

Ohio County, Account Book of Steam Mill at Millersburg Randolph Township, 1832–1838

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In the early years of Indiana's history, the majority of pioneers settled in the southern region of the state. One major reason for settling in that area was trade. For many years the Ohio River was the major highway of the region. As an important westward-flowing, navigable river, it served an important function in the commerce of Indiana in the early nineteenth century.¹ All along the Ohio River small towns and villages popped up during this period of westward expansion. Many of these settlements have since disappeared; one such example is Millersburg.

Millersburg was situated along the river in what is today Ohio County, Indiana, about three miles south of Rising Sun. When it was founded around 1820, it took its name from the Miller family who were among its first settlers. In 1846 Millersburg boasted a distillery, “an extensive manufactory of tobacco,” and a population of about fifty, and was considered a “prominent shipping point.” Perhaps its most defining feature, however, was its “first-class” stone mill. In 1832 nearly all the citizens of the village formed a cooperative group to build and run the new mill, which provided its grinding services to a large portion of the surrounding countryside.²

The William H. Smith Memorial Library at the Indiana Historical Society houses a microfilm collection, “Switzerland Co. Roll #6,” on which is the “Account Book of Steam Mill at Millersburg, Randolph Township, Ohio County, 1832–1838.”³ The account book is rather disorderly and seems to have been used for a number of purposes other than tracking the business at the mill. It is not always in chronological order, and the front is littered with newspaper clippings. In the middle of the accounts for the summer of 1838 are sixteen repeated lines of “Command you may, your mind from play”—perhaps the notes of a bored clerk on a slow day. The account book contains notes on the sort of milling done, for whom and how much, and also purchases by the mill such as iron and wood. The mill was a diverse enterprise. In addition to recording production of meal, bran, and flour, the account book contains records of charges for individuals' passages to Cincinnati and amounts used to purchase supplies and pay employees for making pillows. A distillery was added in 1845; however, the mill burned down

not long after that addition and was never rebuilt.⁴ The account book was kept by Abijah North, one of the earliest settlers of the town.⁵

Below are transcribed the names of those who did business with the mill, both labor and milling, or made other purchases during the summers of 1835 and 1838. Names appear in bold. A great deal of other information is recorded in the account book that is not specific to any individuals or families. This is simply a list of the names expressly stated among the numerous other notes. For the most part, duplicate names have been omitted unless some distinguishing feature is associated with them.

Notes

1. R. Carlyle Burley, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815–1840*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950), 410–11.
2. *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana, from their Earliest Settlements* (Chicago: F. E. Weakley and Co., 1885), 452, 453. Ohio County did not come into existence until 1844. As a result, some of its earliest records are dispersed between its neighbors, Switzerland and Dearborn Counties.
3. Switzerland County [microfilm] Roll #6, F 143, Indiana Historical Society.
4. *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana*, 452.
5. Page 454 of the *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana*, contains a reference to a “North’s Mill, located about two miles and a half from the town.” This seems likely to be the same mill discussed above at Millersburg, though it cannot be said with absolute certainty. Also, a few times, the *Rising Sun Times* mentions Abijah North as an authorized agent of the newspaper, associating him with “North’s Mill.” See *Rising Sun Times*, July 5, 1834, courtesy of Hoosier State Chronicles, Indiana State Library.

From Microfilm Table of Contents:

- pp. 1–11 Used as a scrapbook. 1832–1834 entries covered
- pp. 12–28 Account of money received for the mill, 1835–1838
- p. 27 Poem about Shelby County, Indiana. Clipping laid in.
- pp. 30–31 Account with William Westlick for work on house, 1841–1842
- pp. 36–45 Weather, Dec. 1, 1851–1855
- pp. 46–55 Account of funds for the steam mill, by Abijah North, 1832–1834
- pp. 60–62 Accounts, 1838
- p. 65 Religious thoughts, March 16, 1840
- p. 67 Breeding of Sows, 1842
- pp. 68–70 Accounts of the house at Patriot, November 1855–1856
- p. 74 Account of purchase of town lot and building house, 1842
- p. 76 Draft of letter of [probably a young brother of Margaret Humphrey] to a cousin.
Mentions: Uncle Jim; Hulda’s little boy James North; Dine [Lodina] married Mr. Bodkin; Uncle Art; Mrs. Davis married Patrick Keeney.
- pp. 81–83 “Nature and Chance govern all things.”
- p. 90 Humphrey Genealogy. Laid in.
- pp. 92–102 Diary of Margaret Humphrey, July 30, 1869–Sept. 30, 1869; Jan. 1–7, 1872

Account Book of Steam Mill at Millersburg, Randolph Township, Ohio County, 1832–1838

Account Book Kept by Abijah North

Company Money Received		
June	8	To cash . . . Asahel North
	16	Rec of [S.?] Gilfoy for flour
	17	Peter [R/B]ogers
July	4	Lee Rogers for boat
	[7/1]	Rec of S. Gilfoy
	25	Wm. Wade
Company Money Paid Out		
July	12	Paid to Jacob L Lance
	16	Levi North for nales [<i>sic</i>]

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	18	Samuel Best
July	19	[BradStreet & Sharp/Brad Street?]
	21	[T?] [Lace/Love?] Reed for barrels
		[Lanicus/Lanier?] for Laths
	27	For smith work to [Hogan/Hagen/Hager?]
	30	[Wm Powel?]
Aug	4	[Jacob Lance?]
	22	Tarble Weatherbee
Sept	8	for wood to Samuel Steel
Sept. 21, Money Paid Out		
	21	Almina Miller for Edmon to hall [<i>sic</i>] water
	25	Stephen Blake
		Hathaway
Oct	7	Joseph Miller
	21	Samuel Gilfoy
	31	[Abijah North/Abigail Smith?] for land
Account of Mill Expenses for 1835		
June	23	James ¼ day sweeping out [batts?]
July	11	Mr. Gillis to cash
	12	to cash to John Hammon[d?]
July 22, 1835, Mill Expences [<i>sic</i>]		
	22	to cash to Levi [for/per] [---]
		James North to [fix/pin?] engine 3 days
	24	to cash to John Hammond
		to cash to Hagen for cutting servis
	31	John Hammon
May 15, 1838, Money Received of the Mill Co.		
		Levi North & Powell
		Asahel North
	19	James Miller
	21	Abijah North
June	2	Borrowed of Abijah North & Sons
	23	James Ricketts mill deb[t]

May 15, 1838, Recd. of the Mill Debts		
	13	David Love
	[?]	to James North one day
		James Wilson pas[s]age to Cincinnati
	24	Recd of Benjamin Miller in wood
		Paid Benjamin Miller for wood
June	2	Mr. Ward for 6 days at \$1.50
		Wilson one day
Account of Money Paid Out By A. North		
May	24	Paid to Mr. Ward
June	2	Paid Thomas [Cory/Cony?]
	15	Paid to North & Powell
		Paid Joseph Miller in money
	26	Paid Jacob Powell for wheat
July	12	Paid George Monroe carpenter
July 23, Money Paid Out for Mill		
		Lot N. Miller to get Stove
	23	James Miller sent to Cincinnati
Expensis [sic] of the Mill		
June	12	[May/Maj?] North to two [---] one day each
	14	Mr. Stropes for sweeping upper room
	[13/15?]	Paid Wilson North 12 ½ cts for work
June 26, 1838, Expence [sic] of the Mill		
		James North one day
		Lot North one day
		Lot Miller one day
	27	[Thomas Duit?]
June July	[29? [4?]	to 92 feet of Brds by Abijah
July	11	D Love to work Bolt irons