

Sturgis Library Archives

MS. 163 Account Book of a Cape Cod Physician, 1864-1866

Extent: 1 book in multi-folder box

Scope and Content Note: The collection consists of the account book of an unknown physician on Cape Cod, possibly in Chatham. The name Edward E. Bruce is written on an old label pasted to the front cover of the book, but we are not certain that this is the name associated with the book or that of a later owner. Each account includes the name of the person being treated, along with a list of debits (DR) and credits (CR). The book includes about approximately 335 pages.

Historical and Biographical Information: Many of the entries in the book are for patient visits, for which the physician normally charged \$1. It appears that he not only saw patients in his office, but also routinely made house calls, as evidenced by entries such as “to visit him.” There are also entries for medication, tooth extractions, pills, whiskey, syringe, oilcloth, stitching, needle, rum, ginger, citric acid, cream, castor oil, inhalers, sassafras, etc. Occasional entries for commodities such as apples or pork suggest that he may have bartered for his services. There are entries related to local organizations, the Town of Chatham, Town of Wareham, and the State of Massachusetts.

The account book includes the names of hundreds of patients, making it a treasure trove for historians and genealogists researching the 19th century. Surnames include Adams, Andrews, Ashton, Atkins, Bacheldor, Bainbridge, Baker, Bearse, Benson, Berry, Blankenship, Bloomer, Bolles, Boyd, Brick, Briggs, Brown, Bumfrus, Burchell, Cahoon, Carpenter, Chase, Chipman, Churchill, Clark, Clifford, Cobb, Conroy, Converse, Coffin, Crosby, Crowell, Davis, Delano, Doane, Dodge, Eldridge, Eldredge, Emery, Flynn, Folger, Gill, Gould, Hamilton, Hammond, Harding, Hardy, Hathaway, Higgins, Holler, Hinckley, Holbrook, Horton, Howes, Hunt, Hunter, Hutchings, Illsley, Ireland, Jerauld, Jones, Kendrick, Kent, Laffray, Leonard, Lee, Lewis, Long, Look, Loveland, Lucas, Luce, Madigan, Maxim, Munsell, Pea, Phillips, Phinney, Redding, Reynolds, Ritchie, Robbins, Smith, Sparrow, Spender, Snow, Stetson, Stringer, Studley, Sweet, Swift, Taylor, Thacher, Tillson, Tinkham, Tripp, Thomas, Wing, Wiley, Young, and others. Multiple members of various families appear throughout the account book.

Many who appear in the book are part of the rich legacy of Cape Cod. Josiah Mayo, a blacksmith by trade, built a home in Chatham in the 1800s, which is today considered a prime example of early 19th century life, and is open for tours. Solomon Eldredge/Eldrige and his wife Ab An entry pertaining to Civil War surgeon George N. Munsell appears in the ledger, and he was practicing medicine in Harwich in the 1860s. ilgail were drowned in 1874 while aboard the schooner Franklin Rogers out of Chatham. An entry pertaining to Civil War surgeon George N. Munsell appears in the ledger; he was practicing medicine in Harwich in the mid-1860s.

Access: Unrestricted. Credit Sturgis Library Archives for publication purposes.

Acquisition: Purchased from Brian Gwozdz Rare Books and Ephemera.

Processed by: Lucy Loomis, December 2019.

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