

## The Salem Witch Stamp Boxes

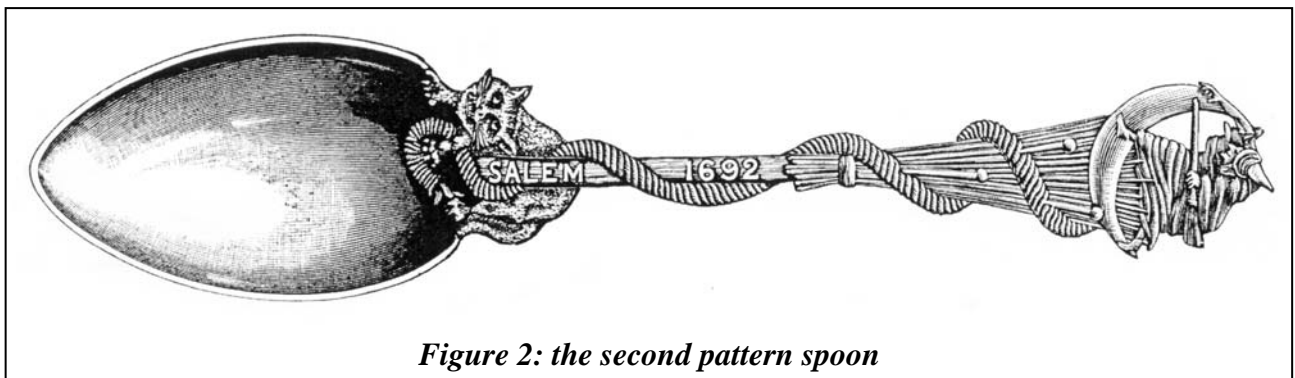
Today, Salem, Massachusetts, USA is a seaside resort of some 40,000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup> - on a par with, say, Scarborough in the UK. In 1692, Salem was one of a group of villages that went collectively insane. The infamous Salem witch trials resulted in 20 executions, with 19 people being hanged and one poor soul being pressed (crushed) to death. At least 5 more people died in prison. Countless other lives were ruined: others accused, friends and families, not to mention the many that simply fled to escape the madness.

Two hundred years on finds a prosperous town quite happy to cash in on the notoriety of its name to attract tourists. A keen entrepreneur was one, Daniel Low, who had opened a department store in Salem in about 1868<sup>2</sup>. In about 1890 he did something rather remarkable for those days – he took a trip to Germany. There he found souvenir spoons on sale celebrating places such as Munich and Dresden<sup>3</sup>. He brought the idea back to the USA and took out his first trademark patent for a souvenir spoon in 1891.



*Figure 1: the first pattern spoon – the item that started it all*

Daniel Low may or may not have produced the first souvenir spoon in the USA, but he is certainly credited with starting the spoon collecting hobby there. He soon produced a second, much more elaborate design.



