



Cuckoo Clocks

The day was grey with low hanging tendrils of clouds drifting across the mountaintops. A gentle mist fell in the chilling air while faint whiffs of wood smoke tickled my cold nose. Constant droplets of accumulated moisture dripped quietly from the dark sentinel fir trees in the Black Forest of Germany. Fresh air like no other filled my lungs only to be suddenly cut short by a sudden gasp. Ever so faintly, the hollow, melancholy sound of the simple cuckoo could be heard. Cuckoo... cuckoo... Its sound wove its way through the thick boughs to my listening ears. It was a singular sound that blended in harmony with the gentle mist, the overcast day, the stillness in this quiet forest.

There isn't a more beautiful combination of nature to be appreciated, than to see the rich, hand carved varieties of wood accompanied by the melancholy tones of the cuckoo.

As a small child, my grandmother had a small cuckoo clock that hung on the living room wall. At 6 p.m. sharp I would stand on the chair under the clock and wait for the tiny yellow bird to pop out of its little door. Fascinated by the size of the itty-bitty bird and what he might be doing behind that itty-bitty wooden door, I was lucky the clock hung way above my head out of reach!

It is a well-known fact that the cuckoo clocks of the Black Forest are world famous and have a very rich traditional history that is carried on to present day. I had stored this tidbit of information somewhere in my head, but did not realize the magnitude of the statement until I entered the House of 1000 Clocks! Yes, there were at least 1000 clocks in this store and more than half of them made some sort of sound!

<http://hausder1000uhren.de/index.php>



Greeted at the door in German by a traditionally dressed young lady, I was excited and later embarrassed by meeting her. She came to me to assist in my shopping and spoke fluent English. Surprised with the sudden clean switch in languages, I commented on how good her English was. She replied with, "that's because I am American!" I felt about two inches tall after that. I don't run into many Americans over here, but this particular clock store seemed to be filled with Americans looking for their clocks or accessories and the employees all spoke wonderful English. Thankfully, they were also blessed with the patience of a saint, because it took me at least one hour to finally choose a traditional cuckoo clock that would hang proudly on my wall. Also lucky for me, I waited until the last day before I chose my clock, otherwise I would have been tempted to purchase one only to find another that I loved just as much!

I had the opportunity to stand eye to eye with hundreds of little yellow birds as they sporadically popped out of their hidden chambers. I hurriedly paced back and forth along the wall trying to see every single bird, lost in a wall full of miniature clocks of every imaginable design!



The history of the cuckoo clock began in the late 1600's. The farmers desperately needed additional means of income during the long winter months while farm work was very limited. The winter season lasted at least six months of the year. This was very believable when we drove through snow on a mountain pass in neighboring France on our way home!

Typical of those hard times, Franz Ketter and Simon Dilger, a poor farmer and a lathe turner, combined their skills and began to make wooden geared clocks. These basic functioning clocks were later enhanced in 1712 when Friedrich Dilger moved to France to learn from the French clock craftsmen. He returned to the Triberg region, shared his gathered information and the 10 surrounding communities began making their living from the clock manufacturing business. Traveling glass salesmen would peddle the finished clocks along with their own sales. In time the impact and importance of the clock making industry grew so well that the Great Ducal Badish Clockmaker School was founded in Furtwangen Germany in 1850. Today, the clock making business in the Black Forest is an international enterprise and is constantly being improved through attractive enhancements and the development of fine mechanics.

When I speak of enhancements, I mean serious improvements to the traditional roof, square box and the little door for birdy to come out of. The clocks that I encountered took my breath away. Not only were these clocks non-traditional, they exhibited some of the most intricate woodcarving in miniature that I have had the pleasure to see.



Traditional triangular roofs were replaced by the authentic roofs seen today in the valleys and on the peaks throughout the Black Forest region. Detailed environments of woodcutting and farm living decorated little shelves in the foreground. Tiny figurines depicting men and women in traditional dress danced little circles to music box melodies while above their heads the cuckoo still came out of his little hideaway to mark the hour of the day.



For those whose taste was for more elegant time telling, flat-faced clocks with delicate hand painted apple roses or blooms of summer filled another wall. They had a beauty and antiquity of their own, shining with brass pendulums and accompanied by a rich gong chime that designated the hour. Since each clock face is hand painted, no two are alike, making them true original works of art.

There was always a clock within eyesight, even while driving through the adjoining towns. Proudly exhibiting the craftsmanship of centuries, exterior walls of buildings housed gigantic clock faces. The intricate tonnage of working parts was protected inside and viewable, making one feel like a mouse inside the grandfather clock.



The clock pictured here had massive wooden gears, carefully glued together and then pressed so that they wouldn't lose their accuracy. The cuckoo weighed about 400 pounds while two nine foot tall bellows made the echoing cuckoo melody. The wooden pendulum hung two stories long and occupied one complete side of a room for its swinging arch. Even with the enormous size of this clock, its accuracy could be calculated and controlled to within four seconds per year!

Always conscious of the time, we tried to do and enjoy as much as possible in the five days that we visited the Black Forest region. Everyday was filled with historical delights and wonders of nature, which I will share in my next adventure!

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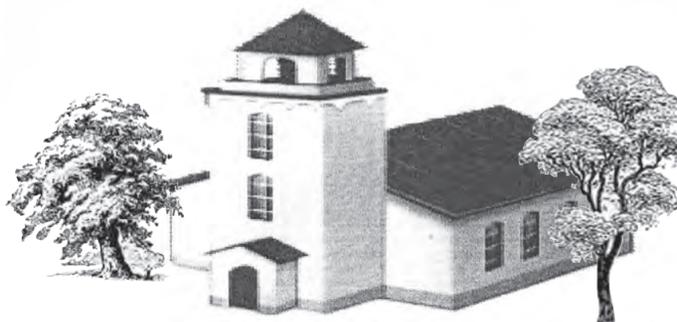
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9:45 a.m. - Bible Study

11:00 - Worship Services

Preaching: Don Tiger

Worship Leader: Mike Grass

Come Join Us . . .

This is the day that the Lord hath made we will rejoice and be glad in it.