

NO YANKEE GINGERBREAD MACHINE

Perth's Town Clock



(Photo courtesy of the Town of Perth)

When the town fathers of Perth convened on the evening of Monday April 25, 1864 *“there was not much business before the Council”*, but there was one item of interest. *“A motion was brought up by Mr. Doran to purchase a Town Clock ... but the motion was thrown out, the majority of the Council thinking that the clock should be purchased by subscription of those who wished to see a clock on the Market House”*.¹

Undeterred, John Doran (1825-1892)² raised the matter again when council met two weeks later, tabling a motion, seconded by councillor Robert Allan (1815-1868)³, that *“the Market Building Committee be instructed to purchase a Town Clock, and have it placed as soon as possible in the tower of the Town Hall, the cost thereof not to exceed \$400”*.⁴ That initiative met with no greater success however, going down to defeat on a tie vote of 5-5 with Mayor John Graham Haggart (1836-1913)⁵ casting a nay vote.

¹ *Perth Courier*, April 29, 1864.

² John Doran (1825-1892), Perth merchant, insurance agent.

³ Robert Allan (1815-1868), shoemaker.

⁴ *Perth Courier*, May 13, 1864.

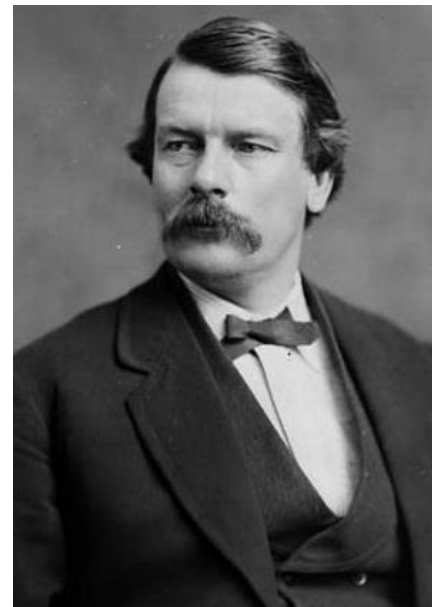
⁵ John Graham Haggart (1836-1913), Mayor of Perth 1861-1864 & 1871-1872, MP for Lanark South 1872-1913, including stints as Minister of the Post Office Department and Minister of Railways and Canals.

As a compromise, councilors supporting the scheme proposed that the new Town Hall, then nearing completion, be inaugurated *“with a concert, by which at least one fourth of the required amount [for a clock] would be raised, and that Council should make provision for the remainder. [But] this reasonable proposition was rejected also, Messrs. Botsford⁶, Douglas⁷, Kippen⁸, Cox⁹ and Haggart, determinedly opposing everything having in view the object of providing the Town with an article that everybody needs, and which nine-tenths of the ratepayers are willing to be taxed for”*.¹⁰

Still, the issue would not go away. When council reconvened for its June meeting, a town clock was once again the center of debate. Councillor Kippen, who had twice voted against the proposal, told the meeting that he had reconsidered and *“decided to support it as, on enquiry, he found that he would be consulting the wishes of the people of the Town by so doing”*. This gave Doran’s motion a majority, and it carried *“with the understanding that its cost was not to exceed \$400”*.¹¹

Councillor Robert Douglas (1818-1886), who had opposed the initiative from the outset, protested that *“a good clock could not be had for the sum named in the resolution, but that instead of a good and durable article, some “Yankee gingerbread machine” would be put up, which might go for a year or two, at great expense, and then it would have to be “thrown away” as useless trash”*.¹²

Kippen’s defection to the ‘yeas’ infuriated Mayor Haggart who declared the motion *“... an illegal transaction ... and stated his determination to veto the vote of the Council by refusing to sanction the expenditure of the money necessary to get the clock, and to suspend any municipal officer concerned in the transaction”*.¹³ Councillor Allen put forward a motion urging that the mayor should at least *“call a public meeting of the ratepayers of Perth to ascertain their views”*¹⁴, but even that compromise failed by the same count as defeated Doran’s original motion. Commenting upon the mayor’s extraordinary threats, the *Perth Courier* observed,



**John Graham Haggart (1836-1913),
Perth Mayor 1861-1864**

⁶ William Jarvis Botsford (1814-1900), merchant.