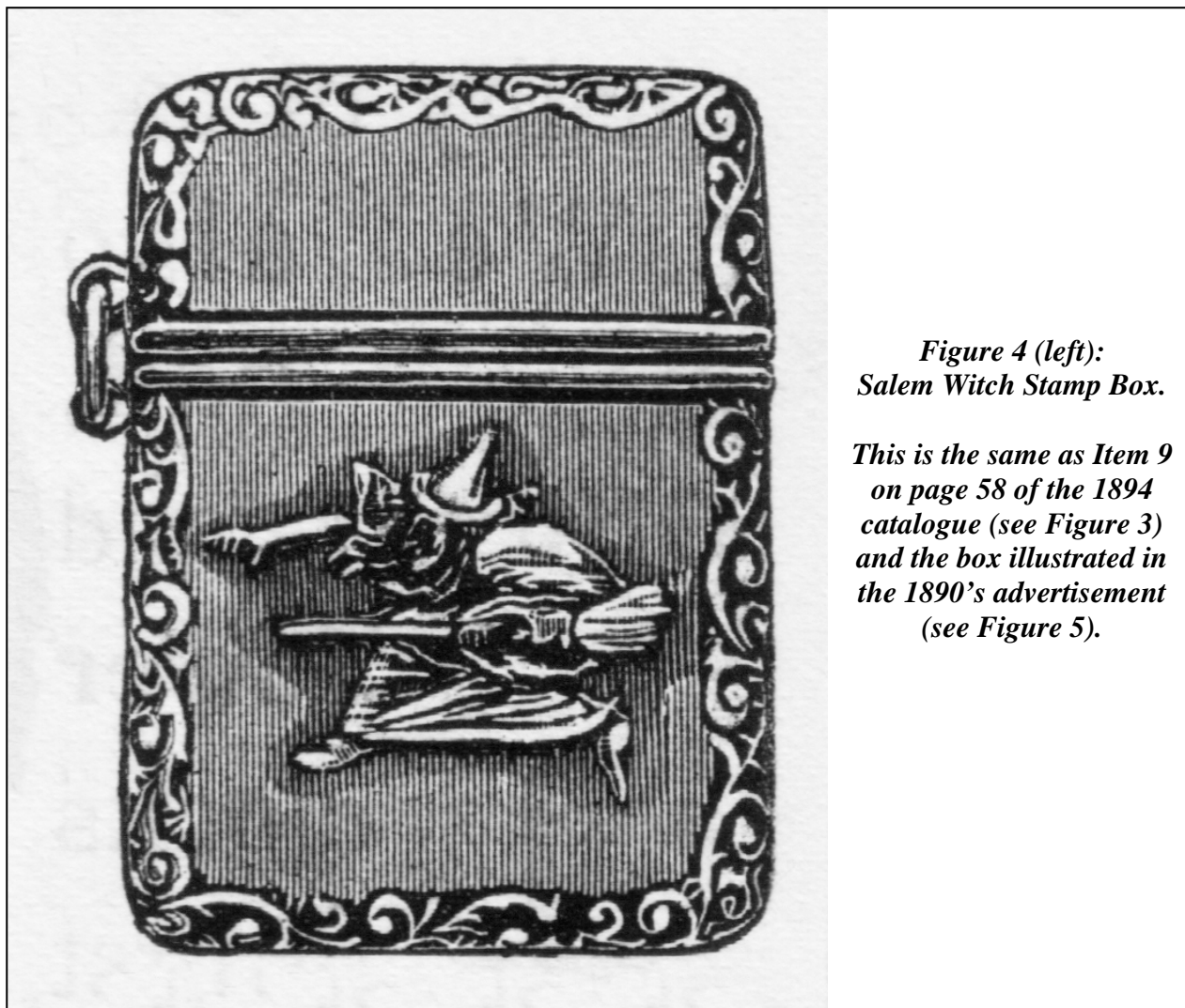
*Figure 2: the second pattern spoon*

Business boomed. But Daniel Low was not content with selling souvenirs to Salem’s tourists; he knew that there was a bigger world out there. He entered the mail order business and did it on such a scale and so successfully that he is also regarded as one of its pioneers.

By 1894, just three years after the first spoon, he was able to produce a 64 page catalogue. Souvenir spoons alone could not fill such a volume, although by then the “Witch” spoons had been joined by others such as the “Lexington”, “Concord” and “Leif Ericson”. There were more mundane spoons and other tableware such as tea pots, coffee pots, sugar and cream bowls; pencils and pencil holders; prayer-book markers; buckles; toilet articles including mirrors, brushes, nail polishers, etc; “novelties”, including candlesticks, caddies, thimbles and button hooks; pins and broaches; boxes and bowls of all sorts of descriptions; and many, many other articles in a real cornucopia of goods – including 5 different stamp boxes and cases.

