



SEATTLE'S FIRST WATCHMAKERS 1869 -1889

Bringing Time to the Public in the Pacific Northwest



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By Paul Middents

Standard time calibrated to the Greenwich meridian reached the nation and the Pacific Northwest in 1884, about the same time a fifteen-year-old German Jewish immigrant named Joseph Mayer arrived in Seattle and took up the trade of watchmaker and jeweler. Eventually he became a true clock maker specializing in street and tower clocks. His role in spreading public time around the West over the next 50 years sparked my interest in considering Seattle's place in the jewelry and watchmaking trade and its evolution while he was launching his career.

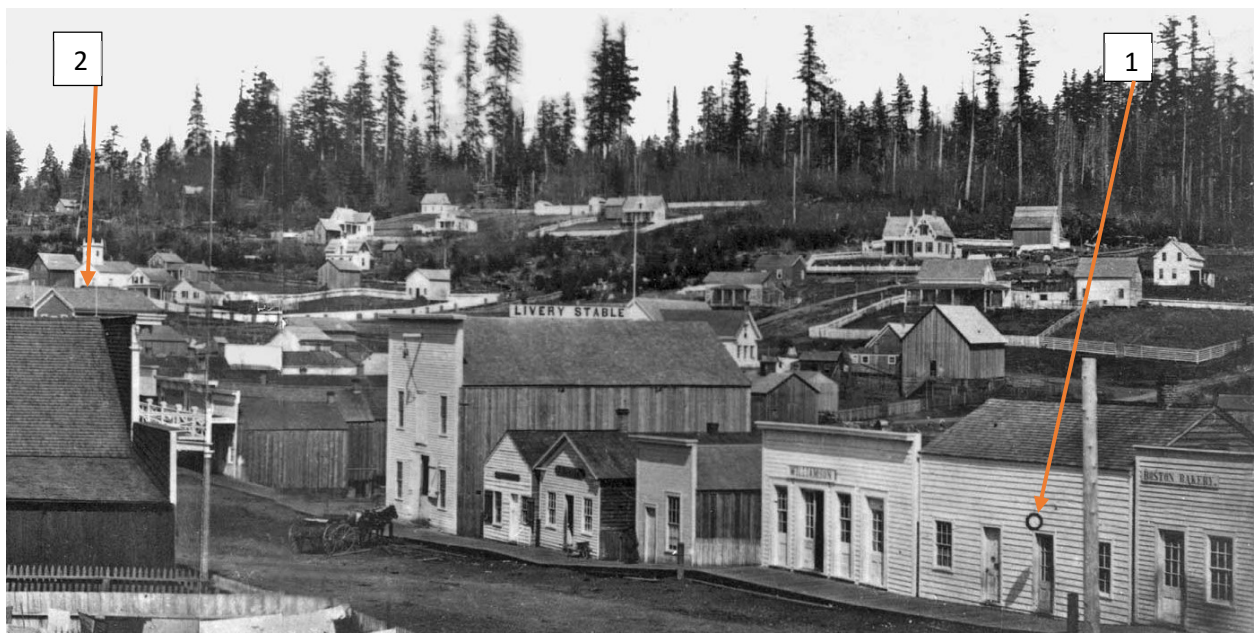


Fig. 1. This 1869 [image](#) of Seattle shows a watchmaker's sign on Commercial St.—probably the first watchmaker in town. The sign was not a functional timekeeper. (1) Seattle's first watchmaker. East side of Commercial St. between Main and Washington. (2) Masonic Hall on Front St. This was home to W.G. Jamieson and his brother, J.L. Jamieson for a few months in early 1878. From a panoramic Washington State Historical Society photo (1991.1) of Seattle 1869 by Robinson.

First Watchmakers

A photo from 1865 of Commercial St. shows the buildings pictured in [Fig. 1](#) but the watchmaker's sign is absent.^{1,2} The territorial capitol, Olympia, had one jeweler in 1861; Julien Guyot, a 35 year old Swiss immigrant.³ A Pacific Coast Directory for 1867 lists three watchmakers in the Washington Territory; two east of the Cascades in Walla Walla, then Washington Territory's largest town (population about 1400), and one in Port Townsend on the Olympic Peninsula.⁴ Port Townsend was a contender for the territory's principal seaport and railway terminus. Seattle was a frontier village with a population of 1107 in 1870,

less than 20 years after its first settlement by the Denny Party. By contrast, San Francisco, population 57,000, had 106 watchmakers and jewelers in 1860.

William G. Jamieson, a 25-year-old immigrant from Victoria, Vancouver Island, opened a jewelry business in September 1870. [Fig. 2](#). An 1871 Pacific Coast Business Directory lists George W. Parker and Leonard P. Smith as watchmakers and jewelers in Seattle. No addresses are given.⁵ Smith, age 56, was born in Maine. He, together with his wife and his 21 year son probably arrived before 1870 as did Parker. Either Parker or Smith could have occupied the location pictured above in 1869. See also the

1

W. G. JAMIESON.
WATCHMAKER
JEWELER AND ENGRAVER,
 FORMERLY OF VICTORIA, V. I.,
DESIRES to announce to the citizens of
 Seattle and Puget Sound, that he has
 opened business in
Seattle,
 On Commercial Street, one door from Mill St.,
 and respectfully solicits their patronage.
Watches, Clocks and Timepieces,
 of every description, carefully examined and
 repaired, and warranted for one year.
Jewelry Made to Order and Re-
paired.
LETTER AND SCROLL ENGRAVING
 Neatly and tastefully executed.
 All orders by letter or otherwise carefully
 and promptly attended to.
 Orders from Olympia and vicinity may be
 entrusted to Messrs. T. G. Lowe & Co.
 Address, W. G. JAMIESON,
 Commercial street, one door from Mill st.
 Seattle, September 24, 1870. 47:tf

2

W. G. JAMIESON.
WATCHMAKER AND JEWELER
 Commercial St., Seattle, W. T.
 DEALER IN FINE GOLD AND SILVER WATCHES, CLOCKS,
 JEWELRY, SILVERWARE, SPECTACLES, Etc., Etc.
 Watches Repaired and Warranted. Jewelry Made to Order.
 ENGRAVING NEATLY EXECUTED.
 A LARGE AND COMPLETE ASSORTMENT OF
 Elgin and Waltham Watches Always on hand.

3

CHARLES NAEHER,
 COMMERCIAL STREET, SEATTLE, W. T.
 The Only First-Class Jewelry Store
 ON PUGET SOUND.

4

L. P. SMITH,
WATCHMAKER, JEWELER & ENGRAVER
 MILL STREET, Next to Intelligencer Office, **Seattle, W. T.**
GIVES his personal attention to all work entrusted to him, and will guarantee
 satisfaction. **Jewelry Manufactured,** and MAHERSCHAUM PHES
 mounted to order at satisfactory prices. L. P. SMITH.

