

Willard House and Clock Museum

Submitted by Terry White

While on a journey to New England, Carolyn and I decided that a visit to the Willard House and Clock Museum was a must see location. We picked the rainy days to visit museums and we headed to North Grafton, Massachusetts is just off of the turnpike, but it took some careful “*sign reading*” to get us into the parking lot at 11 Willard Street, the location of the museum. Knowing history of early manufacturers, it was a surprise to find the house nowhere near a stream, sometimes using waterpower to operate machinery.



It was a bit unusual in that you must ring the doorbell to access the museum through its locked doors. Once inside, it became clear, years past the workers were tied up and the museum robbed of some of the clocks; security is tight.

John Stephens, the museum Director/Curator, met us at the door, signed us in and took us on the tour. Some of the furnishings actually belonged to the Willard family members, but most was period items purchased or donated to the museum.

While it was known that the Willard’s manufactured long case clocks, the wall and shelf clocks also produced were astonishing. Per the museum’s rules, nothing was to be touched, but it was certainly tempting to slip the hood off of a clock and take a look at the works.



The tour ended in the Willard workshop where a tower clock was operating on its test stand and other clocks were hanging and standing. For a small museum, the contents were astonishing. The museum contained a gift shop offering items of horological interest and in particular, books on the history and study of Willard clocks.

If you are ever in the Boston area, make a point to visit the museum. I would like to thank John Stephens for guiding us through the museum and taking the time to answer our many questions.