

On December 27, 1863, Peter Hefferman (alias Peter Dunn, alias James Johnson) and his wife were arrested and charged with grand larceny, stealing watches and jewelry from the store of a Mr. Bronte. Already well known to the police, the Heffermans attracted the attention of police officer Timothy Golden when they were coming out of their residence in the morning. Golden followed them, saw them enter Bronte's, followed them to several other places, saw them enter a saloon, followed them in and arrested them. He found a box containing the watches and jewelry in Hefferman's pocket. After Hefferman was found guilty, a report comments.

Mary Brown, alias Frances Stanley pled guilty in June 1865 to a charge of grand larceny (shoplifting) for stealing from a store. Brown had only recently been released from state prison after servicing 4½ years for a similar offence.

After receiving several complaints of shoplifters operating in stores in the Canal Street area of New York, Captain Irving of the detective squad set out in February 1874 to stop the offenders. Irving and his partner toured the area where they saw Mary Moore, alias come out of a store. They followed her into a saloon where they arrested her. When apprehended, said one account. Long Mary was also described as.

About one year later by the name of Christina Meyer was arrested on a charge of stealing a piece of silk worth \$80 from the store of Lord and Taylor. She was assisted by two men and a woman, all of whom escaped. In the rooms where the four lived, police found a large quantity of property consisting of valuable shawls, ladies' underwear, spoons, knives, forks, bead work and three pawn tickets for gold watches. The men had each served five-year prison terms, for shoplifting.

In January 1876 Julien Blum, Moses Leon, and Morris Klein entered the store of Henry Shaw at different times and met outside after reconnoitering the place. Blum pretended that he wanted to purchase linen. They were noticed by two detectives who regarded the movements as suspicious and determined to watch them. On the following day the three men returned to the store and upon leaving the shop were arrested and searched. On the persons of Klein and Leon were found four pieces of Belfast linen, stolen from Shaw's store and valued at \$140. Blum was found guilty at trial and sentenced to five years in state prison. The 77-year old Klein pled guilty, claiming he had been driven to the deed by poverty. He was sentenced to three years. Out on bail, Leon had skipped town.

Mary Ann Watts, alias Mary Wilson, a shoplifter, was convicted of larceny in December 1873 and sentenced to three years in Sing Sing. Three months later she escaped. Spotted by police in April 1876, then calling herself Mary Walker, she was arrested by police. Apprehended with her was her friend Annie Smith. A search of the pair resulted in the finding of a number of stolen items on Smith and 85 yards of silk in a wallet concealed under Watt's overskirt.

The prevalence of shoplifting was increasing. In 1876 in Boston, Detectives Wood and Wiggin were watching especially for shoplifters. On one day they arrested Mary Brett and Mary

Brown for shoplifting at the stores of Whitney and Stearns on Tremont Street. Goods valued at \$20 were found on the person of each. The pair were arraigned and fined an unreported amount. On the following day the two detectives greeted a train arriving from New York City and arrested the disembarking Mollie Hoye, Sarah Clifford, and Mary Wilson, alias Frenchy Johnson, said to be. They were put on a return train to New York a couple of hours later. Later that same day the pair of detective picked up Tilly Miller and Lena Nugent, alia Black Lena. Both women were wanted in Brooklyn after escaping from jail, where they had been placed for shoplifting offenses.

A Fulton Street, Brooklyn, firm which sold hats and furs reported to the police in January 1877 that they had lost at different times during the previous six months a number of valuable saccues, a woman's loose-fitting jacket or cape. Assigned the case, Detectives Corwin and Looney learned that on the day the last sacque disappeared had been seated in the store for some time, on the pretense she was waiting for her brother, who had promised to meet her there and buy her a sacque. Store employees thought she had been in the store on one ruse or another several times. Corwin and Looney then started a search of the pawn shops finally locating the sacque in question, along with a good description of the woman. Eventually they arrested Sarah Redmond who confessed she had been shoplifting for a long time. At her home a quantity of stolen items were found; on her person were 75 pawn tickets.

