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# James Anderson (1740-1798) and Son Account Books (1778-1805): A Variety of Settlements

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## OVERVIEW

The Andersons were blacksmiths in Williamsburg and Richmond, Virginia during the mid-1700s to the turn of the century. Their customers included prominent figures in government. The account books which they kept are among the best preserved and neatest of their time, maintained at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library in Williamsburg, Virginia. The handwriting is magnificent. Instead of facing pages, which appears to be the more common practice at the time, the books show debits and credits from individual accounts on the same page as in the following format:

| Item | Debit | Credit |
|------|-------|--------|
|      |       |        |
|      |       |        |
|      |       |        |

The debit entries are preceded by the word “to”; and the credit entries, “by.” That was customary in the 1700s in American account books. Account titles indicate the names of each customer, along with any titles they had. British currency—pounds, shillings, and pence—was used exclusively in the accounts. Unusual for accounts at this time, many seemed to be discharged by cash payment rather than barter. However, a number of settlements are made in barter of various kinds. The appendix provides a list and brief commentary on other American account books that the author has examined in recent years.

Referring to dignitaries among their customers, the account they kept for Thomas Jefferson shows the following:

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|       |         |   |
|-------|---------|---|
| p. 72 | 1780    | His Excellency Thomas Jefferson               |
|       | Jan. 6  | To putting 6 new shoes of his own on 2 horses |
|       | Mar. 11 | To 2 shoes for a horse                        |

No currency figures are given, and no settlement is indicated. Apparently, the Andersons performed their services free of charge for Jefferson.

### SETTLEMENTS

There are a number of different types of account settlements illustrated in these books. Moreover, the settlements are usually indicated by comments presumably made by the Andersons below each account, an approach to reflect account settlements that appears to be unique. However, the nature of the settlements was not unusual at the time. Consider the following accounts:

#### 1. *The Rev. John Bracken*

|          |   |             |
|----------|---|-------------|
| 1795     |   | Dr.         |
| March 26 | To pointing a plough                    | £ s3 D      |
|          |   | 9. 12. 2½   |
|          | To amount brought forward from Ledger A | £ 9. 15. 2½ |

“This account has been discharged by schooling some of the children of my father.”

#### 2. *Samuel Shearer*

|                |   |     |
|----------------|---|-----|
| 1794           |   | Dr. |
|                | To Repairing a Spindle for a fan                          | 2s  |
| April 20, 1804 | This man cannot be found by me in Richmond or elsewhere.” |     |

#### 3. *Mr. James Shields Junr*

|        |  |         |
|--------|--|---------|
| 1790   |  | Dr.     |
| [Bal.] |  |         |
| Mar. 3 |  | 1..6..3 |

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“This account appears to have been received by Leroy Anderson.” Apparently Leroy Anderson paid this account or used this account to settle his own account with James Anderson.

4. *John Rind—Richmond*

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1791           | Dr.          |
| Oct. 13 [bal.] | 151(s)..3(d) |

“This account appeas[sic] to have been discharged by Journey work.”

5. *Sydney*

|              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| 1791         | Dr.     |
| May 2 [bal.] | 2..8..6 |

April 20, 1804. “I cannot find a man who will acknowledge this to be due from him and it has no Christian name affixed to it.”

6. *Julius Dandridge*

|         |      |
|---------|------|
| 1792    | Dr.  |
| July 11 | s    |
|         | 10.. |

April 20, 1804. “This man swears the account has been paid.”

7. *William Carter Doctr*

|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| 1795            | Dr.      |
| April 12 [bal.] | 7..8.11½ |

“My father purchased a house of this man and I imagine his account is settled.”

8. *Henry Banks—Richmond*

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| 1795          | Dr.      |
| May 23 [bal.] | 4..2..1½ |

“This man produced an account against this and a balance in his favor.” Either he had an account with Anderson as his customer or with another customer of Anderson to offset this account.

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9. *William Duvall—Richmond*

|        |                                     |
|--------|-------------------------------------|
| 1795   | Dr.                                 |
| May 16 | 22..8.5 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> |

April 20, 1804. Richmond. "This account was presented to Major W. Duval he stated that its amount partly discharged a bond which he held of my fathers." The Anderson son apparently is overseeing these account settlements.

10. *Mr. John Foster*

|               |                                     |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1795          | Dr.                                 |
| Aug. 5 [bal.] | 28..2.1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> |

April 20, 1804. "This man asserts that the amount of this account partly discharged an execution against my father in Norfolk."

