

Reading Blue Jeans

Clothing and Culture

Legal Niceties

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Rivets And Button Flies

San Francisco was a small but thriving frontier seaport in 1848. A harbor town, all about shipping and commerce.... Until someone discovered gold nearby. Men seeking a quick fortune flooded the town around 1849. These original San Francisco forty-niners rushed to the hills of California to pan for gold.

A German immigrant named Levi Strauss came to San Francisco during the excitement; not to pan for gold, but to open a west coast branch of his brothers' New York wholesale dry goods business -- selling clothing, blankets, tin plates, cups, needles, fabric, and household items. Levi sold white cotton fabric to Jacob Davis, a tailor in Reno Nevada. Davis used the fabric to make work pants for laborers – surveyors, teamsters, and woodcutters. But the men found the pants didn't hold up to the rigors of long days of hard labor. Davis decided to strengthen the pocket corners using metal rivets.

The pants were a hit in Reno and other tailors were starting to imitate his design, so Davis decided to apply for a patent. But he didn't have the \$68 filing fee. Davis wrote to Levi Strauss suggesting they hold the patent together. Strauss saw the potential and agreed. On May 20, 1873, the two men received a patent for a “riveted overall.”

The invention proved popular and Strauss sought to establish his brand name. So he displayed a leather tag on the rear waistband showing a pair of horses, trying (without success) to tear the pants hitched between them. The picture conveyed the idea of tough work pants even to the many consumers who could not read. Many called them the “two horse brand.” The tag is still used today.

The metal rivets and buttons still found on many blue jeans are period details. They tell of a past when labor was hard enough to tear pants apart. They mark a garment “invented” before modern synthetic thread. The cotton thread that was originally used could not stand the rough use of the pants. But the metal rivets easily handled the strain of heavy work.

What about those little buttons on the fly of classic blue jeans? They too are period details. Button fly jeans are a reminder of the American frontier in the 19th century, a time before zippers were invented. For seventy years, denim jeans had no zippers. It was the Lee company, one of Strauss's competitors, that introduced the “Hookless Fastener” in 1926. It sought to ease complaints that the button fly front was hard to undo quickly. The Lee company ran a contest to name this new button replacement and decided to call it the “Whizit.” The invention stuck, but not the name. Zippers were not introduced on Levis until 1954.

The copper rivets became less important as blue jeans became more popular. Rivets caused problems – cowboys complained they scratched their leather saddles and homemakers found they nicked furniture as well. In the late 1930s they were moved to inside the back pockets. The rivets were removed entirely during World War II to preserve copper for the war. In the 1960s, they were removed entirely from the back pockets and replaced with bar tacking. The post-war version of the 501 jeans restored rivets, but only to the watch pocket and front. Other brands still pay homage to the past by using metal or rivet-like decorations. The rivets in many brands of blue jeans today are no longer made of copper.

Denim And The Global Market

The first Levi Strauss Company pants were made by seamstresses working at home. As demand increased the company collected its stitchers in a small factory on Fremont Street managed by Jacob Davis. Even in the 19th century the problem of finding workers to make garments and competition for labor became a problem. Several days of rioting erupted in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1877. American-born citizens feared Chinese immigrants willing to work for lower wages would take their jobs, especially in the garment industry. Over 200 years later, some Americans have the same worries - but in the 21st century the factories are located in China.

Levi Strauss, not wanting to exploit the immigrants, assured his fellow San Franciscans that he would employ only white "American" labor. His response at the time was welcomed by most Californians. In fact, Congress had passed the Chinese Exclusion Act six years earlier. At the time, discrimination was supported both by the Federal Government and the courts.

In later decades Levi Strauss & Co. earned a reputation as a company with a social conscience. It opened integrated factories in California and the U.S. South long before required by law. And in the 1990s, Levi Strauss & Co., was one of the last garment makers to move production toward lower wages in the global marketplace.