Fig. 2. (1) Jamieson's first advertisement appearing in an 1870 issue of the Olympia's *Washington Standard*. (2), (3), (4) Advertisements from the 1872 directory.

[1878 map](#)

Putting Seattle on the Map

Seattle literally was placed on the map in 1871 through the telegraphic determination of the town's longitude. The routine dissemination of telegraphic standard time signals would not become available for almost 20 years. Each community ordered business according to local time which was established by observing local noon which can be estimated by eye or more precisely by an optical instrument such as a sextant or transit. The arrival of railroads, scheduled steamer and ferry service and telegraphic communication sparked public awareness of time and brought the "public time era" to the Northwest.⁶ Men were carrying watches in increasing numbers and the commercial life of cities and towns was being conducted in accordance with the standard time for a whole region. Jewelers were the first to provide reliable and accurate local or standard time to the inhabitants of these towns.

Watchmakers could estimate local time but with an accurate longitude they could make a precise determination of local time or time at any other reference longitude through star observations. This was of real significance to ship's navigators in the harbor who were checking their chronometers; to the watchmakers who were repairing and rating chronometers; to railroad men and ferry boat men who were trying to operate trains and ferries to a schedule. The watchmakers disseminated time by [regulators](#) (precision pendulum clocks) or chronometers displayed in their shops. They sold pocket watches emphasizing their accurate timekeeping.

In August 1871 the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey established an astronomical station consisting of a brick pier and temporary shelter near Jackson and Front Streets about where [Occidental Park](#) is now.⁷ The station was equipped with a meridian transit instrument mounted on the brick pier. This was used for determining the latitude, the local time and checking the rate of a chronometer via star observations. Western Union provided a temporary telegraph connection so time signals could be exchanged with a similar station on Washington Square in San Francisco. The longitude of San Francisco had already been determined by extensive astronomical observations. The longitude difference between Seattle and San Francisco was determined by exchanging telegraphic local time signals over an extended period. Successful star observations and time signal exchanges were made on 12 nights. Forest fires throughout Oregon and the Washington Territory caused frequent loss of telegraph connections. The San Francisco observer in charge of the operation observed 602 transits of 81 stars on 38 nights.

Someone might have asked what the full extent of the country was because the next Seattle longitude measurement determined the difference between Seattle and Tatoosh Island. This was more likely motivated by the need for an accurate position of the Cape Flattery Lighthouse. The 1871 Jackson St. station had succumbed to urban development by 1886. So in May 1886 USC&GS Assistant J.J. Gilbert set up a new station on the grounds of the [Washington Territorial University](#) consisting of a "suitable building and instrument pier" from which the longitude difference of Tatoosh Island was determined.

Omaha marked the western extent of the national longitude net in 1884. The net reached the far west and Washington Territory first in 1887 when Salt Lake City was connected to Walla Walla. In the summer

of 1888, Edwin Smith, one of the Survey's most noted Assistants found the Seattle station established by Gilbert two years earlier, in good condition. He described it as "on the grounds of the university at the break of the hill sloping down to the art building". A series of exchanges that summer tied Seattle to the national longitude net via Walla Walla and Portland. Thus the Washington Territorial University (now the site of the Olympic Hotel) established the longitude reference for the triangulation of western Washington including our complex coastline and vital waterways.

Competing and Moving Around

An 1872 Puget Sound directory lists Smith on Mill St. next to the Intelligencer building. Parker moved to Olympia by 1872. Sometime after 1872 Smith moved his business out of Seattle for a short time but we don't know where. An 1876 newspaper ad says he moved back to Seattle. His business now, L.P. Smith and Son, was located on [Front St. in Reinig's Building opposite the brewery](#).⁸ Fig. 5. The son, Alfred A. Smith, now his father's partner, and his wife were living with his parents in 1880. The Smiths moved a

NEW ADVERTISEMENTS

THE OLD FIRM RETURNED.



**L. P. SMITH & SON,
Watchmakers
& Jewelers,**

Having returned to Seattle, have opened their
Store in
Reinig's Building,
Opposite the Brewery, with a full line of
**Watches, Jewelry,
&c.,**

Which they offer at very low prices.
We are prepared to do all kinds of Watch and
Jewelry Repairing and guarantee satisfaction.
CALL AND SEE US.
L. P. Smith & Son.
Seattle, September 29th, 1876.

**GRAND OPENING
OF
CHRISTMAS STOCK
AT
CHARLES NAEHER'S
NEW STORE,**

Largest and Finest Stock of
Watches, Jewelry, Clocks, Silver and Silver Plated-ware
Ever brought to Seattle, which will be sold at **EASTERN PRICES**, and which
defy **COMPETITION**. Each and every article **WARRANTED** as represented.
Also a line of **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** at the lowest figures.
Don't forget the name or place.
CHARLES NAEHER, on Mill street, next door to L. Reinig's.
Call early at my New Store before purchasing elsewhere.
CHARLES NAEHER.
Watchmaker & Jeweler.

**L. P. SMITH & SON,
Watchmakers
& Jewelers,**

Would respectfully announce to the people of Seattle and vicinity that they are constantly receiving
large additions to their desirable stock of
WATCHES, CLOCKS, JEWELRY, SILVERWARE,
&c., Suitable for the Holiday Trade.

We invite a careful inspection of our goods and prices, and we confidently assure our customers that
we make it a point to deserve their custom.
Goods sent to any part of the Sound by express, to the order of responsible parties.

All kinds of Jobbing and Repairing in our line promptly
and satisfactorily done.

We are always at home and glad to see our friends.
L. P. SMITH & SON,
(Opposite the Brewery.)
FRONT STREET, - - - Seattle, W. T.

Fig. 3. Above: Seattle Daily Intelligencer Dec. 11, 1876

Left: Daily Intelligencer Sep. 29, 1876

few yards south to [Sullivan's Block on Front St.](#) sometime before 1879 where they remained in business until 1887. [Figs. 6](#) and [Fig. 9](#).

William G. Jamieson and Charles Naeher (Naher) were both listed as jewelers in the same 1872 directory on Commercial St⁹. [Figs. 2](#), [Fig. 3](#), [Fig. 4](#). Jamieson immediately launched an aggressive advertising campaign. Naeher, a 43 year old German immigrant, left a jewelry business in St. Paul, MN. Both his sons worked for him, one as a clerk and the other a watchmaker. Naeher moved to [Mill next door to Rienig's Bakery in 1876](#). (Mill near Front), and into the [Yesler Leary Building on Mill St.](#) in 1883. He remained in business until his death in about 1890. His elder son became a vice president of Schwabachers, Seattle's first and for many years, premier department store and hardware wholesaler.



Fig. 4. (1) Charles Naeher on the east side of Commercial St. 1873.

(2) Masonic Hall on Front St. This was home to W.G. Jamieson and his brother, J.L. Jamieson for a few months in early 1878.

