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Executive Director's Digest

A large percentage of our members who have joined the NAWCC in just the last few years are relatively unfamiliar with the Association's organizational structure and functions, particularly that of the various committees. There are fifteen standing national committees and two museum committees that vary in size from three to over ten members each. Members and chairmen of the committees are appointed by the President, except the nominating committee which is comprised of the last three past presidents and who serve for the remainder of the term of the administration during which they are appointed. Committee members may be reappointed by the next President. A complete list of the committees, along with the officers, directors, trustees, and staff is usually printed on the last page of the BULLETIN.

There is no real secret on how to be appointed to a standing committee. Any member who has a special interest or has expertise relating to one of the committees and wants to contribute their talents should contact the chairman of that particular committee and discuss the possibilities of becoming involved. Several committees, particularly the Editorial, Research, Library, and Acquisition committees, are always working on various projects that could use some assistance. Offering to participate in a specific project is an excellent way to become familiar with the members of a committee and to get a feel for how things are done.

I've heard several stories from committee chairmen who have had members express various levels of dissatisfaction about how things were being handled by their committee. The response of the chairman is usually to invite the critical member to "join the party" and lend his talents to make whatever it is he is displeased about better. Often the answer is negative, followed by a long string of excuses.

This is not to say that criticism is either discouraged or ignored from those who usually are not actively involved in the Association. *Accuracy and attention to detail are skills that are honed by a constituency that demands perfection.* One fairly new member recently wrote to Headquarters stating that, if one looked through a magnifying glass, the tower clock and the McClintock clock pictured on the covers of the December '93 BULLETIN were two minutes apart and should have been corrected.

Everyone in the NAWCC who holds an elected, appointed or staff position desires the highest standard of service and horological information that can be provided to the membership. We need more perfectionists like our member with the magnifying glass who are willing to participate.

Thomas J. Bartels

Book Reviews

LA MONTRE FRANCAISE

Adolphe Chapiro

Hard cover, 464 pages, 1000+ photographs, most in color. 9½" × 11½". Published 1992 in French by les editions de l'amateur, 5 rue de Montholon 75009, Paris @850 FF.

What may be considered the most comprehensive expository treatise on the French watch is this massive and authoritative book by Dr. Adolphe Chapiro. He is a leading horological authority, and is director and past president of the French, Paris-based watch and clock collectors (A.N.C.A.H.A.). The author, whose doctorate is in chemistry, is also a director of research of the Centre Nationale de Scientific research. He has contributed over 300 articles on scientific techniques in the technical field of chemical application of chemistry to plastics. Horologically, he has authored over 40 articles on its history as well as cataloging the French timepieces of the (Rockford, U.S.A.) Time Museum. His other major horological work on French horology is his book, *Jean Antoine Lepine Horloger (1720–1814),* Editions de l'Amateur. He has also contributed articles to the publications of the British Antiquarian Horological Society, (Swiss) Chronometrophilia, and the BULLETIN of the NAWCC.

There are over 1000 illustrations of 800 plus watches. The extra views are enlargements of individualistic features of these timepieces. Each is professionally photographed, almost all items in larger-than-life views.

A short history of the watch opens this book with an explanation of how France, following the 30 Years War, 1618–1648, also saw the fading of Germany as a producer of timepieces. Miniaturization of the table clock had already taken place some years earlier and the first truly portable timepieces were mainly French small drum-shaped or spherical. The second half of the seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of France as the principal producer of watches with England and Switzerland also entering that scene. By the second half of that century, some watches appeared small even by current standards, all pictorially represented and explained in this volume.

Exhibited are very early enamel watches dated about 1630, introduced in Blois and soon in Paris. One beautiful

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example by Jehan Cremsdorf (Paris), which deserves its full page color photo, is reported to have been auctioned at Christies in 1986. Rock crystal watches, chased and highly engraved cases appear, as do pages from the pattern books, which these artisans used to select their designs. Later on, tortoise shell and shagreen case coverings were used, examples of which are included. Bombe' dials in porcelain, and with paintings, emerged close to that period.

The changes in balance cocks to the carved and chased circular balance covers secured with diametrically opposite screws followed later in that century. Chapiro states that with the introduction of the spiral balance spring by Huygens, a new dynamic era began. He adds that in 1665, Christiaan Huygens was then in Paris and was a "protege" of Louis XIV. The coiled balance spring spurred a great deal of experimentation by the leading watchmakers of France. Thuret, DeBaufre, Julien and Pierre Leroy, Berthoud and Hautefuille are among others whose efforts can be studied in this section.

A 64-page section is devoted to the development following Huygens contribution to the watch. Many French watches are shown without fusees. The author also acknowledges that technology from France quickly reached over the Alps into Switzerland and, like all technology, to and from both sides of the English Channel.

