

North American Pocket Watch Basics

- **Watch Sizes**
- **Jewel Count**
- **Winding Styles**
- **Case Styles**
- **Case Materials**
- **Railroad Approved and Railroad Grade**
- **Brand Names**
- **Building a Collection: From Simple to Expensive (CAD\$)**

(Presented at the NAWCC Toronto Chapter 33 on September 20, 2026)

<https://torontochapter33.ca/>

North American Pocket Watch Basics

Watch Sizes (A Lancashire Gauge system)

- **Most Popular: 16S (43mm) and 18S (45mm)**
- **Other Sizes: 0S, 10S, 12S, 14S**



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Jewel Count

- Most Popular: **7 jewels**, 15 jewels, **17 jewels**, 21 jewels
- Other Sizes: No jewels, 11 jewels, 19 jewels, 22 jewels, 23 jewels
(rare: 24, 25, 26)



Crazy Jewel Count



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Winding Styles

- *Key-Wind (until 1870s)*
- *Stem-Wind, Pendant-Set (after 1870s)*
- *Stem-Wind, Lever-Set (after 1870s)*



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Case Styles

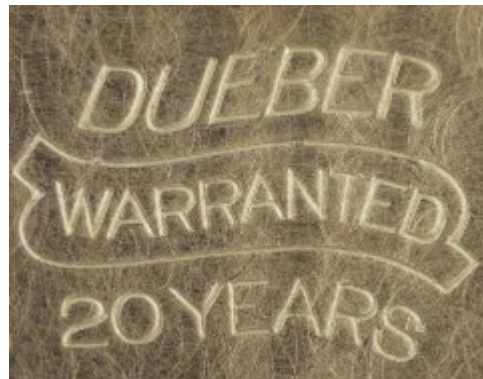
- *Hunter Case*
- *Open Face*
- Other Styles: Half-Hunter



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Case Materials

- ***Solid Gold and Gold Filled***
- ***Gold Plated (cheaper watches, modern watches)***
- ***Silver and Coin Silver***
- ***Nickel/Copper/Zinc alloys:*** Silverine, Silverode, Oresilver, Silveroid
- ***Base Metals:*** Nickel, Steel, Chrome



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Railroad Approved and Railroad Grade

- ***Railroad Grade (Webb Ball in 1893)***

A rigid manufacturing specification set by chief time inspectors like **Webb C. Ball**. To meet "Grade" standards, a movement had to be American-made, size 16 or 18, have at least 17 to 21 jewels, be adjusted to 5 or 6 positions, be lever-setting (to prevent accidental time changes), and feature a highly legible white dial with bold Arabic numerals.

- ***Railroad Approved***

A watch that was officially vetted, certified, and cleared by local inspectors to be actively used by a conductor or engineer on a specific rail line.

North American Pocket Watch Basics

Brand Names

- *Entry-Level: Elgin, Waltham, etc. Lower jewel count*
- *Mid-Tier: Hamilton, Illinois*
- *High-End: Howard, Ball, High-Grade Elgin/Waltham/Hamilton (incl watches with wind indicator)*



North American Pocket Watch Basics

Building a Collection: From Simple to Expensive (CAD\$)

- ***Beginner (\$75–\$250)***
7-15 jewels, 12S or 18S; Elgin, Waltham
- ***Medium (\$250–\$650)***
17-21 jewels, all sizes but predominantly 16S and 18S
Elgin, Waltham, Hamilton, Illinois
- ***Advanced (\$650–\$1,500+)***
Ultra-premium railroad watches, rare jewel counts, solid gold cases, or high-end complications.
Elgin Veritas, Waltham Riverside Maximus, E. Howard, Illinois Bunn Special 161/163

North American Pocket Watch Basics

Hands-on with a Hamilton Model 992 Pocket Watch

Disassembly, Cleaning, Assembly