



## A FIGURAL EMPIRE CLOCK DEPICTING THE CHARIOT OF TELEMACHUS

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H: 17.5 in / 44.5 cm | W: 20.5 in / 52.5 cm | D: 5.5 in / 14 cm

A Figural Empire Clock depicting

The Chariot of Telemachus

Constructed from gilt-bronze, and expertly mercury-gilded, chased, and burnished, rising from a rectangular plinth supported by hairy paw feet and truncated ionic columns, relief decoration, and most unusual owl figures. The dial set within the wheel of a chariot, surmounted by the figures of Athena and Telemachus, holding the reigns of two rearing horses. The eight-day silk suspension movement striking on the hour and half hour, the spokes of the chariot at the five-minute mark, having a count wheel bearing roman numerals. The dial signed "Le Roy, Palais Royal Nos 13 & 14" indicating the clockmaker to Napoleon.

French, circa 1810

**Literature:**

The clock depicts Telemachus, the young son of Ulysses, on his chariot accompanied by the Goddess Athena as told in Homer's Odyssey. At the front of the chariot is the head of a roaring lion symbolizing Fortitude, while Athena is in her usual guise of a helmet, spear and shield, representing military Victory. The eagle on the plinth referring to Jupiter, god of war, and the father of Athena. The original drawing of this model, signed Jean-André Reiche (1752-1817) and dated 1807, is entitled "Char de Télémaque" and is in the Bibliothèque National de France, Paris (Ref. 134-1807).

Tales and episodes recounting the courage and valiance of ancient heroes such as this one were a common theme found in the most important figural clocks of Napoleon's reign, as they embodied the virtues of his own French Empire. One of the original clocks was in the collection of the 1st Comte Jourdan, Marshal of France, while another had belonged to the 1st Duc de Trévose, Marshal of France. It is said each of the original Marshals of France were presented with a clock of this model by the Emperor.

### Le Roy of Paris

Basile-Charles Le Roy founded the House of Le Roy at 60 Galerie de Pierre, Palais-Royal shortly after 1785 when the duc d'Orléans opened up the Palais-Royal gardens to the public and the buildings to the trade. This enabled Le Roy and a number of other clockmakers to set up shop in the arcade galleries. During the Revolution he worked for the Republic signing his clocks 'Elyor'. Afterwards he moved the business to Galerie Montpensier, 13-15 Palais-Royal, where the concern was to remain for almost a hundred years.

The following years saw his appointment as clockmaker to Emperor Napoleon, to Madame Mère, Princess Pauline, Jérôme Bonaparte King of Westphalia and in 1829 as royal clockmaker to the ducs de Bourbon and de Chartres. His house exhibited clocks at the Paris Exposition l'an VI (1797/8) and again in 1819, 1823 and 1827.

### Literature:

Colón de Carvajal, J. Ramón. Catálogo de relojes: del Patrimonio Nacional. Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 1987, no. 127 (illus.). Showing a clock of the same model in the Spanish Royal Collection.

Chevallier, Bernard, and Claude Seguin. La mesure du temps dans les collections du Musée de Malmaison:

[exposition, Rueil-Malmaison], 29 mai 1991-15 septembre 1991. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1991, p. 21. Showing a clock of the same model at the Chateau de Malmaison national collection.

Tardy. *Les Plus Belles Pendules Françaises*. Paris: Tardy, 1994, p. 279 (illus.). Showing a clock of identical design.

Kjellberg, Pierre. *Encyclopédie de la pendule française: du Moyen Age au XXe siècle*. Paris: Les éditions de l'amateur, 1997, p. 417 (pl. D). Illustrates a contemporary clock with a similar base.

Niehüser, Elke, and Clemens von Halem. *Die französische Bronzeuhr: eine Typologie der figürlichen Darstellungen*. München: Callwey, 1997, p. 69 (pls. 98-100) and p. 243 (pl. 912). Showing a variation of this model with patinated bronze horses.

Gaydamak, Arkadi. *Russian Empire: Architecture, Decorative and Applied Arts, Interior Decoration 1800-1830*. Moscow: Trefoil Press, 2000, p. 44 (illus.). Showing a clock of the same model.

Duesberg, François, and Stéphane Audiau. *Musée François Duesberg: arts décoratifs 1775-1825*. Mons: Office du tourisme de la ville de Mons, 2004, p. 37. Showing two clocks in the museum's collection of identical design.

