

opting for this choice are legion (see Gillis, 1985).
Perhaps they wished to avoid the fuss and expense
of a Church wedding. This pragmatism would fit
with the ethos of the shrewd entrepreneurs ^{of the Age} who
might ~~see anything~~ ^{would} ~~not~~ ^{would} ~~have~~ ^{would} ~~viewed~~ ^{would} ~~church~~
large weddings as unjustifiably frivolous.

→ working with her husband in ~~the~~ his trade.

The 1861 census records her ~~occupation~~ as
"shoemaker help." (PRO, Census of England, 1861, Lakenham).

Perhaps the ~~print~~ 1866 print entitled "The Northampton
Shoemaker" accurately depicts (Swain, 1986 (2))

accurately depicts the integrated efforts of the
Sexton husband and wife team. The print shows
the shoemaker, ^{seated upon an apron} attaching the sole on to a shoe; while
his wife sews the upper, together the "upper" of a shoe.

in ~~the~~ another
part of the shop

Mark, PR). It is possible that through inheritance Henry obtained the capital to embark on an ambitious business venture. In the 1881 census of Lakenham James Sexton was residing in "Sexton's Buildings" in Dutchman Yard on Trafalgar Street. Therefore James may have had real estate investments and other holdings - perhaps, considering his station in life (weaver / drover), the ^{original} source was the estate of his uncle Benjamin Sexton (a landed proprietor and shopkeeper) who died in 1852 (NRD, Lakenham St. Mark, PR).

The Shoe Industry in Norwich 1880 - 1900

In the latter part of the nineteenth century there were 7,000 - 8,000 people who were employed in the footwear industry in Norwich, among whom 4,000 were employed in factories. In Norwich the focus of the industry was on quality goods, with 75,000 pairs of shoes being manufactured each week. "The bulk of this production was effected by a few very large firms and some of these were famous for generations into the Twentieth Century" (Edwards, 1984, p. 153). One example was "Sexton & Sons in Fishergate which shipped its goods throughout the entire world" (Edwards, 1984, p. 154).

Description of the Sexton & Sons Factory Complex

The location of the original Sexton factory was "in St. Edmund's, by the side of the river at Whitefriar's Bridge" (EDP, ~~16 January 1913~~) wedged between Fishergate and the River Wensum, with St. Edmund's churchyard adjoining the western limits of the Sexton property. The main gateway entrance to ^{which included a bridge and fence} the factory was off Fishergate, ~~where a brick and stone clocktower was positioned.~~ ^{clocktower} The factory complex "comprised one of the finest and most solidly built factories in the city, the whole covering over an acre of ground" (EDP, 16 January 1913). The main block was five stories high, with the long axis extending along the north bank of the Wensum River. At the west end of the building were steam, electric, and gas engines; and the factory was "equipped with the most up - to - date and valuable machinery". In addition to the main building, the factory complex included "a long range of two - storied buildings extending from the corner of Cowgate Street as far as opposite St. George's Catholic Church; while, separated from this by the yard entrance to the factory, is another large building of four storeys, happily still intact" (EDP, 17 January 1913). The former ran alongside the main factory block, and was described as an "elongated two storey house about 180 ft. in length, at one end of which were offices". Here, on the top story, was located the "girls machine room, replete with valuable machines". The ground level floor was used as "a leather storage". The damage estimate of L100,000 (a huge sum) indicates something of the value of the premises and the business (EDP, 17 January 1913).

^{and in the early years of the twentieth century}

The number of employees at the time of the fire was "some 1000". Somewhere between 300 and 400 of the workers were members of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (EDP, 17 January, 1913).

