

LEVI STRAUSS & CO. TIMELINE

19TH CENTURY

- 1829** Levi Strauss is born in Buttenheim, Bavaria.
- 1847** Levi Strauss, his two sisters and mother sail for America, where they join half-brothers Jonas and Louis in New York. Levi joins their dry goods business.
- 1853** Levi Strauss arrives in San Francisco and opens a wholesale dry goods business, selling clothing, blankets, handkerchiefs, etc., to small general stores throughout the American West.
- 1854** Levi Strauss donates \$5 to a San Francisco orphanage only one year after arriving in the city to open his dry-goods business. This is equivalent to approximately \$110 and begins the company's tradition of sharing its prosperity with the community.
- 1866** Levi Strauss & Co. headquarters are at 14 - 16 Battery Street, where they remain for 40 years.
- 1871** Levi Strauss & Co. gives \$100 to the Chicago Relief Fund to help rebuild after the fire of 1871.
- 1872** Jacob Davis, a Reno, Nevada tailor, writes to Levi Strauss, telling him of the process he invented to rivet the pocket corners on men's pants. He suggests the two men take out a patent on the process together and Levi agrees.
- 1873** Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis receive a patent on the process of riveting pants by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on May 20. It is patent number 139,121. They begin making copper-riveted "waist overalls" (the old name for jeans) in San Francisco.
- This first pant was the original 501® jean but it didn't have that name yet: it was simply called "XX" — an industry term meaning highest quality, and also the term for the high quality denim used in their manufacture.
- The jeans have one back pocket with the Arcuate stitching design (the same design they have today), a watch pocket, a cinch, suspender buttons and a rivet in the crotch. The rivets on the back pockets are exposed.
- 1886** Two Horse™ brand leather patch is first used on the waist overalls. Its purpose was to demonstrate the strength of the pants and reinforce our status as the originator of patent-riveted clothing.
- 1890** The rivet patent goes into the public domain, so that Levi Strauss & Co. is no longer the exclusive manufacturer of riveted clothing.

Lot numbers are first assigned to the products being manufactured. 501® is used to designate the famous copper-riveted waist overalls.

1897 Levi Strauss donates funds for twenty-eight scholarships at the University of California, Berkeley. These scholarships are still in place today. He also gives money to the California School for the Deaf and supports other local charities.

1900 - 1919

1901 The pants now have two back pockets. The additional pocket was likely added due to consumer requests or changes in men's fashions at the time.

1902 Levi Strauss dies at the age of 73. His nephews inherit the business. Levi Strauss' will contains a number of bequests to Bay Area charities which serve children and the poor.

1906 The earthquake and fire destroy the headquarters and two factories of Levi Strauss & Co. The company extends credit to its wholesale customers so they can get back on their feet and back in business. Employee salaries are continued, and temporary headquarters and a showroom are opened in order to keep employees working. A new factory is built at 250 Valencia Street, and new headquarters are erected on Battery Street.

Levi Strauss & Co. begins to buy denim from Cone Mills in Greensboro, North Carolina.

1912 Simon Davis, son of Jacob Davis and the superintendent of the Valencia Street factory, invents "Koveralls," a one-piece play suit for children and the company's first nationally distributed product.

1913 Levi Strauss & Co. builds a playground in front of the 250 Valencia Street factory for the enjoyment of neighborhood children.

1915 Levi Strauss & Co. receives the highest award for waist overalls at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. The company begins to purchase denim from Cone Mills in North Carolina.

1920s

1920 A factory is opened in Frankfort, Indiana, to make Koveralls.

1920s During this decade, the assembly-line technique is adopted at the Valencia Street and Frankfort factories.

1922 Belt loops are added to the overalls, but the suspender buttons are still retained. The cinch is also still used on the pants, but some men cut it off in order to wear the overalls with a belt. The addition of belt loops was in response to changes in men's fashions and understanding of what consumers wanted.

Levi Strauss & Co. now buys its denim exclusively from Cone Mills.

1926

Bonuses are given to the workers at the Valencia Street factory, possibly a first in the apparel industry.

1927

Cone Mills develops the 10 oz. red selvage denim exclusively for the 501® jeans. The denim is woven in 29" wide looms and is known as XX denim.

1928

The company registers the word Levi's® as a trademark.