⁷ Robert Douglas (1818-1886), a local carpenter, Douglas was Mayor John Graham Haggart’s father-in-law (father of Caroline Douglas-Haggart (1842-1900).

⁸ Duncan Kippen (1831-1926), a building contractor in partnership with his father Alexander Kippen (1803-1893). In 1864 Alexander Kippen & Son were completing construction of Perth’s new Town Hall.

⁹ John Cox (1841-1897), carriage maker.

¹⁰ *Perth Courier*, May 13, 1864.

¹¹ *Perth Courier*, June 3, 1864.

¹² *Perth Courier*, June 3, 1864.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

We do not know what power the Mayor has in such matters, but as Mr. Haggart has before assumed powers that the law did not confer upon him¹⁵, we are at present somewhat inclined to doubt his ability to carry out the extraordinary threat of ruling the Town against the will of a majority of its representatives. The Council having passed a motion to provide the Town with a clock, the people have a right to expect that the clock will be placed in the tower with as little delay as possible.¹⁶

The *Courier* editor was of course correct, Doran's motion, supported by the majority of council, stood and could not be vetoed by Haggart. The *Courier* also thought, however, that "*for \$400 a first class article, from the best makers can be procured and erected*"¹⁷, but on that count Councillor Douglas was proven correct. The price of a serviceable town clock would far exceed the \$400 so grudgingly allocated by council and, although the *Courier* urged "*as little delay as possible*", ten years would pass before a clock chimed in the cupola of Town Hall.

When the Municipal Corporation of the Town of Perth was created in 1854¹⁸ it was assumed that "*the first thing which will probably occupy the attention of the new Councillors will be the erection of a Town Hall. This will be absolutely necessary, as the corporation will have no longer a right to occupy the County Building, except by permission of the County Council*". Nevertheless, Perth's municipal council continued to meet in the County Court House for a decade before finally undertaking construction of a 'Market Building' that would also house Town Hall functions. It was not until March 1863 that Town Council instructed architect John Power (1816-1882) of Kingston, to design a building of,

80 ft. X 44 ft. with accommodation on the ground floor on one side for Council Chamber, Clerk's Office and on the other side, a Post Office, with two rooms in rear for use of Postmaster. Above, a large hall 76 ft X 40 ft. In rear of main building another stone building, giving in the basement three rooms for the Market Clerk, three cells for male prisoners and one for females ... above, two anti-rooms on one side and a large room on the other. The walls of the Market Building are to be built of stone, giving accommodation for 12 stalls.¹⁹

¹⁵ Under the rules of the Municipal Act a tied vote was 'lost'. Nevertheless, a few months earlier, in electing a Reeve and Deputy Reeve, when Mayor Haggart cast a vote that created a tie vote, he still declared his preferred candidates duly appointed. The *Perth Courier* editorialized that Haggart "*exercise[s] his fancied right of doing as he pleases and overrule[s] the decision of a majority of those elected by people of Perth to manage their public affairs. Mr. Haggart is endeavoring to rule the Town with a minority of its representative; he knows that he is violating the law and directly insulting the people by doing so ... the question to be resolved then is – will Mr. Haggart retract of his own accord, or will the people have to put a better man in his place at the next election*". Less than two months later, Haggart's high-handed conduct of municipal affairs led to his resignation (July 29, 1864). Although he gave as his reason a plan to "*leave Perth Permanently*", that move never came to pass (except to the extent that he was elected a Member of Parliament in 1872, serving through 1913).

¹⁶ *Perth Courier*, June 3, 1864.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ From the end of British Army governance in 1822 until 1854 the community had been administered as a rural village within the Township of Drummond.

¹⁹ *Perth Courier*, March 6, 1863.