The Factory Operation

A description of the Sexton & Sons factory operation was given by Henry's grandson, H.J. Sexton ^{in 1952} (~~NRO, H.J. Sexton, Fifty Years in the Shoe Trade, 1952~~). Henry Sexton & Sons had many garret masters (as described above) working for them. A key component of the process centered around the wicket where workers, carrying their completed or partially completed work on poles (each pair of shoes covered with blue print wrappers), exchanged the fruits of their efforts for payment and new materials to be transformed into footwear. Apparently the purchasing of raw materials (e.g., leather) and the sale of the finished product was conducted in the pub. While most of the employees of Sexton & Sons were outworkers (free agents working in their own homes), two of the essential tasks, clicking ~~and~~ and sole - cutting were done in the factory. In contrast to the independent outworkers who worked as many hours as suited their constitutions, the factory workers were consigned to a 55 hour work week. Initially there was no minimum wage, but later a clicker would command 21 s. a week; a pressman 19 s.; an experienced machinist 8 s.; boys 3 s.; girls 2s (~~1952~~, H.J. Sexton, *Fifty Years in the Shoe Trade, 1952*).

In February 1891 the company was then a well - established going concern in the City of Norwich as reflected in the fact that Henry Sexton was banqueted by the heads of the various departments in his firm. In the words of the reporter for the Boot and Shoe Trades Journal:

→
→
A very pleasing evidence of the cordiality existing between Messrs Sexton and Sons, of Norwich, and their servants was given last week, when the members of the firm were entertained at a banquet at the Maid's Head Hotel. The event was put on foot by the heads of the various departments, and was characterized by the greatest success. The business of Messrs. Sexton and Sons has greatly increased of late years, and they claim to possess one of the largest sew - round factories in the kingdom (The Boot and Shoe Trades Journal, February 7, 1891, p. 157).

→
→
Other items of interest noted in the report is that by then Henry Sexton had "taken his sons into partnership..." (all of whom were present that evening). After the toast to "the health and prosperity of the Firm", Henry Fisher Sexton ~~after~~ ^{responded, saying, after} the hearty applause which greeted him had subsided, that it was with some amount of feeling that he addressed those at the table that evening. He had known many of them for a long number of years, though not always occupying positions in life which they did at the present day. Therefore he, on behalf of himself, and of his partners, had to thank them for inviting them there that evening. In a few years the firm had climbed up to the present position of being the largest sew - around undertaking in the country - that was to say, for high - class goods and this he attributed to the loyal way in which each and all of those who

had the direction of the departments had worked true to each other (ibid.).

Apparently Henry Fisher Sexton was an innovator. For example, in October 1892 he developed the "Veldtschoen" for which he obtained a patent; and further introduced the Louis Heel soon thereafter. At about this time there was a revolution in the shoe industry and the outworkers became a rarity as more and more employees performed their tasks under the factory roof. Mr. H.J. Sexton noted that the types of footwear which were made in the factory. They manufactured children's, women's (fabric with serge uppers), and men's (patent cloth - backed court shoes and oxfords) shoes; in addition to men's and women's leather slippers (→ HSL, H.J. Sexton, *Fifty Years in the Shoe Trade, 1952*).

Industrial Strike

In 1897 an event occurred which may have taken its toll on the health of Henry Sexton. The Norwich No. 2 branch of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, then having only about 200 members,

issued a notice with the sanction of the Council, to the Norwich Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Association, requesting negotiation or arbitration on a minimum wage for clickers and pressmen (28 s. and 26 s. respectively), a fifty - four - hour working week, and the regulation of boy labour to the one in three ratio. The employers declared a minimum wage to be impracticable and ignored the other demands (Fox, 1958, p. 283).

The Union then recommended a work stoppage, with lasters and finishers and many non - union personnel supported the clickers and pressmen. Six weeks later, with no significant movement on the part of the manufacturers, the unionists began to trickle back to work. After 16 weeks the employers were as intransigent as ever and many of the workers ^{made} were ^{returned} again at their posts. After 8 disastrous months the strike ended, with the only concession being a "recommendation" by the manufacturers association that the members raise union wages by 5 percent. Most ignored even this mild "recommendation" (Fox, 1958).