MOHAI photo 11365A

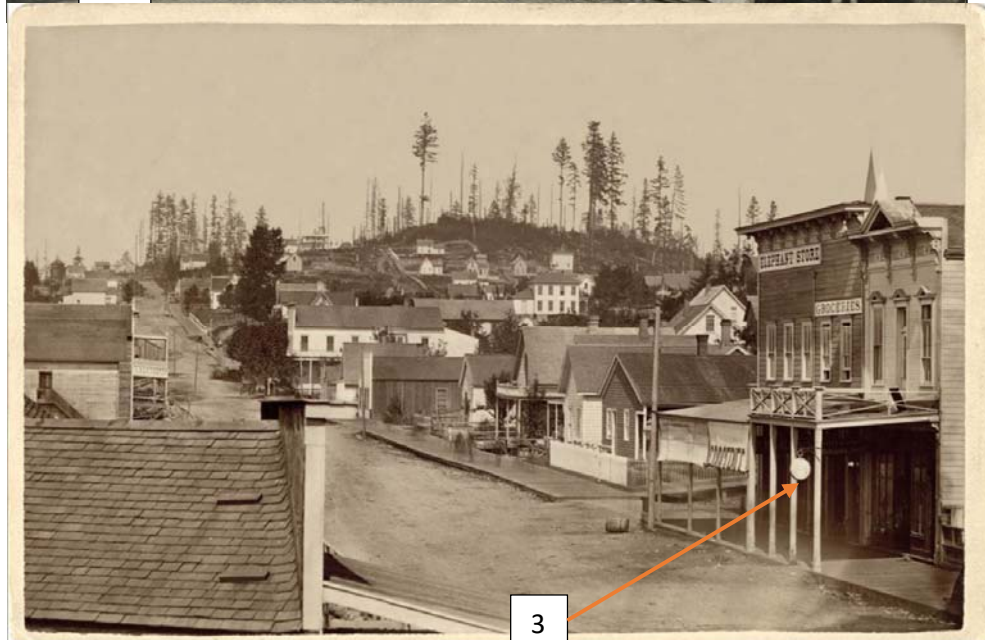
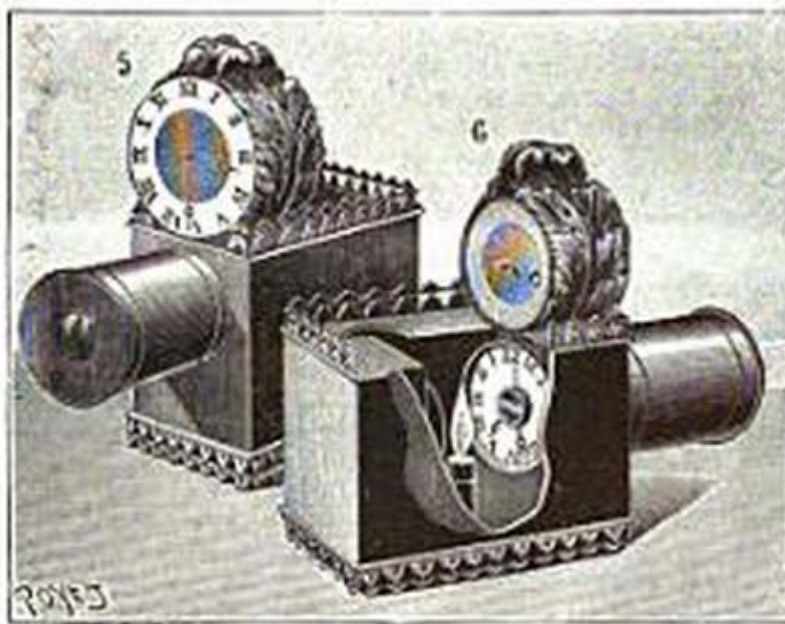


Fig. 5. Front. St. looking north. (3) L. P. Smith and Son on Front St. ca 1876.

MOHAI photo 1802.

Seattle's First Public Clock

Based on the size and number of ads (1876-1879), W.G. Jamieson tried to be the largest and most competitive jeweler. In 1877 he was occupying two brick fireproof stores on [the corner of Commercial and Mill Streets](#) with his "Jewelry, Music and Art Emporium" and claiming to be largest business of its kind north of San Francisco. He advertised a wide variety of goods in addition to jewelry, silverware, watches and clocks. These included books, stationary, musical instruments and agent for the Singer Sewing Machine Company. October 1877 found him posting notices pleading for people to pay their bills. In January 1878 he announced a move to the [Masonic Hall](#) on Front St. [Fig. 1](#). In February of 1878 the *Intelligencer* reported he had installed a "transparent magic clock" in his window with a reflector behind it and between them a calcium light. "It is the next best thing to a town clock that could have been devised." Jamieson went into receivership April 18, 1878 in spite of his innovative public timepiece.



Figs. 5 and 6.—LANTERN CLOCK.

Fig. 5.—External view. Fig. 6.—Details of the internal mechanism.

profile

Fig. 6. Jamieson's projection clock might have been a precursor to the magic lantern clock.
From *Scientific American* Jan. 5, 1895 p. 4

Time by Telegraph

William's younger brother, John L. Jamieson showed up on the pages of the *Daily Intelligencer* in June of 1876 advertising as a Book, Stationary and Tobacco store next to Schwabachers on Commercial St. November 1876 ads place him in Coleman's brick building, Mill St. [Fig. 7](#) An 1876-78 Pacific Coast Directory lists him as a jeweler on Mill St. January 1878 found him sharing quarters with his brother in the [Masonic Hall on Front St.](#) In May 1878 he ran a very interesting ad as a watchmaker and jeweler in [Wentzler's new building on Front St.](#) His specialty is in watch and jewelry repair. He states that "The true time is received daily by telegraph from the U.S. Signal Station and kept by a first class chronometer, enabling those having fine watches to have them accurately rated." This is the first indication I have of a jeweler using time by telegraph in Seattle and making it available to the public. This service was short lived. His last ads appeared in September 1878

U.S. Signal Stations were established as meteorological observatories. The Army's Chief Signal Officer reported that a station had been established in Olympia, W.T. in 1878.¹⁰ In 1870, the Signal Corps established a congressionally mandated national weather service. This included a network of weather observatories called U.S. Signal Stations. Some of the more famous included ones on top of Mt. Washington in New Hampshire and Pikes Peak, Colorado. By 1879 the Signal Corps had constructed, and was maintaining and operating, some 4,000 miles of telegraph lines connecting the country's western frontier.¹¹ The Signal Stations reported their results by this system. The Signal Service master clock telegraphed Naval Observatory Washington time signals to the Signal Stations, coordinating the observations.¹² Jamieson's is the first known example of these signals being distributed to private users. Note that this predates by several years the adoption of standard time zones or the routine distribution of time signals by Western Union.¹³

John Jamieson's last ad in the *Intelligencer* ran Sep. 27, 1878. An 1879 directory lists him as a jeweler on Cherry between Front and Second. The 1880 census finds both James and his brother, William working as watchmakers in Walla Walla, probably for Zebulon K. Straight Walla Walla's most prominent watchmaker.

