July 24, 2021

http://www.plads.com/m57/JamesRussell/

James Russell Pocket Watches
and
Aaron Lufkin Dennison

by Chris Carey (MA) and narrated by Ron Price (SC) with technical support from Michael Edidin (MD)

This afternoon I'm going to tell you a story, a mystery story. It's about the Waltham Model 57 lookalike, the James Russell pocket watch. First, I'll tell you why it is a mystery, if you don't already know it, then I'll present some clues that help solve the mystery in my opinion. Finally, I'll claim my partners and I have solved the mystery and why. You might not believe me, but I hope, at least you will agree, I have told a good story.

The complete JR story is on my website at the above address, including a myriad of background details and research events in chronological order. To spare you boredom and sleepy eyes, I'll just cover highlights today, but, of course, critical key facts that unlock the mystery.

I will, however, be relying on familiarity with the history of the American Watch Company. You know, when Aaron Dennison and Edward Howard started the Boston Watch Company in 1850 in Roxbury, Mass, financed initially by the rich clock guy, Samuel Curtis. The company moved to Waltham in 1854 and went bankrupt in 1857, called insolvency then. **[NS factory sketch]**

Howard and his financial partner, Charles Rice, lost out on bidding for the company at auction and went back to Roxbury taking inventory from the factory, perhaps more than they should have. Dennison found financial partners, in particular, jeweler and watch importer Royal Robbins, to keep the company in Waltham. It started as Tracy Baker & Company, then Appleton Tracy & Company, followed by the American Watch Company. This slide is a sketch of the Waltham factory in 1858. **[NS intro slide]**

I will be calling upon information in my related monograph, *Origins of the Waltham Model 57*. It too is available online at the above address without the word JamesRussell.

The James Russell appears to be an early custom or private label version of the so-called American Watch Company Model 57 pocket watch, after the watches being manufactured at Waltham starting in 1857. Indeed, this is how I originally treated the JR when I first encountered it in 1996. It was called a Swiss fake in a NAWCC Bulletin as far back as 1960. However, the JR is much better than most Swiss or English fakes. I will describe later a couple superb Swiss fakes.

Early on in my research, fellow researcher Michael Edidin sent me his James Russell #20145 for hands on examination. It is shown here. “James Russell & Co, Hartford Conn”. In my hand I would have sworn it was a Waltham Model 57 until I got a close look. Many of the parts look correct, others were not exactly the same as Waltham parts. A great copy! Or was the movement remanufactured? And why?

To date, I have recorded 34 surviving James Russell movements, plus additional dials. Here’s the list from my website. **[NS]**

Who Made These Watches?

James Russell & C°, Hartford Conn

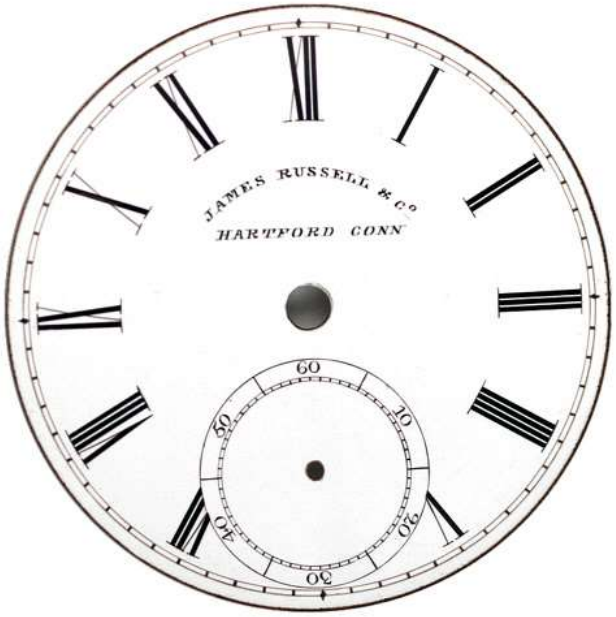
List of known examples of James Russell movements and dials.
(**H** & **L** for High and Low grade respectively; bold digits on barrel bridge)

- **L** #**19841** October 2006 information provided by Robert Niemeyer
- **L** #**19970** May 2007 eBay ad
- **H** #**20076** January 2017 pictures and information from Jeff Marcus
- **L** #**20093** February 2011 eBay ad
- **H** #20**145** October 2006 information provided by Michael Edidin
- **H** #20**146** October 2012 information provided by Ron Price
- **H** #20**191** June 2014 Bonhams auction
- **L** #**20242** February 2008 information provided by Mike Warren
- **L** #**20476** March 2017 restored by Jerry Boorse (info on file)
- **L** #**20493** February 1996 information provided by William Meggers (no pictures)
- **H** #20**501** April 2013 information provided by Ron Price
- **L** #**20590** from Derek Foster (September 2011 observations by Ron Price)
- **H** #20**677** February 2014 eBay ad; follow up by Jeff Marcus
- **H** #20**687** January 2001 eBay ad
- **H** #20**716** November 2015 eBay ad; follow up by Jeff Marcus
- **H** #20**788** December 2014 eBay ad; follow up by Jeff Marcus
- **L** #**21010** March 2013 information provided by Paulette Katz
- **L** #**21147** February 2010 provided by Ron Price
- **H** #21**283** February 2007 information provided by Alan House
- **L** #**22177** February 2007 information provided by Alan House
- **H** #**22899** January 2011 provided by Ron Price
- **H** #**23283** July 2007 eBay ad
- **H** #**24281** from Boris Ioffe July 2017
- **L** #**24301** August 2012 eBay ad
- **H** #**24353** December 2015 eBay ad; follow up by Jeff Marcus
- **L** #**24608** April 2010 eBay ad
- **L** #**24634** February 2019 eBay ad
- **L** #**24862** December 2013 eBay ad; follow up by Jeff Marcus
- **H** #**25043** with burnished jewells - NAWCC Bulletin #87, Aug. 1960, pp270-276 "Swiss Imitations Of Early American Watches", page 275; NAWCC Bulletin #201, Aug. 1979, pp426-434, Imitation American Key Wind Watches, page 434 **eBay Sept. 2019**
- **H** #25047 restored January 2017 by Jeff Marcus with mixed parts. "The replacement parts (except one) were from an 1863 Waltham Wm. Ellery parts movement. All fit as "drop in" except the pallet". The barrel bridge came from a different watch.
- **H** #**297** April 2011 by Richard Newman
- **H** #**331** November 20016 by Dave Wallace
- **H** #**448** October 2012 eBay ad
- **H** #**733** November 2013 eBay ad

This slide is probably too small to be able to read much, especially the source of the information. More important, about half the movements are listed as L for low grade, the rest as H for high grade; to be explained in a moment. Some of the movements show only the last three digits of the serial number on the barrel bridge. You have to look inside on the pillar plate to see the full five-digit serial number.

Based on surviving rates approaching 10% for early Walthams documented in my *Origins* monograph, hundreds of JR movements were made. Clearly this was not an extemporaneous activity.

Let’s look at another James Russell, #21147. **[NS]**



About half of the known movements have a hidden stud for the hairspring under the balance bridge. That is, they look like an 1859 P.S. Bartlett M57 grade. Sorry, the photo is a little blurry.

And their dials have Roman numerals with the signature in a curve. Also note, the signature on the movement is in script facing the edge; again, like the P.S. Bartlett grade. **[NS]**

Shown on the right of this slide is a 11J P.S. Bartlett movement #17053 to compare with the Russell. However, this particular Bartlett has fake jewel settings and a fake compensating balance (i.e., closed) not wanted on a James Russell. The 11J Russell has 2mm garnet jewels burnished into the plate. I wonder where the watchmaker got the 2mm garnet jewels.