Failing Health

Whether the stresses of this action weighed heavily on Henry Fisher Sexton can only be surmised. There is a strong possibility that the strike aggravated his already fragile health. It is likely that he had suffered from chronic nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys) for many years but that by 1897 he was debilitated to the extent that a cold and congestion of the lungs, which would have been a matter of little concern to somebody in good health, put an end to his life. Henry Fisher Sexton, ^{after 5 years in strike} died 15 December 1897 at his residence, 20 Golden Dog Lane in Norwich, with his son Henry Walter Sexton by his side (GRO, Certificate of Death, Norwich, East Wymer). He died intestate,

and the administration of his estate was granted to his wife Elizabeth on 30 March 1898. His effects were calculated to be worth L.5160 (PPR, Administrations), a large sum which probably does not take into account his company (which was a partnership).

the Henry Fisher Sexton was buried on the highest point of *land in* the Rosary Cemetery in Norwich. A large marble monument with an obelisk marks the location. Buried in the same grave *at* his wife Elizabeth and daughter Emma Jane Faux. A considerable number of his descendants are buried in adjoining plots (including three of his sons) (*Hamlin, 1986*).

Elizabeth (Green) Sexton, widow of Henry Fisher Sexton, *then 81 years old,* died 31 October 1914 at her residence at 75 Bakers Road with her daughter Emma Jane Faux present at the time. The cause was carcinoma (cancer) of the stomach and cardiac syncope (GRD, Certificate of Death, Norwich, East Wymer). She left a will, signed 13 March 1913, whereby she bequeathed, "unto my two daughters Emma Jane Faux (wife of Robert Faux) and Elizabeth Green Edwards (wife of Edward Edwards) all my possessions at the time of my decease wheresoever and whatsoever to be equally divided between them for their sole absolute use and benefit". She appointed her son Fred Thornley Sexton as the executor of the will (PPR, probate 12 November 1914). The effects amounted to L486. 10s. 4d.

Addendum

There is, considering how prominent the firm was, a dearth of information concerning Sexton & Sons. One reason is likely the devastation caused by the fire of 1913. In support of this hypothesis is the statement of one Archie H. Newhouse who, after the fire, found *where* two charred pieces of an order book, and a portion of a ledger book *over a mile north of the factory site - no doubt carried by the wind* (EDP, 17 January 1913). *complete set of the* No doubt all the firm's records were consumed in the fire.

in all probability It may be *instructive* useful to note at this point that from the ashes of the original firm, three companies emerged:

- 1) Henry Sexton & Sons, Limited. *they* who manufactured the Swifan and Olympic brands of footwear. Their office was on Magdalen Street in Norwich. The eldest son of Henry Fisher Sexton, Henry Walter Sexton, was the founder of this business - as well as the latter's son H. H. Sexton.
- 2) Sexton, Son & Everard. From their St. Mary's Works in Norwich (40,000 square feet floor space) they manufactured "High - Grade Footwear", and specialized in "Louis Heel Goods" in "London, Paris and New York Styles". They focused on exports and had offices across the world (e.g., Denmark, New Zealand). Henry Fisher Sexton's son Jesse Henry Sexton headed this firm.
- 3) Fred Sexton (Norwich) Ltd. Their factory was in Botolph Street and, with the trade mark name of "Fleet Foot" manufactured

"Men's and Women's High - Class Dress and Walking Shoes." They also specialized in "Louis Heel Work". They exported throughout the world (e.g., South America, Holland). Henry Fisher Sexton's son Arthur James Sexton became Chairman of Directors while the latter's son Fred Sexton was the Managing Director of the firm (Shoe and Leather News Biographical Directory of Shoemakers, 1919).

Henry Fisher Sexton's descendants went on to distinguish themselves in numerous ways. For example, in addition to their success in business, his sons made significant contributions to the political and cultural life of the city that had ~~allowed~~ ^{faceted} the family to ~~rise~~ from poverty and obscurity, to wealth and prominence. For example, son Henry Walter Sexton became a City Councillor. Also, grandson Henry Jesse Sexton received the Order of the British Empire, and was Chairman and founder of the Norwich Arts Trust (LSL, File of Sexton Newspaper Clippings). ^{of the} ~~His~~ sense of community obligation is ~~also~~ reflected in the fact that he purchased the Assembly House and spent L.70,000 in the 1940s to restore and furnish this Norwich landmark as a way of "putting something back" into the community. His express wish was that the premises not become the domain of the privileged few, but ~~as~~ a place where the average citizen ^{as documents} could find enjoyment (The Assembly House, H.J. Sexton Norwich Arts Trust, pamphlet, no date). ^{evolution}

^{The latter's} ~~entertainment and~~