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Save these 2016 dates

January 16th

10 a.m. – noon Chapter 15 Meeting
Pok-e-Jo’s – 2121 Parmer, Austin
“Restoration of an Early American
Tall Case Clock”
Jay Holloway

January 24th

6:00 p.m. – NAWCC Webinar
“Architectural Skeleton Clocks”
R.O. (Bob) Schmitt

February 20th

10 a.m. – noon Chapter 15 Meeting
“The Elgin Watch Company”
Pat Holloway
Pok-e-Jo’s – 2121 Parmer, Austin

February 21st

6:00 p.m. – NAWCC Webinar
“Horology in Art”
Bob Frishman

March 4th-5th

Lone Star Regional
Mesquite TX

Current Board Members

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President@nawcc-chapter15.org

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Secretary@nawcc-chapter15.org

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President’s Message

Dear Members,

Welcome to the New Year 2016. A year ago when I wrote the President’s Message, well, it was 21 degrees outside in Austin, TX. Today, as I write this, it is 19 degrees. But, that’s not in Austin; that’s up here in Denver! In Austin, it is a balmy 37 degrees. The big difference is that there is snow outside our door here. It’s actually quite pretty. The temperatures aren’t too bad but they do get a bit chilly at night. It’s important to dress appropriately. Beyond that, the warm sun takes care of the rest up here during the day and it is actually very comfortable.

I wish I could say I was ready to resume clock repair; I certainly am anxious to do so. But, there is much left to do. As you can tell from this picture, not much clock restoration is getting done right now. But it is easy to overlook the progress that has been made in December. First, we uprooted an entire family and three shops, and relocated to the Denver area (Broomfield, CO) and everyone is fine including our four birds. Second, Teri and the girls have done an incredible job of getting the household more or less unpacked and operational. Third, the clock shop space was finished on time and was ready for move in. It is larger than the Cedar Park shop by a fair margin, making it possible to arrange things to do multiple projects at once, enabling classes and the like down the road.



Further, the air is now plumbed into the E-lab, wet room (where clock movements will be cleaned), as well as the outside garage (for sandblasting). That project was a monumental success as it involved plumbing 60ft of Type L copper pipe before the renovation work (building the downstairs shop) even began, and it survived unscathed. And, as of yesterday, the clock shop storage area shelving is all installed and almost ready to load up. Soon it will be possible to put things away—which is a very important step towards getting things organized (we have clocks crawling on top of clock parts at the moment).

It is about that time to once again start thinking about the annual NAWCC Crafts Competition. Jay was a great help in getting the clock shop in Cedar Park packed up and ready to move to Denver (a heartfelt thank you, Jay!) In exchange for his great help, I donated several possible project clocks to the Chapter. No obligation, but if someone is looking for something to do for the Crafts Competition, or if there is interest in a group project, there are quite a few projects to choose from. I’ll let Jay comment further on that at the January meeting and in upcoming newsletters.

Update on the Big Ben Project

In our last Newsletter, we had started our discussion about the restoration of an electric Big Ben Chime Alarm. The project was one of the last to be completed in the Cedar Park shop. We discussed the problems with fabricating a second wheel gear and pinion for the clock, which was successfully completed. But there was much more to do. The case required stripping and repainting. Generally, we try to leave the nickel alone if it is still nice, and this one was. So, the nickel was masked and the black paint refinished. The results were quite nice as you can see from the picture above.



Dials are another issue. It is difficult to do anything with an alarm clock dial that won't make matters worse. This dial was one of the nicer dials we have seen on an electric Chime alarm. So, it was left untouched. We carefully removed the dial and placed it in a plastic Ziploc bag, then in a plastic box for safekeeping. In any alarm clock restoration we do, the dial is stored away and does not see light of day until the clock is reassembled with gloved hands. That's about all that can be done since many of these dials are impregnated with oil and soot from the movement, from previous repairs, fingerprints from previous handling, etc.

There is one important note about electrics in general and cosmetically, which relates indirectly to the dial, which is worth sharing here. Many were built with early coils, which were layer wound, with a layer of waxy paper in between the layers. Then, these are oil or varnish impregnated to keep everything stable. The wire itself was coated with an early varnish insulation, which we find holds up well, but is very deteriorated as found today.

In operation, these coils heat up slightly. Although the effects are slight and gradual, the oil and varnishes bake out over the decades from the heat. These substances find their way on everything inside the clock—the dial, the movement, case, and inside surface of the glass, etc. It looks like a “soot” covering, and many think it is there because something burned up inside the clock. Well not really, but in a sense that's true, with the “burning up” taking place over a very, very long and gradual period of time. It is quite noticeable once examined, but many customers do not even realize it is there until they see the clock without the layer of soot. Obviously it is nearly impossible to remove this soot from a paper dial, and attempts to do so often damage the dial.