Origin of Denim

Both denim and jeans are foreign born imports – just like most of the first Americans to wear them. The name denim is possibly from *serge de Nîmes*, French for the "cloth from Nîmes", a city in southern France. However, it's impossible to know the exact origins of the word denim, or even what cloth it originally referred to. We do know that another fabric often used for work clothes was first produced for sailors in Genoa, Italy, and was pronounced in English as *jean*. It was a lighter fabric than the denim we know, but became a universal name for work pants of any kind.

Amoskeag Manufacturing Company

California was not a center of textile production in 1850, so the blue jeans story turns to New England. Strauss bought his denim from the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company of Manchester, NH. The mills were enormous, stretching more than a mile on both sides of the river. The mill had a natural advantage – the Amoskeag Falls on the Merrimack River. The water supplied power and made transporting cotton possible. Amoskeag Mills became the world's largest textile factory, producing an incredible fifty miles of cloth every hour.

At first, only young women worked at the Amoskeag mills. As the mill grew men were hired after the Civil War, as were many immigrants, especially from Canada. Children also worked in the mills. School was not required and children always worked hard on family farms. Child labor was legal and quite common.

The mill brought great prosperity to Manchester – for a while. After World War I, many textile mills moved to the South with its large source of labor and proximity to cotton fields. New England's loss was the Southeast's gain. Eventually, the Amoskeag Company had to lower wages to stay in business, causing the workers to strike in 1922. The company reopened, but closed forever in 1935.

Some of the old Amoskeag mill buildings still stand. New England is no longer a major producer of denim, and Manchester residents have found other jobs. The old mill has been turned into offices, and a shopping center.

Modern Textile Mills

A modern textile mill seems almost deserted amid the roar of machinery. Less than a thousand workers today make more denim than ten or twenty thousand two centuries ago. You could say technology put people “out of jobs.” You could also say it freed millions from tending machines so they could be productive in ways never imagined by 19th century mill workers.

Manchester, New Hampshire thought their waterfall gave them a big advantage in producing textiles. It did – for a time. And cheap labor and closeness to cotton fields gave an advantage to the American southeast – for a time. East Asia and Brazil are today’s largest textile producers. Arvind Mills in India is one of the world’s largest denim manufacturers. History suggests their advantage will not last forever.

Blue Jeans are International

Blue jeans are truly international. Even the cotton thread in denim is often a blend of fibers from around the globe. Textile companies use multiple sources to insure consistency. So a single strand of cotton thread might contain fibers from the plains of Texas, the fields of India, and the farms of Azerbaijan.

Blue jeans are worn worldwide today. In Amsterdam, 40% of the people wear jeans on any given day. In Beijing, jeans and uniforms fill Tiananmen Square. They may be cut and sewn in Vietnam or China, using denim from mills in India or Turkey and synthetic indigo dye from Germany or Brazil, but they are still seen as uniquely American.

Blue

Another detail of blue jeans that speaks of history is their color. Why are they blue? The color in blue jeans is the blue of one plant widely grown in early America... Indigo. Indigo colored the uniforms of the rebellious Americans in the revolutionary war. It was the blue of the red, white, and blue. Indigo was the leading crop in early South Carolina. Ten years before the American Revolution, South Carolina exported five hundred tons of indigo a year, most produced on plantations by slave labor.

For the past century, almost all the blue dye in denim has been man-made. Synthetic indigo was invented in 1905 by a German chemist -- Adolf von Baeyer -- the same Baeyer whose research led to synthetic aspirin and many of today’s plastics.

Although denim appears dark blue, only about two thirds of the yarns are dyed blue. The lengthwise yarn (the warp) is blue, but the horizontal yarn (the weft) is undyed. Denim often has two or three blue warp yarns for every white weft. The weft is the “natural” color of cotton. Warp yarn has to be dipped in indigo dye three to twelve times to get the right color. Slice a yarn of indigo dyed cotton crosswise and you’ll see it still has a white core. That’s one reason blue jeans fade with repeated washings. But this imperfection is part of what makes denim changeable and lovable.