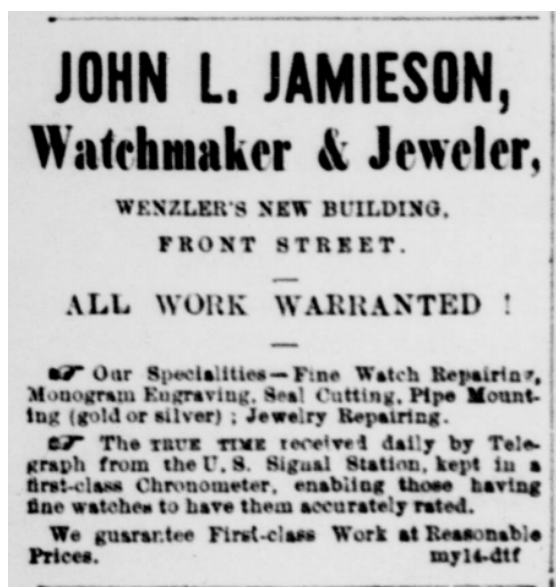


Fig. 7. Above: *Daily Intelligencer* March 30, 1877. Left: From *The Daily Intelligencer* May 15, 1878.

Jewelers from 1882-1889

Five jewelers were listed in 1876. Smith, Naeher and the Jamieson brothers had been joined by William Hanson specializing in repair only. Hanson disappeared within a year or two. The Jamieson's had both moved on by 1879. Seven jewelers were in business by 1882 and nine in 1884. Smith and Naeher also advertised as wholesale jewelers for the first time in 1884.

William H. Finck arrived in 1882 and opened a jewelry store on [Commercial St. opposite the New England Hotel](#). Finck was a 24 year old Canadian immigrant, son of a German father and Canadian mother. He was working as a jeweler in Oroville, California in 1880. Finck established a successful and long lived business. He would eventually install a street clock which stood in front of his store until he retired in 1913.

H.J. Requa, a 25 year old native of Wisconsin showed up first as a jeweler in 1882. He was in partnership with [A.E. Giering in 1884](#). By 1888 they went their separate ways; Giering in partnership with Charles O'Donnell; Requa in several locations. [Fig. 11](#).

The Yesler-Leary block, Seattle's most substantial pre fire commercial building, opened in 1883. It occupied the southwest corner of Mill and Front St. [Charles Naeher moved into the Mill St. side](#). Albert Hansen opened his jewelry store in 1884 on [Front St. in the Yesler Leary block](#). [Fig. 12](#). Albert was born (1857) and raised in Denmark of a German father and Danish mother. He and his two older brothers, Theodore and Rudolf, immigrated in 1879. All three were jewelers. They went first to California where the oldest brother, Theodore married and started a family. Albert never married. Hansen would install one of Seattle's first street clocks in 1890. He and Theodore opened stores in Spokane and Tacoma about the same time where they also installed identical Seth Thomas clocks. These stores did not survive the financial panic of 1893. They consolidated their business in Seattle which then grew into one of Seattle's largest and most well respected jewelry stores, continuing in business until 1930.

Time from the sun and stars

Gerhard Beninghausen, a German immigrant, worked for Kimball and Son upon his arrival in 1883 and established his own business in 1884. Beninghausen's first location was on the west side of Commercial between Washington and Mill. [Fig. 10](#).

Beninghausen was a serious watchmaker. He is the first Seattle watchmaker to repair and rate chronometers, an important service in a town that wanted to be a major seaport. He took daily observations of the sun and stars for local time. Telegraphic time was not routinely available in Seattle until about 1890. This underlines J.L. Jamieson's pioneering telegraphic efforts in 1878. [Fig. 8](#)

Beninghausen had a very successful jewelry business which he sold in 1905. His store front was distinguished by Seattle's only street time ball. A few years later he reopened as a watch and chronometer repairer and continued until his death in 1922.

A FINE WATCH

When repaired by a botch watchmaker will never keep time correctly. Then you will try another (so-called watchmaker) and your watch will be in a worse condition still, besides you are out a considerable amount of money. You will avoid all this trouble and your watch will be in perfect order when repaired and regulated by

**G. BENINGHAUSEN,
The Watchmaker.**

He keeps the only place adapted for fine watch repairing. Inquire first for the place before giving work to some one else. Chronometer repairing and rating a specialty. Observations taken daily by sun and star time.

Jal 8 3m

Fig. 8. From *Seattle Post Intelligencer* Feb 21, 1887

Jewish Jewelers in Seattle

Joseph Mayer arrived in 1883 at age 15. He would eventually found a wholesale jewelry and jewelry manufacturing company that would become the largest on the West Coast. His 1883 arrival in New York from Germany was just in time to take advantage of the Northern Pacific railroad's first connection to the Northwest, from St Paul, Minnesota to Portland and Tacoma. This event shortened a journey which might have taken weeks or months into one of a week or so. Mayer probably completed the journey either on a steamer from Tacoma or on the Puget Sound Shore Railroad.

Seattle was a brawling frontier village that had just passed Wall Walla to become the territory's largest town. It was well on its way to becoming a city of over 12,000 people engaged in lumbering, fishing, shipping and wholesale trade. Seattle saw 1000 new homes built in 1884. The city was riven with ethnic violence by the anti-Chinese riots in 1885-86. The territorial governor placed Seattle under martial law for a period. Lynching was not unheard of during this relatively lawless period.¹⁴

Joseph joined a Jewish community of 100 or so. Many, like himself, were German speaking from central Europe, some of whom were very successful entrepreneurs. These included Bailey Gatzert, manager of Schwabacher Brothers general wholesale and retail store. He became mayor of Seattle in 1875.¹⁵

Henry E. Levy, a 35 year old New Zealand immigrant, established a store on Commercial St in 1876. He called it "The Seattle Bazaar" specializing in glassware and pottery.¹⁶ An 1888 gazetteer lists him also as a jeweler. There is no indication that he was a watchmaker. Morris Abram, was a pawnbroker on Mill St. in 1882. Jacob Levy and his family make their first appearance in 1888 as a tailor and pawnbroker at 206 Commercial. His 19-year-old son, George F. Levy, was working as a watchmaker for Frisch Brothers Jewelers (Norwegian immigrants) in 1888 and then the following year for his father. George was apparently in delicate health and attempted suicide in 1891. He survived and worked periodically for Frisch Brothers and independently over the next several years.

