

cents a bushel in 1826 at Pittsford, Vermont, and rye was quoted at seventy-five cents a bushel at the latter place in 1840. The entries are not lacking in humor, as the closing of an account by a storekeeper in Scituate, Massachusetts, aptly illustrates:

“Scituate December 1st Day 1763  
Then Received and Seteled all A-Compts  
from the Beging of the World unto this  
Day with John King Jr. and found Due to  
me or on Balance in old Tenor £10:10:0.”

Records such as these serve a number of purposes. By searching them it is possible to ascertain the course of farm incomes from year to year over long periods. Again it may be possible to trace the influence on New England farming of that great improvement in transportation facilities which opened up the new West and put the New England farmer under a new and difficult type of competition. We may find something on the changing condition of farm laborers, on changing crops, and even on the efforts of farmers to add to their incomes by small manufacturing such as the making of shoes or the weaving of cloth. On the other hand, the account books of country stores not only add material for research on the aforementioned subjects, but open quite different vistas. The student is enabled to investigate such matters as yearly turn-over, the spread between city and rural prices, and the changing margin between cost and selling price of these country institutions. As no social or economic history of New England would be complete without tracing the vicissitudes of the New England farmers, so no business history of this area would be complete which did not cover the history of these farmers as business men, and, equally so, a study of the changing fortunes of the New England country store.

## Two Unique Books on “Handy-Works”

Two eighteenth century technical treatises — *Mechanick Exercises: or the Doctrine of Handy-Works*, 1703, by Joseph Moxon, and *The Practical House Carpenter*, 1796, by William Pain — have been presented to the Society by William Butler, one of our members.

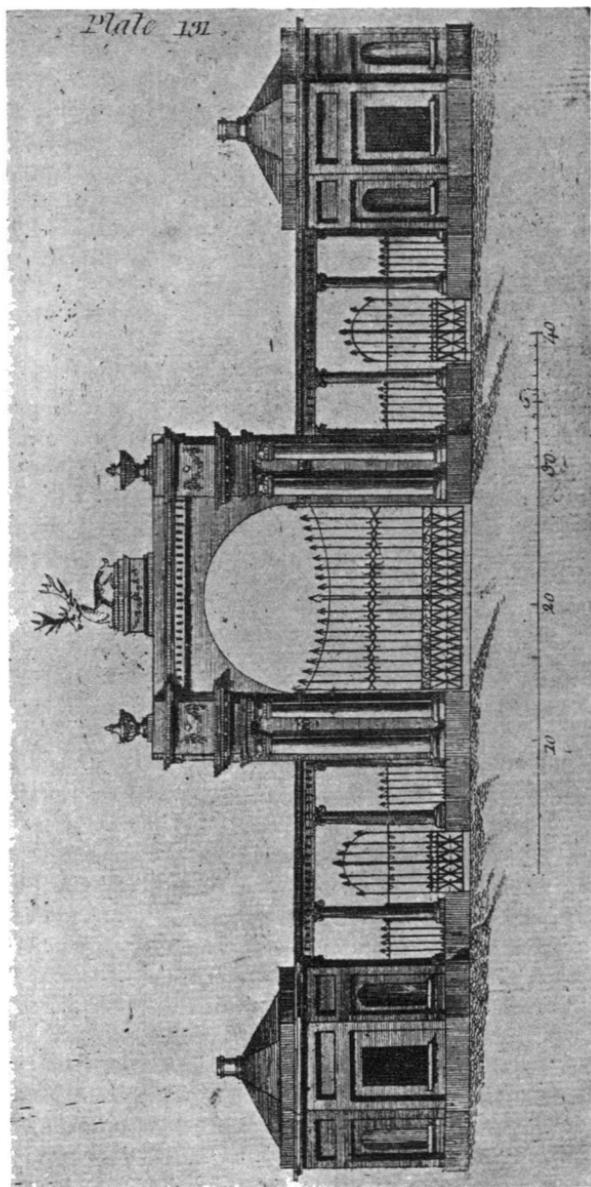
In the preface to his volume on *Mechanick Exercises*, Moxon gives a vigorous defence of manual labor which he declares is no more deserving of contempt, “than that the excellent Invention of a Mill should be despis’d, because a blind Horse draws in it.” He

continues with the pertinent remark that geometry, astronomy, music, navigation and architecture, though "excellent Sciences," are dependent upon the lowly "Handy-Works" for their existence.

"To dive into the Original of the Mechanicks is impossible, therefore I shall not offer at it: Only I shall say, it is rational to think, that the Mechanicks began with Man, he being the only Creature that Nature has imposed most Necessity upon to use it, endow'd with greatest Reason to contrive it, and adapted with properest Members (as instruments) to perform it." Thus we can see that Moxon was influenced by the philosophy of rationalism which dominated the thought of his century.

The book is divided into five parts — smithing, joinery, carpentry, turning and bricklayery, to which is added "Mechanick Dyalling; Shewing how to draw a true Sun-Dyal on any given Plane, however Scituated." Moxon defends the introduction of the "vulgar art" of Smithing by asserting that "without the Invention of Smithing primarily, most other Mechanick Invention would be at a stand: The instruments, or tools, that are used in them, being either made of Iron, or some other matter formed by the help of Iron" — in fact — "most other handy-works, as Joynerly, turning, etc. . . . all having dependence upon the Smith's trade, and not the smith upon them."

