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I am collecting stories from the NAWCC membership on tales of super finds and unusual discoveries about any brand of watch or clock. As another facet to this feature, please submit your Exasperating Problems/Exhilarating Successes. Did you ever solve a repair problem and feel like shouting about it from the rooftops? Now's your chance to broadcast your success!

Please email your Fantastic Finds and Success stories to me at the address at right. If you want to remain anonymous, I will omit your name from the story. If you have images, please attach them along with a note that the NAWCC is free to use them. I hope to hear from you soon!

This series was inspired by a similar feature in my 2004 book *The Illinois Watch: The Life and Times of a Great American Watch Company.* In my book dozens of Illinois watch collectors shared their very interesting finds.

FANTASTIC FINDS and Related Tales

By Fredric J. Friedberg (CA)
Email your stories to fred@illinoiswatches.com

In a Room Full of Watch Collectors

Debra Ciaburri (from the nutmeg state) reports that "I purchased your book many years ago for my husband as a gift. Years later we were enjoying the book and identifying our watches in our collection and to my surprise realized that we have a rare Illinois Chatham case signed Model 652 Keystone Watch Case Co., 10K gold-filled. It looks like a greenish yellow, gold-filled case. All these years I thought of contacting you to verify that what we have was truly a Chatham but, for one reason or another, I never got around to it. Recently we received our NAWCC November/December issue. While reading your 'Fantastic Finds' article, I came across your story of the 'Chatham? Chatham? What Chatham' and found it very interesting and realized after wondering all these years that ours is indeed an Illinois Chatham. Everything looks right and it does have the original dial and grade 605, 15-jewel movement. Ours could have been number two if I contacted you in 2004 when I purchased your book. At that time you stated in the book that there were two white gold-filled and one yellow Chatham that had been identified so far.

"We purchased this watch in a lot of four watches at a well-known watch and clock auction house in New Hampshire (Jones and Horan Auction) in 2000. We paid $100 for the lot. Two were gold-filled Elgins and two were Illinois. The other Illinois was a plain white, gold-filled cushion style. We were thrilled when we won the lot. In a room full of watch collectors, to our surprise, they did not get a lot of interest. We were just starting to collect Illinois watches at that time and thought because they were somewhat plain nobody really wanted them. It is getting harder and harder to buy nice original examples. But when we do, it makes all the looking and chasing worth it.

Rare Illinois 10K gold-filled Chatham case signed, Model 652, Keystone Watch Case Company.

FJF: Now we know of at least six yellow, gold-filled Chathams but still only two in white gold-filled.

Message from Down Under

A watch colleague from Down Under provided this "Fantastic Find."

"George Michael Christ was born on the October 6, 1915, to parents Daniel Christ and Mary Farrell in Leavenworth, KS. George joined the Elgin National Watch Co. after graduating from the Elgin Watchmakers College in 1935. He started as a jobber in the Timing Department and moved into the Casing Department in 1936.

"In 1937 George married Leone Ciraulo on the 25th of November. Leone Ciraulo was born in 1917 to parents Leo Ciraulo and Irene Abts in Elgin, IL. George departed Elgin in 1945 to serve with the navy, and on his return from service he went back into the Casing Department at the Elgin Plant in 1946. He was transferred to the Lincoln Plant in August 1946 and was appointed job master in charge of casing a month later.[1]

"George was promoted to assistant foreman of the Lincoln Assembling Department on January 31, 1949.[2] On March 7, 1949, the Lincoln Plant produced its one millionth movement and George was there to take it off the assembly line.

"The one millionth watch, a 17-jeweled movement was presented to Helen Knight, an employee of the Plate Department during a social function on March 31, 1949. She was thrilled to receive the celebrated Elgin DeLuxe wristwatch, even though it is a man's watch.

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The one millionth watch to come off the Lincoln assembly line is being examined by Virginia Miller and George M. Christ prior to packing. It was taken off the line on March 7, 1949.

Testing of the millionth watch to come off the Lincoln assembly line is being done by Darlene Blum.

Note: This is not his 15-year service pin.

"George was promoted to foreman of the Lincoln Assembling Department in August 1949. In 1950 George would have received his 15-year, solid gold Elgin service pin."

"In 1955 Elgin National Watch Co. purchased a second electronics plant for the year in California and appointed George M. Christ as manager. Elgin brought American Microphone Co. of Pasadena, CA, as part of its general diversification program announced in 1953 by James Shennan.

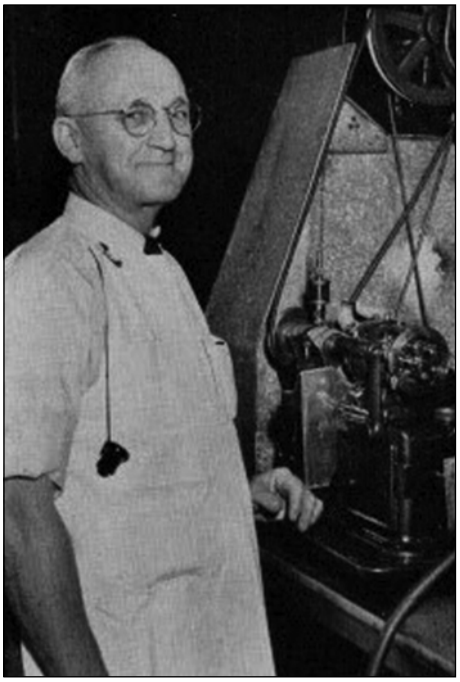
"In 1960 George received the above watch for 25 years of loyal service, the same year Elgin sold American Microphone Co. to General Cement Co. of Rockford.

"It's unclear as to what happened to George after the sale and if he stayed with Elgin.

"George's father-in-law Leo Ciraulo was a veteran of the Screw Department. Leo joined the company in 1910. Leo first worked in the Motion room for three years and then was in the Escape and Speedmeter rooms before going to the Plate Department in 1924. Ten years later he was transferred to the Gilding Department where he was a jewel inspector until 1940. Since that time he has done jewel stripping on the automatics.[3]

"George passed away in 1986 at age 71 in Elgin, IL. His wife Leona passed away on November 24, 1996 at age 79 in Elgin, IL."

Above and below. George M. Christ's 25-year service watch.



Leo F. Ciraulo.

Notes

1. *Watch Word,* August 1949.
2. *Watch Word,* April 1949.
3. *Watch Word,* April 1950.

FJF: Another great example of strong research and the value of inscriptions on case backs.

I hope that everyone found these Fantastic Finds and Related Tales to be fun and interesting. To help ensure that this feature continues to appear in the Watch & Clock Bulletin*, please email your stories to fred@illinoiswatches.com immediately.*

Thank you all in advance for your contributions and anticipated participation.