Pennsylvania Clocks
1750-1850
A Special Exhibit of the National Watch and Clock Museum®
Columbia, PA.
Comparison of the German and English Rack-and-Snail Striking Systems
(Courtesy of Edward F. LaFond Jr.)

GERMAN

- Rack Hook
- Tailess Gathering Pallet
- Snail
- Lifting Piece
- Rack
- Hour Wheel

ENGLISH

- Rack Hook
- Tailed Gathering Pallet
- Snail
- Lifting Piece
- Rack
- Hour Wheel

Pennsylvania Clocks 1750-1850
A Special Exhibit of the National Watch and Clock Museum®
A look at makers from 12 different counties in Pennsylvania.

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Columbia, PA

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National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.
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Introduction

This exhibit attempts to show the diversity of influences that made the development of clockmaking in Pennsylvania so unique. In part due to the legacy of William Penn’s “holy experiment” in religious toleration and economic opportunity, and because of a liberal naturalization act passed by the British Parliament in 1740, Pennsylvania contained the largest non-English population of any American colony. Philadelphia, dominated by an English Quaker aristocracy, was the largest and wealthiest city in America, and the principal port of entry for tens of thousands of Germans from the Palatine, the upper Rhine, and Switzerland, and of Scotch-Irish from Ulster.

By the mid-eighteenth century German settlers were well established in the rich farmlands of central Pennsylvania. They clung tenaciously to their language and traditions and had a profound influence on the originally English-settled areas such as York, Lancaster, and Reading. The Scotch-Irish, finding the best lands in the east already occupied, settled along the western frontier. The result was a blending of English and German traditions, which is evident in the workmanship of many of the clocks in this exhibit, both in movements and cases.

While the prevailing fashion in furniture in most areas was for the English-derived styles of Philadelphia, the German-trained cabinetmakers and joiners modified these styles to suit German tastes. Hoods and bases of clock cases became wider and larger in proportion and construction was heavier.

Most of the clocks produced in Pennsylvania before 1750 were made by English-trained clockmakers, whose ideas continued to dominate in the predominantly English and Scotch-Irish settled areas in the eastern and western counties until the end of the handcrafting era.

Characteristic of the English style movements is a rack striking system with a long-tailed gathering pallet used for locking the strike train. The lifting piece is pivoted on the right side of the front plate while the rack hook is pivoted on the left. Variations of this system were used by Swiss-trained clockmakers in Pennsylvania such as Peter Schütz, with his “J” hook strike, and John Scharf. On wheel trains, cut or slit pinions were used. The leaves of which had to be shaped or “rounded up” by hand filing. Four cast frame pillars were used to fasten the plates together. The pillars were normally riveted permanently to the back plate and pinned to the front plate to allow disassembly of the movement. The pendulum was suspended by a two-footed pendulum cock screwed to the back plate and a suspension spring fixed in a metal block on the end of the pendulum rod.

On 30-hour movements, a spoke ratchet winding mechanism is used, rather than the ratchet wheel and cock used on 8-day movements.

Characteristic of German style movements, exemplified by the works of...
George and John Hoff, is a rack-striking system with a tailless gathering pallet with rack hook locking, and both rack hook and lifting piece pivoted from the same side. On the wheel trains, wire or lantern pinions were used. Three squared steel frame pillars were often used to fasten the plates together, two at the top and one at the bottom center. Swiss-trained clockmakers sometimes used detachable frame pillars, pinned front and back, as on the Jacob Winterode clock in this exhibit. Pendulums were suspended by a hook and a loop of string.

While some German and Swiss-trained clockmakers continued to produce clocks in the German style, such as George Hoff of Lancaster and Peter Schütz of York, most of them adopted English ideas to some extent. This process was facilitated by the availability of English castings and forgings during and after the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Clockmaker John Wood, Jr., of Philadelphia advertised “cast clock-work” for sale as early as 1768. The majority of clocks produced by German-trained clockmakers of central Pennsylvania have both German and English characteristics. One Germanic feature, the rack striking system with tailless gathering pallet, was adopted by English-trained clockmakers for their 30-hour movements, as seen on the clocks by Jacob Godschalk and Eli Bentley in this exhibit. A few, such as John Eberman and Rudolph Stoner of Lancaster and John Scharf of Selinsgrove, used the English system with tailed gathering pallet.

Just as the development of clockmaking in Pennsylvania was profoundly changed by the immigration of Germanic craftsmen and their culture in the eighteenth century a second wave of “immigration” in the 19th century, beginning in the 1820s, soon brought about the demise of the craft there.

This second wave came in the form of thousands of 30-hour wooden wheeled shelf clocks, as well as some brass 8-day ones, brought by Yankee peddlers from Connecticut. In order to compete with these mass-produced factory-made clocks, some of the traditional tall clock makers of Pennsylvania, primarily German-trained ones, adopted some of the features of these strange foreign clocks and produced shelf clocks of their own, using their handcrafting methods. Though a few, such as the Sollidays and John Scharf, were moderately successful, the result was inevitable. With the advent of the cheap 30-hour brass movement shelf clocks by Chauncey and Noble Jerome, the era of handcrafted clocks was over. By the 1840s, most clockmakers were merely repairers and sellers of Connecticut clocks.

**Editor’s note:** For your reference, the inside back cover features comparison diagrams of the German and English rack-and-snail striking systems that are mentioned in the clock descriptions throughout this booklet.
The lineage of Jacob Godschalk (d.1781) is uncertain, but he is probably descended from Jacob Godschalk (ca. 1670-1763) who came to America in 1701 from the Rhineland in Germany and became the second bishop of the Mennonite church upon the death of his predecessor and friend, William Rittenhouse, the grandfather of clockmaker David Rittenhouse. The earliest record of clockmaker Jacob Godschalk seems to be his purchase of 82 acres of land in Towamencin, Montgomery County, on November 27, 1760. Many of his early clocks were signed in Towamencin. On March 6, 1765, he purchased a small property on the north side of Arch Street in Philadelphia with a two-story building with two small front shops. In 1770, after the death of his first wife, he married Elizabeth Owen, whose younger brother, Griffith Owen, became apprenticed to Godschalk in 1773, and who succeeded him in business upon his death in 1781.

Though of German descent, Godschalk's movements are made primarily in the English tradition, with tailed gathering pallet locking on his 8-day movements and spoke ratchet winding on his 30-hour movements, as on this example. The striking mechanism on his 30-hour clocks has the tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking common to Pennsylvania German 30-hour clocks.

The brass dial has a separate center section attached by four iron strips which carry the dial feet and to which the chapter ring is pinned. The center is engraved with a compass rose design and cup-and-ring turnings often seen on Godschalk's 30-hour clocks as well as on those by Augustin Neisser and Adam Brandt. The date "1720" was added at a later date, most likely during the Victorian era.

