

Early Carriage Clock Cases: One-piece and Multi-piece by Leigh Extence



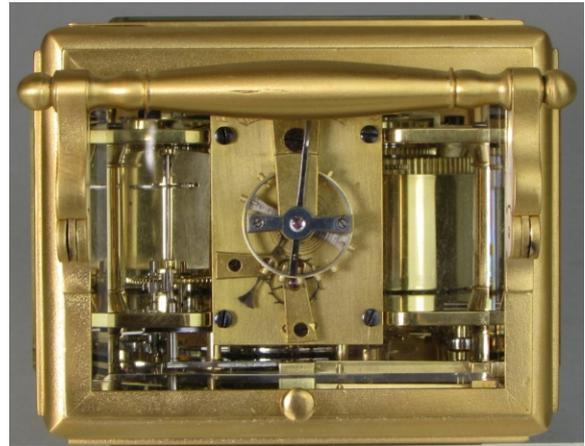
In a previous article for the newsletter I made comparisons between the gorge and cannelée cases which came into fashion in the 1850s and the mix-up between the two that has since ensued.

Prior to this date the majority of cases used for carriage clocks were of the one-piece design or a multi-piece style of simple pleasing lines, with the latter turning into the corniche case to become the most popular style of carriage clock case in future years.

The titles of both these case types are self-explanatory in that the body of the multi-piece case is made up of several parts; base, pillars, top plus handle whereas the one-piece was basically a complete body, plus a separate base and handle.

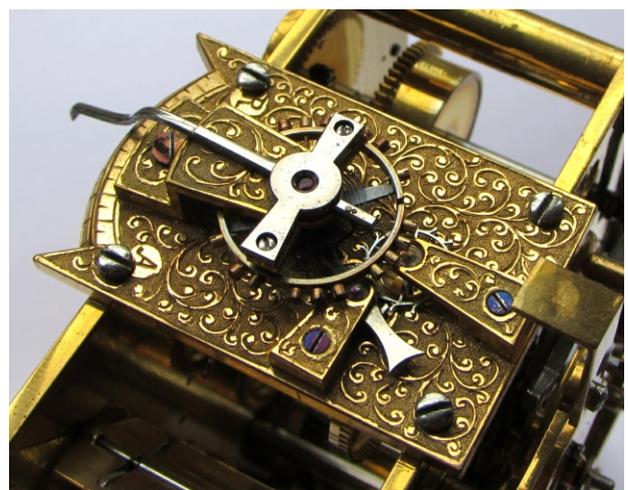
For the sake of simplicity, this article dismisses some of the more flamboyant styles of the time, including the Empire style that Breguet favoured and concentrates on these two more common examples.

It was circa 1830 that the one-piece case was introduced to the wider clock buying public by Paul Garnier who utilised it for his series 0, I and II clocks and was a design that would last for a number of decades. Interestingly this identical case style, quite probably from the same case maker's mould, was used by a number of other makers of *pendules de voyage* one example being serial number 297, as seen below, that came from the Henri Jacot workshops in the small horological town of Saint Nicolas d'Alhiermont near Dieppe on the French northern coast in circa 1855 and which was retailed by Dent in London. That the case style and proportions are identical to those housing Garnier movements may come as less of a surprise now that my research shows that a fair proportion of the *blancs roulants* being made for Garnier at this time were manufactured in the Saint-Nicolas d'Alhiermont workshops of Holingue frères, including those fitted with the *Garnier* chaff-cutter escapement, and that Holingue and Jacot had workshops literally a few hundred yards from each other and would have access to the same case makers. Note the mid-period form of *trefoil* hands.



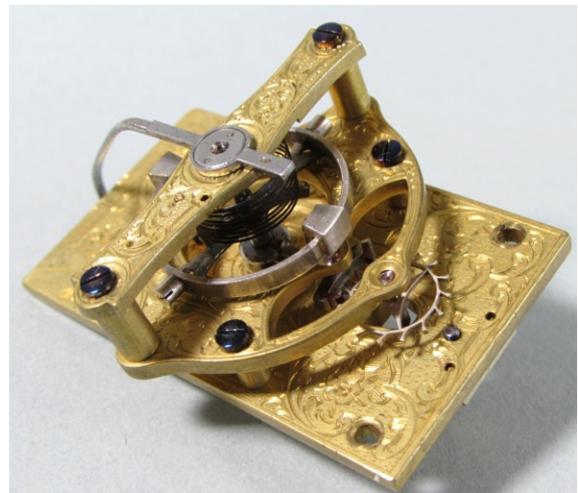
Jacot 297 retailed by C.J. Dent, London with a typical Garnier style case.

