

The John E. Bassett & Co.  
754 Chapel Street  
New Haven County  
New Haven, Connecticut

HABS NO. CONN-283 HABS  
CONN.  
5-NEWHA  
32..

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS NO. CONN-283

THE JOHN E. BASSETT & CO. (Hardware Store)

Location: 75<sup>4</sup> Chapel Street (south side of Chapel, about 50' west of State Street), New Haven, New Haven County, Connecticut.

Present Owner: The John E. Bassett & Co.

Present Occupant: The John E. Bassett & Co.

Present Use: Hardware store.

Statement of Significance: The John E. Bassett & Co. store is reputed to be the oldest existing hardware store in the United States and is the oldest business in New Haven, having been continuously operated by a surviving partner. It possesses a remarkably early cast-iron store-front frame and one of the earliest remaining hoists (manually operated) in the state.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Information on chain of title contained in advertising books published by the firm in 1884 and 1895.

1784 Titus Street began business in his residence on Chapel Street with the usual assortment of a country store.

1792 Mr. Street took Samuel Hughes as partner and conducted business under the name of Street & Hughes.

1802-1821 "Owing to the unsettled condition of mercantile affairs incidental to the War of 1812, making it difficult to collect money" the partnership was dissolved and reformed at intervals, becoming successively: Street, Hughes & Co.; Street, Sherman & Co.; Hughes, Sherman & Co.; Hughes & Sherman. Mr. William Sherman retained an interest in the firm during the years the changes were made. Mr. Street retired in 1821.

- 1821-1838 Mr. Samuel Hughes carried on the business after Mr. Street's retirement and took his son, E. B. M. Hughes, as partner. Samuel Hughes died in 1838 and bequeathed the hardware store to his son. It then became known as E. B. M. Hughes.
- 1855 Mr. John E. Bassett came into the firm in 1855, and it became John E. Bassett & Co. E. B. M. Hughes remained as senior partner until his death in 1864.
- 1865 Mr. H. N. Jarvis became associated with Mr. Bassett as partner and remained three years. He then returned to Colorado to farm.
- 1889 Firm name became The John E. Bassett & Co., and expanded to include buildings at 318-320 State Street. John E. Bassett was President and George J. Bassett was Secretary-Treasurer.

2. Date of erection: 1828
3. Architect: None recorded.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: None.
5. Alterations and additions: The store once connected with a store at 318-320 State Street through a door on the east side, ten feet from the southeast corner of the present store. The door is now a fire exit leading to a parking lot. The building was not changed in the destruction of the adjoining store.

Present shop windows and entrance within cast-iron frame are not original. Wood-engraving of 1856 shows entrance to have been close to front plane up two risers and hung with paired wooden doors below lintel of lunette. Display windows had double-hung three-over-two-light wooden sash. Lights were set in heavy muntins. Muntins of upper sash were bifurcated in upper zones forming arched heads on principal lights and space for smaller light between muntins and arched head of sash. Muntins of lunette above door had corresponding design.

Upper windows have been altered from six-over-six light double-hung sash to casement windows. Interior fittings and changes in first floor windows and entrance apparently

date from 1889, when premises were expanded.

6. Important old views: Copy of wood-engraved advertisement of 1856 showing appearance of facade before later alterations and photograph c. 1900 are in possession of John E. Bassett & Co.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

Titus Street began in the hardware business as a youth in 1784 in the structure which was his residence in the corner of the big lot on Chapel and State Street. The present store building was built in 1828 after Mr. Street's retirement. At the close of his business career he was considered to be one of the three wealthy men in the city; the others being Eli Whitney and William Leffingwell. Titus was the descendant of Reverend Samuel Street, the first Congregational minister in Wallingford. His father, Samuel, also resided there. Titus was the father of Augustus R. Street, founder of the Yale Art School. Prior to his death in 1841, Titus Street occupied the Reynolds residence on Elm Street, near Orange, which he had purchased from Pierpont Edwards, the eminent lawyer.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Arnold G. Dana, "New Haven Old and New," unpublished scrapbooks, New Haven Colony Historical Society, 114 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Conn.

The New Haven Land Records, Land Records Office, the Hall of Records for the City of New Haven, Orange Street, New Haven, Connecticut.

Interview with W. E. Janswick, President, The John E. Bassett & Co.

2. Secondary and published sources:

The New Haven City Directory, 1840 to 1952, copies in the Yale Library, the Public Library, the Town Clerk's office, and the New Haven Colony Historical Society Library.

Ye Historie of an Olde Hard-Ware Store, 1784-1884, advertising booklet published by The John E. Bassett

& Co. hardware store in 1884. It includes a map of Chapel Street drawn in 1845.

Ye Olde Harde-Ware Store, 1895, advertising booklet published by The John E. Bassett & Co. hardware store.