1930s

1930s

The Depression strikes and the demand for products declines. Workers at the Valencia Street facility are put on a short work week to avoid layoffs, and others are given nonmanufacturing tasks such as laying the hardwood floors that are still in use today.

The company adopts the cowboy as its advertising and image-building icon, associating the rugged individualism of the cowboy (and his Hollywood counterpart) with the famous 501® waist overalls.

1934

Levi Strauss & Co. creates "Lady Levi's" the company's first blue jean for women.

1936

The red Tab is first placed onto the right back pocket of the overalls. The word "LEVI'S®" is stitched in white in all capital letters. The Tab is created to differentiate Levi's® overalls from the many competitors in the marketplace who were using dark denim and an Arcuate stitch.

1937

The back pockets on the overalls are sewn so that they cover the rivets. This is in response to consumers who complained that the rivets scratched furniture and saddles.

The suspender buttons are removed from the overalls. Consumers are given snap-on buttons in case they still want to wear suspenders.

1940s

1940s

During World War II, the design of waist overalls is changed due to government mandates regarding the conservation of raw materials. The crotch rivet, watch pocket rivets and back cinch are removed to save fabric and metal. The Arcuate stitching design is removed as the thread is decorative only and not vital to the usefulness of the garment. In order to keep the design on the pants, Levi Strauss & Co. sewing machine operators hand paint an Arcuate on each pair.

U.S. soldiers wear their Levi's® jeans and jackets overseas, giving the products their first international exposure.

African-American workers at the company's California plants work in integrated facilities.

1947 The post-war version of the 501® jeans starts coming off the production line. The cinch is gone forever, the rivets are put back on the watch pocket and the Arcuate is now stitched with a double-needle machine which gives it the “diamond” shape at the point where the two lines of stitching meet.

1948 Levi Strauss & Co. discontinues its wholesale business in order to concentrate on manufacturing apparel.

1950s

1950s The leather patch is replaced by a Two Horse™ patch made of heavy-duty card stock, known as the “leather-like” patch. This is due to the fact that the company was selling products nationally, and it was becoming more expensive to use real leather.

1952 The Levi Strauss Foundation is formed to coordinate the company’s charitable giving.

1954 “Lighter Blues” casual slacks and the “Denim Family” line mark the company’s entry into the sportswear business.

An Army colonel on an American base in Frankfurt, Germany, bans military wives from wearing blue jeans, saying it reflects poorly on the U.S.

1958 Levi’s® jeans are chosen for the American Pavilion at the World’s Fair in Brussels.

1959 Levi’s® jeans are exhibited at the “American Fashion Industries Presentation” in Moscow. The company begins exporting garments to Europe and appoints an Export Manager.

1960s

1960s Levi Strauss & Co. opens its first southern plant. Located in Blackstone, Virginia, the company insists from its inception that the facility be integrated. This occurs before desegregation is mandated by federal law.

1960 The word “overalls” is replaced by the word “jeans” in advertising and on labels because teenagers began calling the product “jeans” in the 1950s. No one really knows why the word became associated with the men’s overalls, but teenagers adopted the phrase and it became the term used by all manufacturers.

1961 Clothing is exhibited in Paris by our French distributor.

1962 Levi Strauss & Co. receives President Kennedy’s “E” award for significant contributions to the United States export program.

1963 Pre-shrunk Levi’s® jeans are introduced.

1964 STA-PREST® slacks — the first wrinkle free products — are introduced.

Levi’s® jeans become part of the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institution.

- 1965** Levi Strauss International and Levi Strauss Far East are established, beginning the company's expansion into Europe and Asia.
- 1966** The company airs its first television commercial.
The rivets are removed from the back pockets and replaced with bar tacking. This is due to the fact that the strong rivets eventually wore through the denim, exposing them and causing the problems with scratching furniture that led to their being covered back in 1937.
- 1967** Levi's® jeans are exhibited in Moscow, Prague and Warsaw.
Rock groups such as The Jefferson Airplane and Paul Revere and the Raiders record radio commercials for the Stretch Levi's® and White Levi's® lines.
The "batwing" is adopted as the logo of the Levi's® brand.
- 1968** The Community Affairs department is established, formalizing the company's philanthropic efforts.
- 1969-70** Levi Strauss & Co. introduces bell bottoms into its jeans line.
Levi Strauss & Co. renovates the Valencia Street plant and the surrounding areas, creating a community gathering place and contributing to the improvement of the community.