Below is shown a finely engraved carriage clock in a one-piece case and signed by Moïse Bolviller along with the serial number 407 LM. This clock was most likely made for Bolviller in the Japy frères workshops near the French/Swiss border at Beaucourt in circa 1845. It is complete with a finely worked platform to the escapement and a sweep seconds hand, both features typical of Japy's work and also seen on carriage clock movements they made for others including Bovet frères of Fleurier in Switzerland.



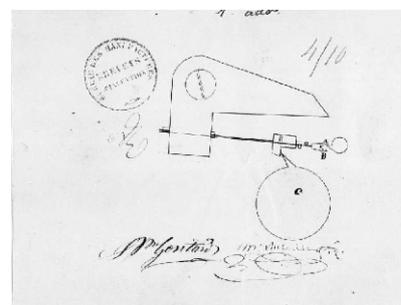
Bolviller 407 LM

A further engraved one-piece example from the Bolviller workshops in Paris is shown below, stamped with the serial number W433. This clock is signed on the dial *Gontard & Bolviller, Paris* and therefore dates from the period that Celestine Phillippe Gontard and Moïse Bolviller were in partnership. The platform lever escapement on this clock is particularly fine with a helical spring and beautifully engraved decoration. Gontard was a maker of superb escapements which he most often attached to movements from Henri Jacot, with one version of his chronometer escapement being particularly noteworthy, although he did manufacture and patent others of various designs. One patent for a detent escapement registered in 1848 had both Gontard and Bolviller's names given as patentees with the registered address for both being that of Gontard's workshops at 12, rue St Hyacinthe St. Honoré although at this time Bolviller's main address was rue Vendome, 12. I have on my database quite a number of carriage clocks that are signed for *Gontard & Bolviller* on the dial although all only have the *Bolviller, Paris* oval trademark on the backplate, with no mention on the movement of Gontard. The clocks signed for the partnership can be dated fairly accurately as the archives show they joined forces in 1847 but had parted company by 1851.



Gontard & Bolviller No. W433

Article premier.
 Il est déclaré aux (M^{rs}) Gontard (Célestine-Philippe) & Bolviller, (Moïse) Horlogers à Paris, rue St Hyacinthe, St Honoré, 12.
 à leurs risques et périls, sans examen préalable, et sans garantie, soit de la réalité, de la nouveauté ou du mérite de l'invention, soit de la fidélité ou de l'exactitude de la description, un brevet d'Invention de quinze années, qui ont commencé à courir le 20 Juin 1848
 pour un perfectionnement fait à l'échappement libre à ressort applicable aux pendules & aux montres



Gontard & Bolviller patent 1848

The one-piece engraved carriage clock signed for Japy frères, as below, is interesting in that it has the sweep seconds hand as seen on Bolviller 407 LM, along with the same fine moon *Breguet* hands that are typical of this maker. The platform is also decorated in a method similar to the Bolviller but has 'bat wing' attachments to the balance rather than the normal timing screws; the bat wing being an Oriental sign of good luck, this clock having been produced for the Chinese market.

