

The Public Time Initiative: The Idea of the Decade

Frank Del Greco, NAWCC Director

Your board of directors and headquarters staff enjoy hearing members' ideas. Ideas help us to continuously improve the organization. In fact, we really like good ideas and love great ones. A couple of years ago James Storrow of Stormville, New York, suggested to council that we begin a project to catalog all of the public clocks in America.

The idea itself is not new, as there are many members who have created inventories of the public clocks in their own states. Some of these inventories are on the web. In addition, the Antiquarian Horological Society initiated "Project 2000" in the United Kingdom, which is designed to catalog the public clocks in England. What makes James Storrow's idea great and sets it apart from others is that he proposed that we not only catalog America's clocks, but we also do detailed inspections to find out what is actually behind the dials. We would then provide resources to communities to help repair, restore, and conserve these clocks, and thereby connect with the public.

Your board of directors feels that this initiative is so important that, now that the merger is behind us, we should make it a priority. Listed here are the benefits that James envisioned when he proposed the initiative to us:

- We would create a complete database of public clocks in the United States.
- Local chapters, as a public service, would restore clocks correctly and in accord with and at minimal cost to the local communities.
- We would create a bond between the local communities and the NAWCC.
- As a result of this program, communities would not sell clocks as scrap or allow them to be removed from public buildings.
- We would improve information exchange among the chapters that do restorations.



Street clock at NAWCC Headquarters donated by Louise Bell (NC).

The Public Time Initiative

VISION

(A picture of the initiative in the future, completed state.)

The NAWCC maintains an up-to-date, publicly accessible inventory of all public clocks in America. It is useful to NAWCC members and the public alike for research and other purposes. Resources are available pro bono to communities to assist in the preservation, repair, and restoration of public clocks. Success stories wherein NAWCC members have assisted communities are plentiful and well known.

MISSION STATEMENT

(The purpose of the initiative—why we are here.)

Our mission is to provide methodologies, resources, and encouragement to inventory, preserve, repair, restore, and disseminate knowledge about America's public clocks as a public service.

STRATEGY

(The general approach or plan that will be used.)

We will use volunteers as much as possible to develop and implement all phases of the initiative. We will attempt to create an initiative that is self-funded.

We will use a three-phase approach:

- Phase IA: SpotAClock—A pilot inventory receiving "clock spottings" from members only. (Implement by 10/04.)
- Phase IB: The inventory and "clock spotting" capability is rolled out to the public. (Implement by 6/05.)
- Phase II: Qualified chapter members inspect clocks in their local areas and add their findings to the inventory. (Implement by 1/06.)
- Phase III: Resources (e.g., qualified repair people from chapters, sources of parts, technical expertise) will be made available to communities where clocks need preservation, repair and/or restoration. (Implement by 6/06.)
- We will develop and implement a communications plan early in the process. Communication tools will include: The BULLETIN, MART, NAWCC_News, and the Tower Clock Chapter 134 newsletter. We will communicate to the public media through the NAWCC director of marketing and public relations.
- We will use the Museum's PastPerfect database software in the pilot phase while determining what we need long-term.

- NAWCC and the local chapters would receive increased publicity. NAWCC headquarters would use this publicity as a tool for increasing membership and improving Museum visitation.
- Cities with restored clocks would regain a focal point previously forgotten or thought to be lost forever.

We couldn't agree more with James. We see this initiative both as a way to improve the visibility of the NAWCC (and thereby attract new members) and as a way to improve our service to the public. The box insert on the previous page gives more details about the program and its three-phase approach. SpotAClock is the first phase. As you can see, we will start with a pilot program where NAWCC members will submit public clock locations. Once we get the database established and are able to ensure accurate data submission and entry methodologies, including the elimination of duplicate spottings, we will roll the program out to the public. We realize that ongoing inspections and restorations will continue to occur before Phases II and III are officially launched, and we are prepared to include that data and support those efforts.

At the special council meeting in Orlando, NAWCC Director Connie Stuckert and I outlined a plan to council to launch this initiative. I accepted the role of project manager.

When I mention this initiative to members, they seem to line up, ready and willing to share with us the public clocks that they have inventoried and/or repaired. We are not quite ready to start accepting data—but we will let you know when the time is right. I am interested in receiving members' comments and suggestions and can be reached at fdelgreco@aol.com. In addition, Jim Bland, our NAWCC director of marketing and public relations, is seeking information on current, in-progress restorations so that he can solicit the local media for coverage of the event.



The NAWCC
Headquarters tower
clock.

