

*A Finding Aid to the **Easton Ledger Collection***

Date Range: 1747-1947

Compiled by Arielle Nathanson,

December 2021

Summary

Creator: The Easton Historical Society and Museum

Title: Easton Ledger Collection

Dates: 1747-1947

Extent: 4.17 linear feet

Abstract: The account books found in the Easton Ledger Collection date from 1747 to 1947 and contain accounts ranging in topic from business to daily life. Included in this collection are: ledgers relating to local businesses, infrastructure, industry, church business, the Ames Family, the Almshouse and personal accounts.

Language: English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: This collection is the result of various donations over the years and as such there is no one source to credit for their acquisition.

Accruals: No further accruals are expected, but the collection may be updated as additional relevant materials are located and processed.

Restrictions on Access: Collection may only be accessed with the permission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum. Digitized versions of select materials are available through this finding aid and the Easton Historical Society and Museum's website at: eastonmahistoricalsociety.org

Conditions Governing Use: The Easton Ledger Collection is owned by the Easton Historical Society and Museum. It may be used for research, study and scholarship purposes. Permission to quote, publish or copy these materials requires the permission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum, which can be contacted at: eastonmahsmuseum@gmail.com or 508-238-7774.

Preferred Citation: Easton Ledger Collection, 1747-1947, Easton Historical Society and Museum, [item].

Processing Note: This collection was fully processed and a finding aid created by Arielle Nathanson. Select materials from this collection were digitized in 2021 and are accessible online. To request virtual access to non digitized materials, please contact the Easton Historical Society and Museum.

Historical Note

The Almshouse functioned as a working farm. Anyone who was able bodied was required to work until they could support themselves and leave the property. It was run and supported by the town, who ensured that it would not go out of business. However, the staff still had to provide an account of their expenses, inventory and the people staying there. It was not uncommon for vagrants, tramps and hobos to stay for a night and then move on. Unfortunately, the people there ranged in all ages and situations, and many were not able to leave so easily.

The Ames Shovel Shops ran a general store for more than 100 years. It was opened in the 1820s on Center Street for the convenience of their workers, but was popular among the public. There was no requirement for Shovel Shops employees to frequent the store, but it was helpful for immigrant workers who did not have any of their own land to sustain themselves.

The Congregational and Unitarian Churches were involved in a notable controversy, evident in the account books in this collection. The Congregational Church was the sole religious and meeting space for the town. However, there were townspeople who were in favor of religious reform. They clashed with those who preferred the traditional ways. This clash became heightened when Reverend Luther Sheldon (1785-1866), the Congregational Minister, refused to invite Unitarian Ministers to speak at his church. In 1831 the church and state officially separated in Massachusetts, which finally allowed for there to be more than one church in town. This led to the old Congregational Church turning into a Unitarian place of worship, while those who believed in the traditional ways created a new Congregational church. This collection features account books from both churches.

The Morse Thread Mill was established by Josiah Copeland (1768-1852), who came to Easton in the late 1700s and started manufacturing simple cotton yarn. Throughout the years it was bought out and passed down until Alfred Bryant Morse (1861-1932) inherited the business. With the addition of another building, he created the Morse Machine Company in 1892. The company began manufacturing parts for cars and lace machines. By 1860, 39,600 pounds of thread made from South Carolina's Sea Island cotton was being produced. The thread was used in lace, bonnets, shoes, leather, straw and cloth. In 1917 the company closed down due to a lack of German steel during war time. The materials in this collection directly reflect the payroll and feature the names of the employees for the Thread Mill and Morse Machine Company.

The Swift Brother's general store was run by Luther (1866-1949) and Howard Swift (1868-1951) from 1890 to 1948. They bought out the store from Frank Copeland Wade

(1859-1949) and sold everything from hay, grain and flour to rubber, boots and paints. Their account books document these daily transactions for a large segment of Easton's population.

The Belcher Malleable Iron Foundry was founded in 1837 by Alexander Boynton. It was run throughout the years by members of the Belcher family. While it was in operation, it was the oldest iron business in the United States still operating on its original site. It closed in the 1990s and was torn down only recently.

Scope and Content Note

The account books found in the Easton Ledger Collection date from 1747 to 1947 and contain accounts ranging in topic from business to daily life. Included in this collection are: ledgers relating to local businesses, infrastructure, industry, church business, the Ames Family, the Almshouse and personal accounts. This collection is arranged into seven series by creator and presented in alphabetical order. Subsequent organization of subseries are arranged alphabetically, as will be specified below. Notable materials in this collection include: a personal account book from 1743 and three Morse Cotton Thread record books.

Series 1: Almshouse Records. The materials in this series are dated from 1838 to 1927. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. Notable items include: a Pauper's Register and a Book of Tramps.

Series 2: Ames Family Ledgers. The materials in this series are dated from 1840 to 1910. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. A notable item is a record of stocks purchased and sold.