The appearance of the typical French "oignon" watch is covered in a 50-page section. Many types and variations, complications of calendric, alarm, and repeating details are revealed here. Some, despite their bulkiness, were attractive and very well-made.

From 1730–1790, a long period of invention and development occurred in France. Chapiro devotes 102 pages to this era which includes the Louis XV and Louis XVI periods. The watches in this section are representative of the masterpieces of famous French makers. These complicated watches are in full-page, full color view.

Although the contributions of Lepine are adequately covered in Chapiro's earlier book on this maker, he is given his deserved niche here as well. The watch's development in general in its stylistic evolvement has became smaller and thinner, yet attractively ornamented. Movement design and variations by shapes are displayed in comparative views.

No book on French horology dares omit Breguet, one of France's greatest horologists, and this book is no exception. It devotes over 50 pages of photos, production tables, and examples of all types of the grandmaster's watches with generously-sized photos and drawings. In that era, the Breguet, "Marie Antoinette" watch was, by far, the world's most complicated. It is shown with under-the-dial view and contains the only reference to a tourbillon. A helpful section of this chapter is devoted to counterfeit Breguet watches in which Chapiro points out both subtle and obvious differences from the genuine. A listing of the many artists Breguet employed to create this masterpiece and the amount of their contributions are also provided.

French chronometry and samples of its components are viewed with some drawings of their escapements as well as the chronometers themselves.

The last formal section, "The elaboration of the 'moderne watch' (1830–1900)" shows the movement engraved with floral patterns, yet retaining the Lepine-type bridges. Cases and inside back dust covers also are engraved with informative statements of manufacturer and technical features of its movements, including its jewel count. Mass produced watches in Besancon, the French horological capital, show watches by Lip, who at one time had the most complete watch factory in the world.

The last section contains a list of about 200 French watchmakers who produced "oignon" watches and about 50 Swiss, four Italian, one Belgian and two English who also made these. Charts of their dimensions and characteristics, alarms, repeaters and clock watch actions are provided. In the following part of this final section are reproductions of catalogue pages of the house of Breguet with line engravings of the different types available from that master horologist.

In a book of this size and span it is difficult to keep a review to a readable length. The contents of this book are of such high expert calibre that to mention each important feature would tax editorial indulgence. Despite the French text, the pictures tell so much and anyone who would enrich his knowledge should be able to profit greatly, even with a good French-English dictionary as a companion.

(Henry B. Fried)

COMIC CHARACTER WATCHES: SEVEN DECADES OF MEMORIES

Hy Brown and Nancy Thomas

Hard cover, 280 pages, 375 watches in color of 600 illustrations. Published 1992 by Schiffer Publishing Co., 1469 Morstein Rd, West Chester, PA 19380. Price $79.95.

The husband and wife team of Hy Brown and Nancy Thomas has assembled a very significant collection of comic character watches. They pay much tribute to Robert Lesser, a pioneer collector of such timepieces as well as to collector Howard Brenner, whose book on such watches was published in 1987, *Modern Comic Character Dial Watches.*

The authors state that character watches began production in 1933 when the Ingersoll Watch Company of Waterbury made special arrangements with Disney to produce and market the Mickey Mouse watch. Its success sparked competitors to produce watches with well-known comic strip and movie screen characters, sports and highly recognizable political figures.

The authors state that over 5000 different subjects have appeared in such watches. They have chosen and photographed in true color almost 375 different types and about 200 others which are pictured in their book.

Mr. Brown, with an engineering and realty organization background, became hooked on such watches after receiving an original 1933 Mickey Mouse watch as a gift. The couple's own collection totals over 1400 such pieces and is still growing. Together they strive to refine their collection.

All photos of subject watches are in high-quality color. The earliest such watch in America is an 1893 Chicago World's Fair item, and another made in 1908 of Buster Brown, a precocious comic strip boy, are illustrated. However, collectors of American pocket watches can point out that the New England Watch Company of Waterbury produced colored, hand-painted, fired-enameled dial watches with the various positions of baseball players instead of numerals, as well as some of their cheaper watches with paper dials with patriotic symbols in the 1890's.

In 1933, Ingersoll employed just 300 workers. After the success of the Mickey Mouse pocket watch in just two years they had to employ 3000 workers to pro-

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duce 2,500,000 watches. In 1957, Ingersoll, now operating as the U.S. Time Corp., presented Walt Disney with the 25 millionth watch.

There was a hiatus of ten years when few such watches were produced, but in 1968, U.S. Time, which had changed its name to Timex, again went into production of the Mickey Mouse watch.

In 1972, the license to make Disney character and Mickey Mouse watches was acquired by the Bradley Time Corp., a division of Elgin Industries. Bradley had the exclusive rights to produce these from 1973 to 1985. The license was then transferred to the Seiko group until 1990 when numerous other producers were licensed to make and market any Disney character timepiece.

