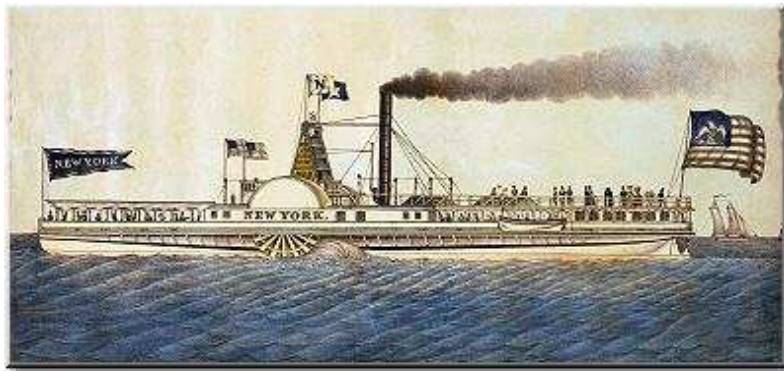


## Not a Restoration.... But Preservation....



Sometimes one is called upon to offer their services and they don't exactly match the ones that we specifically are trained for or are generally called upon for. Such is the case with this particular job.

I was contacted by an individual who was interested in seeing if two watches that she and her husband uncovered buried in the sand and under some 50 feet of water in the Gulf of Mexico could be restored into working condition. The site was the wreck of the S.S. New York. I was immediately intrigued and inspired. What student of history would not be intrigued by an artifact submersed in the ocean for over 150 years?

Once the package arrived, I was excited to say the least....but with trepidation. Upon examination of the two watches, it was clear that the salt water had done all it could do to render the two pieces irreparable. All steel parts were literally rendered "mush". Financially, it was not prudent to take the job on by either myself or my customer. After lengthy deliberation, it was determined that the best option was to preserve the watches in an "as found" condition. One of the watches had, prior to my request for assistance, had been cleaned and disassembled. The other watch, a continental verge escapement fusee, was left as it was found on the ocean floor.

The following images offer what went into the shadow boxes that have become part of the collection destined for the museum in Galveston, TX.



## *The Fateful Hour*

The above ladies pocket watch was discovered at the site of a ship wreck, The S.S. New York in 2010, in the Gulf of Mexico. The ship, a luxury, 160 foot steam powered vessel, left Galveston, Texas at 4:00 PM on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1846 with 53 passengers and crew. Hours later, the ship was faced with a hurricane and by 2:00 AM the engine stalled. Within a couple of hours the ship sank taking with her the lives of 17 people. The survivors managed to hang onto debris for two days before being rescued.

The watch is a continental gold cased verge fusee. It was likely made in the 1830's - 1840's in France. It is unsigned so no maker could be identified. All steel parts vanished due to corrosion. The hands are made of precious metal, likely gold and survived. Interestingly, upon inspection of the dial, there is clearly a "shadow" of the hour hand showing approximately 1:50. Was the watch running when it was submersed? Or had it already wound down and been placed in a jewelry box prior to the ships demise?



## *The Fateful Hour*

The above gentleman's pocket watch was discovered at the site of a ship wreck, The S.S. New York in 2010, in the Gulf of Mexico. The ship, a luxury, 160 foot steam powered vessel, left Galveston, Texas at 4:00 PM on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1846 with 53 passengers and crew. Hours later, the ship was faced with a hurricane and by 2:00 AM the engine stalled.

Within a couple of hours the ship sank taking with her the lives of 17 people. The survivors managed to hang onto debris for two days before being rescued.

The watch was made by Robert Watson, an unrecorded Liverpool watch maker. The movement is typical of Liverpool watches having a fusee and a patented Massey lever escapement. The gold case, lacking it's front cover looks to be of English origin, but there is speculation that it might have been a US made case. There are hallmarks, but there is no "letter" mark that would indicate a year of manufacture. The marks might have been forged to appear as though the entire watch were made in England. A hand scratched mark on the underside of the dial offers a repair date of 1841 and a charge of \$2.50. The watch was most likely produced between 1830 and 1840.

Sometimes a restoration does not take you where you think it will and this particular job offered just that type of trek.... Even though I was not feasible to "re-build" both watches to their original condition, it was thoroughly satisfying to offer a visual display and offer future generations what style and type of watch was aboard the ship, S.S. New York at the time of it's sinking.