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John H. Coon Ledger

1862-1873

1 volume

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Owner of a general store and a farmer in Sheffield, Massachusetts. Ledger includes lists of customers, the goods that they purchased, and how they paid (cash and exchange of goods or services).

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Scope of collection

John H. Coon's ledger covers the years 1862-1873, during which time he served his neighbors from a well-stocked general store at the crossroads in the Berkshire village of Sheffield Plain, which lies between the Housatonic River and the route of the

Housatonic Railroad. The town of Sheffield sustained very little industry at the time John Coon lived and worked there. Its marble quarries were actively mined, however, even providing some of the stone used in the Washington monument. In 1874 Sheffield's farmers formed the Farmer's Milk Association (later the Sheffield Creamery) and established a depot for the collection of milk to be shipped to New York.

Many of John Coon's customers purchased goods from him frequently, so that their buying patterns are easily determined. A close look at what the store offered reveals a remarkable variety of dry goods, household supplies, and building materials, along with food.

Most payments were made in cash; occasionally accounts were settled by the exchange of goods (eggs, a cow, marble slabs, apples, and once, a rat skin) or services (filling ice house, painting, carting cord wood).

Coon's customers include his close neighbors Frank Noteware (a laborer) and Frank Crippen (a carpenter who worked on Coon's house for \$275 credit at the store in the summer of 1867). In addition, Coon served the town clerk, Emmons Arnold; justices of the peace, Leonard Tuttle and Ira Curtiss; and Mrs. Aaron Croslear, a member of Sheffield's active Black community.

John H. Coon, who was born in New York, first appears in Sheffield in the 1860 census, where he's identified as a 39 year old grocer married to Phebe, also age 39. No children of theirs are living with them (if they had any), but their household does include 17 year old Eliza Hubbell and 50 year old M. Thorpe, a miller, who owned real estate valued at \$6000 (whereas Coon's was worth \$1800 with a personal estate of \$400). By 1870, Coon, who called himself a farmer then, lived with only Phebe, owning real estate worth \$6000 and a personal estate of \$1000. By 1880, however, Phebe is a 60 year old widow living as a boarder in the home of Maloy Smith (45), a painter, and his wife Elizabeth (38) in the village of Sheffield. That the accounts end in 1873 may be due to Coon's illness or death.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

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Processing Information

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Language:

English

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Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Curtiss, Ira
Noteware, Frank
Arnold, Emmons
Coon, John H.
Crippen, Frank
Croslear, Aaron, Mrs.
General stores--Massachusetts--Sheffield--Finance
Retail trade--Massachusetts--Sheffield--Finance
Sheffield (Mass.)--Economic conditions
Tuttle, Leonard

Contributors

Coon, John H. **[main entry]**

Genres and formats

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