

Thomas Stretch

Born at Staffordshire, England, Thomas Stretch came to America with his father, Peter Stretch, a clock maker, in 1702. The earliest known clockmakers in Leek, Staffordshire were members of the Quaker family named Stretch. Samuel Stretch, Peter Stretch's uncle, was making lantern clocks in Leek in 1670.

Thomas Stretch's father, Peter Stretch, became one of the most important clockmakers in colonial America, noted for his magnificent tall case clocks, intricate watches and clocks, and scientific instruments. His shop was at the southeast corner of Front and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, then called "Peter Stretch's Corner at the Sign of the Dial". Soon after the death of his father, Thomas Stretch sold his father's property at the Sign of the Dial and established himself a block farther west, at the southwest corner of Second and Chestnut Streets.

In 1753 Thomas Stretch erected a large clock dial and masonry clock case at the west end of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Six years were to elapse before Thomas Stretch received any pay for it.



Thomas Stretch was one of the founders of Pennsylvania Hospital and a member of the Union Fire Company, also known as Benjamin Franklin's Bucket Brigade.

In the Pennsylvania Gazette of May 29, 1755, Thomas Stretch appears as one of the largest subscribers (with Benjamin Franklin and others) to the fund for the Pennsylvania Hospital. In essence, the Stretch family and Benjamin Franklin each provided half of the original capital to found the hospital.



Benjamin Franklin, the Fireman, ca 1850.
Charles Washington Wright. Franklin is depicted in the fire helmet worn by the Union Fire Company



Founded on May 11, 1751, by Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond, Pennsylvania Hospital was the first hospital in the American colonies and is the oldest hospital in the United States.



A 1730s Peter Stretch clock with walnut case.

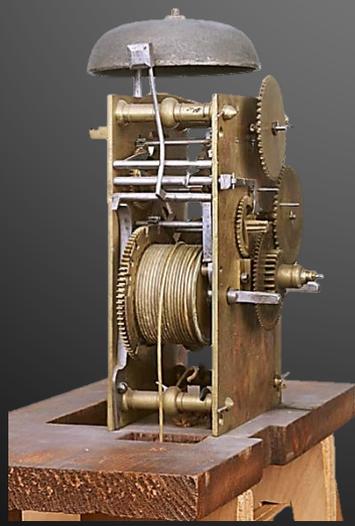


Thomas Stretch

A full case view of this Thomas Stretch Philadelphia Queen Anne walnut tall case clock



A Queen Anne carved and figured mahogany tall case clock by Peter Stretch of Philadelphia circa 1740, was bought at auction by Winterthur Museum on October 28, 2004 for the highest price ever paid for an American clock: \$1.7 million.



Works from a Peter Stretch clock built in the 1720s.