

The History of Boots

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Throughout history, costume then fashion footwear have reflected social, economic and political developments. Usually what started as a practical application in one part of the globe ended up as a fashion statement in another. Trade was primarily the reason for this movement but also war was another. The oldest boots in the world come from a clay impression originating in ancient Syria (Broby-Johansen, 1986). Cave painting in Spain dated between 12,000 and 15,000 BC, show a man in boots of skin and a woman in boots of fur. Persian funerary jars of around 3000BC made in the shapes of boots show the basic forms of ancient footwear. Boots were also found in the tomb of Khnumhotep (2140-1785 BC) in Egypt. Perhaps the greatest paradox of boots is although they were essentially practical items of clothing they have always been worn as fashion items for all, but the lowly peasant. Fine boots were important indicators of social status before the sixteenth century and continued to be so up until beyond World War I. Over the centuries their style gradually became less flamboyant but that did not reduce their importance. Sixteenth century boots, as worn by the gentlemen class, were extravagantly decorative. More practical forms of boots began to develop especially for horse riding. The rigours of horseback meant boots needed to be more rigid and protective. Improvements in transport meant by the early nineteenth century boots became normal daytime footwear for all smart and fashionable men. Top boots and dress boots were made of the finest leathers to be worn with the breeches tucked in. As the century continued these calf high boots were superseded by the much less flamboyant boots and spats which signified the tempered Victorian male's approach to dressing for vanity. Boots were never as flashy again until stage and film cowboys revived them in the 20s and 30s. The author attempts to expand on these historical changes.

Mesopotamian Boot

The earliest people to wear boots were the ancient Mesopotamians. They wore boots made from kid leather with laced closures. Between 3000-1400BC in Crete, both men and women wore calf high boots tied to their legs with thongs. The boot had a strip of leather against the anterior aspect of the leg and secured below the knee with a band of leather. The top of the foot was covered. (Bigelow, 1970 p37). People went barefoot in the house. Later the Cretans wore a puttee of leather. These were thick soled boots woven in red, white or yellow. Leggings were worn just below the knee and used when hunting. Women usually went barefoot but Amazon women wore boots very similar to those of men. In ancient Greece soldiers wore high boots. They were fitted to the leg and foot snugly and in some cases left the toes exposed. The boots were laced up the front of the leg ending at the top of the calf ended up at the top of the calf. Mycenaean men wore decorated calf length boots of pliable leather. By 5 BC young Greek men wore white boots made of stretched material pulled up to the top of the calf and decorated with turned over tops in blue and green. The toe section was often highly decorated.

Etruscan Boots

The Etruscans were skillful tanners and made boots from animal skins and hides. A characteristic of their high and low boots was the curved up toe. Historians believe this may have been caused by the way the boots were laced pulling the excess upper towards the ankle. The body of the sturdy boot covered the foot and the lower leg. The section that covered the foot and the back of the leg was laced together with thongs (Bigelow, 1970 p46). Boots have been traced back to 650 BC in ancient specimens of Etruscan footwear and were worn by priests whose duty it was to interpret supernatural signs. Warriors went barefoot but had leather or metal greaves to protect their legs, or wore fur lined rawhide boots with

slashed foreparts; some were coloured and had embroidered cuffs. Leg bandings, in bound puttee fashion, rose above the ankles.

Roman Boots



According to Pattison and Cawthorne (1997) Romans wore boots to keep their feet warm whilst living in colder climates. The military boots were hobnailed and depending on rank determined how far up the leg the boot could go. Victorious soldiers when they returned to Rome would have their copper hobnails removed and replaced with gold and silver ones. Julius Caesar was reputed to have worn a pair of boots made from gold. Eventually boots were worn by citizens. At first patricians wore muleas, which were red or violet coloured boots. These were served however for those patricians who had served as magistrates. Some authors believe the muleas has been confused with calceus patricius, a style of shoe worn by Roman senators. Citizens of Romans wore a boot made from hairy undressed hide similar to those worn by agricultural workers. The calceus was a boot developed at the end of the Roman period. It was high boot laced on the inside of the leg and fitted with a tongue. Many boot forms arose from the calceus. The muleus was similar to calceus, but laced with red coloured thongs and only worn by emperors. The gallicae was a knee high closed boot, the espadrilles was a boot with straps laced through eyelets, or sophisticated version of the Greek crepida. The calceus senatorum was a calf length boot worn by members of the senate. The boot was slit on the inside and fitted with a tongue. Generally black until the late empire when they were white with complex lacing. (Anderson Black J Garland M 1975, p29). The boot generally had gold or silver crescents at the front. The letter "C" was embossed and referred to the first 100 patricians or nobles established by right of birth or privilege. These boots or bushkins extended to the knee and were fastened with four tags or knots. Plebians and vulgar people could wear boots too but they were restricted to the use of one or two knots.

