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Description: Walter Cary's introduction to the S. Cary & Co. ledger 1837-1844

Presented to Cary Library
by Walter Cary.

This time-stained and battered volume shows throughout its more than nine hundred pages the diligence of a skillful penman and accurate accountant. It is wholly in the handwriting of Collins Whitaker, the first Clerk of Courts of Aroostook County. Mr. Whitaker, who was born in New Salem, Massachusetts, came to Houlton in 1830, when 18 years old and entered into the employment of his brother-in-law, Shepard Cary.

At the time he was keeping this book, he was in partnership with Shepard Cary, doing business under the firm-name of Shepard Cary & Company, engaged in trade, as the book itself shows. The store in which the business was carried on was located in a small story-and-a-half building standing a few rods easterly from the dwelling house, occupied by Mr. Cary's family for many years, and is still to be seen on the southerly side of Military Street, on the slope of what was formerly called "Garrison Hill". This house, built by William H. Cary, father of Shepard Cary, was erected about 1822, when the Cary family came to Houlton from their native town of New Salem(mentioned above). The Whitaker homestead was the dwelling next easterly of the store, and now occupied by George W. Drake.

When I was a boy, I heard Mr. Whitaker, who was visiting in Houlton in the Summer of 1877, say that it was his custom, every night, on closing the store, to carry this bulky volume to his house for safe-keeping.

The firm of Shepard Cary & Co., in due course of time, came to engage in extensive lumbering operations on the upper waters of the St. John and Alagash rivers, supplying Pine timber for the Saint John(N.B.) market, from whence it was shipped to England.

For a number of years Mr. Whitaker resided in the city of Saint John, and was United States Consul there from 1848 to 1862. The following year the family removed to Dubuque, Iowa, where Mr. Whitaker died July 3, 1890, in the 78th year of his age.

This old book is of antiquarian interest, aside from its local association, (a) as showing the miscellaneous character of the merchandise kept for sale, and the prices of the same that were then current; (b) as containing the names of pioneers and early settlers of this and neighboring places; and (c) as giving the names of officers stationed at Hancock Barracks.

Dated at Houlton this fifth day of March 1940.

Walter Cary