

Clock Advertisements

REVERE'S Day Book shows three charges against Simon Willard for prints to be placed in clocks, as follows:

April 11, 1781, "Mr Simon Willard Dr/ To printing a number of sheets of / Prints to go into time pieces 1-12-0."

June 14, 1781, "Mr Simon Willard Dr / To printing 18 Sett of prints to / go into time pieces 0-18-0."

July 3, 1781, "Mr Simon Willard Dr / To Printing 18 Sett of prints / for your time pieces 0-18-0/ To Cash paid for Vermillion 0-3-0/ To 100 prints for your Br Aron for Watches 0-6-0."

All of these charges were made against Simon Willard. Simon was the second oldest of the Willard brothers who were clock-makers. Benjamin was born in 1743, Simon in 1753, Ephraim in 1755, and Aaron in 1757. Benjamin had a shop in Grafton and sold tall clocks in Roxbury as early as 1771. Simon spent most of his business life in Roxbury, and made tall clocks and wall clocks, mostly the latter. Ephraim lived at Medford during the eighteenth century and made comparatively few clocks. Aaron established his clock business in Boston, later moved to Roxbury, and in 1792 returned to Boston. He made clocks on a large scale, employing many workmen.

Although all of the above entries for clock prints were charged against Simon Willard, no print with Revere's characteristic engraving has ever, to my knowledge, been found in a Simon Willard clock. In the 1790's he used a printed label, printed by Isaiah Thomas, Jr., advertising his various kinds of clocks, and giving directions as to operation.

All of the clock labels, surely engraved by Revere, carry the name of Aaron Willard and are found in Aaron Willard clocks. I have located more than twenty. The label is $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches high by $3\frac{7}{8}$ wide, to the edge of the engraving. It shows a Chippendale type of border of scroll work and flowers, with a shelf clock at the top, and with the engraved advertisement "Common House Clocks, Table Spring

Clocks, and Time-peices, of different constructions made by Aaron Willard Boston," followed by "Directions for setting up the Clock." There are three varieties — the first with "Roxbury," a second with "Boston," and a third with "Boston" and a line inserted at the bottom "to make it go faster screw the pendulum up, slower screw down." The chronological order of the three labels is not certain. All of the three labels are herewith reproduced, Plates 57 and 58. The American Antiquarian Society has only the last of the three prints.

The engraving is in Revere's characteristic style, both in the border and in the lettering. The fact that no such labels are found in Simon Willard clocks, and all located are in Aaron Willard clocks, would lead to the belief that Simon was assuming the charge in the Day Book in behalf of his brother Aaron. This belief is heightened by the fact that the last Revere charge is for one hundred prints for "Your Brother Aron for Watches."

I have not attempted to list the owners of tall clocks which still retain the engraved label. I have found over twenty and have a dozen photographs. The print is reproduced, in slightly reduced form, in Wallace Nutting's *Clock Book*, 1924, plate 112, and in his *Furniture Treasury*, 1928, Volume 2, number 3452.

As for the watch paper engraved for Aaron Willard, the Revere Day Book in July, 1781, specifically charges Simon Willard with six shillings for 100 prints for "Your Br Aron for Watches." The search for such a watch paper has gone on for many years. In 1935, John M. Phillips of Yale University acquired such a paper from Francis H. Bigelow of Cambridge. He gave it in 1947 to Mark Bortman of Boston, and Mr. Bortman in turn presented it to the American Antiquarian Society in 1948. The paper is circular in shape, to fit the back of a watch, and shows an angel blowing a horn at the top, a branch of a tree, a watch, Father Time, a rooster, and in the center the advertisement of "A. Willard Watch & Clock Maker Boston." It is typically engraved in Revere's style and is unquestionably his work. It is reproduced, Plate no. 58. The Bortman copy shows only the outside ornamental border line, but another copy recently acquired by the American Antiquarian Society shows also an outside plain border line. The diameter of the label is $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches, to the plain border line. The two copies owned by the American Antiquarian Society are the only ones located.