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Simeon Bartlett Account Books

1792-1832 and 1816-1867

2 volumes

Call no.: MS 175



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Freight hauler, farmer, sawmill owner, and possibly a hatmaker from Williamsburg, Massachusetts. Volume 1 includes accounts of Bartlett's income, selling and exchanging of goods and services, details about his employees and his family (such as family births, deaths, and marriages). Volume 2 contains lists of hat purchases, lists of teachers and their pay, his participation in town affairs, and a number of lyrics to Civil War songs.

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Background on Simeon Bartlett

Simeon Bartlett (b. 1764), lived in Williamsburg, Massachusetts from 1797 to 1832 and married Elisabeth Bunt in 1793. They had five children: Harriet (1794-1821), Sapphire (b. 1796), Ashbel Baker (1798-1832), Betsy (b. 1800), and Simeon (b. 1803). The family may have moved to Williamsburg in April, 1797, as his book entry dated April 23 reads, "Then we moved into John ____ House at Williamsburg." On the 24th Bartlett wrote "Had when I came to Williamsburg 5 bushel Rock Salt which went to the family." Originally, the Bartlett family came from Martha's Vineyard, as did others mentioned in these accounts: Mayhew, Manter, Hillman.

Scope of collection

Bartlett's account books suggest his varied sources of income. At first, he primarily hauled freight, sometimes Hartford and Middletown, Connecticut were on his route. Some pages in this portion of the book have "company business" written sideways at the edge of the page. Elnathan Webster seems to have worked for him in 1795, as does Silas Strong in 1796. Customers were Aaron Rice, Joseph Clapp, and Captain Joseph Lyman.

Later entries suggest Bartlett was foremost a farmer, raising and selling or exchanging agricultural products with his neighbors, but moving eventually to focus on his woodlots and sawmill. He also occasionally made miscellaneous repairs for others. From 1806 to 1813 he rented two seats in his pew to Captain Coffin for one dollar each per year.

While Bartlett recorded a number of details about his employees and his family ("Ashbel started with John Manter for Pitsfield gone fore days") and kept records of some family births, deaths, and marriages, there is scarcely a hint of the story told briefly by Phyllis Baker Deming in her history of Williamsburg; Ashbel committed suicide in June 1832 because his father objected to his marrying Lucretia Jones, whom the younger brother Simeon eventually married anyway. Bartlett does note "June 1832, Then my poor Ashbel died" and there are only two entries in Volume I following Ashbel's death--one business transaction in August and a 1839 notation of brother Julius' death. Many pages are blank following the August entry, suggesting the interruption of business as usual.

Volume 2, it would appear, served varied purposes to three generations of Bartletts and, perhaps, an unrelated individual who sold hats. The hat accounts are for 1818-1819 in South Hadley; the hatmaker remains unidentified, but it does not seem to be Simeon Bartlett. Most purchases were for either felt hats or "napt" (napped) hats--one was brushed, the other not. Customers also frequently paid for the brushing and banding of hats. There are occasional requests for "small white hats" or a "boy's hat" or, additionally, leather for shoes, wool, morocco shoes, a broom, rabbit skins, or wood.

This volume also reflects Simeon Bartlett's participation in town affairs; one loose leaf inserted in it was addressed to Bartlett as a surveyor of highways in 1816 from the selectmen assigning him certain roads. He also appears to have been on the School Committee in 1830 when he lists the teachers (Abigail Hunt, Susannah Babcock, and Mr. Clapp) and their pay, some of it from his own pocket later reimbursed.

A later listing (1865-1867) of the members of three schools in Williamsburg--W.W. Mitchell's, E. Cooke's, and A.E. Ives', assisted by Nellie Nash--must have been made by another generation. The Simeon Bartlett of Volume 1 is actually listed in the federal census as Simeon Bartlett Junior. His father (who must have been Simeon Bartlett) appears occasionally in Volume 1; the son Simeon (brother of Ashbel) was known, too, as simply Simeon Bartlett. He appears in the 1850 census at age 45, a farmer married to Lucretia.

In 1864, a number of friends (perhaps those of Simeon Bartlett III's children) wrote out the lyrics to songs, mostly about the Civil War, including: "The Bonnie Blue Flag" (Hattie Bodman, Northampton); "Darkie Song" (Mary Crosby, Southampton); "Ellsworth's Avengers" (Maggie Peck, Birmingham, CT); "When the Cruel War is Over" (Ellen Abells, Hatfield); "The Song of Ulysses Grant" (Larue Johnson, Colrain); "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home," "The Battle Cry of Freedom," and "Babylon is Fallen" (Daniel Wright, Williamsburg); "Tenting on the Old Campground" (Hannah Everett, Cummington); "Just Before the Battle, Mother" and "Just After the Battle" (Mrs. Mary Sweet, Hatfield); "Tobacco Song"; and "Darling Nellie Gray" (C.H. Bartlett).

There are also seemingly doodled lists of names and towns, among which is "Mr. Clarence E. Brown, Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass."

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

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Lyman, Joseph, Captain.

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Contributors

Bartlett, Simeon [main entry]

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