Belt Loops, Watch Pockets, and “501”

Belt Loops

Levi Strauss made a variety of garments, but what we call a “blue jean” was born as a “waist overall.” The bib front overall was worn even before the U.S. was a country. They were called overalls because they were worn “over all” the other clothes. The riveted pants lacked the traditional bib front found on most work garments at the time.

With the top half gone, how would these new waist overalls stay up? This close up of a pair of jeans from around 1879 shows rivets to hold suspenders and a cloth cinch to tighten or loosen the waist. For the first seventy years of their existence Levi’s blue jeans did not have belt loops. They were added first in 1922. Even through the 1930s, pants were more likely to be held up by suspenders than belts.

Watch Pocket

Another historical detail on blue jeans is that small pocket underneath the belt line. What’s it for?

When the first patent for “waist overalls” expired in 1890, Strauss added a watch pocket to the original design. Remember that in 1890, the wristwatch had not yet been invented. Small watches were carried in pockets, much like today’s cell phones.

Pocket watches have long gone out of fashion, but the watch pocket remains useful in the 21st century. With the popularity of portable music players, Levi Strauss & Company introduced “red wire” jeans that update the watch pocket into an iPod holder complete with a built-in remote.

501

Around 1890 Strauss assigned lot number 501 to jeans featuring six copper rivets, a button fly, and heavyweight denim. They featured a rear pocket design showing a pair of arches made with orange thread. The pocket stitch was trademarked in 1943 and remains one of the oldest design trademarks in the U.S.

Does the number 501 have special meaning? No one knows for sure. Many of Levi’s records were lost in the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906. We do know that 501s are the best-selling garment of all time.

How Blue Jeans Invented Teens

Denim was once a cloth that communicated class distinction. It spoke of the frontier west, the farmer, the worker, the poor and dispossessed. Charlie Chaplin is thrown in jail in the 1936 movie *Modern Times* and plays his scenes in a blue denim prison uniform. Although some social groups began wearing denim as everyday clothing in the 1930s and 1940s, it wasn't until the 1950s that young people changed the meaning of blue denim permanently.

The idea that “teenagers” were a tribe-like group going through a stage of life hardly existed before 1950. The word “teenager” was not widely used until after World War II. There were no teen fashions, music, or language. Adolescence as a separate stage of life is a surprisingly modern invention.

Before the 1950s teens wore uniforms to school... or whatever adults told them to wear. The first teens that wore blue jeans to school in the early 1950s tested adult values. Some school systems outlawed blue jeans, finding them not suited to the learning environment.

Hollywood helped fuel the connection between youthful rebellion and jeans. Marlon Brando wore trademarked 501s in *The Wild One*. And a jeans-clad James Dean starred in the 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause*. Blue jeans changed from being a symbol of the rugged frontier into a garment that showed at least a hint of defiance toward adult authority. They were part of what became known as the “counterculture.” Jeans on Elvis had an entirely different meaning than jeans on John Wayne.

In the late 1950s, advertising helped suggest jeans were acceptable in school, not only for juvenile delinquents. Levi's ran a campaign said “Denim: Right for School” and Erwin Mills advertised their garments as “Clean Jeans for Teens”

In the 1960s, television, music, and mass magazines helped create a youth culture. Teens for the first time were aware of what teens outside their neighborhood wore and how they acted. That realization popularized the idea of “cool.” Urban kids wore jeans as if to show membership in the new tribe of teens. In San Francisco, Donald and Doris Fisher set up a store selling records and Levi jeans. They named their store “Gap” taking the name from the phrase “generation gap.”

Blue jeans became to clothing what the electric guitar was to music. The guitar was a simple folk instrument. But once electrified it helped blend youth culture and music. And that youth culture wore a garment that was once a simple garment for workers and farmers. The electric guitar and blue jeans helped define a culture and a generation.