We know this JR is, specifically, a circa 1859 P.S. Bartlett lookalike because the parts are tracked in my *Origins* monograph. I'll bring up a page from the Bartlett data table from the monograph to explain. **[NS]**

P.S. Bartlett Waltham, Mass

S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source
No12503	B	Wal	M	S		AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	PT	08'58		[c100186] (HS)
No12546	B	Wal	M	S		AT&Co	SN	N	E	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	BE	09'58		[c171331]
12715		Wal								15												09'58		[r89]
No12819	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	11	3.5	T	F	App	Stl	SU-H	N	N		Eng	3BE	09'58	✓	Ch87 Mart 9/94 (photos)
No12958	B	Wal	M	S	B	AWCo	SN	Y	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N			3BE	10'58		eBay 09/2002
No12996	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58	✓	eBay 11/2006
13007										/												01'59		[r73 page 58 Cat206]
No13119	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				10'58	✓	eBay 12/2002 & 04/2011
No13121	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58	✓	eBay 06/2008
No13126	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	Y	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58		[r43] & eBay 07/2007
13207	B	Wal							np	15				App		SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[r82 page 21]
13232		Wal								15					Stl							02'59		[r89]
13241										15					Stl							02'59		[r89]
No13291	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N	np	15		T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[c983106] (photos)
13346						AT&Co				7	N/A											10'58	✓	WN
13446	B	Wal	M			oth		N		15		T	F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[r88 p 103] & [c004619]
No13622	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	/	4.	T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	Jones & Horan Nov 94 & 06
No13937	B	Wal	M	S	B	plain		N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				11-12'58	✓	eBay 03/2004
No14182	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					11-12'58	✓	eBay 03/2004
No14421	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	CN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N		Eng	BE	11-12'58		[c078373]
No14924	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					12'58	✓	eBay 10/2006
14954	B	Wal								7	N/A			App		SU-H	N					12'58		[r81 page 47]
No14989	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					12'58	✓	eBay 03/2012
No15038	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				01-02'59	✓	eBay 06/2000
No15261	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				01-02'59	✓	Jones & Horan Apr 96
15308	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	CN	N	E	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	3	01-02'59		[c308605]
No15810	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	3BE	03'59		[c808001] (photo)
15814		Wal								7	N/A				Stl							03'59		[r89]
No15983	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				03'59	✓	[c044201] (5/21/95 photo)
No16098	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					03-04'59	✓	eBay 05/2013
No17027	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N		15		T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				03'59	✓	[c009602] (photos)
No17053	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	E	15	4	T	3F	App	Cls	SU-H	N	N	N	Wal	3BE	03'59	✓	[c697334]
S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source

You need to see my monograph for all the details in these data tables. Movements that have been entered are listed by serial number on the left column with their various features listed across the top; the approximate date when they were made is on the right column. The last row is for the Bartlett shown in the previous slide.

For now, the M/F column is for miscellaneous features. The entry “np” is for not-pinned plate; “E” is for top plate encircles the barrel. Assuming the JR movements either copied Bartlett parts or are based on them, they had to be based on parts after August 1858 or so, because before, they would have had pinned plates, which would be seen on the previous page if I showed it.

Also, they had to be based on parts before June 1860 because later they would have had an exposed hairspring stud. The entry “SU-H” is for sprung under hairspring with hidden stud; pages later show exposed stud.

Let’s look at another James Russell, #20716. **[NS]**

The rest of the known James Russells look very much like an early Appleton Tracy & Co grade Model 57; again around 1859. The signatures on all of these dials are in a straight line versus curved as before.

The JR signature on the movements is in block letters in a wave facing the center; that is, like the Appleton Tracy grade.

This higher-grade JR is also a circa 1859 lookalike because its copied Appleton Tracy parts had to be before June 1860 when the serial number was moved from the barrel bridge to the top plate. Also, the sprung under balances seen here were converted to sprung over around June 1860. This information is documented in the Appleton Tracy data table in my *Origins* monograph. **[NS]**

Shown on the right of this slide is an Appleton Tracy movement to compare with the Russell, including real jewel settings secured with 3 screws for the third and fourth arbors where most lookalikes have 2 screws.

The James Russell watchmaker clearly produced two distinctive grades of watches with characteristic dials. Where jewel count is known, the higher-grade movements are 15J whereas the lower grade movements are either 7J or 11J.

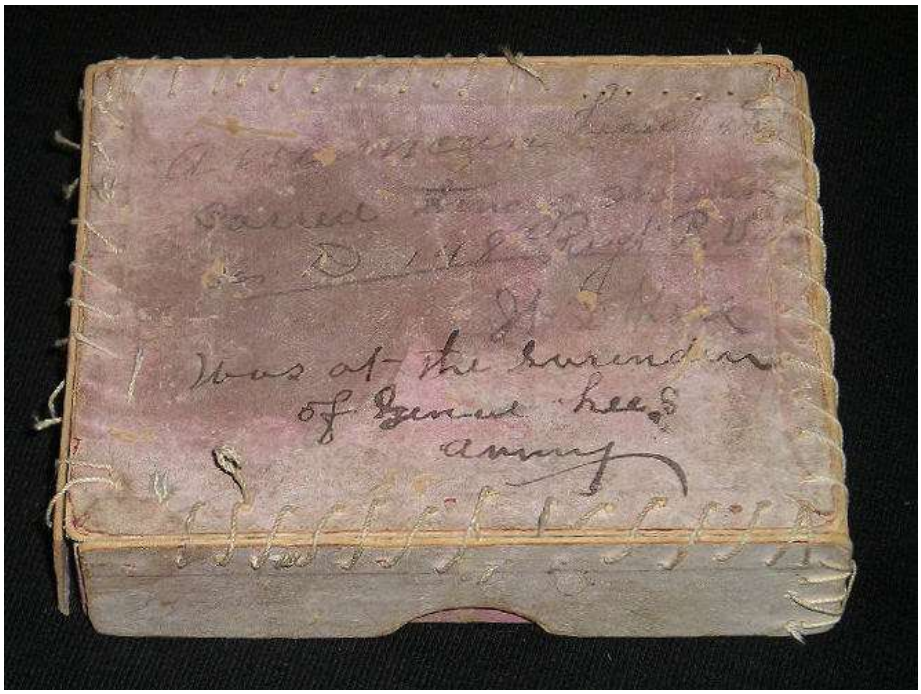
Most of the dials on the higher-grade JRs have Arabic numerals in a serpentine script. **[NS]**

The fancy dial on the left is the dial on JR #20145 that was on the opening slide. The dial on the right is from Appleton Tracy #6716, made Dec 1858. Note the signature is in a straight line.

There must be a Waltham connection here. These JR dials have the same Arabic style numerals as dials on early Waltham Appleton Tracy grade Model 57s, as shown here on the right. Examples of AT Arabic dials are given on my website with dates ranging from 1858 to 1860. The James Russell watchmaker clearly wanted to embellish his high-grade watches.