Although Council disputes over purchasing a town clock would go on for years, a clock was, in fact, part of the original building scheme. The architect's instructions of 1863 included the requirement that "... the roof will be so framed so as to admit of a tower being erected for the purpose of having a clock for use of town placed therein".²⁰



Perth Market Building / Town Hall c1890

The contract for construction of the Market Building was awarded to Alexander Kippen & Sons²¹, with Samuel Bothwell (1825-c1900)²² appointed by council to superintend the project. Work got underway in the spring of 1863 and the new Market Hall, topped by a cupola clock tower, was completed in August 1864. Installation of the clock was expected "to take place shortly"²³ thereafter but procurement and installation of a clock was soon stalled by the realization that a suitable timepiece would cost not \$400, but in excess of \$1,000.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Alexander Kippen (1803-1893) and son Duncan Kippen (1831-1926). Duncan Kippen was also a sitting Councillor in 1863.

²² A Perth contractor, who built St. James Anglican Church in 1861, the County Jail in 1862, and St. Andrews Hall in 1864.

²³ Perth *Courier*, June 10, 1864.

Informed and uninformed estimates of the cost discouraged progress on the project, and it was not until December 1870 that the first formal quote was secured. Through the auspices of local watchmaker John H. Howarth (b.1831), "*J. W. Benson*²⁴, of London, England, the celebrated church and turret-clock manufacturer" provided an estimate of about \$800 for "*a turret-clock suitable for the Perth Town Hall buildings ... with four dials, each four feet in diameter ... [including] the cost of carriage and setting it up in its place in the cupola*".²⁵

There was little immediate action, however, and it was not until the summer of 1873 that an effective fundraising effort got underway. In early August the *Perth Courier* could at last report that,

*The subscription list for the purchase of a town clock is growing daily, and the product already funds up to a handsome figure. We may mention that the clock which it is proposed to get, will have four illuminated glass dials, will strike the quarter as well as the hours, and is furnished with a bell weighing 1,000 lbs., capable of being heard at a distance of two miles from the Hall. The weight of the clock themselves will pull down the beam at 400 lbs.*²⁶

A week later, \$435 had been pledged to the fund. By mid August the total had risen to \$510 and at the end of the month to \$555.00. In addition to the subscription campaign the clock fund was boosted by a share in proceeds from several 'penny readings'²⁷ and, on October 22nd, by a fundraising concert of local amateur talent at the Town Hall – the Perth Brass Band, performers on violin, piano and harmonium and singers performing solos, duets, trios, and quartets. The audience numbered 400, and proceeds amounted to \$100. Another concert, by professional opera singer M^{lle} Rosa D'Erina²⁸, raised nearly \$17.00.

With the fund growing steadily, when Town Council met at the end of the month Mayor James M. Millar (1842-1889)²⁹ placed the 'clock question' back on its agenda,

... observing that the subscription list was growing handsomely, and now footed up to \$555.00. He expected at least \$600 and perhaps \$700 towards the price would be raised in this manner, and he trusted the Council would act as liberally to aid the project as private parties had done.

²⁴ J. W. Benson Ltd., clockmakers, London, England, founded 1847, obtained Royal patronage 1879. The firm became a limited company in 1897 continuing to date, a subsidiary of Mappin & Webb Ltd, a member of Sears Holdings.

²⁵ *Perth Courier*, December 9, 1870.

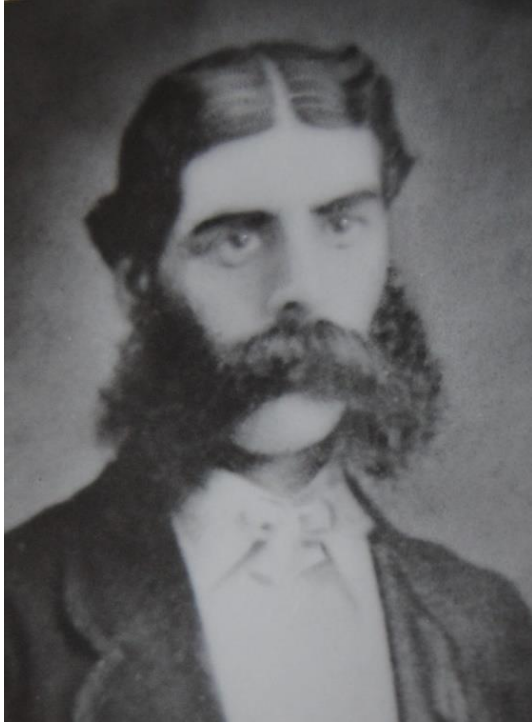
²⁶ *Perth Courier*, August 8, 1873.