The rather severe looking walnut flattop case provides an interesting contrast to the slender and graceful lines of the Philadelphia Chippendale case of the John Sproggell clock. It is quite heavily constructed with pegged mortise and tenon joints. Unusual details are the half columns applied to the hood door, with corresponding halves applied to the rear of the hood on the sides. The hood door is recessed into the hood, with the ends of the columns extending beyond the door. Decorative touches are the shell carving on the arch of the waist door and the shield design on the base panel.

On loan courtesy of the State Museum of Pennsylvania. 4.6.2002

References:
A. Root, "Will the Real Jacob Godschalk Please Stand Up?"
NAWCC BULLETIN, October 1977.
John Sprogell, Philadelphia
Tall Clock, ca. 1770

Little is known about John Sprogell except through his newspaper advertisements. He first advertised in January 1764 that he had lately opened shop on Front Street, next door to the corner of Market Street, Philadelphia. He states that he had, “worked with general satisfaction for several Maryland Gentlemen,” indicating that he may have spent some time in Annapolis. In March he also advertised that he had, “worked for John Wood the watchmaker to the complete satisfaction of his customers…” His ads emphasized the watchmaking branch of his business. In 1771 he advertised, “Watches Made in Philadelphia. The Subscriber, having employed Journeymen from London, proposes making the best of plain, horizontal, second and stop Watches, that he can insure for three or four years free from all expense to the purchaser, unless cleaning. The Public may be assured, as the character of the Maker lies at stake, that he will make his work perform, and will endeavor to give general satisfaction.” It is not presently known if he actually made any watches, but several tall clocks by him have survived.

The 8-day movement of this clock has some interesting details. The arched rack hook is seen on some Scottish clocks and was used by Delaware clockmaker Duncan Beard. The surface of the front plate behind the dial is roughly finished and the layout circles can be clearly seen. The “ears” or extensions at the top of the front plate are for attaching the dial feet, which are often far apart when a moon wheel is used on a brass dial.

The mahogany case exemplifies the Philadelphia Chippendale style, with tall and slender proportions, fluted quarter columns on the base and waist, shaped waist door and base panel, bold scrolls with carved rosettes, and OG bracket feet. Compared to cases made outside of Philadelphia, the depth of this case is quite shallow.

On loan courtesy of Henry Gerlach and Robert Gerlach. 1.5.2002

Reference:

Right. John Sprogell 8-day movement with rack striking and gathering pallet tail, rack pin locking, and Scottish style arched rack hook.
Solomon Parke, Philadelphia
Tall Clock, ca. 1810

Before coming to Philadelphia, Solomon Parke worked in Newtown and Southampton, Bucks County. He is listed in the Philadelphia directories from 1791 through 1822 at various addresses. He is listed under Solomon Parke & Co., 1794-1801, and Solomon Parke & Son, 1806-1808. According to D.F. Magee in his article, “Grandfathers’ Clocks: Their Making and Their Makers in Lancaster County,” Lancaster County clockmaker William Fraser (1801-1877) “learned his trade in Philadelphia, and worked at it from 1814 to 1821 as apprentice and journeyman in the large clock manufactory of Solomon Park, who was then the largest manufacturer in Philadelphia, and employed many workmen of different nationalities, French, German and Swiss....”

The 8-day movement is in the English tradition and was probably made from English castings and forgings. It has tailed gathering pallet locking on the strike and grooved winding drums.

The inlaid mahogany Federal style case provides a marked contrast to the Chippendale case of the John Sprogell clock. The surfaces are flat in comparison, and ornamentation is provided by contrasting veneers and geometric patterns of satinwood inlay, the only carved decoration being the reeded scrolls and floral rosettes.

The dial is a fine example of the Boston style, made by the Curtis Manufactory of Boston and Philadelphia, the principals of which were Samuel Curtis and Spencer Nolen. On loan courtesy of the Lancaster County Historical Society. 3.1.2002

References:
James Hansell, Philadelphia
Tall Clock, ca. 1830

James Hansell (1791-1865) appears in Philadelphia directories from 1816-1850 at various addresses. In 1817 he married Anna Catherine Ehrenzeller (1797-1886) of Philadelphia.

The movement of this clock is of English origin. Hansell evidently purchased it as a finished movement and fitted the dial and rocking ship, which were locally made. The patterns of the castings and forgings and the layout of the movement closely follow the designs published in 1813 in *The Clock Makers Guide to Practical Clock Work* by Samuel Harlow, clockmaker and clock brass founder of Ashbourne, Derbyshire, England, and is most likely a product of the Harlow firm. One of the most easily identifiable characteristics is the rack hook with a C-shaped loop at the left-hand end with a double hook. These movements and their characteristics are fully discussed in a recent excellent work, *The Longcase Clock Reference Book* by John Robey.

At the bottom of the front plate is stamped “WAINWRIGHT NO 1.” This stamp has been observed on two Lancaster County Pennsylvania clocks, both with standard seconds, one signed on the dial by Martin Schreiner, Jr., and one by George Eberman. Another clock by George Eby of Manheim, with seconds from the center, is stamped “WAINWRIGHT NO 3.” Two other Lancaster County clocks, one by Anthony Wayne Carpenter of New Holland and one by Joseph Eberman of Lancaster, both with standard seconds, are stamped “WAINWRIGHT” but with no number. It is not certain whether Wainwright was a wholesaler who bought finished movements from Harlow, or whether Wainwright bought the castings and forgings, finished the movements, and then sold them to the trade or an importer. A very similar movement, with all the Harlow characteristics, but with the stamp of “T.E. BAGNALL” on the front plate, was used in a clock by Isaac D. Custer of Norristown, Pennsylvania, and is illustrated by Bruce Forman.

During the last decade or so of tall clock production, it is likely that the practice of buying finished movements became more widespread. By examining many Pennsylvania tall clocks of the 1830s, one notices a definite uniformity of finish and lack of individuality among clocks by different makers, especially those in the English tradition. This is in stark contrast to the makers of shelf clocks of the period, whose movements are highly individualistic and locally made, and who are mostly of German or Swiss training.

The dial of this clock is a rare example of a William Jones, Philadelphia, dial with a rocking ship. The dial sheet was originally intended for a moon dial, but instead of the moon wheel, a dished section of iron has been attached and painted with a lighthouse and sky, while directly behind the globes and in front of the ship, a metal strip has been attached and painted to form a seascape. The ship is attached to the verge arbor and rocks back and forth with the swing of the pendulum.

The beautifully veneered mahogany case is in the American Empire style, with characteristic twist columns on the hood and waist, and a wide waist with a small door. The veneers are carefully matched and banded. The turned feet are consistent with the turning at the top of the waist columns. On loan courtesy of Stacy B.C. Wood, Jr. FNAWCC. 13.2002

References:
John Child, Philadelphia
Wall Regulator, ca. 1820

John Child (1789-1876) appears in the Philadelphia directories from 1813 through 1847 as a clock and watchmaker. The movement of this clock is a simple 8-day timepiece (no striking work) with a recoil escapement, and is very finely finished. The plates of the movement are stamped J. CHILD, PHILA.