Women and Jeans

Women and pants have a long and tortured history together. In the 1600s, English women could be executed, just for wearing men's clothing. By the first part of the 20th century, stars like Sarah Bernhardt, Greta Garbo, and Marlene Dietrich saw pants as both fashionable and liberating.

The first jeans for women were far from a fashion statement. Women flooded the workforce during World War I, since there were not enough men to run the factories. To clothe these hard-working women, the Lee company made women's "Union-alls" in 1914, and Levi's followed with "Freedomalls" in 1918.

In the late 1930s, denim western wear became a fashionable fad – Levi's introduced "Dude Ranch Duds" as well as a campaign called Lady Levi's. Denim dude wear for women was featured in influential magazines like *Vogue* and *Mademoiselle*. The first popular woman to wear blue jeans was a fictional character – Rosie the Riveter. She represented the power of women in factories during World War II. Late in the war, a photographer from Life Magazine first captured the now-standard college attire of sweatshirts and jeans. In the 1950s and 1960s, Marilyn Monroe wore jeans in many of her films. Lee Jeans sponsored her film *Bus Stop*, and she wore JC Penney's brand jeans in *River of No Return*. In the early 1960s, Levi's Strauss offered colored Ranch Pants in red, gold, pink, blue, and indigo. But blue jeans were still designed for men. It wasn't until the late 1970s that Calvin Klein began to design jeans to fit women's shapes.

Fashion And Communication

Branding

Most agree we wear blue jeans to be ourselves. But the desire to be ourselves ironically leads us to wear the same basic garment as everyone else. So we need to personalize our jeans. One way is by branding.

This small red tab, introduced in 1936, may be the first example of clothing with a brand name on the outside. Today, it's difficult to find clothing that does NOT show a brand name on the outside.

In the 1970s, designers such as Gloria Vanderbilt, Bill Blass, Sasson, and Calvin Klein helped turn what was once a long lasting, practical, commodity into fashion --an item that went out of style long before the garments wore out. Designers used a brand to tell a story. Consumers buy jeans, but they wear the label.

Fashion

Blue jeans were not invented as a fashion statement; they were made to last, not impress. A common practice among cowboys was to jump into the horse trough wearing their new jeans. The jeans would mold to his shape as they dried. The first pre-shrunk jeans were introduced in 1936, and didn't become mainstream until the 1960s. For most people before the 1960s, denim meant work pants – useful for rounding up cattle but not for leisurewear.

Blue jeans are often forbidden at even casual gatherings at private country clubs. The clubs claim to prefer a well-dressed membership. Many schools today have uniforms or dress codes that keep blue jeans out of the classroom. Some dress codes forbid jeans made of denim, but allow corduroy.

Most clothing is like lawn furniture. Once it wears out, we throw it away or donate it to charity. But blue jeans are more like a friend than a garment. The creases, tears and marks draw a road map of the wearer's life. Vintage blue jeans often command a high price, like antique furniture or old paintings. And like the patina of furniture, the evidence of use as seen in wear and tear makes them more valuable.

Wearing worn jeans was once a way to reject the idea of a throwaway consumer society that values only what is new. But jean makers saw a market, so they created new jeans that looked worn or disfigured. In the 1980s, jeans makers turned to washing jeans in rocks – stone washing.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, wearing new pants to school showed your parents had enough money to clothe you. Kids who wore tattered jeans were the poor kids. In the 21st century, tattered jeans became a fashion statement. Wearing new jeans with a nice straight crease was definitely not cool.

Some jeans makers offer a chance to customize jeans by giving purchasers access to stones, stencils, razors and other implements. Or they offer monograms and color choices. Fashion designers produced jeans washed in stones, chemicals or enzymes. They rubbed jeans with machines or sanded them by hand to soften the fabric. One cool-seeking company marketed jeans slashed with two-inch razor cuts. Another offered "shotgun" denim based on jeans used as target practice. Grunge music made ripped jeans even more popular.

