the courthouse was struck by lightning, stopping the clocks at 3:39 am.

The clocks haven't worked reliably since the 1970s, and didn't work at all in the late 1990s. In 2000 new driver motors were installed and by 2002 some of the hour hands were losing time. Old grease seemed to be cause of the problem. In 2005, close to 400 McLean County residents gathered in the old courthouse to hear the bell ring for the first time in 50 years.

Scope Note

This collection contains newspaper clippings, bills, correspondence, instruction manuals, diagrams, and historical sketches that are related to the clocks and bell in the dome of the Courthouse / McLean County Museum of History. This collection spans the years 1922-2005

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Bill Miller "The Old Courthouse Clock"

- 1.1 Letter to Greg Koos regarding the bell ringer system
- 1.2 "The Old Courthouse Clock, a Brief History" May 2001
- 1.3 "The Old Courthouse Clock, a Brief History" January 2002
- 1.4 Letter to Greg regarding the history of the clock
- 1.5 "The Old Courthouse Clock, a Brief History" November 1999
- 1.6 Pantagraph clippings related to the clock spanning the years 1922-2001

Folder 2: Bill Miller- Parts, Correspondence, Photos.

- 2.1 "Bell Talk" 2005
- 2.2 Internet print out of K-2 Series Parallel Shaft AC Gearmotor Model 0741
- 2.3 Internet print out of K-2 Series Parallel Shaft AC Gearmotor Model 0722
- 2.4 Internet print out of K-2 Series Parallel Shaft AC Gearmotor
- 2.5 Letter from Bill Miller to Greg regarding fixing the strike time
- 2.6 Simplex Time Recorder 6400 Dimension and Installation details
- 2.7 Premises for Bell Ringing on Courthouse Clock, January 2005
- 2.8 notes on operation of timing wheel
- 2.9 "Dome caps first phase" *Pantagraph* March 2005
- 2.10 "Historic bell tolls on Christmas Eve" *Pantagraph* December 2004
- 2.11 Proposals to slow courthouse bell strikes by Bill Miller
- 2.12 March 2005 letter from Bill Miller to Greg regarding suggestions for maintaining and checking the system to know it is functioning as intended
- 2.13 April 2003 letter from Bill Miller to Dave Hauman updating the clock situation
- 2.14 April 2003 letter from Bill Miller to Dave Hauman regarding pending retirement from horological custodians of the clocks
- 2.15 September 12, 2002 Letter from David Hauman to Jay Scales
- 2.16 March 27, 2002 Letter from David Hauman to Jay Scales regarding instructions for repair
- 2.17 October 15, 2001 Letter from Bill Miller to Dave Hauman
- 2.18 June 21, 2001 Letter from David to Bill
- 2.19 July 26, 2000 Letter from David to Elderhorst Bells, Inc.
- 2.20 June 2, 2000 Letter from David to Elderhorst Bells, Inc. with enclosed \$600 check
- 2.21 June 17, 2001 Letter from Bill Miller to Greg Koos regarding expense sheet (attached)

- 2.22 May 12, 2000 Letter from Bill Miller to Greg regarding approved purchase and installation of new clock motors
- 2.23 March 10, 2000 Letter from Bill Miller to Greg regarding received grant and list of priorities
- 2.24 Technical Report Courthouse Clocks by W.R. Miller, P.E. and D.R. Gottselig, P.E. September 1999. 10 pages
- 2.25 12 September 2002 letter from David Hauman to Jay Scales
- 2.26 March 27, 2002 letter from David Hauman to Jay Scales
- 2.27 July 19, 2000 e-mail from Bill Miller to Jay Scales regarding driver and mounding alignment problem
- 2.28 September 21, 1994 letter from Simplex regarding redesigned tower clock movement
- 2.29 July 12, 2000 Letter from Jay Scales of Elderhorst Bells, Inc. to Bill Miller regarding new clock drive movement
- 2.30 February 21, 2000 email from Jay Scales to Mr. Miller regarding electromagnetic strikers
- 2.31 Chronology of the clock system at the courthouse
- 2.32 sketch
- 2.33 December 7, 2004 emails between Greg and Jim Romba. Attached are clock control system descriptions, dimensions, ACM interface drawings, and wiring drawings
- 2.34 Slides of courthouse clock photos

Folder 3: Clock Restoration

- 3.1 Simplex 6400 Time Control Center Programming Instruction manual
- 3.2 7 diagrams
- 3.3 Simplex 6351 and 6400 Time Control Centers Installation & Operating Instructions
- 3.4 Simplex Tower Clocks Parts List
- 3.5 Simplex 6351 and 6400 Time Control Centers Installation & Operating Instructions

Folder 4: Johnson Pneumatic Clock System

- 4.1 The United States Patent Office Warren S. Johnson of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Pneumatic Clock System. Application filed October 15, 1895. Serial No. 565,707. 10 pages
- 4.2 W. S. Johnson Pneumatic Clock diagram

Folder 5: Purchase of New Controller 1998-99

- 5.1 Bill \$2,052 5/25/99
- 5.2 May 11, 1999 letter from Jack E. Moody to Greg Koos regarding Simple Time Recorder Invoice \$1,875
- 5.3 Simplex installation service acknowledgement
- 5.4 Simplex Time Recorder Labor Estimate
- 5.5 February 26, 1999 letter to McLean County Facilities Management from Jack E. Moody
- 5.6 Property Committee Agenda
- 5.7 December 22, 1998 Letter from Greg Koos to John Zeunik informing him of a donor offering to install a new clock works and interest in applying for grants
- 5.8 September 1, 1988 email from Tracy M. Shepard to Greg Koos stating that there needs to be a heat/fire detector in the dome wired to the fire department
- 5.9 Letter from Greg Koos to Jack moody enclosing the contact for the purchase and installation of a new control system.
- 5.10 May 22, 1998 letter from David Ringland of Simplex to Greg koos in regard to problems with the current system
- 5.11 Memorandum to Tracy Shepard from Steven E. Bishop regarding services and fees
- 5.12 E-mail from Steve at Farnsworck & Wylie Architects, Engineers, Surveyors to Greg Koos regarding donation of \$1200

- 5.13 E-mail from Tracy Shepard to Greg suggesting waiting on announcing the project until they get the Farnsworth report
- 5.14 E-mail from Tracy Shepard to Greg regarding proposal
- 5.15 Farnsworth & Wylie, Inc. forms
- 5.16 Simplex building systems quotation
- 5.17 e-mail from Tracy Shepard to Greg regarding pigeon droppings and leaky roof
- 5.18 May 22, 1998 Newspaper article about Fulton County crumbling bell tower
- 5.19 e-mail from Tracy Shepard to Greg regarding getting an engineer to look at the dome