

Le Locle on the Seine

Artisanal and Entrepreneurial Traditions in Henri Jacot's Parisian Atelier

by Larry L. Fabian (NY)

Jefferson David Chalfant's *Clock Maker*, painted in 1899 and once owned by John D. Rockefeller III (Figure 1), hangs in the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. It depicts a solitary, elderly artisan at his workbench near the end of a century during which factory-scale clock making had become dominant in the United States. The iconography is subtle; notice the white factory building in the lower half of the shelf clock on the floor. "[T]he subject matter and style of Chalfant's *Clock Maker*," art historian Dana Emily Shapiro has written, "were readily adopted and adapted to meet the needs of a burgeoning industrial culture, [and] they were also

firmly rooted in a sentimental discourse that associated the clock with an artisanal American past."¹

Odd, perhaps, that Chalfant's painting comes to mind as I read Leigh Extence's remarkable *catalogues raisonnés* of the Jacot and Drocourt families whose firms rank among the finest of French carriage clock-makers in the second half of the nineteenth century.² Extence is a British carriage clock dealer, consultant, and researcher who has inventively mined primary genealogical and horological sources with results that bring to life the histories of these two great families.³

Yet it is perhaps not so odd after all, considering Henri Jacot's pivotal role in the story of the family firm that he founded and in the firm's contribution to French carriage clock making in the Victorian era. The Jacot firm's principals embodied two overlapping motifs shaping their nine decades of contributions to carriage clock craftsmanship: an artisanal one associated mainly with Henri and an entrepreneurial one carried forward by his nephew and successor Albert. The Jacot enterprise reached the pinnacle of Paris's carriage clock trade because its craftsmanship reflected an uncommonly successful amalgam of these motifs.

Extence's research is tantalizing for collectors interested in social dimensions of horological history that have long been—with notable exceptions in fields of cultural and economic research—a stepchild in the vast literature on clocks, timekeeping, and clock-makers. Charles Allix's magisterial study of carriage clocks was published more than 40 years ago.⁴ With abundant technical knowledge and seasoned aesthetic sensibilities, Allix surveyed carriage clock production in France, England, the United States, and elsewhere. His panoramic overview drew upon exhaustive research from primary and secondary sources, authoritative firsthand horological observations, and the memories of key individuals who, at the time of his writing, were blessed with long lives and good memories reaching back into the late nineteenth century.



Figure 1. *Clock Maker* by David Chalfant, 1899. Oil on canvas. COURTESY OF THE FINE ARTS MUSEUMS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA.

Extence's journey of discovery was stimulated by Allix's suggestion that much could be learned about Jacot, whom he regarded as Paris's preeminent carriage clockmaker, if a systematic record of his output could ever be compiled. By taking on this challenge, Extence enriches our appreciation of Jacot in more elaborate detail than any research since Allix's treatise. This copious fresh information supports an effort to situate the Jacot firm more confidently within the larger nineteenth-century historical context of Parisian carriage clock making during Henri's and Albert's stewardship.

Le Locle: Jacot Family Roots

Among the most important of Extence's revelations is that Henri Jacot was Swiss by birth—not French—and steeped in Swiss watchmaking traditions. His father, Daniel-Henri, was born in the Jura Mountain village of Le Locle,⁵ the cradle of Swiss watchmaking dating from the seventeenth century. Daniel-Henri worked as a watchmaker in Fontaines, a nearby village located

between Le Locle and the cantonal capital, Neuchâtel. His wife was the daughter of a prominent local watchmaker. His son, Henri, born in Fontaines in 1796, was brought into the business around 1817.

Henri's father and a youthful Henri lived a classic artisanal life—families and extended families working in tandem, sometimes intermarrying, often sharing reliance on clock-related crafts, such as toolmaking and dial enameling. Fallow farming times or long Alpine winters had artisans working from their homes to produce all manner of goods serving regional or local needs. The horology market grew rapidly during this period. When Henri's father was practicing his trade in Fontaines during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the number of watchmakers in and around Le Locle grew from 75 to 800. Watchmaking was steadily replacing textile crafts, especially lacemaking, as the area's main artisanal industries. Cottage-style producers spawned small-scale factory production based on increasing specialization and interchangeable parts. These patterns had become

