

Old Magazines Reveal As Much As Old Clocks

by Kenneth A. Fox

A few years ago, a friend, knowing of my interest in clocks in general and Willard clocks in particular, gave me a copy of the following article from a 1929 issue of "Antiques Magazine". At the time it was one of the most informative bits of Willard history that I'd seen. Of course, what I remembered gradually filtered down to almost nothing — until recently. A call from a fellow collector about repairing a church gallery clock brought me face to face with "The Great Revelation". No ordinary gallery clock this (Figure 1) but rather the presentation clock of all presentation clocks. The ornate and gilded case is 70" long, 40" wide, and 7" deep. Dial is 26" in diameter, enameled wood. It was while struggling with this monster in my too small house that the brass plaque (Figure 2) revealed why it was so elaborately made. Note, too, (Figure 3) the finely detailed glass with the appropriate subject matter for its new home. A bit puzzling, however, is the single note on the hour, drop-off strike, pictured in Figure 4. John Doggett must have been a high ranking parishioner to be allowed to impose this reminder on the minister to "end the sermon". The movement is obviously Willard, probably Aaron, Jr., although that is only conjecture. The eighteen-pound, triple compounded weight runs the clock just eight days. There are pencilled notations in the case indicating service at fairly regular intervals throughout the years and present parishioners do not recall the clock ever not running.

Of interest to our watch collecting members and current Willard owners is Figure 5. This is an advertisement from elsewhere in the same magazine and is self-explanatory. It also gives us a bit of insight into what Charles Fasoldt's grandson was doing at that time, although we do not know the quality of his work.

In conclusion, I can say that it was most rewarding to be able to view one of these splendid clocks at close range. My special thanks to Charles Spooner who did outstanding photography under most adverse conditions: a horrible wallpaper background, which he has fortunately obliterated in his finished product.

*

(The text on the following seven pages is taken from "The Man Who Made Simon Willard's Clock Cases", by Mable Swan. That article, published in March, 1929, is republished here by courtesy of The Magazine ANTIQUES. The illustrations presented are not from the Swan article, but relate to the Fox text above. The photography is by Charles Spooner. Ed.)