Conclusion

The humble work pants designed for miners in California and favored by hard riding cowboys on the frontier is today a fashion statement and one of the most popular garments on the planet - Americans spend about \$15 billion a year on jeans.

Designer Bill Blass called classic blue jeans “the best single item of apparel ever designed.” Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss would likely agree. The inventors would recognize today’s blue jeans, but would be shocked at who was wearing them, and why.

Questions For Discussion

1. How are blue jeans and labor intertwined?

Discussion may include:

- Chinese Labor
- Child Labor
- Slave Labor
- Women Labor
- Laborers who wore jeans

2. How have jeans challenged the American social structure?

Discussion may include:

- The development the teenage years being a separate stage in life
- Women donning pants as an exertion of independence and breaking traditional gender roles
- Jeans becoming acceptable daily wear at school and office
- The rise of countercultures: hippies, bikers, rockers

3. How did jeans become acceptable for daily wear?

Discussion may include:

- Advertising by manufacturers
- Fashion magazines such as *Mademoiselle* and *Vogue*
- Movies and movie stars
- Rock and roll

Research Topics

Levi Strauss
Jacob Davis
The origins of denim
Chinese labor in San Francisco
Levi Strauss & Co. and social consciousness
Denim production
Other blue jeans brands: Lee, Wrangler, Guess, GAP,
Amoskeag Manufacturing Company
Teenagers
Jeans in the movies
Jeans and advertising
Women and the wearing of pants and jeans
Indigo
Jeans and globalization
Stone-washing and other finishes
Jeans and fashion
Jean designers: Bill Blass, Gloria Vanderbilt, Calvin, Klein, etc.
Western wear
Recycled blue jeans

Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture

Multiple Choice Worksheet

Circle the best available answer for each of the following:

- 1) Jacob Davis applied what to blue jeans:
 - a) leather labels
 - b) buttons
 - c) zippers
 - d) copper rivets
- 2) Blue jeans are truly international because:
 - a) the cotton used to make denim is grown around the world
 - b) denim is woven in India
 - c) 40% of people in Amsterdam wear jeans on any given day
 - d) all of the above
- 3) The Amoskeag Manufacturing Company was in:
 - a) New York
 - b) California
 - c) Massachusetts
 - d) New Hampshire
- 4) The original Levi leather tag depicts:
 - a) two elephants
 - b) two tigers
 - c) two cows
 - d) two horses
- 5) Blue jeans fade because:
 - a) people wear them in the sun for too long
 - b) the cotton does not absorb the dye all the way through
 - c) chemicals in detergent bleach the fabric
 - d) none of the above
- 6) Denim may have originated in:
 - a) America
 - b) Ireland
 - c) France
 - d) Australia
- 7) The "Hookless Fastener" is an early name for:
 - a) snaps
 - b) zipper
 - c) button fly
 - d) Velcro
- 8) Strauss and Davis' patent was for:
 - a) riveted overall
 - b) coveralls
 - c) jumpsuit
 - d) blue jeans
- 9) How much of the threads in denim are dyed:
 - a) two-thirds
 - b) three-fourths
 - c) one-third
 - d) half
- 10) Blue jeans were originally designed for:
 - a) actresses
 - b) working men
 - c) prisoners
 - d) teenagers

Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture

Multiple Choice Worksheet Answer Key

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Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture Quiz

Match the words in the first column to the best available answer in the second column.

