

A History of 19th Century Shoemaking in Swansea

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Cost of shoes in the mid-1800s

A standard pair of leather shoes typically cost between \$1.25 to \$1.75, while sturdier leather boots generally cost around \$2.50 per pair.



Making Shoes 1800s

- The Shoemaker would measure the length and width of the customer's foot with a paper strip or tape



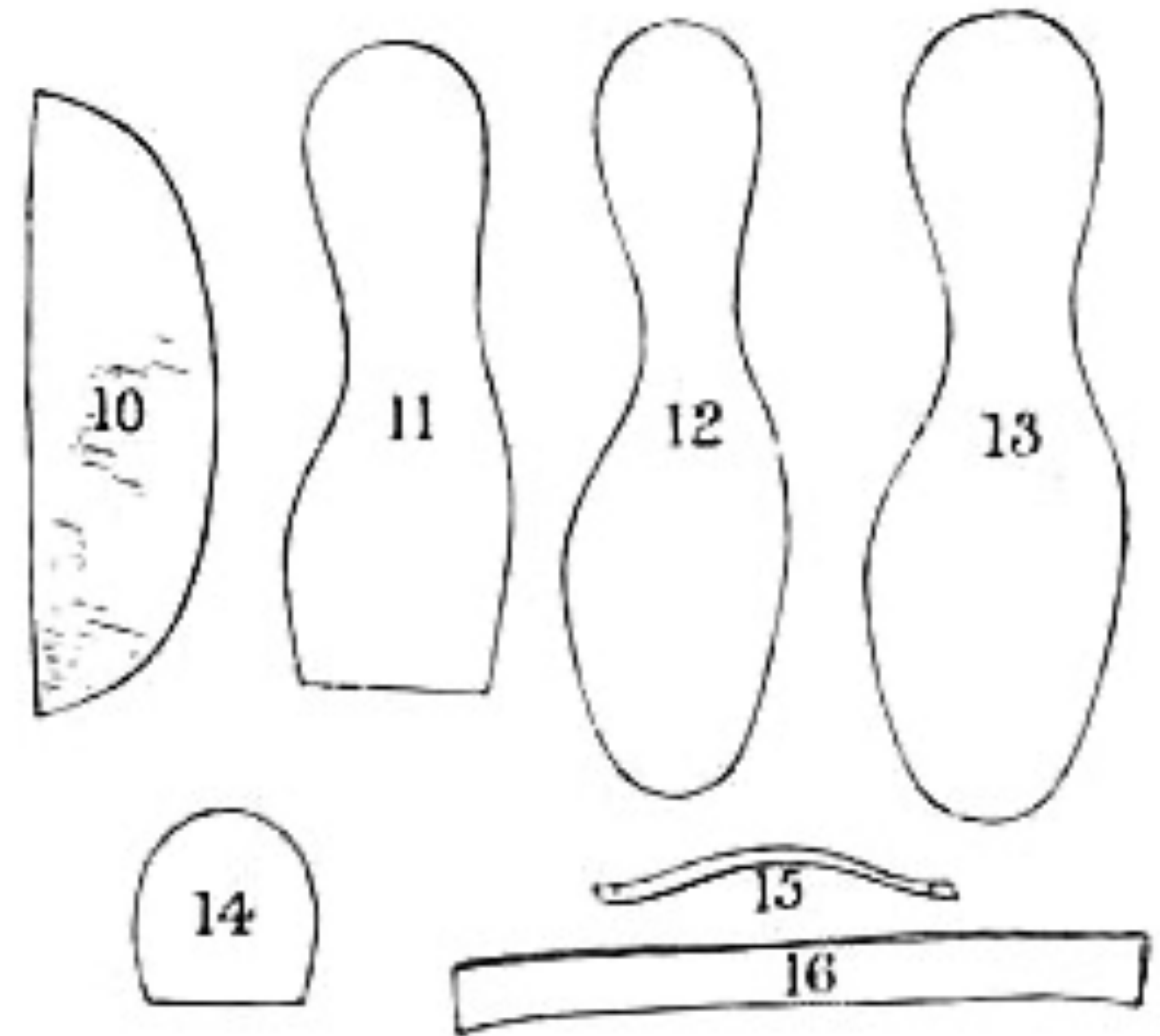
Making Shoes 1800s

The wood molds were made of mahogany or cast iron. Some clients paid to have the wood mold/last custom made. We have a few in Henry Luther's collection that has clients names on them.