None of these seem very likely as employers for Joseph Mayer who would have needed to continue his apprenticeship as a watchmaker. Charles Naeher and Gerhard Beninghausen were the only native German speakers with their own businesses that might have employed Mayer. Simon Rumpf, a German Jew, arrived in 1886 and worked a short time for Beninghausen. Rumpf would eventually become Mayer's ill-fated partner in his first independent enterprise as a pawnbroker and wholesale jeweler. Naeher was nearing retirement so Beninghausen seems the most likely to have taken Mayer in.

Joseph was joined by his younger brother, Albert, age 15, who arrived in Seattle July 1, 1888.¹⁷ The 1889 directory lists 12 watchmakers and jewelers and four pawnbrokers. Neither Joseph nor Albert appears in this directory.

Nathan Phillips, an orthodox Jew, age 23 arrived in Seattle in 1888. He is the first eastern European Jewish watchmaker that I can document in Seattle. An 1890 directory lists him as a "Peddler". In 1892 he is listed as a jeweler and in 1893 he is listed under Clocks, Watches and Jewelry at 207 Washington, just across the street from Rumpf and Mayer's Uncle Harris Pawnshop. (204 Washington). 1894 and '95 directories list him as Boston Loan Office at 214 Washington.

Phillips was apparently in the habit of taking a selection of watches and jewelry to the mining camps east of Seattle. June 29, 1896 found him on such a trip, staying at the Monte Cristo Hotel in Monte Cristo Washington. Monte Cristo, now a ghost town in eastern Snohomish County, was the first silver mining center on the western slope of the Cascades. By 1893 there were over 200 claims. John D. Rockefeller had bought up a controlling interest in most. The Monte Cristo Hotel and associated brothel was owned by Frederick Trump, the Donald's grandfather. A rapsallion named David Leroy approached Phillips at the hotel with a watch to repair and lured him to the outskirts of town with the promise to connect him up to someone who wanted to buy a watch.

As they approached Leroy's home, the thief demanded Phillips' satchel containing \$1000 worth of watches and jewelry. Before Nathan could comply, Leroy drew his gun, fired, knocking Phillips to the ground. Leroy shot him again, this time through the back. Witnesses later stated they saw Leroy and his brother heading for the high timber carrying a rifle and a brown satchel. Phillips, in very bad shape, was taken back to the hotel where he was given some rudimentary first aid for his injuries. The following day his brother and two doctors arrived by train from Seattle. Phillips was treated and returned to Seattle where he recovered at Providence Hospital.

The hotel landlord retrieved Phillips blood stained vest where he found the watch given to Phillips by Leroy. It had stopped the first bullet, saving Phillips life. The newspaper account described Phillips as standing high among the merchants of Seattle with a most excellent reputation among the Jewish citizens. They noted he had been in the loan business for the past four years.

Phillips moved his business to 106 Occidental in 1898. He married Johanna Brooks, the daughter of the first rabbi of the Bikur Cholem congregation, that same year. Bikur Cholem, the first orthodox synagogue in Seattle, was dedicated in 1898.

Nathan Phillips passed away at age 38, June 11, 1903. He left a family. He had been in poor health for some time probably aggravated by his near death experience in Monte Cristo. His business continued at 821 1st Ave. A number of pocket watches survive with his name on the dials and movements.

City directories for 1890 and 1891 show Joseph, now 21, working as a watchmaker for [Augustus Franklin, a pawnbroker, at 204 Washington St.](#), just around the corner from Albert at [207 3rd Ave.](#) The directory entries for both imply that they were living at the same address they worked. Franklin appears only in the 1890 and 1891 directories and disappears the next year.

Albert was working for ["M. W. or M. M. Fredrick" at 207 S. 3rd Ave.](#), rooming at the same address. Morris M. Fredrick is listed as a jeweler rooming at that address. Morris, also a German Jew, was born in 1837, immigrated in 1853 and by 1880 was living in Virginia City, Nevada, listed as a jeweler. He married Anna in 1859 and they had a son, Marcus W. born in 1863.¹⁸ Morris and his family moved on to San Francisco where he became a manager for Will and Finck, well known manufacturing cutlers. The 1891 directory lists Marcus W. Fredrick (Fredrick and Co.) at 207 3rd, still boarding at the same address. Morris was probably dividing his time between San Francisco and Seattle. He was still listed as a Vice President of Will and Finck in 1896.¹⁹ A 1909 Seattle Times social page report of his 50th wedding anniversary refers to him as a pioneering Seattle jeweler who arrived in the city in 1889.²⁰ His son, Marcus may have

managed Fredrick and Co. for the first few years, eventually returning to San Francisco where he was listed in 1909 as an “oculist and aurist”. This is consistent with the family memories of Janet Levy, Albert Mayer’s granddaughter, recorded in 1972. Her grandmother, Leah, used to talk about her grandfather learning watchmaking from Mr. Fredrick. She stated that her grandfather became a fine watchmaker.²¹ Morris Fredrick was the first really successful Jewish jeweler in Seattle. He moved to 2nd Ave. in 1894, taking over a store with a Howard street clock which had come to the city the year before.

Joseph and Albert Mayer are among the first Jewish watchmakers to arrive in Seattle that I can identify. Both probably received some apprentice training in Germany before emigrating and then completing their apprenticeships in Seattle. They went on to found a great jewelry manufacturing and wholesale house in 1897.

