Back in Time

The carriage clock came about when famed Swiss-born horologist Abraham-Louis Breguet designed a small portable clock in 1798 for Napoleon Bonaparte, who wanted a way to keep time while his carriage trundled from skirmish to skirmish.

Featuring a top handle, the spring-driven clock could be fastened securely to a hook and still maintain accurate time while swaying with the motion of a horse-drawn conveyance. Through its utility, the clock became very popular; even after the Napoleonic Wars, which ended in 1815, affluent travelers continued to use the carriage clock model while travelling.

Carriage clocks have stood the test of time, so to speak, and have become highly collectible items.

Decorated with bats and roosters, representing night and day respectively, the "Night and Day" Carriage Clock by Tiffany & Co. was designed and crafted by Charles Osborne (1847–1920), a master of his craft. Osborne, who at one time was the chief designer at Whiting Manufacturing Company, eventually migrated over to Tiffany's—a business competitor—to collaborate and learn from the jewelry establishment's head silver designer, Edward C. Moore.

Osborne, who specialized in Japanesque silver, embellished the clock's background with a Martelé or hammered-like texture.

Japanese decorative influence can be seen throughout the clock's design, such as in the simplification of the bats' features—the bat being a creature that the Japanese associate with good luck. The top of the clock depicts characteristics of the *unmon*, a Japanese cloud motif. The rounding of the bats' eyelids and ears appeals to the Japanese sense of *kawaii* or cuteness.

In ancient Japanese myth, the rooster was said to have tempted the sun goddess, Amaterasu, out of her cavern, bringing light back after a dismal period of darkness.

According to the curator's notes at Macklowe Gallery in New York City, where the 19th-century clock is on display, these decorative elements are typical of Tiffany & Co. silver in the 1880s, which was primarily inspired by the Japonisme and Art Nouveau movements.



COUERTESY MACKLOWE GALLERY IN NEW YORK