Although an 1859 lookalike, there is evidence that the James Russell was actually an 1860s watch; in fact, specifically 1862 according to <u>two</u> known examples (2 is all I've got). The cuvette on the case housing Russell #331 (not shown) is inscribed Nov 26 '62. The other example is for JR #20242. **[NS]**

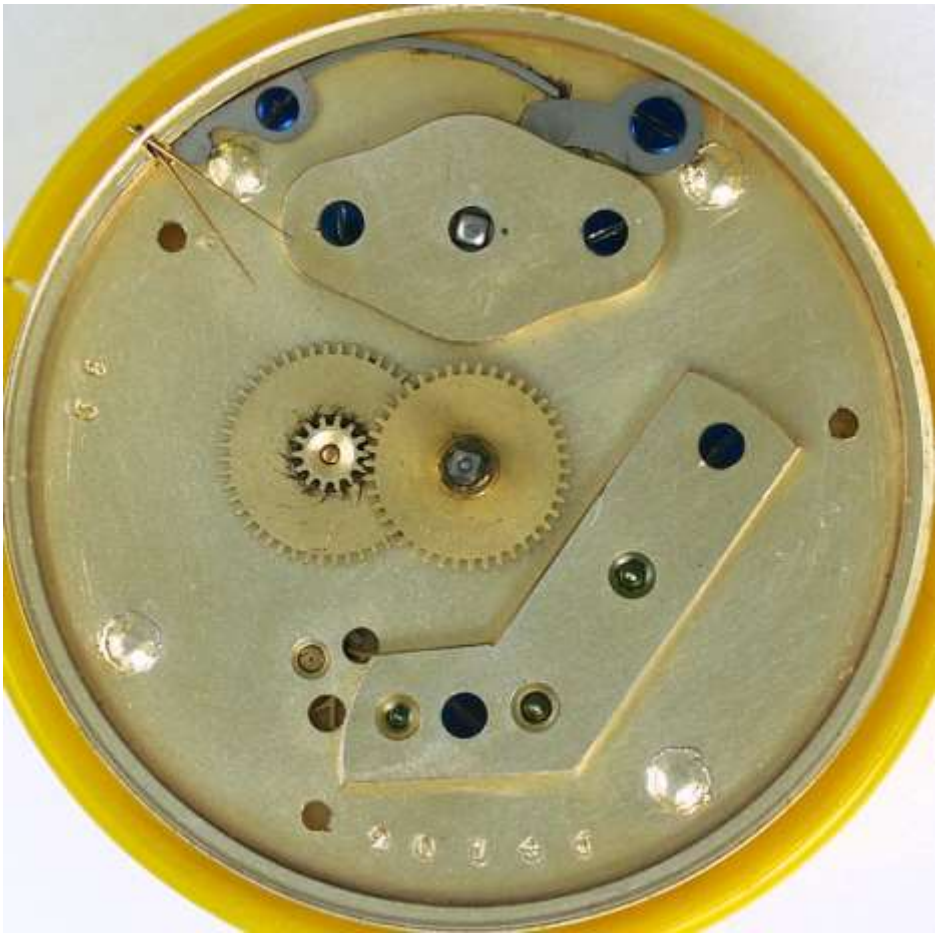
The original owner, William D. Ross, quote "carried this watch all through this civil war", end quote. This statement is written on the bottom of the box carrying his watch.



Written on the top of the box, shown here, in part is, quote, “was at the surrender of General Lee's army", end quote. Mr. Ross mustered in the Civil War on August 28, 1862. Of course, we don’t know when these watches were actually purchased, although likely sometime 1862.

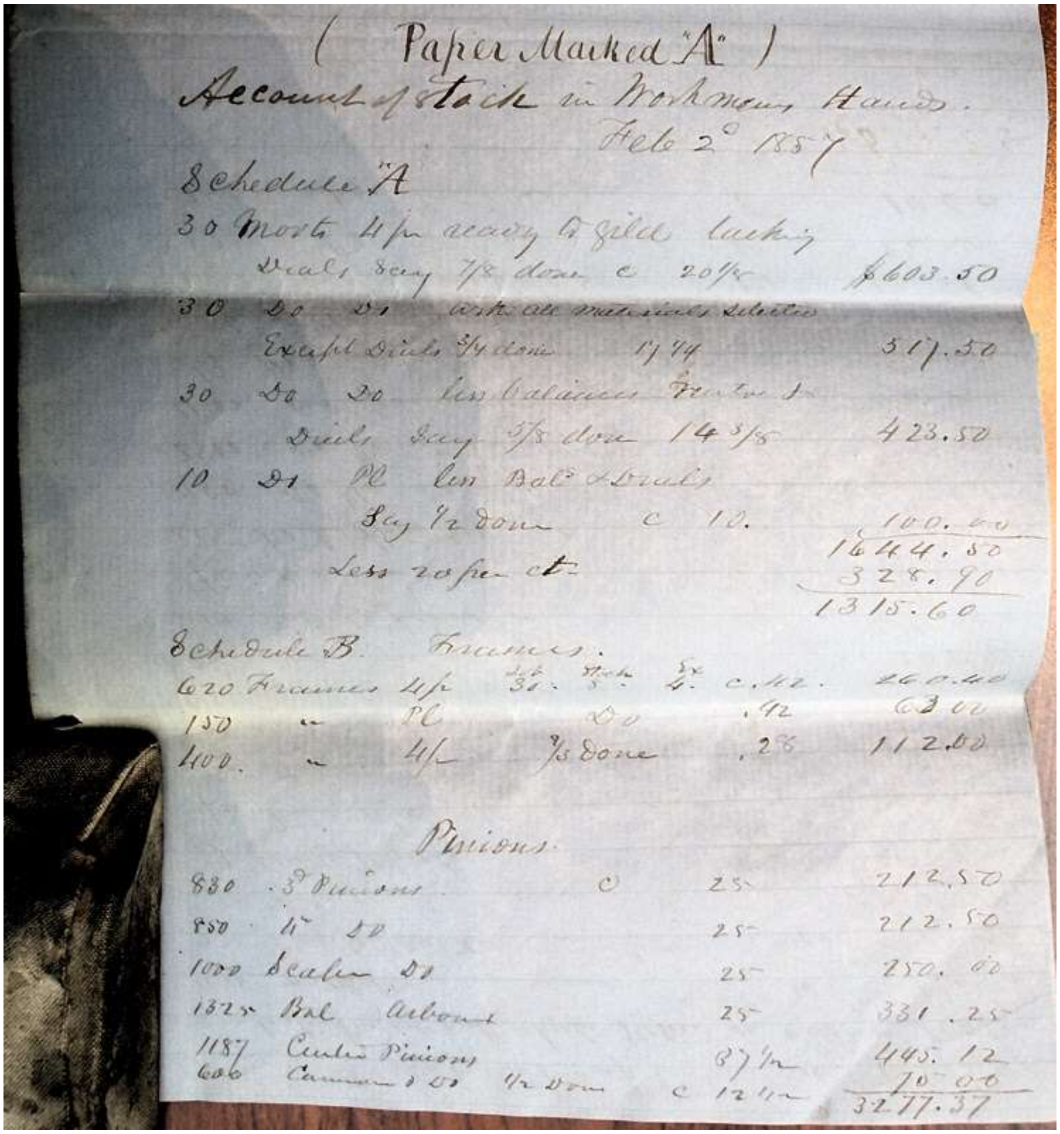
So basically, this is important, the James Russell movement looks like Waltham 1859, but marketed in 1862. **This is one of the keys that unlock the JR mystery.** Circa 1859 watch, sold circa 1862. **[NS]**

Interestingly, each JR movement has a subassembly serial number stamped on the parts like the Walthams have, but the sub-number is not from the visible movement number on the barrel bridge, although a different number is also stamped on the parts which does match the movement number; all of which makes one think "remanufactured Walthams". Shown here is the pillar plate view for #20146.