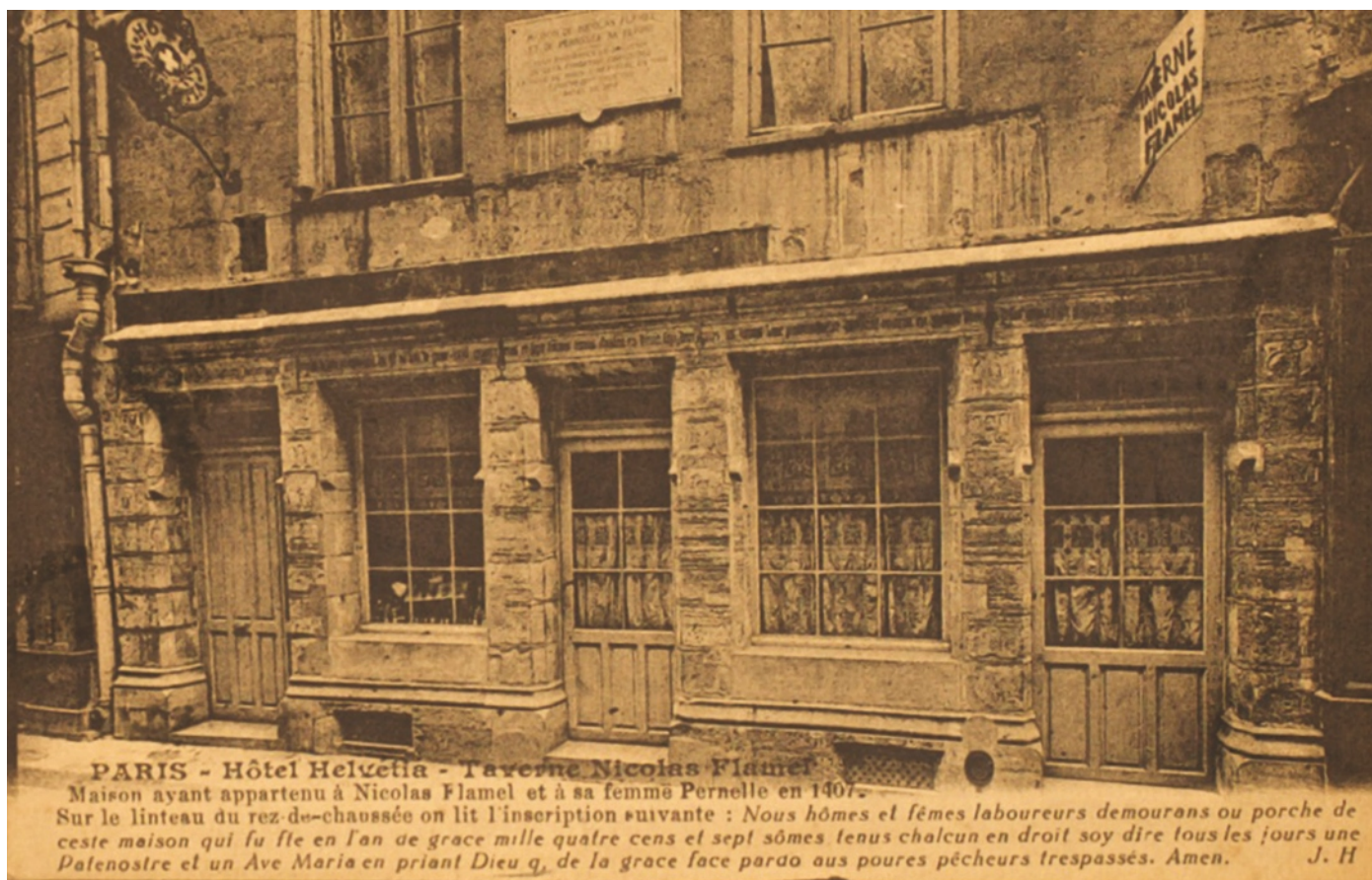


Figure 2. Rue de Montmorency ca. 1909, Nicolas Flamel House, steps from the Jacot residence and atelier. Postcard photograph. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

commonplace in the Le Locle region by the time Henri migrated to Paris just a few years after working for a time alongside his father. Henri Jacot's persona and his family's century-long narrative are compelling because he was the central figure in a historical evolution that transplanted the artisanal ethos of his "real" Jura Valley eighteenth-century horological community into a "virtual" counterpart, a web of Victorian-era horologists who made their homes and practiced their trades in the Marais district on Paris's Right Bank.

Henri Jacot: In Paris

Henri, not yet 30 years old, established his Paris business sometime around 1820. The Jacot atelier and family occupied a townhouse on *rue de Montmorency* in the Marais; it would be their home for nearly a century. The tenant roster included a jeweler, a shoemaker, and Henri's workshop. Just down the block was the oldest stone building in Paris, the Nicolas Flamel House, built in the fifteenth century (Figure 2). In Henri's time it was the local auberge and is still today a well-known neighborhood restaurant.

Henri's workshop in the townhouse on *rue de Montmorency* has disappeared, but the character of the Jacot premises—now a five-story, four-bay structure—has not been lost entirely to history. Extence gained access to the premises in 2015 and afterward described the experience:

I walked down the corridor and there in front of me was the wonderful, original large oak staircase, set against the original stone walling, which had been kept despite all the renovations. Every Jacot clock went up these stairs as a blanc roulant and then came down as the finished article. Henri Jacot himself, and his family, would've used these and held onto that same banister rail. I was literally walking in his footsteps... It was just magical! ... and there I was standing in Jacot's cobbled courtyard garden. Just to think that he and his family would've spent so much of their time in this small space, just as I was.⁶

Henri arrived in Paris when sweeping changes were underway in French horology, heavily influenced by the genius of Swiss-born Abraham-Louis Breguet. The greatest horologist of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Breguet died during Henri's first decade in the Marais. Jacot and other midcentury

clockmakers stood on his shoulders and on those of the celebrated Paul Garnier. By the 1830s he was creating and selling record-breaking numbers of carriage clocks, using machine-produced components. Garnier demonstrated that England could become an attractive and burgeoning market for refined, high-quality French carriage clocks. Neither Henri nor Albert would ever lose sight of that market's potential.

Henri Jacot: In Business

Two years after Henri established himself in the Marais, a terrible cholera epidemic wracked Paris, the first of three during the next few decades. Its effects were most severe in poorer sections of the city like the Marais. Still essentially a medieval town in its urban character, Paris was rife with filth, decay, and vice hardly imaginable by a young man migrating from the bucolic villages in the Jura Mountains. Charles Marville's classic photographs of cramped and gloomy Paris streets like those in the heart of the Marais might at first glance seem to be images of Paris after a light rain shower. His camera was actually recording streets glistening with raw sewage.⁷

The Marais belonged to a Paris whose tribulations were chronicled by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*. Hugo lived in the Marais during Jacot's time, although in the decidedly tonier *Place des Voges*. The Jacot family's longevity on *rue de Montmorency* was attributable to the success of the business and to good fortune. The center of the Marais was never victimized by the Haussmannisation that, in the name of imperial urban renewal, dispossessed working-class Parisians by slashing through their neighborhoods. Henri's Marais, in Paris's 3rd arrondissement, although relatively impoverished after the departure of its aristocratic residents during the Revolution, remained an enclave for artists, shopkeepers, artisans, immigrants, tradesmen, and whoever else sought cheap housing.

A stream of Swiss horologists and artisans came to France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, drawn across the border by linguistic affinities and the promise of economic rewards not available in their homeland. Although none of these newcomers would attain the stature of Breguet—whose grandson and head of the Breguet firm is named among the French luminaries immortalized in gold letters under the first balcony of the Eiffel Tower—they included many beneficiaries of successive generations

of family skills. Antique clock enthusiasts know the examples: the Tompions, the Arnolds, the (Swiss-born) Vulliamys in England, and the Breguets, the Le Roys, and the Drocourts in France. Of the 20,000 Parisian horologists at midcentury, only a miniscule percentage are assumed to have been makers of carriage clocks. Paris was a city of small workshops and remained so despite the country's expanding industrialization. Artisans and their small firms—with as few as two employees and rarely more than ten—were located throughout Paris, frequently in neighborhood clusters defined by trades.

