

Watch Tax

Watches were once considered a luxury item and as such were taxed by the State, however collecting the tax was left to the counties. Despite watches becoming more common, the tax remained in effect even though the cost of collecting the tax far outweighed the amount collected. If tax returns were to be believed, there were large numbers of municipalities and entire counties where not one citizen owned a timepiece!

As reported in the March 19, 1857 **Pittsburgh Gazette**, out of the \$26,030,838 collected in Allegheny County taxes, \$792 was from the watch tax. In neighboring Beaver County, \$164.25 of watch taxes were collected out of a total of \$4,372,191 in tax revenues.



The September 9, 1874 issue of the **Pittsburgh Daily Commercial** reported Allegheny County's tax on silver watches was 50 cents, second rate gold watches 75 cents and best gold watches \$1. Out of a population of 262,000 persons, only 1,045 watches were reported.

<u>Municipality</u>	Silver	Gold
Franklin Township [Franklin Park]	5	4
Leet Township [included the future Leetsdale & Edgeworth]	9	79
Marshall Township	1	0
McCandless Township	0	0
Sewickley Borough	11	66
Sewickley Township [Bell Acres]	3	2

Pennsylvania's often ridiculed 18th century watch tax was repealed during the winter of 1886.