

American Antiquarian Society

Manuscript Collections

NAME OF COLLECTION:

Baker, James, Business Records, 1761-1823

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes "B"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

1 box (ca. 500 items)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For biographical information on Baker, see *Sibley's Harvard Graduates, 1756-1760*, vol. xiv, ed. by Clifford K. Shipton (Boston: Mass. Historical Society, 1968), p. 551-552. See also the typescript, "Notes for a Brief History of the Walter Baker Company and Its Times . . .," 25 p., in the collection.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

Gift of Samuel A. Green, M.D., 1898

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

James Baker (1739-1825), son of James Baker (1713-1776) and Priscilla Paul Baker (1718?-1776), graduated from Harvard College in 1760. After teaching school, studying theology, and serving an apprenticeship to a physician, Baker opened an apothecary shop in Dorchester, Mass., which expanded into a general store. In 1769 he married Lydia Bowman (-1816), daughter of Rev. Jonathan Bowman (1703-1775) of Dorchester. They had three children: Edmund (1770-1846); Elizabeth (1774-1805); and Lydia (1777-1851).

Having helped Daniel Vose establish a chocolate manufacturing business in 1772, Baker took on Nathaniel Blake shortly before Vose withdrew from the business in 1780. Baker then closed his general store and devoted all his attention to making Baker's Chocolate. Dr. Baker retired from the business in 1804, leaving it entirely in the hands of his son Edmund. The business had been prosperous, but was destined to achieve national prominence under the guidance of Dr. Baker's grandson, Walter Baker (1792-1852).

This collection is almost entirely in the form of accounts and receipts, and from these it is easy to follow the development of the chocolate industry from a storekeeper's early venture in a sideline in the 1770s to the establishment of the business in 1780. Cocoa was initially an item bought for the store, along with sugar, molasses, and rum; gradually, it supplanted all other commodities as Baker turned to the production of chocolate.

The first mention of cocoa is in a receipt dated 2 July 1772. By the late 1770s the receipts reflect Baker's deep involvement in the manufacturing of chocolate. There are also some court summonses and writs relating to legal actions involving Baker, as well as an estate inventory of his brother, Ebenezer Baker (1743-1798), and documents and accounts relating to his guardianship of Ebenezer's children.

See Contents List.

13 June 1973
contents list added 16 April 1991
revised 15 December 2001
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Contents List

Folder	Contents
	<u>Miscellaneous Items</u>
1	William S. Piper notes on the collection, 1939
2	"Notes for a Brief History of the Walter Baker Company and Its Times . . .," 1940
3	Walter Baker, Humorous Broadside, n.d. [photograph]
4	James Baker, Sr., Letter, n.d.
	<u>Business Records, n.d.; 1761 - 1823</u>
5	n.d. [26 items]
6	1761 - 1768 [12 items]
7	1769, January - June [12 items]
8	1769, July - December [10 items]
9	1770, January - August [12 items]
10	1770, October - December [10 items]
11	1771, January - June [12 items]
12	1771, July - December [12 items]
13	1772, January - April [12 items]
14	1772, May - August [12 items]
15	1772, September - December [12 items]
16	1773 [15 items]
17	1774 [17 items]
18	1775 - 1776; 1778 [17 items]
19	1779 [13 items]
20	1780 - 1781 [16 items]
21	1782 - 1783, March [12 items]
22	1783, April - December [12 items]
23	1784, January - May [15 items]
24	1784, June - December [18 items]
25	1785, January - April [13 items]
26	1785, May - December [12 items]
27	1786 - 1787, March [13 items]
28	1787, April - 1788 [10 items]
29	1790 - 1799 [13 items]
30	1800 [10 items]
31	1801 [15 items]
32	1802 [11 items]
33	1803 - 1804 [14 items]
34	1805 [14 items]
35	1806 [17 items]
36	1807 [11 items]
37	1808 [20 items]
38	1809 [17 items]
39	1810 [14 items]
40	1811; 1817; 1819; 1823 [11 items]