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# Horace Pierce and Son Ledger

1828-1857

1 volume (0.1 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 234

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- [Scope](#)
- [Admin info](#)
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Read collection overview

Starting out as a blacksmith in Royalston, Mass., in 1828, Horace Pierce established a successful pail manufactory. Taking his son Milo as a partner, he employed a work force of eight by 1870, selling over \$6,000 of pail annually with capital of nearly \$3,500. Horace Pierce died in Royalston in 1883 at the age of 78.

This ledger includes records of work performed as a blacksmith (shoeing horses, fixing irons, mending sleighs, shovels, or chains, sharpening tools), records of manufacturing pails, forms of payment received (cash, labor, agricultural produce, wood, shoes, coal, and old iron), lists of customers, accounts of employees (monthly wages, charges for boarding, and days lost to work), and accounts of supplies purchased.

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## Background on Horace Pierce

Born in Royalston in 1805, Horace Pierce began his business career as a blacksmith in 1828, the year he married Mary Blood and saw the birth of the first of his eight children, Milo. Within a decade, Pierce began increasingly to specialize in the manufacture of pails of various sorts and sizes, and when Milo joined him in business, he began to increase his workforce and production, though maintaining some of his work as a blacksmith and sawyer.

Although Pierce never reached great wealth, he reported real estate valued at \$4,200 and personal property at \$2,300 in 1860, both respectable figures for small town Royalston. His fortunes thereafter may have declined somewhat, but as late as 1870, Pierce & Son employed eight workers, sold over \$6,200 worth of pails annually, and had a capital investment of \$3,500. He listed himself proudly as a "retired manufacturer" in the federal census of 1880. Pierce died in Royalston in 1883 and is buried in the Old Centre Cemetery.

## Scope of collection

Horace Pierce's ledger documents his work as a blacksmith and pail manufacturer in the rural north-central Massachusetts village of Royalston. The first two-thirds of the book centers on Pierce's blacksmithing, recording his work shoeing horses, fixing irons, mending sleighs, shovels, or chains, and sharpening picks,

plows, or axes. Payment often took the form of agricultural produce, shoes, coal, old iron, wood, and labor, in addition to cash. The last third of the volume reflects the growth of Pierce's manufacturing business between 1847 and 1850. Although the number of customers appears to have waned during these years, merchants such as Ephraim Murdock, John Bower, and the firm How and Damon, purchased several thousand dollars of pails annually.

Of particular note, Pierce kept careful accounts of employees at his pail manufactory, with information on monthly wages, charges for boarding, and days lost to work. The 1850 manufacturing census listed eight workers earning wages of \$175 a month, however, there was notable variation: William Whitney was hired at \$11 per month in 1848, while in the same year, Jeremiah Wheeler came on board at \$24. Benjamin Brown, in contrast, was paid by the piece. On January 1, 1850, he earned \$165 for turning out 12,324 pails over the previous (unspecified period of) months. There were also accounts of supplies purchased.

Recorded dos-a-dos in the volume are day-book entries from 1855 to 1857, representing not only his pail manufacturing, but what appear to be a general store operation.

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired from Charles Apfelbaum, 1987.

### Processing Information

Processed by Ken Fones-Wolf.

### Language:

English

### Acknowledgments

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## Search terms

### Subjects

- Blacksmiths--Massachusetts--Royalston--19th century
- Pails--Massachusetts--Royalston
- Pierce & Son (Firm)
- Pierce, Horace, 1804-1883
- Pierce, Milo, b. 1829

### Contributors

- Pierce, Horace, 1804-1883 [main entry]

### Genres and formats

- Ledgers

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