Note the two numbers 38 and 20146 where the '38' is in the standard M57 location for its subassembly number. There are no hand-made scribe marks on the plates for locating arbor holes. Even if the James Russells were intended to look like Walthams, there would be no need to make internal parts that are not visible to look exactly like Waltham parts. For example, shown here are same style 1st series click, oblong ratchet bridge and long bridge. Not shown here, the cantilevered potance under the top plate that holds the bottom balance arbor is another example. The number 38 is even stamped under the long and ratchet bridges; also, on the underside of the top plate. These examples give evidence that whoever made James Russell movements might have started with Waltham factory parts with matching sub-numbers.

Just before when the Boston Watch Company went insolvent, on February 2, 1857, an inventory was taken of the contents of the factory. Fortunately for us, this inventory was written in a detailed document which was submitted in an insolvency court case. The document survived in court archives. Here is image of the first page. **[NS]**



(Paper Marked "A")
Account of Stock in Workmen's Hands.
Feb 2d 1857
Schedule A
30 Mov'ts 4/p ready to gild lacking
Dials, Say 7/8 done c 20/— $603.50
30 Do Do with all materials selected
Except Dials 3/4 done [illegible] 317.50
30 Do Do less balance [illegible]
Dials, Say 3/8 done 14 3/8 423.50
10 Do Pl less Bal & Dials
Say 1/2 done c 10. 100.00
1644.50
Less 20 per ct 328.90
1315.60
Schedule B. Frames.
620 Frames 4/p [illegible] c .42. 260.40
150 " Pl Do .42 63.00
400 " 4/ 2/3 done .28 112.00
Pinions.
830 3d Pinions c 25 212.50
850 4th Do 25 212.50
1000 Scape Do 25 250.00
1325 Bal Arbors 25 331.25
1187 Center Pinions 37 1/2 445.12
600 Cannon Do 1/2 done c 12 1/2 70.00
3277.37

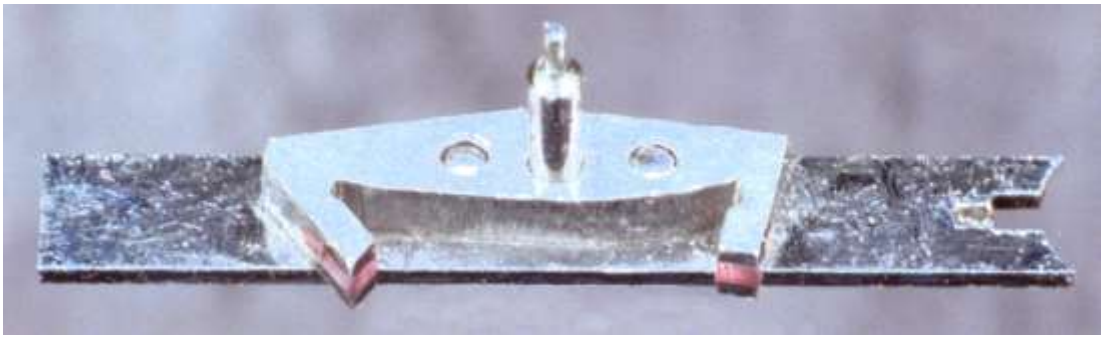
The inventory consisted of a vast amount of watch parts, around 100 partial movements and **1,170** frames. Frames were partially finished pairs of plates apparently already stamped with serial numbers. The term "frames" must have included their attached parts like pillars, barrel bridge, balance bridge, third-wheel (long) bridge and potance because these parts are not otherwise listed in the parts inventory. There is evidence that JR barrel bridges were modified to remove the original serial number on top because their thickness varies from side to side on three examples I have investigated so far, whereas factory parts are consistently flat; moreover, both "Waltham" and JR numbers are stamped on their undersides, whereas factory bridges have no underside numbers (because the full number is on top). This explains finding fully completed frames in JR movements with their attached parts stamped with corresponding sub-numbers. I don't know why the JR barrel bridges have the underside numbers; they seem unnecessary. Perhaps it has to do with the process of modifying the part.

Note, this is another key that unlocks the JR mystery. That is, the better part of a JR movement corresponds exactly with a Waltham movement.

From the beginning of researching the JR watch, I have been reporting how similar the JR plates and related parts are to the Waltham Model 57, actually mostly identical or near identical. The internal parts are more difficult to examine, and I have not said much about them. Shown here is a picture of the JR escapement from #20146. **[NS]**

The picture is a little blurry, but not bad taken with my phone. I haven't used my digital camera for a long time. Note the blunt-end escape wheel. What I mean by "blunt-end" is the shaft of a tooth is squared off where the end of the tooth is the same size as the shaft. Also note the three spokes join the outer wheel at the base of the teeth. Here is picture of the actual factory part. **[NS]**

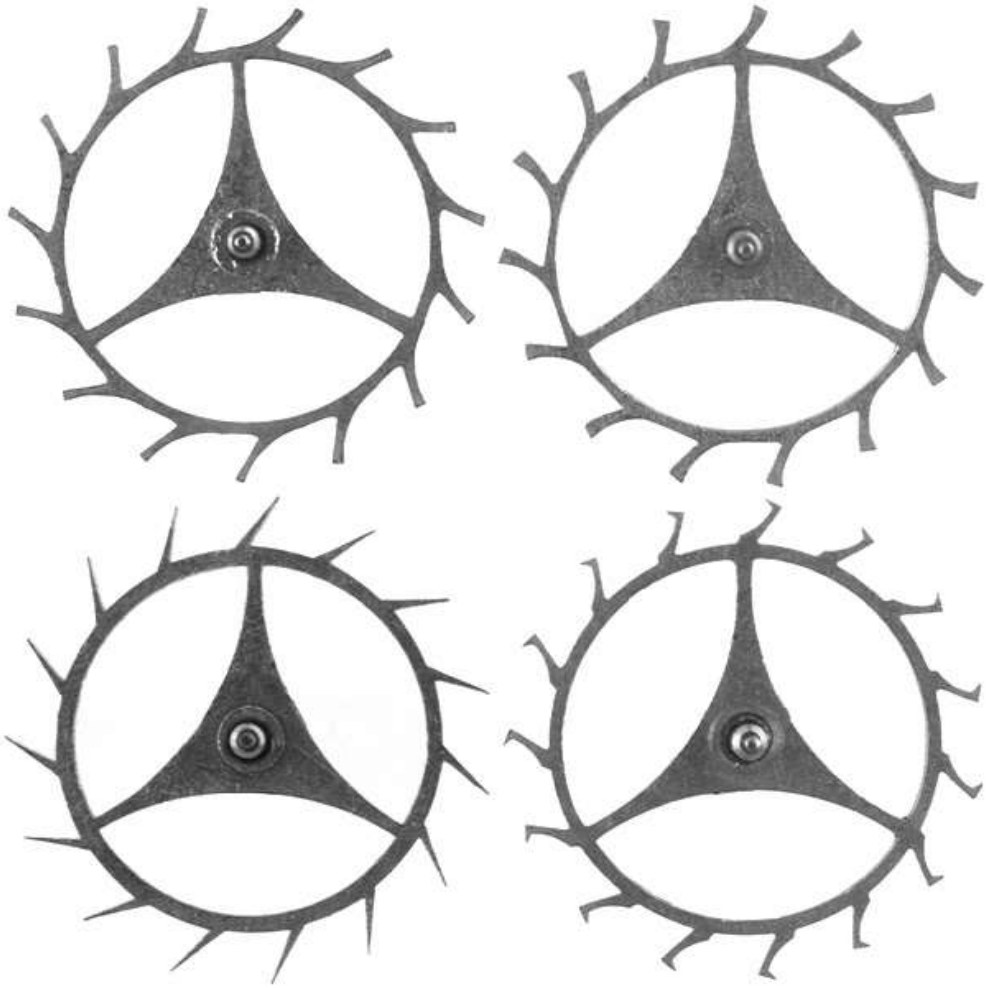
The JR escape wheel is a perfect copy. Here is picture of the factory M57 lever. **[NS]**



The JR lever is a perfect copy. A side lever with English style closed pallets.