Prepared by: Jonathan B. Conant  
Research Assistant  
National Park Service  
August 31, 1964

## PART II. Architectural Information

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Building is three-story brick row structure on inside lot with skylighted one-story rear extension of shop area. Late Federal-Greek Revival facade details give exterior a transitional stylistic character. Most notable exterior feature is thin cast-iron arcaded frame defining entrance and flanking shop windows. Frame is not bearing member, but masks structure of undetermined material supporting brick wall above. Use of cast-iron prefigures later developments and is extremely rare, if not unique, in an American shop front of so early a date (1828). In the attic is an original hand operated winch device for hoisting goods to upper floors.
2. Condition of fabric: Facade in good condition; interior appears to be structurally sound but finishes show effects of time.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 22'-0" x 116'-0", three stories, three bays. A rectangular store building with a one-story brick extension to rear.
2. Foundations: Stone. Stone base of front is now concealed by sheet copper installed later.
3. Wall construction: Brick bearing walls not shared as party walls with neighbors. Front (north) wall is faced on first floor with non-structural cast-iron store front frame with red painted brick above. Side walls are carried above roof in triangular parapets.

4. Framing: Brick bearing walls with wooden floor and roof framing.
5. Porches, etc.: None.
6. Chimneys: Chimneys visible in attic have been lowered below roof line.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Center front entrance is one riser above grade and deeply recessed from front plane behind ground floor cast-iron arcaded motif. Door has single large plate glass light and is ornamented by large brass protective plate of fanciful serrated outline extending from base to point well above handle.
  - b. Windows: Three thin-cast-iron arches framing center entrance and two show windows almost span first floor. Show windows have fan lights above large single plate glass lights. Single plate glass shop windows flank recessed entry way. There are three casement windows across facade on second and third floors with ten lights in each sash. Lintels and sills are stone. Second story lintels have incised Greek key design.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with ridge parallel to street; modern roll composition roofing.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Simple molded brick cornice across (north) front. Above cornice large wooden sign of irregular outline, dating at least from 1856 and typical of mid-19th century, conceals roof from street. The 1856 wood engraving indicates carved flanking scroll consoles and cresting on center portion of roof sign.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
  - a. First floor: Simple rectangular open commercial plan with storage spaces, counters and shelves.
  - b. Upper floors: Small office spaces and loft areas.

2. Stairways: Open flight of wooden stairs ascends against west wall.
3. Flooring: Wooden.
4. Walls and ceiling: Stamped metal ceiling (not original). Walls plastered above wooden display cases.
5. Doorways and doors: None.
6. Decorative features: None.
7. Notable hardware: Brass trim (c. 1890) on front door.
8. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.
9. Heating: Modern central heat. No fireplaces visible.

D. Site and surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: On inside lot on south side of Chapel Street between Orange and State Streets facing north.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: Fronts on concrete public sidewalk.
5. Landscaping: None.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
July 28, 1964

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the Summer, 1964 New Haven Project, jointly undertaken by the HABS and the New Haven Preservation Trust, and financed by "Mission 66" funds of the National Park Service with assistance from the NHPT, following a 1963 HABS inventory survey of old New Haven carried out by the NHPT under the direction of Professor Christopher Tunnard of Yale University, President.

The project was under the direction of the Eastern Office of Design

and Construction, James C. Massey, HABS Supervisory Architect, and was supervised by Architect Woodrow W. Wilkins, Professor of Architecture at the University of Kentucky, assisted by Ned Goode, Photographer, Frazier, Pennsylvania; Annette H. M. Gottschalk, William P. Hersey, and Charles R. Tichy, Student Assistant Architects and students at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Yale University, and Iowa State University, respectively; and Jonathan B. Conant, Research Assistant and student at Yale University.



Ye  
Historie  
of an Olde  
Hard-Ware  
Store.

1784

1784  
Titus Street

1792  
Street & Hughes

1821  
S. Hughes & Son

1838  
E. B. M. Hughes

1855  
John E. Bassett & Co.



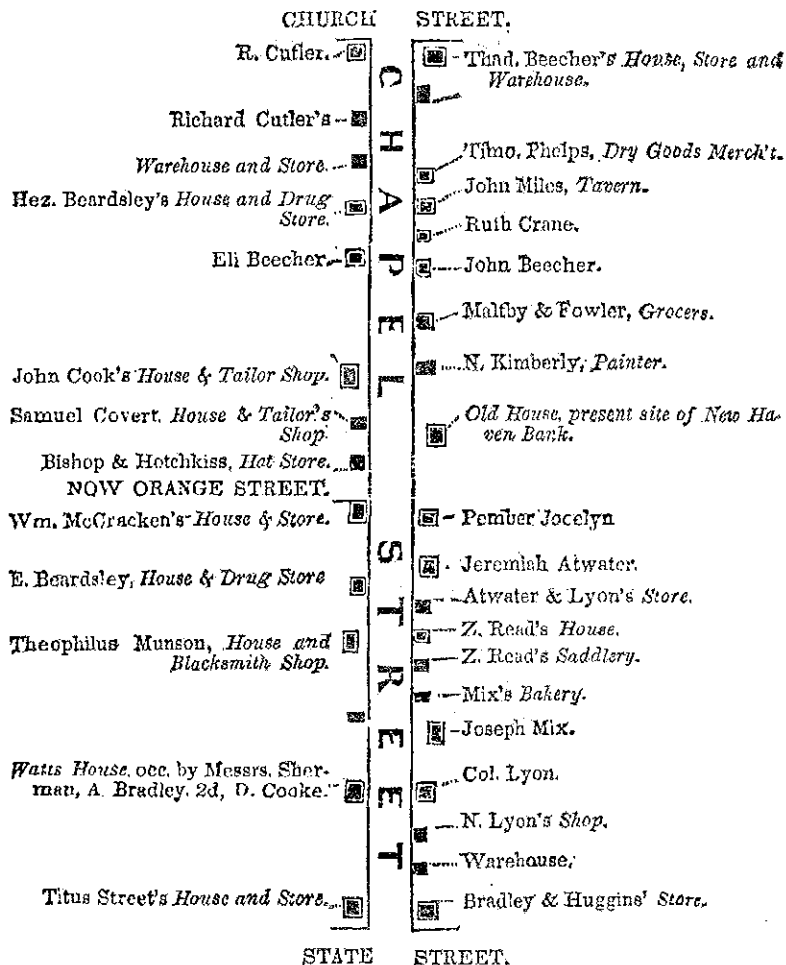
# John E. Baffett & Co.