Finding leading members of the carriage clock trade meant going to the Marais, including to Henri's atelier. By the 1850s he certainly ranked among the city's elite horologists, as was confirmed when his 1867 submission at the Paris Universal Exhibition prompted effusive praise from Claude Saunier, founder and editor of *La Revue Chronométrique*, France's leading journal devoted to the science, technology, and the practice of horology:

"[Jacot is] one of the most outstanding personalities in the Paris industry, the creator of the contemporary style in carriage clocks. ... The carriage clock industry has become extremely important in Paris. This style of clock is exported throughout the world and nowhere is it better produced than here. The Exhibition has certainly shown us some beautiful examples of the style of the English section, but these were exceptional pieces, produced at great expense and not the result of regular manufacturing. ... he has remained the master of this specialty. In contrast to almost all his colleagues who rely on the large factories ... for their basic materials, M. Henri Jacot makes everything himself, using mechanical aids that he has invented or improved. The reason for the excellence of his production is also to be found in the cleverly designed range of his models, and in the ingenious machinery by means of which he produces both his cases and his movement parts in his workshops at St. Nicolas and Paris."⁸

Jacot's death a year later occasioned a brief but revealing obituary written by Saunier that warrants especially close reading:

"The whole of Paris horology is indebted to him. It was to him that we owe the development of the splendid carriage clock industry which today provides the livelihood of a large number of families. *Beneath an unassuming nature were hidden the qualities of the artist prepared to forgo even material gains for the success of his work.* [Emphasis added] The greater part of his profits went into the invention and perfecting of tools."⁹

These words validate Extence's conviction that Henri "was very much a 'clockmaker' with maybe less of an eye on the commercial aspect, whereas his nephew came into the business and decided to change the set-up."¹⁰ The complex relationships between artisans and industrialization have fascinated generations of historians. James Richard Farr writes that midcentury France displayed "a dual economic structure which had an artisanal and an industrial face, but one that saw the balances tilting decidedly away from artisanal favor."¹¹ This succinct description applies not only to the country as a whole but also to individual craftsmen working during these transitional years. This duality is precisely what makes the Jacot story so engaging. It encapsulates the difference between two Jacots, each striking this balance but in different directions. Henri tilted toward the artisanal face but was always mindful of new trends shaping his trade. Albert tilted toward the industrial face but was always animated by his uncle's artisan legacy.

Henri Jacot: Artisan Founder

Contemporaries saw in Henri the qualities of a true artisan: a passion for quality, self-worth rooted more in the integrity of artisanal accomplishment than in rewards of commercial success, and a commitment to honing the skills and tools of his craft. Modern scholars of innovation among traditional artisans, including those working in nineteenth-century Europe, have coined the phrase "soft innovation."¹² Henri was a "soft innovator." The term describes craftsmen who "negotiate the onslaught of industrialized products and processes," by relying on artisanal knowledge "deeply rooted in tradition, with an inherent tendency towards conservatism." Their knowledge is regarded "... as proprietary, situated and often location-specific...." Their work is characterized "by the application of skills, regular recourse to personal judgment and extensive hand-working involving individuals and small collaborative groups ... typically based upon, or inspired by, traditional ... production methods...."¹³

The jury that awarded Henri his first bronze medal at the *Palais de l'Industrie* in 1855 described his clocks as having *blancs roulants* and cases fabricated in Saint-Nicolas d'Aliermont "at his factory" and then finished in Paris "with much care."¹⁴ Other contemporaries credited Henri with inventing the form of the gorge case and the mechanism for distinguishing between hour and quarter striking.¹⁵ Henri was by this time an active member of the French horological society founded in 1856 with other leading horological personalities, among them Breguet's descendants and Garnier.

Henri's inventiveness and skills bespoke an artisanal tilt that was neither nostalgic nor stubbornly traditional. He was in business, after all—as were Parisian soft innovators known to have been active in other trades at the time. Henri faced competition, and partnerships were needed to acquire or to finish clock components. He had to get them to market directly or through middlemen. Absent atelier workbooks, or inventories, or sales records, the trajectory of this young immigrant horologist's evolution into a master Parisian craftsman remains conjectural. Recently, however, Extence offered important new evidence of Henri's output during what he calls Henri's Period II, produced between 1852 and 1866. Jacot's Period III, during which most of the Jacot clocks featured in the present article were produced, extended from the mid-1860s into the early twentieth century.

Extence reported one of these early clocks in 2016 (Figure 3) in the journal of the NAWCC International Carriage Clock Chapter.¹⁶ He regards this clock as "quite possibly the 'purest' Henri Jacot" that he has ever examined.¹⁷ Its highly elaborate cast and chased case contains a movement signed by Jacot, which enabled Extence to compare it with other early unsigned examples that he had believed might have originated in Henri's workshop. As was typical of this Jacot period, the clock bears neither the parrot trademark nor the award stamp that appear regularly on Period III clocks.¹⁸

The appearance of this ornate clock could hardly be more different from that of another earlier Jacot, pictured in Figure 4. They were made during approximately the same period of time, and their movements are essentially identical.¹⁹ This simple and rare ebony case obviously prefigures the Period III gorge form that Henri was said to have invented. Certain features of this clock resemble those found on the early Period III example in Figure 5, which dates from the second



Figure 3, above. Henri Jacot, serial no. 489, ca. 1855. COURTESY OF LEIGH EXTENCE.

Figure 4, below. Henri Jacot, serial 519. Ebony case, ca. 1850s. COURTESY OF LEIGH EXTENCE.