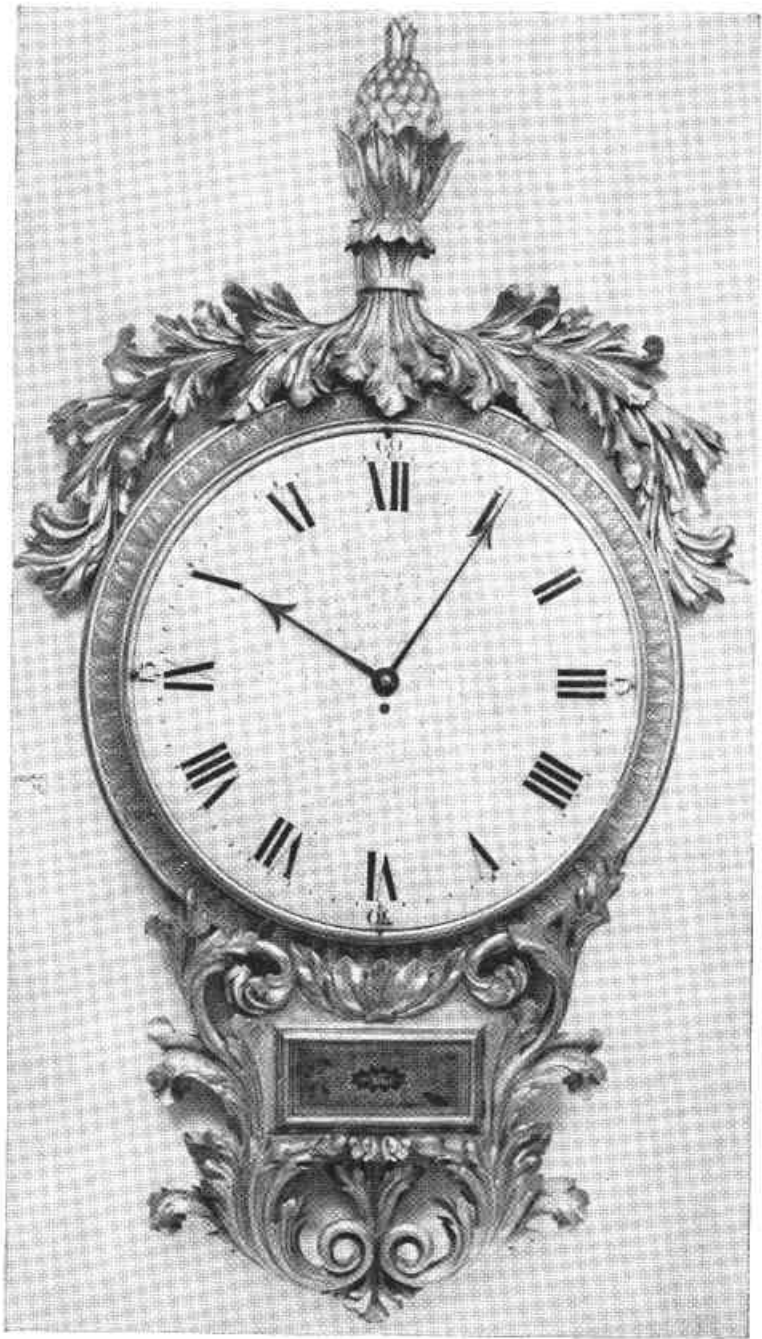


Fig. 1 The Willard-Doggett Presentation Gallery Clock

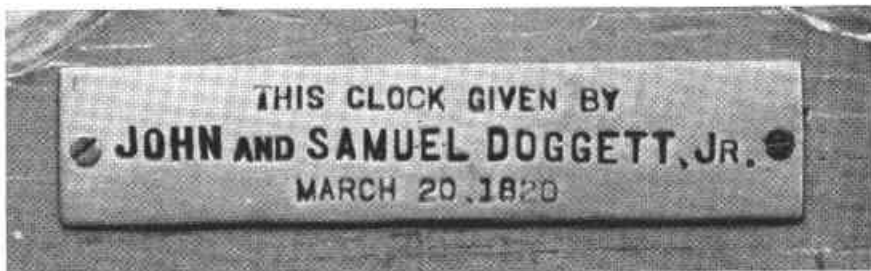


Fig. 2 Brass plate found in Presentation Gallery Clock

But for an old brown ledger, *John Doggett, His Book 1802-1809*, no one would have known that Aaron Willard, the clockmaker, painted mirror panels, that John Doggett, himself, made and gilded cases for the Willard clocks, that Gilbert Stuart, Rembrandt Peale, and Hubbard were friends and patrons of John Doggett, that — but the ledger may as well tell its own story.

In the early days of the eighteenth century, the old Meeting House on Meeting House Hill, Roxbury, must have looked down with great complacency upon the very unusual group of artisans who had chosen to settle around it, a group which included the Willards — Simon, Aaron, and Aaron, Jr.; Elnathan Taber and William Cummins, promising apprentices to Simon Willard; John R. Penniman, an English artist; Samuel Washburn, John Green, Jr., Charles Bullard, Samuel Curtis, Spencer Nolen, painters; Spencer Thomas, Thomas Bacon, William Fiske, William Viles, Nehemiah Munroe, cabinetmakers; Laban Beecher, Thomas Wightman, and John Doggett, carvers; and, most notable of all, Gilbert Stuart, who lived for a time on Roxbury Street just beyond Shawmut Avenue. Many other names less well known appear in the Doggett ledger and show the friendly cooperation that existed among this interesting congregation of men.

The ancient law of 1635 which, as a means of protection against the Indians, forbade any person to dwell more than half a mile from the Meeting House was partly responsible for the feeling, even a century and a half later, that "round the Square" — which, in this locality, was then

through Roxbury Street, round the Meeting House, through the lane, and back through Dudley and Eustis Streets — was revolved all the town life. But in Roxbury, a magnet stronger than either spiritual or physical protection was the commercial element introduced by the clock industry of the Willards and their various apprentices.

Here on Meeting House Hill, opposite the old burying ground on the narrow lane which led to the marshes, stood the shop and looking-glass factory of John Doggett, carver, gilder, cabinet and looking-glass maker. That Doggett was one of the most skillful and successful of the Roxbury group is shown by his old ledger, which, written in the tall, stilted handwriting of a century ago, gives a most systematic account of his business from 1802 until 1809. Not only did his customers include such well-known persons as the Willards, Harrison Gray Otis, Samuel Dexter, Samuel Haven, and other prominent men of the time, but his apprentices, Samuel Sprague Williams, Samuel Doggett, E. G. Scott, W. C. Moore, John Hastings, and Dudley Williams, were members of leading Roxbury families.

