

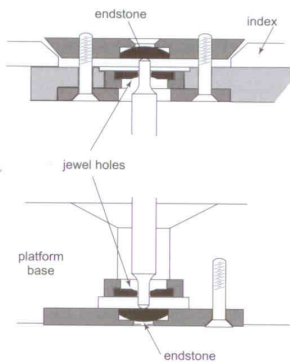
Technical Stuff

Count Your Jewels by *Tim Rymer*



Collectors today need to know that the practice of jewelling only the top plate of the pocket watch, where the jewels are easily seen, was a widespread practice. Generally, if the watch

was built for accurate timekeeping, they were proud of it and said so! If they spelled out: “fully jeweled”, “fifteen jewels” (or more) you’ve got them, if not, the watch might have nine, eleven, or thirteen jewels. The reason for the “odd” number of jewels (except for watches with cylinder escapements), is that the roller jewel pin which operates the pallet fork is all by itself under the balance wheel, while the other wheels have a pair of jewels for their pivots to roll in.



It truly is amazing that you can remove one screw and if you’re careful not to snag, bend, or overextend the hairspring, you can dunk the balance wheel, hairspring and all into a jar of “Instant Gratification” hair-spring cleaner and a miracle seemingly happens.

The sophisticated solvent cleans away most of the fresher oils and 99% of the dirt and lint! Once re-oiled and returned to the watch, it runs pretty darn good – assuming nothing is actually bent or broken. But, in the fullness of time, we find that the heavy, sticky old oils – especially the old sperm whale, porpoise jaw, mineral and vegetable based oils are left behind to contaminate the fresh oil and the watch quits in a few months. A good repairperson makes the extra effort to really, really clean the balance system and the watch, and then make a detailed inspection with a high-powered loupe.

First, one must be willing to take apart the most delicate mechanism, the balance wheel assembly, the fast beating heart of the watch, and clean out the jewel hole with sharpened “peg wood” sticks. Then move the stick sideways across the cap jewel to ensure the entire old dry oil residue be removed. Finally, clean all the parts except the wheel and hairspring in “rodico” plastic watch cleaning putty. Then look for cracks or pits in the cap jewel, and cracks in the hole jewel with a strong magnifying loupe. Beware of the symmetrically blown – out hole. At first blush, it looks o.k.

then you see the jagged edges of the hole instead of smooth roundness.

In that case, I must select the right size and length jewel pin, clean it and the roller in hairspring cleaner so new shellac will stick then avoid losing the pin forever while transferring it to the roller table. Then heat the combination in one of the many tools designed for this purpose. Then all one must do is put a tiny amount of shellac fragments on the underside of the roller table to make it melt into a tiny puddle which will hold the jewel in place. This ancient method allows a watchmaker to warm it up and move the jewel’s position slightly if necessary to make the watch run properly.

These techniques can be reinforced or made clearer by reading Henry Fried’s Bench Practices, and other books from our library, or at the Marts. I really enjoy reading about the old methods and reverse engineering the old tools our past generations of repairmen left for us.

Regional Tables Now For Sale



The Southwest California Regional will be held this year at the same place, Del Mar Fairgrounds, Wyland Center, on November 19, 20, and 21, 2009. The public will be admitted on Saturday, November 21st.

There are three convenient ways to pre-register for that perfect table location such as 1) Earl Starr will be selling tables at every Chapter 59 meeting until October 10th, 2) print the pre-registration form from our website at www.nawcc59.org and 3) complete the form at the back of The Mart, August 2009 edition.

August 8th Meeting

Chapter Mart

The Chapter Mart opens at 6:00 p.m. with refreshments. Bring any horological item to sell or trade. The Chapter Business begins at 7:00 p.m.

Show and Tell

Please bring any horological item beginning with the letter “G” such as Gilbert, German, gravity escapement, Gothic, Grand Sonnerie, Gustav Becker, gear, gilt/gold, Giant, General Stark, and Gruen.

Program

TBD