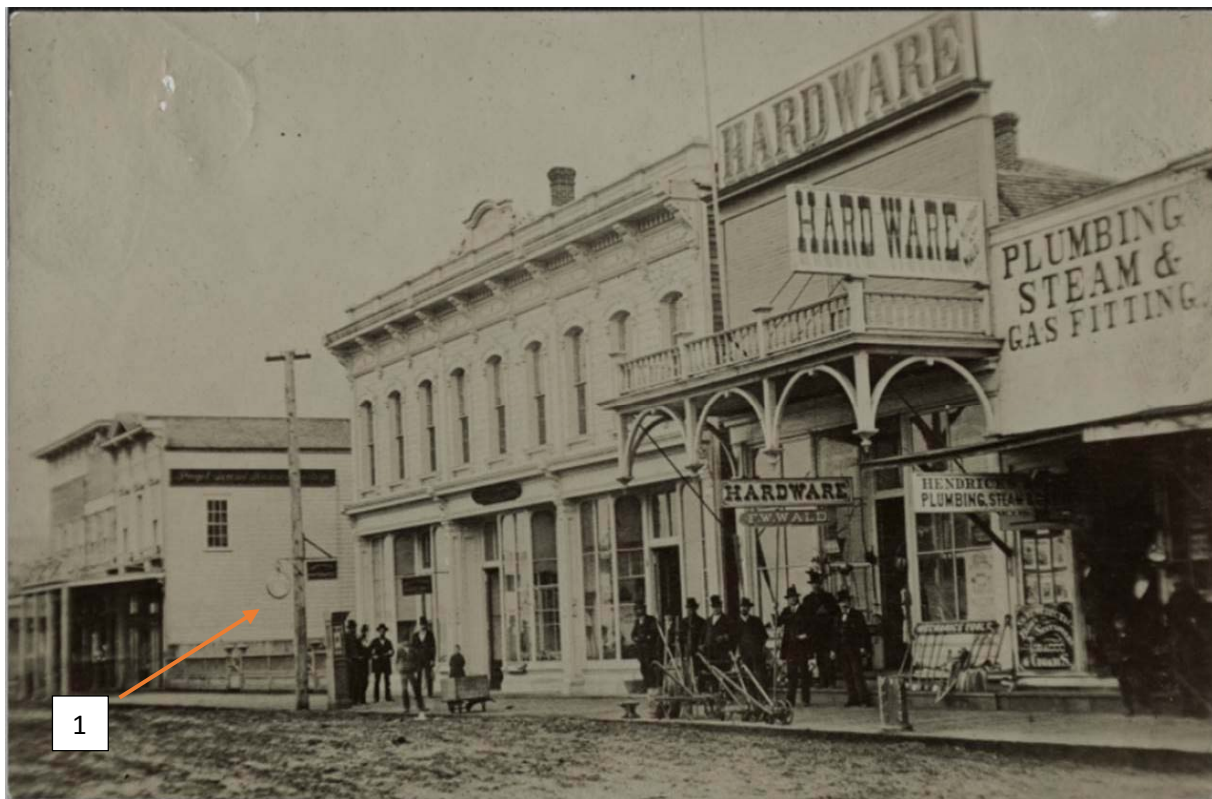


Fig. 9. East side of Front St. between Cherry and Columbia. Ca 1882 (1) L. P. Smith and Son in the Sullivan Building. Smith's watch sign is sharing the pole with George Moore, Seattle photographer's sign. MOHAI photo 11141 B.



Fig. 10. South on Commercial 1884. This is probably Gerhard Beninghausen's first location in Seattle on the west side of Commercial next door to Schwabachers, Seattle's first and foremost department store style wholesaler and retailer. MOHAI photo 10623



Fig. 11. Above: West side of Front St. ca 1884. Chicago Boot and Shoe at 613 Front. (1) Requa and Giering Jewelers at 609 ½ Front St. MOHAI photo 11141A Below: Similar view looking north ca 1886. (2) Requa & Giering. MOHAI photo 486.





Fig. 12. Yesler Leary Building ca 1886. (1) Charles Naeher on Mill St. (2) Albert Hansen on Front St. [MOHAI](#) photo 5559. The Yesler Leary Building was completed in 1883.

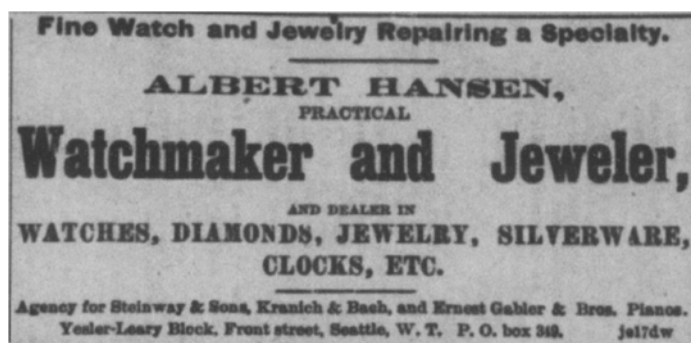


Fig. 13 Detail from Fig. 12. This shows Albert Hansen's shop. The ad at left from an 1886 *Daily Intelligencer* notes that Hansen was an agent for Steinway pianos. The clock sign on the right is associated with his shop too.

The First Tower Clock in Seattle

Only one actual public clock greeted Joseph Mayer upon his arrival in Seattle. [Seattle's Central School](#), the largest public school in the Washington territory, was completed in 1883.²² It sported a four dial tower clock of unknown make. There is no record of it in E. Howard Clock Co., Boston or Seth Thomas, Thomaston, CT records. These two companies supplied the vast majority of public clocks across the country after 1870. The school burned in 1888 and the building which replaced it had a tower with dial like openings but no clock. It would be almost twenty years before Seattle saw its next tower clock. [Fig. 14.](#)



Fig. 14 Seattle Central School. The city's first truly public clock. Completed in 1883 and burned in 1888. [MOHAI](#) photo 10653

Fig. 15. Howard 2 dial street or post clock as installed by Z. K. Straight, Walla Walla in 1889. This model clock would play a major role in bringing public time to post fire Seattle. It would also inspire Joseph Mayer to produce his own version.



Distributing Standard Time in Walla Walla

The earliest standard public time in the Washington Territory was probably supplied to the citizens of Walla Walla by Zebulon Kenyon Straight, one of the most prominent jewelers in the Territory. Straight opened his business in 1870 after training as a watchmaker in Minneapolis. On April 16, 1884 he ordered a top of the line clock from Nordman Brothers, a San Francisco agent for the E. Howard Clock Co.²³ This was shipped from Boston, completing its journey via the Northern Pacific Railroad. The line had just been completed the previous year, connecting St. Paul, Minnesota to the Washington Territory and Portland. The clock was a Model No. 61 regulator, standing over seven feet tall in an imposing carved black walnut case [Fig. 16](#). The movement was fitted with jeweled pallets and a temperature compensated, mercury pendulum. The glass door proudly proclaimed “City and Railroad Time”. An 1889 catalog lists this clock for \$350 plus shipping. . Routine telegraphic time signals from the Naval Observatory would not be available for several more years. Straight must have used a small telescopic transit instrument and calculated local time based on sun and star sights. He would then correct these observations to the meridian for the Pacific Time Zone.

Straight was the first in the Washington Territory to add a two dial post or street clock to his business on Walla Walla’s Main Street. [Fig. 15](#). He chose one from Seth Thomas’ principal rival, E. Howard Clock Co. Boston. Ordered May 18, 1889, the first street clock in Washington cost \$300 delivered from the Chicago office of E. Howard via the Northern Pacific.²⁴ [Fig. 14](#). Later that same year Washington became a state with Zebulon K. Straight as a member of the first state legislature

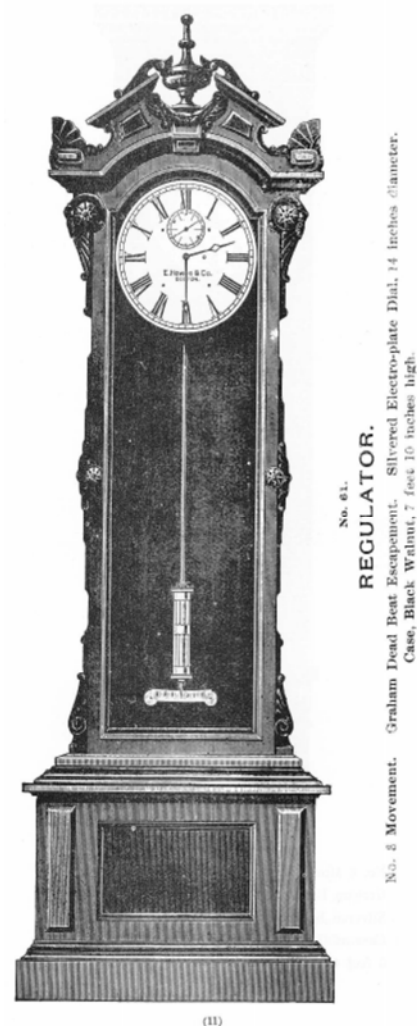


Figure 16. Howard No. 61 Jeweler’s regulator as purchased by Z.K. Straight in 1884. From a ca 1890 Howard catalog.

