

The Crown Electric Clock by Herschede

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This is an October 2023 update of an article that was first printed in the August 2010 issue of the “Electrical Horology Journal” of NAWCC Chapter 78.

The book “150 Years of Electric Horology” (published 1992) contains a section on Herschede and Revere electric chime clocks. It was written by Howard Klein, who was the owner of the Herschede Clock Company at that time. Included is one sentence that refers to the Crown Electric Clock:

“Finally, in 1933, a line of inexpensive electrics, Crown Clocks, was introduced, but it was only to last a year or so”.

As I was already a collector of Herschede and Revere electric chime clocks when I acquired a copy of that book in the late 1990’s, this sentence caught my attention and I wondered if these clocks really existed. A search was begun for an example of the Crown Electric Clock. A research request was sent to the NAWCC Library, but they could not provide any information about Crown Clocks at that time.

Soon after finding my first Crown Clock on eBay in 2010, I ran into Howard Klein at a York, PA NAWCC event and asked him about the source for that sentence in the book. He told me that he found the information in a Herschede history document that was in the records that he received when he bought the company. He also told me that he had never seen a Crown Clock and had no other information about them.

Randy Thatcher (of R&M Imports) was the next owner of Herschede, after purchasing it from Howard Klein in the 1990’s. In late 2011, he let me borrow a hand-typed history of the Herschede Clock Company that may have been the same document that Howard Klein referenced. In this document, the following entry was found in a section describing the declining sales of the depression era:

“In an effort to attract more volume, a line of inexpensive electric clocks was brought out under the name of “Crown Clocks” in 1933. Designed to retail from \$3.95 to \$35.00, this low-priced line undoubtedly filled a need at the time, but it was discontinued within a year or two as the depression bottomed out and economic recovery appeared under way.”

Up until now (Oct. 2023), three complete examples of the Crown Clock have been acquired and are described on pages 3 and 4. Also, a loose Crown Clock movement with dial and hands has been found. The previous owner had found it in that condition and had no knowledge of the type of case it may have started out with.

The three clocks have identical movements that are constructed with brass plates and gears, and with steel arbors. They have integral motors that are manually started and operate on 115V/60Hz. The voltage and frequency are not marked on the clocks, and there are no nameplates on the clocks or markings on the movements. The dials are marked "CROWN CLOCKS – CINCINNATI".

As this was an attempt to market a lower cost electric mantel or shelf clock, they have the following cost-reducing design characteristics that differ from standard Herschede/Revere practice of the early 1930's:

1. Stamped brass bezels with plain convex glass and without hinges. Herschede and Revere mantel clocks of the period had cast brass bezels that were hinged and contained a beveled glass.
2. Paper dials. Herschede and Revere mantel clocks of the period had silvered brass dials.
3. No back access panels on the wooden case models. Herschede and Revere electric mantel clocks of the period had hinged wooden back panels. Later Herschede and Revere electric mantel clocks had removable metal, and later still, plastic back covers.
4. Integral manually-started motors. Herschede and Revere electric mantel clocks of the period used self-starting Telechron type "B" motors.
5. No chimes or hour strike. Most Herschede and Revere mantel clocks of the period either had Westminster chimes, both Westminster and Canterbury chimes, or hour strike on a chime rod.
6. No markings on the cases or movements. Herschede and Revere mantel clocks have the case number stamped into the bottom of the case, and serial & patent numbers stamped into the back plate of the movement, along with the company name.

Although Crown Clocks were designed to compete with other inexpensive electric clocks of the early 1930's, the examples found so far are of good quality, and are still capable of running without noticeable motor noise.

One example of a Crown Clock has a simple gothic-styled case that is 11" high x 7-1/2" wide x 4-13/16" deep. It is covered by mahogany veneer with two lighter accent pieces on the front. The dial is 5" in diameter. See fig. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 below.