Brodequin Boots

The brodequin was a light boot whose form derived from the cothurna and the caliga. Until the 16th century, brodequins were light shoes worn inside boots and houseaux. The term also described an instep strap or stocking which young men wore inside their boots for weapon practice. Only in the 18th century was the brodequin found as a sort of a boot. Brodequins became fashionable footwear for ladies in the 19th century and were worn with fine linen or silk stockings. Brodequins were worn at the grand for dancing. The name was also given to a short army boot. Liturgical brodequins were richly ornamented silk or velvet stockings used for the consecration of bishops or the coronation of monarchs.

Boots of the Middle Ages

In the middle ages the term boot referred to a type of slipper and generally was fur lined e.g. night watch boot. This type of footwear was often worn by the clergy. From the late 12-14th century a popular lightweight short boot was the estivaux another, more tightly fitting boot was the stivali. In England these soft boots were worn high and wider on the leg. They forced the wearer to adopt a bow legged gait and had the added disadvantage of allowing rain to pour into them. In France the stivali was worn tight on the leg. The boot was available in different colours with black the most popular but red was also worn. The name survives in German, steifel and the Italian, stivale. By the 14th century armed boots were reinforced with steel rods and chain mail. The military style was copied and made up in leather boots and became popular in the 14th and 15th centuries. These were worn by both men and women. At one time it was considered very fashionable to wear only one boot. The boots circa 1340 were according to Ribeiro & Cumming (1989), laced across the top of the foot. Alternatively ankle length boots were elaborately punched with small cruciform holes. Fashions for ankle length long pointed boots lasted well into the 1400s and by 1460 hose were worn with seems done the back of the leg and the ankle length boots were sometimes protected by pattens. Walking sticks became the vogue. By 1492 the toes of men's shoes became rounded.

Boots of the Sixteenth Century



During the sixteenth century boots were worn by the military or part of hunting attire. As war tore through Europe in the following centuries, boots again became the fashion. High boots were popular in Spain where they seemed to originate from. Henry IV of France (1589-1610) enjoyed wearing the best of leathers and realised the craftsmen in France were inferior to elsewhere. He commissioned a tanner to study leather work in Hungary where the old trades still existed. His influence made boots very fashionable in France and they were allowed to be worn in salons as well as on the dance floor. The style of boots varied relating to whatever purpose they were put to. Boots were distinctively men's fashion everybit as much as the codpiece. According to Girotti (1997) to make the boots fit tightly around the leg, they were first soaked in water. Once they dried on the leg it was very difficult for the man wearing the

boots to bend their knees. Dismounted horsemen walked with stiffened legs. This may have given rise to a distinctive swaggering gait which at the time was considered very macho.

Boots of the Seventeenth Century



By the beginning seventeenth century boots had become fashionable for men and were worn at the English court during Charles I reign. (1600-1649). Charles suffered from osteomalacia (rickets) as a child and was feared would never walk without the aid of calipers. The Royal shoemaker designed boots which has concealed brass supports in the heel and ankle. Once an adult he was able to walk without the aid of his supports but continued to wear boot for preference. Tightly fitting boots became the fashion and were folded back into deep tops. The front flap of the boots provided a handsome strap to fit spurs onto. Later soft boots with baggy creases and full tops became the fashion at European courts. Ladies continued to wear slippers with pointed toes and in some cases high heeled pumps. (Burnett, 1926). Cordoba was the centre for leather craft in Europe and the term cordwainer refers to a man who has

derived his craft from the Spanish city of Cordoba. Craftsmen were sent to Cordoba to learn the secrets of the leather trade and bring them back to France. Cordoban boots were soft and worn crumpled or with a kink. A large piece of leather shapped like a butterfly was stitched across the instep to hold the golden or silver rowel spurs. A soulette was a strap fastened under the foot, which also held the spur in position. Poor quality boots were made from cow hide which was heavier but more durable. The lace edged boothose were worn inside the boot and were made from linen. These protected the delicate silk stockings from being soiled by the leather. From 1610 onwards boots were worn indoors, sometimes with an overshoe. (After peace was ratified in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, boots were no longer worn indoors.) Riding boots were worn high with widely flared or funnel tops protecting the knee when riding. This part of the boot could be turned down for town wear. Already in 1627 gentlemen were wearing light coloured boots with red heels and the edges of the soles were stained red. Under Louis XIII (1601-1643) a shorter, lighter model of boot known as the Ladrine was worn. By 1630 a protective additional sole or golosh made from thick leather or wood was used to keep the fine boots and shoes from the dirt of the streets. Boots were only accepted for riding, hunting and walking by this time. Restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne (1660) brought the heeled boot to England. Men wore boots with very long stockings which flared at the top of the leg and caught the foot with a strap under the instep. These were worn over silk stockings.



