

## Old Bardwell Account Book Turns Up in Michigan

In April 2002, Ann Sibole of Ann Arbor, Michigan generously donated to the Shelburne Historical Society a unique manuscript whose existence was previously unknown - a personal diary and account book written by Jarvis Bodman Bardwell (1802-1902) of Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. Ms. Sibole, who knew nothing of Shelburne Falls or of Jarvis Bardwell, found the book about 1997 in the basement of an old house in Ann Arbor. Undoubtedly the book had been owned by Jarvis' great-grandson Philip B. Hadley, who was living in Ann Arbor around 1923.

In this small book Jarvis recorded his personal worth and assets, every year on his birthday (January 1) during most of his life. The financial entries cover the period from 1840 through 1882, with the notable exception of 1879. A few short entries, namely, death dates of members of the Shelburne Falls Military Band, are entered as late as 1899.

Jarvis Bardwell was one of the wealthiest and most influential residents of Shelburne Falls. His portrait hangs in the museum of the Shelburne Historical Society. Jarvis was preoccupied with money and saving. Small wonder that he became a president of two Shelburne Falls banks, having started with nothing! By age 38, in 1840, he had a net worth of \$6200, which gradually increased to over \$25,000 in 1878. But then there is an astonishing interruption. About 10 pages are missing from the book - not lost by chance but deliberately removed with scissors or a knife. How interesting those missing pages may have been! The next entry, in November 1880, shows a net worth of only \$2000, which gradually increased again to \$17,000 by 1892 (age 90). By 1892 no more space remained in this small book. Near the end of the book are listed the assets of Jarvis' daughter Fidelia Tyler.

The great mystery is what happened to over \$23,000 about 1879. Did Jarvis have a financial disaster, or did he simply give away his fortune? It is known that a banking crisis occurred about this time.

Although preoccupied with money, Jarvis felt a moral obligation to help others. For example, in