

Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Records

1799

1 vol. (0.15 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 088

Read collection overview [Collection overview](#)

Authorized in March 1799, the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Company constructed a toll road through miles of rough terrain and sparse settlements, connecting Leominster, Athol, Greenfield, and Northfield. Having opened areas to land travel that had previously been accessible only over rivers, the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike ceased operations in 1833 after years of declining revenues.

The collection consists primarily of one volume of records of the directors of the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike, including minutes of meetings, accounts of tolls collected, and drafts of letters.

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Background on Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a system of over sixty toll roads and turnpikes sprang up to take financial advantage of the need for improved travel in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In exchange for building and maintaining suitable roads, turnpike corporations were granted the right to charge travelers for use, typically assessing fees based on the nature of the conveyance, with exemptions for travel to and from religious services, farm work, military duty, or a handful of other matters.

Chartered in 1799, the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Corporation was empowered to operate a roadway from Leominster

heading west to the town common in Athol which then divided into two branches, the first criss-crossing the Miller's River as it passed through Orange and Erving into Millers Falls and Montague City before ending in Greenfield, and the second taking a more northerly route through Orange and Warwick en route to Northfield.

Having considerably improved travel and transport in the northern part of the state, the Fifth Turnpike was profitable enough to issue dividends during its early years, however like most turnpikes of the era, it was not a particularly profitable long-term venture given that travelers could avoid toll booths by switching onto "shunpikes" and other free local roads. In the face of years of low revenue, the shareholders voted to dissolve the corporation in March 1833.

Scope of collection

The collection consists of a single volume of records of the directors of the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike, including minutes of meetings, accounts of tolls collected, and drafts of letters.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Language:

English

Provenance

Provenance varied.

Copyright and Use ([More information](#))

Cite as: Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike Records (MS 088).

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Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Aug. 2013.

Search terms

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- Toll roads--Massachusetts

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