



Closer Inspection

TALL CLOCK

Lynn Flemister is restoring the dial on a 19th-century **Scottish tall clock**, whose parts will then be reassembled in its mahogany housing.

Tall-clock **bells** were made of a bronze alloy (called bell metal) that helped create different tones and resonance. The harder the cast, the higher the tone, Lee Flemister says. A leather cap over the hammer muffles this bell's sound.



Lee Flemister says such clocks were originally called **tall or long case clocks**. Only later, after the 1876 release of "My Grandfather's Clock," a popular song by Henry Clay Work, were they known as grandfather clocks, he says.



LYRE BANJO CLOCK

The Flemisters bought this mahogany **circa 1810 clock** 25 years ago at auction in Frederick. The clock, reminiscent of one developed by clockmaker Simon Willard in 1802, "has a great American form to me," Lee Flemister says.

To restore the clock's rusted **hands** to an authentic patina, Lee Flemister heated them in a frying pan. When the color changes from gold to blue, "you pop them out and put oil on them real fast, so they get that gunmetal-blue look."



'SKELETON CLOCK'

The Flemisters also own a circa 1790-1800 "**skeleton clock**" — a masterpiece an apprentice clockmaker would make to prove to his boss that he was ready to become a master. "There are probably 500, 600 hours put into it," he says.



What makes them tick ...

Rockville clocksmiths specialize in antiques

BY KRIS CORONADO

It was just a matter of time before Lee and Lynn Flemister found their present-day profession. Growing up a block apart in Colesville, the high school sweethearts often assisted Lee's father, Harvey, a retired FBI agent who became a master clocksmith. "We'd be talking to him, and he'd say, 'Hold this,' or, 'Do this,'" says Lee, now 52. Eventually, the duo took up the skills as well, joining the Horological Association of Virginia. In their 20s, they spent hours learning from local masters. "We learned like they did originally," says Lynn, 54. "As an apprentice."

In 1986, four years after they wed, the pair decided to turn their passion

into a full-time gig, incorporating in 1989. The Flemisters' Old Clock Works (www.theoldclockworks.com) specializes in antique clock repair and restoration. Today, they work out of their Rockville home; past clients include former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and the Woodrow Wilson House. Here, the Flemisters give insight into their operation.

RESTORED FACE

The couple use this 1840s Scottish tall-clock **dial** as an example of their restoration work. The left side is untouched; the right has been restored using black light to see the "ghosting" — the remnants of ink that had faded over time.



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