²⁷ Penny readings were a popular public entertainment in the mid to late 19th century, consisting of readings and short performances. Traditionally, an admission of one penny was charged, but by the 1870s admission to penny readings at Perth amounted to five cents. Proceeds from Perth penny readings were usually dedicated to the welfare projects of local churches, but in 1873-1874 the clock fund was included for a share.

²⁸ Rosa D'Erina (1848-1915) was born Rose Anna O'Toole. Known as the 'Irish prima donna' she was an Irish soprano, pianist, and organist and "vocalist by command to the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Irish court". She had emigrated to Canada in 1870.

²⁹ James Morton Millar (1842-1889), Mayor of Perth in 1873 and 1874, was the manufacturer of 'Venus' sewing machines and brother-in-law of former Mayor John Graham Haggart.

Moved by Messrs. Kippen and McLeod³⁰, that Messrs. Hall, McLaren³¹, McLeod, Douglas, and O'Brien³² be a committee to cooperate with the Mayor in the purchase of a Town Clock, and report at the next meeting of Council the probable cost of the same; and the amount likely to be asked from Council.³³



**James Morton Millar (1842-1889),
Perth Mayor 1873-1874**

When, after some further delay, the Clock Committee tabled its findings in October 1873, their report showed *“they had examined the several specification and diagrams of town clocks submitted to them”* and recommended ordering a clock, through local watchmakers G. Northgraves & Son³⁴, from Howard & Company of Boston³⁵ at *“the probable cost of \$1,100, of which \$610 had already been raised by private subscription, an amount that would likely be increased to \$800. The clock ordered was to have four dials, including one illuminated, with a bell weight of 800 pounds”*.³⁶ The bell would be supplied by the Meneely Bell Foundry of Troy, New York³⁷. The committee’s recommendations were adopted for action.

The clock and its bell arrived at Perth in December 1873 and on January 9th it was reported that *“workmen are now engaged in putting it up and getting into operation. The four dials have been placed in their proper receptacles in the tower and now stare the town straight in the face to the north, east, south, and west. As yet the hands point to four different times a’day, and the truth is not in them. The bell, which weighs 822 pounds, has also been hoisted in its place.”*³⁸

³⁰ William McLeod (1811-1890), tinsmith.

³¹ John A. McLaren (1831-1901), distiller.

³² William O'Brien (1818-1895), manufacturer of and dealer in boots, shoes, and leather goods.

³³ Perth *Courier*, August 29, 1873.

³⁴ William Northgraves (1846-1908).

³⁵ E. Howard & Co., a clock and watch company formed by Edward Howard (1813-1904) and Charles Rice in 1842. The business originally limited itself to the building of mantel clocks, but expanded to watches, and later to tower and street clocks.

³⁶ Perth *Courier*, October 3, 1873.

³⁷ The Meneely Bell Foundry was established in 1826 at West Troy (Watervliet), New York, by Andre Meneely. After his death his two sons continued to operate the foundry while a third son opened a second foundry across the Hudson River in Troy, New York, in 1870. Between 1826 and 1952 the Meneely foundries produced about 65,000 bells. The Perth bell seems to have come from the Troy factory.

³⁸ Perth *Courier*, January 9, 1874.

A Mr. Frieland from Howard & Company supervised installation and calibration of the instrument and set it to “*railway time*”³⁹ at noon on Friday, January 16th. At last, the *Courier* could crow that “*The new celebrated Town Clock is in full working order and regularly tolls, the quarters and hours throughout the live-log day and night*”.⁴⁰

The final invoice totaled \$1,370.64. The largest part of that amount was paid for by the citizens of Perth through the public fundraising campaign⁴¹. The balance came through in April 1874 when Town Council finally approved release of its \$400 contribution -- funding that had been agreed to exactly 10 years earlier through Councillor John Doran’s motion of April 1864.



The 1874 Meneely Co. Bell



Town Clock c1890 – Note the Gore Street face is white for illumination by coal oil lamp.

