

Josiah Green and Co. Records

1829-1905

2 boxes (2.0 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 683

Read collection overview [Collection overview](#)

Josiah Green and Co. were pioneering manufacturers of mass produced pegged boots, one of the earliest and largest firms of its kind in Central Massachusetts. Founded by Josiah Green in the town of Leicester in 1812 and relocated to Spencer in 1816 or 1817, the firm grew rapidly, erecting a four story factory on the Boston Post Road in 1834. In 1850, J. Green and Co. was the largest of six major shoe- and boot-manufacturers in town, though its market share eroded thereafter. Green ran the company until passing control to his sons in 1867.

The records of Josiah Green and Co. document the growth and peak years of operation of one of the most important high-volume manufacturers of boots in central Massachusetts. Although the account books and ledgers extend back into the 1820s, the bulk of the correspondence dates from 1889-1894, when Josiah's sons operated the firm. Despite being sporadic and incomplete, the correspondence offers a glimpse into the manner in which Green's business was conducted during a period when the firm sold to a wide network of wholesalers and jobbers in the northeast and Midwest. Much of the correspondence concerns the placement or fulfillment of orders and issues surrounding prices and payment. The four press copybooks in the collection contain outgoing letters for the years 1889-1892 and 1904-1905.

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Background on Josiah Green and Co.

Early in the nineteenth century, Worcester County, Massachusetts, became one of the first regions in the state to

experience rapid industrialization, and the small town of Spencer became a center for the manufacture of wire, boots, and

shoes. The development of the shoe and boot industry began as a cottage industry in 1809 when the inauspicious Charles Watson produced a few dozen pairs for which he never received payment. In nearby Leicester, however, Josiah Green (1792-1876) and his brother Nathaniel found greater success when they began making shoes and boots in about 1811. Working from the garret of their mother's house, 19 year-old Josiah began producing boots at \$1.25 per pair. The scant profits he made from the sale of his boots in Boston encouraged him to continue, and the start of the War in 1812 added further impetus. In 1812, the brothers turned to Albany to market their goods, selling to military contractors at a profitable \$2.25 per pair.

After dissolving his partnership with his brother at the end of the war, Josiah relocated to Spencer in 1816 or 1817, where he became the first of several large-scale manufacturers of shoes and boots. Early in his career, Green began to use pegging to attach heels and soles, producing a harder wearing product while driving down cost and increasing the rate of production. Widely known for the quality of his work, Green's trade to the wholesale market grew rapidly, and by 1834, he erected a four story factory on the Boston Post Road, over which sat a sign reading "Josiah Green's boot manufactory, established 1812." Although Green was the largest of Spencer's six major shoe- and boot-manufacturers in 1850, by the eve of the Civil War his firm had begun to lose market share to local competitors such Isaac Prouty, C. and G. Watson, and A.T. and E. Jones.

Green was married twice, first in 1816 to Tamer Watson (d.1820) and then to Sybil Underwood in 1821. In addition to two children by his first marriage, Josiah had eight children with Sybil. He continued in the boot trade until retiring in 1867, when his sons assumed control of the company. Green died on Dec. 28, 1876, and the company continued in operation into the twentieth century.

Scope of collection

The records of Josiah Green and Co. document the growth and peak years of operation of one of the pioneers in high-volume manufacturers of boots in central Massachusetts. Although the account books and ledgers extend back into the 1820s, the bulk of the correspondence dates from 1889-1894, when Josiah's sons operated the firm. Despite being sporadic and incomplete, the correspondence offers a glimpse into the manner in which Green's business was conducted

during a period when the firm sold to a wide network of wholesalers and jobbers in the northeast and Midwest. Most of the correspondence concerns placement or fulfillment of orders and issues over prices and payment. The four press copybooks in the collection contain outgoing letters for the years 1889-1892 and 1904-1905.

Collection inventory

Correspondence	1876-1898		Box 1: 1
Correspondence	1876 Oct.	2 folders	Box 1: 1-2
Correspondence	1877 Apr.-June		Box 1: 3
Correspondence	1882-1892		Box 1: 3
Correspondence	1893 Jan.-Mar.		Box 1: 5
Correspondence	1893 Apr.-June		Box 1: 6
Correspondence	1893 July-Sept.		Box 1: 7
Correspondence	1893 Oct.-Dec.		Box 1: 8
Correspondence	1894/1898		Box 1: 9

Ledgers	1829-1905		
Account book	1829-1839		Box 2: 1
Perusal of stock	1838-1842		Box 2: 2
Inventory of stock on hand and accounts	1840-1850		Box 2: 3
Account book	1856-1858		Box 2: 4
Account book and work record	1875-1876		Box 2: 5
Stock account	1878-1887		Box 2: 6
Letter copybook	1889		Box 2: 7
Daybook	1890-1891		Box 2: 8
Letter copybook	1890-1891		Box 2: 9
Letter copybook	1892		Box 2: 10
Letter copybook	1904-1905		Box 2: 11

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Steve Finer, May 1997.

Processing Information

Processed by Dex Haven, August 2010.

Bibliography

Draper, James, *History of Spencer, Massachusetts...*, 2nd ed. (Worcester, Mass.: Henry J. Howland, 1860).

Marvin, Abijah Perkins, *History of Worcester County, Massachusetts...*, vol. 2 (Boston: C.F. Jewett, 1879).

Tower, Henry M., *Historical Sketches Relating to Spencer, Massachusetts...*, 4 vols. (Spencer, Mass: W.J. Heffernan, 1901-1909).

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

- Shoe industry--Massachusetts--Spencer.
- Spencer (Mass.)--Economic conditions--19th century.

- Green, Josiah.
- J. Green and Co.

Genre terms

- Account books.

Names

Link to similar SCUA collections

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