Figure 5, above. Henri Jacot serial no. 1148. Hour strike and repeat on a bell, with alarm. Gilt-brass gorge case. Platform no. 90476. *Blanc roulant* no. 295, attributable to Louis Baveux. No Jacot stamp. Award date 1862. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Figure 6, below. Henri Jacot serial no. 1148. Engraved platform and club tooth escapement. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

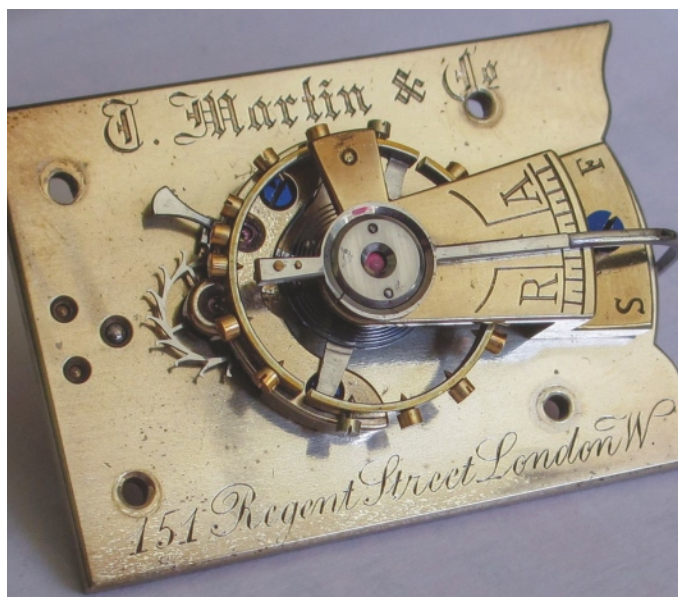


Figure 7. Henri Jacot serial no. 1148. Rear view. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

half of the 1860s. Both have rare club tooth escape wheels, reflecting Swiss influence and possibly Swiss origin, seldom seen in later Jacot clocks. Both have early handle styles typical of Jacot's earliest gorge cases, with upright sides and fewer bails than the five-bail configuration standard during Period III. Both dials are fashioned without an inner ring beneath the Roman numerals, a characteristic feature of Jacot's earliest dials. Both were marked for Klafthenberger retail firms. The ebony clock dial was signed for the Geneva-based Klafthenberger. The later gorge was signed for the London Klafthenberger, a watchmaker and jeweler favored by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The earlier clock is signed for the firm's Geneva address on the dial; the latter is signed on the dial for the firm's London address, and the firm's name is stamped in small block letters on the back-plate, indicating that the clock was probably made specifically for Klafthenberger.

These two early Jacot clocks reveal that the mature Henri of Period II was producing clocks in a luxurious

rococo style and concurrently experimenting with simpler, elegant gorge cases that would become his *métier* later on.²⁰ The clocks that earned him an award in 1855 might have been undecorated brass gorge cases, their form not so dissimilar from that of his ebony example.²¹

During Henri's years, France's old craft guilds—horological and otherwise—were being refashioned with fresh purpose and new identity. They had been banished during the French Revolution, before which time they had been shaped by a largely adversarial relationship with an exploitative aristocracy that controlled their governance, their membership, and their production. The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed a proliferation of trade associations, professional societies, and journals. This new generation of self-governing institutions promoted cooperation among members, adherence to quality standards, mutual assistance, and knowledge sharing.

The nascent professionalization of the horological community had been years in the making. If history remembers the great Paris Industrial Exposition of 1806 as strategically designed to reverse the decline of French industry, its successor in 1855 is remembered as an extravaganza intended to showcase France's new industrial and economic prowess. A half century earlier, artisans displayed and sold their wares from shops under arcades facing the streets of Paris or from fashionable, intimate boutiques lining the new Parisian arcades. In 1855 their offerings—Henri's included—were on view in the grandiose *Palais de l'Industrie*, with its scale made possible by advances in French construction technology. This cavernous temple of commerce enclosed display spaces—covered by canopies that Haussmann dubbed umbrellas made of iron—manifested Louis Napoleon's lofty ambitions for a more competitive France.

By this time Henri's brother, Julien, also a horologist and married to a member of a prominent horology family, was living in Paris at the *rue de Montmorency* address. The Jacot family enjoyed a modicum of prosperity. Julien apparently was not only working with his brother but also may have handled some of the Jacot firm's business in Saint-Nicolas d'Alhiermont while his son Albert was being groomed to lead the business.

Henri died in July 1868, by which time his active involvement with the firm had slowed down. His

death certificate was witnessed by Louis Baveux, a respected horologist of Henri's generation who was a prime source of fine Saint-Nicolas d'Alhiermont *blancs roulants* for Paris clockmakers. Henri and Baveux are known to have had a business relationship in the mid-1850s, perhaps even as partners. Henri's nephew and Baveux's son deepened that relationship in later decades.

Henri's carriage clock, shown in Figures 5, 6, and 7, was made a short time before his death. The *blanc roulant* came from Louis Baveux. As indicated above, this clock shares important features with the ebony Jacot of Period II, but moon hands typical of Period III now replace the trefoil hands found on the ebony clock. This clock has a finely engraved platform, seldom found on Jacot clocks, similar to the one that Allix shows for a high-quality Drocourt *grande sonnerie*.²² Also rare in Jacot's output is an escapement that beats at 15,000 beats per hour rather than the normal 18,000, a precision-related variation that Jacot is known to have experimented with on at least one other gorge clock of a slightly earlier date.²³

Henri's death would have prompted a Jacot family discussion about the firm's future. But any plans would almost certainly have been interrupted abruptly 24 months later. During August–September 1870 France's armies were crushed in a series of battles on French soil during the early phases of a Franco-Prussian War. The conflict redrew Europe's map and poisoned French relations with a unified Germany for a generation to come. Prussian encirclement of Paris was completed by late September, followed by a punishing four-month barrage aimed at strangling and starving the city.

The Siege of Paris traumatized a vibrant metropolis that was midcentury Europe's leading capital city and beacon of culture, style, and prosperity. Bombardment and invasion turned large portions of the city into a brutish urban wasteland, spreading famine, disease, and depriving residents of basic services. No sector of Parisian society was unaffected. The imperial regime's collapse, the rise of the radical Paris Commune, and brutal suppression of the revolt by the new government convulsed all of Paris, leaving high tolls of casualties and injuries. Many tens of thousands of Communards, largely from the urban working class, were killed, executed, imprisoned, or exiled. The war's termination in May 1871 brought an end to this third and final nineteenth-century revolution—far more violent than precursors in 1830



Figure 8, left. Albert Jacot serial no. 1664. Engraved gorge case. Quarter striking on two bells. *Blanc roulant* no. 516, attributable to Louis Baveux. No Jacot stamp. Award date 1862. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Figure 9, above. Albert Jacot serial no. 1664. Rear of dial. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

and 1848. Rebuilding the city and resuming daily life was imperative for Parisians, irrespective of whether these horrendous months left them wishing to forget, to regret, to celebrate, or to mourn.

