

The clock that killed Herschede

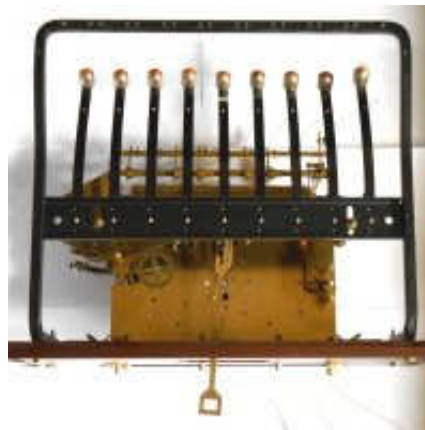
Herschede closed its doors in 1984. One reason becomes clear when you look at the pages from a clock kit price list like the one below, from 1979 or 1980. Urgos had a great product for less than half the cost. The issue was price. After decades of struggle financially, the arrival of this competing clock was probably the last straw for Herschede.



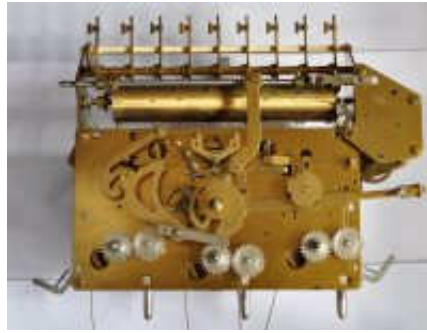
A new clock with tubular bells arrived from Germany, before which Herschede had enjoyed no competition for decades in the luxury market for clocks with tubular bells in the United States. The photos below were taken during disassembly. The dial is typical of German grandfather clocks at the time.



Here is a view of the frame to hang the nine tubes.



Whereas the Herschede was a traditional design, dating back to the 1910s or 1920s, the new Urgos clock was an all-new design. While it was exceptionally complicated, it was intended to require as few adjustments as possible after assembly to facilitate mass production, to share as many parts as possible with other Urgos grandfather clock mechanisms, also to benefit from mass-production (economies of scale), and to fit together very precisely.



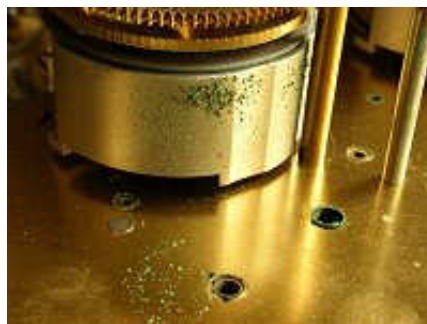
Apart from the parts for the chimes on the upper-left of the photo below, the back looks like other Urgos grandfather clocks of that era.



The chime mechanism uses no contrate gear, relying on three beveled gears. The parts fit together and work well without adjusting any cap screws, as you would on a Herschede. The green color is old, dry grease.



The escapement is also very precise, adjusting itself when the pendulum swings with wide amplitude. The quality is as good as you will find in any modern clock. Notice the green powder that has fallen down from the chime parts onto the gears between the plates. The grease failed when it dried.



The Urgos clock with tubular bells shared many parts with the standard Urgos grandfather clocks with chimes rods, (see below), allowing for better economies of scale. This was how Urgos produced

an outstanding product for half the cost of a Herschede. Was a Herschede worth twice as much as an Urgos? If you look at the mechanisms and the dials, and you listen to the tubes, you would have to say "yes." Having said that, if I could get the Urgos with a set of Herschede tubes, weights, pendulum, dial and hands, I would take it.



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