- | | | |
|-------|---|-----------------------|
| _____ | The word denim is derived from this French word | 1) jean |
| _____ | The plant used in dying denim | 2)warp |
| _____ | Year Davis and Strauss received a patent for the “riveted overall” | 3) Calvin Klein |
| _____ | Made jeans acceptable everyday wear | 4) indigo |
| _____ | The first popular woman to wear jeans | 5) stone washing |
| _____ | Designed jeans specifically for women | 6) serge de Nimes |
| _____ | The length-wise yarn in fabric is called the... | 7) teenagers |
| _____ | Sailors in Genoa, Italy wore clothing made of... | 8) 1873 |
| _____ | A method manufacturers use to make new jeans look worn | 9) brand |
| _____ | A trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer | 10) Rosie the Riveter |

Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture

Quiz Answer Key

Match the words in the first column to the best available answer in the second column.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 6) serge de Nimes | The word denim is derived from this French word |
| 4) indigo | The plant used in dying denim |
| 8) 1873 | Year Davis and Strauss received a patent for the “riveted overall” |
| 7) teenagers | Made jeans acceptable everyday wear |
| 10) Rosie the Riveter | The first popular woman to wear jeans |
| 3) Calvin Klein | Designed jeans specifically for women |
| 2) warp | The length-wise yarn in fabric is called the... |
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| 5) stone washing | A method manufacturers use to make new jeans look worn |
| 9) brand | A trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer |

Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture Quiz

Match the year with the event

- | | | |
|-------|---|-----------|
| _____ | Davis and Strauss received a patent for the “riveted overall” | 1) 1926 |
| _____ | The Gold Rush began | 2) 1954 |
| _____ | Zippers were added to Levis | 3) 1960s |
| _____ | Bar tacking was added to pockets | 4) 1873 |
| _____ | The Amoskeag Mills closed permanently | 5) 1877 |
| _____ | Levi Strauss & Co. moved production overseas | 6) 1905 |
| _____ | Rioting broke out in Chinatown | 7) 1922 |
| _____ | Lee jeans introduced the “hookless fastener” | 8) 1849 |
| _____ | Adolf von Baeyer invented synthetic indigo | 9) 1935 |
| _____ | Levi’s added belt loops | 10) 1990s |

Reading Blue Jeans: Clothing and Culture

Quiz Answer Key

Match the year with the event.

- 4) 1873 Year Davis and Strauss received a patent for the “riveted overall”
- 8) 1849 The Gold Rush began
- 2) 1954 Zippers were added to Levis
- 3) 1960s Bar tacking was added to pockets
- 9) 1935 The Amoskeag Mills closed permanently
- 10) 1990s Levi Strauss & Co. moved production overseas
- 5) 1877 Rioting broke out in Chinatown in this year
- 1) 1926 Year Lee jeans introduced the “hookless fastener”
- 6) 1905 Adolf von Baeyer invented synthetic indigo
- 7) 1922 Levi’s added belt loops

LEVI STRAUSS

1829-1902

Birth

February 26, 1829, in Buttenheim, Germany. His given name is Löb, also spelled Loeb. He adopted Levi after immigrating to America, reason unknown.

Death

September 26, 1902, after an illness

Parents

Father: Hirsch Strauss, a peddler – died 1845

Mother: Rebecca Haas Strauss

Married in 1822

Siblings

Half-siblings (Hirsch's first wife was Emanuela Schneider)

Jakob (also spelled Jacob)

Jonas – immigrated to US

Louis – immigrated to US

Mathilde – became Mary in US

Full-sibling

Vögela – became Fanny in US. Fanny married David Stern, another Jewish immigrant peddler. The couple moved to St. Louis, MO, and later to San Francisco.

Some sources say there were three sisters in the Strauss family. The only other name that is mentioned is Maila, who may have also been Mathilde/Mary.

Spouse

Never married. Levi lived with his sister Fanny and her family in San Francisco. It is said that she arranged trysts with married women for him.

Children

None. His estate and business passed to his nephews

Immigration

1847

Spring 1853, granted American citizenship

Education

None of the sources mention a formal education

Early Career

Peddler in New York City. To make a greater profit and to escape competition, Levi began peddling in the New York countryside. He would stock his bags on Monday morning and set out of the city carrying up to 100 pounds of merchandise. Levi would return by Friday for the Jewish Sabbath.

In 1848, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky, to work as a peddler.