How Albert Jacot and his father initially planned to sustain the family firm in the early 1870s is not known. *La Revue Chronométrique* provided no clues about developments in the horology community, for it suspended publication from 1870 through 1873. In 1874 Saunier resumed publication with a hopeful message. The Review "is entering its 19th year," he reminded his readers. "The past four years have been difficult, but the days of ordeal are over, and everything allows us to expect that the year now beginning will become a fruitful one for horology."²⁴

Albert's succession was not at first marked by much change in the style of the clocks produced.²⁵ But gradually his industrial tilt came into view. He ramped up annual production and moved beyond his uncle's mode of self-reliant artisanship. He eventually produced a more varied range of clock cases and movements with additional complications. He forged

outsourcing relationships with high-quality craftsmen. He strengthened links with top London retailers and with marketing middlemen. He built on the Baveux relationship, now using *blancs roulants* from Louis's son Alfred. Extence estimates the firm's total output to have been some 20,000 clocks during the next half century. Henri's output probably amounted to no more than 8 percent of this total; Albert's annual production was 10 times greater than his uncle's.²⁶ Saunier wrote in 1870 that Albert "supports a reputation that for any other, would be a heavy burden. He continues the dignified tradition of his uncle, Henri Jacot, founder of the house."²⁷

Albert's engraved gorge pictured in Figure 8 exemplifies the quality of his decorative clocks in the late 1870s. Carriage clocks rarely can be dated precisely. But this movement is stamped "23 11 77" for the date of fabrication. Louis Baveux supplied the *blanc roulant*. Extence speculates that this case, along with an identical Jacot clock of the same period, might have been made by M. Lavasseur, an engraver and a close neighbor of Jacot's who might also

have engraved a similar Drocourt case.²⁸ The dial of Albert's example was made by Adolphe Mojon, whose initials are inked on the back of the dial.²⁹ He worked with, and succeeded, Etienne Valat, yet another Jacot neighbor, who died in 1874 and who had supplied dials to Henri and other prominent early makers. The names "Dent" and "Valogne" are also inked on the back of the dial (Figure 9). The first, of course, refers to the prestigious London retailer and clock-making firm, Dent and Co.; the second, to another supplier and retailer working in Paris and London, who may have acted as an intermediary for the sale of this clock.

The gorge case remained a favorite among the best carriage clockmakers for their higher-end pieces, not least by the Jacot firm for more than a half century. A notable early twentieth-century example is Albert's circa 1902–03 *grande sonnerie* pictured in Figures 10 and 11. When this clock was made, the Jacot atelier consisted of only eight or ten employees.³⁰

Albert's father and Henri's brother, Julien, had died in 1892. The last known Jacot case in the gorge style was recorded in 1914, 12 years before Albert's death. By the mid-1920s the Jacot enterprise had closed.

Industrial-scale production of carriage clocks for a mass market eclipsed smaller Parisian firms by the beginning of the Edwardian era. Factories became the norm; ateliers were the exception. Carriage clocks of extremely high quality were still being produced, but dominating the market were cheaper, plainer, and plentiful clocks emerging from production methods that had become steadily more industrialized in France throughout the nineteenth century. The dozen or so most prestigious Paris ateliers continued to meet the highest horological and aesthetic standards, and some larger French clock-making firms marketed top-quality carriage clocks as well as mass-market products.



Figure 10, left. Albert Jacot serial no. 14850. *Grand sonnerie* and repeat on a gong. Gilt-brass gorge case. Jacot stamp. Award date 1889. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Figure 11, above. Albert Jacot serial no. 14850. Rear view. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.



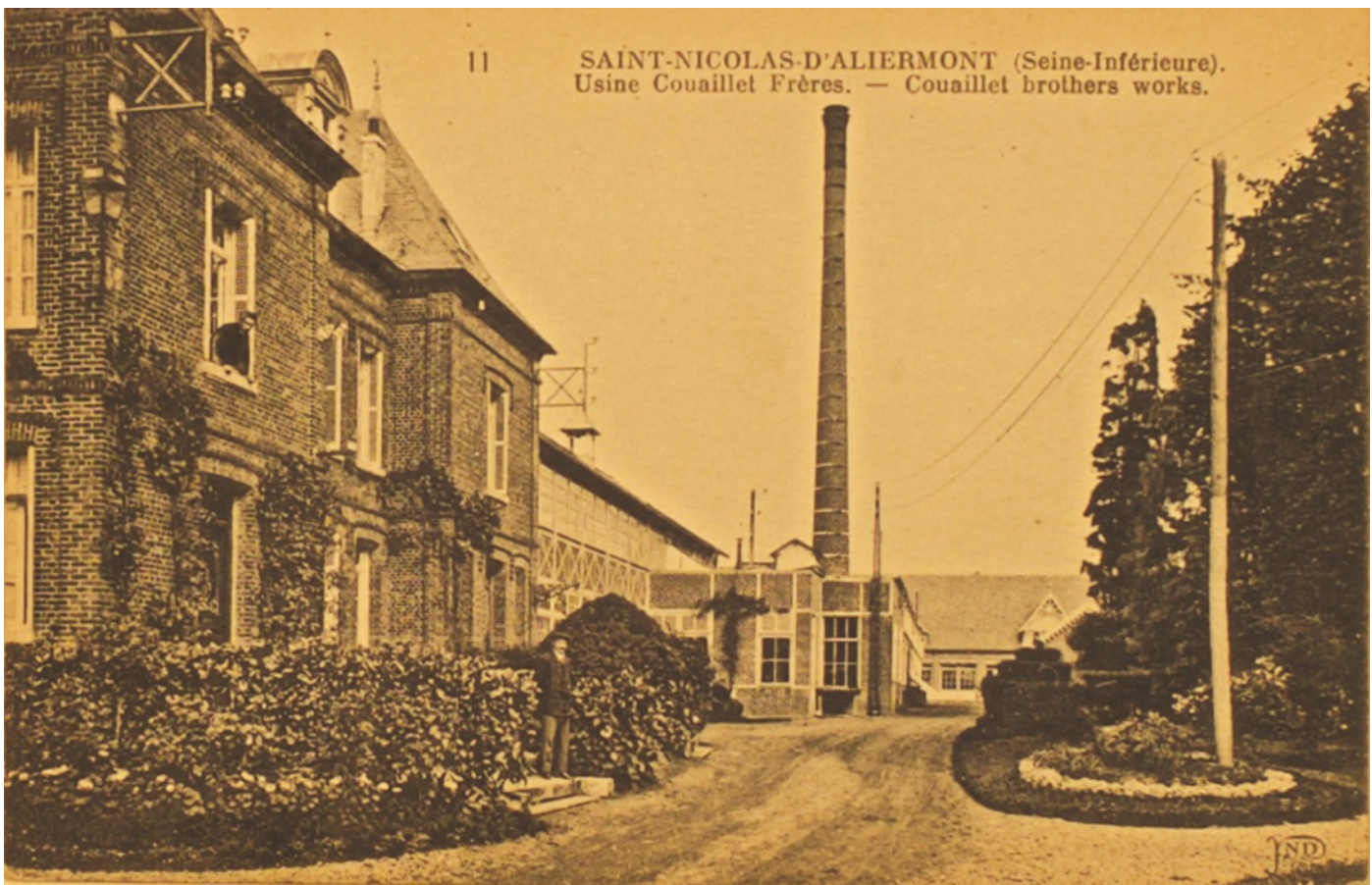
Figure 12, above. Couaillet Frères timepiece. Gilt-brass doucine-style case. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Figure 13, below. Couaillet Frères factory, Saint-Nicolas d’Aliermont, ca. 1915. Postcard photograph. USED WITH PERMISSION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION.

