

# The Origin of Levi Jeans

## - a fashion history

### I The Levi Empire

Read and/or listen to text about the Levi Strauss Business Empire.

Levi Strauss was born in 1829 in the town of Buttenheim, Bavaria, and emigrated with his brothers to America in 1847. His real name was Loeb Strauss, but he preferred to be called Levi. He arrived in New York City and started a textile and tailoring business. After a few years, Levi moved to San Francisco where there was a massive influx of miners, hoping for a quick way to make money in the Gold Rush of the 1850's.

He tried to sell canvas material to the miners for their tents or wagons, but the interest was not great, so he decided to make canvas trousers instead. These trousers were not the most comfortable, as the material was rough, but they were definitely durable and became an immediate success for Levi. The trousers were nicknamed Levi's after the inventor and were known as waist overalls, worn over a pair of regular trousers, acting as a protective layer.

In the 1860's instead of using canvas Levi changed to using denim, which was a material from France. Its original name was "serge de Nimes" which resulted in the new name of Denim. This material was much softer and gave greater comfort, but it was still tough enough to endure the hard work-

ing conditions of the miners. In addition to the change of material, he began in 1873 to dye the denim an indigo blue colour, which did not show stains or dirt so easily. Once again, the miners were delighted with the new product.

There was however a negative side to the softer denim material. The miners often carried heavy tools in their pockets and the denim ripped at the seams. The solution, was to add metal rivets which strengthened each pocket, but it was another tailor who came up with this idea. His name was Jacob Davis and he went into partnership with Levi. These rivets or studs, became a hallmark of the company's product.

Levi's, were originally trousers used solely by the working class, but in 1935 an advertisement featured in Vogue Magazine showed two high society women wearing skin-tight jeans and from that moment, jeans became the fashion for all from every walk of life.

By 1970 the Levi Strauss Company had become the largest clothing manufacturer in the world. The red tab on the rear pocket was added in 1936, so that Levi's could easily be identified from a distance and it is still a Levi trademark today.

## 2 Quiz online

Look at Levi Strauss Quiz online. This quiz is quite a challenge, but when the 10 answers are revealed, you will receive many more facts about Levi and his products.

Click: [funtrivia.com/playquiz/quiz16537812f05f8.html](http://funtrivia.com/playquiz/quiz16537812f05f8.html)



## 3 Commercials

There are great Levi Jeans commercials, especially the advertisements of the past. In 2000, the *Laundrette* advert for Levi's 501s was named the 6th best television commercial of all time.

Look at Levi Jeans commercials on **youtube.com**

Search: *Levi Jeans commercial*

What is similar in all the commercials? Which commercial is your favourite? Explain why.

## Future products

In 2006, the Denim giant Levi Strauss designed a pair of jeans, called RedWire DLX Jeans, which were able to control a wearer's Apple iPod music player. The RedWire DLX Jeans had an iPod remote control and docking station fitted in its pockets, and came complete with attached headphones. Launched in August 2006, the jeans cost approximately \$250. (1500 kroner) Levi Strauss is not the first firm to produce iPod-compatible clothing, but it is believed to be the first to do so for trousers or jeans.



## 4 Design changes

What do you think will be the next innovation from Levi's?

Read about the changes chronologically in the design of Levis: [designboom.com/eng/education/denim2.html](http://designboom.com/eng/education/denim2.html)

## 5 Different Styles of Jeans

Before you read this website see how many styles of jeans you know. Now find out, just how many different styles there have been.

Look on [wiki.answers.com](http://wiki.answers.com) and search *differences in style number of Levi's*

