



**FINAL**  
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**The Old North Church & Historic Site's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Avery-Bennett Clock is Ticking Once Again  
Thanks to 2nd Generation Clock Repairman Ken Pearson  
Re-Installation: Wednesday, June 16 at 9 a.m.**



*Image: Courtesy of Old North Church + Historic Site, 2021.*

BOSTON – For more than almost three centuries, the Avery-Bennett gallery clock has kept time at Old North Church & Historic Site. A muted observer of war and peace, the 18<sup>th</sup> century relic has survived battles of the American Revolution and Civil War, met world leaders, including the Marquis de Lafayette and Queen Elizabeth II, and witnessed our nation's transformations, from winning our independence to the desegregation of congregations and most recently a 13-month shutdown of Old North Church during the COVID-19 crisis. On June 16 at 9 a.m., Ken Pearson, a lineal descendent of the clock's 19<sup>th</sup> century repairman, will complete a two-month restoration and re-install the time piece on the front gallery of the organ loft where it has ticked since 1726.

The Old North Foundation received an \$1,800 grant from The Massachusetts Society of Colonial Wars and The General Society of Colonial Wars to repair the pinion gears of the inner workings, which ensure the brass wheels run to keep time. The clock was constructed by Richard Avery in 1726, and the case was made by Thomas Bennett, proprietor of pew No. 56, for the cost of 12 shillings. These two church members had never built a clock before and never built one after and yet the Avery-Bennett gallery clock functions like typical grandfather clocks still created today.

"The Avery-Bennett clock exemplifies the threads of active citizenship that weave throughout Old North's history," says Nikki Stewart, Old North Church & Historic Site Executive Director. "We are all called to use our talents in unique, and sometimes unexpected ways. These novice clockmakers came together in partnership to create a clock that has served this community for 295 years with only a handful of repairs."

Old North Church's modern-day clock repairman, Ken Pearson, 70, of Gloucester, Mass., is a relative of Simon Willard, father of Simon Junior and Benjamin F. Willard, who cleaned the Avery-Bennett gallery clock in 1823 and 1830. Pearson has been tinkering on clocks since he was a teenager, helping his father, also a man of the trade. Since 1983, he has run his own shop, Time Machines Past and Present, based in Wenham, Mass.



“My father went to watch making school on the GI bill and soon after became a clockmaker – I guess you could say it runs in my family,” says Pearson, who earned an Art History degree from Case Western Reserve University before launching his career at the Cleveland Museum of Art. “I like clocks because they combine aesthetic and mechanical attributes, science and art, engineering and beauty.”

The Avery-Bennett gallery clock exhibits a polychrome red case scheme with bronze moldings and a black dial face with bronze sunburst behind the dial hands. A detail of the reddish field indicates a likely purposeful “antiquing” campaign applied to the current red paint as a restoration finish. One of its most unique attributes, according to Pearson, are the dozen signatures handwritten on the back, including one from the Willard family. Other famous clockmakers, including Samuel Bagnall, repaired the clock but did not inscribe the clock.

“There are hundreds of thousands of different types of clocks in the world, each with their own story to tell,” says Pearson. “Clockmaking and repair take a special kind of precision and patience that will keep this trade alive. No machine can replace the human touch. The profession is timeless if you will.”

This summer, visitors can view the newly restored Avery-Bennett gallery clock at Old North Church & Historic Site. The price of admission is \$5 per person. Patrons can walk through box pews, admire the 17th century angels flanking the church’s 1759 organ, and the bust of George Washington, which Lafayette reportedly remarked was the best likeness of the first president he had ever seen. For more information or to purchase tickets in advance, visit: [www.oldnorth.com](http://www.oldnorth.com).

***About The Old North Foundation of Boston / Old North Church and Historic Site***

*Established in 1991, The Old North Foundation of Boston is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is responsible for historic site operations and interpretative, educational, and preservation programs at the iconic Old North Church and Historic Site. A secular organization that is independent of Christ Church in the City of Boston, Old North Church welcomes approximately 150,000 visitors annually while overseeing the use and preservation of an enduring symbol of American independence. The Foundation serves a wide audience by creating meaningful experiences through educational outreach, site-specific programming, and historical analysis. Old North Church works collaboratively with the City of Boston, the U.S National Park Service, the Freedom Trail Foundation, and other non-profits to foster educational and interpretive programs for students and visitors while engaging the public in Old North Church’s history and its role in inspiring liberty and freedom. For more information, visit: [www.oldnorth.com](http://www.oldnorth.com).*

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