Boots were worn tight on the leg but the top could be turned over. The footwear was made of soft leather. The Cavalier boot had a very wide top which could be turned down for town wear, showing silk or coloured leather lining. The width of the leg had increased and the boots were worn wide across the toes. Toes became square and this fashion remained popular till the end of the century. Aristocracy preferred light, high heeled shoes and boot but the working class wore more practical and cheaper shoes, which were low heeled. Usually dark brown, with leather latchet ties, deep square toes and closed sides. In 1660 the France of Louis XIV became the fashion capital and shoes for men were preferred over boots. From 1660 onwards decorative frills, or cannons, were worn below the knee and hence shoes became more popular. At the end of the reign of Charles II (1630-85) the military still wore an old style heavy boot. This was replaced by a light leather leggings covering the boot called houseaux. The heavy boot was still used for riding. In 1663 the first seamless boot was made by a Gascon shoemaker called Lestage. King William of Orange (1650-1702) introduced the jackboot,



which was of sturdy construction and worn high above the knee, quartered, and heeled with immense breadth for the toes. Thigh high boots were fashionable for soldiers and horsemen. Worn tight on the calf they were ample enough to be folded over in a buccaneer fashion above the knee. Sometimes covered in decoration with punched designs they covered the whole leg and were held in place with garters or suspenders from the doublet. The above knee section was known as bucket tops and were worn with leathers and spurs. The boot offered protective armour to the leg and is still worn by the Household Cavalry. Before the advent of gum boots the style of boot was worn by fishermen. Thigh high boots were originally worn by pirates and smugglers, who tucked contraband or "booty" into them. The practice gave rise to the term, 'bootlegging'.

Boots of the Eighteenth Century



During the eighteenth century boots had surpassed shoes as the fashionable footwear for men. They became more refined and slimmed down in style. Worn with turned down tops, lined in brown, to contrast with the black leather of the rest of the boot, the top boots were distinctly elegant. The style was based on the boots worn by horse jockeys who partook in the newly fashionable sport of horse racing (Baynes K, Baynes K, 1979). The black and brown boots worn to below the knee were for outdoors. O'Keeffe, (1996) considered women would have less need to venture outdoors and hence their shoes were more flimsy by comparison. Tans and pale shades were popular with the gentry.

Dandified young Englishmen became obsessed with all things foreign and were christened Macaronis by satirists. They used to have iron heel clips fitted to draw attention to themselves as they walked through the streets. George Beau Brummell (1790- 1840) epitomised the new age macho dresser and as a dandy was quite different to fops of the previous century. Brummell had certain idiosyncracies and was reputed to have his boots polished with champagne. Not only that he insisted in having the soles of his boots polished at the same time as the uppers. The reason being he was concerned the edge of the boots were not perfectly shined. Brummell sported the two most popular styles of the time. These were the English, John Bull (or tall boot) and the Austrian, Hess boot. Hess boots took their name from the German state of Hesse, where they were made. The hesse boot was knee high and cut on a V at the front. Often the boot had a decorative tassel. In time the Wellington boot superseded the popularity of the hessian boot (also called Souvaroffs). This was a slim cut leather boot

which was worn under narrow trousers. Napoleon boots cut high in the front and worn to the knees first appeared round about 1730. The design allowed the knee to bend as well as offer protection to the joint when exposed during horseriding. It was common practice to wear long woollen stockings under the knee high riding boots. The laced ankle boot we know associate with modern militaria originated from the Blucher shoe which was based on a boot worn by Prince of Wahlstadt, Gebhard Leberecht von Blucher, a Prussian field Marshall. His popularity was second only to Wellington as a hero of the battle of Waterloo.



The blucher or derby was a high cut shoe with a tongue cut in one piece with the forepart and fastened with laces. Women's boots were a modified version of men's footwear designed for equestrian pursuit. However it did not escape the attention of French writer and wit, Nicolas-Sebastien Chamfort (1741-1794), who wrote in *Maxims's and Considerations* of the common habit for ladies to tip their man servants to help remove their tight boots. Chamfort was of course referring to flirtations resulting from exposure of forbidden flesh. A common practice among the upper classes. In 1770 boots were introduced to dandies who started to wear their boots to half calf. Splatter dashes were puttees or leggings that buttoned on the inside of the leg and worn to protect the delicate silk hose during inclement weather. Jockey boots were introduced in 1780. However the need to protect feet from the elements necessitated new materials be developed and during the 1790's patent leather became available. Shoes and boots treated with the new process became a very popular fashion on both sides of the Atlantic. By the end of the century young men wore the popular hussar bushkins which were short boots with a dip in the front, mid tibia. French top boots with a turned over top were also fashionable. V-fronted tasselled hessian boots were made from soft leather and proved popular with men.