Making Shoes 1800s

- A paper or thin wood pattern would be made to create the various components of the shoe.
- The shoemaker placed patterns on tanned leather hides and carefully cut out the pieces for the upper, linings and counters using a sharp knife.

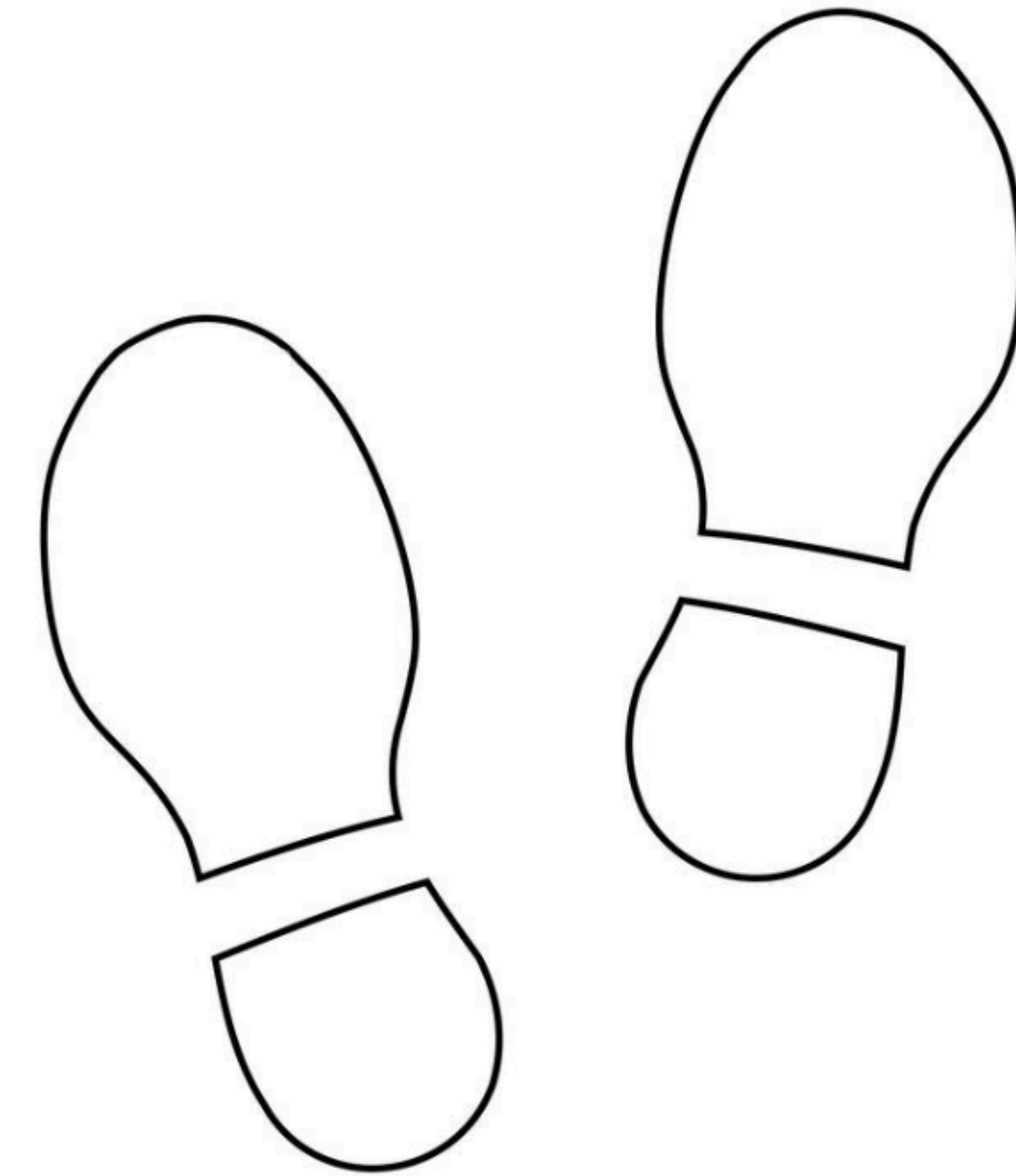


PIECES OF A SHOE.