Saint-Nicolas d’Aliermont’s expanding profile reflected the new era, most notably in one of the town’s largest enterprises, founded in 1892 by Armand Couaillet. The timepiece in Figure 12, circa 1915, fabricated in the plainer style of these mass-produced clocks, almost certainly came from the factory shown in Figure 13. Allix estimated that there were 800 Couaillet employees during the firm’s heyday, whose storied history he traced in engaging detail with vivid, often charming portraits of the founding family and of a handful of individuals who shared with him personal memories from the Couaillet era in Saint-Nicolas d’Aliermont.³¹

Henri Jacot, Paterfamilias

Strands of a horology story larger than the man or his family or his firm radiated from Henri Jacot’s atelier in the center of the Marais during subsequent decades. Henri was an exemplar whose deeply rooted artisanal mores undergirded his reputation in Paris and shaped his enduring legacy. There also was a glimmer of a generous spirit. Extence entertains the possibility that Henri may even have encouraged Pierre Drocout—40 years younger than Henri and



a onetime farmer with no connection whatsoever to horology—to join the trade.³² Extence’s micro-histories make clear that the rival Jacot and Drocourt firms intersected in myriad ways, especially throughout the years when Albert Jacot and Alfred Drocourt managed their operations. They relied in common on the Baveux family, on Valat and Mojon, and on other craftsmen. Various members of the Jacot and Drocourt families had lived not far from each other in the suburbs of Paris, and afterward the two ateliers were near-neighbors in the Marais along with dozens of other leading carriage clockmakers and suppliers. Figure 14³³ displays proximities among their ateliers, and Figure 15³⁴ locates Marais within metropolitan Paris.

Somehow, several generations of Neuchâtelois clockmaker immigrants successfully navigated this turbulent French century. The cantonal homeland from which they came was long-steeped in radical

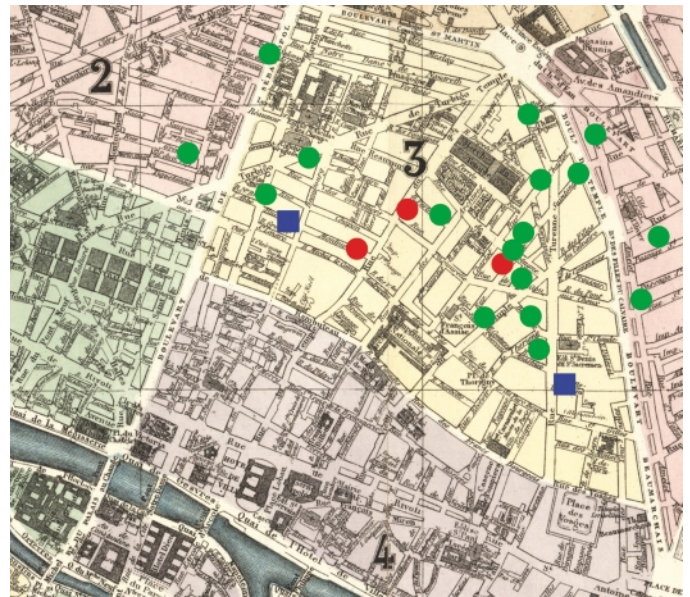


Figure 14. Marais map of locations associated with prominent carriage clock ateliers. Blue: Henri Jacot (center), Albert (lower right). Red: Leading Jacot partners/suppliers, Baveux, Mojon, and Valat. Green: Other prominent horologists.