Daniel Low & Co., Salem, Massachusetts, 1894 Catalogue				
List of items: Stamp Boxes & Cases				
PAGE NO.	PAGE DESCRIPTION	ARTICLE NO.	ARTICLE DESCRIPTION	PRICE \$
12	Sterling Silver Novelties	147	Stamp box, satin finish	1.25
12	Sterling Silver Novelties	148	Stamp box, satin finish	2.25
12	Sterling Silver Novelties	154	Stamp case (also listed as no. 349 a Court Plaster Case)	1.75
24	Sterling Silver Novelties	393	Postage Stamp Case	4.50
58	Witch Novelties in Sterling Silver	9	Stamp Box	1.75

*Figure 3: 1894 Catalogue listing of Stamp Boxes & Cases*



*Figure 4 (left):  
Salem Witch Stamp Box.*

*This is the same as Item 9 on page 58 of the 1894 catalogue (see Figure 3) and the box illustrated in the 1890’s advertisement (see Figure 5).*

As well as his catalogues, Daniel Low sold through extensive advertising in newspapers and magazines.

**SEND TO US FOR YOUR  
Christmas Gifts.**

**Sterling Silver Novelties.**

Everything new and desirable usually found at a first-class jeweler. Lower prices on fine goods than in the larger cities.

Emery, plain silver top, \$1.00; chased.....	\$1.25
Box for spool of Dental Silk, \$2.00; chased....	3.00
Foot Rule, 3 inches long when folded .....	2.50
Penholder, twisted or chased .....	1.50
Pungents, cut glass, silver top .....	1.50
Glove Darner, \$1.50; Glove Buttoner .....	.75
Shoe Horn, \$3.00; Cigar Cutter .....	1.50
Key Rings, 75c.; very heavy .....	1.50
Silver Tags, leather strap, for bags, etc., \$1.50; for keys, including marking .....	1.00
Prayer-book Markers, 3 ribbons, with silver heart, anchor and cross .....	.75
Bon-bon Spoons, Louis XV. ....	1.75
Individual Berry Forks, Watteau.....	1.00

**THE "WITCH" SPOONS.**  
The most celebrated of the Souvenir Spoons.

Coffee Spoon .....	1st Pattern. 2d Pattern.
Coffee Spoon .....	\$1.25 \$1.75
Coffee Spoon, gold bowl. ....	1.50 2.00
Tea Spoon .....	2.00 3.00
Tea Spoon, gold bowl. ....	2.50 3.50
Orange Spoon .....	2.25 3.25
Orange Spoon, gold bowl .....	2.50 3.50

**DANIEL LOW, Silversmith,  
229 ESSEX STREET, SALEM, MASS.**

Established 1868.

*Figure 5: a typical newspaper advertisement, said to be 1892 but not verified by the author. Original size 144mm x 151mm.*

Daniel Low was running this business empire from an intriguing building. The appropriately named, "First Church" was the first Protestant church in America. It was founded in 1629, over 60 years before the witch trials. It was housed in various buildings over the years and in 1826 a new one was built on the corner of Essex Street and Washington Street, Salem. The church itself occupied the first floor and the ground floor was let to shopkeepers. Here Daniel Low was established (see Figure 6). Later, the church moved yet again and Daniel Low and Company was able to buy the whole building in 1922/23. By this time, the founder's son was in charge, Daniel Low having died in 1911.<sup>4</sup>



*Figure 6: the corner of Essex Street and Washington Street, Salem*

## **Daniel Low Catalogues**

Original Daniel Low catalogues do appear on the market. For example, a 1921 catalogue sold on eBay for £24.25 on 16 March 2008. The two catalogues referred to in this article, 1894 and 1901, are more readily available in facsimile editions.

The 1894 catalogue is published in a facsimile edition by “Vintage Catalogs” and is available via their website: [www.vintagecatalogs.com](http://www.vintagecatalogs.com).

The 1901 catalogue was published in a facsimile edition by Bridgham Antiques of San Diego, USA and is available from The Eden Sterling Company via their website: <http://www.edensterling.com/historical.html>.