Boots of the Nineteenth Century



The Napoleonic Wars dominated the early part of this century. Shoe makers first became adept at making the military boots but as the war passed they soon adapted them for civilian wear. First men then women took to wearing boots for everyday wear and this remained the vogue until the end of the 1800's when shoes became popular again. Men's boots had high heels until the middle of the nineteenth century when the design of coaches was improved and the development of railways meant less need for horses. According to McDowell (1989) women's high heels were equally a reflection of their mode of transport. When women travelled they went by coach or, during the seventeenth century by sedan chair. In Versailles sedan chairs were carried into the public rooms so lady's might alight on clean dry floors. The fight against dirt was everyone's concern until the introduction of metalled roads. The slap sole was a fashionable extension added to high heeled shoes and boots. Working on a similar principle to the Eskimo's snow shoe with a bar between the heel and forefoot to increase the surface contact thus preventing the shoe from sinking into the mud. Nineteenth century Dandy's such as Johnny Walker paid much attention to their appearance. Although there was less emphasis on ostentatious styles for men by the beginning of the twentieth century. Mens' fashions had virtually become a uniform. This is especially true of shoes. By 1830 fashions for non working women included boots. There was a return of the heel and the boots were worn short to the ankle, or just above. To give the appearance of daintiness, the boots were made on narrow lasts. The introduction of heeless shoes brought an end to the straight shoe. Closely buttoned or tightly laced to the mid calf, the boot supported the ankle, presumably to reduce risk of sprains. Ladies boots were made from silk, fabric or kid leather. A change of lacing style to side lacing proved very popular and the ankle boots were called "Adelaides" after the Queen Consort of William IV. The style highlighted the gentle contours of the female foot, presenting a vulnerable and delicate extension. Primarily the boot was to encase the female foot and ankle from temptation but probably had the opposite effect. Bootmakers embellished their wares with silk fabrics and metallic thread embroidery. Button closures were used instead of laces to reveal shapely ankles. Cut outs in the leather were sometimes included to provide a playful view of colourful stockings. These boots were called Barrettes Heels did make a return by the middle of the nineteenth century and the close fitting

high button boots became the predominant fashion. Charles Goodyear's discovery of vulcanised rubber enabled Sparkes-Hall, bootmaker to Queen Victoria in 1837 to invent the elastic gusset boot. The advantage of elasticated boots meant they could be easily removed and put on again which appealed to busier and more demanding life style of Victorian women.

Although there were several teething problems by the late 1840's the fashion began to catch on. This became a prominent style in the West until the onset of World War One. The Balmoral boot (or Bal) was originally designed for Prince Albert and consisted of a close fitting lace up boot, similar to those worn by today's wrestlers. They could be front or side lacing and acted as a galosh to protect the feet from the wet gorse. The upper section of the toe



box was treated with water proofing. Queen Victoria must have approved because she had several pairs made and wore them regularly. Possibly because Prince Albert expressed a liking for the style because it had a slendering effect. Balmoral boots became popular with both men and women. After the Royal family bought Balmoral in Scotland, the Queen took to walking and this required sturdy footwear for women. This freedom reflected the growing movement for women to enter the workforce. Well bred women could not be acknowledged to possess anything as base and potentially carnal as legs. Indeed it was during the Victorian period that legs were referred to as lower limbs. Crinoline as a material may have looked ridiculous but at the same time was very seductive. The steel hoops that buoyed the skirt kept the material in a permanent state of motion. The slightest pressure at one point raised it correspondingly at the opposite point. This often revealed a titillating and tantalising glimpse of the forbidden flesh i.e. the female ankle. Partly worn in honour of Wellington (1769 - 1852), the boot complemented the crinoline dresses and provided a foot corset enjoyed by men and understood by women. The nineteenth century was dominated by dancing and the craze for public balls affected the dress and costume of the day. Jane Austin's novels illustrate the importance of dances to nineteenth century social life. Fancy costume balls were all the rage in America and women would create their own design

themes. Fashionable boots came in many forms including Opera boots which were highly decorated footwear. These were popular with opera goers and hence the name. Juliets were quilted boots worn by lady's travelling in carriages. Once they arrived at their destination they would change into other shoes more suited to the occasion. High lows were first worn as fashionable boots in the early 1800s. Made from silk uppers they laced to above the ankle and often were worn by brides. Victorian children wore miniture adult shoes and gaiter boots were popular. By the middle of the century mass production meant the cost of boots became affordable to more people. No longer the a reliable



sign of status, the boot became a symbol of emerging equality not just between the sexes, but also among the social groups (O'Keeffe, 1996). Further evidence of the merging new women were waterproofed boots designed to give women greater mobility with freedom outdoors. During this century the workboot started to appear. John Lobb trained as a bootmaker in London before moving to Australia to try his luck in the goldfields. He never found his fortune in gold but instead came up with the brainwave of making hollow heeled boots for prospectors to hide their gold. The idea caught on and John Lobb set himself up in business in Sydney in 1858. When the Great Exhibition came along in 1862 he sent a pair of his boots along and won a gold medal for their quality. Twelve months later he sent a pair of his riding boots to the Prince of Wales and was awarded a Royal Warrant. He returned to London and established a business " John Lobb, Bootmaker" which continues to trade as the world's most famous bespoke shoemaking establishment. Boots for women became more elaborate from 1850s onwards partly due to the introduction of machinery. Elasticised boots were worn for daytime wear where at night leather slippers was preferred for formal wear. Men's slippers were usually black and trimmed with black flat bows or black ribbon rosettes. (Bigelow, 1970.) Until 1820 women generally wore soft flat heeled slippers for all occasions but after

