

Artemas Cushman Account Book

1822-1846

1 vol. (0.1 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 073 bd

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Born in Middleborough, Mass., in 1781, Artemas Cushman relocated to the central Vermont town of Braintree as a young man and spent decades as a carpenter and house joiner. He and his wife Phebe Spear raised a family of nine, one of whom (Artemas' namesake) rose to local prominence as a officer in the state militia and representative in the state house and senate. Cushman died in Braintree in 1864.

Cushman's small ledger is a fine record of the day-to-day work of an antebellum carpenter in rural Vermont. Part daybook and part account book, and often lacking in detail, Cushman's entries document the work of a skilled artisan engaged in constructing or repairing houses, windmills, cider mills, bake houses, sheds, and barns, and at least one school. Occasionally, he applied his

skills to smaller projects such as mending a wheel or making a wagon body or coffin, and less frequently he was compensated for manual labor (haying or planting). In a cash-poor economy, Cushman was typically repaid through an exchange of labor, or through commodities such as brandy, grain, or pork.

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Background on Artemas Cushman

A carpenter and house joiner and a descendant of one of the early post-Mayflower settlers of Plymouth Colony, Artemas Cushman was born in Middleborough, Mass., on April 7, 1781, the son of William and Susanna Cushman. As a young man, Cushman relocated to the central Vermont town of Braintree, where on July 10, 1803, he was married to another transplant from the South Shore, Phebe Spear (1783-1852). The couple raised a large family that included four sons -- Holmes (1804-1874), Artemas (b.1806), William (b. 1809), and Earl (1828-1910) -- and five daughters: Content (1811-1889), Phebe (b. 1815), Philinda (1818-1891), Emily (b. 1822), and Minora (1825-1903). Cushman died in Braintree on April 29, 1864, at the age of 83.

Artemas Cushman, Jr., became a widely respected figure in the region. Living in the portion of Braintree that was separated out as the new town of Rochester in 1824, Cushman earned a commission as brigade inspector in the Vermont militia in 1828, eventually rising to the rank of Major General. A justice of the peace from 1835-1851, he represented the town of Warren in the state house in 1835, 1836, and 1842, and was a state senator from Windsor County in 1846 and 1847.

Scope of collection

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Cushman's account book includes the names of other early settlers in Braintree, including Maj. William Ford, Henry Brackett, Capt. Joseph Spear, and Samuel Lamb. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the volume was used as a scrapbook, leaving a few pages obscured with pasted-in newspaper clippings.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from unidentified source, Aug. 1996.

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Aug. 2014.

Bibliography

On Cushman, see:

Henry Royce Bass, *The History of Braintree, Vermont* (1883).

Lewis Cass Aldrich and Frank R. Holmes, *History of Windsor County, Vermont* (1891).

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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