



It's About Time By: Kathleen D. Saviers

Many of us own a few wristwatches, have any number of clocks in our homes and vehicles, and observe time as rigid and structured. We depend on knowing the correct time so we arrive at appointments on time, are able to catch the football game on television, and to leave work at the proper time. This was not always the case.

In 1826, a new town clock was installed in New Haven, Connecticut. Most people didn't have watches or clocks. The other source of public time was the clock in the tower at Yale College. Soon after installation, the new town clock fell behind Yale's clock by up to fifteen minutes. Then, over the year, it began to speed up, gaining that lost time and fifteen minutes more, but then losing it again.

What was discovered was that the town clock was constructed to observe "mean time," while the Yale clock measured "apparent time" which is based upon the irregular movements of the earth and sun, the same as is noted on a sundial. The difference between these styles of clocks was plus or minus fifteen minutes, four times each year.

Because there was no standard of time, other problems began to happen. In 1843, on Election Day in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, the polls were to officially close at 7:00 PM. But, when was that exactly? The factory clock had been used as the point of reference, but few thought it was accurate. The clock in front of the local jewelry store showed 8:20 PM. The bartender at the local hotel said the time was 9:00 PM. An individual said his personal clock read 7:15 PM. A watchmaker criticized the factory bell as being 15 minutes faster than his sundial. Of course, the losing politicians made the most of this confusion by asking that the election be declared invalid due to votes being

accepted after the official close of the polls.

There have been several examples of factories adjusting their clocks to get another thirty minutes of unpaid work from their employees. Since most employees at that time did not own wristwatches, they did not realize this.

By the late 1800s, when railroads were expanding their coverage, there was the additional problem of "local time." Because there was no standard of time set by any regulating body, towns and cities were allowed to select their own local time. The time between two relatively close cities could vary by ten, fifteen, twenty minutes or more. The railroads published timetables indicating "railroad time" and "local time" for each city on the route.

It was the railroad companies that pushed for a national standard time. They proposed a standard time style based upon Greenwich Time with divisions of one hour for every fifteen degrees of longitude resulting in four time zones across the United States.

While some embraced this concept, others challenged it. Legal battles ensued. The Supreme Courts of various states had to hear arguments regarding standard time at least fifteen times between 1883 and 1915. There were trials in New York and California as late as 1917.

The bottom line of all this is that the United States has agreed upon standard time for less than one hundred years. Many of us cannot even imagine what it was like without standards of time. Looking back, it seems so ludicrous. How could the nation have existed without recognizable standards? The answer was "they couldn't," so they created the standard.

On a smaller but no less im-

portant scale, the Crime Scene Certification Board is trying to do the same thing, by defining standards and recognizing those who meet them. Started in 1989, the IAI Crime Scene Certification Program recognizes three levels of expertise: Crime Scene Technician, Crime Scene Analyst, and Senior Crime Scene Analyst. Each has an increasing series of education and training requirements and has a written examination, increasing in comprehension of more complex topics for each level. It is not an easy process to complete and not every one who applies is successful. Some law enforcement agencies include a certification requirement in the employment process and some will pay the application fee for their employees. For the complete requirements and an application, please visit the IAI web site: www.theiai.org.

In five or ten years, being certified could become the standard. In twenty years, maybe we will look back and wonder in amazement that the United States could exist without these standards of professionalism. If you are a Crime Scene Investigator and are not certified, isn't it **about time** you considered it?

Examples and data on time from: O'Malley, Michael, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time*, New York, Penguin Books, 1990.

For application forms and more information about the IAI Crime Scene Certification Program and other IAI certification programs, go to www.theiai.org.

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