Figure 1. Front View



Figure 2. Rear View

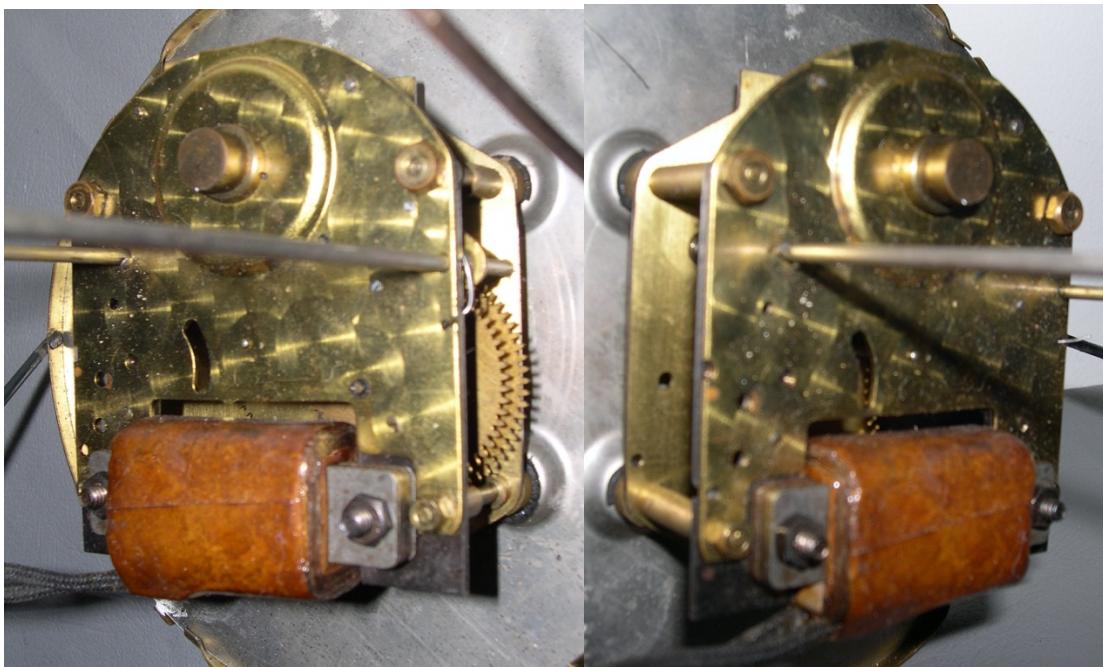


Figure 3 and 4. The Crown Clock Movement



Figure 5. Markings on Dial

Another example is in a smaller wooden case that is 7-1/8" high (including brass handle on top) x 4-3/4" wide x 2-3/8" deep. The case construction is similar to the clock described above, and it has a 3-1/2" diameter dial. See fig. 6 below left.



Figure 6. Small Wooden Case Clock



Figure 7. Marble Case Clock

The last example has a more impressive two-tone marble case that is 6-3/16" high x 6-5/16" wide x 4-1/4" deep. The dial is 3-5/8" in diameter. See fig. 7 above right.

Also found was a small Herschede electric shelf clock with a self-starting synchronous motor (not a Telechron) that appears to have been made with movement plates and some gears left over from the Crown Clock venture. The size and shape of the movement plates are the same, and some unused holes in the plates match holes found in the Crown movement plates. See fig. 8, 9 and 10 below.



Figure 8. Herschede Clock with Self-Starting Synchronous Motor

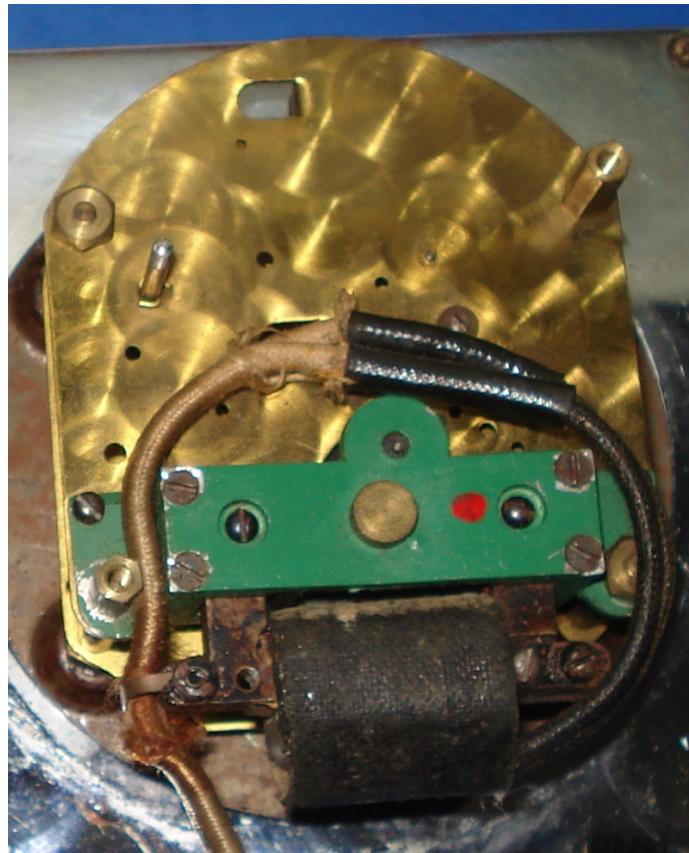


Figure 9. Herschede Movement



Figure 10. Crown Movement