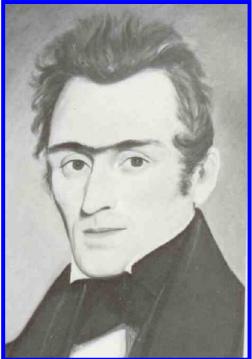


## The Ingraham Clock Company by Mark Edgar

Elias Ingraham was a prolific manufacturer of clocks beginning with his first position in 1829 as a clock case designer for George Mitchell. Clocks bearing the Ingraham name existed from about 1841 until 1967 when the company was sold to McGraw-Edison making Ingraham one of the longest surviving clock companies in the United States. Elias was born in 1805 on a farm in Marlborough, Connecticut. His ancestors included Martha Carter who was executed during the Salem witch trials and Nathan Hale a American Revolutionary War hero.

Elias apprenticed as a cabinet maker in Connecticut between 1821 and 1826; however, he was basically an entrepreneur searching for a business. The red-haired Elias married on Christmas day in 1827 and had his only child, a son, about three years later.



In 1831 Elias, along with partners, started his own business at the age of 26 to build furniture, clock cases, and other items including a pipe organ for Chauncey Jerome. From 1831 to 1833, he built 6,000 clock cases for Chauncey Ives. Also, in the 1830's Elias had a knitting company and a horse care company. His main entrepreneurial hope was a reclining rocking chair (perhaps the first Lazy Boy) he designed and patented. Unfortunately, the economy turned bad and Elias went bankrupt in 1840 effectively ending the Lazy Boy prototype.



A story is told that Elias, depressed after loosing his first business, spontaneously left in about 1842 for a year-long trip to South America without telling his wife. During this voyage, Elias produced the design for the benchmark Sharp Gothic Clock which had a cast iron back plate on the movement. The best selling Sharp Gothic was produced at the newly founded (1844) Brewster and Ingrahams clock company in Bristol, Connecticut. The Sharp Gothic was not as successful as it could have been because Elias failed to patent the case design, a mistake he did not repeat.

Ingraham clocks were made under many different names over the years; however, the first clock with the Ingraham name was not from Elias, but his brother, Andrew as part of the Ingraham and Ray Clock Company founded in 1841. Ingraham and Ray was dissolved when the highly successful Brewster and Ingrahams (includes both Ingraham brothers) began to produce clocks in 1844. After a tiff with Brewster's son, Andrew, Elias formed E. & A. Ingraham in 1852. Elias' son, Edward, later joined the company. Disaster struck in 1855 when a fire, a common occurrence among all clock companies, destroyed the factory. Following the fire, the Ingrahams and other partners made some clocks at a facility in Ansonia, but

further business issues led to a second bankruptcy in 1857. Andrew and Edward returned to farming while Elias started the Elias Ingraham & Co. in 1857. He gradually recovered from bankruptcy by making a few clocks from materials salvaged from the fire and selling them to purchase additional materials. From this point forward, the Ingraham clock company (under many different Ingraham names) was successful and Elias blossomed as a clock case designer. Edward and Andrew both returned to the company.

Elias designed and patented several case designs that helped make the company successful, including the



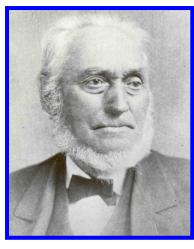
Doric, Venetian and Ionic. In 1865, Ingraham began making their own movements for the first time. With this



event, Ingraham became a complete clock manufacturing company. Another patented innovation involved the process of Japanning to produce clock case finishes that simulated black marble. This clock case style was sold by the millions from 1885 to the 1920's.

Even today these clocks are a common sight in antique stores and Regionals.

In 1885, about 76 Ingraham clocks were displayed at the centennial celebration in Bristol, Connecticut . One week later, Elias died of cholera. He had designed more than 900 clock cases and overcame monumental obstacles to establish one of the longest lasting clock companies.



After Elias' death, other family members managed the company and growth continued. Pocket watch manufacturing started in 1914. Manufacture of wristwatches and electric clocks began in the 1930's. Edward Ingraham II, Elias' great grandson was one of the last family leaders of the company. He later started the American Watch and Clock Museum in Bristol, Connecticut.

One of the sources for this article was a book entitled "For Generations to Come" by Forrest Holly. Holly married Elias' great great granddaughter and lived in Ramona and Escondido, California for many years and was a Chapter 59 member.