

A Rare IWC Jones Pocket Watch

And New York Time

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The calibre Jones watches are the earliest products from IWC, designed and manufactured by F. A. Jones almost 150 years ago. Collectors immediately recognise the Jones watches as their dials seem, at first sight, rather uniform: white enamel, classic slender hands, Roman numerals, small seconds at 6 o'clock and the logo depicting the name of the manufacturer. It is the logo which has been written in many different ways. The authors of the already-classic book, *F.A. Jones: His Life, Legacy and Watches* recognise five different groups of how 'International Watch Company' has been written, using different styles and abbreviations of the three words, **Figure 1**.¹ Alan Myers states: 'at thorough inspection it turns out that no logo is identical to another, indicating that they were applied one by one and by hand'. In the Jones reference book, two other logos are depicted. Here the manufacturer's name has been deleted and instead the name of the retailer has been applied. These two names are 'J.H. Johnston, New York' and 'William H. Sandifer, New York', respectively. Further names referred to by Alan Myers are: Carrollton Baltimore Md, K&W Tichel, Savage Lyman & Co, Montreal, Mc A H & B and Thos Kirkpatrick. Now another name has turned up, not known so far: Sam'l Hammond, New York, **Figure 2**.

It is not strange that some names are accompanied by 'New York'. After all, the complete early production had been exported to New York City where Jones had F. H. Mathez as an agent for further distribution. This was also the time when 'New York' was engraved on each movement, **Figure 3**. When Ferdinand Seeland took over the production, following the first bankruptcy in 1876, 'New York' was no longer engraved on the movements because he stopped the export overseas and he reserved the produced watches for the European market. As on the 'Hammond' watch the usual International Watch Co. logo is lacking, so this watch can easily be overlooked by collectors. However, it is a genuine Jones, pattern 'B', referring to the early production batches, according to the movement number dating from the period 1872–1874. On the movement, the name 'Passingham' has been engraved but could not be identified as a jeweller or a watchmaker from New York in those days. Given the style, comparable with many other IWC engravings from the same era, it had been applied almost certainly in Schaffhausen, **Figure 4**.

Samuel Hammond & Co was located at the corner of Wall Street and William Street, New York City. He had been a partner of Samuel Ward Benedict since 1841 and continued the business alone after Benedict retired in 1860. Hammond was a smart businessman. Although there were abundant American engine-produced watches available,

European hand-produced watches were considered by some as of higher quality and prestige compared with the mass-produced timepieces from gigantic manufacturers such as Elgin and Waltham. Hammond advertised that he was the exclusive importer of complicated and chronometer watches of European origin, **Figure 5**. Chronometer watches and very accurate timekeepers were sought-after by a special group of customers: captains of naval vessels docking at the nearby East River. The watches imported by Hammond had exclusively his name on the dial, suggesting to the customer that they had been made especially for him. To see who had produced the watch was not of interest to every client. Printing only the name of the retailer or wholesaler was also not a big problem for European watch manufacturers, as they eagerly wanted access to the American market. It was done for 25 or 50 cents extra per piece. It is known that Hammond imported chronometer watches produced by A. P. Walsh, a famous chronometer maker in London, and watches made by F. A. Lange in Germany and Vacheron Constantin, Switzerland. Hammond must have had confidence in the quality of products made by F. A. Jones in Schaffhausen as well.

New York, during the 1860s, together with Boston, was already an important commercial city and a gateway to world seas and the European continent. There were many watches around and these were not only increasing in number but also in accuracy. However, unlike Boston, there was no standard time in New York. At least six different times were provided, four of which were determined by local jewellers showing the time on buildings visible from far away. This was causing confusion, certainly for business people, as the important city clocks were not synchronised and the jewellers, spread over the city, all claimed to be the keeper of 'New York Time'. Also, Hammond assured the New Yorkers that his time was the correct one. It could be read from Trinity Church at walking distance from his shop, the clock of which was maintained by him. There were several other important city clocks, among them the City Hall clock and Tiffany's Hercules. Businessmen complained at the stock exchange that important deals could be disturbed by the fact that one partner had Tiffany's time, the other Trinity time, set on their respective watches. The city press had, not without irony, repeatedly called upon the city council to accept a standard time instead of maintaining six different time zones in one city. Moreover, it was unacceptable that the time was not determined by an officially controlled state organisation, but by private jewellers at their own discretion! Finally, in 1864, 20 years after the telegraph had been introduced in the USA, the Albany Dudley Observatory sent its first time signal and

