

MOM'S JOY ROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Antique 1800s Gothic Steeple Gong Clock — Key Wind, Running & Keeping Accurate Time



MARKET VALUE

\$95–175

Realistic quick-sale price via shop or site for a running, complete example

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$200–300

Ceiling for a fully complete, time-keeping Gothic steeple clock with intact original glass



Antique Gothic/steeple-style shelf clock, walnut-grained wood case, Roman numeral paper dial, reverse-painted floral glass tablet on lower door. Confirmed running and keeping accurate time, with original key and pendulum housed inside.

DESCRIPTION

An antique American Gothic (steeple) style shelf clock dating to the 1800s, distinguished by its characteristic pointed, cathedral-arch-shaped wooden case — a form so closely tied to Gothic Revival architecture that the style earned the nickname "steeple clock." The case is finished in a rich walnut-grained wood with a gently arched crest and beveled side pillars. The hinged front door opens to reveal a paper dial with bold black Roman numerals, visible spade-shaped hands, and an exposed decorative brass movement plate at the dial's center — a hallmark of mid-to-late 19th century American clockmaking, where the front of the movement was often left visible as part of the clock's decorative presentation. Paper dials were the standard for affordable American shelf clocks of this era, applied directly to the movement front plate and printed with the maker's or retailer's name and numeral ring; the survival of an original paper dial in legible condition is noteworthy, as these were vulnerable to fading, staining, and foxing over 150+ years. Below the dial, a lower glass door bears a hand-painted floral reverse-glass tablet in soft pinks, blues, and gold trim. The clock is confirmed to be **running and keeping accurate time**, with the original **winder key and pendulum stored inside the case** — all present and accounted for, a detail that significantly increases the completeness and usability of the piece. The fact that a mechanism of this age continues to run and keep reliable time is a testament to both the quality of its

original construction and the care it has received over the decades.

HISTORY & CONTEXT

The **Gothic steeple clock** is one of the most recognizable and beloved forms in American clockmaking history. Emerging in the 1840s and remaining popular through the end of the 19th century, this style was produced in massive quantities by the great Connecticut clock manufacturers of the era — firms such as **Seth Thomas**, **E.N. Welch**, **Waterbury Clock Company**, **William L. Gilbert**, **New Haven Clock Company**, and **Ansonia Clock Company** — all clustered in the clockmaking hub of Connecticut's "Clock District." These companies mass-produced affordable, mechanically reliable shelf clocks for middle-class American homes, and the Gothic/steeple silhouette — with its pointed arch echoing the cathedral windows and church spires of the Gothic Revival architectural movement then sweeping America — became one of the signature shapes of the period.

The clock's movement is a **gong-strike mechanism** — rather than the coiled wire gong found in many later 19th-century American clocks, the steeple form's mechanism typically strikes the hour (and often the half-hour) against a coiled gong housed within the case, producing a resonant, bell-like chime rather than the sharper "ding" of a standard clock bell. This mechanism, combined with the **key-wind**, **weight-or-spring-driven movement** and swinging pendulum, represents the standard American shelf clock engineering of the mid-to-late 1800s — reliable, repairable, and built to run for generations with occasional cleaning and oiling.

The **paper dial** was the predominant dial type for American shelf clocks of this era, printed on heavy paper and affixed directly to the front plate of the movement. Paper dials were far less expensive to produce than painted tin or porcelain alternatives, making them the natural choice for the affordable mass-market clocks that defined the Connecticut clock industry. Many paper dials bore the manufacturer's name or a retailer's private label printed directly on the dial face — and the absence of any printed name on this dial may simply mean the printing has faded beyond legibility over the decades, or that the dial was a plain unprinted version. The survival of the paper dial in legible condition with clear Roman numerals is a positive condition factor, as many original paper dials on surviving steeple clocks are heavily stained, torn, or replaced entirely.

The **reverse-painted glass tablet** on the lower door is a defining decorative feature of these clocks and one of the most vulnerable to loss or damage over 150+ years — glass tablets frequently crack, fade, or are replaced with plain glass or mirror over the decades. The presence of an intact, legible floral tablet on this example is a meaningful point in its favor, as many surviving steeple clocks today have lost their original painted glass entirely.

This particular example is **unmarked** — meaning no maker's label or stamped manufacturer's mark is visible, which was common when paper labels (typically affixed to the inside back of the case) were lost, removed, or deteriorated over the decades, or in cases where the clock was produced by a smaller regional maker or sold through a retailer under a private label. While an identified maker's mark can add collector premium to a piece like this, unmarked Gothic steeple clocks of this quality and completeness remain readily desirable to collectors and decorators alike, prized simply for their form, age, and — most importantly — the fact that they still run and keep time. A confirmed **running**, **time-keeping** antique clock, complete with its original key and pendulum, represents a genuine functioning piece of 19th-century American technology and craftsmanship, not merely a decorative shell.

NOTABLE FEATURES

- ◆ **Gothic/steeple case form** — classic 1840s-1890s American clock shape, inspired by Gothic Revival architecture
- ◆ **Confirmed running and keeping accurate time** — a genuine functioning antique mechanism, not merely decorative

- ◆ **Original key and pendulum** — both present and stored inside the case, a significant completeness factor
- ◆ **Original paper dial** — period-correct for American shelf clocks; survives in legible condition with clear Roman numerals
- ◆ **Gong-strike movement** — resonant hour/half-hour chime, typical of quality 19th-century American shelf clocks
- ◆ **Intact reverse-painted floral glass tablet** — original decorative glass survives, often lost on comparable pieces
- ◆ **Exposed decorative brass movement plate** — visible through the upper dial, a hallmark presentation detail of the era
- ◆ **Unmarked case** — maker's label lost to time; attribution to the Connecticut clock industry is stylistic, consistent with the era's mass-produced steeple clocks

"Wound by hand, kept by time — this little steeple has been counting the hours, faithfully, since long before anyone alive today was born."

Collector's note: Gothic steeple clocks are among the most collected and traded forms of American Victorian clockmaking, prized by both antique clock enthusiasts and interior decorators drawn to the distinctive silhouette. Comparable running examples with intact key and pendulum typically sell in the \$95–175 range at retail and online markets, while examples with confirmed maker attribution, exceptional glass tablet condition, or documented provenance can reach \$200 and above. The fact that this clock not only runs but keeps accurate time places it above the many surviving examples that tick but drift significantly — a sign that the movement is in good mechanical order and has either been well maintained or needs only minimal servicing. The original paper dial, surviving in legible condition, is itself a positive condition factor — many steeple clocks of this era have dials that are heavily foxed, torn, or replaced with modern reproductions. Because this example is unmarked, the valuation reflects strong functional and cosmetic condition (running, time-keeping, complete, intact glass and dial) rather than a specific manufacturer premium. Should a paper label or stamped mark be discovered inside the case during cleaning, this certificate should be revisited, as attribution to a known Connecticut maker (Seth Thomas, Welch, Waterbury, Gilbert, New Haven, or Ansonia) could meaningfully increase both figures.