10, Heel stiffener. 11, Sole lining. 12, Inner sole.
13, Outer sole. 14, Heel lifts (6). 15, Steel shank.
16, Rand.

Making Shoes 1800s

- The left and right foot patterns arrived with the Industrial Revolution. Prior to that there was no distinction between a left foot and a right foot. The straight cut ended with the Industrial Revolution.



Making Shoes 1800s

- The individual pieces of the upper portion of the shoe were sewn together by hand with waxed thread and a bristle needle.



Making Shoes 1800s

- The stitched leather upper would be dampened and pulled tightly over the wooden shoe mold using lasting pliers. Next, the leather would be temporarily pinned or tacked in place.



Making Shoes 1800s

- Next, an insole and a heavy outer sole would be attached to the bottom of the shoe. In standard construction a narrow strip of leather (the welt) was then stitched to the upper and insole and the outer sole would be stitched to the welt.



Making Shoes 1800s

- Next, the heel would be built. Layers of thick leather lifts would be stacked, nailed to the rear base of the shoe and trimmed to form the heel.



Making Shoes 1800s

- Next, trimming and sanding would be done. The edges of the soles and heels were pared down with a knife and smoothed with a rasp file.



Making Shoes 1800s

- Lastly, the leather would be cleaned, buffed and finished with wax, ink or polish to give the shoe a clean look.



Making Shoes 1800s

- Most shoemakers had a crew, so it wasn't just one man. Family members often helped out..



Making Shoes 1800s

Shoemaker's tools of the trade.