When a boy in Dedham, John Doggett chose the trade of carver in wood, bone, and shell. Later, from a traveling artisan, he learned the art of gilding, and was the first to practice that trade in Roxbury. He not only gilded looking-glasses, but he made the frames, carved and gilded the ornaments for them, and, when the Embargo Laws of 1812 forbade the importation of French glass, his ingenuity supplied the demand by quick-silvering window glass, which

met with a tremendous sale throughout the countryside.

One night an itinerant English weaver stopped at the door of Doggett's shop to ask for something to eat. In return for the generous hospitality which he received, he offered to teach his host the secrets of weaving. From this very modest beginning, the manufacture of rugs was gradually developed. Several years later, when carpets had come into general use, the old weaver's secrets laid the foundation for the extensive carpet business which John Doggett carried on under the name of John Doggett & Co., at first in Roxbury and later in Boston.

The first mention in the Doggett ledger of business dealings with the Willards occurs under date of January 19, 1804, when Simon Willard bought "5 books of Gold leaf" from John Doggett at 62½ cents each. The next day Doggett records the following work for Simon Willard:

*To gilding 3 surcles for
clocks and sundary orna-
ments at \$15.
Woodwork for do 6.*

Simon Willard, the most famous of the four Willard brothers, all clockmakers, moved to Roxbury in 1780 and established his shop near the corner of Washington and Ruggles Streets, next to the building where the large double-dial clock remained for many years as his sign.

In 1802 Willard was granted a patent for an "improved timepiece," which at once became very popular — so popular, in fact, that it was imitated by many other clockmakers. Willard's only retaliation for such infringements of his patent was a dignified refusal to speak to the offenders — a characteristic but ineffectual means of protecting his commercial rights. Simon Willard was, in truth, an inventor, a dreamer. He lacked the qualities of a successful business man. Although it is estimated that, during his career, he made twelve hundred eight-day clocks, and over four thousand timepieces, he retired from business with a fortune of only five hundred dollars. The entries in the Doggett ledger record more than a thousand dollars' worth of business

performed for Willard between 1804 and 1809; yet, at no time during these years, was Willard free from debt to Doggett; and at the close of the ledger he owed the thrifty cabinetmaker over six hundred dollars.

John Doggett, on the other hand, was consistently and methodically successful. Whether the amount of a transaction was a few cents or ten dollars, he recorded it in his ledger, even to the extent of entering the loan of a pot of glue. The following entry emphasizes the difference in the business methods of Doggett and of the clockmaking genius:

*April 26, 1805
Simon Willard Cr.
By 1 Ticket in the New York Lotery \$7.50
Dr.*

To short pay of Note .54

Not only did John Doggett make the cases, and carve and gild the ornaments for some of the finest of the Simon Willard clocks; but he also supplied the glass for the doors and fronts:

*August 27, 1804
Simon Willard Dr.
To Gilding 1 Clock circle \$4.
To 3 pieces of glass for
Clock doors at .10 .30
November 1, 1804 Dr.
To 1 piece of Looking glass
for timepiece .37
November 13, 1804 Dr.
To 2 round glasses for
timepieces .56
March 7, 1805 Dr.
To 8 pedestals at 3.75 30.
To 1 glass for timepiece .20*

Three types of timepieces were made by Simon Willard. The second of these was in greatest demand. The first had a mahogany case, often inlaid (these inlaid cases were made, for the most part, by William Fiske), brass bezel, side arms, and painted glass panels. The second had a plain mahogany case, brass bezel, side arms, and painted glass panels. The mahogany case of the third type was enameled in white, and, with its gilded beading, brass bezel, side arms, very elaborate console bracket, and unusually elaborate painted glass panels, was, by far, the most ornate of the

three. The following entries refer to these three types:

June 5, 1806

Simon Willard Dr.

To 1 Clock case No 3
with Eagle \$23.

April 6, 1807

Simon Willard Dr.

To 2 No 3 Clock cases
withought Eagles 46.

December 25, 1807

Simon Willard Dr.

To 1 Clock case No 1
common 70.

To 1 do No 2 common 42.