Over the following years the Town Clock was subject to some modification and adjustment. For reasons unexplained, the coal oil lamp that (faintly) illuminated the front-facing dial was not lit until January 1875. At about the same time “*blinds for the tower*” were installed “*adding greatly to the appearance of the structure, they greatly improve the tone of the Town Clock bell and add much to its sound*”.⁴² In 1880, the 1,200-pound weights that powered the quarter-hour striking mechanisms were removed “*for the safety of the public*”⁴³. The weights hung directly above the Council Chamber and some councilors thought them a danger. The clock was floodlit with electric light in 1939 “*which not only makes the clock faces visible but have a very pleasing effect*”.⁴⁴

³⁹ In the early 19th century, each town and village had its own ‘time’, usually based on solar noon at their own location. With the expansion of railway networks around the world the need for accurate scheduling, to avoid accidents and publish reliable timetables, became paramount. In 1840 the first standardized railway time was established in England, fixed on the time at London. A similar system was applied in the early years of Canadian railroads, with time fixed on Montreal -- so railway time at Perth in 1874 was Montreal time. But as the rails stretched further and further from Montreal, that time came into increasing conflict with the reality of daily activities in communities hundreds and thousands of miles away. The problem was resolved in 1884 by CPR Director Sir Sanford Fleming (1827-1915) who created the standard time zones we know today.

⁴⁰ Perth *Courier*, January 16, 1874.

⁴¹ Numerous accounts touching upon the Town Hall clock credit Mayor James Morton Millar with paying all or most of the cost of the clock from his own pocket. No evidence supporting these accounts has been found.

⁴² Perth *Courier*, February 5, 1875.

⁴³ Perth *Courier*, February 22, 1880

⁴⁴ Perth *Courier*, October 6, 1939.

The 1874 Howard & Company clock served Perth for 83 years until it was replaced in 1957, at a cost of \$9,787.26, by an electronic clock manufactured by International Business Machines (IBM). As had been the case in 1874, the new clock was purchased through a local firm, Doug Cavers' Jewelry⁴⁵. The IBM clock was considered,

... the most modern and up-to-date equipment in use today ... The four dials are about five feet across. Twelve, three, six and nine are designed with a circle while two, three, four, five, seven, eight, ten and eleven are marked with a stroke. The dials are illuminated from the inside and are covered with a glass face, which protects them from the weather elements.

The clock is supplied with Westminster chimes and the quarter hours strikes four notes, on the half hour six notes, on the three-quarter hour, twelve notes and on the hour, sixteen notes, followed by an hour bell. The striking system can be heard for two miles. The clock is supplied with chimes without the expense of installing bells and can also be adopted for use as a signal system such as air-raid siren, all clear, etc. with only the addition of the proper control place.

Another advantage of this system is that all setting of the tower clock is done at the master clock which is situated in the Clerk's office. In the event of a power interruption the clock carries on for a period up to four hours."⁴⁶

When the 1874 clock was replaced in 1957, the old 800 pound bell, proving too heavy to move except at great expense, was left in the cupola and, although unused, remains in its place to this day.



In the photo on the left, Tim McCulloch, Town of Perth Superintendent of Parks & Facilities, is seen in the Town Hall cupola with the electronic clock that replaced the IBM model in 2004. This most recent clock was supplied by Smith of Derby Clockmakers Ltd.⁴⁷, of Derby, England.

⁴⁵ C. Douglas Cavers (1922-2009).

⁴⁶ Perth Courier May 30, 1957.

⁴⁷ Established 1856, <https://www.smithofderby.com/>

TOWN CLOCK DONOR LIST

August 1, 1873

James Gray	\$ 50.00
R. J. Drummond	\$ 50.00
Hugh Ryan	\$ 25.00
Shaw & Matheson	\$ 25.00
F. A. Hall	\$ 15.00
James Allan (Hotel)	\$ 10.00
A. E. Seeley	\$ 10.00
Henry Taylor	\$ 10.00
J. D. Kellock M.D.	\$ 10.00
John Hart	\$ 10.00
J. Bower & Co.	\$ 10.00
Berford & Elliot	\$ 10.00
William Hicks	\$ 10.00
Henry Moorehouse	\$ 10.00
James Cameron	\$ 5.00
H. B. Wright	\$ 5.00
Robert Lillie	\$ 5.00
R. Williams	\$ 5.00
Thomas Hicks	\$ 5.00
H. L. Slack	\$ 5.00
G. L. Walker & Brother	\$ 5.00
T. Enright	\$ 5.00
Thomas Scott	\$ 5.00
Henry Allan	\$ 5.00
Charles Rice	\$ 5.00
Edward Kennedy	<u>\$ 5.00</u>
	\$315.00

