

## North Center School District Records

1818-1833

1 box (0.25 linear ft.)

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The North Center School District was established in 1812, when Hatfield divided into three school districts. The collection consists of seventeen handwritten documents including financial records, a report and recipes relating to the North Center School District in Hatfield, Massachusetts, representing the period from 1818 to 1833. While not a comprehensive collection, the items nonetheless offer insight into education at the turn of the century, especially the sorts of expenses accrued in maintaining a small town schoolhouse.

### Background on North Center School District (Hatfield, Mass.)

Incorporated in 1670, the town of Hatfield, Massachusetts was originally that part of Hadley west of the Connecticut River, settled by people from Hartford, Wethersford, and Windsor, Connecticut.

Hatfield, whose motto is "Industry & Prosperity," was an unusually prosperous community, thanks to the richness of the Connecticut River Valley and its ability to support agriculture and livestock. While the insularity of the community may have

contributed to its prosperity as well, farmers were quick to capitalize on new industries, and around 1816, Hatfield began manufacturing brooms based on a technique developed in Hadley. As the demand for this product decreased, Hatfield turned to tobacco growing.

Education was important to the people of Hatfield. Encouraged by the Dickinson family, Hatfield opened schools for girls in 1796. Young boys attended these "dame schools" as well (although not at the same time). Since the first "examination" of teachers didn't occur until 1826, many of these early schools were "kept" by non-professionals.

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## Scope of collection

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Of particular interest are the individual and family names that appear in the documents. Many names of prominent Hatfield citizens appear on the items, from descendants of the earliest settlers to family names associated with charities and education in the Connecticut Valley: Dickinson, Bardwell, Smith, Waite, and Morton.

The financial records include treasurer's reports on expenses of the North Center School District from about 1818 to 1830. These reports reflect costs for tuition, housing, instruction, and repair of the schoolhouse, among them reimbursement for sawing wood, mending windows, and providing "a ride down and back." Expenses for the 1827 year totaled just over \$125.00, including payment to "Miss Dickinson to keep the School for four weeks ... at \$1 per week." The 1828 treasurer's report lists "Israel Dickinson tuition money" and payment to the "Charles Smith Committee," as well as the "District's proportion of money for the year."

A handwritten expense summary for 1830 includes handwritten minutes of what might be one of the first instances of school choice. Apparently superseding a phrase apportioning costs, the following decision is recorded as passed: "Voted that any scholar belonging to this district who shall actually expend ...the district's proportion of Money in a select school or higher school in this Town or any other town and absents himself or herself from this district school for the whole warrant year - shall be entitled to draw from the district Treasurer his or her proportion of the Town's Money raised for the support of district scholar."

The Schoolhouse Site Selection Committee Report (1833) summarizes a contract with Solomon Dickinson "for a site on the north side of his home lot for the sum of One Hundred and fifty Dollars" with provision for re-deeding the site to Dickinson's heirs after ten years.

The warrants illuminate the history of the North Center School District from the formation of committees to raise money, to their consideration of repairs, to the purchase of items for the school, and, finally, to the selection of a site for a new schoolhouse.

The earliest dated warrant (1818) directs the selection of a clerk, the raising of "a sum of money sufficient to procure a school house," and the choosing of a committee to "procure said house." An 1827 warrant directs consideration of raising money for repair and procuring "a suitable Stove for their schoolhouse."

## Inventory

Financial Records

ca. 1818-1830, undated

Box 1: 1

Recipes

ca. 1830

Box 1: 2

Schoolhouse Site Selection Committee Report

ca. 1833

Box 1: 3

Warrants

1818-1833, undated

Box 1: 4

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## Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

## Provenance

Purchased from Peter Masi, March 2005.

## Processing Information

Processed by Jane Babcock, October 2005.

## Related Material

For books related to the history of Hatfield in the W.E.B. Du Bois Library at UMass, see:

Englehardt, Cynthia, ed. *This is Our Hatfield*. Hatfield, Mass. c1973. (F74 .H45 E5)

Judd, Sylvester. *History of Hadley, Including the Early History of Hatfield*. Northampton: Printed by Metcalf & Co., c1863. (F74 .H1 J9)

Wells, Daniel White and Wells, Reuben Field. *A History of Hatfield, Massachusetts in Three Parts*. Springfield, Mass.: F.C.H. Gibbons, c1910. (F74 .H45 W4)

## Language:

English

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## Search terms

### Subjects

Allis, Dexter.

Bardwell, Elijah.

Bardwell, Remembrance.

Dickinson, Solomon.

Education--Massachusetts--Hatfield.

Hatfield (Mass.)--History.

Massachusetts--History--1775-1865.

Morton, Chester.

Morton, Jeremy.

New England--History--1775-1865.

North Center School District (Hatfield, Mass.)

Porter, Theodore.

Schools--Records and Correspondence.

Waite, Daniel.

Waite, Justin.

### Contributors

North Center School District (Hatfield, Mass.) **[main entry]**

### Genres and formats

Recipes--Massachusetts.

School records--Massachusetts.

Warrants--Massachusetts.



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