The case is heavily constructed of cherry and mahogany with mahogany veneer. The waist door may have originally had a mahogany veneered panel similar to that on the base.

Clocks of this type were designed for public places rather than for domestic use. They are closely related to the English tavern clock.

Donated by Peter Tucci. 1998.10

John Child 8-day time-only movement with recoil escapement.
Movement by Benjamin Morris, Hilton, Bucks County. Case attributed to Isaac Thomas, Willistown, Chester County

Tall Clock, ca. 1795

Little is written about Benjamin Morris (1748-1833). Apparently he was a descendant of English Quakers. He was a farmer as well as a clockmaker in Hilltown and owned 150 acres of land. Two of his sons were clockmakers, Enos and Mason. He was buried in the Hilltown Baptist Cemetery.

The 8-day movement of this clock is made in the English tradition, with gathering pallet locking on the strike and grooved winding drums. Characteristic of Morris's clocks is the oval brass plate attached to the front of the dial engraved with his initials, “B.M.” The dial was made by Wilson of Birmingham. It is likely that this clock was not originally housed in this case.

The walnut case is attributed to Isaac Thomas (1721-1802) of Willistown, Chester County. Though many clocks exist signed, “Isaac Thomas, Willistown,” he probably did not make clocks but rather bought movements and had his name engraved on the dials. A few have been found with the name Thomas Wagstaff, of London, engraved on the back of the chapter rings. Several of Thomas’s cases have been reported by clockmaker Eric Chandlee Wilson of Chester County housing movements and dials signed by Solomon Parke of Philadelphia.

Thomas first appears in the tax records of Willistown Township in 1764 as a “Joyner” and the owner of a sawmill. In 1768 he was listed as a “Joyner & Clockmaker.” In 1776 he appears as a clock and watchmaker, and in 1797 as a clockmaker and operator of a grist and sawmill. After his death, an inventory of his estate was taken with clockmaker Benjamin Garrett of Goshen as one of the appraisers. Relating to Thomas’s clockmaking activities were “Ten clocks and three cases - $276, Clock shop tools and Joiner shop tools - $140.”

Characteristic of Thomas’s cases are the high scroll board, the keystone at the top of the arch molding over the hood door, the shell carving between the scrolls at the top of the waist door, and the scalloped moldings at the top and bottom of the waist. The freestanding pillars at the front of the hood are actually attached to the door.

On loan courtesy of the State Museum of Pennsylvania. 5.6.2002

References:
A. James, Chester County Clocks, 1976.

Right. Benjamin Morris 8-day movement with rack striking, gathering pallet tail, and rack pin locking.
Eli Bentley, West Whiteland Township, Chester County
Tall Clock, ca. 1774-1778

Eli Bentley (b. 1752) was born in West Marlborough Township and was of English descent. He and his brother Caleb both became clockmakers. It is not known where they learned their trade, but they were apparently trained in the English tradition. Their first cousin, Thomas Shields of Philadelphia, was a silversmith and clockmaker. Eli may have only worked in West Whiteland Township for a few years, after which, in 1778, he left the county and settled in Taneytown, Maryland, where he continued to make clocks. Caleb is said to have worked in York, Pennsylvania, and then Leesburg, Virginia.

The 30-hour movement of this clock shows primarily English training, with spoke-ratchet winding, cut pinions, and four frame pillars. It has the rack striking system with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking seen in Pennsylvania-German style 30-hour movements. This same combination of English and German features is also found on the 30-hour movement of the Jacob Godschalk clock in this exhibit.

The walnut case is well proportioned but quite deep. The arch of the waist door is matched by the arched sidelights on the hood. Fluted quarter columns were used on the waist and the base. The base panel is removable. The rosettes at the ends of the scrolls are replacements. This was quite an expensive case for a 30-hour clock.

On loan courtesy of the State Museum of Pennsylvania. 2.6.2002

Reference:
A. James, Chester County Clocks, 1976.

Right. Eli Bentley 30-hour movement with spoke ratchet winding, rack strike with tailless gathering pallet, rack hook locking, and unfinished front plate.
Daniel Rose, Reading, Berks County
Tall Clock, ca. 1770-1780

Daniel Rose (1749-1827) was the son of Reading weaver and tavern keeper Erhard Rose, who was married to Maria Eva Solliday, sister of Bucks County clockmaker Frederick Solliday (c. 1717-1804) who may have trained Rose. There may be a connection with Reading clockmaker Valentine Urletig (c. 1724-1783), whose estate was appraised by Rose. He appears as a clockmaker in the Reading tax list in 1773, the first year records were kept. During the American Revolution he served on the Committee of Safety in Reading and in the local militia as a lieutenant. As a musician, he gave three months service teaching the drummers and fifers of the Berks County militia. He played the piano, violin, organ, flute, and clarinet. He also sold musical instruments. He ran his own museum in his house. In August 1812, he advertised, “Having just now added to my Museum a very interesting piece of Mechanism, called The Invisible Lady, I invite the Ladies and Gentlemen to convince themselves of this interesting artificial work…” He was apparently a bit of a dandy, with his silk shirts, satins and ruffles, silver shoe and knee buckles, and powdered hair. He even had a famous rose garden with busts of himself at the four corners.

He served on the state assembly in Lancaster for eleven years, between 1799 and 1812. During those years he was associated with several Reading clockmakers who maintained his shop in his absence, among whom were Thomas Wildbahn, Jacob Diehl, Johann Guth, and Daniel Oyster, who later married Rose’s sister Catherina.

Upon his death in 1827, his inventory was calculated to be worth the sizable amount for those days of $1,493.87. Included were, “Sundry Clockmaker Tools, $50.00; 1 Iron Lathe and Sundries, 2.00; 3 Watches, 9.00; 1 Musical Eight Day Clock & Case, 50.00; 1 Eight Day Clock and Case, 35.00; 1 Musical Timepiece 25.00; 1 Piano & Organ, 60.00; 1 Organ and images along also Chair, 100.00; 1 Clarinet, Flute, and Basone and Hoboy and French horn, 10.00; 1 Gold Watch, 15.00; 1 Silver Musical Snuff Box, 6.00; 3 Musical Canes, 10.00.”

This early 30-hour movement clearly shows German training. It is rather small with three brass frame pillars, the top two of which are extended to support the dial. The dial has a single dial foot, which is pinned in a hole at the bottom of the front plate. Rose used wire pinions except for the escape and fly pinions, which are cut pinions. The German-style strike system was used, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking. Winding is by ratchet wheel and click, with a single weight and endless chain. A flat steel hammer spring is pinned through a slot in the back plate. This flat, mortised hammer spring is also found on clocks by the Solliday family, and may provide a clue as to Rose’s training.