That same year Rosa Rode and a male companion entered a store on Broadway in New York where the man priced some items while Rosa. An employee saw the woman hide a box under her shawl. When the pair left the shop the employee followed the woman and summoned the police. Rosa was arrested but the male escaped. She was found to have secreted in dozen pairs of kid gloves hidden under her shawl and in her felt petticoat was an which held two boxes containing nine more dozen pairs of kid gloves. Those 16 dozen pairs were valued at \$140. She was held for trial in lieu of \$5,000 bail. One week later she pled guilty and was sentenced to 3½ years in jail. This case illustrated the advantage females had over males in stashing goods on their persons. Rosa had manage to secrete almost 200 pairs of gloves on her person and almost got away with it. Even at this early period most of the shoplifters' tricks, such as the booster bag to receive pilfered items, hidden within one's clothing, were already well known and well used.

Rosa did her time but was not long on the streets before again running afoul of the law. It was reported in April 1890 that Mary Scanlan, alias Rosy Rode—known as Kid Glove Rosie—and Louisa Rice were arrested in the act of stealing 180 yards of silk from a Broadway store. Both had prior shoplifting convictions. Scanlan chose a trial while Rice pled guilty. The judge noted that the large dry goods establishments in New York suffered great losses by the depredations of shoplifters and he was determined to administer severe punishment to all offenders brought before him. Scanlan received five years, while Rice received four years and nine months—in consideration of having pled guilty she had three months taken off.

Even then, Christmas was a popular time for shoplifting. It was easier to pilfer when the streets and stores were jammed. On December 24, 1877, Detective Lenahan was patrolling Brooklyn's Fulton Street. His suspicions were aroused by a woman who was in and out of many stores. Lenahan followed her but could spot no crime. Nonetheless Lenahan arrested Mary Mason, alias Catherine Connor, as she got off a streetcar. On her person she was found to have six pairs of kid gloves, three silk handkerchiefs, two bottles of cologne, a pair of bracelets, and a cigar holder in a morocco case. At her residence more stolen items were found.

During the 1870s a transition began to take place in shoplifting reports. More and more it came to be viewed as a crime committed solely by women. At least partly this was due to the beginnings of mass retailing to a mass consumer base, in huge premises. Shopping was set up to attract primarily women. A second difference taking place at this time was that more and more women arrested for the offense were well-to-do, of good character. That is they were not lower class. This phenomenon would lead to a major change in how the justice system could deal with those accused of shoplifting. It was one thing to sentence a lower class women to many years in prison for shoplifting—as happened all the time. However, it was unthinkable that this would be done to upper class women. For that matter it was unthinkable that well-to-do women, whose only trouble with the law was shoplifting, would be treated like common criminals at all, notwithstanding that all lower class women so charged were so treated. Out of this difficulty was born the concept of kleptomania.

In the summer of 1876 a lady entered a store and inquired about the price of several bronzes. Just after she left, the clerk noticed a \$45 statuette of Mercury was missing. He chased after her and had her arrested by a police officer who found the item on her person. Initially she was held on \$1000 bail. A day later that was reduced to \$500 when a man arrived to make an affidavit to her good character. She was released on bail.

Emma Deming was arrested on Christmas Eve 1880 in the store of B. Altman and Co. for shoplifting a bottle of cologne. When arrested she had the cologne on her person along with a small valise containing three pocketbooks, all identified as property of the firm. At the time of her arrest she offered to pay for the cologne but the offer was refused. Deming explained she could not remember whether or not she had left money on the counter to pay for the cologne, but she had intended to. She further explained she found the valise on the floor, picked it up and while searching for the owner was suddenly arrested. At her trial witnesses testified to her good character. B. Altman indicated they were willing to withdraw the complaint. In the end.

