

# A Very Rare and Important Collection of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Swiss Clocks and a 17<sup>th</sup> Century German Predecessor



Derek Roberts in *"Mystery, Novelty & Fantasy Clocks"* and Alfred Chapuis in *"L'horlogerie Une Tradition Helvétique"* reported on a series of Swiss novelty/mystery clocks made in Geneva in the 1920 – 1930 period. The clocks have been attributed variously to Gubelin, Alfred Hof, HAST (H. Arnold & Steinwachs) and several others. It is clear however that the enamellists at Arnold & Steinwachs should be credited with the elegant cases, both Alfred Hof and Gubelin should be credited with the designs, and Gubelin and a few other high-end jewelers were retailers. The earliest and most frequent designs featured a rotating cupid riding on a sea shell and pointing to the time on a horizontally mounted dial. Chapuis reports that more than fifty of the clocks were created and dispersed throughout the world. The estimate is supported by a recently discovered photo album that depicts fifty-six of the clocks (the album was very likely created by an enamellist at HAST who appears in one of the photos).

Since 2000 a number of the clocks have appeared in shops and auctions in Geneva, New York, Hong Kong, London, Frankfurt, Sydney, Amsterdam, Chicago, Los Angeles and Lisbon confirming the world-wide interest. The current collection includes eight of the clocks, including several of the most significant examples of the genre.

The original H. Arnold and Steinwachs photo album is included in the collection.





*A rare and charming Swiss table clock, stamped Plojoux Geneve, circa 1920, no. 57549, 4 1/2 X 5 in.*

This is one of the earliest examples of the carved ivory cupid on a gondola rotating on a mirror simulating an alpine lake. The circular enameled silver case has a blue enamel dial above, a painted enameled center section and another enameled band below. Separating the enameled areas are cast silver borders and the whole stands on four cast feet. It still retains the original Moroccan leather presentation case and key.



The enamel midsection depicts a landscape scene with Lake Geneva and the Alps, along with a charming scene of a horse-drawn carriage racing through the woods with Cupid sitting on the baggage rack.



The blue enamel dial has cream colored Roman numerals with gilt edges for the hours, bright stars for the half-hour markers and smaller stars for the quarter-hour markers. In the center, mounted to a mirror is a carved ivory cupid standing in a silver gondola with a gilt-silver spear with a hook that indicates the time as the clock runs. The silver bottom plate is bordered by a wide light-blue engine-turned band and has several stamps that include, '935, Plojoux, Swiss and 57549.



*A very rare Swiss table clock, stamped Alfred Hof, circa. 1920, no. 57938, 5 X 5 ½ in.*

*“Lac Lemman”* was designed by Alfred Hof and is the earliest example of the use of something other than a carved ivory figure. It features a custom designed 2-masted silver sailing ship mounted to the mirror; the bow of the ship points to the time on the horizontal dial with Roman numerals for the hours and markers for the quarter and half hours. The enamel case is bordered above and below by silver rings and four cast silver legs.



The translucent enamel scene on the case depicts several scenes of Lake Geneva including the vista in the area of Montreux, with Château de Chillon on the lakefront and the prominent peaks of Rochers-de-Naye in the background.

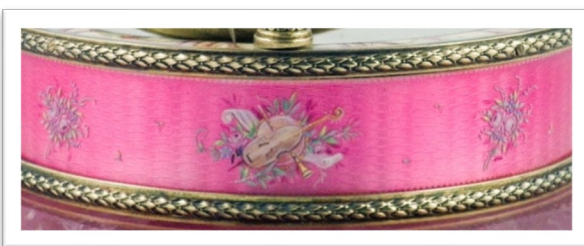
The bottom plate is stamped by the designer ALFRED HOF, SWISS. The rudder of the silver sailing ship is further stamped “JvDH”, the mark of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch silversmith Jan van Dyck of Hoorn. This is a one-of-a-kind piece and appears in the photo album from the workshop of H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Geneva. With original Moroccan leather carrying case.

Ref.: HAST Photo Album



*An elaborate Swiss table clock with cupid rotating under a dome, designed by Gubelin, Lucerne, circa. 1920, no. 58011, 10 ½ X 6 in.*

The pink guilloché enamel case is decorated with floral bouquets, musical instruments, butterflies, etc. Above and below the side panel are gilt laurel rings. The case is mounted on an octagonal concave-sided base of polished rose quartz. The guilloché enamel dome is supported by four gilt silver fluted columns with Corinthian capitals. The dome is topped by a decorative gilt finial and has similar decorations as the side panel. Framing the dome is a silver and enamel ring with an inlaid geometrical pattern. The cream-colored and pink-shaded enamel dial has Roman numerals for the hours, pink rose buds for the half-hours and an inner ring with pink symbols for the quarter hours. Mounted to the mirror in the center is the familiar carved ivory figure of cupid in a gilt silver seashell carrying a hooked silver spear and pointing to the time on the enamel dial. The underside of the dome is hallmarked and stamped, "Gübelin" "Lucerne" "Swiss" "58011".