With assistance of contributors, including Jeff Marcus (NY), who has seen and restored more JRs than anybody, we have investigated the train and escapement of over six examples of JR movements over the full range of JR serial numbers to compare with the Model 57. The best I can tell, these parts are identical with the Waltham parts. That is, the parts are Waltham's English style side-lever with closed pallets and the blunt-end escape wheel.

The design of the Waltham escape wheel evolved over time with the production of the Model 57. **[NS]**



Shown here are the four types of escape wheels as described in my *Origins* monograph. They are pointed-tooth ratchet escape, blunt-end tooth, toe-end tooth, and the basic club-tooth.

Bringing back the previous data table for P.S. Bartlett movements **[NS]**.

P.S. Bartlett Waltham, Mass

S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source
No12503	B	Wal	M	S		AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	PT	08'58		[c100186] (HS)
No12546	B	Wal	M	S		AT&Co	SN	N	E	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	BE	09'58		[c171331]
12715		Wal								15												09'58		[r89]
No12819	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	11	3.5	T	F	App	Stl	SU-H	N	N		Eng	3BE	09'58	✓	Ch87 Mart 9/94 (photos)
No12958	B	Wal	M	S	B	AWCo	SN	Y	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N			3BE	10'58		eBay 09/2002
No12996	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58	✓	eBay 11/2006
13007										/												01'59		[r75 page 58 Cat206]
No13119	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				10'58	✓	eBay 12/2002 & 04/2011
No13121	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58	✓	eBay 06/2008
No13126	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	Y	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					10'58		[r43] & eBay 07/2007
13207	B	Wal							np	15				App		SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[r82 page 21]
13232		Wal								15					Stl							02'59		[r89]
13241										15					Stl							02'59		[r89]
No13291	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N	np	15		T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[c983106] (photos)
13346						AT&Co				7	N/A											10'58	✓	WN
13446	B	Wal	M			oth		N		15		T	F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	[r88 p 103] & [c004619]
No13622	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	np	/	4.	T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				02'59	✓	Jones & Horan Nov 94 & 06
No13937	B	Wal	M	S	B	plain		N	np	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				11-12'58	✓	eBay 03/2004
No14182	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					11-12'58	✓	eBay 03/2004
No14421	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	CN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N		Eng	BE	11-12'58		[c078373]
No14924	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					12'58	✓	eBay 10/2006
14954	B	Wal								7	N/A			App		SU-H	N					12'58		[r81 page 47]
No14989	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					12'58	✓	eBay 03/2012
No15038	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				01-02'59	✓	eBay 06/2000
No15261	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				01-02'59	✓	Jones & Horan Apr 96
15308	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	CN	N	E	7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	3	01-02'59		[c308605]
No15810	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N	N	Eng	3BE	03'59		[c808001] (photo)
15814		Wal								7	N/A				Stl							03'59		[r89]
No15983	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N	N				03'59	✓	[c044201] (5/21/95 photo)
No16098	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N		7	N/A			App	Stl	SU-H	N					03-04'59	✓	eBay 05/2013
No17027	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N		15		T	3F	App	Gld	SU-H	N	N				03'59	✓	[c009602] (photos)
No17053	B	Wal	M	S	B	AT&Co	SN	N	E	15	4	T	3F	App	Cls	SU-H	N	N	N	Wal	3BE	03'59	✓	[c697334]
S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source

One of the features I tracked in these data tables is the escapement, when I was lucky enough to get the information. Note the escape wheel is the blunt-end type during the years around 1858 and 1859. Now looking at a corresponding table for Appleton Tracy & Co movements **[NS]**.

Tracy Baker & Co. Waltham / Appleton Tracy & Co. Waltham, Mass

S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source
No6690	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y	nf,E	16		T	3R		Gld	SU-E				Eng	3BE	01'59	✓	personal comm. (photos)
6709		Wal				AT&Co		Y		16		T			Exp	SU-E					BE	12'58		[r42]
No6716	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N					12'58	✓	Jones & Horan Oct '16
No6726	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	CN	Y		15	3	T	R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N	N	Eng	3BE	12'58		[c511926]
No6759	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co,W	CN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N				12'58		eBay 06/2009
No6765	B	Wal	M	W	B	plain		N		/			3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N					12'58		[r15 page 694]
6803		Wal								15					Exp							12'58		[r89]
6809		Wal																				12'58		[r89]
No6817	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	N		15		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				12'58		eBay 01/2013
No6822	B	Wal	M	W	B	~~AWCo~~	CN	N		15		T	3R	App	~~Exp~~	SU-E	N					12'58	✓	eBay 06/2016
6832																						12'58		[c730188]
6833		Wal								16					Exp							12'58		[r89]
6848															Gld							12'58	✓	[c217534]
6850	B	Wal								15		T	R	App	Gld	SU-E						12'58		[r83 page 69] incorrect source
No6851	B	Wal	M	W	B	-				/	3.6	T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				12'58	✓	Ch 8 (2/1/97) & eBay12/06
No6885	B	Wal	M	W	B	oth	CN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				12'58	✓	eBay 12/2007
6888		Wal								16												12'58		[r89]
No6897	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co,W	CN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				12'58	✓	eBay 5'98
No15508	B	Wal	M	W	B	AWCo	SN	Y		16		T	3R	App	Stl	SU-E	N	N				01'59		eBay 12/2006
No15547	B	Wal	M	W	B	plain		N		/		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				01'59	✓	eBay 10/2011
15563	B	Wal	M			AT&Co				15		T		App	Gld							01'59	✓	[c002384]
No15590	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				01'59	✓	Jones & Horan Apr '04
15691	B	Wal				AT&Co		Y	ns	15	3.5	T	R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N	N	Eng	3TE	01'59	✓	[c128342]
No15939	B	Wal	M	W	B				SW	15			3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				?	✓	[r9 page 559]
No16447	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y	ns,E	15	3.5	T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N	N	Eng	3BE	03'59	✓	[c697334]
No16507	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co,W	CN	N		15		T	3R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N				03'59		eBay 01/2013
No16594	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		15		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				04-05'59	✓	Jones & Horan Sep '14
No16622	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		15		T	3R	App	Exp	SU-E	N	N				04-05'59	✓	Time&Strike 06/02 & eBay 11/2002
No16632	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N				04-05'59	✓	eBay 10/2002
No16633	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y	E	15		T	3R	App	Stl	SU-E	N				3TE	04-05'59	✓	eBay 06/2008 & Jun 2008 eMail
No17728	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		/		T	3R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N				06'59	✓	eBay 09/2013
No17794	B	Wal	M	W	B	AT&Co	SN	Y		15		T	3R	App	Gld	SU-E	N	N				06'59		11/2015 email
S/N	B/P	City	State	P/E	B/E	Dial	D/S	SSec	M/F	#Js	Sze	T/J	T/S	Indx	Bal	Su/o	Bnk	Fog	Dst	Pallet	Escp	Date	ck	Source

Note again the escape wheel is the blunt-end type during the years around 1858 and 1859, with a couple toe-ends. The toe-end is hard to distinguish from the blunt-end and might be misreported. Regardless, the blunt-end is predominant.

