

Greene County

MAGAZINE

Ledgers from the Daily Maupin Estate



GREENE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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LEDGERS FROM THE DAILY MAUPIN ESTATE

by Donald D. Covey

In October 1988, the Greene County Historical Society was given thirteen ledgers from the estate of Mrs. Daisy Maupin. The ledgers date from February 9, 1857 to May 25, 1887. All but two of them apparently document business at the Mitchell General Store. Mrs. Maupin was previously married to Kenneth Mitchell, son of the store's owner, through whom the ledgers presumably came down to us. The society is indebted to Mrs. Maupin's heirs, Mrs. Daisy Gassman, Mrs. Patsy Warmbier and Mr. Kenneth Mitchell, for this most interesting and valuable addition to its library.

George Washington Mitchell, grandfather of the heirs, was the owner of the store. George William Mitchell, another grandson now living in Culpeper, Virginia, says that the store was originally in what is now known as the "old morris store." That is located on the Southwest corner of the central intersection of Stanardsville. We have been unable to confirm this from any other source; but, if so, at some time the store was moved east and downhill to approximately the present site of the Greene Pharmacy and opposite the family home. There are still people living in the community who remember the store building, which stood near the junction of Highways 33 and 230 until sometime in the 1930's.

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The ledgers are about evenly divided between Day Books and Account Books. The Day Book acts something like a cash register tape. Each page is a single column. Below the date are the names of customers who have charged their purchases. To the left of each name is a page number where the same name may be found in the corresponding Account Book. To the right of the name there is often an indication that the purchases were made for "self", "wife", "son", etc. Then the purchases are listed with the price to the right (often a unit price is included). Finally there is a total for the day's purchases. Occasionally an entry in a Day Book is crossed out or marked "paid" or "off". Most entries are "Merchandise Debits," but a few times we find "Cash Debit." Within several pages the owner records loans of twenty-five cents and twenty-five dollars.

An Account Book is much as one might expect. These ledgers begin with an alphabetical list of customers and the number or numbers of pages on which that account may be found. Under each customer's name on the correct page are two columns. To the left is the Debit Column, which shows purchases as transferred from the Day Book. To the right is a statement of payments - the Credit Column. The accounts are usually continued for about a year. In a few cases the account is continued for several years. This usually seems to be a matter of carrying the account until it is paid up.

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Below is a description of the ledgers in chronological order:

#1. A Day Book.

116 lined pages, 6" x 15"

Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.

Writing is in Copperplate script.

On the inside of the front cover we find

February the 9th, 1857

Tho. H. Gibbons

Day Book for 1857

All pages are blank except for a fragmentary account of Miss Martin and some scribbles which appear to be shorthand symbols; but it appears that about half of the pages may have been removed.

#2. A Day Book covering the period November 13, 1860 to August 10, 1861.

216 lines pages, 6" x 15".

Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.

Writing is in Copperplate script.

There are probably about 200 separate accounts.

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#3. An Account Book for the period January 1867 to February 1874.
226 lined pages, 7-1/2" x 12-1/2".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
181 customer accounts.

#4. An Account Book limited to a few months in 1867 (mostly
October, November and December)
150 lined pages, 7-1/2" x 12".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
55 customer accounts.

This is an Account for the W.H. Garr & Co., Wolftown,
Virginia, and includes an inventory of this store taken on
November 24, 1868. The inventory includes 598 items on 19
pages. Also included are three pages of accounts with
balance due. The value of the business appears to have been
\$2,534.49 on the given date.

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- #5. An Account Book covering the period July 1868 to December 1875 (but this late date in only one case).
280 lined pages, 8" x 13".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
176 customer accounts.
- #6. An Account Book covering the period October 29, 1869 (but mostly from September 1873) to May 16, 1887.
396 lined pages, 7-1/2" x 12".
Binding in contemporary rough calf, blind tooled.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
This Account Book contains accounts with 113 companies (perhaps a few individuals). There is seldom any indication as to the type of business.
- #7. An Account Book covering the period August 13, 1875 to December 12, 1878.
116 lined pages, 7-1/4" x 12-1/4".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
The first 26 pages of this ledger have 49 printed lectures on shorthand pasted over the original writing.

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#8. An Account Book covering the period March 1876 to an account as late as December 24, 1883.

Apparently contained 234 lined pages. If so, pages 75-78 and 191-220 are now missing.

Front cover shows that original binding was 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards. There is no back cover.

Writing is in Cooperplate script.

Originally contained 146 customer accounts.

#9. A Day Book covering the period February 11, 1881 to August 18, 1881.

192 lined pages, 5-3/4" x 15".

Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.

Writing is in Copperplate style.

#10. A Day Book covering the period August 19, 1881 to March 22, 1882.

192 lined pages, 5-3/4" x 15".

Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.

Writing is in Copperplate style.

- #11. A Day Book covering the period March 21, 1881 to July 17, 1882
240 lined pages, 6" x 15".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
- #12. A Day Book covering the period of July 21, 1883 to July 1884.
144 lined pages, 6" x 15".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.
- #13. A Day Book covering the period August 1, 1864 to May 25, 1887
124 lined pages, 6-1/2" x 15-3/4".
Binding is in 1/4 contemporary calf, with marbled boards.
Writing is in Copperplate style.

