



Town of Gray

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**First Settled
1738**

August 10, 2020

TO: Pennell Alumni Association
Gray Historical Society (GHS)

FROM: Doug Webster, Comm. Dev. Dept. & Clock Advocate

RE: Mounting Original Pennell Clock Face
Enhancing GHS Presence at Pennell
Status & Next Steps

Introduction

Thanks to Don Whitney's consistent dedication, we are all fortunate to be on the threshold of having Pennell's last original clock face displayed. The Pennell Alumni Association's devoted support of the 1880's round-top Howard Tower Clock, together with Balzer Family Clockworks of Freeport, has ensured that Gray's irreplaceable clock will be striking every hour for years to come. This memo outlines the present situation and anticipated next steps for mounting the clock face as well as increasing the awareness of Gray's historical artifacts.

Relevant History

In the 1880's, Pennell's Tower Clock was purchased by Henry Pennell, built in Boston by E. Howard & Company, then shipped in a wooden crate to Portland's (then) Union Station. Planks from the original shipping crate are on display in the present clock room on the second floor of Pennell. From the 1880's until 2009, the clockworks were located behind the four clock dial faces in the 80' clock tower.

As part of the 2009-10 resident-supported \$2.4M renovations converting Pennell to municipal use, the clockworks were relocated from further up the clock tower to the second floor clock room to be more climate controlled and more readily visible for the public. The clock ticks 2,732 times per hour and has ticked over 3 billion times. It is in pristine condition thanks to the Pennell Alumni and Rick and Linda Balzer.

All four of the original 200 pound (+/-), seven and one-half foot diameter clock faces, the "dials", were replaced in the spring of 1992 using the full extension of Gray's Fire & Rescue Department ladder truck. The north-facing dial was in the best condition and was the template to construct replacement dials. The other three dials were in such poor condition that they needed to be thrown out. This only remaining original

north-facing dial was kindly stored by Jim Hall, a local carpenter, in their family barn on Dutton Hill in Gray from 1992 until recently. This unrestored dial is currently in Pennell's second floor hallway adjacent to the clock room.

Recent Developments

Just as the planets came into alignment a decade ago to renovate Pennell, it is increasingly apparent that this is the moment in time to memorialize the last original clock dial. A month ago, Don Whitney called me at Town Hall with a friendly but firm reminder to this effect. He remains committed to the mission of having the dial mounted inside Pennell *and* operational from the gravity-driven historic Tower Clock. Along with many other Town residents attune to Gray's history, he would also like to encourage the public to visit the second floor of Pennell to appreciate the wide spectrum of artifacts.

After talking with the Town Manager and a handful of phone calls to Pennell Alumni Association including the officers, it was clear that there is financial support for the undertaking. The next two steps were to determine the viable options for where to mount the dial and the most prudent method to administer donations for the undertaking. Both of these are addressed on-point below in this memo.

Dial Location in Pennell

In mid-July, a meeting was held at Pennell with several parties including various Pennell Alumni, Linda and Rick Balzer, and Town staff including Mose Russo, the Town's Facility Manager. The objective was to better understand the options and implications of locating the dial on either the first or second floor. At the end of the meeting, Don Whitney asked me to explore both options.

The second floor location that was originally envisioned in the second floor hallway is opposite the 1900's era GHS restored Greek portico that came from Stimson. The wall space above the two doors going into the clock room is sufficiently sized and routing the drive shaft from the clockworks is the most direct.

Given the need to have the dial/hands driven from the clockworks on the second floor, the most visible and viable location on the first floor was in the Community Development area. This first floor location would necessitate relocating one office door, moving a fire separation door, relocating a motion sensor and fire alarm horn, sprinkler pipes, and constructing a plexi-glass protector.

It is noteworthy that running the driveshaft(s) to the dial on the first floor would need to be through additional walls as well as the floor. The drive-shaft would need to be run horizontally above the second floor ceiling, another set of bevel gears, then down through the second floor ceiling, then the first second floor walking level. As compared to the second floor option, this first floor location adds developed length to the drive-shafts, additional bearings to support the drive-shafts, and additional

beveled gears/differentials. There were questions/concerns raised regarding the long-term wearing of the clockworks from this increased load to drive the hands of the dial.

