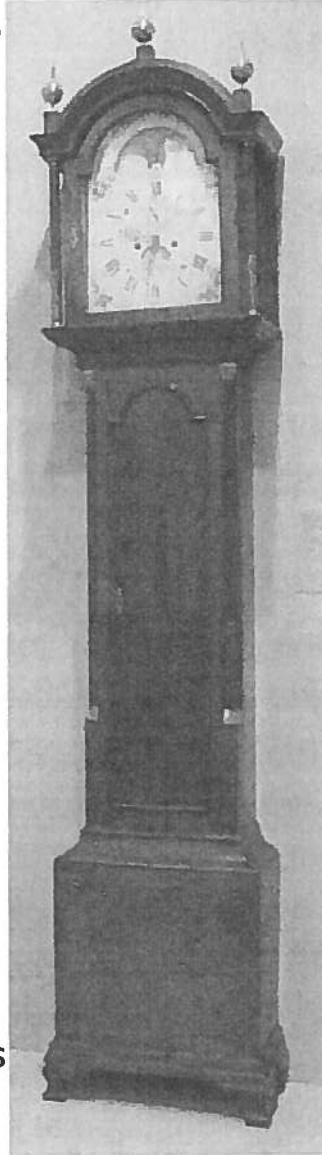


TALL CLOCK, 1795, Movement by Simon Willard, Roxbury MA.

Mahogany and mahogany veneers, brass fittings.

Gift: Mary Ann Burgess McCrea in memory of Stanley Barrows McCrae, 1986
(4993.1)

The maker of the Academy clock's movement, Simon Willard, (1753 – 1848) was one of the very best clockmakers of the American Federal period. Born in Grafton, Massachusetts, he set himself up in business as a clockmaker in Roxbury...in the late 1770s. Willard was a genius for his trade; he possessed a natural mechanical ability, an inventive mind, and was a conscientious and meticulous workman. When one considers that there were no machines at the time to facilitate the work and that everything had to be done by hand, making a clock in the late 18th century was no small feat...The 8-day movement of the Academy's clock works as well today as when it was made...



From Jensen, JF, (1978?) Unlabeled notes.

SIMON WILLARD

American, b. Grafton, MA, 1753; d.
Roxbury, MA, 1848

Tall Clock [with Moon Phase Mechanism], ca. 1795

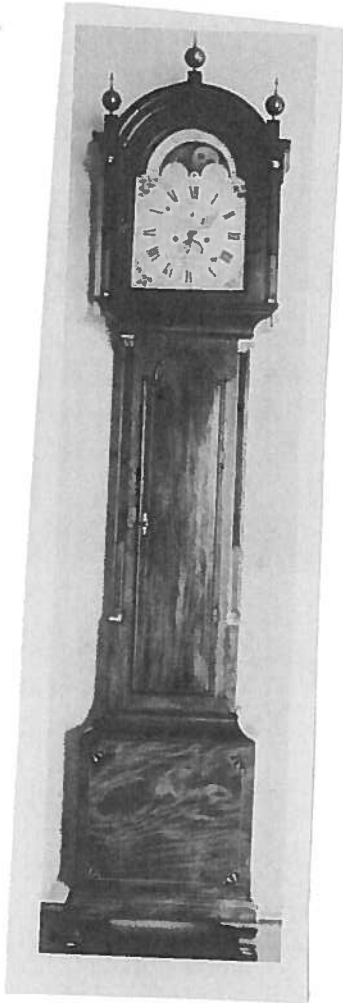
Mahogany with dark and light wood inlays,
chestnut, white pine, brass fittings

Gift of Mrs. Mary Ann Burgess McCrea in
memory of Stanley Barrow McCrea, 1981
(4993.1)

Simon Willard was the most celebrated of a family of clockmakers who were active in Massachusetts between 1765 and 1850. Willard specialized in clocks for churches, halls, and galleries; catering to a clientele that included Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. Capitol, and Harvard University. Moon phase clocks first gained popularity in the early eighteenth century as a means to determine the most advantageous use of the light provided by the moon for travel. The moon phase mechanism consists of a rotating dial on which there are two moons, one on either end of the dial, with one picture of the full moon displayed every 29.5 days, in direct correspondence to the natural moon cycle.

