

N° 11

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GEORGE PRIOR, London

BRACKET CLOCK ON ITS BRACKET



Circa 1790

Overall Height 72 cm (28 ¼"), W. 32 cm (12 ½"), D. 20 cm (8")

REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY: Richard Barder, *The Georgian Bracket Clock 1714-1830*, 1993; G.H. Baillie, *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World*, 1925; F.J.Britten, *Old Clocks and Watches & Their Makers*, 1904.









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George Prior is recorded as active in Prescott St, London between 1765 and 1810. He was rewarded with the Silver Medal assorted with 25 guineas by the Arts Society for the invention of a new clock escapement, and rewarded again with 20 guineas for making a remontoire, which he patented in 1818. He was mostly known for supplying watches and clocks to the Ottoman market.

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Movement with two fusees and gutline transmission, anchor recoil escapement, spring suspended pendulum with adjustment under the bob. Hourly rack strike on a bronze bell above. Finely engraved rear plate bearing the signature of George Prior, London. Autonomy 8 days.

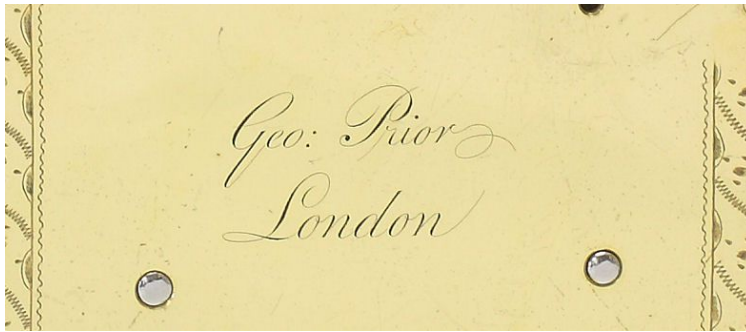
Similarly signed enamel dial with Ottoman numerals for the five-minute markers and the hours. Strike suppressor lever (STRIKE – SILENT) above the numeral 60. Finely cut and gilt brass hands.

Oak case with ebonized peartree veneer with varnished or gilt applied bronze lining and accessories. Side panels finely cut in the Oriental fashion, with silk back lining, allowing for the sound to go through while keeping the dust outside. Stylized lying crescent above the dial to underline the Easterly character.

A very ingenious and unusual assembly system makes the whole assembly theft-proof; the clock is assembled with its bracket through two hand-screws hidden inside the bracket. The bracket cover also locks in place with a key, and the whole does not allow access to the wall screws, unless separated first. It is also to be noted that the two upper side panels can be easily removed for a technical access.

Movement restoration by Ryma Hatahet; case restoration by the Jean-François d'Oultremont workshops.





English clocks and watches were exported in large numbers from the end of the 17th C. It went mostly to Continental Europe, like in the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain and Italy, particularly so to Florence where it was greatly appreciated and collected by Cosme III Medicis. The trade also expanded East, and towards the Ottoman Empire where the Sultans were great collectors of European watches and their makers as early as the 16th C.

It has been reported that Sir John Finch, English ambassador in Turkey in 1680, offered an English clock to the Great Vizier. The market for these clocks expanded quickly and durably through the Ottoman Empire with clocks with Ottoman numerals on their dials. French, Swiss and English makers soon made models easily recognizable by their dials and their various East-inspired decorations, such as Moon crescents, cupolas, arabesques, etc... The clocks and watches thus imported in the Empire bore mostly the names of Marwick Marckham, Abraham-Louis Breguet Father and Son (mostly for musical watches) , Julien and Pierre Leroy, George Prior and his son Edward, Paul Garnier, Auguste Courvoisier and Co and finally Daniel Saint-Leu.

