

The Senate Clock

Turning back the hands of the clock in the Senate Chamber
It has always been a mystery to me why I should have been
selected for that duty.

As far back as ~~for~~ President Pierces administration, I have been
called on to perform that duty

There was an iron railing all around the old Senate Chamber
on the west side of the Chamber and in the center of the Gallery
is where the old clock stood, and it now stands in the Corridor
near, the ^{Entrance of the} present Senate Chamber

I never will forget the anxiety of Mr Bickens the Then Secretary
of the Senate to have that old clock put in the new Chamber, it
was impossible to find a suitable place for it there, He came
to me and said Bassett cant you suggest some place for
that clock I see it cannot go in the Senate Chamber, I told
him that was the best place for the present pointing to the niche
in the corner of the lobby, Well he said if we cant get in the Senate
let us put it as near as we can, so there the old clock went
and there it stands to this day Soon after we came over to the
New Senate Chamber the Sergeant at Arms ordered a new
clock of smaller demensions, to be placed over the door of
the main entrance to the Senate Chamber and I have continued
to turn the hands of that clock back at the close of every session
I wish it distinctly understood that I never did so until I received
the order from the Vice President, or President Protem of the Senate
A number of the most important appropriation bills have been
saved, and an extra session avoided, I have nothing to say
whether it was Constitutional or not, but never in my life
while in the service of the Senate disobeyed an order from the
Vice President. On a great many occasions when I have put
the clock back a great many of the Senators would call me to their

Seats and question me as to what authority I acted upon, I always answered with great dignity, by order of the President of the Senate of the United States, They would say by what authority does he order you to do that. I told them that it has always been the custom at the last hour of the Session when they were waiting for important appropriations bills to come from the House to turn the clock back.

In older times when I turned the hands of the clock back the Senators all understood it but in these latter days all seem different. On one occasion when I was through turning the hands back Senator Hill of Ga, arose in his seat and called the attention of the Senate to the fact and declared that it was all wrong and there was nothing in the Constitution that warranted it. His remarks were winked at and several Senators called out alright Hill Constitution or not, which created a great laugh all over the Senate Chamber.