Ref. There is a full-size photo in the HAST Photo Album.



***“Commedia dell’ Arte”, a rare Swiss table clock, stamped Juvenia, La Chaux De Fonds, circa. 1920, no. 58058, 4 1/2 X 5 1/2 in.***

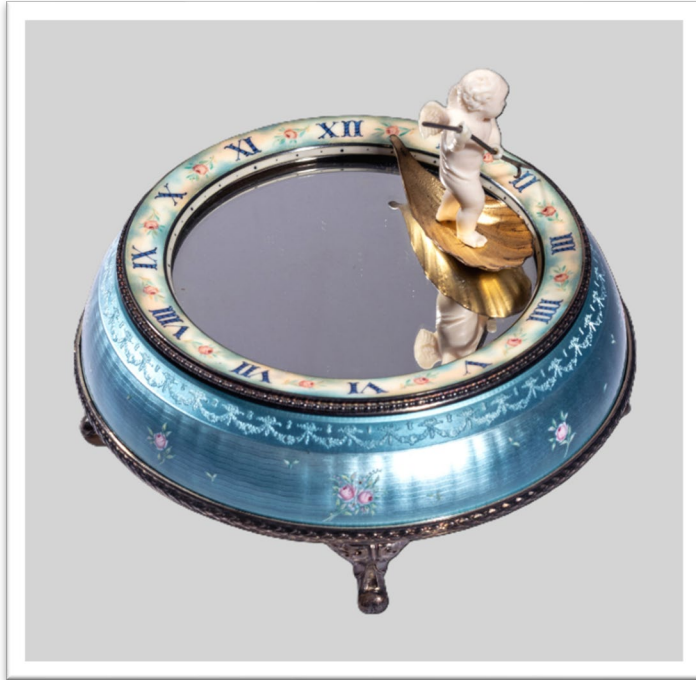
The convex-sided enameled center section is painted with ladies in crinoline dresses and classic Commedia dell’ Arte figures on the shores of Lake Geneva. The revolving mirror carries the cupid mounted to a seashell and indicating the time with a spear on the horizontal dial with blue Roman numeral hour markers and pink rose blossoms for the half hours, and an inner ring with markers for the quarter hours.



The case is stamped with serial number 58058', and signed: "Ateliers Juvenia a La Chaux-De-Fonds Suisse et a Paris Fab. Suisse", further signed "Juvenia Mfg. Swiss". This is a superb example and is featured with 5 photos in the photo album from the workshop of H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Geneva.

Ref:

1. *“Mystery, Novelty & Fantasy Clocks”* by Derek Roberts, p. 86, Fig. 8-7
2. HAST Photo Album.



**A rare and elegant Swiss table clock, stamped HAST Geneve, circa 1925; no. 58133, 5 X 5 ½ in.**

This is a very elegant example of the carved ivory cupid mounted to a silver gilt seashell rotating on a simulated lake and pointing to the time with a hooked silver spear. The cream-colored dial is painted with blue Roman numerals for the hours and floral sprays for the half hours; an inner ring has markers for the quarter hours.



The translucent blue guilloché enamel case is decorated with rose groups and hummingbirds. The case is bordered above and below with silver rings and is mounted on four silver legs. The case is stamped HAST SWISS.

Provenance: Halim Time & Glass Museum, Evanston, Illinois

Ref. HAST Photo Album



***A rare Swiss table clock, stamped  
A l'Emeraude Lausanne, circa  
1920, no. 57569, 4 3/4 X 5 1/4 in***

This is one of the more elaborately decorated cases with the familiar carved ivory cupid mounted to a gondola rotating on simulated lake and pointing to the time on the enamel dial painted with blue Roman numerals for the hours and floral sprays for the half hours.



The case is bordered above and below with gilt silver rings and is mounted on four cast silver legs.

The translucent blue guilloche enamel mid-section is painted with floral wreaths and elaborate cameos depicting romantic scenes.



The serial number on the case indicates that this was among the earliest examples of the genre.