The brass dial has a separate center section attached by iron strips, which is engraved with a compass rose pattern quite different from the somewhat more standardized pattern commonly seen on dials by clockmakers of the Schuylkill River Valley, such as Jacob Godshalk, Adam Brandt, and Augustine Neisser. The spandrels are an English “string of pearls” pattern.

The slender, well-proportioned walnut case is in the American Queen Anne tradition. The mitered corner joints in the upper waist section and the arches of the waist door and hood relate this case to other early Reading cases, one of which is owned by the Historical Society of Berks County, housing a clock by Valentine Urletig. On loan courtesy of Chris H. Bailey. 8.2002
George Hoff, Lancaster County
Tall Clock, ca.1770

George Hoff (1733-1816) was born Johann Georg Hoff in Westerburg in the state of Hesse-Cassel, Germany. He learned the trade of clockmaking from his father-in-law, George Schnertzel, in Grunstadt, the Palatinate. Thus, when he and his family arrived in Philadelphia in 1765, he was a fully trained clockmaker in the German tradition. His clocks and those of his sons, Michael (1766-1810), John (1776-1818), and George Jr. (1788-1822), are almost purely German in style.

Hoff is first noted in Lancaster in 1766, when his son Michael was baptized. In 1783, his daughter Catharine Julianna (1763-1839) married clockmaker Frederick Heisely, whose early movements strongly resemble Hoff’s, and who was probably trained by him. George Hoff’s 40-year working career spanned the Colonial and early Federal periods, and his clocks and their cases underwent an evolution in design and style. He gradually added English features to his movements.

Hoff’s early clocks strongly resemble those of Neustadt clockmaker Jacob Moellinger, many of which were brought to America by German immigrants from about 1720 on. Characteristics of these movements are the wire or lantern pinions, frames with only three pillars (two at the top and one at the bottom), and the rack striking system on both the 8-day and 30-hour clocks, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking. These movements were considerably smaller than their English counterparts.

The 8-day movement of this clock is typical of Hoff’s early work. It has thick brass plates with three frame pillars, wire pinions, and solid main wheels that are recessed on one side to receive the winding ratchets on the winding drums. The pinwheel on the strike train is also solid. All other train wheels are crossed out with four spokes. The pendulum is suspended by an off-center post and bracket. The winding drums are smooth with keyhole slots to receive the end of the weight cable. Also characteristic of Hoff's 8-day movements are the off-center winding arbors, since the time trains of his movements were planted to the right of center.

The dial is sheet brass with a pewter chapter ring and pewter spandrels of a pattern that occurs frequently on Hoff dials and may have been made by him. Hoff normally used painted iron dials on his 30-hour clocks and brass on the more expensive 8-day clocks. Note the off-center winding holes. This would be in 18th century terminology a “plain 8-day clock,” having no seconds, calendar, or moon.

The finely proportioned walnut case epitomizes the Queen Anne style of Lancaster. Distinguishing features are the bold cornice molding on the hood with a molded platform on top and the arched tops of the waist and hood doors and side-lights. The base and waist sections are ornamented with plain quarter columns that nicely match those on the hood. On loan courtesy of the Lancaster County Historical Society. 1.1.2002

References:
John Hoff, Lancaster County
Tall Clock, 1/4 Hour Strike, ca. 1810

John Hoff (1776-1818), son of John George Hoff (1733-1816), was born in Lancaster and trained by his father, and his movements closely resemble those of his father. Though he apparently started business for himself in 1799, he may have worked as a journeyman for his father, as three clocks have been observed with George Hoff's name on the dial but with the movements signed by John Hoff. The earliest is dated 21 November 1794, and the other two are dated 1797. According to his “Book of New Clocks Made and Sold,” he made 103 clocks, including four quarter-hour chiming clocks, one 10-tune musical clock, and four chamber or spring clocks.

This clock appears in Hoff’s order book for Nov. 18, 1809: “John Kindig bespoke an eight-day Clock with Quarters on 4 bells. 14 Inch dial for £26 0 0.” “1810 July 7, took the Clock away this day.” The clock descended in the family to Howard C. Bare, who gave it to the Lancaster County Historical Society in memory of his father “Kendig H. Bare--- Instructor of Watchmaking for over Forty Years.”

The three-train quarter-striking movement retains many of the features of earlier Hoff movements but shows some evolution. The main wheels are crossed out and no longer recessed to enclose the winding ratchet. The pendulum is suspended from a more conventional two-footed bridge and cock as on English clocks.

Retained from earlier movements are the wire pinions and the smooth winding drums with keyhole slots to attach the weight cable as well as the flat lightning-S-shaped hammer spring screwed to the back of the plate. Also retained is the German strike system, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking.

The mahogany case is nicely accented with bands of curly maple around the tops and bottoms of the base and waist as well as on the cove molding under the pediment and the inlaid stripes on the chamfered corners of the base and waist are characteristic of the Federal period.

The dial is by Osborne of Birmingham, England, with center seconds and calendar.

On loan courtesy of the Lancaster County Historical Society.
2.1.2002

References:
Martin Shreiner, Lancaster County
Tall Clock, 1/4 Hour Strike, ca.1810-1815

Martin Shreiner (1769-1866) was one of Lancaster's most prolific clockmakers, numbering well over 300 clocks. His grandfather, Hans Adam Schreiner, was born in Germany in the village of Gommersheim in the Rheinland Valley, and came to America in 1738. Martin Shreiner learned his trade from Lancaster clockmaker John Eberman, Jr. In July 1791 he advertised that he would make either German or English style clocks. While a few of his clocks have wire or lantern pinions in the German fashion, most of his clocks are of the English style, with cut pinions and gathering pallet locking on the strike train in the English fashion, as on this example. It is likely that, given the relatively large number of clocks produced, the uniformly fine finish, even on his early clocks, the use of an English style locking of the strike train, and the patterns of the striking levers, Shreiner used castings and forged work and perhaps finished movements imported from English suppliers. The front plates of at least three of his movements are stamped "Wm. Vale-Lichfield," an English supplier of castings. This was common practice among Lancaster County and other makers of the Federal period, though some, like the Gorgas family clockmakers, persisted in more traditional methods of producing clocks, using their own patterns and having their casting work done locally if not by themselves. In 1829 Shreiner was succeeded in business by two sons, Martin, Jr., and Philip, while he himself concentrated on making fire engines.

In 1832, the public was invited to view "the most perfect and beautiful Astronomical Instrument ever seen on this side of the Atlantic...constructed by Mr. Martin Schreiner...technically called a Tellurian and Lunarian, and shows the motions of the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Earth and Moon, with great precision. By turning a small crank all the Eclipses that ever occurred since our Earth and Moon commenced their celestial journeys can be determined or for any future given period."

This clock is one of five known carillon or musical clocks made by Shreiner. It plays seven tunes on a nest of eleven bells, a different one at every hour, with an automatic change mechanism. As in the majority of Shreiner's clocks, this example, No. 201, has an 8-day movement with seconds and calendar from the center of the dial. The center or sweep second hand was particularly popular in the German-settled areas of Pennsylvania. The trapezoidal cutout at the bottom of the plates is a Schreiner trademark. The dial is a magnificent example of the Boston style with raised gesso and gold decoration, attributed to Spencer Nolen and/or Samuel Curtis of Boston and Philadelphia.