Similar problems were happening in Europe. In Paris, France, during June 1877 the trial of three foreigners from Venezuela on shoplifting charges took place. The Defendants were persons of. The women were described as. This financially well-to-do trio was arrested after the theft of a sapphire ring at a store. A search of their apartment turned up a great quantity of stolen goods. Their method of operation was for Pulgar and Mr. Lopex to occupy the attention of the employees while the other woman. The young woman got eight months in jail while the other

two were each sentenced ¹ to a year and a day. Usually the wealthy never reached court on shoplifting charges—they paid their way out of trouble. However, a minority of retailers pursued a prosecute-all policy, in the belief that was the only way to reduce the practice. In that case, and assuming a judge was determined to be fair and not class-biased (not always true), upper class women ran the risk of prison time. That prospect made kleptomania even more inviting as a saving strategy.

The existence of gangs of professional shoplifters was already noted by the 1870s. Extensive shoplifting operations against dry good stores in Cleveland led to arrests of six people, described as a gang of shoplifters from Chicago. A search warrant executed at a house used by the group led to the discovery of hundreds of dollars of goods, including silk handkerchiefs, laces, whole pieces of silk and so forth.

Also by this time false arrest of people were taking place, with a resultant fear on the part of retailers of being sued for damages by wrongfully accused shoppers. A Mrs. David was awarded \$150 in damages in 1878 after being ¹ wrongfully accused of shoplifting a purse from a New York store. She was forcibly detained by the store and searched as a result of the accusation. The New York Times editorialized that while a was necessary in stores, a little more care could be exercised in selecting store detectives.

Later that same year Ellen Whalen found herself in court ¹ charged with stealing an item of clothing from a dry goods store. Store detective Alexander Sisson testified he saw Whalen take the item from the counter and ¹ conceal it under her cloak. He followed her out of the store, brought her back and locked her in the basement of the shop until police arrived. Whalen's lawyer got Sisson to admit he didn't know if the item had or had not been sold to the accused. Proof was produced by the defense that Whalen purchased the item whereupon she was discharged.

Catherine Walsh was charged with shoplifting in 1880. A store clerk testified she saw the accused take 85 cents worth of sleeve buttons and hide them in her shawl. Walsh was approached by the clerk's boss who demanded the buttons's return. Hotly denying the charge, Walsh nevertheless later gave the buttons back to the clerk saying they must have fallen accidentally into the folds of her shawl. Charged anyway, Walsh was convicted and fined \$25. Noted a reporter,

The confusion between employee theft and shoplifting happened on occasion. Both contributed to a retailer's overall loss, known in the trade as . However they were separate issues, although the entire shrinkage figure was often attributed solely to shoplifting—in the old days and in current times. When 18-year-old Lizzie Creamer, an \$8 a week salesclerk employed by dry goods merchant Hartung & Co., was caught stealing items while she was on duty, she was charged and convicted of shoplifting—and sentenced to 60 days in prison. The newspaper report headed the item.

By the end of the 1870s, shoplifting in Paris was characterized as. Two such American women escaped their predicament by paying for the lifted items and by giving \$100 to the poor. It was said. Also arrested was a wealthy German countess: The store owners countered that they had tried the lenient approach for a long and an unsuccessful time and now felt that they had to take a more severe approach. The countess was charged. More generally it was reported that

Shoplifting had become so prevalent by 1878 in New York that the *Times* did a general round-up article, including interviews with several department store executives, albeit all unnamed. One such retailer mentioned that unfortunately his store sometimes arrested an innocent person by mistake. It was regarded as extremely unpleasant for a businessman to have anyone arrested in his store, even a professional thief. It injured the business in this way: He added that in former times there were no store detectives employed since there were no large establishments. In such establishments the owner and any clerks could see all over the place and they called a police officer when they found anybody stealing. In the large and crowded department stores, already in place in 1878, it was impossible for busy clerks to watch over the store. When this executive talked of gender differences in shoplifting he touched on an obvious point, but one that few others made.