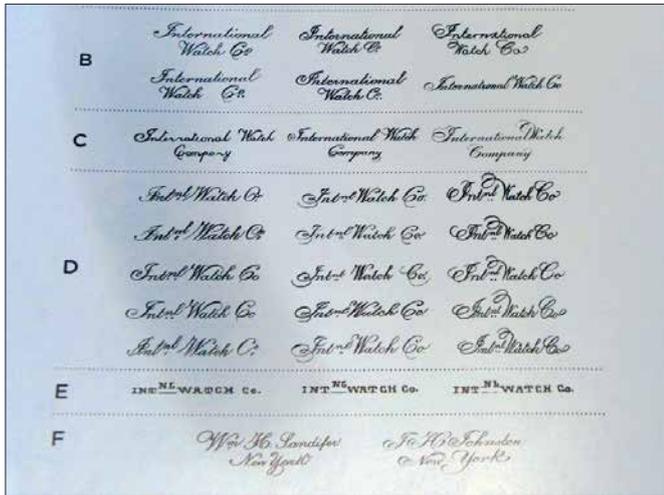


Figure 1. Different dial inscriptions for Jones pocket watches (courtesy of A. Myers).



Figure 2. Jones watch dial with logo 'Sam'l Hammond, New York'.



Figure 3. Jones watch movement pattern, engraved 'New York', early production.



Figure 4. Jones watch movement pattern 'B', early production, engraved 'Passingham'.

standard time was born in the metropolis.

The same issue was present in Schaffhausen.² Here also, there was no standard time available during the Jones period, and for many years thereafter. The watches were regulated in the regulation room in which a tall pendulum clock was present, to be used as the master clock. A pendulum clock was considered the most accurate timekeeper available and this remained so until the development of the atomic clock, shortly after WWII. It took more than 40 years (1912) before IWC had access to astronomical time determined by the Neuchâtel Astronomical Observatory. But that fact did not withhold Samuel Hammond, four decades before, from ranking the Jones movements among the best timepieces available.

ENDNOTES

1. D. Seyffer, T. König and A. Myers, F.A. Jones: *His Life, Legacy and Watches*, (IWC, 2013).
2. D. Seyffer, *Die Unternehmensgeschichte von IWC Schaffhausen. Ein Schweizer Uhrenhersteller zwischen Innovation und Tradition Teil 1, 2*, (Oberhausen: Athena Verlag, 2014).

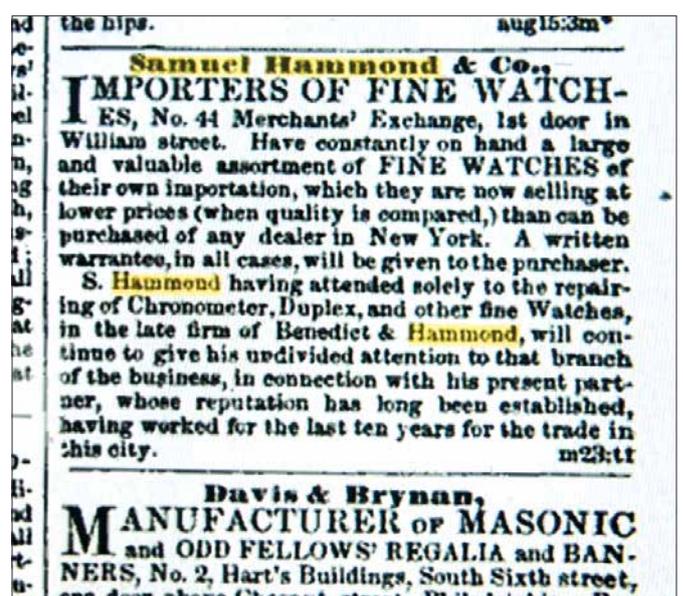


Figure 5. Advertisement by S. Hammond around 1860.