

Meade & Baker Apothecary Ledger

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1861-1870



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2009.130

Unit Date

1861-1870

Language

The material in the collection is in English.

Abstract

The collection contains an accounts ledger for a pharmaceutical firm in Richmond, Virginia, including customer names, addresses and itemized lists of purchases.

Creator

Meade and Baker Apothecary (Richmond, Va.)

Extent

0.4 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Meade & Baker Apothecary Ledger was purchased by Special Collections in 2008.

Processing Information

The processing and description of the Meade & Baker Apothecary Ledger commenced and was completed in October 2009. Prior to processing, the ledger had been sent to a professional conservator for full treatment.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Meade & Baker Apothecary Ledger, Ms2009-130, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Thomas Roberts Baker, son of Hilary and Margaret Marshall Roberts Baker, was born in Richmond, Virginia on May 30, 1825. As a youth, Baker learned the pharmaceutical business under Alexander Duval, then attended the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, graduating in 1852. During the American Civil War, Baker enlisted in the Confederate Army as a member of the Richmond Howitzers but was ordered to report to the army's medical department, where he would serve throughout the war. Baker married Maria G. Burgwyn in 1868, and the couple would have one son.

Richard Hardaway Meade, son of Benjamin and Eliza Hardaway Meade, was born in Powhatan County, Virginia, in January 1831. As a boy, Meade moved with his family to Richmond; like Thomas Baker, Meade found early employment in the drugstore of Alexander Duval. In 1856, Meade and Baker partnered to establish an apothecary shop on the corner of Richmond's 9th and Franklin streets. During the Civil War, Meade served as a member of the House Guard. He married Jane Catherine Fontaine. The Meades would have five children. Though Meade was the junior partner of Meade & Baker, he is credited with having played a larger role in creating many of the company's formulas, including that for a mouthwash that would become very popular.

Meade & Baker eventually moved to the 900 block of East Main Street and became the largest apothecaries in the city. When Meade died in 1880, Baker bought out his partner's interest in the company. The company's mouthwash product eventually became so successful that Baker in 1888 created the separate Meade & Baker Carbolic Mouthwash Company, which manufactured and sold not only its namesake product, but a tooth powder as well. At the same time, the original drugstore was sold to the head pharmacist, William P. Poythress. In 1892, the mouthwash company became a stock company with Baker serving as president. Thomas Roberts Baker died on November 26, 1906.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of a single accounts ledger from Meade & Baker, a pharmaceutical business in Richmond, Virginia during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Containing more than 600 pages, the ledger appears to be a daybook, recording customer names and addresses, dates of purchases, itemized lists of purchases, and payments. The store's sales consisted almost entirely of pharmaceuticals and related health and beauty goods, but the ledger also records sales for such household items as spices, chewing tobacco, stamps, and pencils. Many of the account entries made during the 1860s illustrate rampant inflation within the Confederacy. The price recorded for a toothbrush in February 1861, for example, is 25 cents, while a January 1865 entry records the price for that same article as 12 dollars.

That the ledger contains account information only for customers outside of Richmond (including a number of customers in other states) suggests that the volume may have been used to record only mail-order purchases. This theory is supported by the fact that this single ledger enumerates an entire decade's worth of sales, far too few for a company that has been described as one of the largest drugstores in nineteenth-century Richmond.

Keywords

Civil War

Folk, historical, and patent medicine

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Medicine

United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865

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Description of Subordinate Components

Ledger

Unit Date 1861-1870

box 1