that day shoes or ankle boots were widely favoured. (Anderson Black J Garland M, 1975.) In 1890 the low shoe or laced oxford was introduced. These were often worn with gaiters in colder weather or for sporting occasions. Toe shaped changed over this period otherwise shoes and boots styles remain unchanged. 1870 was square toe fashion 1880 rounded and 1890 growing more pointed. In 1890 rubber soled shoes were introduced. (Bigelow, 1970,)

Boots of the Twentieth Century



The introduction of footwear to the masses coincided with mechanised production at the turn of this century. By 1889 the first heel factory was opened in the US. As hemlines began to raise, legs, ankles and feet took on greater importance. As the song went "a glimpse of stocking was something shocking", so fashion pundits at the time seldom missed the opportunity to make this part of the female anatomy full of promise. The foot and shoe have always lent themselves to this masquerade. The idea of long legs has an appeal to both sexes. Considered to enhanced body contours, shoes and boots incorporated high heels.

According to Steele (1985) Victorian fashion expressed neither the social and sexual repression of women nor male perceptions of them as primarily sexual beings. Victorian fashion revolved around an ideal of feminine beauty in which eroticism played an important part. Dress appropriate for a social gathering of peers was more overtly erotic than those worn on the street. Two tone high boots buttoned at the side were fashionable for both men and women (spats). Whilst the upper class women wore boots made from glace kid, working women wore lace up ankle boots made from leather. A combination of a patent leather shoe with a cloth legging was introduced at this time. Brocade, velvet and antelope skin were worn in boots made for special occasions. Boots that fastened with button were fashionable up until 1925. An essential accessory for women who wore these was a button hook. Popularity for Balmoral boots continued and none other than Winston Churchill wore them over many years. He was photographed wearing both designs i.e. cloth and leather leggings. Charles Chaplin favoured patent leather bals with beige cloth legs. The two tone effect was developed from the turn of the century and by the 1930s the combination of shoe and legging became spats. The legging could be removed and was easier to clean than the original bals. By 1921 women were wearing straight topped, knee high, Russian boots with pointed toes and a Louis heel. A style similar to the Wellington but without the buttons. The boot originally laced up the side but was later replaced with a zipper (invented, 1891). Dunlop developed another version for the fashion market, these were made from rubber and came in a brown colour. The boots had pointed toes and a cuban heel. Wellingtons or wellies as they are better known had a short fashion life and were soon relegated to garden accessories.

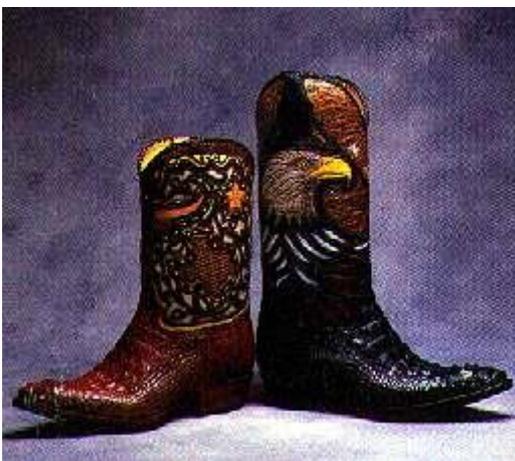
The sports boot and forerunner to athletic footwear has its ancestry in the development of the blucher army boot and came from conscription for war. Boots took less and less fashion attention after the 1930s and were often associated with oppression. Wars and depression meant greater concentration was given over to utility and hard wearing properties. During the depression RM Williams designed and made a elastic sided boot for mounted stockmen working in the outback (1932). The qualities of water resistance, comfort and toughness ensured the footwear became popular with country people and now are exported all over the world. Williams was assisted in his endeavour by Dollar Mick a travelling companion. Made from one piece leather the upper had no seams to burst when worn hard against the saddle stirrups. At first heels were hand made with a series of lifts but nowadays they are premade and nailed to the sole by machine. In the late fifties boots began to appear in mainstream fashion. Rediscovered by the youth of the day engineer boots took on a fashionable veneer. First came the fashionable canvas boot associated with the popular game of baseball in the US. Next the desert boot which was to spring board into Brothel Creepers, then, the sixties chukka boots. Both traditional leathers and new look plastic were used to add spectacle to the tight fitting footwear.



