

Blog Post:

For our blog site we will be focusing on denim jeans and how they were invented, what was used before, and how the styles have evolved over time. The antecedent to jeans were cotton and wool pants, the problem with using these fabrics was that they were not durable and they would split and were easily ruined while working. Working men needed pants that could withstand different environments without being ruined.

The idea of making sturdy pants came to Levi Strauss when he was selling goods and a man asked him if he was selling any pants that would not rip and could withstand work.¹ (Weidt). He was not selling this product at the time but he went to a tailor and asked to make overalls using a brown thick canvas because it would be durable than pants made of wool or cotton.² Once the word got spread on how Levi these great pants, people started buying them from him. He ran out of the canvas he was using, so he asked for more canvas to be sent to him from his brothers in New York, but they actually sold him denim which was a heavy cotton material³ (Weidt).

The original brown canvas overalls evolved over time with more pockets and different buttons used and different colors of denim and of course changed from overalls to just pants.⁴ We will go in depth on the change of denim jeans and overalls through history on society and workers. He also added stitching on the back pockets that did not serve a

¹ Maryanne, Weidt. *Mr. Blue Jeans: A Story about Levi Strauss* (Minnesota: Lerner Classroom Publishing, 1990.)

² Iain Finalyson, *Denim: An American Legend* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1990.)

³ *Ibid.*,

⁴ *Ibid.*,

purpose besides to show his brand by the “shape of an American eagle’s wings. The stitching was purely decorative-it served no purpose”.⁵ Strauss and his company were all about marketing and making their product a statement.

At this time there were no other pants like Levis, however a possible alternative to Levi might have been Jacob Davis, had he not been behind Levi with less resources. He was an entrepreneur and people in his town kept complaining about their pants ripping at the seams so he thought of using un-dyed duck cloth, “purchased on credit from Levi Strauss & Co., Davis outfitted the woodcutter with the strongest pants he could conceive.”⁶ The pants became a hit but he did not get a patent quickly because in the past he had many failed attempts with getting patents. He wrote to Levi Strauss and “offered a half interest in the proposed riveted pants business in exchange for the price of the patent application.”⁷ Once the patent was approved for Strauss’s patent, Strauss brought Davis to San Francisco to overlook the workers cutting cloth for the production of the new riveted trousers. So in the end Davis worked with Strauss and his idea was combined with Strauss.

Our main focus for this research will be the interaction of jeans with American society and culture. We will study how society evolves with jeans, what different styles are invented, and the different ways they can be worn throughout history. The original purpose of these overalls were designed for working men, but somewhere along the way common people started to take up wearing denim jeans. ⁸(Downey) We will research how people first

⁵ Ibid.,

⁶ James, Sullivan, *Jeans: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006.)

⁷ Ibid.,26.

⁸ Lynn Downey, *Levi Strauss: The Man Who Gave Blue Jeans to the World*. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.)

got interested in jeans without being a worker. We are interested in how the style of jeans has changed so much over the years, how to wear jeans, and how many old designs keep coming back into style.

To create the documentary we plan on using the Production Studio in the HCC. The studio is equipped with cameras, a green screen, lights, and microphones so we will not need any equipment. We will work through the details of the documentary later on in our research.