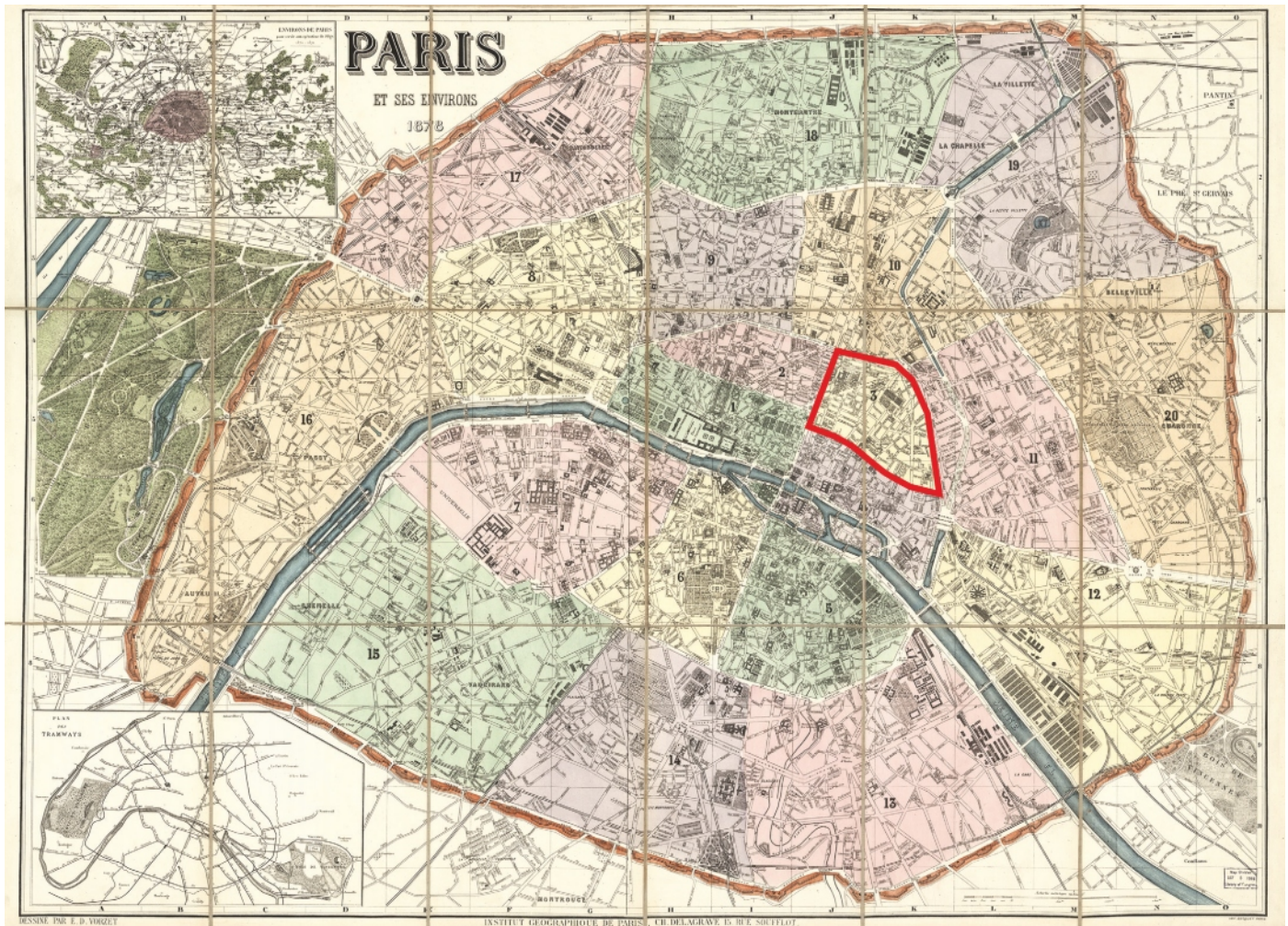


Figure 15. Marais location within metropolitan Paris.

politics—conspicuously antimonarchist at the time of the French Revolution and later supporters of Swiss communism. The Jacots and the Droucourts and their peers were among the upper echelons of the artisanal community, once called the aristocrats of the working class along with scientific instrument makers and other highly skilled craftsmen. These were not members of the working-class proletariat who took to the barricades in 1870–71. The more militant workers came predominantly from the large trades that were vitally important for the main French industries, such as building and construction, ironworking, and garment and textile production. Yet the leading carriage clockmakers in Paris—whatever their political sympathies—could hardly have escaped its effects of disruptions during the years when the *La Revue Chronométrique* was forced to shutter its presses.

Little is known about what life was really like among the carriage clockmakers, with their interlocked and intermarried families, intergenerational dynamics, coexistence in the dense neighborhoods they shared, competitive tensions, and communal ties. One wonders also about interaction among different hierarchies within the trade. Only a few steps separated the 1855 Industrial Exhibition booths of the “unassuming” Henri Jacot, whose atelier was in the humble Marais, and the patrician Breguet descendants, whose business addresses dotted some of Paris’s most genteel neighborhoods. Henri and the elite clockmakers and inventors of his day had many opportunities to interact in professional settings, all of which intensified during Albert’s years. Yet even without knowing more about the quotidian lives of these Marais artisans, we sense that their tight-knit world had a special quality, larger than the sum of its parts and bonded by shared culture, traditions, and habits lodged somewhere deep in their inherited artisanal DNA.

The metaphor of a Le Locle on the Seine invites us to imagine this “virtual” community among the carriage clockmakers in the Marais. The intimacies and proximities of the Jura region were little more than faded memories, but their functional equivalent survived and enlivened the Marais community. Henri deserves recognition as a paterfamilias who embodied traditional artisanal values and lived by them. Chalfant’s painterly image of the *Clock Maker* juxtaposed the artisan in a rapidly maturing industrial age coexisting with the unseen factory workers in that tiny white image on the shelf clock below his workbench. So

too did the Jacot atelier’s era coexist with that of the unseen workers toiling in the shadow of Couaillet’s factory tower in Saint-Nicholas d’Aliermont. In the pantheon of Victorian carriage clockmakers, Henri Jacot, by this reckoning, deserves pride of place as an icon whose life evokes the allegorical Angel of History who faces backward, gaze fixed knowingly on the past, while being pulled inexorably from behind into an uncharted future.

