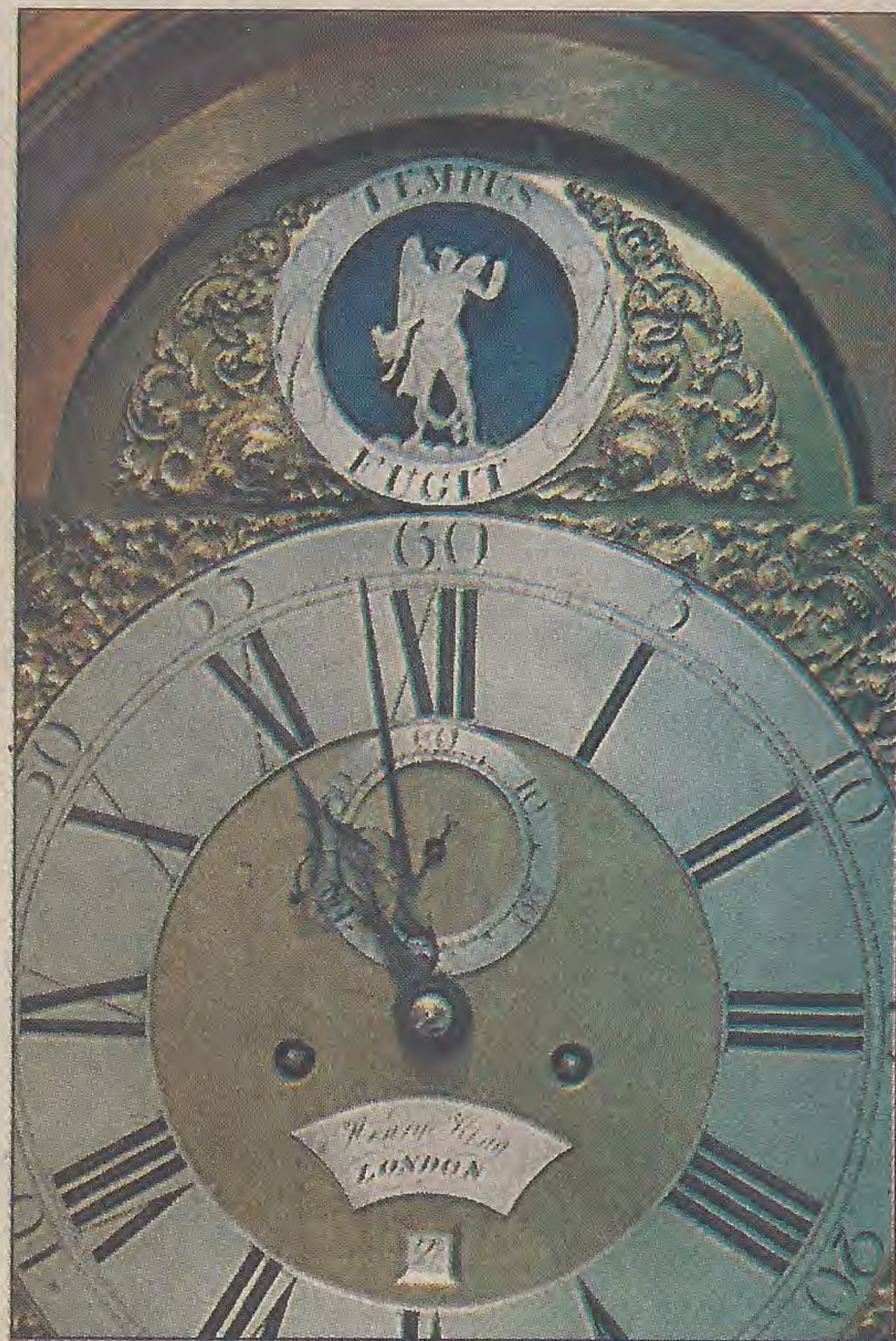


# Keeping TIME is serious business



This long case clock was made in 1743 in London.

By Susan Tuz  
THE NEWS-TIMES

Business was brisk at the Horologist of London Thursday. People came and people went entrusting their heirlooms to Gerald Grunsell's capable hands, viewing the long case clocks and considering making a substantial investment in a bit of the past.

