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## Amos Whittemore Daybook

1817-1819

1 volume

Call no.: MS 153



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Wagonwright and celebrated inventor of a machine that made cotton and wool cards from West Cambridge (now Arlington), Massachusetts. Includes records of services provided, such as repairing, cleaning, painting and varnishing chaises; providing wheels, springs, waterhooks, whippletrees, bellybands, and carpet; and mending reins and harnesses. Also contains lists of customers (including many prominent families from the town) and records of cash transactions.

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### Background on Amos Whittemore

Amos Whittemore (1759-1828) of West Cambridge (re-named Arlington in 1867) invented a machine for making cotton and wool cards, which was considered a marvel of human ingenuity. First patented in 1797, the machine was touted by John Randolph of

Roanoke in Congress in 1809 on the occasion of its patent renewal as "the only machine which ever had a soul." In 1799, Whittemore traveled to England to seek a patent there.

A remarkable era of prosperity in West Cambridge from 1779 to 1812 was due to a card factory established by Amos and his brothers, William and Samuel (Whittemore Brothers Co. or William Whittemore and Co.). By 1801, 23 machines were in operation and 40 people were employed. By 1809 there were 55 machines in the factory. When Whittemore and Co. was moved to New York in 1812, the town was adversely affected, returning primarily to farming for home consumption. In 1827, Amos' sons Gershom and Henry bought machines from their uncle Samuel of New York and revived card making in West Cambridge, though with less financial success than before. In 1862, the factory was destroyed by fire and the business was not resumed.

## Scope of collection

Curiously, this immaculate record of a wagonwright's business (1817-19) reflects the pattering in retirement -- or the industriousness -- of a celebrated inventor who, in 1812, had sold his patent rights and machinery for \$150,000.

The account book which comprises this collection provides a clear record of the various services provided by a wagonwright's business: repairing, cleaning, painting, and varnishing chaises; providing wheels, springs, waterhooks, whippletrees, bellybands, and carpet; mending reins and harnesses; and other similar tasks. Jonas Prentiss appears to have worked for Whittemore.

Many members of the town's most prominent families figured as Whittemore's customers: Col. Thomas Russell, Alfred Locke, James Read, Rebeckah Tufts, Ephraim Frost, and James Hill, for example.

Amos Whittemore and his wife Helen Weston of Concord had eleven children. One of them, Amos Whittemore, Jr. was a tavern keeper; he died at age 45 in 1827, two years before his father. It is conceivable that this is his account book, although the inside front cover clearly claims this as "Amos Whittemore's Account Book" and Amos Whittemore, Jr. is designated as such when he appears in the accounts (Amos Whittemore is also listed, just to confuse matters, but generally in a record of cash transactions where he may be acting as a banker).

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

### Processing Information

Processed by Linda Seidman.

### Language:

English

### Acknowledgments

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### Copyright and Use (More information )

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## Search terms

### Subjects

Arlington (Mass.)--Economic conditions--19th century--Sources.

Arlington (Mass.)--History--19th century--Sources.

Carriage and wagon making--Massachusetts--Arlington--History--19th century--Sources.

Carriage manufacturers and dealers--Massachusetts --Arlington--History--19th century--Sources.

Harness making and trade--Massachusetts--Arlington--History--19th century--Sources.

Whittemore, Amos, 1759-1828.

### Contributors

Whittemore, Amos, 1759-1828 [main entry]

### Genres and formats

Account books.

### Link to similar SCUA collections

Business and industry

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