

139. San Jacinto

Location: Turn-Key Coatings, 8411 Rannie Road, Houston, TX 77080

When: Second Saturday of month, 8am-noon

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Annual Meeting in February

A presentation was given during the chapter 139 annual meeting on February 3 by Ben Fulbright. The talk was concerned with the city of Houston tower clocks, from the very beginning to today.

The first part of the discussion detailed some information about the currently installed tower clock units in the current city hall. The building was built mid-century and the clock unit was an electric clock of uncertain manufacture, though a very large movement. One particular aspect of this clock was a part of the general presentation. It seems that the hands of the clock, with a twelve foot diameter dial, were equipped with neon lights to allow citizens to see the time at night. At that time, likely around 1980-90, the neon tubes required a fairly large transformer to function. The transformer was placed near the middle of the hand--significantly un-balancing the hands. About 1995, Ben was invited to visit the clock to diagnose the problem which caused the clock to fail to operate. The gears from the motor had quite literally 'chewed' up the gear attached to the hour cannon upon which was installed the minute hand with the serious imbalance problem discussed above. When the neon company was told about the cause of the clock not operating, they quickly remedied the problem and the clock is still running.

The next part of the talk dealt with the original clock for the city of Houston in the 1895 city hall. The history of the city hall was covered; from installation and opening through pretty well total destruction by fire in the 1930 time frame. The clock was salvaged and stored by the city for a number of years, after which a local clock collector got ownership. That collector happened to be a charter member of chapter 139. He sold the clock some time later to a man who wanted to open an entertainment center in village mills, Texas. He built what was billed as "the world's largest mantel clock" in the park. City of Houston administrators heard of this and attempted to re-gain ownership. The park owner/operator agreed to return the clock to Houston at the end of a ten year period. The venue was damaged by fire about 1985 and the city of Houston got possession at that time. A public display of the clock, including the four large original dial and the original bell was built in the market square area of downtown Houston.

Ben has made several repair trips to the clock and these were detailed in the talk. At one point, a chapter meeting was held at the clock where each member attending got to wind the clock, operate the strike of the clock, and generally get a good feeling about the city hall clock.

The clock again fell into disrepair and the city decided to install a remontoire system for automatic winding. The clock today sits idle.

Chapter 139 volunteered to assist with the unloading at Chapter 124 Mesquite Regional in early March, 2018.

Presentations:

January Tech Session- Tim Glanzman gave a presentation on buying items at NAWCC Regionals. He covered items to bring and recommended that new members ask experienced members for input before purchasing an item.

February Tech Session- Tim Glanzman gave a presentation on evaluating clocks before you purchase it. Again he recommended to seek advice from experienced members.

Board update:

The board is moving ahead with developing training classes for 2018.