

Jeans

Jeans were the classic clothes of the American West. In 1853, a young tailor from Germany, called Levi Strauss, began working in San Francisco. Levi sold thick canvas to miners; the miners used the canvas to make tents.

One day, a miner told Levi that he could not find trousers that were strong enough for work in the gold mines. Levi decided to make some trousers out of canvas. However, the canvas was rather heavy and stiff. Soon Levi found an alternative – a heavy textile from France. Americans called this 'denim'.

Denim was a bit lighter than canvas, but it was very strong; it was ideal for miners.

However, the original denim was almost white. The miners did not like the colour – it was very impractical. Their denim trousers got dirty as soon as they began working.

Because of this, Levi Strauss decided to use coloured denim, and he chose dark blue. In 1873, he began to make denim trousers with metal rivets¹ to make them stronger. This was a radical new idea: 'Blue jeans' had arrived!

Levi's jeans became very popular and sold very well. Miners liked them, but so did cowboys and other working men. Soon blue jeans became the classic American working trousers.

Today there are hundreds of different brands of jeans. Many top fashion brands, like *Armani* or *Benetton*, make their own blue jeans. But for real authentic jeans, 'Levi's' are still the most popular brand.