The coincidental fact that Waltham employed the blunt-end transitional design for the escape wheel around 1858/1859 just when the James Russell watch was created, is a main key that unlocks the JR mystery. [NS]

I need to point out that the teeth with flat ends on Waltham's escape wheel is not a unique feature. Indeed, other escape wheels exist that are called blunt-end. I contend that the specific shape of Waltham's escape wheel with square shafts is unique. Not necessarily better, just specific to Waltham.

We know from the insolvency papers that the Waltham watch factory was making its own escapement in 1857, but that was the then conventional English-style side-lever with closed pallets and ratchet pointed-tooth escape wheel. Although the transitional escape wheels could conceivably have been obtained elsewhere, I believe for independence from the European companies copying Waltham, the factory made the transitional escape wheels as well. Moreover, James L. Baker, Waltham's escapement maker, was reported in June 19, 1857, Waltham Sentinel article, that he stayed with Royal Robbins' new company at Waltham.

We investigated a lot of 1860s watches; American, English and Swiss, and found no evidence of a non-Waltham source for "Waltham's" blunt-end escape wheel. The word lot is a bit of an understatement. Although many examples are given in my online JR web page, this is an area for a challenge because the number of possibilities seem endless. **[NS]** (picture of a Rotherham watch)

The investigation was also an educational experience for me. For example, I never heard much before of the Rotherham Watch Company, which dates its heritage back to Coventry, England, in the year 1747. Rotherham was a vibrant company sending quality watches to America even before 1850. Although Rotherham could have been a source for watch parts, they could not have supplied Waltham with escapements because they relied on the ratchet tooth even into the 1880s. **[NS]**

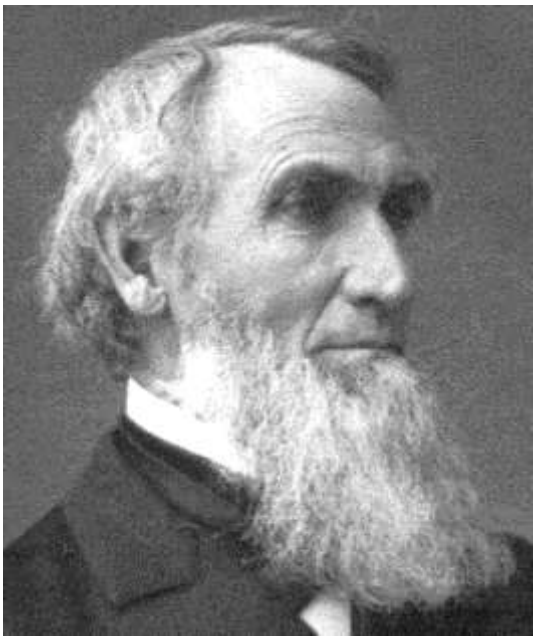
Getting back to the subject at hand, I do have a superb Swiss fake of an Appleton Tracy watch with matching case. I had to take it apart; its escapement is a great copy.

As you can see, its blunt-end escape wheel is indeed a great copy, but not perfect as shown next. **[NS]**

On closer view as shown, the pinion and arbor on the escape wheels are different. The left wheel is from JR #22899 (same for JR #20146 which I confirmed); the right wheel is the AT fake wheel. The pinions on the 4th wheels are also different (not shown). Ditto other internal parts. Although multiple copies were presumably made, this excellent fake watch is basically a one-of-a-kind lookalike, and therefore not a source for escapement parts, nor a James Russell watch. **[NS]** (photo of a Shawmut movement)

Contributors Michael Dayton (CA) and Michael Harrold (MA) sent two Shawmut Watch Company movements for detailed examination. The Shawmut is also an excellent Swiss lookalike, but with a toe-end escape wheel. I'm not describing it here in the interest of time. Again, not a resource for Waltham.

Okay, I've got the James Russell watch pretty well defined. The question is, who made it? A number of possible candidates are covered in my online JR web page. However, Chris Carey, my good friend and fellow researcher, and currently president of the New England Chapter 8 of NAWCC, has been adamant from the very beginning it was Aaron Dennison, the co-founder of the Boston Watch Company. **[NS]**



Aaron Dennison was an abolitionist. We expect Dennison wanted to make watches for union soldiers who were fighting for the freedom of slaves. Apparently, Dennison was not a good technician and mechanic, and many historians beat him up for this, which I think is undeserving. I see Dennison as an entrepreneur and visionary, a leader. He was dedicated to his beliefs. So, did Aaron Dennison orchestrate the James Russell product line to prove his idea?

Dennison had expected to have an ownership position in Royal Robbins' new watch company after the Boston Watch Company went insolvent, but instead he had to accept an employee position. He was, though, superintendent from 1857 to late 1861. From time to time, Dennison was accused of failing to perform various duties. He also was accused of promoting a new lower priced watch for the war trade against Robbins' instructions while Robbins was in Europe on honeymoon. This was the Wm Ellery watch. The so-called soldier's watch. Dennison was dismissed from the American Watch Company in December of 1861.

I originally thought Dennison was too busy to be involved with the James Russell, and I had a hard time accepting Chris' theory. After being fired from the Waltham factory, Dennison got involved with the Tremont Watch Company.

However, one day while re-reading Philip Priestley's 2009 monograph published by NAWCC, Title: *Aaron Lufkin Dennison, An Industrial Pioneer and his Legacy*, on page 25 he says, quote "Between leaving Waltham in December 1861 and the end of 1863, the nature of Aaron's employment is not recorded" end quote. Let me repeat, there is no record on what Dennison was doing from late 1861 to late 1863! Oh, convenient. **Priestley provided the main key that unlocks the JR mystery.** Dennison had opportunity, as well as motive. **[NS]**

As superintendent, Dennison had ample opportunity to obtain watch parts, maybe rejected parts from the company. Although not made public, maybe this was the real reason Dennison was fired. Perhaps he was prototyping the James Russell watch while promoting the Wm Ellery watch in the company.

Shown here is a 11J James Russell on left compared with an early 11J Wm Ellery. The JR is based on 1859 parts; the Ellery on 1862 parts, actually February ’62 for this example. One glaring difference is that the index is applied to the James Russell plate while it is engraved on the Ellery plate. This feature was added to previous Walthams late 1858. I’m inclined to believe that all frames were premade the same, predrilled for 7 jewels, possibly up through year 1859; plate jewels and engraving were added to plates during final production. Since the metal index strip already existed in 1859, it was easier for Dennison to apply the index than to engrave it. In fact, it was applied over the signature on early low-grade JRs. **[NS]** (Dennison photo)

We can speculate how and when Dennison got his James Russell business started. He probably moved his prototyping activity out of the factory when the Wm Ellery production started in 1861. Perhaps anticipating his eventual firing, he setup the JR business as a cottage business operating out of homes.

I don’t know if it was one home or multiple homes. The business was not actually making movements. It was mostly assembling, fitting and adjusting movements from factory parts. Nevertheless, gilding must have been a problem for Dennison, as poor as it was. Engraving and fitting were likely done by different people. Screws might have been problematic for Dennison. They are not listed in the insolvency inventory. His tradesmen might have had to make or obtain their own screws and tap holes. Although there might have been some toe-end escape wheels in JR movements, all we’ve seen are blunt-end wheels which existed only about a year in production. I think Dennison acquired excess stock blunt-end escape wheels from the factory when the factory transitioned to the toe-end design in 1860. Heck, they could have been still laying around in a box somewhere in the factory in 1861. This idea might be a bit of a stretch, especially because he was selling watches in 1862. So, bottom line, I need you to put on your imagination hat to accept my theory.

