

PERPETUATING OUR “LEARNED SOCIETY”

Dear Fellow Members:

Have you ever heard of George Brown Goode? I hadn't, or if I had, I'd long forgotten who he was. For many years Dr. Goode was the chief administrator at the Smithsonian Institution and was one of our most innovative thinkers about museums and libraries. While he lived, worked, and wrote in the nineteenth century, much of what he championed defines today's modern museums, libraries, and research centers. In 1895 Goode presented a paper in which he stated:

“The special function of the museum is to preserve and utilize objects of nature and works of art and industry; that of the library to guard the written records of human thought and activity; that of the learned society to discuss facts and theories; that of the school to educate the individual, while all meet together on common ground in the custodianship of learning and in extending the boundaries of existing knowledge.”

When you think about it, Goode's description of the various roles played by the museum, the library, the “learned society,” and the school is an apt description of what we, the NAWCC, have established and promoted. We have built an institution, not by accident or random accretion, but by design and purpose. We sensed that books and pictures without examples and displays give an incomplete and imperfect understanding, but books and pictures and archives together *with* the best horological examples and well-designed displays help us much more effectively understand the story. The most famous definition of a museum is that it consists of well-written labels illustrated by excellent examples. Whether we aspired to it or not, we have become a “learned society” on horology, with some of us admittedly less learned than others, but with all of us keenly interested in time and timekeeping.

Why do I raise all this? First, because rather than appreciating what we have, we sometimes complain about the price of our success. Our organization is a most worthwhile institution that has made a meaningful contribution to horology and, through horology, to man's achievement in the modern age. Second, because Goode's description of interrelated roles underscores why we have crafted, from whole cloth and in a scant few decades, a lasting enterprise fueled by our fascination with time and timekeeping. Did our association really need to build a



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museum, develop a library, and become a leader in education? The answer is yes, because only by doing so have we accomplished our mission to educate the public about the art, science, and history of horology. And third, because appreciating what we have created and how each element is important underscores why we must aggressively continue to pursue our mission.

You may ask, “Haven't we finished our work? We have the Museum, Library and Research Center and it is all working just fine. What more do we need?” The answer, to paraphrase Goode, is that a “finished” museum, library, and research center is a dead museum, library, and research center. To be useful and reputable, we must be constantly engaged in aggressive work, either in education or investigation, or both, and constantly improving. That's how we remain relevant

and attract the best. At present, for example, our aggressive work includes increasing access through embracing the digital age and ensuring our facilities and operations meet the highest professional standards. We have created the best and are taking it to the world. We also work hard to hire and retain the best staff and supplement that staff with faithful volunteers. We encourage scholarship and regularly publish a wide range of articles on various aspects of horology. Through the annual symposia we invite the best and brightest to come together and share ideas and information. And we continue to develop the best horological library and one of the best horological museums in the world.

It is truly remarkable that the NAWCC has accomplished all this primarily as a dues-paying-only organization. We are more conscious than ever that revenue from dues alone cannot sustain what we have built and that revenue from other sources must be developed and relied upon. In that regard, I want to draw your attention to pages 563 and 564 of the November/December 2014 *Watch & Clock Bulletin*. Page 563 shows both whence cometh our fiscal year 2014 total revenues and where goeth our expenditures. Remarkable (to me at least) is that revenues from dues for 2014 are less than half (48 percent to be exact) of total revenues, and revenues from donations have increased to 25 percent of total revenues. The remaining 25 percent consists of various forms of investment and earned income. We continue to live within our means and exer-

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