Patents

Rivets to reinforce seams – patent granted on May 20, 1873, in the names of both Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis. Patent expired in 1890. # 139,121

Design and Structure Elements

1873 – Jacob Davis used orange thread to match the rivets. Levi Strauss began doing so too.

The curving Vs on the back pockets were added, called the arcuate design

Pockets -- two in front, one in back, reinforced with rivets

1890 – the watch pocket was added

1905 – a second pocket added to the back – this five-pocket jean became standard 501

1936 – The red Levi's tab at the back pocket was added

1940s – rivet at the crotch removed

1943 – the arcuate trademarked

Other Clothing Lines

1912 – 1940 – Coveralls – one-piece denim jumpsuit for children

1918 – Freedomalls – overalls for women

1930s – 1940s – Lady Levi's, discontinued due to fabric shortages during WWII

1935 – Dude Ranch Duds

1950s – Women's jeans with a side zipper

1960s – Ranch Pants in red, gold, pink, blue, indigo for ladies

1967 – Introduced stretch fabric

Other Business Ventures

Served on the boards of the Nevada Bank, the Union Trust Company, and the San Francisco Gas Company

Purchased Mission and Pacific Woolen Mills in 1875. The mill made the lining for Levi's riveted clothing.

An investor of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads in California

A founder of the San Francisco Board of Trade (1877)

Competition

Can't Bust 'Em workwear owned by Eloesser-Heynemann, founded in 1851, jeans made in 1880

Boss (Los Angeles)

Samson

Harrison & Harrison (Indiana)

Murphy Grant & Co. of the Bay Area – brand Nonpareil

Sweet-Orr (New York)

Blackbear (Seattle)

Dixie King (Dallas)

Iron King Overall Company (Baltimore)

Double Ware (Boston)

OshKosh B'Gosh (Wisconsin) est. 1895

Larned, Carter & Co. (Detroit) brand Headlight est. 1897

US Overall Company est. 1918

Lee

Wrangler

Philanthropic Support

Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum and Home

Eureka Benevolent Society

Hebrew Board of Relief

University of California – created 28 perpetual scholarships, four for each congressional district

Home for Aged Israelites

Roman Catholic Orphanage

Protestant Orphanage

Temple Emanu-El

U.S. BLUE JEANS MANUFACTURERS

Lee

Founder: H. D. Lee

Born: 1849, Vermont

Company/Founder History:

Moved to Salina, Kansas, and opened H. D. Lee Mercantile carrying packaged foods. Opened a cold storage division and a flourmill producing Admiral and American Eagle brands.

Between 1900 and 1903, provided the financing to Charles L. Schwartz and Norb. F. Schwartz to open Lee Hardware Company. The hardware store carried inferior denim clothing. Lee began manufacturing his own work wear under the brand Jumbo. Also produced a coverall, to be worn over other clothing, for automobile drivers called the Union-All.

Acquisitions:

1946 – Eloesser-Heyneman, makers of the Can't Bust 'Em line originally established in 1880. This acquisition also included the Boss of the Road brand established by the Neustadter Brothers.

Innovations:

1927 – Added the “Amazing Hookless Fastener” (zipper) fly

1946 – Removed hip pocket rivets

Products:

1914 – Union-alls sized for women

1935 – Lee Riders

1959 – Lee Westerners, white jeans for women

Mascot:

Buddy Lee doll – designed by Lee salesman Chester Reynolds in 1920; Buddy Lee retired in 1960, but reinstated in 1998

Spokespersons:

Babe Ruth

Slogans:

“Lee Dungarees: Can't Bust 'Em, est. 1880”

“The Jeans That Built America”

Wrangler

Founder: C. C. Hudson

Born: 1877, Tennessee

Company/Founder History:

In 1897, Hudson took a job in Greensboro sewing buttons in an overall factory. The factory failed. Hudson, his brother Homer, and a few others collected money to purchase the sewing machines. This group formed the Hudson Overall Company in 1904. After initial success of hiring out the sewing, in 1919 they built their first plant and renamed the company Blue Bell. By the 1930s, the company was one of the largest work wear manufacturers.