Established

One Hundred Years.



## The Chapel Street of One Hundred Years Ago.



This plan was drawn by the late Deacon Charles Bastwick, in 1845, from memory, he being the only person living who resided or did business in that section of Chapel Street in 1786. At that time there was not a brick building in the street.



## HISTORICAL

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HERE HAS always been to the minds of those of us to whom the wonders of this nineteenth century—steam, the telegraph, and whirl of business in our crowded streets—are but commonplace events, an indefinable charm in fancying the amazement of the habitant of the last century, could he again appear upon this planet, “clothed and in his right mind.”

Perhaps it is this habit of imagination and our affection for the legend of Rip Van Winkle, that makes it the more difficult for us to conceive one of the proud beings who treads our streets to-day as being wasted back over the years, in an after-dinner nap, to find himself dropped down among the people of the New Haven of 1784.

We will imagine him as having arrived, and recovered from the shock of his sudden translation, and as starting for a stroll down the Chapel street of that day. He would be conscious of the prevailing quiet of a country village, broken now and then by the voice of a teamster encouraging his oxen, or the rumble of a farmer's wagon; and as he sauntered down the gravel path by the unpaved streets would think it strange that all

that all the houses were such humble wooden structures, when the more imposing brick and stone are only familiar to him. Perhaps he will think it well to take back with him some memento of his strange visit, and somebody kindly points out the store of young Titus Street, at the corner of Chapel and State streets, as a good place to make his purchases. Thence he enters and here we will leave him to get back as best he may, since we are more concerned about the subsequent life of that store and its keepers. It was in this year, 1784, that New Haven first attained the distinction of being called "City," and boasted a population of something over three thousand, with outlying towns looking to the metropolis for their luxuries. In the corner of the big lot, where now Street's Building stands, in the structure which was his residence as well, Mr. Street, then a young man, began business with the usual assortment of a country store, and displayed perseverance and enterprise beyond the comprehension of the conservative merchants, his competitors. Among these, upon the opposite corner, occupied now by the Yale Bank building, was a firm of long-established, slow-going tradesmen, who perhaps were somewhat affected by the success of their young competitor, for they are reported to have said, in kindly anxiety for his youthful rashness, "that young fellow across the way goes to New York so often he must spend all his profits in traveling expenses." The force of this is the more apparent when one recalls that the journey in those days was by packet or sloop, taking from two days to a week, according to wind and weather. However, in spite of melancholy prophecy, Mr. Street flourished and must have attained mercantile distinction, since he counted among his customers such distinguished names as

names as James Hillhouse, Jonathan Ingerfoll, Pierpont Edwards, Rev. Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, David Daggett and others. He continued business alone until 1792, when taking as partner, Mr. Samuel Hughes, together they conducted the business under the firm name of Street & Hughes, until 1802, from which time until 1821, a period of nineteen years, owing to the unsettled condition of mercantile affairs incidental to the war of 1812, making it exceedingly difficult to collect money, they deemed it prudent to dissolve and re-form at intervals, as a means of facilitating settlements. Under such conditions the style of the firm was successively: Street, Hughes & Co., Street, Sherman & Co., Hughes Sherman & Co., Hughes & Sherman. Mr. William Sherman representing an interest in the firm during the years in which the changes occurred. In the year 1821 Mr. Street retired from active business life and so remained until his death in 1841. He was a descendant of Rev. Samuel Street, the first settled Congregational minister in Wallingford, and his father, also named Samuel, resided there. We find in the old Ledger an account with Samuel Street (Pater), indicating the paternal habit of purchasing his luxuries and necessities at the store of his son. Titus Street is remembered as a tall old gentleman of courtly manners, fastidious in dress, and was considered at the close of his business career as one of the three wealthy men in the city; the others being Mr. Eli Whitney and Mr. William Leffingwell. He was the father of Mr. Augustus R. Street, so widely known as the generous founder of the Yale Art School.