115 days are recorded on only 34 pages for this entire period of about three years. An average of a little over four customers is recorded per day. It is unfortunate that our set of ledgers is incomplete. For a period of twenty-five or twenty-six years there are thirteen ledgers, about one fourth of what we might expect. We cannot match any of our Day Books with the Account Books that we have. The whole period of the War

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Between The States is represented by one Day Book which closes with August 10, 1861. For those who filled their pages these books were valuable for the business records they held. A generation or less later they had little value; so many were lost or destroyed. The back is gone from one; a few pages are lost from another. There are scribbles and one or two childish drawings in blank areas. Someone older, obviously concerned with education, but heedless of the true value of these books, pasted a series of shorthand lectures over the figures in another ledger. We are not surprised to learn that the first husband of Mrs. Maupin was, at one time, a teacher and that she was one of his students. But this was surely not uncommon. Ledgers were often stored away on shelves or in attics and often burned with a building. We are fortunate to retain as many records as we have.

The value in our day is that ledgers bring history to life. On November 19, 1860, Miss Julia Plunket bought 10 pounds of sugar at 10 cents a pound. On November 21, 1860 James Beazley, Jr. apparently brought in 34 pounds of bacon at 15 cents a pound. On April 1, 1861, Miss Susan Ogg bought two pair of shoes, apparently paying \$2.75. On August 23, 1877, John G. Dulaney bought a tin cup for 10 cents. These names no longer occur in Greene County. One can imagine the younger members of the family moving to the busy little city of Charlottesville

or seeking adventure farther west. Soon their descendants may seek the quiet of Greene County only two hours from the nation's capital.

On the other hand we find the names of Isaac B. Davis, probably the son of Thomas Davis who was instrumental in creating the County of Greene, in a ledger of 1867. His descendants have remained in the county. From Frank McMullen, a young father living in Charlottesville, we learn that he was named after a great Uncle, Judge Frank McMullen, whose name we find frequently in these pages. The names Deane and Shifflett occur often.

Books have been written about the development of language. In a simple way these ledgers illustrate this development. McMullan is also spelled McMullen and McMullin. Dausen and Lausen seem to be equally good spellings of Dawson and Lawson. Jarrille seems to be the equivalent of Jarrell. Sherman is often Shearman. People frequently bought "pains of glass" and sometimes "tblspuns" and "teaspuns". Over the years one common spelling has been accepted for these and many other items.

"Domestic" and "Linsey" were types of cloth, apparently differing from silk, velvet and calico, commonly purchased by ladies in the period of these ledgers. We suspect what a "chamber" may be but seldom use one today. Does anyone recognize a "Rockingham Pitcher" (54 cents) or "riffles" (6-1/4 cents)? Both customs and products change through the years.

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In 1861 coffee cost 19 or 20 cents a pound. In 1877 it cost 30 cents. Remarkable inflation! We find four cakes of soap at five cents, one pound of pepper at 17 cents, one pound of salt at 10 cents, and one pound of sugar at 15 cents. In 1877 half a bushel of apples cost 25 cents and two dozen eggs cost 20 cents. We can look at these prices in more than one way. Today coffee costs about ten times what it did in 1877 and other products several times as much as one hundred years ago. However, if we compare current wages and standards of living with those immediately following the War Between The States, we may discover that the differences in price are not what they seem.

Our earliest ledger contains little information except that it comes from a store run by Thomas Gibbons. The only Gibbons currently in the Stanardsville telephone directory is Sallie B. Gibbons, General Merchandise. Since the ledger date is 1857, there could be no possibility of black ownership/ and there can be no relationship. Is there, however, a connection?

Another ledger comes from the W. H. Garr Co., Wolftown, Virginia in 1868. Among its customers were "Aaron" (no second name) with Mrs. Conway, "Horace", "David with Mr. Walker", and "Tom with Mrs. Eddins." One wonders why there were no such customers at the Mitchell store. Did Blacks not come to this store? Were they not welcome? Or did they

simply use two names? A William Washington found in the 1881 ledger is suggestive. We might also ask why the Thomas Gibbons and W. H. Garr Co. ledgers are found in a collection of ledgers from the Mitchell store?

It is also interesting to note that no Morris names occur in the early ledgers. Bud Morris appears in 1876 to 1877. The simple explanation may be that in those days most Morris families lived west of SR 810 near the mountains, had a sort of family store where they did most of their shopping, and seldom went into Stanardsville. The ledgers may well bring history to life for us; but they also present us with many leading questions. Another example is a Cash Debit of \$2.00 to a customer to pay for a land transfer. One wonders how he paid for the land if he had no money to pay for the transfer. Further inquiry results in several possible solutions to this problem; but we are not primarily concerned with solutions in this article.

A part of this gift was an 8" x 10" notebook with 60 lined pages and a cover similar to most of the ledgers. The title page, written in Copperplate script, reads:

B. B. Mitchell

Oct. 1978

Senior Math.

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Lectures

Solid Geometry

B. B. Mitchell would have been a son of George Washington Mitchell.

Anyone with a need to know may examine these ledgers at the Greene County Historical Society Museum.