

Centre, in Wilmington, OH, about an hour north of the old location, and crossed their fingers that people would come. From my perspective as a tableholder, who bought and sold watches, the show was an unqualified success. And everyone I talked with agreed. It is my understanding that the venue has already been booked for next year's regional, and I for one am happy that the Southern Ohio Regional will live on its "slightly more northern" location!

Notes

1. The Longacre name has long been associated with the Gruen family. Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s (we don't know the exact date), Margaret Gruen (1910-1976), daughter of Fred Gruen, married Dr. Jacob J. Longacre (1907-1976). Gruen named a watch after him, the "Longacre," which appears in the company's 1931 catalog of watches. Dr. Longacre became a renowned plastic and reconstructive surgeon, while Margaret became an accomplished printmaker. The couple had a son, Frederick Gruen Longacre (born 1947), who lived in the Gruen-Longacre homestead until his death on May 31, 2010, after which the contents of the house were sold at auction in August of 2010.

2. For more information on Mike's new Gruen guide, go to www.gruenwristwatches.com.

Gruen Autograph Book Provides Glimpse into Company History

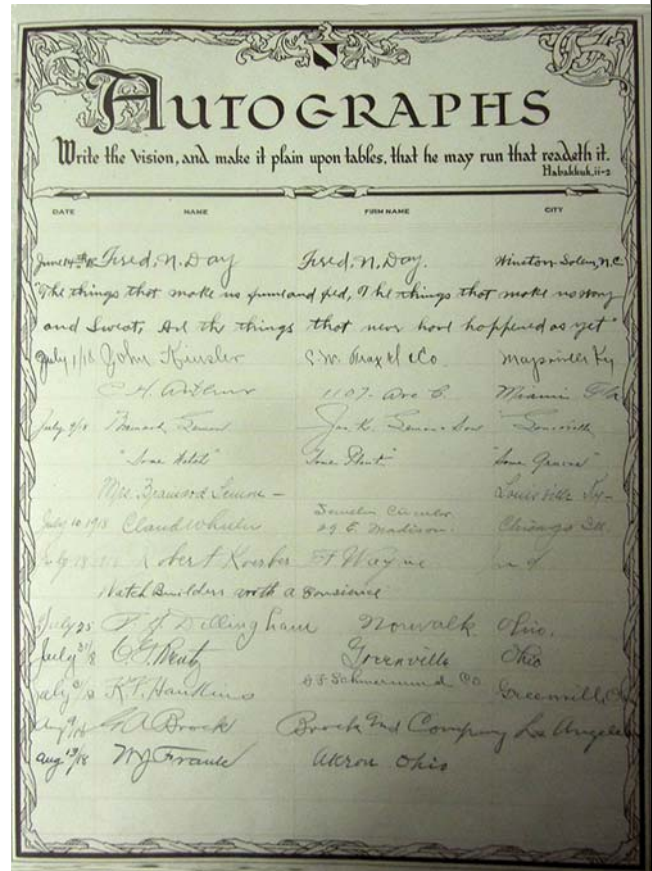
Some might think it just a little crazy of Charlie Cleves to pay \$2,850 for a book of autographs at an estate auction back in August of 2010. After all, he knew virtually none of the identities of those who had inscribed their signatures in the leather-covered volume between the years 1918 and 1927.

But this wasn't just any autograph book. It is a glimpse into the history of the Gruen Watch Co., and to a great extent the life of company cofounder Fred G. Gruen. Many of the signatures in the book are believed to be friends and business associates of Fred's. Those he deemed "VIPs" or dignitaries were often given the red carpet treatment—a personally guided tour of the facility by Fred and sometimes a unique gift.

"Fred was known for giving one-of-kind Gruen watches to special guests," says Charlie. "He would order the case ahead of time from Wadsworth, where it would be marked as a special order for Fred. This would usually be a certain model that was only offered, for example, in yellow gold, to the public. Fred would order one case stamped out of white gold and give that watch to the dignitary, proudly telling him that the watch was a one-of-a-kind." That's why, in more recent times, certain variants of models have popped up on the marketplace with seemingly no explanation of how they came to exist.

Some of the identified signatures are those of representatives of well-known businesses or trade associations, such as Anheuser Busch, Geo. H. Newstedt Company (jeweler), Frank Herschede Co. (clock company), Gidding Company (Cincinnati clothier), and the Watch Trade Association of New York, among many others. Many of the signatures in the book have yet to be positively identified, but they represent visitors from many countries, including China, Australia, Egypt, Canada, New Zealand, and Argentina. Certainly many of the signatures represented high-level businessmen whom Fred either knew personally or by reputation. For example, it is known that Fred was very active in the "Rice Leaders of the World Association," founded by Elwood E. Rice. The association is virtually unknown today, except for some fleeting references in a few obscure business history texts. But back in its heyday of the 1910s and 1920s, it was a flourishing organization of "enlightened" business leaders, with chapters reportedly chartered throughout the United States. Undoubtedly, many of those who signed the book were accorded VIP status as fellow "Rice Leaders," whether Fred knew them personally or not.

When analyzed, Charlie believes the book will read like a virtual "Who's Who" of American business at the time. "That's why I had to have it," says Charlie. "This is truly a special piece of Gruen history and needs to be preserved."



This is a sample page from the Gruen autograph book, signed by many business leaders and dignitaries from all over the world who visited the company. It was customary in those days to often add remarks, quotations, and other "pearls of wisdom" to one's autograph. At the top of the page, we see a signature of Fred N. Day, Winston-Salem, NC, who added this gem: "The things that make us fume and fret, the things that make us worry and sweat, are the things that never have happened as yet."

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE BARNETT.