For the uninitiated, a horologist is one who undertakes the study of time from sun dials to anything mechanical that ticks off the minutes and hours and days.

And Grunsell, who set up his shop in Ridgefield 24 years ago, was trained by one of the best — a gentleman named Gazely — in London, England, 50 years ago. By association, he may be considered one of the top horologists to be found in this country.

"Five percent of the business is sales, and that's where you make the money," said Grunsell, who sells 17th, 18th and some 19th Century long case clocks from Europe. "Then there's the 95 percent that you do (in repairs) to accommodate your customers and bring in people, who will look at the clocks and perhaps will come back to purchase one."

Grunsell is insistent that his clocks are long case, not grandfather, clocks.

"That term, grandfather clock, came from the song 'My grandfather's clock stood by the wall ...,' he sang, "its not accurate."

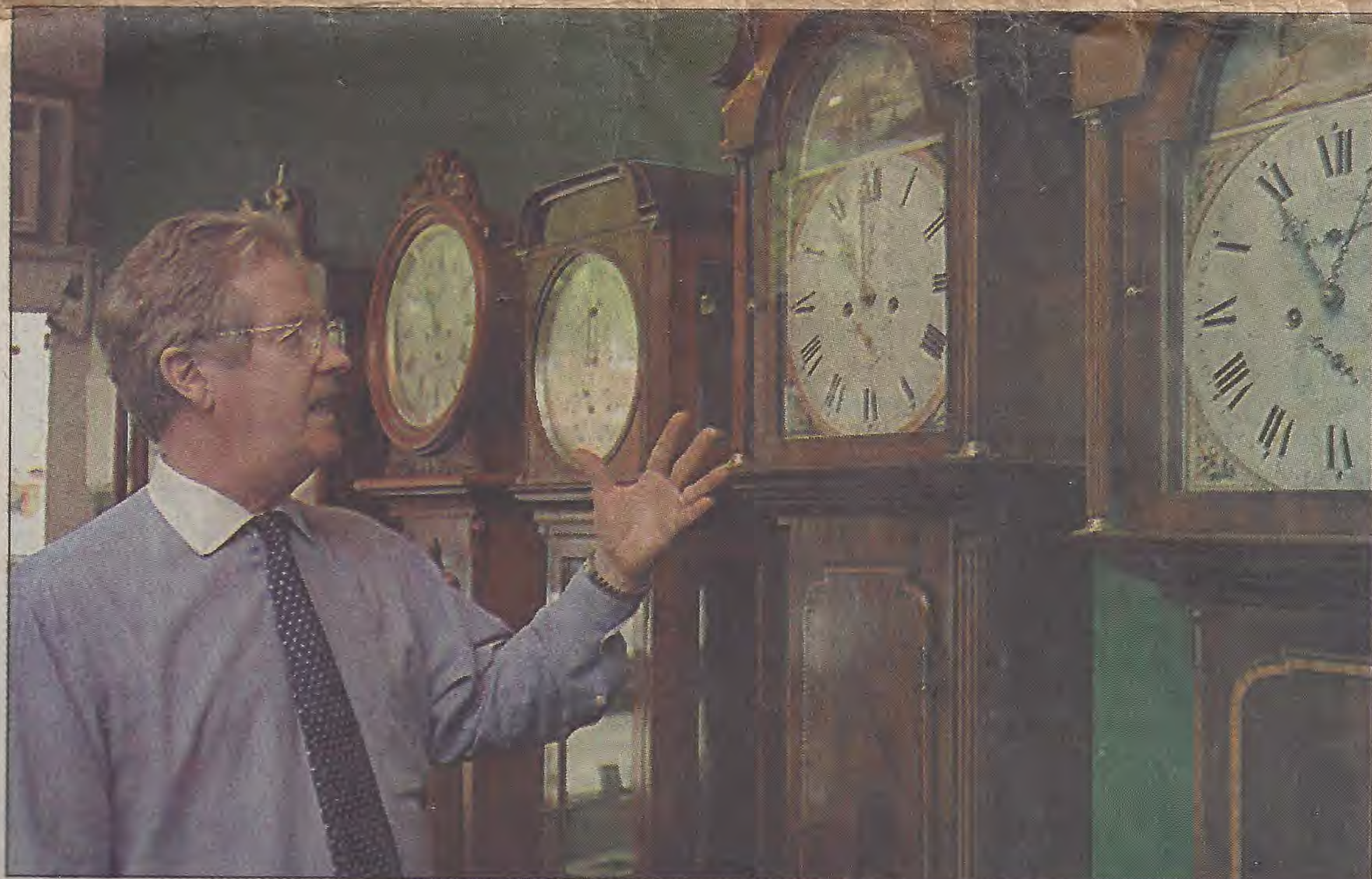
He is trained in horology from making watches to making chronometers, acutely accurate clocks used by sailors at sea. His knowledge of antique timepieces is impressive. As he moves through his Main Street store he points out