The case is an example of the Federal style of Lancaster, made of mahogany and matched figured mahogany veneers and crossbanded borders with chamfered corners on the waist and base. The lancet or Gothic style side windows on the hood are an unusual feature.

Donated by John R. Schmitt and Lillian M. Hause and their families in memory Alfonso and Elizabeth Schmitt. 91.37

References:

Jacob Eby, Manheim, Lancaster County
Tall Clock, ca.1810

Little is known about Jacob Eby, younger brother of clockmaker Christian Eby of Manheim. Tax records list him as working from 1803 to 1828. He was a prolific maker. He and his brother were apparently trained by Manheim clockmaker Samuel Stauffer (1757-1825). Stauffer was trained by York clockmaker Peter Schütz, who came from Switzerland via Germany to York about 1755. The clocks of Schütz, Stauffer, and the early clocks of the Ebys retain some of these Swiss and German features. Most prominent is the detachable frame pillar, which is pinned to the front and back plates. Many of his clocks have movements with seconds and calendar from the center, even on some 30-hour movements. He used both dead-beat and recoil escapements. The movement of this clock is an eight-day with a recoil escapement. It uses an English style striking mechanism, with rack-pin and gathering pallet locking. There are semi-circular cutouts at the bottom of the frame plates and smooth winding drums. The hands are of a characteristically delicate pattern often used by Eby. The dial bears the label of the Curtis Manufactory in Boston.

The case is one of a group of 20 or so eagle inlaid cases probably produced in Manheim, since most of them house clocks by Jacob Eby. They represent the finest of the Federal style clock cases of Lancaster County. The eagle inlays follow at least two distinct patterns, and all differ in some details. This one is similar to one on a clock at the Hershey Museum of American Life, and to those on a signed high chest of drawers by cabinetmaker George Dyer, made in Manheim in 1808, except that this one has a group of 16 stars representing the States of the Union. Also seen on other cases of this group are the inlays of diamond and rope patterns, though the urn with flowers on the base may be unique to this example. The inlaid pinwheel rosettes are another common feature. The primary wood is cherry.

From the Estate of Dr. Richard M. Hiestand.

References:

Right. Jacob Eby 8-day movement with rack strike, tailed gathering pallet and rack pin locking, and recoil escapement with seconds from the center.
Henry Ober, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County
Tall Clock, ca. 1830

Henry B. Ober Jr. (1804-1880) was the son of wagon maker Henry Ober of West Donegal Township in Lancaster County. He is related to two earlier area clockmakers who could have trained him. His sister, Catherine, married clockmaker Jacob Gorgas (1795-1874) of Running Pumps, Mount Joy Township, eldest son of clockmaker Joseph Gorgas (1770-1841) who moved to Running Pumps from Ephrata in 1806. Ober's paternal grandmother's first cousin was clockmaker Samuel Stauffer (1757-1825) of Manheim. He first appears in the Mount Joy Township tax records in 1828. A letter survives from Ober to Harrisburg merchants Ogelsby and Pool ordering sets of castings, forgings, pinions, hands, a bell, and a dial for a 24-hour clock, dated 1831. One of his movements has "Wm. Vale/Lichfield" marked on the frame.

The movement of this clock is an 8-day with a dead-beat escapement and seconds and date hands from the center. It has the German type strike system with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking. Semi-circular cutouts appear at the bottoms of the frame plates.

The dial has been stripped and repainted in its original style, typical of dials on Pennsylvania clocks of the 1820s and 1830s and attributed to William Jones of Philadelphia.

The case is primarily cherry with curly maple trim and matched mahogany veneers. The crosshatching on the plinths beneath the finials, the turnings on the hood columns, and the thin scrolls terminating in cone-shaped turned rosettes are characteristic of the work of cabinetmaker John Smith of West Donegal Township, who apparently made most of the cases of Ober's clocks. This case exemplifies the late Federal style of Lancaster County, with a wide waist with a frieze of dark figured veneer at the top and small turned feet.

Donated by Mrs. A. Bennet Wilson Jr. 86.43

Reference:

Right. Henry Ober 8-day movement with rack strike, tailless gathering pallet, and rack hook locking, and deadbeat escapement with seconds from the center.
Jacob Winterode, Hanover, York County
Tall Clock, ca. 1795

Jacob Winterode appears as an unmarried clockmaker on the Hanover tax rolls for 1795 only. Nothing else is presently known about him. The movement of this clock has detachable frame pillars, which may indicate that he was trained by Jacob Hostetter, also of Hanover, or perhaps that he learned his trade in York, possibly from Peter Schütz.

The movement is an 8-day with a dead-beat escapement and center seconds. The detachable frame pillars are pinned to the plates, front and back, and are extended forward to attach the dial. The cast iron false plate is screwed to the ends of the pillars, and the dial is pinned to the false plate in the usual manner. The German type striking system was used, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking.

According to John J. Snyder, Jr., a noted student of Pennsylvania furniture, the case is one of a group of related cases made in Hanover around the time that Winterode worked there. One of these cases is signed by cabinetmaker Adam Ault (1768-1848) and is owned by the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. Another very closely related case is in the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection of Yale University, which houses a movement by John Wood of Philadelphia. Though made of black walnut, the moldings appear to be identical to those of the present example. An unusual detail common to both cases is the continuous molding around the top and bottom of the waist and along the back as well. Peculiar to this case, which is primarily cherry, is the shark tooth inlay, and quarter fans at the top front sides of the waist. Another unusual detail is the reeding of the terminals of the scrolls, which is repeated on the scroll plinth of the center finial. The style of the flame finials and the lift at the lower ends of the scrolls are typical of the Hanover cases. The case is thoroughly Chippendale in style and is heavily influenced by Philadelphia designs of 15 or 20 years earlier, which continued in favor in outlying areas such as Hanover.

On loan courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County. 1.2.2002

References:
G.R. Weidman, Furniture in Maryland 1740-1940, 1984.

Right. Jacob Winterode 8-day movement with deadbeat escapement and seconds from the center, detachable frame pillars, and rack strike with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking.
Samuel Hill (1765-1809) was born in England and came to Harrisburg about 1785. He apparently learned his trade in England. He married Nancy Beatty from Ireland, whose brother George Beatty (1781-1862) was apprenticed to Hill. Many clocks by Hill survive, including at least one musical clock, which has unfortunately lost its musical train. This clock descended in the Kapp family of Northumberland. It is said to have been purchased in 1799 by Michael Kapp as a gift for his eldest child. It remained in the family until 1951 when it was given to the State Museum of Pennsylvania.

The 8-day movement of this clock is made in the English tradition, as one would expect. The front side of the front plate is unfinished, and the layout circles for the train wheel are visible.