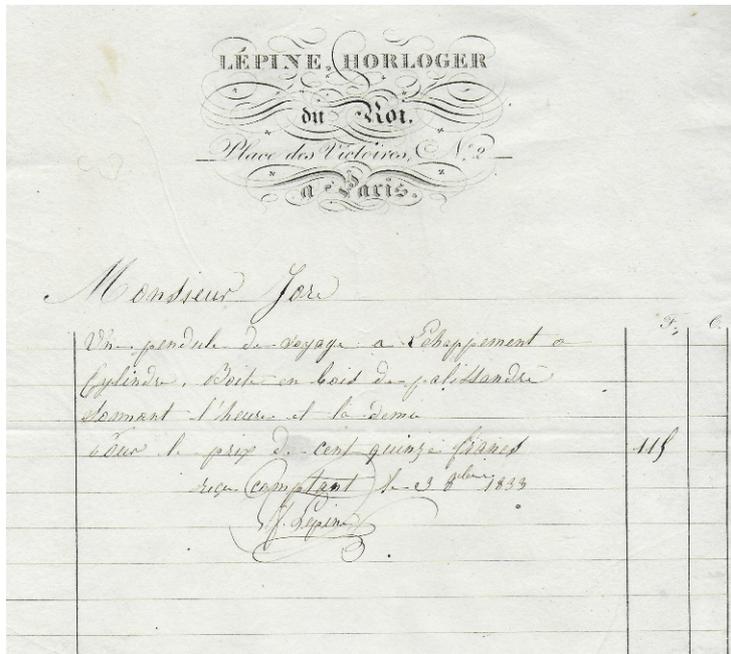


Japy frères with unusual platform escapement

The multi-piece case was in use from the early period of domestic carriage clock manufacture and was used by makers both in Paris and the provinces including Pierre-Louis Stevenard of Boulogne-Sur-Mer as shown in the example below; with excellent floral engraving to the well proportioned case. The movement has bell striking with an outside countwheel and a relatively early form of lever escapement. The handle to the case, with the slightly bulbous centre and scroll brackets to the sides, is fairly typical of a style used by the earlier makers and can be seen on both one-piece and multi-piece cases. Stevenard, born in 1810, was a fascinating maker and well-known for his wonderful automata and moving dolls. Between 1833 and 1842 he produced three most important pieces, each incorporating a miniature musician. At the Paris Exposition of 1878 he showed two automata, *The Physician* and *The Singing Lesson* with the latter signed in a similar style to this carriage clock. Stevenard, who died in 1883, can be considered the equal of Robert-Houdin, another magician and maker of mystery automata who was also a clockmaker.



Stevenard à Boulogne-Sur-Mer



In my archive collection of horological paperwork I have a fascinating invoice from *Lépine, Horloger du Roi, Place des Victoires, No.2, à Paris* issued for the sale of a carriage clock, with a hand-written detailed description of the clock. This must be one of the earliest such invoices known as it is dated 1833, not that many years after the advent of the domestic carriage clock itself. The translation reads: *A carriage clock, with cylinder escapement, a wooden case in rosewood, sounding the hours and half hours, for the price of 115 francs, paid cash, 3rd October 1833.*



A Lépine carriage clock in a multi-piece case is shown above and can be dated to circa 1835-40. It also has the *Breguet* hands as seen on other clocks, along with the fine Roman numerals to the dial being a sign of the *émalleur* Etienne Valat who made dials for other high profile carriage clock makers including Henri Jacot, Le Roy, Garnier and Hologue frères.

The mention of an *échappement à cylindre* in the Lépine invoice is interesting as many excellent carriage clocks around this period were fitted with this type of escapement, as opposed to the more substantial lever, although within a few years the latter was the preferred choice on the majority of better clocks. A one-piece carriage clock utilising a beautifully constructed and engraved cylinder platform is shown below. This substantial French-made piece is signed for *A. Pittar Lattey et Cie, Calcutta* being Arthur Pittar and John Lattey who were only recorded working together at 10 Government Square, Calcutta for a short time, forming the partnership in 1835 and dissolving it in 1842 when it reverted to Lattey Brothers. It is therefore possible to date the clock to this relatively early period of manufacture.



The *Le Roy et Fils à Paris* carriage clock shown below is another unusual example of an early multi-piece case made prior to 1840 by Basile-Charles Le Roy and his son Charles-Louis who joined his father as a partner in 1828 at which time the business became known as *Le Roy et Fils*. In 1835 Charles-Louis was appointed both *Horloger du Roi* and *Horloger du Ministère de la Marine*. Basile-Charles died in 1839 having founded *La Maison de Le Roy* in circa 1785 with premises in the Palais-Royal gardens following their opening to the public and its buildings to the trade by Philippe Egalité, the duc d'Orléans. After the French Revolution Basile-Charles Le Roy moved his business to Galerie Montpensier, 13-15 Palais-Royal and was appointed a clockmaker to the Emperor Napoleon.

This example shows how carriage clocks at this time were still fairly transitional in their workings with the movement in this clock striking the quarters with two blows for each quarter, but only on one bell and not two as became the norm. It has a lever escapement but with a plain gold balance without timing screws and set on an unusual skeletonised platform, whereas the later platforms, manufactured from circa 1855 and generally bought-in from Switzerland, would be, with some exceptions, of a standard design.



Le Roy et Fils à Paris

The multi-piece case of the earlier period of carriage clock manufacture changed form in the 1850s onwards with the more standard morphing into the *corniche*. A transitional example made by Pierre Drocourt in circa 1858 is shown below. The case still has the softer corners and rounded edges of the earlier multi-piece case rather than the sharper corners and moulded edge that was to come within the next few years, whilst the movement has earlier features such as a countwheel to the bell strike, a plain gold balance to the lever escapement and trefoil hands.





There is some belief that a one-piece carriage clock case is always a sign of an early clock, pre-circa 1860. But this is not correct as there are a number of carriage clocks made after this date, and certainly until at least the 1890's, which are housed in one-piece cases, albeit the majority are a slightly more simplified version of the earlier style. Below is shown a typical example of a Drocourt one-piece carriage clock, serial number 15374 and with an Hologue frères movement, that can be dated to circa 1878.



The use of multi-piece construction to manufacture cases became much more the norm after circa 1860 with most cases constructed in this manner; the *gorge*, the *cannelée*, the *bambu* and the *anglaise* all utilising separate pieces for the top, sides and base.

For more information go to www.extence.co.uk