Conclusion

Seattle’s first jewelers are an interesting mix of mature, experienced and probably well capitalized men and young entrepreneurs. Smith and Naeher both were in business with their sons. They survived the national financial crisis of the 1870’s and continued until retirement in the late 1880’s. Smith’s son continued in business for a short time and then disappeared. Naeher’s oldest son became a vice president of Schwabachers. The Jamieson brothers never seemed to be in business together except for a short period when they shared premises in the Masonic Hall. William used extravagant advertising and apparently stocked a wide variety of goods including sewing machines and musical instruments. He was probably too generous in extending credit and went into receivership. That he and his brother were

competent watchmakers would be attested to by their eventual employment with Zebulon K Straight, Walla Walla's leading jeweler.

The second wave of jewelers arriving in the 1880's included several who would survive the great fire, June 6, 1889. The early history of Seattle is starkly divided by this event. By the morning of June 7, the fire had burned 25 city blocks, including the entire business district, four of the city's wharves, and its railroad terminals. 1889 found 12 jewelers in business. Seven remained in business following the fire. Among these were William Finck, Albert Hansen, Gerhard Benninghausen and W.W. Houghton, all of whom grew into substantial businesses lasting well into the 20th century. They also all eventually had street clocks obtained from Joseph Mayer. The rapid recovery and complete rebuilding of Seattle's commercial center in durable brick and stone attracted craftsman and entrepreneurs. The number of watchmakers and jewelers listed doubled from 16 in 1890 to 32 in 1891.

Among the young jewelers working in Seattle before the fire was one Thomas J. Carroll, born in Beaver Dam Wisconsin and trained as a watchmaker in Buffalo, N.Y. He came first to Port Townsend and then to Seattle in 1888, attracted by a weekly wage for watchmakers of \$19 per week, double what he could make in New York State. These wages illustrate the imperative many young watchmakers felt to establish their own businesses. Carroll worked for G.G. White and Co. who had just opened their business at 708 Front St. Barely a year later, alerted to the approaching fire, he packed a piano crate with watches, diamonds and jewelry, loaded it on a buggy and took it up the hill out of reach of the flames. Despite Carroll's effort White disappeared from the scene shortly after the fire. By 1895 Carroll had saved \$200, enough to open a tiny, one showcase store.^{25, 26} His business prospered and the family continued it throughout the 20th century. His street clock, made by Joseph Mayer in 1930, became a Seattle downtown icon and is now preserved at the Museum of History and Industry.

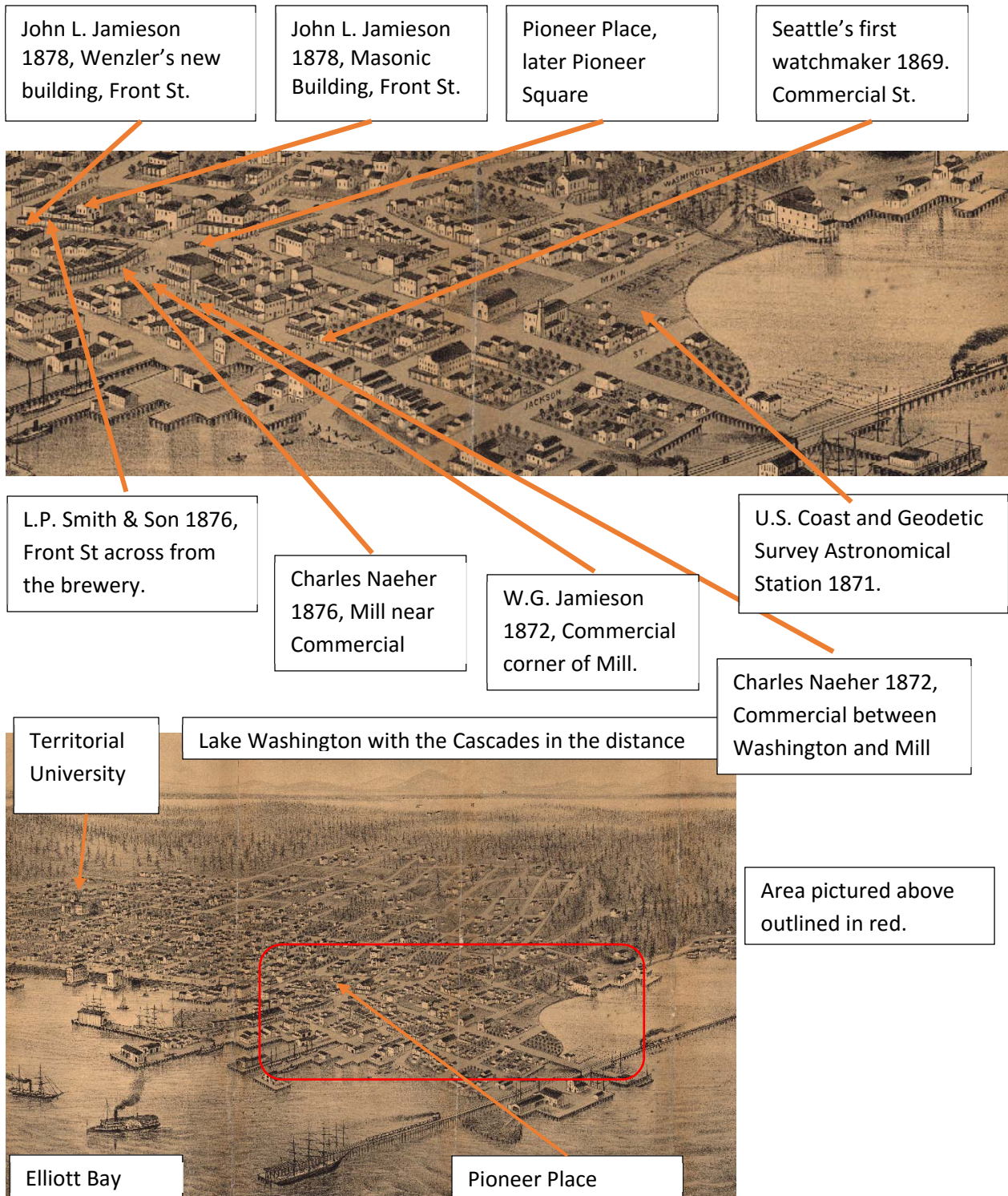
Joseph and Albert Mayer survived the fire, teaming up to bring public time to the streets of the West in the next century. Morris Fredrick remained the most prominent Jewish jeweler, retiring in 1909. Many of Seattle's great jewelry houses were founded by Eastern European Jews in the first quarter of the 20th century. These included Burnett Brothers, Friedlander's, Weisfield and Goldberg and Ben Bridge. The Ben Bridge chain remains with 85 stores throughout the western United States.

