

Clocks *of* Andover

by Bob Frishman (MA)

An ancient clock, described as 400 years old and as the first clock brought to Andover, MA, was seen by hordes of visitors to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Hanging in the kitchen of the New England Farmer's Home, it joined Peregrine White's cradle, John Alden's writing desk, and other significant artifacts from the earliest days of Massachusetts. Sadly, there seems to be no other information about it except for a period illustration showing what looks like a seventeenth-century English lantern clock on the wall.

Fortunately, a pair of other clocks important to our town of Andover is on display at the Andover Historical Society. The makers of these longcase clocks ("grandfather" clocks were not yet known by that name) briefly lived and worked in Andover more than 200 years ago, at a time when more famous Massachusetts clockmakers, such as the Willard brothers, were at work nearby.

"Nathan Adams, Andover 1792" is clearly inked on the face of one of the two Andover clocks standing in the Amos Blanchard House, an 1819 historic house open for tours in Andover (Figures 1 and 2). Born in 1755 in Newbury, Adams lived most of his years in Danvers and Wiscasset, ME, but owned a home, six acres, barn, and shop here between 1784 and 1795. In 1785 he married Bette Poor, and as most clockmakers of his day, worked at several crafts, including joinery and silversmithing. Similar



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

to other Boston-area longcase clocks, his 7-foot-tall time-keeper is mahogany and pine with a colorful iron dial. The 8-day, 2-weight, brass movement strikes the hours on an assertive bell.

"John Osgood, Andover" adorns the face of the much more unusual clock at our Museum (Figures 3 and 4). Osgood was born in 1770 in North Andover, apprenticed in Bradford, but lived in Andover only two years beginning in 1791. He made at least two clocks here but more than 300 during his lifetime, spent mostly in Haverhill, NH, where he was an active citizen and worked also in related crafts. Reportedly made as a wedding gift for Andover's

Peter Shattuck, who may also have built the unique butternut and pine case, the clock was designed to stand in a corner and appears to be a somewhat primitive interpretation of an English table clock sitting on a long bevel-side pedestal. Its 8-day, 1-weight, brass movement, the part of the clock made by Osgood, sits behind its nicely painted iron dial.

Much of our knowledge about these clocks is due to

eminent clock collector Dr. Charles A. Currier (Figure 5) who owned the Osgood. Until 1980 he lived on Central Street in a home filled with antique clocks that many residents still speak about, and he did extensive research on his specialty—clocks of the Merrimack Valley. Dr. Currier hosted a June 1953 gathering of nearly 100 clock collectors for a special horology exhibit at the Addison Gallery where the Osgood clock was featured. Participants also toured his home and an open house at the Historical Society.

There still are impressive private clock collections in Andover, and old public clocks made in other New England towns continue to greet us from South Church, Phillips Academy, Shawsheen Square, and Memorial Hall Library. The gentle ticking, tolling bells, and weathered faces of our venerable timekeepers, especially those made by eighteenth-century Andover craftsmen, remind us of the years before we each had instant digital access everywhere we looked to the correct time of day.

About the Author

Bob Frishman has restored and sold vintage clocks since 1980 and is a past-president of New England Chapter 8. He is a frequent contributor of articles and newsworthy items to the *Watch & Clock Bulletin*. Bob can be reached at www.bell-time.com.



Figure 3.



Figure 5.



Figure 4.