Mounting the dial on either the first or second floor is a visible change to Pennell. As such, the Town Council provided input at their recent meeting this past Tuesday 8-4-20. Based on the relevant information, the consensus of the Council was that the dial should be mounted on the second floor on the clock tower wall opposite the portico. The Council also indicated they are supportive of the undertaking and establishing a fund, as needed, necessary to complete the project.

Possible first-floor monitor(s)

During the mid-July on-site meeting at Pennell to explore the dial location, all attending were supportive of adding one or more monitors at prominent first-floor locations showcasing historic artifacts. There could be a monitor in the Community Development area and/or near the portrait of Henry Pennell as one enters Town Hall. The goal is to entice and remind those coming to Pennell of the memorabilia that is either on display on the second floor and/or throughout Town. The vision is that there could be a continuous scrolling (periodically updated) showing photographs of historic buildings and sites, the clockworks, the original clock dial, GHS items, etc. to encourage those walking into Pennell to view such featured artifacts in person.

Proposed Pennell Clock Dial Restoration Fund

Many years ago, the Pennell Alumni generously donated monies that are still being used for the on-going maintenance of the clockworks, drive-shafts, differentials, and dials. This fund was established and has been used predominantly for clock maintenance expenses. In addition to this fund not having a sufficient balance for the current project, it seems prudent to retain this fund exclusively for maintenance purposes.

The anticipated cost for modifying the mechanical portion of the existing clockworks and drivetrain to turn the hands on the original dial is \$10K. The Balzer's will need to custom design, fabricate, and install all of the necessary components including new drive shafts and gears for the current vertical drive-shaft extending to the four clock tower dials above. There will be additional costs incurred for physically mounting the dial on the wall and coring through the 16" +/- double-brick wall for the dial drive-shaft(s).

As of this writing, we do not have fixed costs for these associated elements. The parties involved will be Rick Balzer, Mose Russo, subcontractors that may be necessary, and me. The wall that the dial is to be placed on supports the clock tower meaning that maintaining structural integrity is essential. There is also the present consensus to establish one or more monitors showcasing the Town's historic artifacts as detailed above.

It is apparent that a new Town fund for this project is necessary. I respectfully submit that this soon-to-be-established fund be entitled the Pennell Clock Dial Restoration Fund. I further suggest that any donated monies to this fund be allocated in the following order: (1) mounting the last original dial driven from the Tower Clock, and, (2) Adding one or more monitors on the first floor of Pennell showcasing historically significant places, buildings, artifacts, and the Town Clock. In the event that there are any remaining funds after these two priorities, I advocate that any such monies be transferred to the Pennell Town Clock fund for on-going maintenance.

Restoring vs. Not Restoring the Dial

The unanimous consensus of the various Pennell Alumni that I have talked with over the past month endorse not doing any restoration of the last remaining dial. There are some missing minute marks and the deep-gray colored paint is both faded from the sun and peeling in places. If the dial were to be refurbished, this would be the time (before it is mounted) while we are preparing the wall for the mounting and the mechanics driving of the hands. I welcome any input regarding this time-sensitive decision that should, out of respect, be made by the Pennell Alumni.

Next Steps

I specifically request input from the Pennell Alumni and those parties that are contemplating donating monies to the Pennell Clock Dial Restoration Fund on both; (A) if the last remaining dial should be restored before it is mounted, and, (B) is there support for the three-tiered approach outlined in this memo for monies in the Fund. This input will help guide future decisions as we move forward.

As indicated above, the Town Council is supportive of the project per the discussion at their recent 8-4-20 meeting. Although the Council needs to vote to formally establish the Pennell Clock Restoration Dial Restoration at their next meeting on 9-1-20, those interested in making donations should not hesitate to contact Katy Jewel, Gray's Finance Director at 657-3339, ext. 103 or kjewell@graymaine.org.

Conclusions

The residents of Gray and other interested parties are incredibly fortunate to have a community jewel such as Pennell with the historic gravity-driven Town Clock as perhaps its centerpiece. Don Whitney's vision of increasing the presence of the last original clock dial and the countless historical artifacts the Town is so fortunate to have is something most Towns can only dream about. It has been, and continues to be, a pleasure to be part of bringing such projects to fruition that will last for generations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 657-3112, ext. 111 or at dwebster@graymaine.org if you have any questions or clarifications.