Reviewing some history, Dennison traveled to Europe twice for the watch company to obtain watch parts and watchmaking techniques like gilding, jeweling and dial enameling. First in 1850 for the BWCo; second in 1857 after the insolvency auction to Prescot and Liverpool, England. Dennison undoubtedly established important contacts and knowledge during these visits. Surely, at least he could have enticed a few employees to moonlight on the James Russell. **[NS]**

It looks like maybe upwards of 400 JRs or so were made and sold between 1861 to 1863. The numbers do seem reasonable, though. Let's look at this chart. Contributor Joseph Brown (MA) tabulated the company's production by grade and year for several years. I believe he did this for the Waltham Watch Company exhibit at the Charles River Museum of Industry

WATCH PRODUCTION 1857-1865
American Watch Company (including Tracy Baker & Co. and Appleton Tracy & Co.)

	Grades												
Year	TBC	ATC	PAR	PSB	SPT	WAT	AMN	AWC	RER	WE	WWC	NLESS	Total
1857 Model 18 Size Full Plate (aka Model A)													
1857	20	840	400	100									1360
1858		820	300	6158	100							30	7408
1859		2210	14	8863	110	330			300			33	11860
1860		1071		8950	100	570		1	200			180	11072
1861		200		500		300			400	303		30	1733
1862		1200		1950	20					7960		20	11150
1863		945		7760						17670			26375
1864		4370		9990	20					17350			31730
1865		9080		11349						20480	1		40910
Total	20	20736	714	55620	350	1200		1	900	63763	1	293	143598

Shown here is Brown's summary table for the full-plate Model 57 production. Years on the left vertical and movement grades on the top horizontal. Tracy Baker & Co, Appleton Tracy & Co, PAR = Parkers (forerunner of P.S. Bartletts), P.S. Bartletts, and so on.

In 1858: 820 ATs were made, and 6,458 Parkers and Bartletts;
in 1859: 2,210 ATs, and 8,877 PARs/PSB;
in 1860 1,071 ATs, 8,950 Bartletts.
There must have been an ample supply of rejected frames and parts, including escapements for Dennison to obtain, especially in 1859. A rejection rate of only 3% in 1859, the pivotal year for JR, would have provided enough material for the JR production.

Another interesting observation from Brown's table is this. The factory produced 303 Wm Ellery movements in 1861, 7,960 in 1862 and 17,670 in 1863. The James Russell watch was a success, but so was the Wm Ellery which quickly overran the JR. Having proved his creation, Dennison moved on to new adventures in 1863.

Also note that the factory was practically shutdown in 1861 with only 1,733 Model 57s made. Actually, the focus then was on the lady's watch. The quiet factory might have made it easier for Dennison to get employees to moonlight on the James Russell and to salvage rejected parts from prior years.

Dials must have been made outside the watch factory, probably as an independent operation because dials were not listed in the insolvency inventory documents. Michael Edidin has an Appleton, Tracy & Co. advertising circular dated February 1858 where the it was offering custom dials on order. **[NS]**

We are just introducing into market, too, a watch named " P. S. Bartlett, Waltham, Mass." at a price so low as to be within the reach of all classes. It is made upon the same principle as the better qualities, is squarely and finely finished, and will give entire satisfaction to the wearer.

We beg to inform you also, that we have made it a part of our business to manufacture Enameled Watch Dials to order, and we solicit your custom on the grounds that we produce a better dial than any other made in this country—and equal to any foreign, that our prices are low, and that the execution of orders is prompt.

Prices are as follows:

Dials with plain seconds and without name, ... $1 50
Named Dials fifty cents extra.
Sunk Seconds fifty cents extra.

To avoid delay and correspondence, we have to add that where broken dials are to be re-placed, the old dial, the dial plate, pillar plate, and the case with glass bezzle (*and no other parts,*) must, in order to insure a fit, be forwarded with the order; it is of no use to send the old dial only. All these may be sent by express, prepaid, or through post, registered. Where we have no account with the sender, payment according to the above scale of prices should be inclosed with the order. A distinct direction should be given us of the name, town, county, and State of the sender.

We do not execute orders for single watches.

Referring you to the annexed list of prices,

We are, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

APPLETON, TRACY & CO.

Shown here is the accompanying letter in part. Dials for $1.50 plus 50 cents for the name. Dennison would have had access to this dial resource. He clearly took advantage of his ability to order dials with Arabic numerals in a serpentine script style for his high-grade JRs to make them stand out.

Interestingly, this letter also introduces the P.S. Bartlett in early 1858, “at a price so low as to be within the reach of all classes.” A 7J Bartlett with plain dial and steel balance in a silver OF case could be purchased for $18. Remember this number.

Hairsprings and mainsprings were also not listed in the insolvency inventory documents; presumedly they were ordered from European supplier(s) from which Dennison could order as well for JR movements. I wonder, did he buy them from the well-known Yates business in Liverpool or from Rotherham in Coventry?

Let’s look where Dennison could have gotten crucial help. Famed watchmaker Jonas G. Hall worked for the AWCo from 1859 to 1862. Hall made many watches, mostly when he was in Montpelier, VT. At least two, #23 and #45, have Model 57 appearances, but nothing like the close lookalike #42904. **[NS]**

Shown here are top and pillar plate views. This watch looks very much like an early P.S. Bartlett M57 with under sprung steel balance, hidden stud and engraved index; except it has 4mm translucent jewels in real jewel settings secured with 3 screws. It has the standard M57 train, 3-arm blunt-end escape wheel and enclosed English style pallets. I am convinced it was made with at least some factory Model 57 parts.

The case is dated 1861 when Hall was still employed at the AWCo. Hall would have been available to Dennison for assistance, not as Dennison's watchmaker because he was quite busy, but probably for training and advice for solving technical difficulties. Perhaps Hall's watch shown here was a JR prototype for Dennison to show him how it could be done. Apparently, Hall had enough spare time in 1861 to make this watch while the factory was slow, although he designed the 10 size lady's watch then for the company.

Samuel Curtis, reported nephew of clockmaker Aaron Willard, Sr., was a renowned maker of clock dials with a business in Boston. Curtis painted similar Arabic dials as found on James Russell movements, but much earlier than 1858. **[NS]**

Many clocks are known to have his label affixed to the back of their dials, title *Curtis Manufactory*.

Shown is a Curtis dial on Jonathan Billings, Acton, Mass, striking banjo clock, with heavy iron Arabic dial, Circa 1825. **[NS]** (portrait of Samuel Curtis)

Samuel Curtis was born in Roxbury, MA, October 17, 1785. He painted clock dials on metal, manufactured them and became very successful selling clock dials and mirrors. He even operated an 1840s iron foundry in Boston. He financed the Boston Watch Company initially, but lost his wealth when the company went insolvent.

