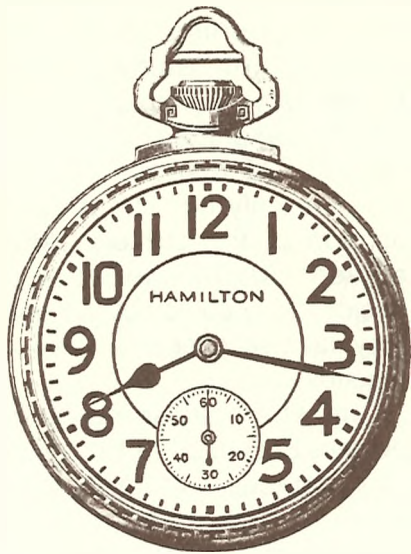


What Time Is It?



Before the railroads stretched iron rails across the nation, each city or town kept its own local time. Clocks in each place were set at twelve noon when the sun reached the highest point in the sky. This local time, or sun time, depended on the **longitude** or

longitude n. — distance east or west of the prime meridian, measured in degrees.

meridian of the town. For every degree of longitude there is a four-minute difference. This worked very well when people traveled from one place to another only at the slow-moving pace of steamboats or horse-drawn wagons.

When railroads came, the differences in time caused problems. Each railroad used the local sun time of its major city. When it was noon solar time in Chicago, it was 12:07 in Indianapolis, Indiana, 11:50 in St. Louis, Missouri, 11:48 in Dubuque, Iowa, 11:41 in St. Paul, Minnesota, and 11:27 in Omaha, Nebraska. The solution to this problem was to divide the world into twenty-four standard time zones. On November 18, 1883, at twelve noon the United States railroads adopted a system for standard time zones. Cities, too, began to use standard time. Eventually standard time zones were adopted by nations of the world. Iowa is in the Central Time Zone.

meridian n. — lines on a map representing either half of the circle that passes through the north and south poles.

courtesy of Robert J. Dietrich



Twenty-five steam whistles sound off in the Creston yards to announce the adoption of standard time at 12:00 noon, November 18, 1883.

The Jewelers Will Change Time

At present the jewelers of Burlington are using almost exclusively Chicago time but on Sunday will adopt standard time. Among the jewelers visited by an Hawkeye representative yesterday was Mr. G.H. Waldin, who stated he would change his time to conform to the new schedule of time just formulated for the use of the railroads by the railroad time convention recently held in Chicago. He further said: "Burlington time is now fourteen minutes slower than Chicago time. According to the new standard it will be five minutes slower than Chicago time. According to the new standard it will be five minutes faster than present city time. We get the correct time from Chicago every morning at 2 minutes past 10 o'clock and we receive it here in the store, being connected by wire. Next Sunday we will adopt the new time. We have always used railroad time; the public demands it and we must supply the demand. Very few people in Burlington use the city time."

Upon a request for determining the accurate time in Burlington, the following reply came from the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.,

Dear Sir — In reply to your letter of June 7, I would state that the longitude of Burlington, Iowa, is 91°07', and that of Chicago, Illinois is 87°38'; the difference therefore is 3°29'. At 4 minutes to 1°, or 4 seconds to 1', this gives a time difference of 13 minutes and 56 seconds. It is proper to observe that as 1' of longitude at this latitude is more than half a mile, different points in the two cities, would differ by several seconds.

Yours very respectfully,
Spencer W. Baird,
Secretary,
Smithsonian Institute

It is very probable the city will adopt the new standard time, as it will be generally used in Burlington anyway. So Sunday at noon, if you have correct Chicago time, set back your clock nine minutes, and you will have standard time.

—The Daily Hawkeye
15 November 1883