In the last years of his life he occupied the Reynolds residence on Elm street, near Orange, having purchased it from Pierpont Edwards,  
the eminent

the eminent lawyer, which, with its superb gardens, sweeping the square from Orange street to what is now the Synagogue, was counted one of the mansions of the place. The career of Mr. Samuel Hughes, first clerk and then partner with Mr. Street, who continued after his retirement, might fitly be called "the romance of a poor young man," since beginning at the bottom in obscurity, he advanced himself to an interest in the business, and during his life created two fortunes, one of which was lost in ill-paying investments. He is described as a short, compactly built man, quick in thought and action, polite and successful as a salesman. To use the words of a gentleman who knew him, he was "a born merchant." An incident of his life will serve to show the business habits prevailing early in this century. The illusion seemed universal, that were the doors of a store closed, it would be inhospitable to customers and prevent their entrance. Acting upon this superstition, our ancestors in mid-winter kept their places of business at a temperature somewhat lower than that of a modern refrigerator, and Mr. Hughes as a victim of this theory suffered the freezing of his feet in pursuing the pleasant paths of trade. At his death in 1838 his large fortune and business were the inheritance of his son, E. B. M. Hughes, who, since the retirement of Mr. Street in 1821, had been associated with his father as partner.

He was a man quiet and unobtrusive in his habits of life, very methodical and careful for details, and possessing, as he did, abundant means for comfortable living, his ambition did not lead him to a passion for great accumulations. Yet, with property rapidly increasing in value and a successful business, he was easily ranked one of the wealthiest men of



men of his day. From the death of his father until 1855, he conducted the business alone, at which time, by the admission of Mr. JOHN E. BASSETT to the firm, its style became as at present, Mr. Hughes remaining as senior until his death in 1864. In 1865, Mr. H. N. Jarvis, became associated with Mr. Bassett as partner, remaining as such during three years, after which time he removed to Denver, Col., where he has since resided, engaged in farming operations. Mr. Bassett looks back over the shadows of nearly thirty-eight years' association with the spot known as 236 Chapel street, whence he came as a boy in 1846. The distinction is accorded him of having been longer in one place on Chapel street than any man now in business there. The times his feet have crossed the threshold in attention to his duties during all these years, we leave as a problem to those interested in abstruse mathematical calculations. It will be noted as exceptional that since the foundation of this business in 1784 it has never been sold out; a surviving partner always carrying forward the business. The little wooden building is but a memory now, but its successor a little above, by repeated additions and enlargements, now extends from 236 Chapel street to 318 and 320 State, thus appropriately encircling its birthplace. The head of this business has succeeded in making its name a synonym for one of the most thorough hardware stocks in New England.

It is this valuable inheritance of a century's honorable record, linked with a present careful and courteous business conduct, which is to commend this store to their majesties the public for the future.

JOHN E. BASSETT & CO.

Taken from the Ledger of Titus Street.

72 *Dr* James Stillhouse Esq<sup>r</sup>

May	10	f	180	1	2	3
	11	f	181	1	13	3
	12	f	182		10	7
June	14	f	186	2	10	3
	18	f	188		10	3
	26	f	191		2	4
July	20	f	195		2	5
	22	f	196		2	1
	26	f	197	3	2	6
	30	f	198		7	1
Aug	6	f	199		10	9
	16	f	201		3	6
	22	f	202		3	0
Sept	6	f	203		4	9
	11	f	206		1	10
	12	f	208		15	4
	23	f	209		4	1
Oct	24	f	210		1	7
	9	f	212		1	5
	13	f	214		2	8
	20	f	215		1	1
	25	f	216		2	3
	28	f	217		1	8
Nov	8	f	218		3	1
	12	f	220		3	6
	13	f	221		10	8
	17	f	222		6	3
	24	f	223		9	3
Dec	1	f	224		6	5
	6	f	225		3	4
	7	f	226		4	6
	21	f	227		2	3
	27	f	230		6	3
1891	5	f	231		6	9
Jan	18	f	234		3	1
Feb	3	f	235		7	9
	16	f	237		1	9
	21	f	239		1	6
April	7	f	249		1	3
May	21	f	252		1	6
	22	f	258		6	1
June	26	f	259		1	6
	30	f	260		1	3
	6	f	261		1	10
	11	f	264		1	3
Aug	15	f	280	3	1	10
				20	8	9

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		New Haven 19 <sup>th</sup> June 1783	
		Dea. De Witt. D <sup>r</sup>	
	A 19 <sup>th</sup> June	2/6	0 4 3
	A 21 <sup>st</sup> June	2/6	0 0 42
	A 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	1/4	0 0 2
		Dea. Gilbert. D <sup>r</sup>	
12	To his in Sharrow		0 1 0
		Dea. Clark. D <sup>r</sup>	
12	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 3 9
	that was weighed		0 6
	To 2 bags of the Navel		0 12 10
	To 1 bag of the Navel		1 2 7
		Dea. Lewis with. D <sup>r</sup>	
12	To 5 bags of the Navel		0 5 9
	To 3 bags of the Navel		0 10 5
19	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 10 5
		Dea. Thornbury. D <sup>r</sup>	
12	To 5 bags of the Navel		1 5 2
	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 18
	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 7 2
		Dea. Morrison. D <sup>r</sup>	
15	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 3 3
	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 5 9
	To 1 bag of the Navel		0 10 2

AT THE STORE OF  
**JOHN E. BASSETT & CO.**

### Farmers

Will find Nails, Screws, Axes, Saws, Poultry Netting, Fence Wire (barbed and plain), Steelyards, Butter Scales, and all they need in building or repairs. Our store has kept the Farmers' trade for a century.