The dial is by Wilson of Birmingham, England.

The mahogany case is primarily of the Federal style, but the carved floral rosettes and the fluted quarter columns are elements of the earlier Chippendale style. The string inlay pattern on the base is suggestive of the outline of an applied base panel on a Chippendale case such as on the John Sprogell, Philadelphia clock, c.1770, in this exhibit. The inlays of the eagle and the sitting dog on the waist as well as inlay on the central plinth were probably purchased by the cabinetmaker, either from a specialist or an importer. The flat molding on the base seems an inappropriate replacement. It is likely that there were feet of some sort originally.

On loan courtesy of the State Museum of Pennsylvania. 3.6.2002

Reference:
Thomas Parker, Philadelphia
Bracket Clock, ca. 1820

Thomas Parker (1761-1833) was a descendant of English Quakers who settled in Philadelphia in 1684. He was trained by David Rittenhouse and John Wood in clock and watch making. He began business around 1783. He advertised in August 1786, “A Good assortment of silver warranted watches, several good eight-day clocks with and without moons; also, japanned clock faces, clock plyers and hammers, …” and various other clock and watch tools and supplies. In 1793 he advertised for an apprentice to the watchmaking business, and that he had for sale, “Imported in the last vessels from Europe, … handsome spring clocks, …” Several of the known spring or bracket clocks by Parker are certainly of imported variety.

The present example, however, appears to be of American manufacture. The undecorated backplate of the movement is engraved “Thomas Parker, Phila, Pa.” The movement is fastened to a seatboard with two seatboard hooks, as on a tall clock, rather than being fastened to the sides of the case by “L” shaped braces as on English bracket clocks. Rectangular cutouts appear at the bottom of the plates. The movement has a pinwheel escapement, a feature rarely seen on English clocks, and the springs are in going barrels with no fusees. The strike mechanism is in the Pennsylvania German tradition, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking. The rack, rack hook, and lifting piece are all made of brass.

The case is cherry and mahogany veneer on cherry, as opposed to the common English construction of mahogany veneer on oak.

From the collection of J. Bryson and Mary Louise Moore. 2000.21.69

References:
C. Harris, *Clock and Watch Maker’s American Advertiser*, 1984.
Frederick Heisely, Harrisburg, Dauphin County
Bracket Clock, ca. 1820

Frederick Heisely (see the description of the Frederick Heisely shelf clock on page 48) made at least three spring-driven bracket or table clocks, one while he was working in Lancaster about 1797, and two while working in Harrisburg.

The movement is quite small, the plates measuring only 4 3/8" by 6." As on the other two spring-driven movements by Heisely, fusees are used to compensate for the unevenness of the force of the springs. Unusual "M"-shaped pallets are used on the recoil escapement. The long pendulum is suspended from the top of an "A" frame screwed to the rear of the back plate and is kept in motion by an upside-down pin crutch (pendulum not shown). The very long pinions appear to have been made from pinion wire. A variant of the German type strike system is used, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking. The rack hook is pivoted on the left side as on an English clock. It may be that Heisely used English castings and forgings for some parts of this movement.

The dial appears to be the product of William Jones of Philadelphia and is attached to the movement by means of a false plate made for a tall clock.

The case is heavily constructed of cherry and mahogany veneer on cherry. The top is constructed of seven thick cherry boards that were cut out in the shape of a broken arch and glued together, then covered with veneer. This same type of construction was used on the case of the Thomas Parker bracket clock in this exhibit. The doorframe and front surfaces are solid cherry, while the sides are veneered with mahogany.

On loan courtesy of the State Museum of Pennsylvania. 7.6.2002
George Solliday, Montgomeryville, Montgomery County
30-Hour Pillar and Scroll Shelf Clock, ca.1830

George Solliday (1797-1871) was the grandson of Frederick Solliday (c.1717-1804) who came to America from Basel or Geneva, Switzerland, about 1743, and settled in Bucks County. Frederick was a clockmaker and armorer and may have trained George’s father Benjamin (1766-1843). Frederick’s sister, Maria Eva, married Erhardt Rose, father of Reading clockmaker Daniel Rose (1749-1827), who may have been trained by Frederick. George moved to Montgomeryville in 1826. The Sollidays were probably the most numerous of American clockmaking families. They produced several hundred tall clocks and a few shelf clocks.

This example by George has what is basically an extensively modified version of a 30-hour tall clock movement. The strike train has been placed on the left side, unusual on Pennsylvania 30-hour movements but common on Connecticut movements. To decrease the weight travel in such a short case, twice the number of hammer lift pins on the main wheel and a double gathering pallet are used, thus reducing the number of revolutions required of the main wheel. The time train has been similarly modified with a large 60-tooth escape wheel and small winding drums. To decrease the depth of the movement, the pendulum is hung from the front of the movement on a split pin mounted on the bottom foot of the hour wheel bridge. The escapement is between the plates, with the pallets underneath the escape wheel. The front end of the verge arbor is pivoted in the hour wheel bridge, and the crutch wire comes out from behind the bridge and down to the pendulum rod.

The major change was the conversion to key winding. The 30-hour tall clock is normally wound by pulling the weight up on a chain. Winding drums have replaced the sprocket pulley, and the weight cables run up over pulleys at the top of the case and down the full length, as in Connecticut shelf clocks. Since the main arbors must turn during winding, a separate arbor was provided to drive the motion work that also serves as a center arbor carrying the minute hand. It is driven by the main wheel.

This was a complicated and expensive movement to produce, and since it would have taken little more work to make it an 8-day clock that could be sold for more money, it seems rather impractical from an economic standpoint. Yet most of the surviving shelf clocks have 30-hour movements.

The dial is painted on iron and was probably made by William Jones of Philadelphia. What “PATENT” on the dial refers to is not clear but it may be that, since Eli Terry’s patent clocks sold well, the Sollidays decided to call their clocks “patent clocks” too. It is pinned to the movement by three dial feet. The case is obviously patterned on the Terry model, though the mahogany veneered panel was preferred in Montgomery County cases over the painted glass tablet.

On loan courtesy of Rebecca Shaull.
1.11.2002

Reference:
Allentown, Lehigh County
30-Hour Pillar and Scroll Shelf Clock, ca.1830

This clock is one of a group believed to have been made in the Allentown area from circa 1828 to circa 1835. They were not made in one shop, as was the general custom with handmade clocks in Pennsylvania, but were produced by a German Black Forest type of cottage industry, with each craftsman being a specialist, such as a frame maker, a wheel maker, or a case maker. It is likely that the movements, dials, tablets, and hands were imported from Germany and cased here, and sold by a master craftsman or merchant, possibly Joseph Hilsinger.