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I would like to thank Ron Edge, Seattle historian, for bringing several of these pictures to my attention.

Seattle 1878²⁷

Front St. became First Ave. Commercial St. became First Ave. South. Mill became Yesler. Pioneer Place became Pioneer Square.



Seattle 1884 Jewelers and Watchmakers.²⁸

L.P. Smith & Son,
Front St. near Cherry,
1879.

Requa & Giering
609 ½ Front
1884

Albert Hansen 1884
Front St. Yesler
Leary Bldg.

Occidental Hotel on
Pioneer Place; Pioneer
Square after the 1889 fire.



Charles Naehrer
1883, Mill near
Commercial,
Yesler Leary
Building

Gerhard
Beninghausen 1884
West side
Commercial
between
Washington and
Mill

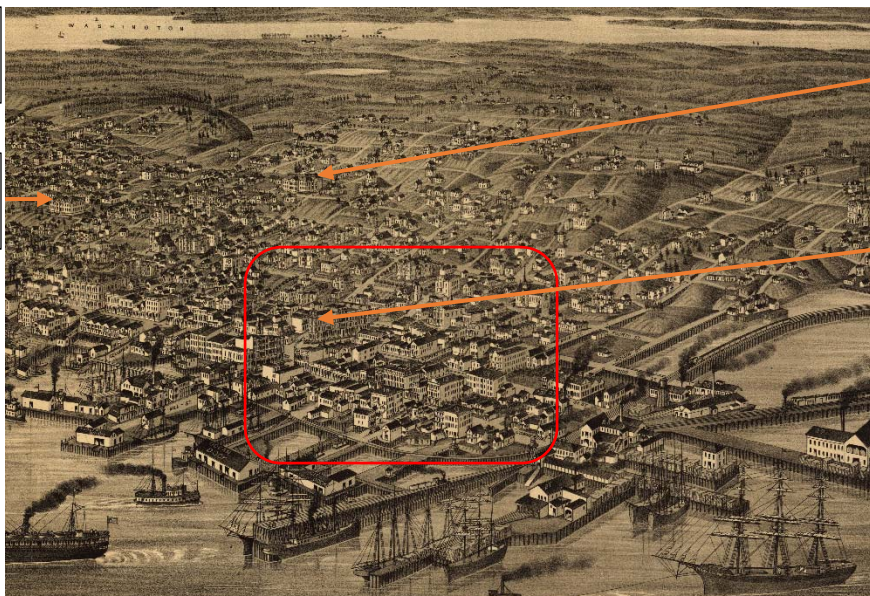
Wm. H. Finck
1882
Commercial
opposite New
England Hotel

Augustus
Franklin 1889
204
Washington
Joseph Mayer

M.W.
Fredrick
1889 207 3rd
Ave. Albert
Mayer

Lake
Washington

Territorial
University



Central
School. The
first tower
clock 1883.
6th & Marion

Occidental
Hotel on
Pioneer Place.
Area pictured
above
outlined in
red.

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- ¹ M.L. Sammis Panorama, 1865, <http://pauldorpat.com/2009/06/25/seattle-waterfront-history-chapter-six/>
- ² A numbered key to Sammis Panorama. The building was identified as Welsh & Greenfield Clothing in 1865. <https://sherrlock.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/kellog-sammis-pan-numbered-keyweb.jpg>
- ³ *Washington Standard*, Olympia, W.T., March 5, 1864
- ⁴ *Pacific Coast Business Directory*, Henry G. Langley, San Francisco, 1867, p. 550 https://archive.org/stream/cihm_17457#page/n823/mode/2up
- ⁵ *Pacific Coast Business Directory*, Henry G. Langley, San Francisco, 1871. P. 388 Ron Edge reference.
- ⁶ McCrossen, Alexis, *Marking Modern Times, A History of Clocks, Watches and other Timekeepers in American Life*, University of Chicago Press. This book provides an excellent overview of the origins and consequences of an awareness and synchronization of public time.
- ⁷ *Report of the Superintendent of the U.S. Coast Survey During the Year 1871*, Washington, 1874 p. 63
- ⁸ *Daily Intelligencer*, Seattle, Sep. 28, 1876
- ⁹ Puget Sound Directory and Guide to Washington Territory 1872, Murphy & Harned, Olympia, "First year of publication"
- ¹⁰ Report of the Chief Signal Officer to the Secretary of War, Reports of the Secretary of War, 1879, p. 80. Station at 47° 2' N., 122° 56' W. in the second floor of the Granger Building corner of Main and Fifth Streets.
<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435062856117;view=1up;seq=86>
- ¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signal_Corps_\(United_States_Army\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signal_Corps_(United_States_Army))
- ¹² Bartky, Ian *Selling the True Time*, Stanford, 2000, p. 101
- ¹³ Private communication with Professor Alexis McCrossen, Southern Methodist University.
- ¹⁴ Web site: HistoryLink.org Essay 1965
- ¹⁵ Cone, Droker, Williams, *Family of Strangers*, Washington State Jewish Historical Society, 2003
- ¹⁶ *Morning Oregonian*, Portland, OR, Sep. 12, 1888
- ¹⁷ U.S. Passport Application for Albert Mayer 1906
- ¹⁸ U.S. Federal Census 1880 and 1900
- ¹⁹ *Polk's San Francisco City Directories*
- ²⁰ *Seattle Sunday Times*, September 19, 1909
- ²¹ Interview with Janet Levy Feb. 15, 1972 Manuscripts & Univ. Archives Div. University of Washington Libraries
- ²² http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=10482
- ²³ Howard Records digitized by National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors (NAWCC) Series 7 Clock Orders 1881-1887, p. 85. McCrossen (p. 122) mistakenly assigned this order to Nordman Brothers who were San Francisco agents for Howard. The order makes it clear that the clock was destined for Z. K. Straight, one of Washington Territory's first jewelers.
- ²⁴ Howard Records Tower Clocks Series 1 1888-1901, p. 16
- ²⁵ *Seattle Sunday Times*, June 23, 1935

²⁶ Brazier, Dorothy Brandt, *Time Marches on for the Carroll Family*

²⁷ Glover, E.S., Birds-eye View of the City of Seattle, 1878, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division

²⁸ Stoner, J.J., Madison, WI, Birds-eye View of the City of Seattle, 1884, Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division