

Basic Detail Report



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Title Tall Case Clock

Date about 1780, case reworked in the late 19th century

Primary Maker John Avery Jr.

Medium Case: Cherry primary wood, iron, brass and iron hardware. Dial: Brass.

Works: Cast brass and iron.

Description Tall case clock in the Federal, or rococo, style, with a cherry case, an arched pediment at the top of the hood, a brass clock movement, and a brass dial that is engraved "Avery/ Preston". The tall case clock consists of three major components: the removable hood, the removable dial and clock works, and the clock case. The dial and works sit on a horizontal board at the top of the clock case; the pendulum (separated from the clock) and weights (missing) that drive the works would be suspended in the trunk, or narrow body, of the case. The hood slides over the works and sits at the top of the case. At the top of the hood are three brass finials, each consisting of a slender cone atop an urn. Each finial sits at the top of a plinth with a carved, undulating front surface. Between the center plinth and each side plinth is a panel of wood that conforms to the shape of the arched hood. The top edge of each panel is shaped with multiple scrolls

Basic Detail Report

and curves (some scrolls now broken). The front of the hood has a glass door that is arched and recessed, with a small brass knob at the left side. The door is flanked by a slender, free-standing column. Each side of the hood has a rectangular door with an undulating top edge. Each back corner of the hood has a vertically-oriented panel, the outside edge of which is shaped with a cyma curve, or S-curve, and a reverse cyma curve. The trunk of the clock case has deep cove, or recessed quarter-circle, molding at the top and bottom of the front and sides; a tall door on the front; and fluted quarter columns at each front corner. Below the cove molding are seven three-inch-tall, fluted panels: three on the front and two on each side. Each panel on the front of the case is separated by a slender, horizontally-oriented boss, or applied tapered ornament. Below the panels on the front and sides of the case is a horizontal, applied band of molding. The door of the trunk has an undulating top and bottom edge. The top of the door has an applied, projecting, wooden boss surrounded by incised carving. Each corner of the door also has incised, triangular carving. The center of the door has an applied, projecting wooden boss inside an oval, vertically-oriented starburst with sixteen recessed rays. The center left side of the door has a ring-shaped knob. Below the door is rectangular, applied molding. Within the rectangle is an oval, horizontally-oriented starburst with sixteen rays, with a wooden boss in the center. Above and below each quarter-column on the trunk is an applied, turned ornament. The center front of the base is decorated with square, applied molding, surrounding a round starburst with sixteen rays. Each interior corner of the square has an applied fan carved with recessed rays. Base

Basic Detail Report

molding is applied to the front and sides of the base. The front of the base has a shaped skirt consisting of a downward peak in the center flanked by an arch and a small spur. Each side of the base has a shaped skirt consisting of a downward arch flanked by a small spur. The boards that form the skirts terminate in straight feet. Construction Details: A single, vertically-oriented backboard with squared top corners extends the full height of the hood and case. The hood does not have a back; it slides over the clock works to rest on the cove molding at the top of the trunk. The hood is constructed of a three-part frame: an arched top and two sides. The arched top consists of an arched panel of wood at the front and back; a conforming iron roof (replaced), or bonnet top, is screwed down to the top of the arched panels. Each side of the hood has a square opening for a door; each door is joined to the outside of this opening with a pair of small hinges at the back edge. All ornament is nailed or glued to the frame: the plinths, the shaped panels, the arched molding at the front, the straight projecting molding at the sides, and the shaped panel of wood at each back corner. The sides of the hood rest on a horizontal, three-sided frame with molding at the outside edges. Each free-standing column extends between the projecting molding at the top of the hood and the horizontal, three-sided frame at the bottom. The door is constructed of wooden rails that are tenoned at each corner. The door pivots on a pair of brass hinges at the top right and bottom right corner. The backboard is nailed into a rabbet on each back corner of the sides of the trunk. The boards that form the sides of the trunk extend several inches above the bottom of the hood. The clock works rest on a seat board, or

Basic Detail Report

horizontal board immediately behind the dial. The seat board rests on a block (later addition) at the top edge of each side of the trunk. The cove molding is nailed to the front and sides of the top and bottom of the trunk. There is a rail above and below the door, and a vertical post at each front corner of the trunk that forms the carved quarter columns. The posts are joined to the sides of the trunk with vertically-oriented glue blocks at the interior front corners of the case. The door is constructed of a single board that is joined to the trunk with two hinges at the right side; there is a round pull at the center left side. The sides of the trunk extend down to the top of the base. The base is constructed of a front and two side boards that are joined at the front corners with nailed butt joints. A strut extends between the bottom edge of each side of the trunk and the corresponding bottom interior edge of the side of the base. The base molding is nailed to the front and sides of the base. The skirts and feet are constructed of separate boards at the front and sides; these boards are nailed to the underside edge of the front and sides of the base. The base has no bottom board. The projecting molding and ornament is glued or nailed to the front of the case. Dial: The engraved, brass dial is square with an arched top; the dial was silvered originally. The center of the dial arch is engraved "Avery/ Preston" inside an oval wreath. The wreath is flanked by curving and scrolled vines that extend down to the top corners of the square dial plate. The middle of the dial plate is engraved with a chapter ring consisting of a ring of Roman numerals, inside a ring of minute gradations, inside a ring of Arabic numbers from one to sixty in increments of five. In the center of the chapter ring is an arbor, or axle,

Basic Detail Report

around which the hour and minute hands pivot. To either side of the main arbor

is a winding arbor, to wind the clock. A round, recessed seconds dial is located

above the main arbor, with a hand pivoting around the center. An arched,

recessed calendar dial is located below the main arbor; a recessed plate behind

the arched opening pivots to indicate the date. Additional curving and scrolled

vines are engraved in the center of the dial arch and on each lower corner of the

dial plate. Clock Works Movement: weight powered Duration: eight day

Materials: domestic cast brass Strike: count wheel Escapement: recoil The dial is

joined to the works with Harland-style screws. Each pillar is cylindrical, with a

ring at the center. The back plate is skeletonized. The works are accompanied by

a pendulum. Condition: Two small pieces of the solid panel at the top right side

of the hood have broken off. The arched bonnet top of the hood is replaced. The

blocks that support the seat board are additions or replacements. The board

that forms the front of the base has split vertically in the center. The boards that

form the skirts and feet are possibly replaced. The carving and applied molding

are later additions. The case is refinished; the inside of the hood door, the back,

and portions of the interior are painted black. The dial was silvered originally.

The pendulum is separated from the clock works. The cylindrical weights for the

clock works are missing.

Dimensions Primary Dimensions (overall height x width x depth): 93 3/4 x 19 x 10

1/2in. (238.1 x 48.3 x 26.7cm)