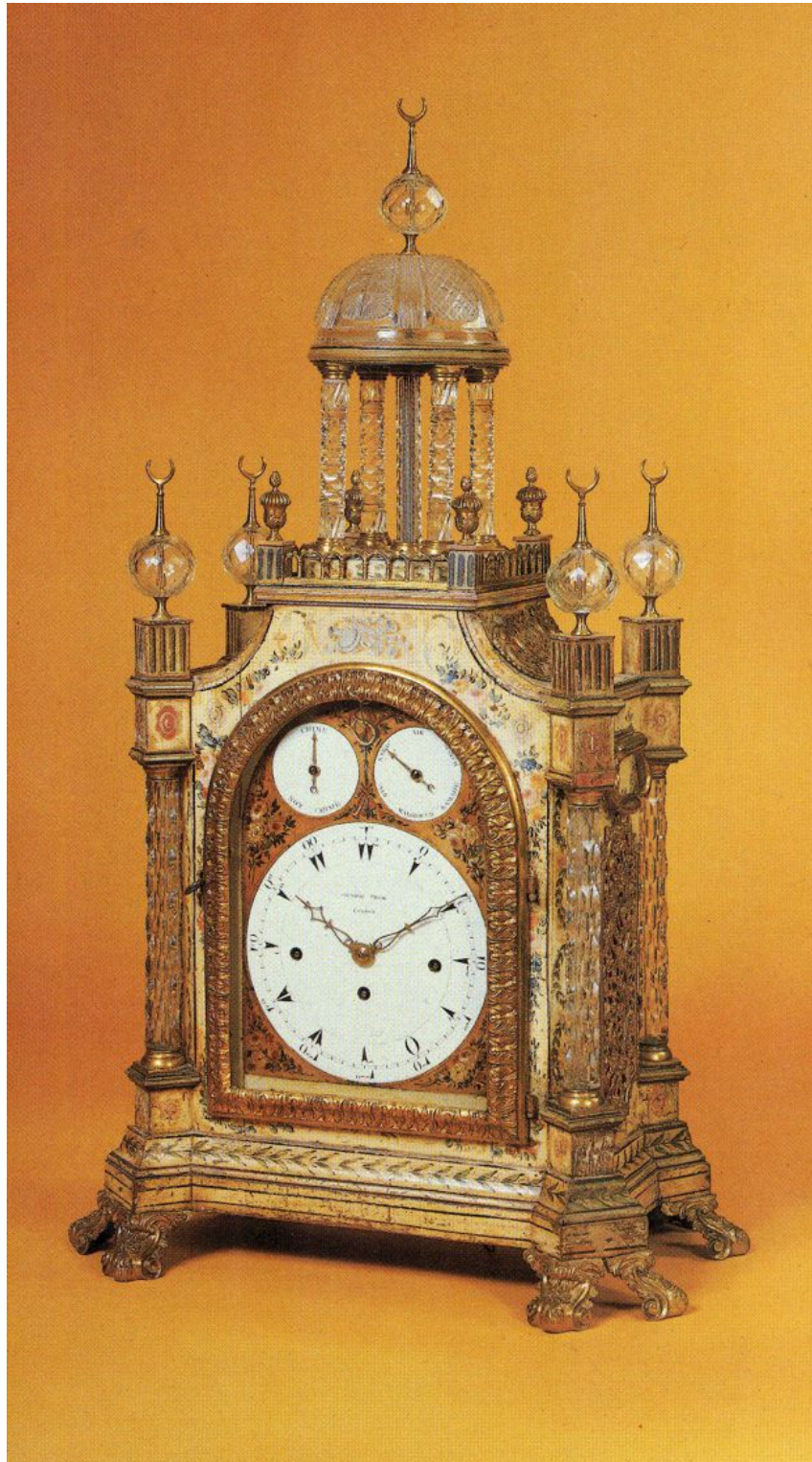
George Prior, mostly active between 1793 to 1830, was particularly renowned in this trade. The five clocks we illustrate below show his craftsmanship, good taste and knowledge of this specialty.

