



THIS CLOCK IS A GEM

JADE HAS SUCH PRETTY NAMES, such an exotic connotation, that, at first observation, it's difficult to imagine it in so homespun, utilitarian an object as a grandfather clock.

A picture comes to mind of the stalwart, patriarchal timepiece in a Victorian hallway next to the umbrella stand, with the somber gong ringing, ringing regularly until the owner, himself, passes on. And somehow, amid all the sentimentality and song writing, a warm wood feeling prevails and we forget the superb workmanship which enabled the clock to run so long.

But when it comes to workmanship, jade is a challenge, too.

Why not fashion a clock with attractive, long-lasting jade parts? thought Ted Bhend of the San Francisco Gem and Mineral Society some years ago. He had made several all-wooden clocks before and the thought of a jade clock seemed increasingly feasible.

Brainstorming sessions began and plans started to click.

From this point on, it becomes difficult to give specific credits for the making of the clock. For if we name the man who faceted the "Chatham-Created Emerald"

bearings, we slight the one who cut out the blanks for spacers. The clock had become a group project, and although a few names stand out as motivating forces and more active contributors, many members took part in the work.

Some donated jade, some their knowledge of machinery; many spent hours over the tedious task of cutting and polishing the various gears and other mechanisms.

Precision tools were needed and special, custom-made machinery.

Jade is hard to hold in a vise and often gets overheated. The intricacies of clock-making became enmeshed with the finer points of gem cutting and, as the lapidaries plunged into their novel project, the two ancient trades seemed to draw closer together.

One major problem—the search for a clear piece of jade to use for the strike train. After experimenting with several varieties of stone, they came up with a black Wyoming jade which rang out "like a bell," sustaining a tone for just the proper length of time. In the true tradition of great problems, their final selection was from the same piece of jade from which the numerals and clock hands were carved. It had been there all the time.

The hands, you will note, are contrived of an S and F as a tribute to the old home town—a San Francisco tradition.

It would be hard to measure the Society's pride in the clock. But next week end, October 17-18, when it goes on exhibit to the public with all parts functioning, the men standing closest to it will probably be willing to bend any listener's ear with anecdotes involving its creation.

It will toll the hours for the group's annual get-together in the Scottish Rite Temple, its innards on view through the plexiglass and walnut case. With the exception of a few gold-plated chains and wires, everything in the six and a half foot clock is jade—with pretty names like apple, lavender and snowflake.

Judy Vaughn

Photos by Vano Wells Fagliano and Henry G. Reinecke

B. Pritchard

