

Old Dominion Chapter No. 34
of the
National Association Of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.

1959-1984

On November 15, 1956, the first effort to form a chapter in eastern Virginia was made by Page Burgess of Norfolk who wrote to Stafford Greene in Richmond asking if he were interested in helping to form a chapter in this area. Only ten National members were required, but the two of them, after canvassing the Norfolk and Richmond areas, were unable to find ten interested members. (Shenandoah Chapter in the western part of Virginia had already been formed.)

Three years later, after a renewed effort, ten members were finally secured and the first meeting was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, on November 22, 1959. Mr. Joe A. Wright, President of the Shenandoah Chapter, conducted the meeting and presented the Charter on behalf of NAWCC to Stafford B. Greene who was elected President. Page P. Burgess, Norfolk, and W. L. Mackin, Richmond, were elected Vice Presidents, and J. J. Forrer, Saluda, was elected Secretary-Treasurer. The following was adopted:

The name would be "Old Dominion Chapter".

There would be four general meetings each year.

The NAWCC Constitution and By-Laws would be the Chapter's Constitution and By-Laws.

The dues were fixed at \$3.00 per year.

By February, 1962, membership had increased only to fourteen. During this period, the average attendance was eight members and six visitors and the balance in the treasury less than \$50.00. At this time and in this financial condition, the Old Dominion Chapter was asked by National to have the 1962 National Convention in Richmond with the help of the Shenandoah Chapter which was also about the same size and in similar financial condition. Old Dominion declined, but Mr. Wright of the Shenandoah Chapter invited them. With only about four members from Old Dominion and fewer from Shenandoah to do the work, plans went forward.

In May, 1962, the only National Convention of the NAWCC to be held to date in the area of the Old Dominion Chapter took place at The John Marshall Hotel in Richmond. Arrangements made at the hotel were good with ample room for mart and exhibits. Highlights offered were tours of a tobacco factory and battlegrounds, a walking tour including St. Paul's Church, Lee's home, and a good musical pro-gram at the Valentine Museum. The BULLETIN gave a very nice write-up saying: "The Capital of the Confederacy was host to the 18th Annual Convention of NAWCC, and one hastens to

admit that Richmond more than ever embodies the warmth, the friendliness, and the fellowship long associated with our glorious Southland..." (see BULLETIN August 1962 Vol. X, No. 5). Earl Strickler, the National Secretary was a great help in making the Convention a success.

There were over 400 in attendance, the third largest National Convention up to that time. From February, 1964, to March, 1966, membership totaled fifteen persons and attendance had improved; the average was twelve members and fourteen visitors per meeting.

In October of 1970, the Old Dominion Chapter under Vern Holman's leadership served as host for the Mid-Eastern Regional which was held at the Golden Triangle Motor Hotel in Norfolk. About 250 attended, and the BULLETINS of February and August, 1971, cover this successful meeting with numerous photos and a comprehensive description.

In 1971, the NAWCC in Columbia, Pennsylvania, moved into a new headquarters building which housed museum, library, and offices. Old Dominion Chapter No. 34 donated \$250.00 from the treasury for this NAWCC Building Fund.

In September, 1972, Chapter member and attorney E. G. Garrett, Jr. was appointed to draw up a new Constitution and By-Laws for the Chapter. These were approved by the membership in March, 1973.

Meetings of the Chapter had been held at various locations in the Chapter area, alternating among Richmond, Hampton, Williamsburg, and Norfolk until the gasoline shortage in 1974 prompted the choice of Williamsburg for a meeting place as being the most central point for the majority of our members. Attendance improved considerably over the next few meetings causing the members to decide to continue holding meetings in the Williamsburg area. In December, 1974, the membership voted to change the number of meetings from four a year to six a year, on the second Sunday of February, April, June, August, October, and December. The Chapter also accepted an invitation to be host for the Mid-Eastern Regional in 1975.

The very successful 1975 Mid-Eastern Regional, chaired by Robert Draucker, was held at The John Marshall Hotel in Richmond October 30 through November 2, with an attendance of over 550. There were 180 mart tables in the large convention area, and the two auctions attracted 250 items.

In August, 1976, the membership voted to incorporate the Chapter. The law firm of Christian, Barton, Epps, Brent and Chappell of Richmond was selected to handle the incorporation and to draw up the new Constitution and By-Laws. On January 28, 1977, the Charter of Incorporation was granted by the State Corporation Commission to "Old Dominion Chapter No. 34 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc." In 1976 the membership passed the 120 mark, and attendance at the meetings increased to an average of 60 to 70 per meeting.

In 1976, Robert Draucker agreed to prepare a slide program featuring clocks owned by some of the members of the Chapter. This program is entitled "The Old Dominion Clock Treasury". After its initial viewing by Chapter members at the August, 1977, meeting, the program was presented to National to add to their slide programs available to all chapters.

To assist developing expertise of Chapter members, training classes in refinishing and repair techniques were conducted during 1975-1977 by Dale Hickman in the Tidewater area and by James Duckworth, Lawrence Edwards, and David Lipscombe in the Richmond area.