Compare those remarks with the ones from the superintendent of a second department store. From an executive with a third store came the estimate that one woman in nine who entered his store was a professional thief, one in nine was an amateur thief who entered the premises with the fixed idea of taking a particular item, and one in nine came with no fixed intent but spontaneously took something which caught her attention. One large dry goods store was then estimating its annual loss from petty thievery at \$10,000. While kleptomania was catching on as a defense with the accused and with the courts and those in the psychiatric field it never did have much credence with retailing personnel, not with executives, owners, clerks, or store detectives. Said the above-mentioned superintendent,

Arrests for shoplifting exceeded 4,000 in Paris, France, in 1883. Most of those were described as not belonging to the. Here, a simple bribe was the quickest way out. Noted on account, For example one wealthy woman who shoplifted 65 francs worth of articles was told she would not be prosecuted if she made a contribution of 1,000 francs to poverty relief.

By 1883 a reporter noted about shoplifting that: It was then reported that in a dozen of the largest retail stores, owners estimated their annual losses to shoplifting at \$8,000 to \$12,000 each. Kleptomania drew a great amount of space in this report, described as familiar to all shopkeepers. Acknowledging that some retailers professed to believe there was such a disorder, the reporter encountered many more whose lips at the mention of the word: Generally, retailers were said to be averse to taking notice of small thefts by females of wealth and high social standing. Even professional female thieves were said to have no trouble in arousing the sympathies of bystanders whenever they were detected and openly charged with the commission

of theft, and whenever a was thus accused the feeling which arose against the store owner was intense.

One owner of a large retail store commented; He added that he didn't believe in kleptomania, and of all the shoplifting cases he had dealt with. Rather, he felt, American women were gradually acquiring the habit of pilfering and that females of social position did not scruple to steal small things. Like most owners this man didn't feel like driving a good customer away by proving her to be a thief, unless her stealing amounted to enough to cause the store a serious loss. Professional shoplifters had also been in the habit of affecting the when apprehended but since retailers had become so exacting in their demand for Store owners were then in the habit in the case of known shoplifters of reporting their description to other stores. When a different store owner was asked what proportion of shoplifters were female, he replied. Store detectives were sometimes ex-police officers but more frequently there were experience salespeople, usually men. Long service enabled them to become familiar with faces. Among the large retail premises in uptown New York in 1883 it was reported that.

Macy and Co. had a female store detective, Mary Plunkett, who started work with the retailer in 1879, becoming a store detective in 1888. Seven years later she estimated she had been involved in over 100 shoplifting arrests. She did not believe in kleptomania, stating, Explaining Macy's policy of dealing with people apprehended for shoplifting Plunkett commented:

An example of the kind of fuss sometimes created when a women was arrested could be seen in 1905 when store detective John Larkin apprehended a well-dressed, middle-aged woman in a large department store. She responded by. This caused a crowd of patrons in the store to gather around Larkin, as they did not know the woman was under arrest. When he took her outside into the street to be sent to the police station she screamed out noisily with the result that another crowd swarmed around Larkin. While this woman had stolen items worth \$3.50 she had on her person \$400. Larkin said he had arrested the same woman two years earlier on the same charge and that she was released.

Some \$500,000 of goods was said to be shoplifted annual from New York stores, in 1906, Lawyer Mark Alter, who had defended over 500 people accused of shoplifting (all woman) said that of the 4,000 arrests each year for the offence only about 700 made it into court and of that number not more than 50 were convicted, he added. Shoplifters would be taken to an office in the store and questioned closely. If it was decided to release the accused without further prosecution, that person was required to sign an agreement releasing the store from all liabilities from damage suits, a precaution said to be necessary.

Christmas had become such an active time for shoplifters by the turn of the century that many of the larger retailers employed extra detectives. On one December day in 1907, two

detectives employed in one department store arrested six people for the offence, all in separate incidents. One woman explained to her captors:

That same month on one day in court 30 people appeared on shoplifting charges, all from separate incidents. Most were paroled. However, one was sentenced to 20 days for stealing lace handkerchiefs.