August 15, 1873

Estate of Hon. R. Matheson	\$ 25.00
Illegible	\$ 15.00
Radenhurst & Douglas	\$ 10.00
Edward G. Malloch	\$ 10.00
G. A. Gamsby	\$ 10.00
Arch. Campbell	\$ 10.00
Rev. R. L. Stephenson	\$ 5.00
Hogg & Pink	\$ 5.00
George Butler	\$ 5.00
Wm. Meighen	\$ 5.00
D. Glossop Jr.	\$ 5.00
Ryan & Devlin	\$ 5.00
James Dick	\$ 5.00

W. Grand M.D.	\$ 5.00
J. F. Kennedy	<u>\$ 5.00</u>
	\$125.00

August 22, 1873

Judge Malloch	\$ 15.00
Sheriff Thompson	\$ 10.00
J. T. Henderson	\$ 10.00
John A. McLaren	\$ 10.00
Rev. W. Bain D.D.	\$ 5.00
Thomas Brooke	\$ 5.00
Robert Howden, M.D.	\$ 5.00
G. Northgraves & Son	\$ 5.00
H. C. Rugg, M.D.	\$ 5.00
George A. Consitt	<u>\$ 5.00</u>
	\$ 75.00

August 29, 1873

Canada Belt Company	\$ 20.00
Alex McLaren	\$ 5.00
Jno. Laurie	\$ 5.00
T. C. Weatherhead & Co.	\$ 5.00
M. R. Dodds	\$ 5.00
P. M. McDermott	\$ 5.00
James Smith	\$ 5.00
Robert Gemmell	<u>\$ 5.00</u>
	\$ 55.00

October 24, 1873

Amateur concert at Town Hall	<u>\$100.00</u>
	\$100.00

November 14, 1873

Abraham Code MP	\$ 10.00
William Doran	\$ 5.00
James Allan	\$ 5.00
Rev. Dr. Chisholm	\$ 5.00
Rev. Dr. Bain	\$ 5.00
P. H. Walker	\$ 5.00
J. G. Campbell	\$ 5.00
J. Rudd	\$ 5.00
Jas. F. Baker	\$ 5.00
G. Northgrave & Son	\$ 3.00
John Lister	\$ 4.00

John Cox	\$ 2.00
W. H. Grant	\$ 3.00
J. Baillis	\$ 2.00
Hugh Robertson	\$ 2.00
Geo Kerr	\$ 2.00
A. L. Farland	\$ 2.00
G. Dunner	\$ 2.00
Charles Meighen	\$ 2.00
W. Cryderman	\$ 2.00
D. Kellock	\$ 2.00
Thomas Cairns	\$ 2.00
Patrick Spence	\$ 1.00
Isaac Allan	\$ 1.00
William. J. Dennison	\$ 1.00
James Laurie	\$ 1.00
Mrs. Gordon	\$ 1.00
R. Matheson	\$ 1.00
F. Hall	\$ 1.00
M. Stanley	\$.50

Mrs. Woods	\$.50
John O'Brien	<u>\$.25</u>
	\$ 87.25

April 3, 1874

Town of Perth	<u>\$400.00</u>
	\$400.00

June 10, 1874

M'lle Rosa D'Erina Concert	<u>\$ 16.88</u>
	\$ 16.88

Other

Penny Readings & Other	<u>\$ 196.51</u>
	\$ 196.51

Grand Total	<u>\$1,370.64</u>
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- *Ron W. Shaw (2023) with assistance from Brent McLaren, Tim McCulloch, Kathryn Jamies, Archives Lanark.*