Acknowledgment

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1. Shapiro, Emily Dana. “J. D. Chalfant’s *Clock Maker*: the image of the artisan in a mechanized age.” *American Art* 19 (2005):54.
2. Extence, Leigh. “An exhibition of carriage clocks by the Parisian horologers Henri Jacot, 11th–16th November 2013”; Extence, Leigh. “An exhibition of carriage clocks by the Parisian horologers Pierre & Alfred Drocourt, 10th–15th November 2014.” Accessed August 6, 2016. <http://www.extence.co.uk/>.
3. Extence documents dozens of their highly admired clocks. With sleuthlike persistence, he has pored over Parisian and provincial municipal records; birth, marriage, and death certificates; patent registries and almanacs; residential and streetscape photographs and maps; and proceedings of horological societies, exhibitions, and journals. His work-in-progress database identifies nearly 2,000 Jacot and Drocourt clocks.
4. Allix, Charles. *Carriage clocks: their history & development*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Antique Collectors’ Club, 1974.
5. Le Locle, together with its larger sister-village La Chaux-de-Fonds, has been designated as a UNESCO world heritage site because of its distinctive urban architecture and public spaces, which were built expressly to accommodate the needs of horological workers. Rebuilt after a

- series of devastating fires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the town created proximity among artisans and their families, and thereby facilitated the transition from cottage industry production to the semi-industrial requirements of nineteenth-century clock making. Like Chalfant's solitary craftsman, French artisans became increasingly anachronistic as industrialization proceeded. By the time Karl Marx later analyzed the clock-making community in Le Locle/La Chaux-de-Fonds, he described them as "factory towns" and declared them exemplary environments for the proletarian workforce.
6. Email to the author. Extence, Leigh, Principal, Leigh Extence Fine Antique Clocks, October 19, 2015.
 7. Harvey, David. *Paris, capital of modernity*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003:92, 244, Figures 28 and 88. Captions for both figures refer to street sewage in Marville streetscape images.
 8. Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 113–114. Saunier's suggestion that Jacot made "everything" himself is not to be read literally. Henri would not have possessed the skill and workshop equipment needed in the 1850s and 1860s to make a complete carriage clock, which would have involved such components as the beveled glass, the escapement, the porcelain enameled dial, major casting of the case, and other items. As the present article later indicates, and as Extence's research amply demonstrates, both Henri and Albert Jacot collaborated extensively with such essential specialists, among them some of the finest craftsmen working in Paris and Saint-Nicolas d'Alhiermont.
 9. Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 113.
 10. Email to the author. Extence, Leigh, Principal, Leigh Extence Fine Antique Clocks, July 15, 2013.
 11. Farr, James Richard. *Artisans in Europe, 1300–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000:295.
 12. Stoneman, Paul. *Soft innovation: economics, product aesthetics, and the creative industries*. London: Oxford University, 2010.
 13. Blundel, Richard K., and David J. Smith. "Re-inventing artisanal knowledge and practice: a critical review of innovation in a craft-based industry." *Prometheus: Critical Studies in Innovation*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2013):2–3.
 14. These clocks were offered for sale at prices between 180 and 400 francs; the lesser amount was equivalent to what well-off Parisian couples would pay for three or four meals at a luxury restaurant; the larger amount was equivalent to what they would spend to book for themselves and their two children first-class train or ferry tickets to London two or three times a year. See L. & D. Noack. *Cost of living in Daumier's time*. Daumier.org, last updated on June 30, 2016.
 15. Extence. An Exhibition...Jacot, np. section titled "Daniel-Henri Guillaume Jacot-Descombes to Albert Jacot-Descombes."
 16. Extence, Leigh. "Pierre Drocourt, his son Alfred, and a previously unrecorded relationship with Henri Jacot." *The Carriage Way*, No. 4 (2016):3–10.
 17. Email to the author. Extence, Leigh, Principal, Leigh Extence Fine Antique Clocks, June 6, 2016.
 18. Award stamps, normally found between the plates, serve as a rough guide for dating Jacot clocks. The stamps' dates correspond to the years of expositions and the rank of awards received, whether bronze, silver, or gold. The stamps were updated only three times, showing 1852–1862, 1867–1878, and 1889. Thus, a clock showing the 1852–1862 stamp dates from the years after 1862, and an 1889 stamp indicates a clock made after 1889.
 19. Extence, *An Exhibition...Jacot*, np, Serial No. 519.
 20. A particularly refined and beautiful early Jacot gorge is pictured in Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 163, Plate VII/8.
 21. Extence is pursuing research into what he calls Henri's Period I, pre-1850s clocks, the publication of which would offer a more fully rounded account of the young Jacot's formative years in Paris.
 22. Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 118, Figure V/21.

23. Extence, *An Exhibition...Jacot*, np, Serial No. 937.
24. "A Nos Lecteurs." *La Revue Chronométrique. Organe des sociétés d'horlogerie et des chambres syndicales*, 1874:5.
25. Email to the author. Extence, Leigh, Principal, Leigh Extence Fine Antique Clocks, July 15, 2013.
26. Email to the author. Extence, Leigh, Principal, Leigh Extence Fine Antique Clocks, July 12, 2013.
27. Quoted in Extence, *An Exhibition...Jacot*, Frontispiece, np.
28. Extence compares two clocks in *An Exhibition... Jacot*, np. Section titled "Comparison of Clocks: Two relatively early engraved gorge examples made by Baveux for Jacot and HL for Drocourt."
29. Extence established Mojon's identity by examining wedding certificate signatures that include the only known signature of Henri Jacot as well as the Mojon's initials. The groom, a close friend of the Jacot family, later signed the wedding certificate of Albert Jacot.
30. Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 107.
31. Allix, *Carriage Clocks*, 94–102.
32. Extence, Leigh. "Pierre Drocourt, his son Alfred... with Henri Jacot," 4, 10.
33. Map of Marais created by the author from locations identified in Allix, 106 and Extence, passim. Adapted from the base map Dumas-Vorzet, Ed, Institut Géographique De Paris, and Printer Becquet Frères. *Paris Et Ses Environs: 1878*. [Paris: Institut Geographique de Paris, 1878]. Accessed November 03, 2017. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012586603/>. Public Domain
34. Paris with Marais location highlighted, created by author. Also adapted from the base map *Paris Et Ses Environs: 1878*, ibid.

About the Author

Larry L. Fabian is a collector with a special interest in the history of English and French clock making. He has published an investigation of Sir Christopher Wren's influence on the design of seventeenth-century architectural-style clock cases crafted by Ahasuerus Fromanteel. His ongoing research focuses on the leading nineteenth-century Parisian carriage clock firms founded by Henri Jacot and Pierre Drocourt, particularly the Jacot firm's evolution during the French Industrial Revolution, and the decorative arts and historical sources of rarer styles of Drocourt's porcelain-decorated clocks. He currently has an article on Drocourt's porcelain tributes to Romantic Love and Royal Victory in press with *Antiquarian Horology*.