The character of the material in his treatise may be further exemplified by his comments on forging: "I think it needless to tell you how to make your Fire, or blow it, because they are both Labourers work; nor how little, or big, it need be, for your own reason will, by the Size of your work, teach you that; only let me tell you the Phrase Smiths use for 'make the Fire' is, *Blow up the Fire*, or sometimes, *Blow up the Coals*." When the iron is burning in the fire, the coals should be pushed close together in order to keep the heat in the body of the fire. "As oft as you find the Fire begin to break out, clap them close again." He suggests that wetting the outside will save coals as well as strike the force of the heat toward the center. He adds by way of warning that "he will not undertake, that with the bare reading of these Exercises, any shall be able to perform these Handy-Works; but . . . that these are the Rules that every one that will endeavour to perform them must follow; and that by the true observing them, he may according to his stock of Ingenuity and Diligence, sooner or later, inure his hand to the Cunning or Craft of working like a Handy-Craft, and consequently be able to perform them in time."



In the first edition of *Mechanick Exercises*, there is a chapter on the "art of Printing" which was not reprinted in later issues. (Our copy is a third edition). It is this chapter which entitles Moxon to a place in the famous *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* by C. H. Timperley (1839). Timperley's very comprehensive volume, a gift of members of the Moore family in memory of Charles A. Moore, is described in a previous issue of the *Bulletin*.

Moxon, this writer tell us, followed the business of a mathematical instrument maker, and resided at the Sign of the Atlas, on Ludgate Hill, where he suffered materially by the great fire of London in 1666. On November 30, 1678, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society, and made hydrographer to King Charles II. At one time Moxon wrote out some mathematical rules for the formation of letters in printing, but Timperley thinks "his science does not seem to have led him to any improvement in shape, for the characters which he formed are like the ugly Elzevirs." However, from the above account it is apparent that he was not an ordinary man and he tells us in the Preface that he undertook the writing of his book on "Handy-Works" to give to the world a treatise disclosing the "Secrets of all Trades." This venture was attempted since Lord Bacon in his *Natural History* had emphasized the need of such a work, inasmuch as he was convinced that "Philosophy would be improv'd by having the Secrets of all Trades lye open, not only because much Experimental Philosophy is caught amongst them; but also that the trades themselves might by a Philosopher, be improved."

William Pain's volume, *The Practical House Carpenter: or Youth's Instructor, containing a great variety of useful designs in carpentry and architecture*, is the first American edition from the fifth London edition, and was printed and sold by William Norman of Newbury Street, Boston. The book is composed largely of designs in the best Georgian tradition, drawn to scale with complete specifications, of house doors, interior and exterior, staircases and rooms of all sorts for dwelling-houses and public buildings. This volume, with its many designs for fireplaces, panelling, ceilings and mouldings, makes an excellent companion-piece for the books on Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton furniture which came into the possession of the Society three years ago.

At the end of the volume is affixed "A list of the Price of Carpenters' Work in the town of Boston" with the added explanation that

“the price of work in these Rules, is calculated at 5 shillings per day, which may rise or fall with the times.” Then we are informed that the scale of prices for window frames varies from 6 shillings for a brick house window frame to 4 shillings per window for wooden house frames “not boxed.” The scale for “gates,” such as that which appears in the illustration, is as follows: “Large gates with posts planed and capped with a cornice and fix pannels in each gate, 58s. 8d.; if the gates be paled, 64s. Gates with wings and square pales, and posts planed, 80s.; if posts cased, 5s. per post more. Extraordinary capping and rustic, left to the work-man.”

## The Secretary's Report

### ACQUISITIONS

During the few weeks which have elapsed since the publication of the last Bulletin, the Society has received and gratefully acknowledges the following acquisitions:

From F. C. Holmes, Treasurer, Plymouth Cordage Company, *The Plymouth Cordage Company, Proceedings at its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1824-1899.*

From Le Chef du Service Economique, Comité Central des Houillères de France, Paris, *Extrait du Rapport Présenté à l'Assemblée Générale Ordinaire . . . 1908-1930.*

From Col. John R. Fordyce, Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas, *Report of the Governor of Cuba as Agent to the Royal Spanish Government, Regarding Estate Expenditures and Receipts, 1752-1758; Letter Book of W. Burgauer and Brother, Dover, Ark., 1860-1863.*

From the Government of India, Director of Public Information, Delhi, *India in 1928-1929.*

From A. H. Lockwood, Vice-President, The Shoe and Leather Reporter, Boston, Blockey, J. R., *Application of Oils and Greases to Leather*, and Lamb, M.C., *The Manufacture of Chrome Leather.*

From Mu Ting Su, President, Provincial Bank of the Three Eastern Provinces, Moukden, China, *Economic Monthly* and Eight Copies of the Regulations of the Bank.

From Col. John H. Carroll, Washington, D. C., Mark Sullivan, *Our Times: 1. America Finding Herself, 2. The Turn of the Century, 3. Pre-War America*, personally inscribed by the author.

From H. Lawrence Groves, Commercial Attaché, American Embassy, Berlin, Twenty-four Dissertations by Students for the Doctor's Degree, at the University of Leipzig.