**Figure 7: the 1901 catalogue cover.**  
Actual size 247mm x 165mm

The business continued to grow and by 1901 the catalogue had grown to 168 pages and many thousands of items. Although silver still predominated, there were now watches, and items made of glass and leather, albeit often with silver trim.

Stationery was now also available including, perhaps inevitably, paper printed with the witch logo.

With the general growth, the number of stamp boxes and related item had also grown considerably. In figure 3 we list 5 items available in the 1894 catalogue; the 1901 catalogue contains the following:

- 7 stamp boxes
- 14 stamp cases
- 5 moisteners
- 1 blotter with a stamp box

With a total of 27 items listed, an interesting collection could be formed of Daniel Low items alone; see figure 8.

Of course, Daniel Low and Company was not the only company to make Salem souvenirs, nor was silver the only material. Other Salem collectables include china, bottles, brassware ephemera and postcards.<sup>5</sup>

### Marks on Daniel Low silverware

The catalogues do not credit the manufacturers of the silverware sold by Daniel Low.

The 1<sup>st</sup> pattern spoon was made by William B. Durgin Co



The 2<sup>nd</sup> pattern spoon was made by The Gorham Co.



Other manufacturers include: George W. Shiebler & Co



and Towle Manufacturing Co



Daniel Low had their own mark



**Daniel Low & Co., Salem, Massachusetts, 1901 Catalogue**  
**List of items: Stamp Boxes, Cases & Moisteners**

PAGE NO.	PAGE DESCRIPTION	ARTICLE NO.	ARTICLE DESCRIPTION	PRICE \$
69	SILVER MOUNTED LEATHER ARTICLES	4955	Stamp Box, red or green leather	2.00
74	SILVER MOUNTED NOVELTIES	724	Case for Government Stamp Book	3.75
76	DESK SET, BEADED PATTERN	85013	Sponge Moistener	0.85
76	- do -	85024	Stamp Box	1.75
77	FRAMES AND CUPID DESK SET	85046	Stamp Moistener	1.25
79*	DESK PADS AND OTHER ARTICLES FOR THE DESK	85027	Blotter, with secret box for stamps	4.50
79*	- do -	85029	Stamp Box, large and heavy	5.50
79*	- do -	85035	Stamp Box, carpet sweeper	2.50
80*	STAMP CASES, BLOTTERS, ETC.	147	Stamp Case	0.75
80*	- do -	400	Stamp Case, rich Empire design, with oiled paper leaves	4.00
80*	- do -	404	Stamp Case, with oiled paper leaves	1.75
80*	- do -	1404	Stamp Case, with clips to hold stamps inside	1.35
80*	- do -	1412	Stamp Case, rich openwork	1.75
80*	- do -	1413	Stamp Case	0.75
80*	- do -	1414	Stamp Case	1.00
80*	- do -	1418	Stamp Case	0.75
80*	- do -	1419	Stamp Case	1.00
80*	- do -	1772	Stamp and Envelope Moistener, with roller	0.75
80*	- do -	1773	Stamp Moistener	0.45
81	SEALS, STAMP BOXES AND OTHER DESK ARTICLES	144	Stamp Box, leather with sterling corners	0.50
81	- do -	153	Stamp Case, openwork, oiled paper leaves	1.35
81	- do -	1415	Stamp Case, openwork, size of No. 1678 Court Plaster Case, Page 90	0.85
81	- do -	1736	Stamp Box, glass with sterling hinged cover	1.60
81	- do -	1769	Stamp and Envelope Moistener	0.50
102	WITCH NOVELTIES IN LEATHER	569†	Stamp Case, large, with paraffine leaves, which prevent the stamps from sticking	0.75
102	- do -	575	Same, without witch	0.50
103	WITCH NOVELTIES	511†	Stamp Box	1.00
*	these pages are illustrated	†	these cases are illustrated	

