



DRESS LIKE IT'S 1899

THE POPULARITY OF CENTURY-OLD AMERICAN WORKWEAR BRANDS ISN'T FLEETING. THE CASE FOR STOCKING UP ON CLOTHING FOR LIFE

The only well-dressed men I have seen in America were the miners of the Rocky Mountains," wrote Oscar Wilde, following an 1882 tour of the country. "Indeed, I made some of them promise that when they again appeared in the more crowded scenes of Eastern civilization, they would still continue to wear their lovely costume, but I don't believe they will."

Wilde's hunch, that the miners would swiftly swap their dungarees for "the abomination of modern fashionable attire," was surely correct. But in recent years, century-old purpose-built apparel makers—including

Seattle outdoors outfitter Filson, Minnesota work-boot maker Red Wing, and Oregon wool miller Pendleton—have enjoyed a revival among white-collar weekenders. It started in Japan in the 1990s, and by 2007, the runways were lined with Red Wing-clad fashion editors. Six years on, the high-fashion crowd has moved on, but the heritage brands' most iconic garments continue to fly off shelves like it's 1899.

Is this a case of the masses following a few steps behind the fashion elite? Maybe. But Lesli Larson, co-founder of the blog and made-in-America fashion label Archival Clothing, believes the resurgence of American workwear reflects "a shift in point of

*** CLOTHES THAT WORK**
H. W. Carter & Sons
five-pocket jeans
(est. 1859)

Red Wing 875 Boot
(est. 1905)



view, not a trend. People are starting to pay attention to where and how their clothing is made." In other words, the appeal of a pair of chunky workboots is the fact the garments—designed so well 50 or a 100 years ago that they haven't changed since—are not simply fashion but *clothing*. As with the local food movement, peripheral trends emerge—witness endless farm-to-table bistros, and hip-meets-heritage collaborations (Pendleton for Opening Ceremony; Lee for Kris Van Assche)—but the big-picture shift is substantive and enduring.

With fashion as with food, the shift comes from a growing sense of the high humanitarian, ecological and aesthetic costs of low prices. As Chinese wages rise and Bangladeshi factories burn, quality manufacturing is trickling back to the U.S. Meanwhile, time-honored trades such as butchery, carpentry and barbering are enjoying renewed esteem. Workwear is back, perhaps, because work is.

"We've seen a transition from things being very disposable to people really understanding and appreciating craft," says Greg Chapman, the creative director of H. W. Carter & Sons, which popularized overalls after its founding in New Hampshire in 1859.

And certainly, these clothes are not disposable. After a year—as Zara produces roughly 12,000 different garments—your Red Wing 877s or H. W. Carter jeans will just be gaining some character. "When you break in raw denim, or rigid boots, and maintain them and repair them, they become part of you," says Chapman. "I got my first pair of Red Wings in 1991. I will have them until the day I die."

Benjamin Leszcz is a London-based writer who has yet to break in a pair of Red Wings

BEST PRACTICES

HOW TO HEM YOUR PANTS IN A HURRY By Graham Roumieu



Put on your pants. This is not something you can eyeball



Fold pant leg under and secure with double-sided tape



Remove pants carefully. Use a low iron to fuse the tape



You're pants are officially hemmed, at least until you can get to a real tailor