### Manufacturers

Can rely upon having their orders filled promptly for their requirements. Agencies: "Jewell's" Belting; New American File Co's Files. Glue, Emery, Cotton Waste, Drills and Drill Rods, Stubs' Files and Tools, Babbitt Metal, etc. Our stock in this department is especially well cared for.

### Builders

Will have no difficulty in providing the Hardware for a cottage or palace. Our long experience with all classes of buildings enables us to carry a well assorted stock. The richest as well as the cheapest goods, at close prices.

### Wood Workmen

Are sure to be pleased with the show of Tools adapted to their use: Duffon's Saws, Bailey Planes (iron and wood), "Chapin's" Planes, Bradley's Edge Tools, Buck's Chisels, Albertson's Drawing Knives, Malleable Clamps, Hand Screws, etc. The Barber and Spofford Brace, Auger Bits (Jennings' and others), and in fact the great miscellany, which the mechanic calls his "kit." The prices are right.

### Machinists

Will not look in vain for a good assortment of Darling, Brown & Sharpe's Celebrated Tools, the "Victor" Micrometer, the "Stevens" Calipers and Dividers, Stubs' Tools and Files, Speed Indicators, Drills, Drill Rods, etc. We cordially invite an inspection of our stock.

## A Word about Hardware for a House.

**Last Spring,** in one of our store windows, we displayed a few Door Hinges, Knobs and Locks. They represented the best results of modern taste and skill in manufacture, and were exceptional as examples of richness in design and metal, of harmony in form and color—they excited much notice—and we answered a good many questions about them. We simply mention this as a sort of preface to what we have to say about Hardware as an important factor in house decoration. Where, years ago, there existed only the plain square cast iron hinge, there are now a hundred varieties in design and shape, and the rude fastenings of that day have been supplanted by locks and latches perfect in action and convenience.

**While It** is possible to obtain Hardware adapted to the most expensive interiors, it is equally pleasurable to know that an outfitting can be had at once tasteful and cheap, and we do not think most people appreciate how much a right selection in interior Hardware adds to the comfort and good looks of the place they call home. Long experience, direct dealings with the best makers and conscientious study in behalf of discrimination and good taste, and not least, “close prices,” are advantages we bring to our help in this department of our business. To Builders to whom we look for most of our trade in these goods, we would say that we have observed that they require, along with low prices, an intelligent comprehension of their needs as well. We think we can give them both.

Everybody Interested in Skates or Skaters is invited to look over our many sorts, without feeling obligated to purchase. Our Stock is ample and embraces

PECK AND SNYDER'S AMERICAN CLUB.

THE ACME, THE LEADING ENGLISH SKATE.

THE AUSTRIA, VERY POPULAR ON THE CONTINENT.

THE PARAGON. THE ICE MONARCH. THE EUREKA.

*Science, Art and skill* have united to make the modern *Skate* an ideal of grace and fleetness, a veritable ice bird. Compared with that of thirty years since, it is as steam against the stage coach.

THE UNION HARDWARE CO'S

HEEL PLATE CLUB, ALL CLAMP CLUB, LADIES' SKATES.

IN VARIETY OF STYLE AND FINISH.

*ALL THE CHEAPER GRADES OF CLUB SKATES FOR BOYS.*

Skates at prices adapted to all sorts of purses.

**Men who have** spent a lifetime in travel in the interest of Cutlery, frequently express surprise at our fine display, which they say is not to be excelled outside of New York. This is good, so far as it goes, but we aim, beside having our stock large, that it shall be well selected; how far we have succeeded we leave to the public who buy to judge.

**Our Stock** comprehends Carvers and Forks with Steels, in Ivory, Celluloid, Walrus, Stag and Wood. Some of the more elegant of these are displayed in Satin Lined Cases of Morocco or Plush. These sets generally include a pair of Beef Carvers, a pair of Game Carvers, with Steel, and are highly appropriate as Wedding Gifts.

*DINING AND DESSERT KNIVES* in handles of Pearl, Ivory, Celluloid, Rubber, Ebony and Cocoa. The finer grades of these are sometimes in Cases. Silver (triple) Plated Knives, Forks and Spoons. We invite comparison in quality and prices.

**Many Ladies** ask us, "is it possible to obtain a really good pair of *Scissors?*" We think it is, most decidedly, and where they are bought from us and don't suit, we want them brought back. The Scissor of to-day excels that of former years in point of quality, finish and endurance; the price is pretty nearly one-half. We have a big stock of two makes, one domestic, the other from abroad, equal in quality, diverse in style. All kinds of Shears, the best and cheapest, Banker's, Paper, Pruning. Please inspect them.

