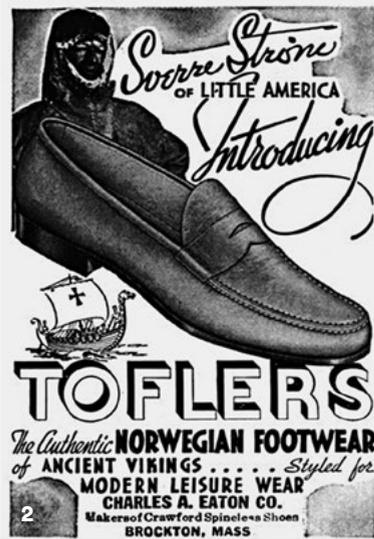


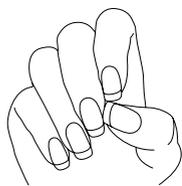
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LOAFER The loafer is a laceless, unlined leather shoe with a low or flat heel.¹ The penny loafer, a variant that features a moccasin-style seamed upper that includes an instep strap incised with a small decorative slit, was a sartorial staple for numerous twentieth-century subcultures, from British teddy boys and mods to Jamaican rude boys and American preps, and has become a mainstay of Western footwear.

While the loafer has a broad and ancient precedent in the Native American moccasin, the penny loafer has its roots in a leather slip-on shoe that Norwegian peasants wore starting in the early 1900s.² Before long, sportsmen from the Continent who traveled to Norway to fish adopted the style, and through them it found its way to the rest of Europe. From there the look spread to North America, and in 1936 its stylishness was confirmed in the pages of *Esquire* magazine, in illustrations documenting the Norwegian-style footwear being worn at the fashionable resorts of Palm Beach, Florida.³ The American manufacturer Bass jumped on the trend, and the loafer it released the same year—called the Weejun in reference to its Norwegian origins—would soon become the standard.⁴ Available in shiny black and brown leather, Weejuns could be dressed up and were often paired with a single-breasted suit jacket and cuffed chino trousers as part of the preppy “Ivy League” look popular with young American men in the 1940s and ’50s.⁵ Conversely, the loafer’s simplicity and comfort made it ideal for the increasingly informal dress of the postwar era (a Bass advertisement from 1962 described it as “a symbol of elegant leisure”). At some point, young Americans of both genders, whether for playful or practical reasons, began slipping shiny pennies into the decorative slit on the shoe’s instep—hence the term “penny loafer.”





This Americanized version of the loafer is what the Italian fashion house Gucci encountered when it opened its first stateside boutique in the early 1950s. Not to be left out of the trend, Gucci produced a luxury take on it, using calfskin leather in a range of colors. The snaffle horse bit that Gucci later placed across the vamp was a trademark detail that made its loafer a signifier of wealth and taste for the remainder of the century.

Celebrities of all kinds have worn classic penny loafers over the decades, but it was Michael Jackson, the “King of Pop,” who literally put the shoes center stage in the 1980s, incorporating them into the elaborate costumes he donned for his performances. Jackson’s influence, combined with a cultural nostalgia for the preppy look of the 1950s, ensured that the penny loafer’s popularity soared again in this decade. The casual minimalist style of the 1990s saw penny loafers paired with light-washed form-fitting denim and simple, comfortable knitwear, and the recent surge of interest in heritage brands has kept these old-school shoes current, affirming their enduring relevance and adaptability. —LB

MANICURE The word *manicure* broadly means “care of the hands” (Latin: *cura* and *manus*), which usually includes nail trimming and buffing, cuticle maintenance, skin moisturizing, and hand massage in addition to nail polishing. Maintaining pampered nails and soft hands has always been a signifier of economic status, given their centrality to manual labor. Recorded across cultures and millennia, dyed nails were historically common in parts of North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia (using henna), and China (beeswax lacquer).

In the Western world, nails were generally colored with tinted powders that were buffed on until the development of a colored liquid nail enamel by the American company Cutex in 1917.¹ The suntan, made fashionable by Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel (among others) in the 1920s, was the perfect foil to the deep red nail lauded as the epitome of chic.

Cosmetics giant Revlon, formed in 1932, initially specialized in nail polish, a recession-proof affordable luxury. The naming of nail colors played an important role in helping the consumer try on new identities. Revlon’s 1952 bright-red Fire and Ice, for example—advertised with a personality questionnaire—was positioned as a nail polish for bold, adventurous, and emancipated women (see *Red Lipstick*). It crystallized the tension around cosmetics in general (and painted nails in particular) in the twentieth century: increasingly part of an independent modern woman’s public identity and yet still associated with the artificiality of “those icons of deception, actresses and whores” (see *YSL Touche Éclat*).²

The 1970s birthed the tawny, white-tipped French manicure, and chipped polish and muddy dark tones emerged as a style for both sexes—worn by gender-bending rock musicians Freddie Mercury and Lou Reed as a means to subvert what fashion designer André Courrèges declared to



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- 1— Michael Jackson performing “Billie Jean” on the TV special *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever*, 1983. Photograph by Paul Drinkwater
- 2— Advertisement for Tofflers loafers, 1936
- 3— Moccasins made by Sioux women of the Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, 1970. Photograph by Dave Buresh
- 4— Student Anna McCann, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, *Holiday*, 1954. Unknown photographer
- 5— Rude boys Chuka and Dubem Okonkwo, the “Islington twins,” London, 1981. Photograph by Janette Beckman