

Olney, Amsden (OA and OA&S) thimbles 1887-1914

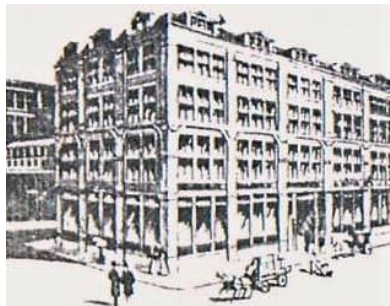
This topic is about thimbles with OA and OA&S marks. The thimbles are a classic example of a wholesaler and haberdasher who never created a thimble. Olney, They were able to choose the best thimble makers for their brand of merchandise that bore these marks.

Thomas Olney employed Frederick William Amsden Jnr (1853-1921) in his retail haberdashery business in 1848. This is when Olney, Amsden turned the retail business into wholesaling. The business closed in 1996.



Thomas Olney – Frederick Willial Amsden Jnr

Olney, Amsden (and Sons) of Falcon Street, London E.C. commissioned thimbles and other haberdashery items from a range of established manufacturing firms. This topic will try to establish who made the thimbles for this well-known haberdashery company.



Olney, Amsden premises 10 Falcon Street London

The mark of **OA** was registered in Birmingham, with the thimbles dating from 1887 to 1917. These sterling silver thimbles were made by James Fenton and occasionally by Henry Griffith & Sons. We are dependent on the thimble size marks to enable us to confirm the maker. For Fenton, the bigger the size number the smaller the thimble – for Griffith it's smallest size to largest (13-20).

Fenton also used the Sheffield assay office and I have found example of an OA marked thimble bearing this assay office mark.

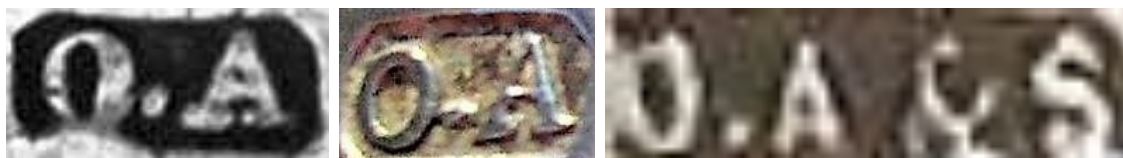
Fenton registered several thimble designs and an OA design bears one of his RD numbers. I understand that Fenton only sold his thimbles thru wholesalers.

There seem to be many more thimbles with OA than OA&S marks.

The mark of **OA&S** was registered in Chester in April 1900. The firm of Henry Griffith & Sons sometimes used the Chester assay for hallmarking its thimbles. Griffith would have made the Chester OA&S thimbles as they were the only British thimblemakers to use the thimble sizing they did.

Olney, Amsden are unique in that they not only commissioned sterling silver thimbles with their marks: brass-lined steel and metal thimbles are quite commonly found. These would have been made for them by Charles Iles. Iles produced millions of metal thimbles, some bearing various brand names like: ILES, ABEL MORRALL and OA&S.

To add into this mix, I have included a thimble with a mark for **OA&C°**.



sterling silver marks

centre: OA mark seems to have a dash instead of a full stop



L: brass-lined steel – R: metal

both marks have a left-facing arrow after the mark – as does an Iles example at right



OA&C° metal mark

There are the cardboard thimble boxes with OA&S markings. Charles Iles produced the greatest range of thimble boxes in the period under discussion, so I assume they were commissioned to make these boxes for OA&S. This haberdashery company often presented their thimbles for sale in quality boxes and cases.

Being haberdashers Olney, Amsden also traded in buttons, needlebooks, needles, pincushions, pins, sewing kits and tape measures.

They owned the Crescent Needle Company of London and Redditch.

Olney, Amsden (OA)

The most popular thimble designs (repeat orders) are the most ornate ones



1887 1892 1904 1917 Birmingham



1893 Birmingham #9
blackberries
James Fenton



1894 1901 Birmingham #8
vertical blackberry panels
James Fenton



1895 Birmingham #9
stars
James Fenton



1896 Birmingham #10
James Fenton
no rolled rim



1896 1913 Birmingham #9
blackberries and large leaves
James Fenton



1898 Birmingham #13
Henry Griffith & Sons



1899 Birmingham
Wide band



1899 Birmingham #8
James Fenton



1899 1907 1911 Birmingham #8 #10
James Fenton



1899 1900 1901 1902 Birmingham #8 #9 #10 #12
blackberries with two rows of leaves
James Fenton



1899 1900 1901 1904 1908 1911 Birmingham #8 #9 #10
moon and stars
James Fenton
R^D281980 24 August 1896
lower row: have no RD numbers



1899 Birmingham #9
James Fenton



1899 1900 1901 1902 1903 1904 1910 Birmingham #9 #10 #11
lower R: 1923 Sheffield #9
pillow or cushion effect
James Fenton



1900 1913 Birmingham #10 #12
James Fenton



1900 1901 1902 Birmingham #8 #11 #12
blackberries with single row of leaves
James Fenton