Series 3: Church Records and Meeting Minutes. The materials in this series are dated from 1792 to 1905. The two subseries are arranged by document function and ordered alphabetically. The items within each subseries are ordered chronologically. Notable items include: meeting minutes from the Evangelical Congregational Church, the Unitarian Church and Elijah Howard's Parish.

Series 4: Individual's Personal Accounts. The materials in this series are dated from 1747 to 1908. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. The most notable item is a personal account book kept by Reverend Solomon Prentice (1705-1773) during his time serving the Congregational Church from 1747 to 1755.

Series 5: Local Businesses. The materials in this series are dated from 1792 to 1947. The subseries are arranged by creator and ordered alphabetically. The items within

each subseries are ordered chronologically. Notable items include: three account books from the Morse Cotton Thread factory, two account books from the Swift general store and one account book from Elijah Howard's store.

Series 6: Local Industry and Infrastructure. The materials in this series are dated from 1837 to 1939. The subseries are arranged by creator and ordered alphabetically. The items within each subseries are ordered chronologically. Notable items include: records from The Board of Health and one account book relating to the Belcher Malleable Iron Foundry.

Series 7: Miscellaneous and Oversized Ledgers. The materials in the series are dated from 1792 to 1928. The subseries are arranged by creator and ordered alphabetically. The items within each subseries are ordered chronologically. Notable items include: Almshouse Records, Ames Company Store Ledgers, the Congregational Church's meeting ledger, and the Swift Brother's store ledgers.

Series Outline

The Easton Ledger Collection is arranged into 7 series, several of which have been further arranged into subseries. The series and subseries are as follows:

Series 1: Almshouse Records, 1838-1927

Series 2: Ames Family Ledgers, 1840-1910

Series 3: Church Records and Meeting Minutes, 1792-1905

Subseries 3.1: Church Meeting Minutes, 1855-1870s

Subseries 3.2: Church Records, 1792-1905

Series 4: Individual's Personal Accounts, 1747-1908

Series 5: Local Businesses, 1792-1947

Subseries 5.1: Morse Cotton Thread, 1792-1880s

Subseries 5.2: Reynolds, Drake and Gables, 1892-1947

Subseries 5.3: Miscellaneous Local Stores, 1815-1893

Series 6: Local Industry and Infrastructure, 1837-1939

Subseries 6.1: Board of Health, 1921-1939

Subseries 6.2: Hose Co., 1895-1917

Subseries 6.3: Belcher Malleable Iron Foundry, 1837

Subseries 6.4: School System, 1842-1890s

Subseries 6.5: Union Pacific Railroad, 1884

Series 7: Miscellaneous and Oversized Ledgers, 1792-1928

Subseries 7.1: Checks and Stock Certificates, 1905-1928

Subseries 7.2: Oversized Ledgers, 1792-1910

Subseries 7.3: Unidentified Store Ledgers, 1890-1893

Related Materials

Reverend Solomon Prentice's account book from 1747 has been digitized. Items from any other series may be digitized upon request. Select digital materials are available at the Easton Historical Society and Museum's webpage:

<https://www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org/#/>.

Other collections featuring Easton families that are mentioned in this finding aid include: The Morse Family Collection. The finding aids for these collections can be found on the Easton Historical Society and Museum website.

Container List

Series 1: Almshouse Records, 1838-1927

Box	Description
1	Almshouse Records, 1838-1883
2	Almshouse Records, 1885-1927

Series 2: Ames Family Ledgers, 1840-1910

Box	Description
3	Ames Family Ledgers, 1840-1895
4	Ames Family Ledgers, 1900-1910

Series 3: Church Records and Meeting Minutes, 1792-1905

Box	Description
4A	Church Records and Meeting Minutes, 1839-1905
4B	Congregational Church Records, 1792-1902

Series 4: Individual's Personal Accounts, 1747-1908

Box	Description
5	Individual's Personal Accounts, 1747-1908

Series 5: Local Businesses, 1792-1947

Box	Description
6	Morse Thread Factory, 1792-1890
7	Swift Brother's and Reynolds, Drake and Gabell, 1892-1947
8	Miscellaneous Stores; Brockton Tools and Car Repair, Edward Dunn Trolley Car, 1916-1930
9	Miscellaneous Stores; Mitchell and Elijah Howard and Co., 1815-1896

Series 6: Local Industry and Infrastructure, 1837-1939

Box	Description
9	Visiting Nurses and Easton Fire, 1895-1939
10	Foundry, School System and Union Pacific Railroad, 1837-1890

Series 7: Miscellaneous and Oversized Ledgers, 1792-1928

Box	Description
11	Miscellaneous and Unidentified Ledgers, 1890-1928
Oversized Box	Description
1	Almshouse Ledger, Ames Company Store Ledger, Congregational Church Ledger and Drake Foundry, 1792-1897
2	Ames Shovel Shop Ledgers and Swift Store Ledgers, 1890-1910