



What do Ben Franklin, Railroads and Time have in common*?

**Here's a clue -- Spring Forward and Fall Back*



Way back before clocks were invented, people around the world kept time by using some kind of instrument that observed the sun's position at noon when it was highest in the sky. Sun dials, for example, used the length of the sun's shadow to determine the time as it would fall over a gauge with hours on it. Another method was to measure the rate at which water would run out of a vessel. It wasn't until the 17th century that the pendulum clock was invented.

Many villages, towns and later cities set their clocks based on sunsets and sunrises, even though dawn and dusk occurred at different times...even within the same state. No one paid much attention to variances in time because it took such a long time to travel outside local communities, and there was a total lack of long-distance communications available...no radio, TV, internet or telephone.

Back in 1784, the famous inventor, author and statesman, Benjamin Franklin, was among the first to suggest that clock settings could be used for more than simply telling time. Franklin -- who is also credited with the proverb "*Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise*" -- was also of the opinion that adjusting clocks in the spring could be a good way to save on candles. This idea of "borrowing an hour of morning daylight and moving it to the evening" had appeal to those who enjoyed evening activities. Some rationalized that this "summer time" would also save energy resources because people would be outside or away from home during peak energy usage hours. Twenty five percent of electricity use at home, for example, is used for lighting and small appliances (TVs, radios, stereos); when folks are away from home, this energy usage would logically decline. While the amount of

electricity saved per household by "summer time" may be small, the savings add up!

The initial motivator for the implementation of Daylight Saving Time was actually the railroads. By the late 1800's, time zones had been established and the railroads used them in an effort to standardize their schedules. Imagine how difficult it would have been to maintain travel timetables when each city and railroad station set its own clock...or relied on a church steeple clock or on one in a jewelry store window! For the first time, in November 1883, the continental United States introduced four standard time zones. The railroads -- and their passengers -- were happy being able to follow uniform schedules for arrivals and departures.

Since World War I, **Daylight Saving Time** -- or DST -- has been used off and on in the U.S. It was utilized during WWI to help conserve fuel needed to produce electric power. DST was formally adopted in the U.S. in March 1918 as a local option, but proved to be confusing and unpopular. It was reinstituted year-round by President Roosevelt during World War II -- called "War Time" -- and kept in force from February 1942 until September 1945.

In 1974, thanks to enactment of the Daylight Saving Time Energy Act, the U.S. Congress set the new guidelines for standardization. Then, in 2005, Congress determined that starting in 2007, DST in the U.S. would begin at 1:00 a.m. on the last Sunday in March and end at 1:00 a.m. on the last Sunday in October. ■