The luminous paint on the hands was chipped and falling off, mostly missing. Generally two things happen to the luminous paint on old alarm clocks and neither is good. First, the phosphorescent material within the paint begins to break down from constant bombardment by the radium contained in the paint mixture. Keep in mind that radium is radioactive, and not safe for long-term exposure. We are more than happy to find it missing because then we don't have to handle it. That was the case here.

The second thing that happens to luminous paint on these old alarm clocks is they change color. The original color was a soft, light greenish color. There are no luminous paints out there today with radium, so it is difficult to promise the customer that the luminous paint will glow like the original did, lasting all night long. At best we can hope for a few hours of glow after the dial and hands are exposed to light from the day. So we do the best we can to match the hands to the numerals, which have darkened from age. Again, we do NOT retouch the dials unless the dial is disastrous, and this one was not.

First, the new luminous material is applied to the hands. Often two coats are needed to cover, and it is important to be sure that the off-white primer on the hands is still intact because most luminous paints are somewhat translucent and will show through to whatever is on the hand. After the paint has set thoroughly, they are color matched with a very faint dye mixed up from oil colors and thinner. It is good to have some dried luminous material to experiment with, because the dye cannot be removed once it comes in contact with the luminous paint on the hands. If the color is wrong, there is no recourse but to strip the hands and start over, which is a frustrating and time-consuming task. As you can see from the picture, the match was quite good in this case.

The cord was likewise in need of repair. Someone had replaced the original cord (not unusual; the cords are the first thing to go on these clocks) with a cord of the wrong color. Above you can see the replacement is a cloth-covered black cord, which matches the clock case. The grommet was replaced as well, and this is very important. Without a good grommet, the cord will fray and become unsafe as the metal case becomes electrified when the bare wire eventually comes in contact with it through wear.

On some early Westclox (and other) electric alarm clocks you will find that setting the alarm involves turning a knob on the back of the clock with an accompanying “dial” located on the back as well. Looking at the picture to the right, you can plainly



see that this is the case with this clock. These “dials” are made of .040” plastic which, over time, dries out and becomes incredibly brittle. Even handling the part can cause damage to it. Unfortunately, most of these are found fairly deteriorated, broken, or even missing altogether. Again that was the case for these. We’ve had a “lifetime supply” of these miniature dials reproduced with .040” Lexan plastic. Above you can see that the replacement is quite nice and will serve for another 50 years or more.



The completed clock had an interesting trip back to its owner. In the incredible confusion of our move, Teri dropped the FedEx package off at the Post Office by mistake. The Post Office assured us that it was turned over to FedEx. However, it went missing for over 3 weeks. In fact, we had thought it was lost and started looking around for another clock from our collection to restore for the customer (that would not have been a good outcome regardless, since the customer loved his original clock). Fortunately, it did finally arrive at the customer’s home just after Christmas. It is certainly an example of why we pack these clocks conservatively for shipment (double boxed, plenty of bubble wrap and Styrofoam peanuts). Fortunately this clock was very well packed.

Condolences

Chapter 15 lost several long time members and friends in 2015: George Kiser, Jim Robinson and George Deeter of Georgetown; June Fear, and in December, Ron Davidson, both of San Antonio. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families and friends of these long-time members and friends.

Chapter membership

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

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

Upcoming Events

January 16th – Chapter 15 Program

Jay Holloway will kick off 2016 with a program on “Restoration of an Early American Tall Case Clock.” You won’t want to miss the story of this clock and the work required to restore its “life.”

January 24th – NAWCC webinar – 6 p.m.

R.O. (Bob) Schmitt will present the first webinar program in 2016. The program will be on “English Skeleton Clocks with an emphasis on Architectural Models.” You may register online now at <http://www.nawcc.org/index.php/workshops/webinars>

February 20th – Chapter 15 Program

Continuing with the Holloway theme, on February 20th, Pat will share a presentation on the Elgin Watch Company’s history and some of their innovative advertising.

February 21st – NAWCC webinar – 6 p.m.

Bob Frishman will present “Horology in Art” during the February webinar.

March 3rd – 4th – Lone Star Regional in Mesquite

Registration is now available on line at the Chapter 124 website or by printing the form for the ever-popular Lone Star Regional. The host hotel, Hampton Inn Mesquite, always books up quickly, so to ensure a room at this hotel, you may book online or call them directly at 972-329-3100 and dial “0” for front desk.

Treasurer’s Report (December)

Chapter Account	\$7,862.58
Inc: Dues	300.00
Exp: Newsletter	-0.00
Closing Balance	\$8,162.58
Regional Account	\$3,438.60
Exp: No change	

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Spot a clock

As Huey Lewis And The News sang, sometimes it's "Hip to be Square"! Or maybe rectangular...Regardless this month's spot a clock from Jay Pine shows that square and rectangular mystery clocks really can be hip!

Don't miss Jay's great article featuring some very special mystery clocks in the *January Watch & Clock Bulletin* – "Sylvania Television Award and Its Clock: From Fame to Obscurity."



Left to right are Jefferson "Golden Secret", "Suspense" and "Contemporaire"; Haddon "South Wind"; and MasterCrafters "Fantasy"