

## BOOK Review for NAWCC Bulletin

How to Manage and Regulate Clocks and Watches. For the use of those who have no knowledge of Horology

By M. Ferdinand Berthoud

Paperback, 21x14cm, 81 pages, Equation Tables, 4 Plates, 1999, first English Translation (by Lawrence Alan Seymour) of the French 1759 classic “L’art de conduire et de régler les Pendules et les Montres. A l’usage de ceux qui n’ont aucune connaissance d’Horlogerie”, with an introduction by Paul Middents.

The first timekeepers were used as scientific instruments for highly educated scholars and as playthings for kings and noblemen. But by the mid eighteenth century in Europe watches and clocks had become common enough that that a sizable portion of merchant classes like urban shopkeepers was likely to own or aspire to own a timepiece, but these machines were still novel enough that most owners did not understand them or know how to use them, nor set them. In 1759 the distinguished Paris based Horologist Ferdinand Berthoud, “with the approval

and assent of the King”, saw an opportunity for what can fairly be described as one of the first mass market books on timekeeping.

While today Berthoud is better known for perfecting the equation clock, and his later, scholarly works on horological theory and horological science, few of his texts were so widely published as this little brochure. In the next 60 years it went through 6 editions in French (including one each in Holland and Belgium), was translated into Spanish and Italian three times each, and was published in German twice, as well as in Dutch. But until L.A.Seymour, a NAWCC member in Washington State, translated and published the text in English in 1999 it was quite inaccessible to English speaking readers.

While from today's perspective some of the text seems quaint, we must remember that the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century was basically a nonmechanical era, and even simple mechanical concepts like friction, lubrication or “storing power in a spring or by raising a weight” were virtually unknown to the intended audience. Even before providing instructions on how to set a timekeeper the author had to introduce such concepts as solar time vs. mean time which Berthoud does simply and elegantly at the beginning of the text. Other chapters deal with evaluating and selecting a reputable watchmaker, and with proper maintenance.

The translator/publisher deserves the gratitude of horological enthusiasts for making this classic work finally available in English 340 years after its first publication.

Reviewed by Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki (New Jersey)