Eagles and swags of
balls

Several glass painters were, at this time, resident in Roxbury; but the question as to who painted the elaborate glass panels on the Number 3 timepieces has never been definitely settled. In the above entries, the low price for the Number 3 clocks implies that John Doggett did not supply the glass decorations for these particular pieces. This decoration usually consisted of an elaborate combination of crosshatching and scrollwork in gold leaf on a white ground. According to John Ware Willard, the gallery clock in the First Church, Roxbury, has the original glasses executed by an unknown artist. The glasses on the gallery clock of the Second Church, Dorchester, are almost identical with

those of the Roxbury clock. The cases for both of these clocks were made and gilded by John Doggett; but the smallness of his charge for them again suggests that the painting of the glass panels was the work of another person, who received compensation apart.

October 10, 1804

Simon Willard Dr.

To Gilding 2 Meeting house
Clock cases 1 for Roxbury
1 for Charleston with
eagles and swags of balls
at \$48 \$96.

for extra woodwork 6.

To Gilding 1 small Bank
Clock case with bottom
piece 8.

October 23, 1806

Simon Willard Dr.

To 1 Clock case No 2 for
Dorchester with Balls in
the hollow \$46.

To 1 do for Mr. Lowell's
Meeting house Gilt on the
side & balls in the hollow 85.

The following entry with "Gilding complete" must have included all the gilding:

November 9, 1805

Simon Willard Dr.

To 1 Clock case woodwork
and Gilding complete for
the Old South Church \$70.



Fig. 3 Tablet in Presentation Gallery Clock

To 1 do for the Old Brick
do do Cr. 42.

By Cash Cr. \$42.

At this time, John R. Penniman, an English artist, was painting mirror panels for John Doggett.

August 1, 1803

John R. Penniman Cr.
By painting 2 tablets & end
pieces \$9.
By 1 do 1.50

October 18, 1803

John R. Penniman Cr.
By painting 1 tablet 22 by
8 \$2.

Drake, in his *History of Roxbury*, notes that Penniman worked for Simon Willard. Penniman died in 1828; and after that year no more of the lacy-patterned glass panels appeared. We may, therefore, conclude that Penniman was the artist who painted the elaborate glass fronts of the Number 3 Willard clocks.

Aaron Willard, brother of Simon, was also painting panels, and was lettering and enameling glasses for John Doggett:

April 26, 1804
Aaron Willard Cr.
By lettering 1 glass \$.25

May 31, 1804
By painting 6 tablets 4.50

July 17, 1804
By enameling 2 Glasses 2.

July 24, 1804
By putting border on 3
Glasses at 1.75 5.25
By lettering 4 Glasses 2.75

Spencer Nolen, who, for a short time, was in partnership with Aaron Willard, Jr., and was likewise one of the firm of Nolen & Curtis, dial-makers, painted glass panels for John Doggett. Samuel Curtis and Stillman Lothrop, both apprentices of Doggett's, did a great deal of similar work. From the numerous purchases of gold leaf by Lothrop entered in the Doggett ledger, the latter artist must have done gilding for other customers.

On March 30, 1804, the day after

John Doggett's wedding, the following item appears:

Jesse Doggett Cr.
By 43 weeks Bord of Lothrop myself & Sam Williams at \$8 per week \$344.

(Captain Jesse Doggett was the tavernkeeper of the *Ball and Pin Tavern*, where John Doggett lived until he was married.)

James Evans, another apprentice, began working for John Doggett in November, 1804. It was evidently his especial work to make the wooden balls and ornaments for the clocks:

James Evans Cr.
By 4 doz. balls for Gen. Badlam & 39 balls for myself at \$7.50 per gross \$4.15

May 22, 1805
James Evans Dr.
To 26 weeks Bord of himself & Boy at \$4.50 \$117
To washing & mending 21 1/4 dozens 21.25

May 23, 1805
James Evans Dr.
To 2 sulphur molds for composition \$2.
To 1 Lion's head 1 scrole 1.
1 leaf 1 Egg & dart 1.
To 1 crot of whiting 2.
To size of sundry times 5.
To 1 litt .33
To 4 1/2 lbs. of puter .90
To horse & sleigh to Dedham 1.
To Shop room use of Tools firewood etc for your Boy 10.

William Viles also worked for John Doggett, doing much of his employer's cabinetwork.

On the much debated question as to whether a gilded wooden eagle on a Simon Willard clock is a sign of restoration, the old ledger throws conclusive illumination. John Doggett unquestionably gilded and, perhaps, made eagles for Simon Willard:

July 17, 1804
Simon Willard Dr.
To Gilding 2 Eagles at \$7 \$14.