1970s

- 1970s** Corduroy and polyester pants are added to the Levi's® range, reflecting the styles of the times.
With Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation in place, Levi Strauss & Co. formalizes its long-standing commitment to foster a diverse workforce. Special recruitment programs bring more people of color and women into areas of the organization where they were underrepresented.
The first Community Involvement Teams are formed at the headquarters office.
- 1971** Levi Strauss & Co. becomes a public corporation and includes a statement of its values in its prospectus.
Levi Strauss Japan is established, marking the company's first official entry into the Asian marketplace.
The word "Levi's®" on the red Tab device is now stitched in white with a capital "L" only; the "E" looks like it changed, leading to the vintage clothing concept of "Big E" and "little e."
- 1972** Levi Strauss & Co. establishes the Minority Purchasing Program.
- 1974** Company headquarters move to a large office complex at Embarcadero Center in San Francisco.

1980s

- 1981** The Red Tab Foundation is formed by a company employee, Jerry O’Shea, with a mission to help provide a financial “safety net” for Levi Strauss & Co. employees and retirees in need.
- 1982** The Levi Strauss Foundation makes its first matching gifts to the Kaposi Sarcoma Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital.
- The Koshland Awards, named for former President Daniel Koshland, are initiated to recognize employees who provide outstanding service to the company and the community.
- 1983** Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the first companies to develop comprehensive HIV and AIDS education and health services for employees and their families. The company’s commitment would lead to the development of groundbreaking policies and cutting-edge philanthropy, such as syringe access support.
- The first Original Levi’s® Stores are opened in Europe (in Spain). Within eight years there are 527 stores throughout northern and eastern Europe.
- Cone Mills begins to introduce XXX denim through the use of 60” wide looms.
- 1984** Levi Strauss & Co. is the official outfitter of the U.S. Olympic Team and the Los Angeles Games staff.
- The “501® Blues” television campaign is launched at the Olympic Games, leading to a resurgence in sales of the 501® jeans.
- Levi Strauss & Co. receives the Lawrence A. Wien Prize in Corporate Social Responsibility.
- 1985** Levi Strauss & Co. wins the Governor’s Committee Media/Advertising Award from the New York State Office of Advocates for the Disabled, for its positive portrayals of disabled people in the “501® Blues” television ads.
- Levi Strauss & Co. completes the largest leveraged buyout in the apparel industry and the company becomes private again.
- 1986** Dockers® Khakis are introduced in the United States. The company holds its first auction of celebrity-decorated denim jackets to benefit AIDS research and education at Barneys in New York.
- The first in a series of innovative television commercials for the 501® jeans airs in Europe. These commercials feature classic American rock music mixed with nostalgia and romance.
- 1985-89** The Time Off with Pay Program (TOPP) was developed out of recognition that taking time off from work allows employees to more effectively balance their work and personal lives.
- 1988** Levi Strauss & Co. hosts an “AIDS in the Workplace” conference at Levi’s Plaza. In attendance are 200 individuals representing 100 different companies. Attendees work together to develop would become the early agenda for AIDS education in the workplace.
- 1989** Levi Strauss & Co. receives Harvard’s Dively Award for Corporate Public Initiative.
- Levi Strauss & Co. inaugurates its first program to assist employees in becoming U.S. citizens. The program is in partnership with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

1990s

1990

Levi Strauss & Co. receives the German Apparel Supplier of the Year award, the first non-German and the first jeans company to win the award.

The Work/Family Task Force is created to study ways to help employees achieve a balance between their work and family lives.

1991

“Project Change,” an initiative to fight institutional racism in Levi Strauss & Co. communities, is launched.

The first Original Levi’s® Stores are opened in the United States, in Columbus Ohio.

Levi Strauss & Co. develops the first known set of comprehensive standards for manufacturing and finishing contractors worldwide, dealing with wages, hours, working conditions, ethics and the environment.

The Time Off with Pay Program (TOPP) is developed out of recognition that taking time off from work allows employees to more effectively balance their work and personal lives.

