



The Firestone Clock

The four sculptures on the cardinal points and a fifth on the hour hand of the clock in the main hall of the Firestone Library are patterned after five common watermarks of the Renaissance. Each figure has a symbolic significance, interpreted in a study made by Harold Bayley.

The hand, at twelve o'clock, is the emblem of the axiom, "laborare est orare—to work is to pray." When marked with a heart, it takes on added significance, as "loving labor." The unicorn, at three o'clock, symbolizes purity and strength. At six o'clock is the "Bright and Morning Star."

Stationed at nine o'clock is the hound representing the pursuit of knowledge. The greyhound, a breed of dog that figures most prominently in watermarks, is normally distinguished by the little bell around its neck signifying "acute preaching." If the analogy is stretched, the belled hound becomes another symbol: an emblem of persistent and energetic education destined eventually to destroy the monster Ignorance.

The head of an ox that tips the hour hand appealed particularly to papermakers, since it was a badge of patience, a type "of all those who bore the yoke and labored in silence for the good of others."

The clock was designed by the architects of Firestone Library, Robert B. O'Connor and Walter H. Kilham Jr., with the aid of Austin Purves Jr., mural painter and sculptor, and was executed by Purves at his studio in Litchfield, Connecticut.

(Adapted from an article in the special issue of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* on Firestone Library, vol. 49, no. 25 [22 April 1949], p. 52.)