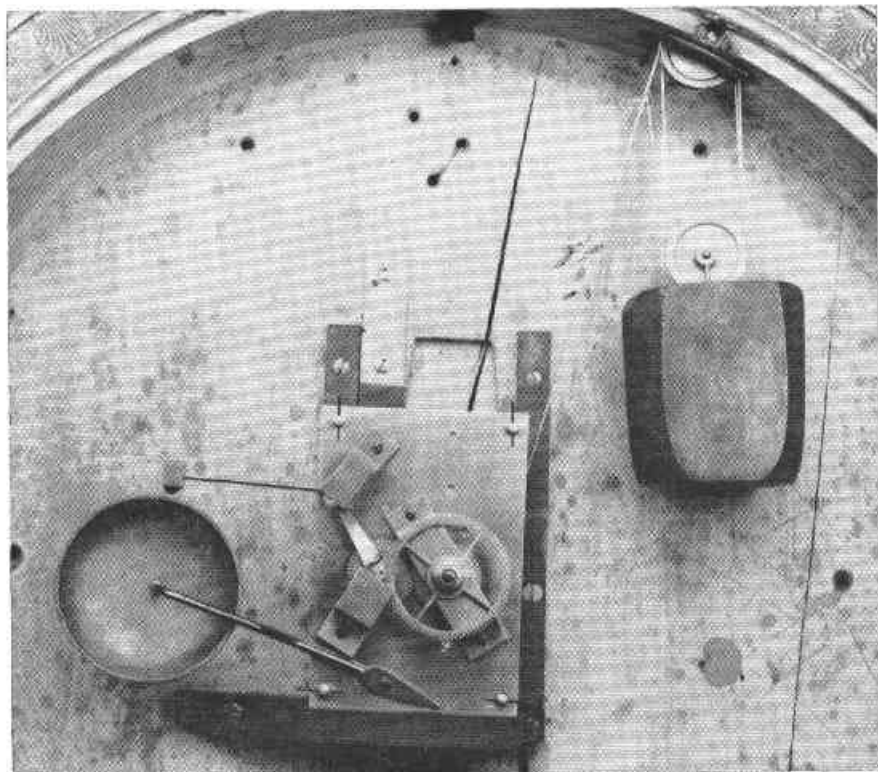


Fig. 4 Movement and weight in Presentation Gallery Clock

To 2 Wire Ornaments of Clocks at \$5	10.	
June 2, 1805		
Simon Willard	Dr.	
To extra Gilding of Eagle for Roxbury Clock	\$5.	
March 18, 1805		
Simon Willard	Dr.	
To Gilding 3 Eagles at .75	\$2.25	
June 17, 1805		
To Gilding 2 large Eagles		
To do 3 small ones	5.25	
To Gilding & burnishing 1 Eagle	1.50	
February 6, 1806		
Simon Willard	Dr.	
To Gilding 1 Eagle in Oil Gold	\$1.75	
November 25, 1807		
Simon Willard	Dr.	
To 1 Clock case No 1 common	\$70.	
To 1 do No 2 common	42.	
Eagles & swags of balls		

June 5, 1806		
Simon Willard	Dr.	
To 1 Clock case No 3 with eagle	\$23.	

There is but one mention of a brass eagle, which Willam Whitwell bought from John Doggett for 88 cents.

The first mention of Aaron Willard in the ledger occurs January 26, 1804, in connection with the purchase of "1 pint of Jappan" from John Doggett. Various other entries follow:

Feb. 25, 1804		
Aaron Willard	Dr.	
To 4 portrait frames, 38 feet 4 in.	\$35.14	
March 6, 1804		
Aaron Willard	Cr.	
By 2 quarts of varnish	\$6.	
1 quart of Jappan	2.	

In April, 1804, Aaron lettered "4 glasses" for \$1.50, for John Doggett. Many similar entries follow for let-

tering and enameling glasses and for painting the panels, or tablets, which occupied the upper sections of the looking-glasses. John Doggett did much less work for Aaron Willard than he did for Simon or Aaron, Jr., a fact accounted for partly by the circumstance that Aaron Willard owned a clock factory on Washington Street, just across the Boston line, and partly by Aaron's method of producing inexpensive clocks on a quantity basis. Nevertheless, this manufacturer's name appears in the Doggett accounts:

January 10, 1805

Aaron Willard	Dr.	
To Gilding 4 Clock doors		
at 7/6		\$5.