Levi Strauss & Co. expands the definition of family to include domestic partners and their children when it implements the Family Care Leave Act.

The Child Care Fund is created to help Levi Strauss & Co. plant employees with child care.

1992

Levi Strauss & Co. becomes the first major U.S. company to offer full medical benefits to the unmarried partners of its employees.

Levi Strauss & Co. adds a “Living Benefits” feature to its group life insurance policy, providing 60% of the insurance benefits to terminally ill employees.

Levi Strauss North America is formed to better coordinate the strategies and needs of the business in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

1993

Business Ethics magazine names Levi Strauss & Co. as one of three companies to win its “Excellence in Ethics” award.

Due to positive changes in South Africa, Levi Strauss & Co.’s South Africa Policy Group recommends that the company modify its policy to consider doing business in that country (if free, fair, non-racial elections have been held and a Government of National Unity has been installed).

Levi Strauss & Co. offices in Europe help underwrite a major photojournalistic exploration of the impact of living with AIDS.

Levi’s® “Women Breaking the Mold” ad breaks new ground in American advertising by dismantling stereotypes about women. Advertising Age named the ad one of the most important commercials launched in the past 50 years.

1994

Dockers® are introduced in Europe.

Fortune magazine names Levi Strauss & Co. the most admired apparel company.

Original Levi's® Stores around the globe participate in World AIDS day.

The Council on Economic Priorities selects Levi Strauss & Co. to receive the "America's Corporate Conscience Award for International Commitment."

1995

Dockers® Khakis, invented in Japan ten years earlier as Dockers® Pants, are re-introduced to Japanese consumers.

Levi Strauss & Co. places No. 1 among apparel firms and No. 16 overall in Fortune magazine's annual list of America's most admired corporations.

Levi Strauss & Co. Europe signs a charter confirming that the affiliate does not - and will not - discriminate against employees with HIV or AIDS. The charter is issued by the Belgian government and signed by representatives of seven European companies.

Levi Strauss & Co. launches its first site on the Web at www.levi.com.

Levi Strauss Japan sponsors the Rolling Stones' "Voodoo Lounge" tour.

"Clayman" becomes Levi Strauss & Co.'s first global commercial for the Levi's® brand and runs in countries on all five continents.

1996

Levi's® Vintage Clothing is introduced globally. LVC is a line of authentic reproductions of clothing from the Levi Strauss & Co. Archives.

Levi Strauss & Co. employees and facilities around the world observe World AIDS Day.

1997

Levi Strauss & Co. receives the Organizational Award for a Large Business from the Centers for Disease Control.

1998

Levi Strauss & Co. celebrates the 125th anniversary of the invention of jeans.

Levi Strauss & Co. receives the first Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership.

A flagship Original Levi's Store® opens on San Francisco's Union Square.

2000s

2000

The Levi's® brand introduces Engineered Jeans™, the reinvention of jeans for the 21st century.

Levi Strauss & Co. named No. 2 in Fortune's "America's Best Companies for Minorities."

The Council on Economic Priorities ranks Levi Strauss & Co. number one out of 320 companies in a corporate social responsibility survey. Levi Strauss & Co. receives an "A" rating in the categories of Charitable Giving, Disclosure, Family Benefits, Minority Advancement, Women's Advancement and Workplace Issues.

The company sponsored its first Community Day for employees in San Francisco in 2000, enlisting employees to volunteer at nonprofits citywide, now an annual event.

Full-time, salaried employees in the U.S. can now schedule up to five hours per month paid time away from the office to volunteer at a nonprofit organization of their choosing.

2001

Levi's® Superlow jeans for women are launched and become popular around the world. Levi Strauss & Co. endorses the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA) prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

2002

Dockers® StainDefender products are introduced.

2003

Levi Strauss & Co. celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding and the 130th anniversary of the invention of blue jeans by Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis.

Levi Strauss & Co. expands non-discrimination/non-harassment protected classes to include transgender employees.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation gives Levi Strauss & Co. a perfect score of 100 percent for the way it treats gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees, consumers and investors. Levi Strauss & Co. has maintained the 100 percent score for each subsequent year.

The Levi Strauss Foundation introduces sourcing grants, aimed at strengthening workers' rights in communities where Levi Strauss & Co. has a business presence.

