



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

September 24, 10:00 a.m.

Canon Pinion Remover, Arbor
Straightener, and Other Special
Purpose Tools
Michael Webb
Windermere Clubhouse
16800 Gower Street, Pflugerville

October 22, 10:00 a.m.

Chapter program
Windermere Clubhouse, Pflugerville

November

Chapter potluck

December

No Chapter meeting
December 1-4 Lathe FSW
College Station

Current Board Members

President – Ken Reindel

President@nawcc-chapter15.org

Vice-President – Bob Rasmussen

VicePresident@nawcc-chapter15.org

Treasurer – Tom Tarpy

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Secretary – Pat Holloway

Secretary@nawcc-chapter15.org

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President's Message

This month we've been challenged to wonder just what Mother Nature has in mind for us. We continue to deal with the worst drought on record here in Central Texas. Although most of us have the advantage of air conditioning, the Texas power grid was greatly challenged to within a few percent of capacity in early to mid August as temperatures prolonged in the 105-110 degree range. The major disappointment is the trees, wildlife and crop impact, which will ultimately bear the permanent scars from this. Then, just last week we see historic flooding as a result of Hurricane Irene along the entire east coast of the US. Millions are still without power. Can you imagine the situation in Vermont, where folks are literally cut off from civilization due to washed out bridges and roads? Irene left \$1 billion damage...the tenth \$1 billion storm in the USA this year. We could sure use some of that rain here....but pray it doesn't come with that level of destruction.

We were glad to be able to attend the All Texas Regional (San Jacinto, Houston). This event has historically been one of our favorites; we've been attending this program since we've been in Austin (over 11 years now). It's always been a very welcoming and friendly Regional for us. Although attendance numbers are said to be down somewhat from what they were 11 years ago, the great variety of horological items continue to make it fascinating and fun to attend. I'm proud to say that Chapter 15 was prominent at the All Texas Regional this year. In addition to numerous attendees from our Chapter, Pat Holloway presented two very interesting sessions. For those of you who could not attend, we have included some pictures and a summary of the event later on in this Newsletter.

Later this month, Michael Webb will be doing a program for us on some unusual clock tools and their uses. We'll hold that program in our new Pflugerville location. Hope to see you there. Also, I am excited to say that we've been invited by the local IEEE (Institute of Electronic and Electrical Engineers) Chapter here in Austin to co-sponsor an upcoming Monday Night technical program. It's a great opportunity for us to make a few new friends and share our interest in horology with technical folks of like mind. It will also give us a chance to learn a few things about another technical organization here in Austin. The topic will be related to the History of Timekeeping (focused on the Industrial Revolution and beyond). We'll be providing more information on that once it is available.

Welcome new members!

James Williams - Harlingen

Darrah Artzner - Houston

Treasurer's Report	
Chapter Account	\$7,415.66
Exp: June and Aug Newsletter	36.80
Income: Membership dues	<u>60.00</u>
	\$7,438.86
Regional Account	\$4,263.60

All Texas Regional – Houston

If you weren't able to attend the All Texas Regional last month in Houston, you missed a great opportunity to connect with other clock and watch enthusiasts. In addition to the lively silent auctions and "It's for free!" tables, there were two excellent exhibits and a wide variety of programs.

John Hubby was the keynote speaker, and in addition to his program on Saturday evening, throughout the week-end, just outside the Mart Room, there was an exhibit of a wide variety of torsion pendulum clocks – commonly known to most of us as anniversary clocks.



Torsion clock exhibit



Close up of various torsion pendulums

A second treat was found just a short step away in the Mart Room: a **complete** display of Fashion clocks, including Seth Thomas, Gilbert (Southern Calendar Clock Co.), Ithaca, New Haven, and National Clock Company. Each of the clocks was identified and several included additional descriptions. There was also a display of very interesting and insightful related ephemera.



The "Always in Fashion" display



A few of the Fashion clocks from other manufacturers

As you can imagine, interest was high around the Fashion clocks on various mart tables! And the interest didn't seem to stop with Fashions. Apparently there were some great deals to be found, as a lot of people with smiling faces were seen carrying clocks out the doors. Some of them were even seen making multiple trips! Maybe we'll get to hear more about a few of these finds at our meeting on the 24th.

If you've never attended the All Texas Chapters Regional, you might want to mark the calendar for next year's event. Since Chapter 15 co-hosts this event, we'll be sure to pass along the dates as well as volunteer opportunities. Being a part of the dedicated team hosting a Regional can be very rewarding and gives us a chance to get to know other members.

