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Richards Family Collection

Digital

1692-1818

1 vol. (0.25 linear foot)

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[Credo digital](#)

[Scope](#)

[Inventory](#)

[Admin info](#)

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A prosperous farmer in the southern reaches of Massachusetts Bay Colony, James Richards was born on June 2, 1658, and never ventured far from his home in Weymouth or the adjoining town of Braintree. The son of William Richards and his wife Grace Shaw, and a member of the third generation of Richards in the new world, James was characteristically diverse in his economic activities, raising livestock (sheep and pigs), harvesting salt grass, making salt, and raising crops including rye, corn, and barley, which he malted, presumably for the production of beer. Although most of his transactions were local, he traded as far away as Charlestown and Barnstable.

The Richards family ledgers include a daybook from James Richards kept between 1692-1710 and an account book from his great grandson Jacob Richards kept a century later, along with loose receipts from generations of Richards in between. The volume associated with James Richards records sales of goods produced on his Weymouth farm, including barley, rye, "Indian corn," salt, mutton and lamb, pork, and eggs, along with occasional records of the sale of goods such as shingles, "board nails," clapboards, molasses and sugar, lamp oil, tobacco, and cloth. The sparser records from Jacob Richards include accounts that include the sale of cider; cord wood; pine, oak, and maple boards; and shoes.

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Background on Richards Family

A prosperous farmer in the southern reaches of Massachusetts Bay Colony, James Richards was born on June 2, 1658, and never ventured far from his home in Weymouth or the adjoining town of Braintree. The son of William Richards and his wife Grace Shaw, and a member of the third generation of Richards in the new world, James was characteristically diverse in his economic activities, raising livestock (sheep and pigs), harvesting salt grass, making salt, and raising crops including rye, corn, and barley, which he malted, presumably for the production of beer. Although most of his transactions were local, he shipped as far away as Charlestown and Barnstable.

Richards married Ruth Bicknell (1660-1728) in 1680, and raised a family of three, including son Benjamin (1683-1733) and daughters Ruth (1685-1766) and Elizabeth (1690-1746). He died on Mar. 8, 1711, leaving his house and property largely to his wife and son, and 100 pounds to his daughter Ruth Lovell.

Scope of collection

The Richards family ledgers include a daybook from James Richards kept between 1692-1710 and an account book from his great grandson Jacob Richards kept a century later, along with loose receipts from generations of Richards in between. The volume associated with James Richards records sales of goods produced on his Weymouth farm, including barley, rye, "Indian corn," salt, mutton and lamb, pork, and eggs, along with occasional records of the sale of goods such as shingles, "board nails," clapboards, molasses and sugar, lamp oil, tobacco, and cloth. The sparser records from Jacob Richards include accounts that include the sale of cider; cord wood; pine, oak, and maple boards; and shoes.

A UMass Press description of the published version of James Richards account book notes that "reveals significant social details of Richards and his household, including his diverse trading partners, his extensive family connections, an Indian slave girl, and a well-dressed female servant."

Inventory

James Richards Daybook

1692-1711

Bound in a crude limp vellum binding, the Richards daybook is a beautiful example of a ledger containing transactions associated with a prosperous farm in colonial Massachusetts at the turn of the eighteenth century. The volume includes over 5000 entries extending nearly to the date of Richards death in March 1710/11.

Jacob Richards Account book

1713-1818

Bound in marbled paper, the account book was kept by Jacob Richards (a great-grandson of James and son of another James Richards), primarily between 1795 and 1801. The volume begins with two pages of earlier and essentially unrelated entries (1734-1748), and a series of receipts were laid in, issued to the elder James Richards' son Benjamin and Benjamin's grandson Nathaniel Richards between 1713 and 1818.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Carolyn Taylor with the assistance of the UMass Press, June 2017.

Bibliography

A fully transcribed and annotated version of James Richards account book was published as: James E. Wadsworth, ed., *The World of Credit in Colonial Massachusetts: James Richards and his Daybook, 1692-1711*. Amherst, Mass. : UMass Press, 2017

Digitized content

The James Richards Daybook has been digitized and may be viewed online through SCUA's digital repository, Credo.

Processing Information

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Language:

English

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Search terms

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Agriculture--Massachusetts--Weymouth

Farmers--Massachusetts--Weymouth

Weymouth (Mass.)--Economic conditions--17th century

Weymouth (Mass.)--Economic conditions--18th century

Contributors

Richards Family [main entry]

Richards, James, 1658-1711

Richards, Jacob, 1778-

Genres and formats

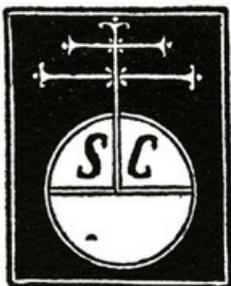
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Daybooks

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Farming and rural life

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