

# THE CHICKEN FEATHER

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In the family room where we spent so many hours during our growing up days was a Seth Thomas Clock on the mantel. It was about fifteen inches tall with a hand-carved top, which gave it the appearance of height and depth beyond its actual dimensions. Behind the glass door was a shiny pendulum and on the shelf beneath lay the large key which our father used to wind the clock each night. Our lives revolved around this timepiece as we listened to it strike the hours and midway between. We got up by it, went to school, Sunday school, and church, met our friends, and went to bed by it. Only the sharp blasts of mill and factory whistles at seven, noon, and five o'clock and our father's gold pocket watch when he was at home augmented the time. It was not a very pretty clock and sometimes failed us. To remedy this inconvenience, our mother dispatched us to the chicken yard for a feather. When none could be found, then began the wild chase in which a hen lost a feather or we were brave enough to pull one out of a frightened chicken. Clutching the fragile prize in our hand, we ran to the house, whereupon it was dipped into a can of coal oil and inserted into a maze of small wheels behind the dial. A gentle touch on the pendulum and the clock started again, measuring off the hours, months, years of our young lives. To this day I have never been able to understand the magic of the chicken feather and the coal oil.