Acquisitions:

January 1, 1826, Big Ben (formerly Jellico Clothing Company of Jellico, Tennessee)

1936 – Globe Superior Corporation of Abingdon, Illinois

1943 – Casey Jones (based in Virginia and Maryland) who had an older line called Wrangler

Innovations:

1936 – Introduced the new Sanforizing process developed by Sanford Cluett. The cotton fibers are mechanically stretched before washing and drying to create pre-shrunk fabric.

Products:

Super Big Ben overalls

1947 – authentic western style jean – Wranglers

Cowboy Cut – designed by Rodeo Ben, personal designer for Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. Features: higher hip pockets, wider belt loops

13MWZ (Men with Zippers)

1950s – Jeanies of the West ladies' jeans

Spokespersons:

Rodeo champions Jim Shoulders “Babe Ruth of the Rodeo” and Freckles Brown

Slogan:

“Since 1947 cowboys have been putting on our jeans. Since 1947, bulls have been trying to get them off.”

Guess

Founder: Georges, Armond, Paul, and Maurice Marciano

Company/Founder History:

The Marciano brothers were born in Ouarzazate, Morocco, and moved to California in 1977. With the financial backing of the Nakash family, owners of Jordache, the brothers established Guess? in 1981. During the 1990s, the company faced trouble with the US Department of Labor for paying their employees less than the minimum wage and no overtime. In 1996, the company moved its sewing production to Mexico. Today the company maintains a favorable reputation and continues to expand its products.

Innovations:

Guess was an early fashion jeans company

Products:

- 1981 – a three-zipper jean called “Marilyn”
- 1983 – began producing men’s jeans
- 2004 – Marciano line, upscale clothing for women
- 2005 – perfume
- 2007 – G by Guess, affordable clothing for teenagers

Spokespersons:

Claudia Schiffer, Valeria Mazza, Adriana Lima, Drew Barrymore, Anna Nicole Smith, Paris Hilton, Jordan

Prison Blues

Founded:

1997 in Oregon

Innovation:

Created private-sector relationship with the Oregon State Department of Corrections to use prison labor to manufacture blue jeans

Glossary

- Bar Tack** A close series of stitches crossing a piece of cloth, as in an article of clothing, in order to reinforce it at a point of concentrated strain.
- Brand** A trademark or distinctive name identifying a product or a manufacturer.
- Counterculture** A culture, especially of young people, with values or lifestyles in opposition to those of the established culture.
- Dry Goods** Textiles, clothing, and related articles of trade.
- Indigo**
a. Any of various shrubs or herbs of the genus *Indigofera* in the pea family, having odd-pinnate leaves and usually red or purple flowers in auxiliary racemes.
b. A blue dye obtained from these plants or produced synthetically.
- Jean** A fabric used for work clothes.
- Patent** A patent for an invention is the grant of a property right to the inventor, issued by the Patent and Trademark Office.
- Period Clothing** Replicas of clothing worn in history.
- Pre-shrunk** Of, relating to, or being fabric or a garment that has undergone shrinking during manufacture to minimize subsequent shrinkage.
- Rivets** A metal bolt or pin having a head on one end, inserted through aligned holes in the pieces to be joined and then hammered on the plain end so as to form a second head. For jeans, rivets are used at joints where wear is common, for example pocket corners.
- Serge de Nimes** French for the “cloth from Nimes”, may be the origin of “denim.”
- Stone Wash** A wash with stones to achieve a worn appearance.
- Tailor** One that makes, repairs, and alters garments such as suits, coats, and dresses.
- Teenager** A person between the ages of 13 and 19; an adolescent.
- Wholesale** Of, relating to, or engaged in the sale of goods in large quantities for resale.

For More Information...

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