



Mr. Saylor's IIII

In response to Bill Saylor's letter about the clock dial being incorrect in the train station: As an industrial arts teacher at Manheim Township High School (now retired), I helped my students construct many clocks.

The design being utilized by the clock face in the train station, while using a nonstandard version of the Roman numeral 4, has been used on clock faces for hundreds of years. The discrepancy Mr. Saylor noticed is actually done intentionally.

Using IV would put the dial out of artistic balance. Using IIII, however, includes four numerals that employ an I, four that employ a V, and four that employ an X.

Mr. Saylor might find a tour of the National Watch & Clock Museum in Columbia both interesting and educational.

Clyde K. Neal, Washington Boro

It's about time

The dial on the new clock for the train station is correct!

As Mr. Saylor pointed out, there is a IIII in place of the more commonly accepted Roman numeral IV for the number 4. Not many people notice this, or at least they don't question it. Good eye, Mr. Saylor!

The reasoning behind the number switch, so I was told, is to make the dial more pleasing and symmetrical -- it makes the IIII more balanced with the number VIII on the opposite side of the dial.

As a retired clockmaker, I've seen clocks over 200 years old with Roman numeral dials, and they all use the IIII.

I'm sure most visitors coming through the train station won't notice what appears to some to be a mistake.

John Kohler, Newmanstown

Giving balance to the clock

Letter writer Bill Saylor, don't be disturbed. The number IIII is not inaccurate on the large clock so graciously donated by Brent L. Miller Jewelers. Your assumption is inaccurate.

The correct way to write the Roman numeral 4 is IV. However, on clocks, an archaic form, IIII, is used. This is to balance the face of the clock.

Clockmakers decided that a clock face would look more visually pleasing if, opposite the 8 o'clock position (VIII), was another Roman numeral that had 4 parts to it. So the number of characters used to write the 4 is the same as the number of characters used to write the 8. It's all a matter of what looks good to people.

Fortunately for the fine citizens of Lancaster city, Bill Saylor wasn't assigned the job of selecting how the numbers on the clock were portrayed.

Thanks, BLM Jewelers and Ryan Miller, for representing the numbers accurately. This beautiful clock will surely leave a wonderful impression on both visitors and residents.

Jay A. Krebs, Mechanicsburg