

DINING ROOM CLOCK

Lessons from an Old Manse #1

From the diary of William Emerson, December 12, 1767:

**“Returned to Concord.
Set up the Clock (good Bargain)”**



HISTORY

On December 10, 1767, Concord’s minister, William Emerson (1743-1776) attended the public auction in Boston. While there he would discover this 8-day clock and buy it for \$20. Pleased with this quality purchase at such a remarkable price, two days later he would write the quote above in his succinct diary. Made in 1740 in Limerick, Ireland, the clock has stayed in this corner of The Old Manse dining room since the house was built for the Emerson family in 1770.

Because we do our best to take care of this clock by carefully winding it every week, it still tells the correct time 280 years after it was crafted! To the delight of visitors, it continues to chime on the hour throughout each day, as it did when the Emersons and successive families lived at The Old Manse.

FOR CONTEMPLATION OR DISCUSSION

TIME PIECES

- What do you use most often to tell the time?
- Where is it?
- How does it keep correct time?

- How does a longcase clock work to tell and keep time in comparison to your contemporary time piece?

PASSAGE OF TIME

- Does it feel like time is moving slower or more quickly during your extended time at home?
- Why do you think?
- What do you do to pass the time?

CONVERSATION WITH THE EMERSONS

- How would you describe to the Emersons the ways in which we keep and tell time today?
- What do you think would be most astonishing to them if you were able to tell them about it?

WRITING PROMPTS

- Write a diary entry or a poem about telling time in 2020.
- Write an essay about the social and technological reasons behind changes in timepieces between the 1700s and now.

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This is part of the *Lessons from an Old Manse* series. For more lessons and other educational materials, please visit [The Trustees At Home](#)