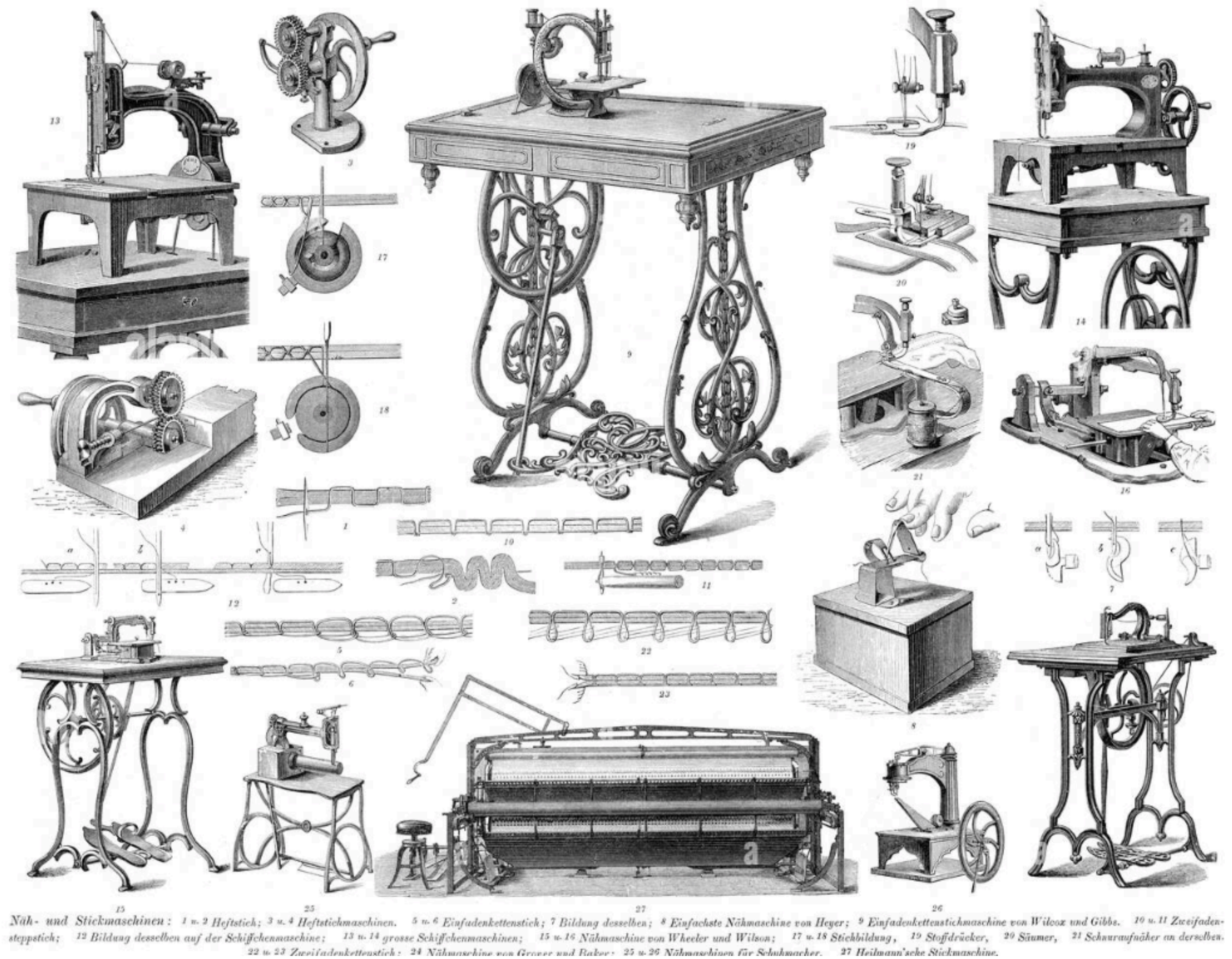
Making Shoes 1800s

Daniel Hale (1758–1830) was an early resident, shoemaker, and carpenter in Swansea, belonging to a prominent local family tied to the historic Hortonville district and the local Swansea Historical Society. Members of the Hale family, including Revolutionary War participants, are interred at the historic Hale Cemetery on Locust Street in Swansea.

Industrial Revolution

Mechanization:

Starting in the 1850's new tools arrived for sewing and fastening parts together faster than the pure hand-stitching.



Industrial Revolution

Matzeliger's Machine:

In 1883 Jan Ernst Mateliger patented an automatic lasting machine that boosted production from 150 to 700 pairs of shoes a day, depending on the factory and the number of workers.