Chapter 34 hosted the October, 1980, Mid-Eastern Regional in Richmond, Virginia, under the leadership of Robert Draucker. The Regional was exemplary of chapter participation, with many members providing assistance through various ways. A large number of volunteers made the task of registration and mart set-up, difficult because of space and time limitations, a smooth operation. Approximately 800 persons enjoyed the outstanding exhibit, lectures, and workshops as well as the two auctions. One measure of the success of this Chapter effort was a financial surplus, which was set aside to be a reserve for future obligations and educational benefits to be planned. Looking to 1986, Chapter 34 is scheduled to host another Mid-Eastern Regional, the location to be in the Norfolk area.

Coincident with growth of Chapter membership levels came complexities of various business aspects of our non-profit educational and historical activities. Council recognized the importance of establishing tax-exempt status for Chapter 34, to supplement State Incorporation gained in 1977. Accordingly, in June, 1980, Council ordered preparation of a formal application to the Federal Internal Revenue Service under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. That was submitted in March, 1981, and followed by modifications specified by the IRS in November, 1981, and February, 1982. Exempt status was approved by the IRS as of March 25, 1982. This recognition may prevail so long as Chapter operations (as reported annually) observe the boundaries outlined in the final application.

The Chapter Library has been expanded from time to time through funds allocated from the treasury as well as through gifts. A library list is up-dated periodically and copies are furnished to members. Approximately 72 books and 21 reprint catalogs comprise the Library presently. All are brought to meetings by an appointed "librarian" to be available for borrowing. Experience shows steady use of the library.

The Old Dominion Chapter supports many NAWCC projects, as well as other Chapters and independent museums, both by personal action of members and by financial gifts. Several members have extended their range of NAWCC activities by serving on the National level as committee members, directors, and officers of the Association. In 1977, \$500.00 was given to NAWCC for the expanded Museum Building Fund Phase I; in August, 1982, a donation of \$500.00 was made to NAWCC to assist with the BULLETIN subject indexing project. An additional \$500.00 was given to the NAWCC Museum Campaign Fund in 1984. Further, donations have been made to the Valentine Museum of

Richmond, the American Clock and Watch Museum in Bristol, Connecticut, and to Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts.

The Chapter serves various local interests also. During the summer of 1981, the Chapter assisted the Valentine Museum in preparing a historical exhibition entitled "Keeping Time in Richmond", with members giving personal time and loaning watches, clocks, and tools related to the Victorian days of Richmond's jewelry and clock businesses. Robert Draucker served as guest curator for the exhibit, assisted by William Williams. Substantial contributions, through research and exhibit preparation, were given by Mrs. Mezia Bennett, Henry Durbin, and Joseph Kent.

Another example focuses on the town of Orange, Virginia, where the tower clock in the County Court-house needed extensive repairs. During the period 1975-76, members Robert Draucker and David Lipscombe conducted the mechanical repairs and restored the clock to operation.

Similarly, Richmond's Old City Hall and the historic railroad station in Shockhoe Bottom both display old tower clocks needing restoration. As both buildings are being renovated, Chapter members volunteered for removal and preservation of the clocks; their efforts have not yet been accepted by the authorities.

In a joint venture with the Tri-City Watchmakers and Jewelers Guild (an affiliate chapter of the Horological Association of Virginia, Inc./American Watchmakers Institute), an extensive exhibit of clocks, watches, movements, tools, and equipment was held at the Science Museum of Virginia in January, 1984. Robert Draucker was the Chapter coordinator for this event, and Raymond Obertone represented the Tri-City Guild. Members were available to answer questions for the public. A similar exhibit is scheduled in the future.

A number of members are active participants in other horological organizations such as the Horological Association of Virginia, Inc. and affiliate guilds.

For our on-going supportive efforts, the Old Dominion Chapter was awarded a Presidential Citation in 1981, 1982, and 1983 by NAWCC.

Chapter membership totals 153 persons as of December, 1984. Meetings are scheduled six times each year at Williamsburg's Fort Magruder Inn and Conference Center; typical attendance ranges from about 60 to 100 members and guests. Normal programming includes a mart start-ing at 11:00 a.m. and a Mini-Workshop or demonstration by a member or the guest speaker at 12:00 Noon. Lun-cheon is served, followed by a business meeting and thereafter the main program. Chapter members frequently speak from their field of expertise. Guest speakers, usually from the NAWCC organization, are used from time to time as well as slide/tape presentations borrowed from the NAWCC Library. Notable guest speakers have included Chris H. Bailey, Robert C. Cheney, Lee H. Davis, Irvin Rosen, and the late John P. Wikswo.

The foregoing comments are intended to highlight this Chapter's growth in educational and historical activities as well as contributions of the increasing member-ship. For more complete details, one should refer to the Chapter Minutes maintained by the Secretary. Various parts compiled and prepared by:

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December, 1984