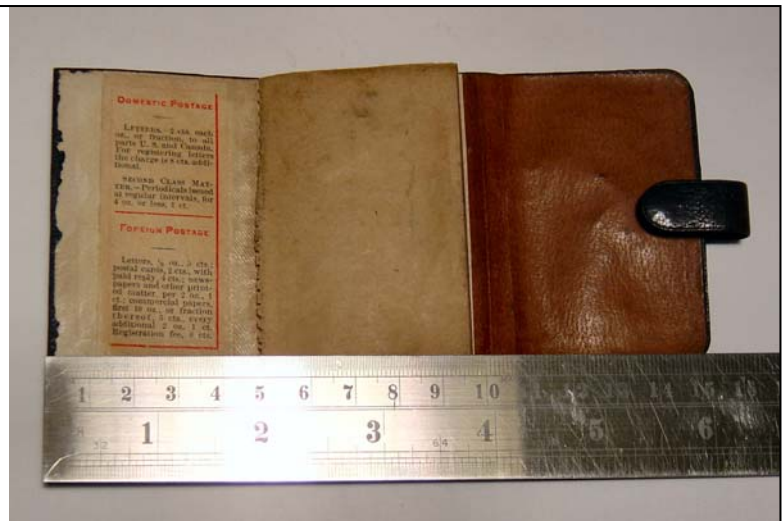
*Figure 8: 1901 Catalogue listing of Stamp Boxes & Related Items*



*Figure 9: Article 511 on Page 103 of the 1901 catalogue*



*Figure 10: an example of Article 569 on Page 102 of the 1901 catalogue*



*Figure 11: a close-up & the inside of the case in Fig 10*

<sup>1</sup> For general information see the Wikipedia entry:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem,\\_Massachusetts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salem,_Massachusetts)

<sup>2</sup> The date of the establishment of Daniel Low, Jeweler (sic) and Silversmith is given as 1868 in, e.g. his 1894 catalogue.