The Engineer's boot or Biker's boot was used by motorcyclists of the fifties to protect their legs from the heat of the engine. They also gave a mechanical advantage to the biker when holding on to the pedals not to mention a buchaner quality. The chuckka boot were hybrids of dessert boots and were worn by scooter, mad Mods. The ankle protection prevented the Mods from the heat of the engine. Made from suede they wear prone to mark easily until the invention of Hush Puppies which were treated synthetically. The cuban heeled, Chelsea boot or recycled elasticated boots was rediscovered and became fashionable with young men, in the sixties. These were worn with pointed toes, round toes or chisle toes. With the introduction of the mini in the 60's women's legs were more exposed and fashion designers created ankle and knee length boots to accentuate the new look. High high boots enjoyed a degree of popularity too. By coincidence the boots often captured kinks or folds and were nicknamed as "kinky boots". The youth of the decade's preoccupation with promiscuity, meant instant success for these "go go boots". In the seventies the US oil recession meant expensive fashion boots fell from fashion. Doc Marten boots meantime became popular with both sexes and were associated with the alternative Punk movement. DMs comercial success in the early seventies combined with increased competition and the availability of cheaper Taiwanese and Korean products convinced the Swartz brothers (US) to manufacture under the Timberland label. The company was launched in 1975. The relaxed all American male image portrayed by the rugged footwear was an instant success with the young Americans. More importantly according to Cattison and Patterson (1997) this was the first time since cowboy boots that a manufactured style was sold to US youth. Their popularity spread throughout the Europe and the rest of the world. Like cowboy boots, Timberland boots, have become part of the mythology support by clever marketing. The succes of Timberland boots draws a clear point that only in the later part of the twentieth century have men been targeted. This had been the domain of women's fashion. Nostalgia for earlier pioneering days combined with a rise in the Green Movement, meant yuppies could wear these icons on their feet. The four wheeled drive boots of suburbia had arrived. The platform boot was popular with the Glam rockers of the seventies. Platform soles gave the height challenged an advantage they would otherwise not have had. Abba took the new platform boots to knee and thigh length extremes. Made in all sorts of material synthetic and natural the fashion passed with the death of disco. However it remained popular as drag sartoria only to re-appear more recently in the ninties with "girl power".



Cowboy Boots



The origins of the Cowboy Boot are well researched and started life as riding boots for the marauding Mongol tribesmen. Horsemen wore red wooden heels and conquered all before them. The fashion caught on and was popular for centuries among nobility and horse riders. Louis XIV wore only red heels as a tribute to Gengus Khan and banned all other men in his court from sporting the red heel. English Cavaliers took the style to extraordinary lengths wearing thigh high riding boots with cuban heels. Once defeated by Cromwell, the Cavalier Stuarts emigrated in their droves to the New World. They took with them their boots and many settled in the southern states forming the plantation class. After the civil war many southerners migrated west to Texas taking with them their noble footwear. Standard cavalry issue during the American Civil

War was the Wellington Boot. In 1815 Arthur Wellsley, First Duke of Wellington, defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. The popular victor became an national icon and both men and women emulated his sartorial style of footwear. The modern Wellington