**We would say** to supplement our paragraph about Scissors, that we have an attractive variety of Scissors in Plush and Morocco Cases. These each contain from three to five pair, the quality of the Scissors not having been sacrificed to the richness of the Case, as too frequently happens. Of course we sell more of these during the Holidays, but we keep them the year round.

**Outside our Store** for a good many years there has stood a big Pocket Knife, with a wonderful number of blades, which has been the admiration of generations of boys and their parents. We don't know how many knives it may have sold for us, a great many doubtless, but we believe we sell more because people know that we can suit them in style, quality and price.

**The boy** of fifty years ago, the old boy of to-day, bought his first pocket knife at this store, a Rodgers or an I X L perhaps, and counted it the most valuable of his then earthly possessions, and it is a curious fact, that, though in successive years many new styles and shapes have come in, both domestic and foreign, the good old patterns seem to keep their hold in the affections of the knife buyer. We have so many sorts and makes we can't begin to describe them. Suffice it to say, our stock includes always the best English and domestic productions, and a good many of them. We would ask attention, however, to our west window, where you will find some fine knives, which will bear close examination. They contain in addition to blades; scissors, toilet necessaries and the like, and are reasonable in price.



# Some Ancient Thynges

IN

## Our Possession.

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### AN OLD SAFE.

Perched on top of the bigger and more pretentious safe which contributes to the security of our store to-day, stands a modest looking "strong box," suggestive of remote antiquity.

The "jiminy" of the last century must have been a sadly unimproved tool, or it may be that the simple folk of that time had too little leisure to cultivate its use as a science, since the construction of this safe indicates the most perfect faith in the honesty of society generally.

It has a history too, not uninteresting; we suspect its maker lived in England, though we can trace it no farther back than as being the property of Messrs. Broome & Platt, who one hundred years ago manufactured in this city under government contract what were known as "Ring Coppers." These were the size of the copper cent, now a rarity in circulation, and bore upon the reverse, an hour glass, the date, and the sententious advice "Mind your business;" upon the obverse, thirteen rings around the margin, and in the centre, the legend "We are one." When, at the conclusion of this firm's business, there followed a sale of their effects, it was bought by the founder of our store, Mr. Titus Street, and has up to the present escaped the unsentimental atmosphere of the junk shop.

A big wrought-iron handle serves to pull its door, and on looking further one finds an oval escutcheon which yields to the touch of a spring and being pushed back discloses a keyhole which as compared with the modern "is not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door." A

key ponderous in proportion, throws back four creaking bolts and we look in upon an interior which contains no treasure now, except the faint odor of ancient books and papers, and the memory of the generations of men, who came on earth and spent a little while in its quiet companionship then crumbled into dust.

This safe was the only one in the service of the store until the death of Mr. E. B. M. Hughes in 1864.

It will give us pleasure to show this relic of the past.

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### *The Ledger of Titus Street.*

A. D. 1784.

A book not so big as the Ledgers nowadays, in stiff leather binding, worn soft and dark in color by age and much handling.

You open it and note the index in illuminated letters, and turn page after page, with its headings written in a bold round hand, upon a paper which resembles much the fashionable "Irish Linen" of to-day.

All its transactions appear in pounds, shillings and pence, and the ink which shows them (as the modern manufacturer would say), "has lost none of its original excellence with age." One feels a reverence for the old book, as within its covers, names appear, which in their day were distinguished in Church and State or shone in society and business. These and generations since have passed away; "borne down the never-ending flood of years."

And one closes and lays down the book a little saddened by the thought that there may be a year nineteen-eighty-four with its old Ledgers too, and its forgotten names. This book, as well as its venerable contemporary, an ancient Blotter, can be seen at our store.

1784-1884

*Printed at ye Ancient Office of Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor.*

*John E. Bassett & Co.*

*The Oldest*

*Hardware Store*

*In the State*

JOHN E. BASSETT,  
President.

GEORGE J. BASSETT,  
Secy. and Treas.

Established 1784.

# Ye Olde Harde-Ware Store

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1784

Titus Street

1792

Street and Hughes

1821

S. Hughes & Son

1838

E. B. M. Hughes

1855

John E. Bassett & Co.

1889

The John E. Bassett & Co.

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## The John E. Bassett & Co.

754 CHAPEL ST.

318-320 STATE ST.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

## Introductory



IT is Ancient History, perhaps, to many of the New Haven public that the "Olde Harde-Ware Store" on Chapel Street was established one hundred and eleven years ago, in 1784, the year in which New Haven, with some three thousand inhabitants, became a "City." A business centenarian for several years, it is probably the oldest house of its kind in New England. During all that period of commercial longevity but four men have had the management of this business, which, handed down from senior to junior partner and from father to son, has never really changed hands. And for nearly half that time the present head of the concern, Mr. John E. Bassett, has been connected with it; for with the beginning of the coming year he will have completed his fiftieth year of service in the same store where, as a boy, half a century ago, he began his business career. Mr.