April 18, 1805

Aaron Willard	Dr.	
To Gilding 6 Timepiece		
doors at 7/6		\$7.50
To Gilding 4 Eagles		6.
To Gilding 4 side		
ornaments		\$4.

In 1809, Aaron Willard, Jr., is recorded as a clockmaker; but as early as June, 1805, John Doggett was making cases and doing gilding for him:

June 25, 1805

Aaron Willard, Jr.,	Dr.	
To Gilding 13 Timepiece		
doors		\$16.25

July 8, 1805

To Gilding 12 Eagles	18.
----------------------	-----

July 22, 1805

To 2 Pedestals with balls	9.
4 do without	14.

August 11, 1805

To 4 Pedestals part painted	
at 3	12.

May 5, 1806

To Gilding 24 Timepiece	
doors	\$30.

May 30, 1806

To 2 clock cases No 3 with	
eagles at \$25	50.
To Gilding 12 small Eagles	18.

The following item, which is one of several similar entries, suggests some

business arrangements between Simon and Aaron, Jr.:

June 10, 1806

Simon Willard	Dr.	
To 10 Pedestals 4 delivered		
at A. Willard, Jun. at		
\$3.50		\$35.

At this time Aaron, Jr., is said to have been employed in his father's factory at 843 Washington Street. This factory was in the rear of the older man's dwelling, with which it was connected by a long row of buildings used for storehouses and workshops. Charles Bullard, an ornamental painter, Henry Willard, clock-case maker, William Fiske, cabinetmaker, Pratt & Walker, cabinetmakers, occupied these shops, and Aaron, Jr., may also have had one of his own. In 1815, he bought a house at 815 Washington Street, and, in 1823, he took over his father's business. The second item in the following entry evidently refers to the lyre clock, which originated with him:

May 16, 1809

Aaron Willard, Jun.	Dr.	
To 1 Clock circle for the		
Exchange		\$10.
To 1 New Fashion		
Pedestal		4.

The ledger shows a greater amount of work done by John Doggett for Aaron, Jr., than for either Simon or Aaron. One entry is almost identical with some of the debits against Simon Willard:

October 23, 1806

Aaron Willard, Jun.	Dr.	
To 2 Clock cases No 3 for		
Mr. Baldwin at \$28		\$56.
To 2 Clock cases No 3		
common		50.
To 1 do No 1 Gilt at the		
side		80.
To 1 do No 2 common		42.
With Eagles and swags		
of balls		
Aaron Willard, Jun.	Dr.	
To making cross for		
clock		\$3.
To 1/2 of my expenses to		
Salem		3.

REPRODUCTIONS, WELL AGED, SIMON Willard hall clock and banjo movement. Can be fitted to your wood or metal dial. Complete line of material. Send for folder. DUDLEY S. FASOLDT, 69 Columbia Street, Albany, N. Y.

Fig. 5 Advertisement by Dudley Fasoldt as found in The Magazine ANTIQUES, March, 1929

Another item refers to "3 crosses for timepieces" made for Aaron, Jr., also to "1 Clock circle bound with iron" for \$9. The fact that Aaron Willard's name disappears from the ledger after the appearance of entries against Aaron, Jr., suggests that this younger man, as he was working for his father at this time, was assuming responsibility for purchasing.

From Elnathan Taber, an apprentice of Simon Willard's, John Doggett bought a clock for \$45, a clock which Taber himself had made. This transaction took place in March, 1804, a few days before Doggett's marriage. The list of purchases recorded by the prospective groom gives us some idea of the articles thought essential to a housekeeping establishment. From William Viles, who worked for him as cabinetmaker, Doggett bought "1 field Bedstead" for \$14; "1 secretary," \$35; one card table, \$14; one small chair, \$2; one bureau, \$18; one lolling chair, \$8. From Aaron Willard he obtained one cot bedstead, \$5.50, and one common bedstead, \$3. William Fiske, the cabinetmaker, supplied a field bedstead for \$14, and one light-stand. Ebenezer Leland, the village tinsmith, furnished "sundry tinware" to the amount of \$14.46. From the shop of Ebenezer Fox came "1 pair shovel and tongs" and "1 pair of candlesticks." Other items included gloves and hose from the country store of Howe and Champney; from Norman Holmes "1 pair of knee buckles." One "set of bamboo chairs" and "2 sets of Windsors," at \$16.50 and \$20 respectively, were bought from Samuel Horton. From Jesse Doggett, the keeper of the tavern *The Ball and Pin*, "45 lbs. of feathers, bolsters and pillows" were purchased

—the feathers for \$33.75. Numerous other articles and "sundaries," variously acquired, indicate a happy co-operative familiarity among the Roxbury craftsmen in a day when clockmakers would sell bedsteads to accommodate a friend, and apprentices would find courage to undertake independent work in a similar generous cause.