So common was the offence that in 1908 Leslie Graff, secretary of the Retail Dry Goods Association of New York City, declared on shoplifters. Having stood the drain as long as they could, this merchants' trade group announced that every case of shoplifting henceforth detected would be vigorously prosecuted. Every retailer said likely to suffer from shoplifting was represented in the group. Also, the district attorney had agreed to cooperate in obtaining convictions. This may have been one of the first times such a pronouncement was made, but it would not be the last. The declaration that all those apprehended would be prosecuted was never put into practice. Graff explained that the explicit understanding was that when once a case of shoplifting was detected the matter passed completely out of the hands of the owners of the store where the theft took place, and they would have no right to interfere with the prosecution. Supposedly that would end the practice whereby people apprehended in a store pleaded with the proprietor with tears streaming down their cheeks, and often were dealt with leniently. Under Graff's plan that could not happen as the merchants themselves would be helpless since prosecution passed to the State and to the Retail Dry Goods Association legal staff. As to who was doing the shoplifting Graff said:

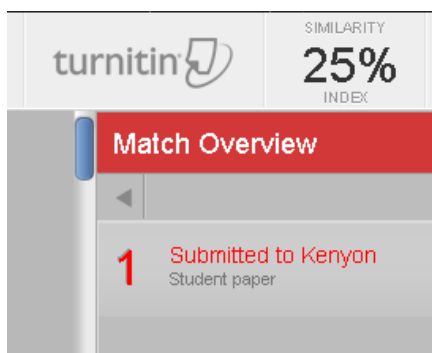
At another retailer, a store detective commented that his establishment didn't fear professional thieves, nor the poor people who stole from need. Rather, The reporter interviewing the detective went on to describe the scene of customers in a fashionable department store by saying. He went on to add.


Methods of shoplifting have changed little in the past hundred years. At the start of the 1900s one method was to try on new clothes, such as coats and dresses, and walk out wearing them, leaving the old, and worthless, behind. Another method was to look at lace items, scarves for example, accumulate a big pile, and then try and secrete one or more items away perhaps in a muff or jacket. One woman had a hollow heel fashioned in her shoes, another had puffs of hair lacquered to extra stiffness, to act as a receptacle for small items. Some women used unbuttoned shirtwaists to stow goods in, or inside low shoes, or up the openings of gloves. Items were also transported in the armpit, the muff, bag, or coat. One woman made off with a \$200 silk gown. She had rolled the gown up and carried it off held between her knees, walking only with the lower part of her legs. At one leading retailer, the detective estimated that, combined, New York City's leading shops lost \$1 million per year to shoplifting. Yet he still let many of those he apprehended go without further prosecution. Those released had to fill out a form, a sort of confessional, which was then kept in the store's safe. Usually they were also told to never enter the store again. Regarding the mechanics of the arrest procedure the detective observed.

London, England, was experiencing the same type of problem in its fashionable West End retailing district. Said the manager of a department store located there; A problem was that the first offender group kept being replenished. Why? This manager commented.

London shop owners had united to fight their own war against shoplifters. Blacklists had been drawn up and circulated to other retailers with all the clerks ordered not to give service to the people on the lists. That was a preventive measure but the real problem lay in suppression of a practice which, noted one account. Methods used by English shoplifters included utilizing a bag with a false bottom, a garter with a row of hooks, a hole through a skirt which allowed the passage of goods into a secret pocket in the underskirt, dropping small articles down the neck of the neck while ostensibly arranging the hair. A more elaborate method involved placing wax under the edge of a jewelry counter. Then the customer would examine items, discretely sticking an item such as a ring on the wax. Deciding not to buy anything the customer left the store. If apprehended, a search would of course yield nothing. Later a confederate would make a trivial purchase at the counter and retrieve the items. Also utilized were the hollow book, jewels hidden in the hair and even a secret pocket in the collar of a pet dog. Such animals were taught to out of the shop and go home.

Not long before World War I began Boston District Attorney Joseph Pelletier declared that shoplifting cost each of the large department stores of that city an average of \$50,000 annually. He recommended that merchants protect their goods with glass cases or wire screens.



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