Bassett has for several years been accorded the distinction of having been longer on the street than anyone now in business there, and the changes he has witnessed in that time have been fully commensurate with the remarkable growth of our country. From the small "shop" of fifty years ago, where everything comprised in the hardware of that day was to be found, the business has grown; so that now the old three-story building on Chapel Street, with its connecting store on State Street, can contain but a small part of the many and diverse articles known as hardware. As in the case of the professions, business has developed into specialties; and though our store has never lost its general character, yet we have turned our attention more and more to the extending of several special lines—chief among them being Cutlery—of which we will speak farther on. Though established over a century ago our store has always been abreast of the times; and yet in the

selection of our stock, though it is thoroughly up-to-date in style and usefulness, old-time quality has never been sacrificed for sham; while in the serving of our patrons, the courtesy of yesterday is never lost in the hustle of today.

With our years of experience in catering to a public's needs, with a hard and well-earned reputation to sustain, and with a thankful appreciation of its cordial patronage in the past, we commend ourselves and our many lines of goods herein described, to the New Haven public.

The John E. Bassett & Co.



## Pocket Knives



WHAT one first notices on entering our Chapel Street Store are two large show cases filled with all kinds and styles of Pocket Knives. This year, as never before, the Cutlers of this country, with those of England and Germany, are competing for the American trade. As a result we have been able to fill up our cases with better goods at less money than we did last year. The public will get the benefit therefrom in lower prices. We are somewhat modest, but we do claim not only to have the best assortment in New Haven, but the largest retail assortment in New England. And we do like to brag about the quality of our Knives, and to tell people to bring them back when they're not good (if that ever happens) and then to surprise them with the extremely low prices

## More Pocket Knives

at which they're marked. Just come in sometime and hear us brag, and if you shouldn't want a knife yourself, remember that the holidays are coming and that you can make someone happy who does. This year we have them in Sterling Silver and Aluminum, as well as Pearl and Shell and Stag, and as for blades, one can hardly conceive of the number of things that can be had in a knife, from the plain, business-like "Barlow" to the miniature tool chest. Our nicest knives come in kid or chamois cases, while all are put in neat cardboard boxes, adding much to their attractiveness as gifts.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Scissors and Shears

**R**IGHT opposite our Knife Case is our case of Scissors and Shears. What we say of Pocket Cutlery applies equally to these goods, but that isn't all. Here it has been our chief aim to have just what the ladies want, and they know that "Bassett's" is the place to find really good scissors. We have many new styles this year, especially in Nail and Manicure Scissors, and we have a few patterns with Silver Handles that also have good blades. Also the light scissors with shear bows that are so popular.

As usual we have neat leather sheaths in which we put all our best goods; and we also have sets of our best scissors in flat morocco cases, hardly larger than a pocket book, that would make gifts as handsome as they are useful.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Razors and Strops

**C**HIEF among the many small things to which a man by daily association becomes attached is his razor. The luxury of shaving is only possible when that razor is good. When its poor it causes profanity and drives one to the barber. We do not mean to have any of the profanity-breeding kind, for we buy the most reliable brands of Sheffield and German razors and sell them *on trial*. That is, we agree to exchange any razor that doesn't suit. And they don't cost so very much, \$1.50 and upwards. Then we're selling quantities of those little shaving machines—the Star Safety Razors. Anybody can use one and it is a delight to shave with it.

Many a good razor is spoiled by using it on a poor strop, but the strop you buy of us will improve yours.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Carving Knives



**A** GENTLEMAN said not long ago: "When I wish to send a man a token of my esteem I come here and select a set of Carvers," and certainly a good carving knife is always a highly appreciated gift. We take a just pride in our Carvers this year, for they have been selected with great care, both as to style and quality. As usual our best are mostly of our own importation of Sheffield goods—a make which we have carried for over twenty years. They are sold either in pairs or in sets with steels to match, and are also put up in cases at prices ranging from four dollars upwards. Stag, as usual, is the popular handle, and we have them this year with Sterling Silver mountings, but we also have many with Ivory, Tusk, Pearl, Silver and Celluloid handles, which for style as well as quality cannot be surpassed.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Table Knives

**W**E have our own brand of Table Knives also, together with the best of home manufacture. In these the Celluloid Ivory Handle is by far the most popular, for it does not crack, loosen or discolor, even though *boiled* in hot water. We have them not only with plain blades, but also with plated blades, very thin, which will cut meat. And then for nicer goods we have them with real Ivory and Pearl Handles, some being mounted with Sterling Silver. Of course we have Table, Dessert and Fruit sizes and can furnish them in cases when desired.

For more ordinary use we have the Rogers Plated Knives, and steel Knives with Forks in Rubber, Wood and Bone Handles; and the quality, kind considered, is very high, and the price, quality considered, very low.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Table Cutlery



**T**O supplement our stock of Carvers and Table Knives we have a large variety of Rogers' Plated Forks and Spoons of the highest quality, both in the plain and Sterling patterns and in all sizes, from the diminutive Coffee Spoon to the large Soup Ladle. And we can also show you the Gold Aluminum Ware which was so popular last season and which, being of solid metal, wears like solid silver. And should you need a set of Nut Picks and Cracks, Fruit or Orange Knives, Fish Servers, Bread Knives, Grape Scissors, or, in short, anything in Cutlery to complete your table appointments, we should be pleased to fill your requirements.

