



The MAINSPRING

A Monthly Publication from
Southwestern Chapter 15 of the
National Association of
Watch and Clock Collectors

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Save the date

January 28

10:00 a.m. Chapter program
Putting Your Mark on Horology
Jay Holloway
Windermere Clubhouse
16800 Gower, Pflugerville

February 20

6 p.m. – National Instruments
Joint Chapter 15/IEEE meeting
Evolution of Timekeeping and
Synchronized Time Over the last
150 years

February 25

1 p.m. – 3 p.m.
Open house
Bea Copeland's, San Antonio

Current Board Members

President – Ken Reindel
President@nawcc-chapter15.org

Vice-President – Bob Rasmussen
VicePresident@nawcc-chapter15.org

Treasurer – Tom Tarpy
Treasurer@nawcc-chapter15.org

Secretary – Pat Holloway
Secretary@nawcc-chapter15.org

Director of Programs – Gary Sertich
Programs@nawcc-chapter15.org

President's Message

New Year 2012

Dear Members,

First I want to start by wishing you all the best and happiest New Year as we start 2012.

I hope you had a great holiday season. During the December holiday season we normally skip our monthly get-together and programs. But now, we are ready to get back to business! In the first few months we will have a program on "Putting Your Mark on Horology", a visit to see Bea Copeland's collection as well as our first-ever joint program between the IEEE and the NAWCC in Austin. And, it doesn't let up after that! We have much more planned. It could be our best year of programs ever. But, we'll let you be the judge. Come on out and join us. With the new meeting area in Pflugerville, we are well positioned to do more than we've ever done before.

March 2 and 3 we have the Chapter 124 Regional in Mesquite. Our neighbors in the Dallas area promise it will be the best Chapter 124 Regional ever! Judging from some of the programs, it just well may be. Nick Lerescu will present on Russian and European horology. Mike Dempsey's workshop on Graham Dead Beat escapement the day before the Regional and John Schmiegs presentation on Case Restoration (two of my favorite topics) are among the other great programs planned. Hope to see you there.

Over the holidays I had an opportunity to talk with some of my customers for a variety of reasons. Because we do quite a bit of business over the internet, there are many customers who we've only communicated with via email. Granted this is quite convenient, but somewhat impersonal. With computers and iPads and even smart phones, we can email and text back and forth with "virtual" conversations even at times when we probably should be doing other things. ☺

Now, enter the whole arena of Skype™. This is the new (well, not that new) internet-based service which gives us both voice and live camera and within the USA, it is free!

The interesting thing about having Skype™ conversations was how conversations tend to make the communication much more personal as well as productive. For example, I had an opportunity to Skype™ with a customer from Chapter 133. I was able to visit with him as if he was there in my shop. I saw his collection, and he was able to see my clock shop as I walked through it with my iPad and showed him around! As a result, I could help him with his problem because there it was right in front of me....and the issue was obvious. Helping him adjust his contacts was much easier than trying to describe it over email, and saved the clock from a UPS trip back here. (Continued on page 2)

President's message (continued)

It struck me that this could be a way to bring members to our meetings without having them travel here. Believe it or not, we have attracted some new membership from well outside our borders as well as some expats who have relocated. We have growing interest in what we are doing from some folks in California. We have members in Pennsylvania and another very interested potential member in Rochester, New York. It seems strange; but with modern technology, some of these borders may be able to be redefined.

Chapter membership renewal

It's time to renew your Chapter 15 membership for 2012. Payment can be made by check or with the PayPal option on the Chapter 15 website.

Chapter membership

If you've not yet renewed for 2012, please take a few minutes to complete and return the form below, or use the PayPal option found on the [Chapter 15 website](#).

Chapter 15 Membership Application
New Application / Renewal (circle one)
Membership Dues are \$10

You must be a current, paid NAWCC member to join a Chapter. You may be a member of more than one Chapter.

Please Print or Type

NAME: _____

SPOUSE'S NAME: _____

STREET: _____

CITY: _____

STATE/COUNTRY: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

NAWCC Member # _____

HOROLOGICAL INTERESTS: _____

Please send my Chapter newsletter by email.

Make Check Payable To: Chapter 15, NAWCC
Enclose this application and check and send to:

Pat Holloway
1105 Lafayette Lane
Pflugerville, TX 78660

Treasurer's Report	
Chapter Account	\$7,325.98
Exp: Dec. Newsletter and prepaid stamps (Forever stamps to mitigate postage incr.)	-150.12
Inc: Membership renewal (less PayPal fees)	<u>69.48</u>
Balance	\$7,245.34
Regional Account	\$4,163.60

Restoring wood alarm clock cases

We have reached the stage in our project where we are ready for the final finish. A quick look at our project and it is evident that the wood is mahogany. This is a beautiful wood, but it has a deep grain and is very porous. There's nothing wrong with finishing the piece in a manner such that the grain is showing. However, this is not what the original manufacturers would have done. The finishes on a great majority of old wood clock cases were smooth with minimal grain showing through. How is this achieved?