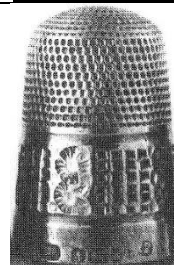
1901 Birmingham #9
blackberries
James Fenton



1903 Birmingham #8
mixed design
James Fenton



1903 Birmingham #10
mixed design
James Fenton



1905 Birmingham #7
mixed design
James Fenton



1905 Birmingham #9
vertical panels
James Fenton



1908 Birmingham #8
James Fenton



1911 Birmingham #9
wobblework band
James Fenton



1913 Birmingham #8
James Fenton
mark looks more like **O-A**

Olney, Amsden & Sons (OA&S)



1900 1901 1902 Chester #14 #15 #16
Henry Griffith & Sons



1900 1901 1903 1904 Chester #13 #15 #16
blackberries and large leaves
Henry Griffith & Sons



1900 Chester #15
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #14 #16
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #13 #15
Henry Griffith & Sons
no rolled rim



1901 Chester #14
wrigglework band
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 1902 Chester #14 #16
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 1914 Chester #14 #16
Henry Griffith & Sons



1901 Chester #13
Henry Griffith & Sons



1902 Chester #16
wrigglework band
Henry Griffith & Sons



Chester #17
non-slip rim
Henry Griffith & Sons
date letter unclear

Metal thimbles (OA&S)(OA&C°)



brass
Charles Iles



brass-lined steel #2
1910s
Charles Iles
often used in WWI army hussifs



metal with lining
Charles Iles
Frederick William Amsden took out a patent
no 22270 in 1907 for thimbles with a lining



nickel #3
Charles Iles



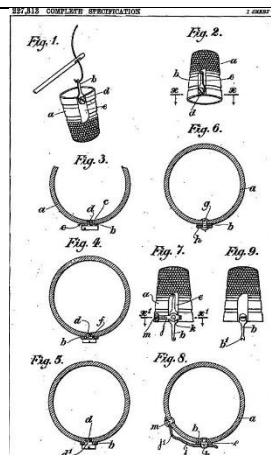
metal #3



silver-plated #3
Charles Iles
OA&C°

In 1924, Frederick George Amsden was one of four patentees who applied for a patent (No227313) for "an improvement in. or addition to sewing thimbles. The other patentees were Charles Iles and Thomas Frederick Therlby of Birmingham – and Llewellyn Charles Hoy of London (same address as Amsden).

When the thimbles were produced – by Charles Iles, the only thimble maker amongst the four patentees, the metal gadget thimble did not include any maker's or patentee names. Thousands of these thimbles were made with a threader with a tiny hook screwed into the band. This threader would move when in use for threading a needle.



Patent 227313 application drawings

Thimble boxes (OA&S)



Standard Silver Thimble
Hall - Marked

I haven't encountered thimble boxes like these before: they operate like a drawer
Using the opening at one end, the boxes operate like opening a box of matches

Charles Iles

It's lovely to see the original 1901 OA&S thimbles are still present



red velour thimble case
Charles Iles



Mauchline ware
William Smith



tartan ware
William Smith

Haberdashery items (OA&S)



Olney Amsden & Co L^{td} London E.C.
Buttons
approx. 1925



Olney, Amsden & Sons Novelties in haberdashery
brass tape measure



Crescent quality Olney, Amsden & Sons London
needles



Crescent Quality best pins
pin box



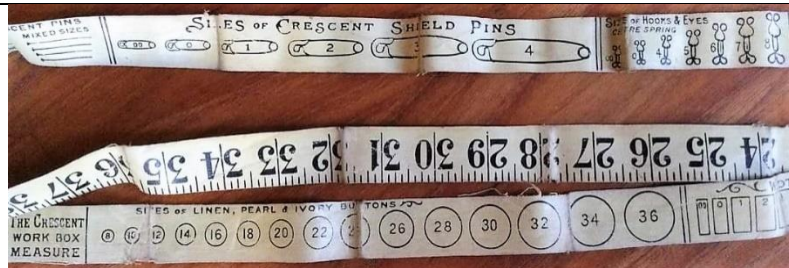
Olney, Amsden & Sons celebrated Haberdashery Cabinets contain a full assortment of best quality haberdashery and are far superior to the old-fashioned workbox Ask your draper for catalogue
The Crescent needlebook with brass clasp



sewing kit
velvet needlebook with pincushion around sides, needles in doctor's cloth, OA thimble
1890s



Olney, Amsden & Sons
sewing thread



The Crescent Work Box Measure
showing Sizes of Crescent Shield Pins



1896 Birmingham mint thimble in sewing set

References

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 Norma Spicer *James Fenton silversmith and thimble maker etc*. 1995

Contributors

Steve Brett | Jan Harris | Linda Gledhill (nee Amsden) | Caroline Meacham-Elegant Arts | Ray Nimmo
 Wolf-Dieter Scholz

This listing of Olney, Amsden thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.
 Rather it invites comment and contribution to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

EMAIL thimbleselect@bigpond.com TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

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 September 2023