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Lambert Bigelow Daybook

1822 Sept.-1823 May

1 vol. (0.1 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 975 bd



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Lambert Bigelow (1821-1869) was proprietor of one of the most profitable general stores in Marlborough, Mass. Entering into partnership with his brother Levi in 1822, Bigelow grew to significant wealth, eventually joining with a friend and neighbor to establish the long-lasting firm, Morse, Bigelow, and Co.

An early daybook maintained by the Lambert Bigelow's newly established firm, and perhaps the first, this volume covers just over half a year of transactions (169 pages) typical of a New England country store of the 1820s. Bigelow's customers purchased small quantities of goods ranging from molasses and rice to cotton and muslin, flour, sugar, tobacco, rum, "Holland gin," and (rarely) brandy. Occasionally, Lambert dealt in daintier products such as cinnamon, raisins, and "cake chocolate," or in specialty items like

pudding pans, pitchers, and a black bean pot.

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Background on Lambert Bigelow

The descendent of a Marlborough family with roots back to the Great Migration of the 1630s, Lambert Bigelow was born in Marlborough on Nov. 1, 1801, one of an enormous brood of seventeen children belonging to Gershom Bigelow and his wives Mary (Howe) and Eunice (Wilder). The Bigelows were prominent citizens, but more than anything they were a large family that spawned large families.

In about 1822, Bigelow, though barely 21, established a country store in Marlborough in partnership with his brother Levi, calling themselves L. and L. Bigelow Co. Situated on Pleasant Street on the western side of town, the store occupied a massive building known as the "Old Long House." The timing was surely fortuitous: the store was founded just as Marlborough, like much of Middlesex County, was feeling the impact of industrialization and the growth that came along with. Although Levi left the firm after only a few years to pursue other work, Lambert continued on, eventually joining with a neighbor to form Morse, Bigelow, and Co., a substantial operation that survived as a commercial presence for decades.

As Bigelow's fortunes rose, he built a grand new house in town, the Old Homestead, and settled into the upper echelons of society. A civic minded man, Bigelow donated the ground upon which the first firehouse was built in 1849, and he served in public office as town treasurer (1835-1837, 1844-1850, and 1852) and town clerk (1832-1853); he represented Marlborough in the General Court in 1845, and he was one of the incorporators of the Marlborough Branch Railroad in 1852. In Marlborough, he outgrew his country store beginnings to be listed in the state census for 1855 as a "trader" and then as a "merchant" in the 1860 federal census. In latter, notably, he was listed with real estate assessed at \$16,900 and a personal estate of \$9,700, making him easily among the town's wealthiest residents.

Bigelow married Emily F. Dickinson, the daughter of long-time Northfield, Mass., family, on Nov. 24, 1824, and like all Bigelows of the time, he raised a large family. When he died March 2, 1869, he was survived by his wife and seven of their eight children.

Scope of collection

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Chris Emery, Jan. 2018. Chris Emery is a fifth generation descendant of Lambert Bigelow, through Lambert's son Edward L. Bigelow (1839-), Edward's daughter Emily Marguerite (1878-1953), and her son George Edward Emery (1904-1975).

Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Jan. 2018.

Bibliography

Ella A. Bigelow, *Historical reminiscences of the Early times in Marlborough, Massachusetts, and Prominent Events from 1860 to 1910*. Marlborough, Mass. : Time Publishing Co., 1910.

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English

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Search terms

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General stores--Massachusetts--Marlborough

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Contributors

Bigelow, Lambert [main entry]

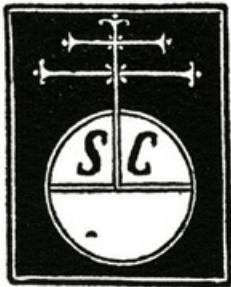
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