



Lesson Two: Reading a Ledger

A ledger is an account book that the shopkeeper uses to keep track of credits and debits from a customer or family. Credit are goods or services, like labor, brought into the account. Those are shown on the right. Debits are charges or purchases to the accounts, shown on the left. Below you will find a sample ledger from one family in 1844-45. Use the ledger to answer the questions below.

James W. Carr 132					
1844	Carried Over	30	1844		
Dec			Dec		
30	To Coffee	20	30		
	To Cloth	15		By Labor	65
		<u>65</u>			<u>65</u>
1845	To Sugar 3	30	1845	By Potatoes	1 50
Mar	To Coffee 4	40	Mar	By Turnips	1 35
15	To Rice 5	25	15		<u>2.85</u>
	To Raisins 3	36			
	To Cloth 8	40			
	To Cloth 8	1 60			
	To Door Bolt	25			
		<u>3.56</u>			

1. In the entry for Dec. 30, 1844, 30 cents is carried over, which means this is the amount that James Carr owed already. He then buys coffee and cloth. How does James pay off his debt?

James pays off his debt through labor. The charges and credits are the same, so he has 0 balance after doing work for the shopkeeper.

2. Look at the entry for March 15, 1845. What is the most expensive thing James buys?

The most expensive thing he buys is cloth for 1.60

3. How much does James spend on foodstuff in March?

1.31 (raisins, coffee, sugar, and rice)

4. What items that James buys were most likely bought wholesale? Is there anything in his list that could have been made locally?

Wholesale: raisins, coffee, sugar, rice, cloth Local: door bolt (could have been made in blacksmith shop)

5. At the end of the day on March 15, does James owe more or have more credit? What is the balance?

He owes more. 71 cents

6. Think about how your family shops at the store. How does your family pay for groceries? How is it different than how James pays

Various answers: credit card, cash, check, etc. James trades or barter and also does work.

7. Is there anything James buys that your family also buys?

Various answers

8. Do you think James has good credit with the shopkeeper? Why or why not?

Yes because James paid off his original debt through labor, so he is willing to work and barter to pay his debt