4993.1

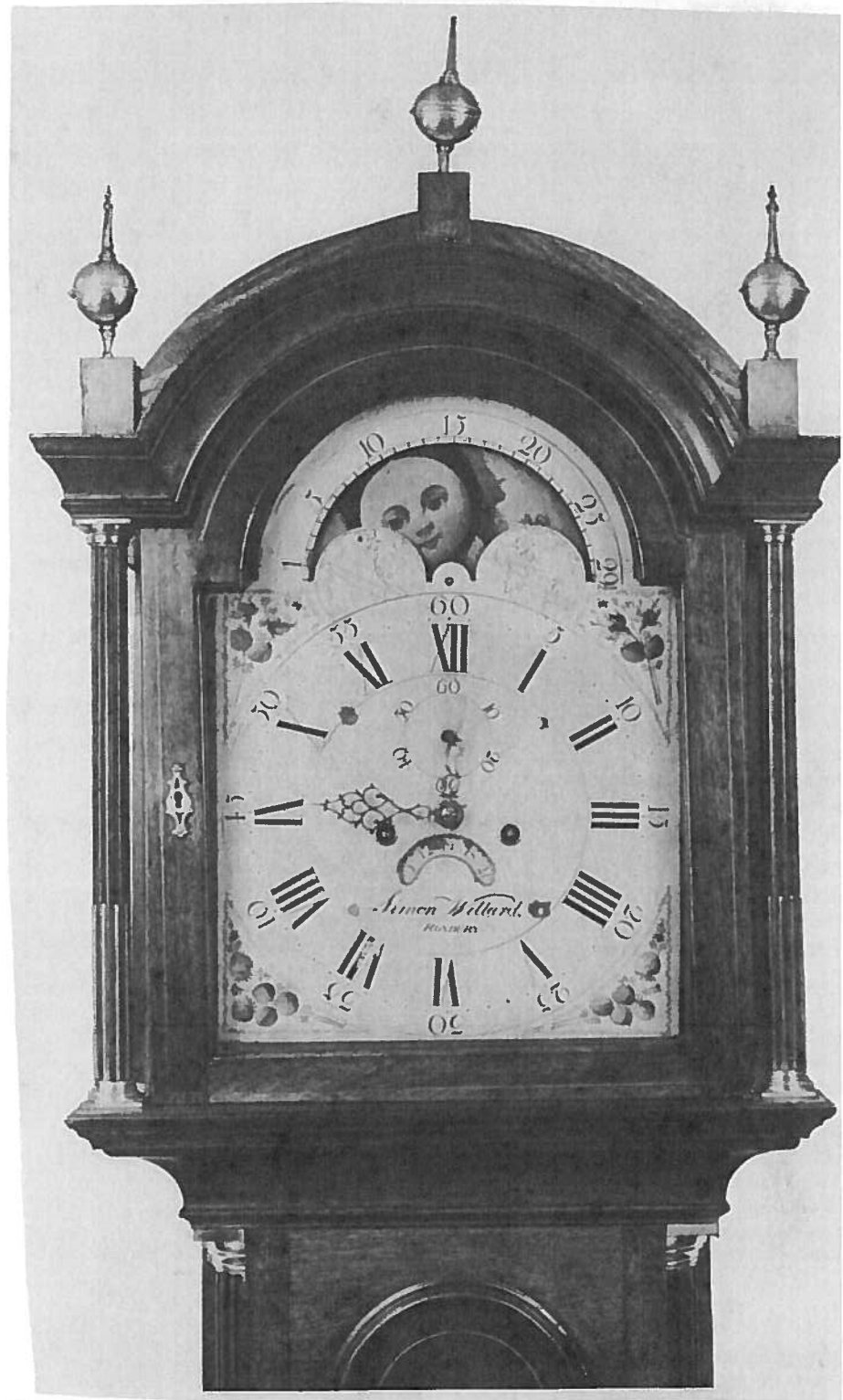
Tall Clock, 1790-1800, United States, movement made by Simon Willard (working 1766-1839), Roxbury, Massachusetts mahogany case with light wood inlays and brass fittings; h. 93 1/2" (237 cm.) Gift of May Ann Burgess McCrea in memory of Stanley Barrows McCrea, 1981 (4993.1) On view in gallery 10



Visitors to the Academy's gallery of 18th- and early 19th-century American art are often delighted by the sounds of the tall clock as it strikes the hours. On loan to the Academy since 1976, the clock was recently presented as a gift to the museum and makes a significant addition to the collection of early American furniture.

Tall clocks were first produced in Europe in the latter part of the 17th century, and the form was probably introduced into America not long afterwards. This type of clock was developed to protect the movement from dust and damage as well as to conceal the weights and pendulum.

The maker of the Academy clock's movement, Simon Willard (1753-1848), was among the very best clockmakers of the American Federal period. Born in Grafton, Massachusetts, he set himself up in business as a clockmaker in Roxbury, Massachusetts in the late 1770s. Willard had a genius for this trade; he possessed a natural mechanical ability, an inventive mind and was a conscientious and meticulous workman. When one considers that there were no machines at the time to facilitate the work and that everything had to be done by hand, making a clock in the late 18th century was no small feat. The mechanisms of the movement had to be fashioned with absolute accuracy in order for the clock to keep good time. That the 8-day movement of the Academy's clock works as well today as when it was made over 180 years ago is proof of Willard's remarkable skill and high standards of workmanship.



The beauty and precision of Willard's clock movement, however, is entirely concealed from the viewer by the case, which, as was customary with the wooden cases of such clocks, is made not by Willard but by a professional cabinetmaker (whose identity is not known). The case of the Academy's clock was made of mahogany and subtly adorned with delicate wood inlays and brass fittings. The fine proportions and the straightforward design give the case dignity, elegance and distinction.

Such clocks frequently convey much information in addition to the time. The Academy's clock has a movable register in the top which shows the phase of the moon and maps of the world divided into two hemispheres below. A sub-dial below the "XII" tells the seconds, and a curved slot below the center boss reveals the day of the month. Painted dials, like the wooden cases, were made by other tradesmen.

MSD →

The Academy clock's dial, decorated with delicate sprays of roses and strawberries, bears a backplate stamped "Wilson," the name of a Birmingham, England manufacturer. — J.J.

Guided tours of the Academy's collection are offered Tuesday-Saturday at 11 a.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.



The museum's *Tall Clock with Moon Phase Attachment* in gallery 10 is adjusted daily by art maintenance assistant Franklyn Donahue

1/86



TAMBOUR SECRETARY, 1800 – 1810, Northeast Massachusetts
Or southern New Hampshire.
Mahogany and mahogany veneer with dark and light inlays.
Gift of Margaret Carroll Gray 1949 (917.1)

[For shelf displays, see following page.]

AMERICAN CABINETMAKER, SALEM

Tambour Secretary-Front Desk and Bookcase, ca. 1790

Mahogany and mahogany veneer with dark and light wood inlays

Gift of Robert Allerton, 1949 (917.1)

The tambour secretary desk, often referred to as a roll top desk, was first introduced to France to England in the early eighteenth century, and from England to America shortly thereafter. The tambour, first seen in America during the Federal period, is created by gluing thin pieces of wood to a cloth backing in order to create a flexible sliding door.