Though some of the early movements of these clocks were patterned after the Terry-style 30-hour wooden shelf clock movement with similar train layout and solid wood or skeletonized brass plates, the typical movement, as in this example, is a modified Black Forest hang-up or tall clock movement. It has a beech wood frame with vertical strips dovetailed to top and bottom boards. “SW” is stamped on the front edge of the bottom board, probably the initials of the frame maker. The center strips that carry the wheels are brass bushed, the two front strips being removable. Unlike the hang-up movement, the count wheel is on the front of the movement and the pendulum is suspended from the front. The escapement is between the plates. The wheelwork is typical Black Forest, with cast brass wheels and steel arbors with lantern pinions.

The case is a Pennsylvania-German version of the Terry-style pillar and scroll. While some versions more closely resemble their Connecticut prototypes, this case has heavy scrolls and untypical columns with long, squared bases, which resemble those seen on cases of Jacob Custer pillar and scroll clocks from Norristown in Montgomery County. The primary wood is cherry with mahogany veneer on the pine doorframe. It has a removable white pine backboard. Pulleys are fixed in the top board to suspend the weights.

This Allentown pillar and scroll has an iron dial, and the tablet in the lower door is painted on iron behind glass, as opposed to the wooden dial and reverse painted glass tablet of the Connecticut version. They are distinctly European in style.

Donated by James W. Gibbs. 8.2, 8.5
Henry Ober, Elizabethtown, Lancaster County
Shelf Clock, ca. 1830

Henry Ober made at least three weight-driven shelf clocks and at least one dwarf or miniature tall clock. The movement of this example is a miniaturized 8-day tall clock movement, with brass plates and three turned steel frame pillars. It has a recoil escapement located between the plates, but the pendulum is suspended from a single-footed cock mounted on the front of the movement, with a circular brass “keystone” to clear the center arbor, as on a banjo clock. It has a typical Pennsylvania German strike system, with tailless gathering pallet and rack hook locking, with both levers pivoted from the right. The weights are compounded and suspended from pulleys at the top of the case and run down the full length. The round dial is painted iron.

The case is primarily cherry with mahogany veneer on the door. The wood panel in the door is bird’s eye maple veneer on pine. The crosshatching below the finials, the turnings on the pillars, and the shape of the scrolls terminating in cone shaped turned rosettes indicate that this case is from the shop of cabinetmaker John Smith of Donegal Township. John Smith, Sr., worked as early as the mid-1780s. His sons, John, Jr., and Jacob, were listed as joiners in 1829.

On loan courtesy of William H. Miller, FNAWCC. 1.9.2002
Frederick Heisely, Harrisburg, Dauphin County

Shelf Clock, ca.1835

Frederick Heisely (1759-1843) was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was apparently trained by George Hoff of Lancaster, as his early movements closely resemble those of Hoff. He is listed as working in Hanover in the 1783 tax records, and a brass dial clock survives signed by him there. In November 1783 he married George Hoff’s daughter Catherine Julianna and shortly after moved to Frederick, Maryland. In 1786 he advertised that he made, “Clocks of all kinds, as well Musical Chime Clocks, … likewise large Town-Clocks … Surveyors Compasses, and other Mathematical Instruments, …” By 1796 he was back in Lancaster where he entered into a short-lived partnership with George Hoff, and then worked on his own. By September 1798 he was back in Frederick, Maryland. By 1812 he relocated to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he worked with his sons George Jacob (1789-1880) and Frederick Augustus (1792-1875). He is listed in the 1839 Harrisburg Directory as living with George Jacob at 2nd and Chestnut Streets.

During the early to mid 1830s, Frederick Heisely produced a remarkable group of weight driven 8-day shelf clocks. The movements bear a striking resemblance to the work of Joseph Ives and a group of internal rack-striking 8-day movements produced by C&N Jerome, R. & J.B. Terry, and E.C. Brewster, all of Bristol, Connecticut. However, the Heisely movements are all individually made, with cast brass plates with a minimal amount of finishing to cut costs. The wheels of this example are also made from castings and are spoofed, while all other movements observed have solid wheels apparently cut from rolled sheet brass. All the movements have wooden winding drums and lantern pinions. The strike levers are pivot-ed in a “T”-shaped extension on the left side of the frame, as on an Ives strap movement. The escapement is on the front plate with a strip pallet verge on a pin and a removable cock for the escape wheel.

The most distinctive feature of the Heisely movements is their rack strik-ing system and motion work between the plates. The train layout and the position-ing of the rack and snail is identical to that of the rack striking movements of C&N Jerome and R. & J.B. Terry.

This clock is the only one known in a locally made case. It is inscribed on the bottom “Case/Made by A. Sloan/Harrisburg Pa/1835.” It is made primarily of cherry with mahogany veneer. Probably to cut costs, Heisely bought Connecticut cases, dials, and hands for his other shelf clocks, all having labels of companies in business in the early 1830s. The movements were fastened to a thick pine block that was screwed or nailed (as in this example) to the backboard of the case.

The dial of this clock is painted on iron.

Also inscribed on the bottom of the case is “Wm. Ingram/Watch and Clock Maker/Harrisburg Pa/1835.” William H. Ingram appears on the Harrisburg tax lists for 1834 and 1835. The connection between Heisely and Ingram is not presently known.

The Heisely shelf clocks are well documented in an important article by Edward F. LaFond Jr. in the April 1968 BULLETIN entitled, “Frederick Heisely Strikes Again . . . or, After You, Mr. Heisely!”

On loan courtesy of Cas Woodbridge, FNAWCC. 1.10.2002

References:
John Scharf, Selinsgrove, Snyder County

Shelf Clock, ca.1830-35

Two old family Bible records state that John (Johann) Scharf was born in the county of Aurour in Switzerland on December 12, 1778. Aurour was apparently located in northern Switzerland near Basel and the German border. He came to America about 1815, undoubtedly as a fully trained clockmaker. A brother, Joseph, who remained in Switzerland, was also a clockmaker. John’s first wife died on the voyage over and was buried at sea. Before settling in Selinsgrove, he may have spent some time in Philadelphia and in or near Ephrata, Pennsylvania. He married his second wife, Anna Katherina Wonfiedler, and a son Joseph was born to them at Danville, Pennsylvania, on May 14, 1821. The Scharfs apparently then moved to Selinsgrove, where he appears in the tax records from 1822-1858. He died in the home of his son on January 19, 1859. A John Scharf, Jr., watch and clockmaker and silversmith, appears in the tax records of Mifflinburg, Union County, for 1835-1841. He was probably a son of John Scharf by his first wife.

Scharf may have been the most prolific of the Pennsylvania shelf clock makers, producing as many as 100 mostly 30-hour clocks in cases of various prevailing styles based on Connecticut designs. The movements and cases were not as expensively finished as the clocks of Jacob Buerkle or Thomas Weaver. Like Frederick Heisely, he was trying to produce a good product at a reasonable cost that would be more competitive with the Connecticut shelf clocks. Judging by the number of surviving clocks compared to those of other Pennsylvania makers, he was fairly successful. That he marketed his clocks in outlying areas is shown by this clock, which bears the label of William Leach of Easton, Northampton County, Pennsylvania, the seller. Leach also sold Connecticut clocks.

