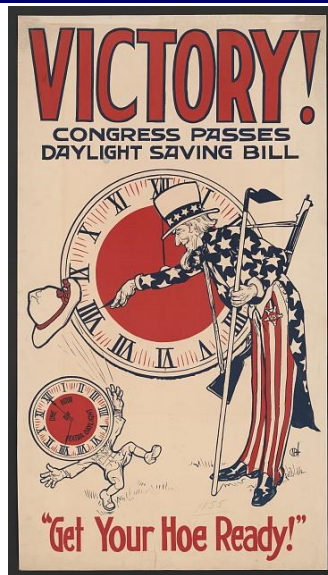


The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended, and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored.

Annals from the Archives

See XIII., Columbus, Juan Spabella, and

The Sisters of Notre Dame and Daylight Saving Time



November 2023
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Poster from the Passage of the
Daylight Saving Bill, 1918

Image from the Library of Congress

—Though most of the convent annals across New England make no mention of the sisters' daily schedules—except for their habit of rising at 5 am—the sisters at the Chicopee, MA convent noted that in April 1921, “the “Daylight Saving Law” went into operation Sunday, April 24th. So little had been said about it that we had almost forgotten it. On Saturday evening the 23rd we retired at eight thirty and remained in bed Sunday till five thirty, thus making up the hour we would otherwise lose.”

While the sisters in Chicopee seemed inclined to forget the change in clocks, most people across Massachusetts had not. Daylight Saving time roused as much opposition in the early 20th century as it does today, seemingly the one topic that almost everyone can agree on. Though time itself shouldn't be a controversial topic, the methods for dealing with synchronizing schedules in the 19th century caused more than a few headaches for businesses and various institutions.

During most of the 19th century, there were at least 300 local times zones across the United States. No one could agree on a standard time, even from town to town, because people believed, reasonably enough, that it was noon when the sun was directly overhead.

Ultimately, in 1883, in an effort to regulate their schedules, it was the railway companies, not Congress, that introduced what we now know as the four times zones—Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific. Because it helped with the confusion regarding travel, it wasn't long before most of the country followed that standard.

But in 1909, an effort was launched by the American Daylight Saving Association to set clocks ahead an hour during the summer months, with the reasoning that it would save energy and provide more daylight for leisure activities. Many people, especially farmers, opposed that plan. It wasn't until World War I, when the government needed to save fuel during the war, that the Standard Time Act was passed. It stated that clocks would be set ahead one hour from the last week in March until the last Sunday in October. In addition, this Act also legalized the time zones that had been created by the railway companies in 1883.

While the government fuel administrators did report significant savings in coal in 1918, people across the country complained. Farmers claimed they could not harvest their crops until late afternoon, when the sun had evaporated the moisture from the fields, because their workers followed the clock and left before the harvest could be completed. Parents reported their

children's sleep schedules were impacted and almost everyone complained that it was against the "natural order of things." And so, under great public protest for the "daylight savings," Congress repealed the act the following year.

But in Massachusetts mayors and local chambers of commerce urged the state legislature to institute once again "advanced time," in other words, daylight saving time. Despite protests from most farmers and a lawsuit that they eventually lost, it was passed by the legislature in 1920 and signed into law by Governor Calvin Coolidge.

While the sisters in Chicopee had little to say about the daylight saving law in 1921, by 1922 the sisters were less than pleased with the need to change the clocks. "The Daylight Saving schedule of time went into operation at midnight between April 29 and 30th. So that we should not lose our usual amount of sleep we retired at eight thirty Saturday night and rose at five thirty on Sunday morning. This time- savings is perhaps of value to people who rise late; but for us it is quite an annoyance for some weeks until we become accustomed to it. It is so dark and chilly at what is really four o'clock that lights must be burned for several hours and we can hardly realize that it is time to get up. Then at night it is too bright to go to bed. The good old Sun is a better manager of light and darkness than our respected "Uncle Sam.""

Most people agreed with the sisters assessment. In 1924, the Legislature put the issue up for a vote, expecting a landslide victory for Daylight Saving Time. Though the law did pass, it was only by 65,000 votes, far less than expected. Many efforts have been made to eliminate Daylight Saving time in Massachusetts through the years, but with varied success and remains in effect to this day.



From the *Boston Globe*
April 24, 1921

Sources consulted for this article

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