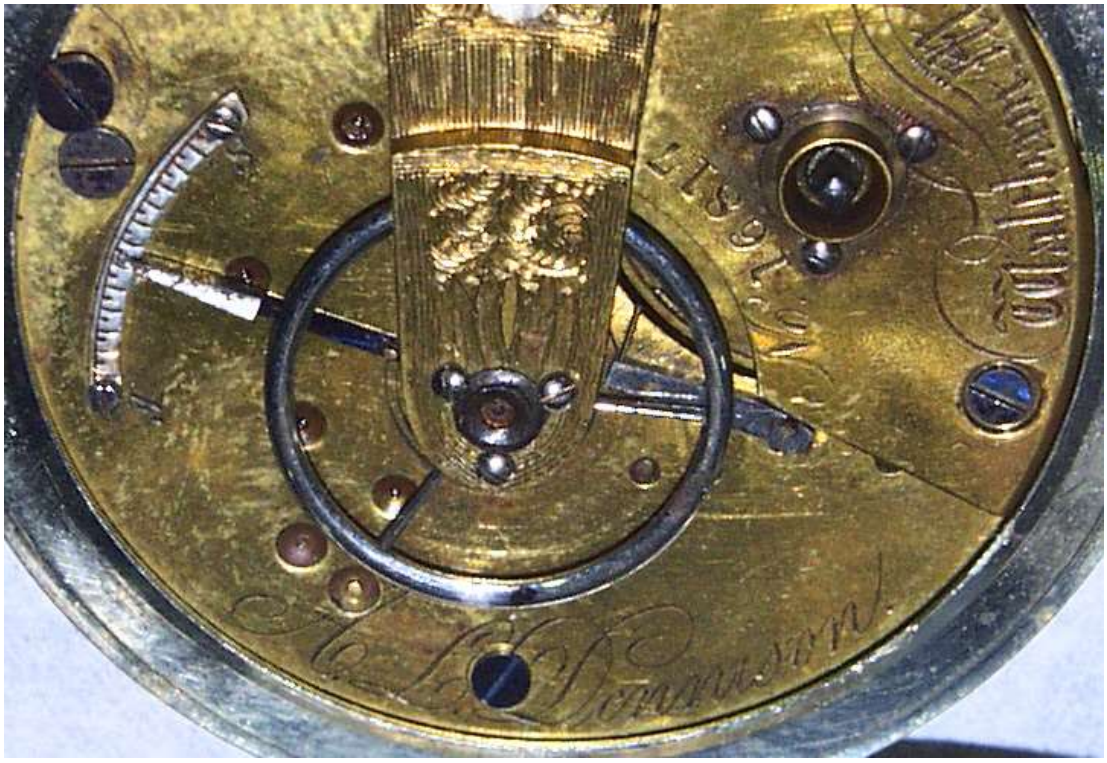
After being badly burnt by the insolvency of the BWCo, Samuel Curtis most likely would have been willing to assist Dennison with his JR venture. He probably promoted the fancy Arabic dials, but more importantly, he had a network for distributing his clock dials. This network would likely be useful for watches too. In fact, James Russell watches have surfaced from cities all over the country and even in Canada.

Actually, Dennison's main distributor might have been Israel P. Libbey, a jeweler in Washington, DC, who was lobbying Dennison in 1861 for low-priced watches for the war trade. Charles Moore, in *Timing a Century*, says Libbey set the price point at $12 to $18 (not clear if this includes a case). Presumably JRs were sold in this range. Actually, Clint Geller (*Civil War Timepieces*) says a $30 range is more likely including case.

Now, for the final key that solves the JR mystery in my book.

On July 6, 2000, at the NAWCC National Convention in Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, Roy Ehrhardt showed me his A.L. Dennison #16817 Model 57 lookalike pocket watch. **[NS]**

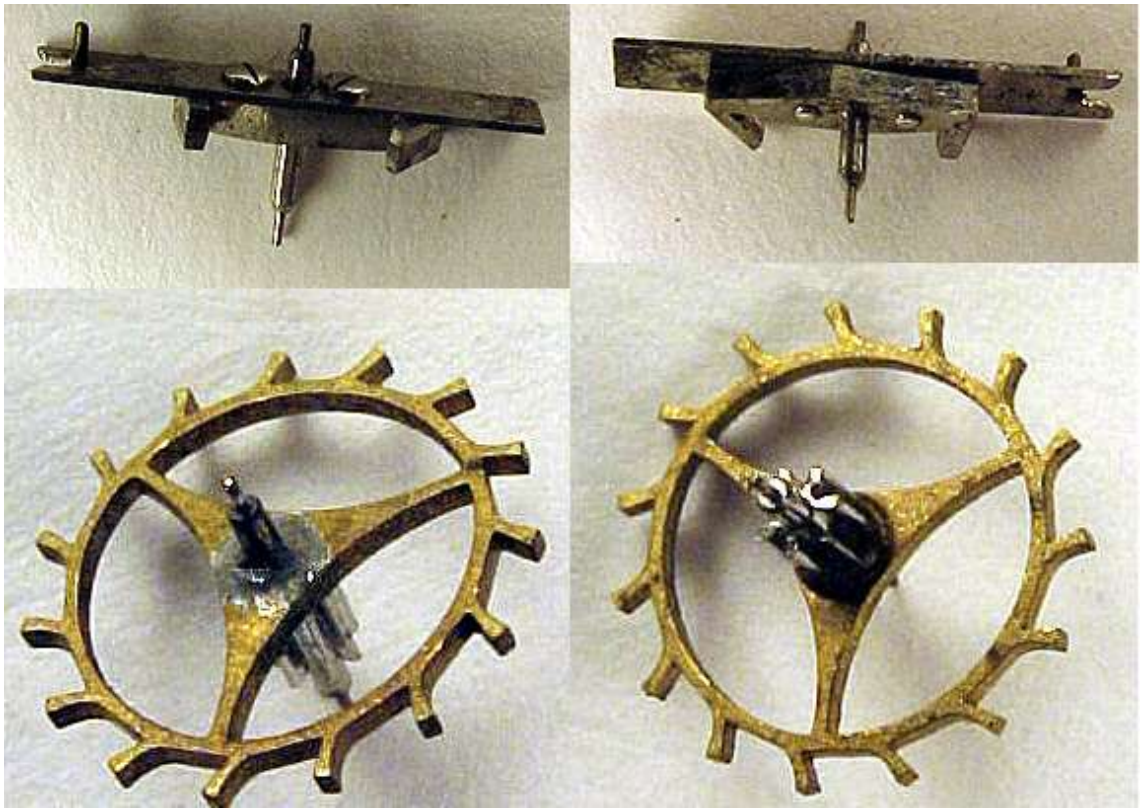
The movement looks like a 7J P.S. Bartlett circa 1859; the Serial Number Ledger lists its S/N in a batch 801-820 as nameless. Shown is my picture of the movement taken by shaking hands with an old digital camera in a busy mart floor in July of 2000.



Note sprung under hairspring with hidden stud and applied index. The applied hairspring anchor is a repair. The style of the Dennison signature is consistent with a PSB, and although orientated correctly, the engraving on the barrel bridge is similar but still different from early AT movements.

Roy had previously sent me detail pictures of movement parts, including the escapement. **[NS]**

(both side views)



The escapement is an English style side-lever with closed pallets and with a **blunt-end escape wheel**. Oh, how interesting.

At the time I didn't know what the watch was, maybe some kind of so-called employee watch at the factory. I sure do now, it is Aaron Dennison's prototype of his future James Russell pocket watch! Thank you, Roy!

[NAWCC-S]

?{I still have a vivid memory of Roy. Some say he was cranky, not with me. Also, a memory of Philip Priestley. I swear, he was a man in constant motion. Roy and Philip have a major part in my JR story. Same for Joe Brown. Joe was with me in my home office going over some watch stuff when the planes struck the towers in Manhattan. You can be sure I will never forget Joe.}?

I know my JR story is speculative and circumstantial. I could be wrong. My partners, Chris Carey and Michael Edidin, could have been much less forgiving to let me tell my story. Well, if it is just that, a story, I hope you enjoyed it.