From Doggett's countless entries for making embroidery frames for "Miss Saunders and Miss Beach," it is very evident that a necessary part of the curriculum of the young ladies' finishing school conducted by these exemplary spinsters was the learning of embroidery.

<i>Miss Saunders and</i>	
<i>Miss Beach</i>	<i>Dr.</i>
<i>To 1 embroidery frame and</i>	
<i>glase for Miss Sarah</i>	
<i>Hawkins</i>	\$7.50
<i>For straining 1 piece of</i>	
<i>embroidery</i>	.50

For his cabinetwork, John Doggett purchased pine, oak, and walnut wood from Benjamin Fairbanks, and "Bay Mahogany" from Cook & Dudley. He needed a variety of materials for his services were manifold. Thus we find in the ledger:

<i>William Lemon</i>	<i>Dr.</i>
<i>To Gilding bed cornice Bows,</i>	
<i>Darts, Quivers, Arrows</i>	\$16.
<i>Mrs. Elizabeth Derby</i>	
<i>of Salem</i>	<i>Dr.</i>
<i>To 1 Looking Glass frame</i>	
<i>44 by 29</i>	\$125.
<i>To 1 bed and 1 window</i>	
<i>cornices 41 feet</i>	102.50
<i>Gilding the Eagles given in</i>	
<i>To regilding Oval Dressing</i>	
<i>Glass frame</i>	4.

*Capt. Jesse Doggett of the
Ball and Pin Dr.*

<i>To Gilding the top of a lightning spear</i>	<i>\$.40</i>
<i>To mending 1 cradle</i>	<i>.50</i>
<i>To 1 five foot stick mark with inches</i>	<i>.50</i>

There seemed to be a complete understanding between employer and employee in those early days, as the following items clearly indicate:

<i>To Landon & Blackman labor</i>	<i>\$1.50</i>
<i>To Cheney & Bird's labor</i>	<i>1.70</i>
<i>To spirit for them</i>	<i>.38</i>

The simplified spelling and the

equally simplified bookkeeping of John Doggett's old ledger may bring a smile to the twentieth-century reader. And yet this unchallengeable story of the industrial life of the Roxbury craftsmen of the early 1800's is one of the most valuable records of its kind which has yet come to light. It answers many a long unanswered question as to the authorship of hitherto anonymous bits of handiwork; and, more than that, it gives us, on every page, some glimpse of character, some revelation of personality, which helps us to realize that the craftsmen of old were by no means supermen, but were human beings like ourselves.

The Two Clocks

Said the modern clock to the old antique,
"Your voice is much too loud when you speak,
And your noisy tick, proves you're not refined,
Your hands look old, and your face is lined;
You may have been beautiful in your prime,
And down through the years kept wonderful time;
But, now you are old, and you should give place
To a clock that chimes, with a younger face.
Up in the attic you still belong there
You stood by the side of an old arm chair.
I can add more grace to parlor or hall,
And when special friends would drop in to call,
I would be too modest, refined and proud,
To stare, and tick too awfully loud.
And when I would be proclaiming the time,
I'd speak in a voice that is tuned to chime;
My hands would move with precision and grace,
And unsightly lines wouldn't mar my face."
Said the old antique, "I may not be young,
But, my honest face, and my truthful tongue
For over a century have told the time;
Though my voice has never been tuned to chime,
The old folks knew I was telling the truth;
And my faithful hands that have lost their youth,
In idleness then could never be found,
And I never stopped, for they kept me wound,
My tick was a welcome sound it would seem
While the years rolled by like a silent stream.
Then the young folks frowned on me for a while,
But, now I've come back with my antique style
I'm gracing the homestead parlor once more,
And the mantel shelf, where I stood before
They put me up in the attic one day,
After the old folks had gone away."

(Submitted by JWG)