

Loveable Levis live on . . .

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In the 1850's, Strauss started using cotton material from Paris. The original 501 jeans were sold stiff and oversized. After a few washings, the pants shrunk to the right size. Miners, cowboys and farmers would sometimes put their new jeans on and dunk themselves in a watering trough. When dry, the shrunken pants fit.

Levis have gone through many changes. "Alkali Ike," a Virginia City miner, complained that his pockets kept ripping under the strain of his large haul and riveted pocket corners were born. The rivets were then removed 50 years later because they apparently scratched school desks, saddles and automobile paint. Walter Haas, Sr., then the presi-

dent of Levi Strauss & Co., requested the rivet in the crotch also be removed. Some cowboys had complained about the rivet before, but these appeals were laughed off. However, when Haas was once on a fishing trip, he crouched a little close to a campfire and the flames heated the rivet. The reinforcement's location was no longer a laughing

matter. The rivet was removed. In the 1930s, Levi's saddle up their reputation and headed into town. Easterners who had vacationed at Western dude ranches brought them home and made them a part of their everyday activities.

Levi's have been a basic part of many wardrobes ever since. These jeans are sold in stores like Richman Gordman, Miller & Paine and the Hitching Post/Wooden Nickel.

Dave Schofield, area manager in Richman Gordman's men's department, said Levi's make up about 10 to 15 percent of their denim sales. He said this is because of their basic design.

"Fashion goods are the icing on the cake, they're just something

extra," he said. "Basic outsells fashion 2 to 1 and sometimes 3 to 1."

Levi Strauss & Co. is adding fashion alternatives to its basic line, though. This year, Levi's will be available in black, bleached blue, charcoal, white, khaki, gray, natural and stripes.

Although salespeople said Levi's have always sold well, some said they have become more popular since the advertising campaign during the Los Angeles olympics. One salesperson said sales have picked up more since temperatures have begun to cool.

Schofield said the basic Levi line that has enjoyed increased popularity in the past months will always be in the market. However, he projected, they'll probably "fade again."

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