We have in stock the genuine Christy Bread and Cake Knives and a large line of Cooks' Knives and Forks and Kitchen and Vegetable Knives.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Thermometers and Corkscrews

**T**HE only reason why we speak of Thermometers and Corkscrews together is that they happen to be that way in our store.

Regarding Thermometers we would say that this is the best and of course the cheapest place to buy an accurate one. We have a large assortment, including the glass window thermometers.

As to Corkscrews, we have but to show you the goods to convince you that we have the best. We have power corkscrews that will fetch the cork every time, without one's straining oneself, and we have little ones to fold up that are good and strong.

Champagne Taps and Cutters, and wooden and brass Faucets are goods right in this line; and of course we have them also and at right prices.

The John E. Bassett & Co.



# Skates



**N**OW that the trolley has brought Lakes Saltonstall and Whitney within such easy reach, skating and skating parties bid fair to become the craze this winter. With the wants of the public always in mind, we have doubled our usual stock of skates, and in addition to a complete line of Peck & Snyder's American Club Skates—improved this year, and for which we are New Haven agents—we also have a full line of the U. S. Club, Union Hardware, and Winslow Skates. This makes a quadruple stock that for variety cannot be equalled in the State. And we have the odd styles too, racers and broad runner skates. And the prices have to be low—we bought these skates to sell.

Of course the athletic "New Woman" will be *en evidence* this winter wherever there is skating, and we have taken especial pains to have just what she wants in Skates.

**The John E. Bassett & Co.**

## Sleds



**W**HEN the weather isn't cold enough to "cut any ice" we're very apt to have snow. It would not be strange if, with so many country hills within a few minutes' ride of our homes, coasting should regain its place among the winter sports. A good sled doesn't cost much, and you can easily find some one to give it to when you're through with it. Then we have any quantity of Children's Sleds—Clippers and High Sleds—ranging in price from fifty cents to five dollars. And also some very pretty Children's Sleighs—inexpensive, too.

Speaking of Sleighs reminds us; don't you need a new set of Sleigh Bells? We've got some nice ones, both in shaft Bells and Body Straps, and a good set costs but little money.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Andirons and Fire Sets

**W**AY back in Colonial days, in the big fireplaces so common then, the back logs rested on "Fire Dogs" of wrought iron. Unsightly affairs they often were, hammered out by the local blacksmith, yet they served their purpose well. And now that things Colonial are again in vogue, wrought iron Andirons have come back with the rest. Nor are they crude either in form or finish. Strength, simplicity and style are wrought together by the hammer of the skilled iron-worker with such pleasing effect that iron is fast replacing brass. Of course brass Andirons are very pretty but, "Aye, there's the rub;" and the modern housekeeper is not slow to appreciate the advantage of having some that do not tarnish. And then again one can get such better effects in iron for the same money, than in brass.

We probably have the largest line of these goods in town, including Fire Sets, Screens and Fenders, and also 3 o'clock Tea Sets and Chafing Dishes.

**The John E. Bassett & Co.**

## Door Trimmings

ONE of the most important things to be observed in house building is the selection of good and tasteful hardware. We often hear it said that "hardware doesn't matter for no one notices it;" but does one notice the detail of the wall hangings or the frieze if the effect is harmonious? More noticeable by far is the inartistic effect caused by door trimmings that are inappropriate or obtrusive. And yet at no previous time in the history of metal work has it been possible to obtain such mechanical excellence combined with such artistic taste, at so small a cost, as now.

We call ourselves specialists in this line, for we have devoted many years to the study of harmony and taste in decorative hardware, and have acquired a thorough comprehension of the many details involved, together with a wide acquaintance with the goods of the best makers. We shall be glad to be of service to you in the selection of Door and Window Hardware.

The John E. Bassett & Co.

## Mechanics' Tools

**F**OR years the "Old<sup>e</sup> Hard<sup>e</sup> Ware Store" has been known as the place where the best Tools were sold at prices that were low. We are trying not only to retain our reputation of selling the most reliable makes, but to also place before our customers the many new and ingenious labor-saving devices that appear from time to time. We are always in the front with new goods, and our wide experience enables us to pick out the most desirable. For instance, we have just received some new Levels, each one of which is tested at the factory and guaranteed accurate. Another point on which we lay particular emphasis is that when we warrant a tool, and all our best tools are warranted, we mean that we have another tool ready to give you if the first is imperfect. That's what we call "square dealing."

The John E. Bassett & Co.

Ancient

History



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*I* seems it is as proper to our age  
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions,  
As it is common for the younger sort  
To lack discretion.

SHAKESPEARE.

*T*o live uprightly then is sure the best,  
To save ourselves and not to damn the rest.

DRYDEN.



New Haven,  
November, 1895.