

SPOTLIGHT

A Timely Facelift



Before restoration



After restoration

Cliffside clock tower receives new look with restoration of faces

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CLIFFSIDE — A lengthy refurbishment project is finished, just in the nick of time. “Raleigh,” Cliffside’s towering, historic clock has been restored to its original luster now that a second phase of the project has been completed by Jim VanOrsdel, restoration expert and owner of The Clock Shop in Charlotte, and craftsmen from Albemarle Glass.

After VanOrsdel completed a mechanical restoration of the clockworks, the second

phase turned back time with a complete restoration of the faces, returning it to like-new condition both mechanically and aesthetically.

“The people at the (Cliffside Historical Society) made it their mission to get this clock back in its original condition,” VanOrsdel said. “They spared no expense, but they also got a pretty big bang for their buck with the folks at Albemarle Glass.”

The Rutherford County Commission and fundraising efforts of the Historical Society paid for the initial restoration, and the Society continued fundraising efforts in order to pay for the second phase of the project.

The second phase included replacing the glass on the face of the clock with opaque milk glass and repainting all the numbers. The original milk glass had been replaced with frosted glass during earlier repairs to “Raleigh,” which was named after Cliffside founder, Raleigh Rutherford Haynes.

“It’s a beautiful white background for black hands, especially at night,” said VanOrsdel. And if one cannot see the clock, which sits in a 40-foot tower and has four faces, each with a five-foot diameter, one can hear it chime once again.

The clock chimes on the hour, but also chimes the Westminster Quarters, a melody used by a set of clock bells each quarter

hour. The number of chime sets matches the number of quarter hours that have passed, so that one can tell which quarter-hour has passed without being able to see the clock, and the melody is played in five different permutations of four pitches in the key of E major.

VanOrsdel said having a clock that plays the Winchester Quarters is a coup in itself.

“There are few clocks left in North Carolina that have



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Quarter-inch thick pure white milk glass makes up the background for the black hands of the new clock faces.

quarter chimes like that,” he said. “Most are delegated to universities or maybe to a few churches.”

The Cliffside clock was custom built for the town by E. Howard and Company in Boston. Similar clocks are found on the grounds of Biltmore House in Asheville and in Union Mills.

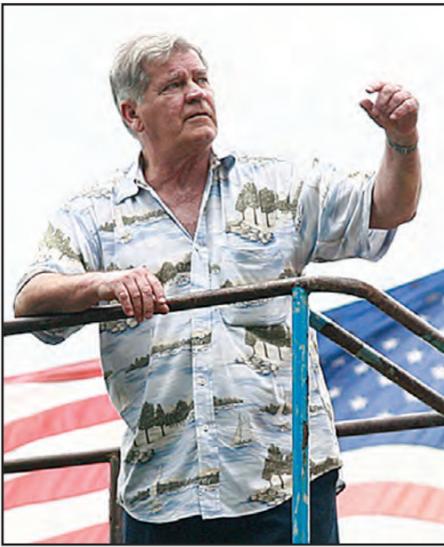
“When I get involved in one of those old clocks, I kind of step back into a different era because of the thoughts back then on how things should be done one way — they best way,” VanOrsdel said. “That was the way craftsmen thought when this clock was made.”

“We just try to take it back and do things the way they were done back then.”

The two-year project, VanOrsdel said, has bought “Raleigh” the most precious of commodities — time.

“It was the end of one era and the transition to a new era,” he said. “We’ve put the clock back in the prominent position it was meant to be in.”

**Photos courtesy of
The Clock Shop and
The Cliffside Historical Society**



Jim VanOrsdel



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(Above) During the restoration period the empty holes in the tower were boarded up with plywood to prevent weather and wildlife from getting inside. (Right) Blue painters tape is carefully removed after the painting of the 12-3 O’clock quadrant of the West Side Story.

