

Special Collections and
University Archives

UMass Amherst Libraries 

Nathan Holden Daybook

1852-1887

1 volume

Call no.: MS 349



[About SCUA](#)

[SCUA home](#)

[Credo digital](#)

[Scope](#)

[Admin info](#)

[Download](#)

[xml version](#)

[print version \(pdf\)](#)



[Read collection overview](#)

Farmer from New Salem, Massachusetts, whose secondary occupation was that of a shoe repairman. Daybook documents a component of small-scale, handwork shoe production in a local economy prior to the arrival of centralized, mechanized manufacturing; lists Holden's shoemending skills and the method and form in which he was paid by customers, including cash, customers' labor, and services or wares such as butchering pigs or cows, chopping or gathering wood, travelling by buggy to a different town, using a neighbor's oxen, and a variety of food and tools.

See similar SCUA collections:

[Farming and rural life](#)

[Manufacturing](#)

Massachusetts (West)

Background on Nathan Holden

Born in 1812 in New Salem, Nathan Holden was the oldest son of Simon and Polly Holden and had eight siblings. He was raised in the Augustus Holden House (named after his grandfather) which was situated on Lover's Lane in North New Salem, mainly a lumbering community.

Nathan married Harriet Stowell in 1836 when he was 23 years old. They had five children at the time they moved into the house that Nathan built near his parents on Lover's Lane during 1846 and 1847. Martha Pamela was the first baby born in the new house and Edgar followed a little over one year later. In 1856, Nathan sold this house to Proctor Whitaker and moved his family to the main street in town.

Farming was a major industry in the western section of New Salem, around where Nathan and his family lived. Shoemaking and shoe repairing were also popular trades to some extent because there were many tanners in town. Nathan appears to have involved himself in both local industries. As a shoe repairman he did everything from lacing up a lady's skates to bottoming a fellow farmer's soles.

Shoemaking and shoe repairing in New England began as a household activity among eighteenth century farmers. Trained shoemakers, shoe repairmen, and artisans often bartered shoes for other goods and services to farm families. Because Nathan made, but mostly repaired, shoes to individual order, his market was limited to the local population and its needs.

Scope of collection

The daybook of Nathan Holden documents the secondary occupation of a farmer who also repaired shoes for people in his community of New Salem, Massachusetts.

This daybook provides insight into local economies prior to the Industrial Revolution, before factory shoebinding replaced small-scale, handwork production. In the eastern region of Massachusetts at this time, factories were active, piecework was being mechanized by the Singer sewing machine, and labor unions had already formed. With this in mind, Nathan Holden, his son Edwin, and brother Augustus, who were also shoemakers and shoe repairmen, persisted in their craft as a result of community interdependence and a localized economy.

In the daybook, the transactions list Nathan's skills that were often traded or bartered for customers' services or wares: butchering pigs or cows, chopping or gathering wood, travelling by buggy to a different town, using a neighbor's oxen, and a variety of food and tools, among other tradable goods. Some customers traded their work for mending shoes, while others paid in cash. Given the change in penmanship and materials used to list transactions, Edwin or Augustus may have taken over Nathan's accounts in 1871, after a ten-year gap of time in the book.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Purchased for SCUA by Robert W. Hugo for the Friends of the Library.

Processing Information

Processed by Jennifer Raitt, January 1995.

Language:

English

Acknowledgments

Encoding funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Copyright and Use (More information)

Cite as: Nathan Holden Daybook (MS 349). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

Barter--Massachusetts--New Salem--History--19th century--Sources.

Farmers--Massachusetts--New Salem--Economic conditions--19th century--Sources.

Holden, Nathan, b. 1812.

New Salem (Mass.)--Economic conditions--19th century--Sources.

Shoemakers--Massachusetts--New Salem--Economic conditions--19th century--Sources.

Shoes--Repairing--Massachusetts--New Salem--History--19th century--Sources.

Wages-in-kind--Massachusetts--New Salem--History--19th century--Sources.

Contributors

Holden, Nathan [\[main entry\]](#)

Genres and formats

Account books.

Link to similar SCUA collections

Farming and rural life

Manufacturing

Massachusetts (West)



Special Collections & University Archives

University Libraries : UMass Amherst

154 Hicks Way : Amherst, Mass. 01003-9275

Ph. 413-545-7282 (545-SCUA)

