

Isaac Cramer's "Accounts"
by Elizabeth M. Perinchief
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Old account books are great sources of information. Not only do they present a thumbnail picture of the economy of the times, as revealed in commodities and prices, but they also are records of persons living in the area who did business with the "store". Frequently the keeper of the accounts or day book was a self appointed vital statistics recorder, and in some cases a diarist and weather reporter. Prior to June 1848, New Jersey kept no State records for deaths and births. Tombstones, Bibles, church or meeting minutes and these day books or accounts are often the only sources.

In the Batsto Archives at the Visitors' Center Library, there are several such journals. The vital information is interspersed throughout the debit and credit pages. Such an "account" was kept by Isaac Cramer, dating from about 1816, but unfortunately, like many of these old records, the first few pages are missing.

Under any given date may be such entries as "begun to plant my late beans and corn", or "my wife tuck a rattle snake that was measured and was 6 foot long", or "William Wollston wife was confind". In the middle of this are the accounts of Uriah Cramer, Dr. for "a quart of rume", or "plowing in ry 1 day 2 horses 2 hand, 2.50, carting hay 1 day 2 hos 2 hand, 2.25."

The next half page may read "David Browers to Charles Cramer", and under almost daily dates are such repeated purchases as "ry flower, 'tators', tobacco, molases, pork. The latter increased in price two cents between January and April 1845. One of a kind items included "quart of milk", [33 cents], "1/2 pound soap" [7cents], and "100 clams" [10 cents].

Births are rather summarily noted: "1832 October 30th Joseph Cross wife was confind and the child was buried November 11832; Elizabeth Cramer was confind with her first on the 2nd of May 1836 ..Rebecca Ann Cramer; Mary Lovland was confind on the 25 of April with her 2nd 1836 — Oliver's wife."

Deaths were given in more detail: ""September 23 Sarah Adams departed this life at one o'clock and wasd enterd at the Mill graveyard the 24 at 4 o'clock; October 13 1835 Johnathan T Cramer departed this life at 7 o'clock and was buried the same day at Isaac Cramers burying ground; Capt Charles Loveland Junior departed this life April 16th 1836 and was buried the 19th at the mill burying ground; George Lovland son of John Lovland departed this life on the 2nd day of May 1836 was buried at the meetin hous."

For the most part marriages were interspersed: "June21 cut my first load of hay; the storm began and rained every day untill for 3 weeks; 25th July stacked my first hay and was stormy for 2 weeks; begun plowing my corn 2nd time; July 27 1836 Chocoley Sears was married; June 19 1836 Peter Lane and Rebecca Vansant was married; June 24 Sarah Vanote left Mr. Hamells and went home with John Shearman in my wagon; July 18 1836 there was frost that kild pumkin and other vines: April 14 1836 Capt. Joseph Cale was married to Elizabeth Lovland; Joel Walton was married April24 1836 to Miss Margaret A Addams; July 17 1836 John Shearman was married to Miss Ann (T)owel."

Then we learn a few other things about Mr. Cramer. "..November 1832 Joseph Kindle built a chimney in my house at the mill which I paid him the sum of two dollers in cash, then (he) repaired my oven and fireplaces at home which I paid him fifty cents". On "Dec 22 1832 J. Carr came home from New York with my boat."

On the right hand page is listed "To sawing at weading. [Wading River] Nov 2 Capt Ebenezar Sooy; 3, George Cramer, 5, George Cramer, 11, George Cramer, 14, George Cramer, 12, Samuel Lovland senior ...23, Isiah Addams, etc." The last entry is "oil of oreganum spirits, George Wetherll, "Pothe Cary"

The book seems to have been kept hit or miss; with entries in sequence that have no regard for month, day or year. On a page following an accounting of the debts of Uriah Cramer in 1840, is a list of the children of Charles Cramer (no wife named) with the dates of birth.

Because of the value of the personal information contained in this volume, the contents, as they pertain to vital statistics, are being indexed and will be placed in the library at the Visitors' Center at Batsto. Some of the entries are barely legible. The spelling as used in the day book-diary-account book is exactly as written by Mr. Cramer.

[Note: The Account Book has been moved from Batsto to the New Jersey
State Archives in Trenton, since Mrs. Perinchief wrote the article.]