**A monumental Swiss table clock, by H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Genève, circa. 1929; no. 58767, 18 X 10 ½ in.**

**“Piece Monumentale” (ref. 1)** is the masterpiece of the series of table clocks made by H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Genève in the 1920s. Chapuis (ref. 1) describes a “truly monumental work” featuring two large swans and two smaller ones rotating to display the hours and minutes. The dial is mounted at the center of a simulated lily pond. A temple is mounted above the dial and encloses a superbly sculptured group of Bacchante seated on a pedestal holding a winged cupid by her side. The temple dome is supported by seven fluted silver-gilt columns with lotus-form capitals and is overlaid with translucent midnight-blue

enamel decorated with four floral and fruit vignettes, representing the four seasons. Alternating gold and blue enamel bands and a lapis-lazuli acorn-form finial highlight the dome. In a very unusual feature, the dial is painted one through twelve twice so that it can be read correctly from either side of the clock. The dial is painted with Roman numerals for the hours, with five-minute numerals and one-minute markers below, and with gold bands above and below the dial. Two sets of ivory swans mounted on gilt cantilevers rotate and point to the time on either side of the clock. The adult swans’ beaks indicate the hours simultaneously on both sides; the cygnets indicate the minutes. The lily pond below is simulated by a stationary green enamel disc painted with gold floral groups. A scallop-edged gilt-silver ring encloses the pond. Below, the drum-form case conceals the clock mechanism.



The sculptured ivory group is enclosed in the recess of the blue enamel temple. The Greco-Roman high priestess of the good life, Bacchante, is seated on a pedestal with a cupid by her side. Bacchante studies a cluster of grapes in a classic pose while the cupid by her side reaches for the grapes. Bacchante wears a floral crown and her hair is tied with a ribbon which is draped over her shoulders. Bacchante's robe is draped over her legs and over the pedestal below; a tambourine is partially visible from the folds of her robe. The sculpture is supported on a bisque porcelain base. The sculptural detail is exquisite and is perhaps inspired by "*Bacchante portant un petit faune*" by Jean-Joseph Foucou in the collection of the Musee Cognac-Jay, Paris.



The enameled side of the case is decorated with an astronomical motif including stars, constellations, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and various astrological symbols en-grisaille on a midnight blue background. A winding key in the form of a chased silver-gilt laurel wreath is mounted to the rear. Eight tapered fluted columns support the clock above an octagonal marble platform with center opening for access to the movement. The platform stands on eight fluted gilded feet below.



The case bears a number of concealed identifying stamps including: “HAST” (the trademark of H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Genève); “Geneve”; “Suisse”; the usual standing bear and silver hallmarks; “3 Mai 1929”; and the serial number 58767.



The movement is additionally stamped “Mechanisme par P. R. Jaccard Genève 1928”.

Exceptional original condition throughout; ht.45 cm, w.26 cm (18 x 10 ½ in.). The original glass dome and wood base are intact.

Provenance: Collection of a Swiss family, 1929-2013; Collection of an American family 2013 – present. It was imported with the approval of the controlling U.S. and Swiss authorities; CITES certificate is available.

Reference:

1. *“L’horlogerie Une Tradition Helvétique”*, by Alfred Chapuis, Neuchatel 1948, page 230.
2. HAST Photo Album



A very rare and important Swiss table clock, by H. Arnold & Steinwachs, Genève, circa. 1928, no. 58803, 8 ¼ X 4 ½ in.

*“L’automne”* is a superbly-painted artistic reproduction of the picnic scene from Nicholas Lancet’s *“L’automne”* which hangs in the 18<sup>th</sup> century galleries at the Louvre, Paris; and is signed by the enameller, "E.O.Bischoff - d'après N. Lancet". Above and below the midsection are alternating chamfered quartz and lapis gemstones bordered by bands of blue enamel and silver beading. The framework and stylized feet are silver.





The white enamel dial is mounted horizontally. It has blue Roman numerals for the hours and blue Arabic numbers for the five-minute marks. The carved ivory figure of a Swiss gentleman in formal dress is mounted to the silver disc in the center and revolves to point to the minutes with his staff; a separate gold marker indicates the hours. The silver base stands on four fluted and tapered silver feet and is stamped "Gubelin, Lucerne". The original Moroccan leather case is included.

Ref. HAST Photo Album



**A rare 17th century gilt metal figural horizontal table clock with striking, German; 6 ½ X 4 ½ in. (forerunner of 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss Novelty Clocks)**

The standing female figure holds an engraved clock dial in her raised right hand; the left hand holds a pointer against the silver chapter ring engraved with Roman numerals and fleur-de-lis half hour markers. The center of the dial is decorated with three Biblical scenes, comprising Moses and the Brazen Serpent, the Sacrifice of Isaac and Jonah and the Giant Fish. The base is mounted with three patinated cherubs and supported by three turned brass feet. The movement strikes on the hour with a single bell mounted below.