had a low cut heel which was calf high and not thigh high. This made them easier to mass produce. Unfortunately during the American Civil War (1861-1865) unscrupulous contractors supplied below par footwear and many of the cavalry boots were mass produced using reinforced cardboard. Climatic conditions took their toll and the soldiers suffered deep cuts to their feet. A Chiropodist General to the US cavalry was appointed at this time. The English language was enriched with the word shoddy which described, manufacturers willing to compromise for profit. Many experts believe the final victory was in no small part due to the superior footwear of the Union army. Right and left boots were introduced at this time but were most unpopular and it took another half a century before the masses were introduced to such luxuries. By the end of the war the federal government had half a million pairs of boots surplus to requirements. Systematically then after troops stationed on the frontier were supplied with shoddy boots. Shoe historians believe the foundation of the cowboy boot trade in the frontier was based on the simple necessity for civilian bootmakers to replace defective military footwear. Low heeled, high topped boots made in hard, black leather called kip were often made by German immigrants. The bootmakers based their designs on Northern European riding boots. The most popular was the Coffeyville Boot from Coffeyville, Kansas. It combined the various US Cavalry styles and the original British leather, Wellington boot. Billy the Kid (1859-1881) was reputed to wear a style of boots based on the Austrian Boot. During the Indian wars in the west (circa 1865) the US Government issued new boots to the soldiers that used brass tacks to hold the leather soles of the boots on. As the soles were worn down the tacks would protrude through the bottom into the soldiers feet. The Government put together a committee to study the problem and suggested a solution. Their solution was to issue each soldier with a metal file to file down the points of the tacks as they pushed through the boot sole. High heeled boots (4"), called saddle dandies, were popular by 1860s. The back of the heel sloped gently until the sole was no bigger than a quarter. Drover, Stovepipe and cattleman models were popular the leg of the boots were at least 14 inches and many boots were thigh high. By the 1880's the cowboy boot was beginning to emerge as a distinctive style. Starting life as a dress Wellington or full Wellington, the fashion merged with the hard wearing lace up boot (or packer), worn by drovers. Other influences included the Mexican riding boot called vaquero. Early cowboy boots had no ornamentation and for control in the saddle, the shoe portion was made so tight that walking was difficult and painful. Originally both boots were made on the same last which necessitated the wearer having to break them in. Later the three piece military boot was incorporated and worn by Hollywood's Cowboys. In 1903 the first embroidered toe wrinkles started to appear Cut out leather designs often in a star pattern were sometimes overlaid around the collars of the boot tops. Tejas (or Napoleon style boots) with their peacock flair and ostentatious inlays were worn by Hollywood megastars like Tex Ritter and Tom Mix during the 20's and 30's. At first films were made in the Eastern States and the costumes were based on exaggerated clothing illustrated in cheap novels and comics. By the time the industry moved to California in 1914 and employed real cowboys, their clothes were dull compared to the illusion. Instead actors wore highly decorated boots outside their trousers. In 1923 boots were available in the US, made from kangaroo skins. It is therefore somewhat surprising to think, today's cowboy boots are really fantasy footwear fabricated by Hollywood and have little to do with the Wild West. The Italian shoe designer, Salvatore Ferragamo made boots for one of Cecil B de Mille's films. de Mille was so impressed he said " The West would have been conquered earlier, if they had boots like these." The irony is of course he was probably quite correct. The style caught on however and thanks to Hollywood became popular across the world. Designs became more colourful and ornate and fashion designers flocked to add to the range of boots available to the fashion following throngs. The exotic cowboy boot remained popular and peaked in the mid-fifties. In 1954, the design of cowboy boots changed to accommodate the growing sport of Roping. At rodeos competitors were required to bale off their mounts, then chase and tackle a strong calf. A lower heel and rounded toe was preferred. This style soon caught on with the audience and became the vogue. The 60s brought an oil boom to the oil states which led to a subsequent economic upswing. Conservative Texans were more likely to drive a Cadillac than ride mustangs and so therefore influenced the fashion for lower heeled boots. By the 70's when urban cowboys took to the dance floor the common work boot all but vanished. The new boots were less hardwiring and more high fashion. Today's styles cater for both with the traditional high heel and pointed toes for the posers and a lower heel, rounder toed boot with comfortable soles and laces for the real cowboy. The appeal of the fashion cowboy boot is not hard to fathom and it is an excuse for



men to share the thrill of standing on elevated footwear. The change in body mass this has makes for a more attractively shaped derriere and hence the natural development of the jeans. Standing taller helps to give the impression of power and dominance and presence and presentation were all in the Hollywood that made the style fashionable. The footwear can be secreted into everyday wear and therefore undetected to the undecerning eye. On average a handmade fashion boot will take 45 hours of loving labour and be every bit as a creation as a designer cocktail dress. The admiring glances say it all and come from the most unexpected quarter. Texas Governor, George W Bush was sporting an elegant pair made from black eelskin at a recent White house reception. The design of which includes a state seal, Texas flag and his initials. The function was attended by Queen Elizabeth and remarked on the fabulous footwear giving the potential presidential candidate a knowing wink. Many US presidents have worn cowboy boots. In 1948 Harry Trueman ordered his form Tony Lama and the style was called "El Presidente" This fashion was followed by Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon B Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. The Lucchese Company of Texas in 1940's produced 48 pairs of boots to symbolise each of the states, featuring inlays of the states house and state flower, bird and flag. Charlie Dunn one of Texas's most famous makers had produced in 1914 a pair of boots trimmed with gold and inlaid with diamonds and rubies for a gambler. More information about the cowboy boot can be found at Jennifer June's Tribute to Cowboy Boots

Military Boots



For the majority of the world's population for most of history the only time they have had shoes was as armour in battle with the hostile climates and terrains that men had to overcome in order to survive. When two tribes go to war, how many people count the cost of keeping their warriors in shoes. In the Great War it is estimated some 2,500,000 pairs of shoes were made for the Allied troops. Laid end to end this would mean the shoes would cover the complete coastline of Western Australia. An 380,000 cattled required to be slaughtered to provide the equivalent of 17.5 million square feet of leather or 400 acres. The soul leather alone would weigh 4,000 tons; metal for nails would be 1,150 tons; with 55 tons of thread; and 78,000,000 eyelets. War has always meant big business to the shoe and textile industries. Sadly this has not always brought the best from friendly suppliers and it is estimated human greed can account for almost as many casualties as enemy fire in modern warfare. When soldiers boots are poor quality for the conditions of combat then their fighting ability is undermined. During the American Civil War, for example, the US cavalry were demoralised because of shoddy workmanship. Supplied with sub-standard cardboard, cowboy boots, their feet and legs were cut to ribbons. During the Second World War footwear supplies to the front were fatally delayed because vital supplies were misappropriated by Black Marketeers. It was quite common to find non-combat units wearing superior footwear intended for their colleagues at the front. Trenchfoot was first described in the Great War and was attributed to the feet being immersed in very cold mud for long periods of time. The forces footwear was no match for the atrocious conditions of the trenches. In the Second World War, trenchfoot was responsible for putting more Allied Forces out of action than the German 88 (artillery). In December 1944, northern Europe's witnessed it's coldest winter during which 45,000 men - the equivalent of three full infantry divisions, were pulled out of the front line because of trenchfoot. Three days before the Battle of the Bulge began so great were the casualties to trenchfoot, men unable to walk were carried from sheltered pillbox positions at night to firing positions in the day time. Behind the US Lines it was decreed any soldier suffering trenchfoot would be tried for court martial. Senior officers were suspicious some soldiers were hoping to avoid combat by actively encouraging symptoms of trenchfoot. One reason why trenchfoot was so common was soldiers slept with their boots on. During engagement they were recommended to dry and warm their feet as best they could, and sleep with their boots off. This was often impractical and most ignored the directive. Conditions in the Falklands War were extreme. The British soldiers were severely challenged by their inferior boots. The direct molded sole failed to keep their feet dry and water poured through the laceholes. The impermeable sole provided a perfect reservoir and feet was



