



## **TIME STANDS STILL AT UNION STATION**

Conservator of Horology to Preserve and Maintain Timekeeping Artifacts

In an era of cell phones and Apple Watches, clocks are often considered relics from the past but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no more iconic site in Downtown Los Angeles than Union Station's historic clock tower. In fact 10 of the station's historic clocks are still operating more than 76 years after its opening.

Maintaining and preserving these historic timepieces, each with its own unique style and function, is an immense undertaking. During the station's recent renovation, architects turned to clock master Mostyn Gale. A Conservator of Horology from Santa Barbara, CA, Gale turned a childhood passion for watches into a Master's degree in Conservation Studies from West Dean College in the United Kingdom.

While "saving time" is an aspiration for most, for Gale it's a lifelong passion. Following an extended study of historic clocks across Europe, he has recently completed extensive research on the Union Station clocks to assist in the creation of a long-term plan to care for the remarkable timekeeping artifacts.

Built in 1939 as the largest railroad passenger terminal in the Western United States, the station was a 24 hour operation serving thousands of travelers and as many as 10,000 troops from across the country...and no one likes to miss a train.

At its opening, there were 12 clocks throughout Union Station made from stone, marble, brass and tile, all connected to a master clock located in the passenger concourse. The clocks were synchronized through what was then considered a state-of-the-art low voltage system that kept each in perfect time.

As electricity was often interrupted, the master clock was fitted with a battery backup. In the event of a blackout, the master would reset and each of the connecting clocks would pulse back to the current time.

The station's iconic Mission-style clock tower, which has stood more than 100 feet above Downtown Los Angeles for decades, still features its four original clocks. Each was created in brass with 10-foot-long hands and measures more than 20 feet in diameter. Topped with its historic brass lightning rod, the clock tower remains accessible only by ladder.

In addition to his work on the station's 10 remaining clocks, Gale has also been tasked with recreating a missing clock once imbedded in the handrail at Union Station's famous Fred Harvey Restaurant.

With Gale's help, it's only a matter of time before the Union Station clocks are fully returned to their former glory.

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