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Photos by Carol Kaliff

Above, Gerald Grunsell repairs clocks in the back of his shop on Main Street in Ridgefield. Below, Grunsell talks about long case clocks. The term 'grandfather clock' is inaccurate, he says.





# ▷ Horologist a Main Street mainstay

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a "domestic regulator," a long case clock made in 1830 for a gentleman's study.

"This one has a mercury dial pendulum," he said. "This one has iron dials that have been painted over. And this one, notice the flared mahogany running through the cabinet and the painted face. This was truly designed to be a decorative piece. Someone might choose it to go with the color of her drapes in a particular room."

Grunsell said his clocks are bargains at \$10,000 to \$75,000, given that a long case clock recently sold at Sotheby's for \$500,000.

"I never would have priced it at that," he noted. "Purchasing one of these clocks is making an investment because in a few years, the value will have gone up. You really should have more than an investment portfolio for the future. You should have something that you can live with and take pleasure from in your home."

The long case clock started as

a clock face with ropes hanging down to manipulate the time, Grunsell explained. The case part was added later: The clocks grew from the face down.

He deals strictly in 17th, 18th and some 19th century clocks. By 1900 these clocks had heavy cases housing nine large tubes to create what is known as Westminster chimes. For Grunsell, the more elegant, "more delicate in proportion" clocks of earlier dates are the creme de la creme of time-pieces.

Long case clocks from the 17th century will be 6 foot 6 inches in height or less. By the 1720s, they were being built at 7 foot 6 inches to 7 foot 8 inches, and by 1800, they were up to 8 feet in height. Grunsell has little interest in clocks from the 19th Century, although he does offer a few.

Clock making was a much guarded craft in the 1600s. No one was allowed to make clocks unless they belonged to London's Clockmaker's Guild. Unless someone had been trained by a guild mem-

ber and had become a member himself, he risked having his creation destroyed by the members of the guild.

By the 1720s and 1730s, the guild's hold had weakened and long case clocks were being made more freely. By the 1800s, they were even being made in the countryside by craftsmen. It was at this point that the clocks went from having decorative brass faces to painted faces.

"Even the doggiest clock, the most worn, can find a home," Grunsell said. "To somebody who has a little cottage in the country that one on the end (by London clockmaker DJ Hoy Mattishall), which is selling for \$4,500, would be just what they wanted."

While long case clocks fill Grunsell's shop, he also carries French carriage clocks by Drocourt. Made of gilded brass and glass, at five to six inches in size, the one he removed from the display case was from 1875.

He also carries Italian-made barometers.

"The Italians took over the barometer trade in England by the 1800s," he noted.

Perhaps the most endearing items that he carries are the antique music boxes. And perhaps the most eye catching one of those is some two feet in height with a painted ceramic base, an artificial bush on top and a singing bird made of real feathers. Made in the 1880s, it has two bellows inside that produce the bird sound when a large pewter key is turned.

"That was about the end of the great phase of music boxes," Grunsell noted. "With Edison's invention it came to an end. Nobody wanted to listen to a mechanically produced sound anymore."



*The Horologist of London is located at 450 Main St. in Ridgefield. It is open for business Thursday through Saturday and by appointment other days. Call (203) 438-4332 for store hours and appointments.*