GEORGE PRIOR

(Thanks to Mr. Richard C.R. Barder)



1. Mahogany bell-top clock with exceptional brass mounts. Mounts were often gilded.



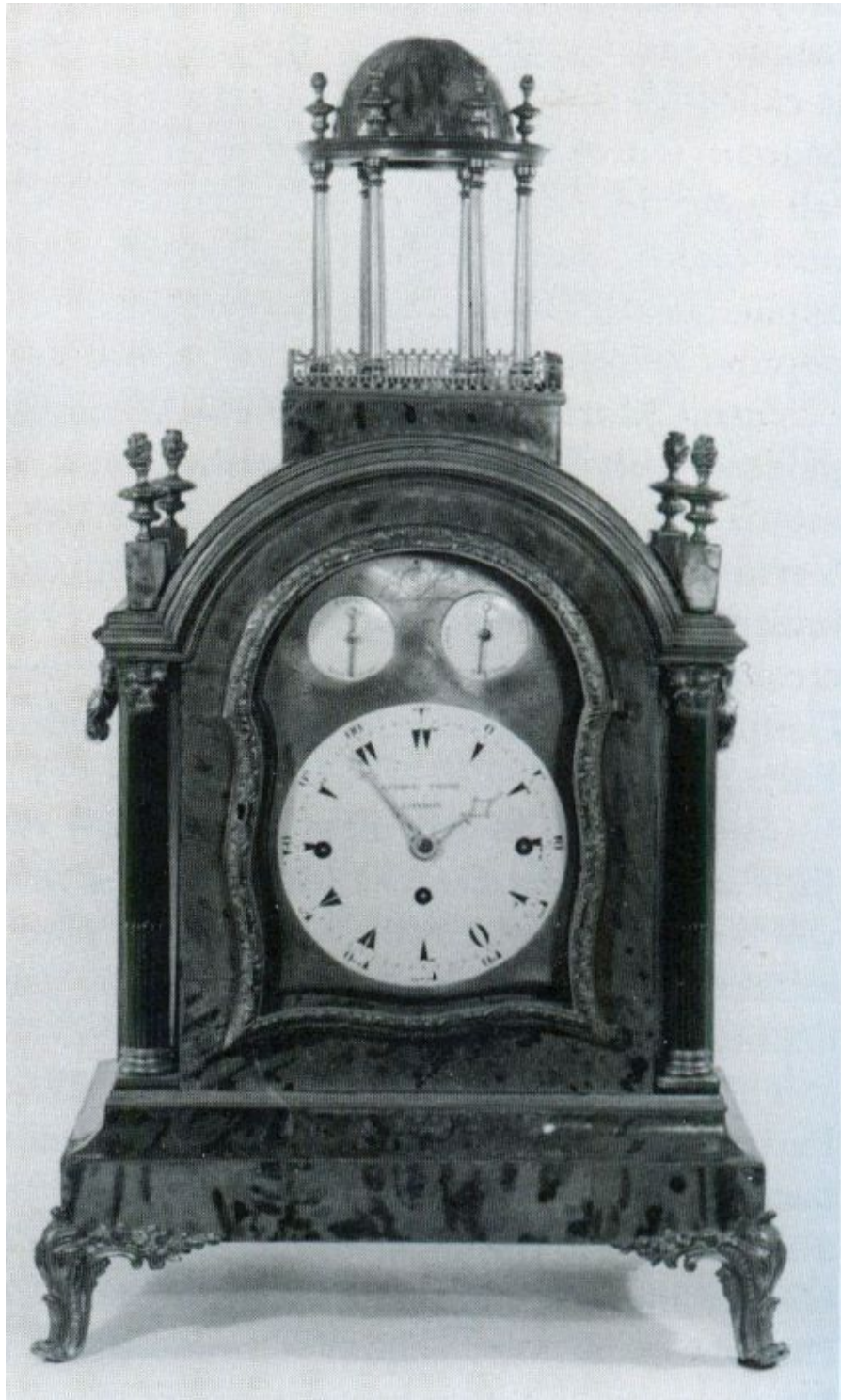
2. Cream Vernis Martin musical clock for the Turkish market. Cut glass finials, pillars and cupola. Flower painted dial plate, enamel dials. Circa 1790.



3. Mahogany cased musical bracket clock with painted dial centre and Oriental turbanned head terms. Mahogany clocks are unusual for the Turkish market. Circa 1785.



4. Elaborate cupola topped Vernis Martin cased musical clock with crescent shaped finials. Painted dial plate. Enamels dials. Turkish market. Circa 1785.



5. Tortoiseshell cupola topped musical clock probably once with automata. Turkish market. Circa 1790.