

Amory Gale Account books

1840-1872

2 volumes (0.5 linear ft.)

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A physician and native of Warwick, Mass., Amory Gale worked as an allopath after his graduation from Brown College in 1824, before turning to homeopathy in the mid-1850s. Often struggling with ill health, Gale plied his trade in a long succession of towns, including Canton, Scituate, Mansfield, and Medway, Massachusetts, as well as towns in Rhode Island and New Hampshire. Between 1844 and 1853, he interrupted his medical practice to answer a call to the ministry, filling the pulpit in several towns in southeastern Massachusetts.

Gale's surviving ledgers include accounts with patients, their form of payment, lists of medical fees, and a draft of a business agreement with a fellow homeopath in Woonsocket, J.S. Nichols.

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Background on Amory Gale

Born on October 15, 1800, the son of a blacksmith and tool manufacturer in rural Warwick, Massachusetts, Amory Gale received his early education at the Chesterfield, N.H., and New Salem Academies and read medicine in nearby Royalston, all as a young man. Hampered by ill health, Gale had a strong desire to enter the ministry, but after attending medical lectures at Dartmouth in 1823, he completed his course of medical studies at Brown, receiving his diploma in 1824.

Beginning as an allopath in Barre, Mass., Gale moved frequently while attempting to establish his practice, passing through Amherst (N.H.) and Canton, Mass., before settling in South Scituate. An instinctive reformer, engaged in the causes of temperance, antislavery, and peace, Gale studied theology under the Unitarian minister Samuel J. May while in South Scituate, and was ordained in Kingston, Mass. in 1844. His ministry, however, was brief. After occupying the pulpit in East Bridgewater, Mass., Southington, Conn., and in Pembroke and Norton, Mass., ill health once again intervened. Too ill for the demands of the ministry, Gale returned to medicine, converting from allopathy to a homeopathic practice more in keeping with his reformist instincts. He built a thriving practice in Woonsocket, R.I., before relocating to East Medway, Mass., in 1853, where his wife had family. Gale remained there until his death on Feb. 20, 1873.

Gale married Martha Leland of Warwick in 1825, with whom he had six children: Caroline (b.1828), Martha (b.1832), Mary (b.1835), James (b.1837), and Annah (b.1840). He is buried in Warwick.

Scope of collection

The two volumes of Armory Gale's account books document his medical practice over thirty years. Dating from 1840 to 1854, the first volume includes a note inside the front cover listing Gale's various residences in those years, including Canton, Scituate, and Mansfield, Mass., and Woonsocket, Rhode Island. The second ledger opens in 1855, apparently in Medway, and the accounts run through 1872. Most of the accounts in the second volume begin with a balance transferred from another ledger, which presumably covers the gap between these two volumes. There is some evidence as well that Gale transferred accounts in the second ledger to other volumes.

The two volumes are account books, rather than daybooks. The earliest accounts in both books were entered chronologically, as Gale added new patients to his lists, but as time went on, Gale simply squeezed accounts in wherever there was room. At some point, he added alphabetical indexes to each ledger, to provide some organization.

Gale's practice was extensive, especially for the days of horse and carriage. He treated patients throughout southeastern Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island, recording patients in at least thirty-four towns. Most of his entries in the ledgers are simply for "visit and medicine," but some include records of dentistry and obstetrics, vaccination, and treatment of broken bones.

Almost all the accounts were reckoned and settled at some point. Many patients paid in cash, and large balances settled in cash suggest that some of the patients were well-off. Gale also accepted a variety of goods and services for credit, including shoes for his family, washing, and work (by the hour or the day). He sometimes balanced credit accounts by paying out cash.

Gale used the last pages of the first ledger for personal accounts, but there are no other personal notations. There are, however, two interesting items. The first volume contains a list of medical fees for Worcester County. It gives the prices for a wide range of medical procedures, from "Advice in common cases" (\$0.25) to "Operation for Strangulated Hernia" (\$25). This list is an important resource for exploring economic and medical conditions in the 1840s and 1850s. The second item is a draft of an agreement between Gale and Dr. J.S. Nichols. Gale agrees to secure for Nichols as much as possible of the homeopathic medical practice in Woonsocket. In return, Nichols agreed to split the profits, estimated at \$1,200 a year, for two years. It is unclear if such an agreement was ever formally signed.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Charles Apfelbaum, 1989.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Lisa May, July 1989.

Related Material

See also the account books of a contemporary and fellow medical graduate of Brown, Cyrus Morton (MS 185bd).

Language:

English

Acknowledgments

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Search terms

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Nichols, J. S.
Scituate (Mass.)--Economic conditions--19th century
Woonsocket (R.I.)--Economic conditions--19th century

Contributors

Gale, Amory, 1800-1873 [main entry]

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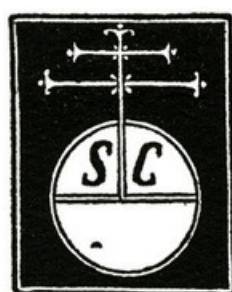
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