Obviously applying finish to a wood with deep grain such as oak or mahogany is going to telegraph the grain. The deep pores and grain feature will absorb more finish, which will sink in at the grain and struggle to fill it. The higher spots will remain high. The result will be a sort of grainy, bumpy landscape. Of course, if we are willing to apply 10 or more coats of finish, sanding nearly back to the wood between coats, we could in theory build up the finish to where we want it. Finishes need to cure for at least a few days or perhaps weeks before they are dimensionally stable; e.g., before they stop shrinking. Thus it will take a great deal of time to fill the grain with finish alone.

Another option is to use wood fillers. One of the most widely accepted "period accurate" methods for filling grain is to use a slurry mixture of fine pumice and shellac. It's a messy proposition (but then, any filling process will be). The pumice is mixed with the shellac to a paste-like consistency. The material is then applied with a brush across the grain, and wiped down to remove excess, again across the grain (not with it). Then, the surface is sanded with 180 or 220 grit sandpaper until all excess is removed. The advantage of this method is it tends to blend well with most woods and there is no need (generally) to color tint the paste to match the wood.

This process can be repeated but it helps to thin the consistency a bit on the second coat. You should also wait 24 hours between fillings in this manner to give the first coat a chance to cure. Otherwise the second coat of filler may well dissolve and remove the first too aggressively, leaving you back where you started.

Again, sand the first coat as described above before applying the second. Once dry (12-24 hours), repeat the sanding process. Then we can proceed with the top coats.

Another approach to filling is to use a material such as “Wunderfil.” We’ve had some reasonable luck with this product. The trick is that the material must be tinted so that the dried material matches the color of the wood—or somewhat darker. This can be tricky, but is key. Otherwise, the grain will be very obvious and potentially obtrusive depending on the color contrast. Tinting can be done either by mixing different colors of Wunderfil together or by simply using acrylic (water based) artists colors to tint the Wunderfil. Mix only enough for the project at hand. Keep careful notes on the formula you used to mix. Apply the Wunderfil mixture exactly as described above for the shellac-based filler.

Again, sanding with the grain using 180-220 grit sandpaper will leave a silky smooth, filled wood that will be ready for the final coats of finish.

Coloring. You may find yourself tempted to color the wood, if only a bit, to restore the antique appearance of the piece. We urge you to consider no coloring first. We recommend you start the process with a single coat of 3lb shellac brushed on carefully. Once dry (allow 24 hours), this will give you a very good idea of what the finish color will be without any deliberate attempt to color the case. If you are pleased, you can continue applying final finish. The beauty of this is that the shellac coats can be applied using a brush, allowing 24 hours dry time between coats. More on that later.

The pictures below illustrate the natural coloring that clear orange shellac will tend to impart on the piece. You’ll be surprised at how much color it will bring. That’s why it’s a good idea to apply a light base coat first before applying any color. The top picture shows the contrast. The bottom picture shows the overall piece with a full coat of shellac applied. The piece is very attractive, but some might prefer it darker.



If you are not satisfied with the natural color achieved, then you’ll need to change gears and do some coloring.

We’ve deliberately avoided recommending the use of stains. We are not very fond of them. On old pieces, especially once filled with either the shellac or Wunderfil method, the results of staining can be frustrating. Different sections of the wood will tend to color differently due to age, sunlight damage, level of fill, etc. It’s so unpredictable that we just prefer to avoid it. Stain, once applied, can be a mess to reverse if you don’t like what you get.

A better approach is to use toners or glazes. The glazing approach is somewhat out of the scope of this set of articles. It is more of a finesse approach because once you apply the glaze, it’s best if you spray on the final coats. But if you are willing to do this it can yield stunning results when applied properly.

What’s coming in 2012?

We’ll be kicking off 2012 with Jay Holloway’s program on “Putting Your Mark on Horology: Walter Durfee”. If you’ve ever thought about how and why Walter Durfee’s clocks are so sought after or wanted to learn more tubular chime clocks, you’ll want to be sure to attend our January program.

In February, we’ll have two very special Chapter events: the first is a joint meeting of IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) and Chapter 15 where Ken Reindel will be presenting a program on the “Evolution of Timekeeping and Synchronized time Over the Last 150 Years”, and the second is an Open House at Bea Copeland’s in San Antonio (please note the change from our normal 10 a.m. meeting time to 1 – 3 p.m.)

March will also offer two events – the 2nd and 3rd is the ever popular Lone Star Regional in Mesquite which Chapter 15 co-hosts, and then on the 24th, Mary Ellen Bell will provide a glimpse of some absolutely fantastic clocks.

These events are followed by our annual meeting in April with the meeting in Pflugerville.

Spot a clock

~Don Bugh



Don Bugh recently spotted this Seth Thomas street clock in St. Louis. Originally located in front of a large grocery store in the 1920s, now the clock is at Laclede's Landing – a popular night time entertainment area in St. Louis.

Don sent photos of some other clocks that we'll be including in upcoming issues, and in May he'll be telling us more about street clocks and sharing his experiences moving and installing a Seth Thomas street clock. You won't want to miss this program!

More clocks spotted in November...



As promised last month, we're including additional pictures from last month's tour.



NOTE: There will be a light dinner provided at the February 20th joint meeting with IEEE. Please let Pat know if you plan to attend. Watch for more updates next month.