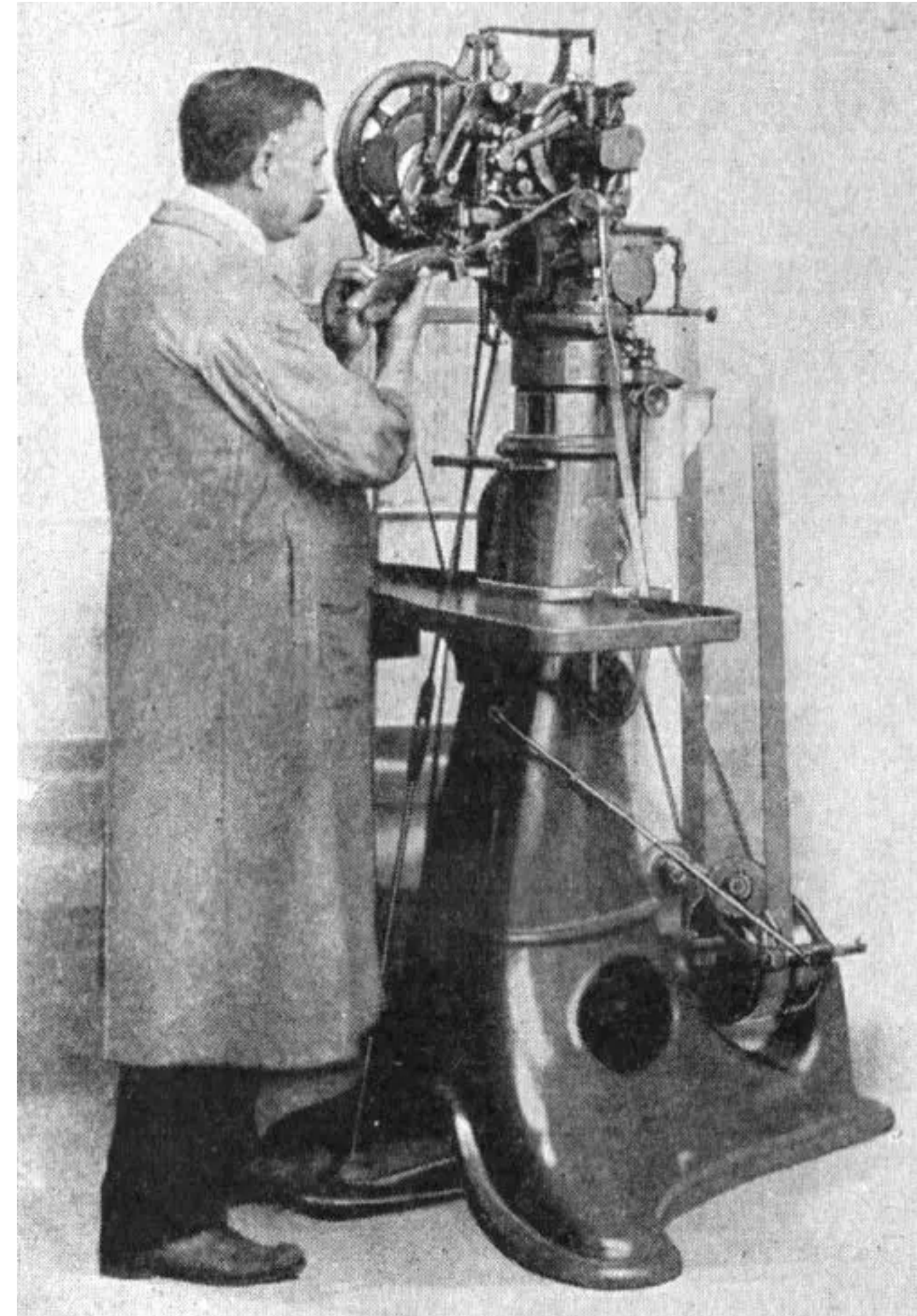


Industrial Revolution

Matzeliger's Machine:

A machine that had a huge impact during the industrialization of the shoe production was the lasting machine, which made it possible to pull the upper leather over the last with a machine.

A part of the shoe production which many thought would never be able to do with a machine.



Industrial Revolution

Cheaper Prices:

Factory production cut the price of shoes in half, turning rare footwear into an everyday item.

Shoes
With a Top Price Look

Fahey Shoes are not the most expensive in town,—far from it. Yet none excel them in fashionable appearance or in neatness of material details.

You may not see how we sell these shoes; values at

\$4.85, \$5.50, \$6.00
\$7.00 A PAIR

But one purchase will convince you.

TEST ON YOUR FALL SHOES.

WILLIAM FAHEY
204 WEST SIDE SQUARE.



Industrial Revolution

Shoemakers originally were called cordwainers. A cordwainer made shoes entirely from leather. The name cordwainer was seldom used after the 1700s. Shoemaking in the 1800s was referred to as the gentle craft because it did not require physical exertion.



Industrial Revolution

Shoemakers were trained from a young age. They would start as apprentices, often with their fathers, and work their way to the title of shoemaker. There was no education for a cobbler. In the 1800s it would be an insult if you called a shoemaker a cobbler.



Industrial Revolution

A **Cobbler** is a person who repairs shoes. The basic equipment a shoemaker needed was a shoemaker's bench and tools. They kept their equipment in a tool box that could be moved from his shop to customer's homes.