The book is organized rather well, the beginning pages are devoted mainly to early Disney character timepieces including, of course, the charismatic rodent, Mickey Mouse.

Cowboy heroes were the subjects of many makers, domestic and European. The color photos and the characters in each chapter are shown in alphabetical order, making reference and identification comparisons easy.

The quartz watch age is well represented by Elgin and some from France, Japan, and one Mickey Mouse with blinking eyes from Israel, circa 1971.

About 50 pages are devoted to the "Bust or Boom" years, 1958–1972, when the glut of such items caused an almost cessation with Bradley, the only American maker who still marketed the Pinocchio, Quick-Draw McGraw, Yogi Bear and Popeye watch.

The Bradley Time Corp. marketed many watches which actually were good timekeepers. This reviewer was their consultant, who was often called upon to evaluate the various different movements and cases to be used. Bradley also produced the first "digiana" character dial watch with both analog and digital display such as alarm, chronograph, and calendric services shown in the l.c.d. panel below the main character dial. Probably no company had as many models of such watches aside from their regular, jewelry store grade of timepieces.

The last three chapters cover 1985 to the present and feature Seiko's illustrated comic strip bracelet and watches with such characters as Beetle Bailey, Blondie, and Betty Boop, from Helbros and Lorus, Hope Sutton and other makers.

Advertising watches were used as promotional items or obtained by premiums. The authors state that some currently fetch good prices.

Politically inspired character watches start with the Spiro Agnew watch by the Dirty Time Watch Co. and a final chapter depicting personalities including the Beatles, Dizzy Dean, Chaplin and even Beethoven (yes, after all, didn't he dedicate the metronomic movement of his 8th symphony to his good friend Mailzel for inventing the metronome?), and for good measure, there is an Arthur Fiedler (Boston Pop Orchestra) watch. A final full page is devoted to listing all the chief items and their current values to collectors-buyers.

While at first glance it appears as an attractive coffee table book, examining its text proves it to be one of dedication and good information in a fine quality product.

(Henry B. Fried)

S W A T C H ALMOST EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT DEALING & COLLECTING SWATCH WATCHES

Roy Ehrhardt

Spiral binding, 169 pages, 4½" × 8½", fully illustrated in 4-color. Published 1992 by Heart of America Press, Umatilla, FL 32784. Price $106.

This new book is a visual text that prices all Swatch watches known to Ehrhardt and his staff. It contains about 1500 different Swatch watches together with all the details required as to value, date of initial appearance and features.

The Swatch watch itself has an unusual history which Ehrhardt places at 1983. I was in Neuchatel at that time with my yearly group of horological tourists, and we were the guests of Dr. Thompke, then head of Eta, when he unveiled the Swatch watch as a gift. The other tour members quickly purchased others. The unusual construction and idea of Swatch was a spin-off of Eta's earlier "thinnest in the world watch," the "Delerium." In this watch, the case was a two-piece construction, but the sturdy case back also served as the main plate of the watch, which eliminated the regular main plate, allowing a very thin timepiece.

The Swatch was made on the same principle as a one-piece unit with a battery hatch as the only accessible entry for replacing the energy source. The plastic watch crystal was permanently sealed in and the first plain models were an immediate success.

The Swatch design proliferated with hundreds of variations and some with special features and sizes. Thus a clan of Swatch collectors formed, developing into vigorous bidding at auctions.

About 1500 different Swatch models are color-pictured in this book. Each photo has a subtitle of its listing number, official name and model such as "SE4154 PWZ 102 Red Pepper One More Time Swatchtables/1991—limited edition of 9999 designed by Alfred Hofkenst 1991—$275." Tables, code designations and other tables and charts to enable decoding of the various similar subtitles for each watch are within this book.

Ehrhardt further states that regular issue watches, excepting very early ones, have a four digit number printed on the back of the watch, behind the 12 o'clock. The first of these four digits indicate the last number of the year, the second two digits refer to the week number and the last number refers to the number of the day of the week. Example: 7013 = January 3, 1987.

Values given in this book are for mint watches in the original box. Used watches bring less according to Ehrhardt. He states that a slightly worn watch will bring only 50% of the top value.

A Protype Book as explained by the author, "This book is produced one at a time by hand, with the help of a color and black and white copier, and represents the state of our research at the present time."

This is the first comprehensive book devoted to this horological phenomenon. After a decade, Swatch's popularity apparently hasn't diminished. There are collectors who specialize only in the Swatch. A collectors club, "Swatchfanatics Worldwide," is self explanatory. Dealers, too, have welcomed this new army of collectors. To those who accept this as part of the whole watch collecting panorama, this book should rank very high.

(Henry B. Fried)