immersed in cold water for long periods. Trenchfoot was commonplace and a major concern to the assault forces. The Argentine boot, on the other hand, was superior in every way and provided ideal protection to the elements, hence it became a valued prize of war. With so much reliance put on the military foot, you might think, armed forces would invest heavily in podiatrists, not so, and only the North American services have podiatrists within their ranks. Currently there are 72 to service 1.6 million personnel. The origins of hob nailed boots can be traced back to Roman times. By having nails on the sole of the sandal the lifespan of footwear could be extended. The reason the British Army supplied their foot soldiers with hob nailed boots was to save money. This type of footgear flowed through to working boots. The style of army boot is based on the Blucher or Derby.

Beatle Boots



Shoes took on a boot style and incorporated Cuban heels which were a style preferred by the Beatles on their return from Hamburg. Needless to say the fashion became ubiquitous before the toes began to widen and the Chelsea boot or chisel toe became vogue. A point of interest the Beatle Boot was less macho and resembled the style of boot favoured by Victorian ladies. Whilst not effeminate it was distinctly a softer less aggressive style that brothel creepers and winkle pickers. The boots often incorporated a French seam or central stitch running from ankle to toe on the upper. In the convention of symbols this referred to female genitalia rather than the phallic of the long toes or winklepicker shoes.

Bovver Boots



Dr Klaus Maertens of Munich invented his air cushion soles in 1945. The inspiration came from a personal injury he experienced when skiing and he wanted to wear a comfortable shoe. He started to produce the air sole in 1947 but its popularity took until 1960 to peak. The once ultra conservative Dr Maertens shoes became the trademark of urban youth excited by violence in Doc Martens. Urban warriors are not the invention of the Eighties but were in evidence much earlier in history. Bootboys were common place in the seventeenth century and used to terrorise the highways of the time. Doc Martens were also the first cross over shoes of the twentieth century and became a unisex fashion. In the history of modern footwear unisex styles are usually short lived and often occur at a time of depression or down turn in economy. The Pope has ordered several pairs of Doc Martens. When Bill Griggs persuaded the German parent company to let him manufacture workmans protective boots with the air cushioned sole at his factory in Northampton in the 1960's little did he know what would be the outcome. DM has become the uniform of youth harnessing the aggression of the storm trooper into the macho urban dwellers. British skinheads made it their own in the seventies and used the DM as Bovver Boots with which to shake the complacency of the bourgeoisie. This failed because the style was readily adopted by all youths and became a unisex phenomenon. The effect of ambivalence presents the ultimate paradox of style, worn by women and gays the shoes at one level project the macho aggressiveness which belies the real feelings of the wearer. It is indicative of the confusion of roles and the blurring of distinctions that a boot with such a down to earth origins. The original eight lacing boot with distinctive yellow stitches has remained the most unique boot of all time. With its patented sole and trends no competitor has ever attempted to copy its world famous features.

Discussion

Some historians believe boots represent the greatest division in wealth and power within our society. Historically men's boots signify strength and affluence and can be traced from early civilisations to the present day. The style and type of footwear retains a special aura connected with the outdoors. Boots have the closest association with war compared to other footwear and their design still presents many challenges to the armed forces. Boots are the only footwear to have reached the moon yet paradoxically for those who have walked on the planet, their boots, were jetisened to float forever in space as a precautionary measure. In the century the working boot has had many adaptions including mainstream sport and recreation. Combined with the invention of new synthetic polymers today's boots are truly of the space age.

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If I have unwittingly ommitted any other source, I do apologise and will rectify as soon as the matter is brought to my attention.

Footnote

The author has no association with shoe manufacturers or retailers. The information presented here has been researched and collated using, in good faith and wherever possible, refereed materials. Where triangulation was not possible, information was taken at face value and unless stated otherwise represents the opinions of the author and not Curtin University of Technology.