The movement of this clock, like the George Solliday pillar and scroll, is a modified 30-hour tall clock movement, adapted to a shelf clock case. The major change is the conversion to key winding by substituting winding drums and arbors for the chain pullies of the tall clock movement. The striking levers and rack are made of brass. The lifting piece and rack hook are shaped and positioned as on a typical Pennsylvania German movement, but a long tailed gathering pallet is used for locking, as on an English movement. All Scharf’s clocks have many interesting details that reflect his European background. The pendulum is suspended on the front of the movement by a string loop and hook, with an oval “keystone” to clear the center arbor. The pendulum bob is made of pressed brass with no lead or other filling and so is very light. The movement is fastened to the case by two metal studs anchored in the backboard behind the top and bottom center of the movement that are pinned through holes in the back plate. This simplified the construction of the case by eliminating the need for a seatboard or case dividers for support.

The weights are cast lead with a cavity to receive a wooden pulley, which pivots on a steel pin that fits into holes in the sides at the top of the weight.

The dial is attached by four iron tabs riveted to the corners of the dial, which fit into slots in the sides of the case. Scharf apparently bought all his dials from William Jones of Philadelphia.

The case is primarily cherry with mahogany veneer on the front edges above and below the door. The rear feet are part of the backboard, and were made by extending the backboard down below the bottom of the case and cutting away the unwanted area. The front feet and skirt are nailed and glued to the bottom board. The painted glass tablet is original with some restoration.

On loan courtesy of Edward and Virginia LaFond. 3.12.2002.

Reference:
E.F. LaFond, Jr., correspondence from Howard Scharf, Candor, NY.
Attributed to Thomas Weaver, Millheim, Centre County
Shelf Clock, ca. 1840

The attribution of this clock was made by comparison with a signed and dated clock with a closely related movement and a similarly constructed case. That clock has several inscriptions indicating that it is a special clock. On the seatboard in ink is written, “Thomas Weaver, clocks made and watches repaired Millheim, Centre County, Pennsylvania.” On the top of the case is written in pencil, “Thomas Weaver Clock & Watch Maker, W.S. Harter, Apprentice, Millheim, Centre County, Pennsylvania, November 6th 1838.” The name of the cabinetmaker was also written but is unfortunately illegible. Thomas Weaver is listed in the Centre County tax lists from 1822-1842.

The movement of the present example has undergone some modification since the Weaver/Harter clock of 1838, and is probably of a slightly later date. The movements of these clocks and one other observed are based on an 8-day tall clock movement but appear to be strongly influenced by the “Salem Bridge” shelf clock movements of Heman Clark of Plymouth and Salem Bridge, Connecticut, which were marketed south into Pennsylvania in the 1820s and 1830s. The rectangular cutouts in the plates are strikingly similar, as are the strike hammer and spring arrangement. The major differences are the retention of the conventional tall clock escapement between the plates, the tall clock pendulum cock, and the strike train with a conventional warn wheel. An English type strike arrest was used but with a double-toothed gathering pallet with long tails for locking. The pendulum has been moved around to the front, as opposed to the rear-hung pendulum on the earlier Weaver/Harter clock, and a “keystone” suspension is used to clear the center arbor. Cut pinions and smooth winding drums were used.

The dial of this clock may have been intended for a Black Forest hang-up movement, as it appears to have been made with an arch, which has been cut off. It is made of thin sheet metal. It may be that, as in the case of the Jacob Buerkle clock from Pittsburgh, this clock was made after William Jones stopped supplying dials to the trade, so Weaver had to use what was available.

The case was inspired by the triple-decker cases of Elias Ingraham from Connecticut but is more solidly constructed. It is made of mahogany, mahogany veneer, cherry, curly maple, birch, tulip, and white pine. The mirror and the painted tablet in the lower door are replacements.

On loan courtesy of Edward and Virginia LaFond. 2.12.2002
Jacob Buerkle, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County
Shelf Clock, ca. 1840-45

Jacob Buerkle appears in the tax records of Pittsburgh for 1837-1839. Earlier he was somehow connected with one Andrew Smith, as a shelf clock with an almost identical movement is inscribed on the backboard of the case, “Bought, February 16th 1833, of Andrew Smith. He is good for the clock 5 years.” Andrew Smith is listed as a silversmith in South Huntingtown Township tax records in neighboring Westmoreland County in 1832-1834. Six of these Pittsburgh shelf clocks were observed. This example is the only one with a name on the dial. Two others have been observed with “Pittsburgh” on the dial but no name.

The 8-day movements of these clocks are nearly identical. They are very finely finished, with the same cutouts at the bottom of the plates. They have the English striking system with tailed gathering pallet locking and rack hook pivoted on the left but they have lantern pinions. They have rear-hung pendulums suspended by a thread instead of a spring. The pendulum bob on this and at least two other clocks is of two pieces of brass, the rear piece being made from a part of an old brass clock dial. The frame pillars are fastened to the back plate by steel screws, and to the front plate by pins.

The dial of this clock is painted on thin sheet metal and was probably done locally. It may be that by the time this clock was made, William Jones was no longer supplying dials to the trade. Before his death in 1845, it is reported that his hands had become paralyzed, “incapacitating him from work during his last years of life.”

The case is similar in style to the empire cases of Connecticut clocks of the early 1840s but is more heavily constructed. It is primarily mahogany veneer on cherry, with a one-piece tulip backboard. The brass weight pullies at the top of the case are removable and revolve in small brass frames. On loan courtesy of Edward and Virginia LaFond.
1.12.2002

Right and below. Jacob Buerkle 8-day shelf clock movement with lantern pinions, English style striking with tailed gathering pallet and rack pin locking.
Henry O. Bower, Falkner Swamp, Montgomery County

Dwarf Tall Clock, ca. 1830

Henry Oberholtzer Bower (1807-1867) was born in Douglass Township. His clocks are signed with the place of manufacture as “F. Swome,” which stands for Falkner Swamp. He is said to have made 130 clocks, the last in 1845. At least three of them were dwarf clocks.

The design of the 8-day brass movement of this example was largely influenced by the Terry-type 5-wheel train 30-hour wood shelf clock movement. The motion work is located between the plates and is driven by the third wheel of the time train, rather than by the second wheel normally used in 8-day movements. The escape wheel and strip pallet verge are mounted on the outside of the front plate, Terry-fashion. The lifting rods for the strike are made of wire as on Connecticut movements, though English style rack and snail and rack hook are located outside the front plate, with tailed gathering pallet and rack pin locking. A two-piece pendulum rod is used with an adjustment screw in its middle for easy access through the waist door.

The construction of the case is identical to that of a full-sized tall clock. The primary woods are birch and mahogany veneer on pine. The turned feet and finials are cherry. The backboard is a single piece of white pine, which runs the full length of the case. The entire case appears to have been originally stained dark to imitate mahogany.


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