The Dockers® brand launches sunglasses, bed linens, & bath items.

2004

The Dockers® brand introduces innovations such as the Never Iron & Thermal Adapt.

The Levi Strauss Foundation is presented with the Corporate Philanthropy Award by the Ms. Foundation. The theme of the awards is how community participation builds and strengthens democracy.

2005

In an effort to increase transparency within the supply chain and encourage collaboration among competitors in shared factories, Levi Strauss & Co. publishes the names and addresses of all active suppliers on its Web site.

The Levi Strauss Foundation commits nearly \$700,000 to tsunami relief efforts, in addition to matching employee contributions.

The Levi Strauss Foundation pledges more than \$100,000 to relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. By the end of the year Levi Strauss & Co. and LSF giving to hurricane relief efforts grow to more than \$3.4 million.

2006

The Dockers® brand turns 20-years-old.

Innovative Levi's® eco organic jeans debut, catering to the eco-friendly consumer.

Levi Strauss & Co. established our 2006 greenhouse-gas (GHG) inventory for owned/leased-and-operated facilities (headquarters, distribution centers, retail stores, data centers, sales offices, etc.) in North and South America.

Levi Strauss & Co. continues to rank 100% on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index.

2007

Levi Strauss & Co. completed a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of the biggest environmental impact of two iconic products — a pair of Levi's® 501 jeans and Dockers® Original Khakis.

The Levi Strauss Foundation begins funding Better Cotton, Levi Strauss & Co. is one of the founding member signatories of the CEO Water Mandate.

The Levi's® brand is an established leader in slim and skinny fits for women worldwide.

2008

Levi Strauss & Co. expanded its investments in capacity-building activities with additional suppliers to provide targeted training on management systems to address corrective action plans and ensure greater consistency in future assessments.

2009

The Levi's® brand launches its premium Made and Crafted collection, a modern assortment of clothing and accessories that are distinctly inspired by the Levi's® archive, but made from modern fits and materials

The Levi's® brand launched its Care Tag for Our Planet initiative, changing the product care tags in Levi's® products to encourage consumers to wash less, wash in cold, line dry and donate when no longer needed.

The Dockers® brand's Wear The Pants™ campaign to re-invent khakis is launched.

2010s

2010

dENiZEN™ brand launches in Asia.

The Dockers® brand debuted its first Super Bowl ad, airing its "Men Without Pants" campaign.

The Levi's® brand was the first retailer to integrate Facebook into its e-commerce platform, offering consumers a "social shopping" experience.

The Dockers® brand launches its first ever collection of premium products to debut in the US, the new Dockers® K-1 Khaki collection.

The Levi's® brand debuts Curve ID, a new line of custom fit jeans made to fit the curve of a woman's body.

Levi Strauss & Co. leads a global ban on sandblasting, partnering with other retail companies to stop this dangerous practice.

The Levi's® brand launches a more sustainable line of denim that uses significantly less water during the finishing process, called the Water<Less™ collection.

Levi Strauss & Co. joined the Better Cotton initiative, with the goal of driving the worldwide adoption of cotton that is grown using more socially, environmentally and financially sustainable practices.

2011

Denizen® launches in the United States, exclusively at Target.

The Levi's® brand begins to operate on a global platform and launches global "Go Forth" marketing campaign.

The Dockers® brand introduces a new denim alternative — the “Alpha” khaki. Lifting a blue jean’s best attributes, including its slim fit, lower rise and rugged construction, the “Alpha” khaki combines the ease of denim with the more polished design details of an iconic khaki pant.

The Levi’s® brand introduces the Men’s Commuter Jean, built for bicycling.

Levi Strauss & Co. announces plans to create a new Terms of Engagement to better the lives of those who work in our supply chain.

More than 2 million pairs of Levi’s® and Denizen™ jeans made with a blend of Better Cotton, cotton that’s better for the planet and people who grow it, are offered in Fall 2011.

A case study supported in part by the Levi Strauss Foundation shows a fourfold return-on-investment for a factory-based women’s health education program called HERproject.

2012

The Dockers® brand announces Bear Grylls as the new face for its marketing campaign.

Levi Strauss & Co. reaches its 2009 goal of reducing green house gas emissions by 11 percent.