Loafers Encyclopedia Article

Loafers

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Contents

Loafers Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Loafers.....3

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America has had a love affair with the moccasin-style shoe known as the loafer for some decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, loafers—particularly Bass "Weejuns"—were the rage, especially among students, who slipped coins into the slits on their tops, creating so-called "penny loafers." While slip-ons had been around for years before, their "preppy" style was extolled in a 1960 editorial in *The Daily Tarheel,* the newspaper of the University of North Carolina, which asked: "What are Bass Weejuns?" The answer: "The thing on the feet of those who are with it." Many firms, including the high-style Gucci company, manufactured slip-on shoes, but it was G.H. Bass & Co., based in Maine, that launched the classic penny loafer style in 1936, duplicating a Norwegian design. According to Bass archivist Carol Paolino, the company named their shoes Weejuns from a contraction of Norwegian and "injun," the crude slang for Indian. Soon, the shoes, and all successive makes of similar design, became known as "loafers," a label that signifies their easy-to-wear comfort and casual style.

Further Reading:

Bayles, Fred. "An American Original Has Lost Its Footing." *USA Today.* February 10, 1998, 4A.

McLaughlin, Patricia. "Loafer Love Affair: Walk a Mile in TheseShoes, Step into Fashion." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* November 19, 1997, 3.