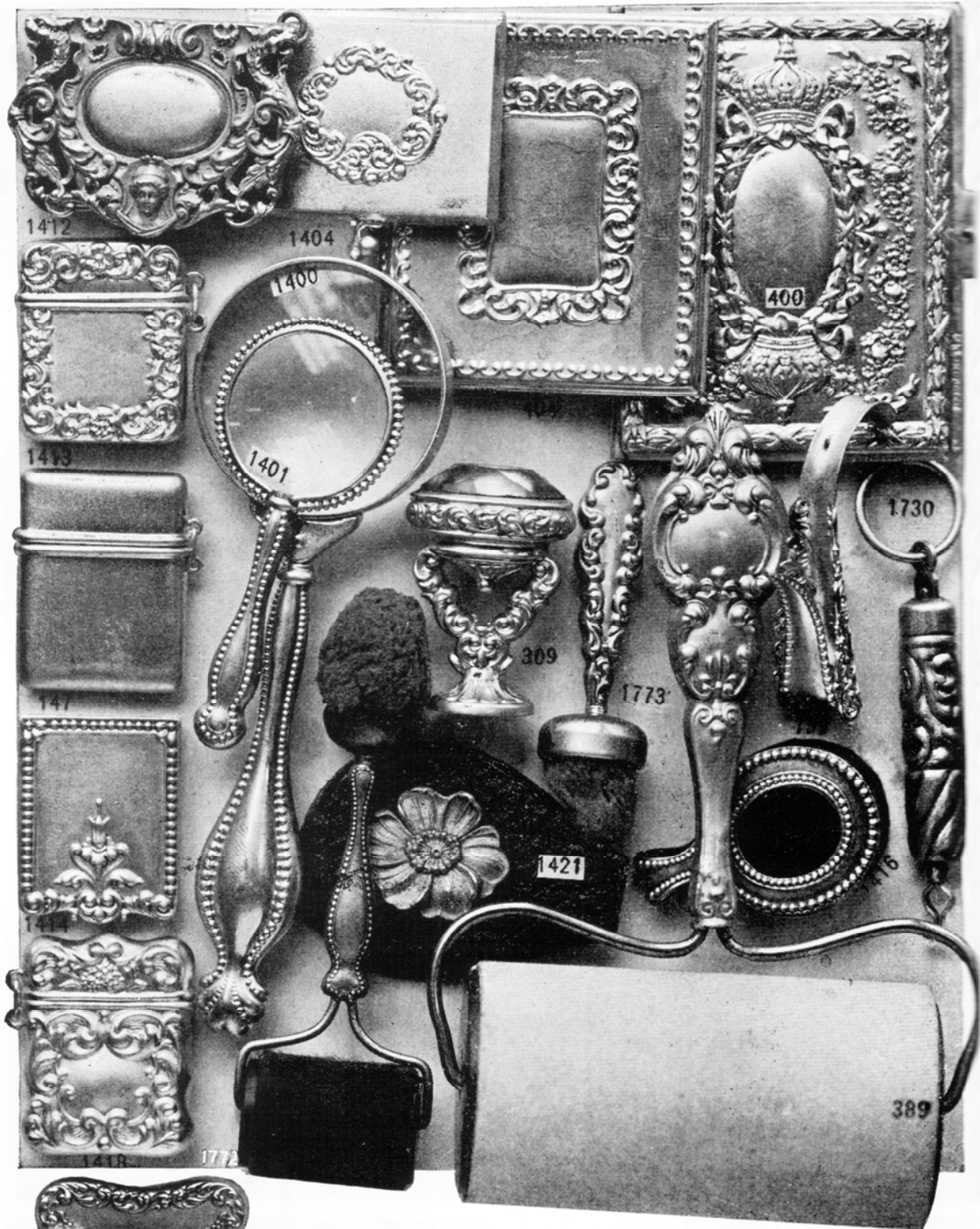
<sup>3</sup> See the “Souvenir Spoons Museum” website at:

<http://www.geocities.com/rodeodrive/6232/beginning.html>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.hawthorneinsalem.org/images/image.php?name=MMD1268>

<sup>5</sup> See “A Collector’s Guide to Salem Witchcraft & Souvenirs” by Pamela E. Apkarian-Russell, published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1998, ISBN: 0-7643-0425-9





1419 Stamp Case, \$1.00.

STAMP CASES, BLOTTERS, ETC. The illustrations are actual size.

147	Stamp Case	-	-	-	\$.75	1404	Stamp Case, with clips to hold stamps inside	-	-	-\$1.35
*309	Seal, set with large amethyst	-	-	-	1.00	1412	Stamp Case, rich openwork	-	-	1.75
389	Blotter, rolling	-	-	-	.65	1413	Stamp Case, \$ .75.	1414	Stamp Case,	1.00
	390 Blotter, large, with handle like	-	-	-	1.50	1416	Eye Glass Wiper	-	-	.60
	4346 Hook, page 52	-	-	-	.75	1418	Stamp Case, \$ .75.	1419	Stamp Case,	1.00
	391 Blotter, bead, with handle like	-	-	-	4.00	1421	Eye Glass Wiper	-	-	.35
	4325 hook, page 52	-	-	-	1.75	1730	Letter Scale	-	-	1.50
400	Stamp Case, rich Empire design, with oiled paper leaves	-	-	-	1.75	1772	Stamp and Envelope Moistener, with roller	-	-	.75
404	Stamp Case, with oiled paper leaves,	-	-	-	.35	1773	Stamp Moistener	-	-	.45
759	Pen Extractor	-	-	-	1.75		*Cutting one letter on seal, \$ .50 extra; cypher monogram, \$ .75 extra.			
1400	Magnifying Glass	-	-	-	.75					
1401	Magnifying Glass	-	-	-						

Figure 13: Page 80 of the 1901 catalogue