Henry Luther
1793-1872
Swansea Shoemaker &
Cobbler

Henry Luther

Henry Luther was a Shoemaker and Cobbler. The tools used for each profession were similar. There were fewer tools needed to repair shoes than to make them.



Henry Luther

Shoemakers would work out of their home, small shacks (as Henry Luther did). He had his wife help him and his children were in the workshop while he and his wife worked on making the shoes.



Henry Luther

It is believed that Henry Luther moved into the 2nd floor of the Luther Store in the 1840s. His business was growing and the shack at 174 Old Warren Road was getting to be too small.



Henry Luther

Henry Luther did not stay for long on the 2nd floor of his cousin's store.

In the late 1840s, Henry packed up his wife and two sons. He left his shoemaking and shoe repair business behind to move on to better business ventures in Rhode Island.



Henry Luther

The 1850 Federal census has Henry Luther, his wife Abigail Gifford Hicks and their two children, Thomas H. Luther and Benjamin Taylor Luther listed as living in Providence R.I. There is no documentation on Henry Luther after he left Swansea other than the Federal census.

SCHEDULE 1.—FREE INHABITANTS in _____, in the County of _____, State of _____, enumerated by me, on the _____ day of _____, 1850.

Dwelling-houses numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	Name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, occupation, or trade of each male person over 15 years of age.	Value of real estate owned.	Place of birth, naming the State, Territory, or country.	Married within the year.	Attended school within the year.	Persons over 20 years of age who cannot read and write.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.
			Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1												1
2												2

Local Shoe Displays

These are wood molds made of mahogany. Some clients had their own molds and wooden sole pattern. Most clients could not afford to pay for the mold, so the shoemaker Henry Luther did the best he could with what he had.



Local Shoe Displays

This is from a pair of boots that belonged to Daniel Hale. With these boots we can see how the heels were made. They were stacked leather with nails.



Local Shoe Displays

We don't know who owned this pair of boots. But this is a different style or they didn't have full pieces of leather.



Local Shoe Displays

These are the wooden molds that were used to form the tops of the leather shoes and boots for children



Local Shoe Displays

These are the cast iron molds that were used for the leather soles to be adhered to the tops of the leather shoes. These were for children's shoes and boots.



Local Shoe Displays

This child's boot gives us an idea of how the boots were made.



Local Shoe Displays

These are static leather heels that were not used but give an idea of the work that went into making heels for boots and shoes in the 1800s.



Local Shoe Displays

These are two of several wood patterns that were used to cut out the soles of the leather shoes.



Local Shoe Displays

Tools used by a
shoemaker in
the 1800s.



Local Shoe Displays

This tool was to stitch the leather pieces together. Unfortunately, it is broken.



Local Shoe Displays

Precut pieces of leather. Henry used a leather stitching pony to stitch the leather pieces together.



Local Shoe Displays

Here are some more tools: a leather roller, hammer and different sized leather chisels (labeled with different sizes).



Local Shoe Displays

Hand-carved
wooden clogs
with leather
accents.



Local Shoe Displays

Cast iron mold
for nailing shoe
soles to the top
leather.



Local Shoe Displays

Shoemaker's
bench owned by
Henry Luther.



Local Shoe Displays

Lasts was another name for the mold used to stretch the leather into its shape. This is an example of one shape and style.



Local Shoe Displays

This pair of shoe molds were for Samuel Luther. It is unclear what the design under his name means



Local Shoe Displays

These two pairs of boots were probably not made by Henry Luther, but more likely made after the Industrial Revolution based on markings and quality. The woman's boots were owned by Elizabeth Stevens and the brown boots were owned by JB Luther Jr.



Local Shoe Displays

A pair of a wooden molds that have JG Luther's name on them.



Local Shoe Displays

This is a picture of a shoemaker working on the leather soles.



Local Shoe Displays

The last item, creation of wood molds, was done by a specialty shoemaker. There were shoemakers who did the molds and made the shoes, but it is unclear if Henry Luther was one of them. The shoemaker would take the measurements then carve a mold from those measurements.



The End