11. *Nimmo*

|         |             |         |         |
|---------|-------------|---------|---------|
| 1794    |             | Dr.     | Cr.     |
| June 22 | By Mr. Kerr | 6..9..8 | 8.16.-- |

"This account appears to be overbalanced."

12. *Lenox & Davidson*

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| 1793          | Dr.     |
| May 23 [bal.] | 2.14.-- |

April 20, 1804. "These men are dead and their estates out of my reach."

13. *Joseph Prentis*

|               |  |          |                                     |
|---------------|--|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1799          |  | Dr.      | Cr.                                 |
| Jan. 9 [bal.] |  | 38.17..6 | 17.-9.- <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> |

"For the balance of this account a bond was taken, and disposed of by Hannah Anderson."

14. *Dctr. James Curry*

|                 |                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1795            | Dr.                                   |
| April 12 [bal.] | £77.16.5- <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> |

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“There are £46.17.4 credits to this account and as this man was the attendant Physician of my fathers family in Richmond I suppose it is balanced entirely by his account.”

## CLOSING COMMENTS

The Anderson account books are so meticulously written, prepared, and kept that they are a pleasure to study. Most books of this nature from the 18th century are in poor condition. What is unusual about these books is the wide variety of account settlements clearly set forth in the account books. A selection of those settlements has been provided in this piece.

## APPENDIX

The following are a sample of other American historical account books that the author has examined in recent years:

- Anonymous. *Wastebok or Day Journal, 1796-1797*. Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia. (a merchant)
- J.S. Cleveland. *Account Book, 1850s*. Shanower Library, Geauga County Historical Society, Burton, Ohio. (a physician)
- Daniel Dayton. *Day Book, 1826-1852*. Shanower Library, Geauga County Historical Society, Burton, Ohio (a merchant)
- Jonathan Hale's Book, 1807, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. (a pioneer)
- David King Amish Account Records, 1893. David Luthy's Amish Heritage Historical Library, Alymer, Ontario. (a merchant)
- Lemuel Punderson. *Account Book, 1816-1825*. Shanower Library, Geauga County Historical Society, Burton, Ohio. (a merchant and public official)
- Samuel Squire. *Account Book, 1799-1854*. Shanower Library, Geauga Historical Society, Burton, Ohio. (a merchant)
- Andrew Stuart. *Grocery Store, Accounts Receivable Ledger, 1887-1844*. Peninsula, Ohio Library, Summit County, Ohio. (a merchant)

Most of the foregoing books represent only accounts receivable and payable accounts. As the books served the stewardship needs of the merchant for whom they were prepared, financial statements were not prepared from these accounts. Many of the account settlements are in terms of barter as currency was scarce and not necessarily reliable. The account books usually are structured in terms of two facing pages, one for debits and the opposite for credits. Since there were no general or specialized journals, the entries are descriptive in nature, with debit entries reflecting

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either goods or services provided by the account book merchant to customers, settlements of his accounts payable, or balance transfers to new accounts; credit entries reflecting settlements by customers of accounts receivable, obligations of the account book merchant to other parties, or balance transfers to new accounts. A “waste book” was usually kept to file invoices and other documents providing the basis for most of the entries in the accounts. None of the accounts was closed, but the ending balances in the accounts were transferred to new accounts when the accounts became full of entries.

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## **The Deloitte Digital Collection, 1895-1983**

Royce Kurtz and Dale L. Flesher  
University of Mississippi

The National Library of the Accounting Profession at the University of Mississippi offers many resources for studying the history of the accounting profession around the world. The accountancy library holdings are the largest of any library in the world, including virtually everything published in English during the past century, and many earlier items, including some dating back to the 15th century. The total number of volumes that Ole Miss houses in the areas of accounting, auditing, taxation, and finance is believed to be in excess of 150,000. In addition to the books and over 1,000 accounting and finance journal titles, there are also tens of thousands of pamphlets, speeches, committee reports, photos, and courtroom documents that exist at no other library in the world. There are also hundreds of archival collections of old business records that serve as primary resources for all kinds of accounting research. The J. D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi is truly the international center of accounting research, and many of its resources are available on the Internet to anyone within reach of a computer. The most recent addition to the Internet-available materials is the digitization of over 36,000 pages of Deloitte-related publications. The purpose of this article is to describe the various elements of the Deloitte Digital Collection, with particular emphasis on the research resources available.

The Deloitte Digital Collection is a collaboration between the University of Mississippi Libraries and the Deloitte Foundation. The Collection