

## **Clocks – Their Origin and Development 1320 – 1880**

**By H.M. Vehmeyer**

*Published 2004 by Exhibitions International, Wilsele (Belgium); 2 Volumes hardcover, in slipcase, profusely illustrated, 1021 pages, bibliography, index; ISBN 90-5349-431-6; available from the publisher ( ), price approx.\$400; or borrow from the Library & Research Center at the National Watch & Clock Museum (additional fee for excess postage and insurance).*

Given the heft (16 lbs.) and the price of this book (\$400) this certainly is not one of the horological books one acquires casually or accidentally. But when this reviewer recently visited a bookseller in the Netherlands as part of a horological study tour a handful of the 20 participants when confronted with this extraordinary publication spontaneously placed orders for this title, so for a certain type of serious student of horology it clearly is attractive.

This book is a completely rewritten and vastly expanded version of an earlier publication (Vehmeyer, *Antieke Uurwerken – Een familienverzameling*, 1994, 624 pages, ISBN 90—6194-188-1). The main difference is that the original edition was written in Dutch, and the current one is all in English, making the work vastly more accessible to most American collectors. Both editions are basically a detailed history of the mechanical clock in Europe, illustrated primarily with examples from the extraordinary collection of the author's family. The 1994 edition showed 233 clocks in detail; the 2004 edition has grown to 330 clocks so shown. Therefore the book also is a massive collection catalog. Each clock in the family collection is catalogued on two (or more) large (13x10 inches) pages, with about half a page of text describing maker, dial, movement and case, half a picture of color photos of details, and a large, full page color picture of the clock facing the initial page. The clocks are arranged by country (52 from Germany, 109 from the Netherlands, 94 from England, 83 from France, but none from outside of Europe. Within each country they are in chronological order.

Interspersed between these country catalogs (which take up about 660 pages) are additional chapters (about 300 pages) with a narrative history of the art and science of clockmaking. These chapters (particularly those dealing with the post 1657 era) are more sparsely illustrated, mostly using images of outstanding examples from major museums whenever the author's collection was inadequate to make a particular point. A 50 page "List of Clockmakers" provides biographical data of the about 195 clockmakers represented in the collection. There also is a good bibliography and a comprehensive index. The quality of production, including photography and printing is very high (more crisp than the 1994 book) and many photographs are new.

Why would you want to buy this book? If the focus of your horological interest is in very high grade European clocks, the kind you will rarely see outside of museums, like the oeuvre of Buschmann from Germany, of Coster or van Ceulen in the Netherlands, of Knibb, Thompion or Quare from England, of Breguet, Berthoud or Janvier from France, you know you will unlikely ever own many of this type of clocks, and that to see a significant number of them you must travel to many museums, where some may have a hand full of examples – but mostly behind glass, hard to see up close. Purchasing the Vehmeyer book –while no replacement of hands on examination of the masterworks- gives you a great opportunity to learn about some of the finest clocks ever made, and the cost of the book –while substantial- is but a tiny fraction of what it would cost to buy any one of them, and still considerably cheaper than touring the great horological museums of the world. Even more economical is borrowing the set of books through the mail from the Library and Research Center in Columbia PA. (By agreeing to write and publish this book review the library was able to get a second set –only books of which we have duplicates are lent- at a reduced price).

Book Review by Fortunat Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ  
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