Just a note – in August 2012 (that's next year) the All Texas Chapters Regional will be moving to the Marriott Houston Westchase which is a couple of miles west from the current location, just inside the Sam Houston tollway. There are abundant restaurants and shopping close by, and in addition to a spacious facility for the Mart and programs, **PARKING is FREE!!**

Restoring Wood Alarm Clock Cases

~ Ken Reindel

(Last month's issue included the first installment of this article. Following is part 2, with part 3 in October.)

Preparing the Surface. The subject of our restoration will be the case shown below. It is from a Telechron desk clock circa 1935 or so. The movement is driven by a classic Telechron movement powered by a small sealed rotor. The rotor is H style. As received, the cord was unsafe to use. The movement and rotor were gummed up and did not run. The case was likewise highly distressed. The subject of electric alarm clock movement repair would be a great future article. These clocks are gaining in popularity but bargains can still be found.



The right picture above is a close up of the finish. It can be seen that the finish has heavily alligatorated. It is distressed, scratched, etc., but the real issue is the finish is failing. It will not easily dissolve because it has become dry and brittle. It cannot be partially removed because this process will continue to reveal more cracked and alligator effect underneath, all the way down to the bare wood. I will choose to remove it completely down to the bare wood.

The first thing we want to do is to identify the original finish. Most early clock cases were either shellac (prior to 1920) or lacquer (later than 1920). However we must approach this with care since there was some degree of overlap between them. To test, we will try some shellac thinner in an inconspicuous, small area for example on the back or underneath the clock. Apply the thinner to a small cloth, and wet a very small area less than 1/2 inch square. We're looking to see if the finish softens in this spot. After applying the thinner, you can try touching it again with a dry cloth or your finger. If it is sticky, then shellac was the original finish. If the shellac thinner will not soften the finish, then try lacquer thinner.

If the lacquer thinner does not soften the finish, you are faced with a decision. Most likely the original finish has been replaced or top coated with a

varnish or polyurethane of some kind. If the article is in generally good condition, it might be wise to leave it alone, or use a more conservative touch up method such as tinted wax, rubbing out the finish, etc. Removing the polyurethane is an option, but you risk bubbling the delicate wood or veneers underneath. You'll have to make that call.

In the case of our subject clock, shellac thinner did indeed cause the finish to become sticky,



but it did not soften it. The true telltale in this case was a look at the cloth that was used to rub the finish. The solvent-soaked cloth picked up much more finish when the shellac thinner was used. When the lacquer thinner

was tried, very little finish was picked up on the cloth at all. Conclusion: The finish was shellac.

Caution: When using any solvent or solvent based finish, it is wise to wear a NIOSH approved breather, or to work outdoors. Even if you wear a breather indoors, it is important to provide adequate ventilation to avoid dangerous buildup of flammable vapors. And of course, do not smoke or when using these products and keep them away from any ignition source! When handling these materials, or cloths soaked with them, always wear rubber gloves. Don't wear latex gloves since the solvents will destroy the latex. Always keep safety foremost in your mind.

Below is a view of the clock case, 45 minutes later, after the finish was totally removed. A few key points about this process. First, using shellac thinner, as much or as little of the finish as you like can be removed. If your desire is to remove a badly damaged

outer surface, assuming the finish has not alligatorated, then you can do that. However, if the finish is alligatorated as ours was, you can make much faster work of removing all of the



shellac by switching to acetone instead of shellac thinner. This material will much more aggressively remove shellac finish, leaving a clean wood surface underneath in seconds. You will also notice that we had some veneer come loose; not to worry. We will have to take care of this as part of our next article. This must be repaired before finishing can proceed.

Do you ever “spot a clock”?

~ Pat Holloway

When you’re out and about, do you find yourself noticing public clocks in various locations? I’m discovering that clocks can appear in the some of the least expected places.



Last November, we were driving through Half Moon Bay, CA, and spotted these clocks. Needless to say, I could imagine our daughter rolling her eyes as I yelled at her to slow down and frantically stuck my camera out the window to snap these shots. We had just been admiring the majesty of the Pacific Ocean and driving through some awe-inspiring redwoods, so I’m sure my desire to capture something as mundane as a couple of clocks probably struck her as rather odd.

Then, in June of this year, when she joined me for dinner during a trip to San Jose, CA, she patiently waited on a busy sidewalk so I could capture this great 4-dial street clock.

This was the second clock I encountered in a three or four block stretch. Unfortunately, I was towing my luggage at that time and wasn’t able to get my camera (phone in this case) out in time to snap a shot. I definitely plan to do a little research to see if there are others in the area.



If you’ve spotted clocks, please consider sharing the locations and/or pictures and stories with us to help raise our awareness, too. There is also a Spot-a-Clock link on the NAWCC website where you can submit sightings. The information is then added to a database that is available in pdf format for download.