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introducing STETSON®

SINCE 1865



STETSON® 150th ANNIVERSARY 1865 2015

celebrating A LEGEND

As it did in 1865, Stetson today embodies the resourceful, very authentic, and diverse American spirit. Rich in history, the story of Stetson continues in step with the journey of America - ever evolving and timeless.

When John Batterson Stetson began selling hats bearing his name in 1865, there really was no need for yet another hatmaker on the East Coast. Although nearly every adult who went out in public wore a hat, there were hundreds of hat companies. However, like other great businesses throughout American history, Stetson would prove to offer something to the consumer that they valued; innovative products with exceptional quality at a fair value.



John Batterson Stetson
Photo courtesy of Stetson Archives



Stetson's success eventually required this huge factory in Philadelphia.
Photo courtesy of Stetson Archives

1830 The Beginning

Stetson was born in 1830 and grew up with his family in East Orange, New Jersey. The Stetsons were a family of hatmakers and "John B." along with his 12 siblings worked in the family's No Name Hat Company in East Orange where they learned the hatmaking trade.

John B. Stetson, an Eastern hat maker, would go on to make the West's most enduring icon, the "Cowboy Hat."

Stetson's Iconic Hat Style

Today's cowboy hat has remained basically unchanged in construction and design since the first one created in 1865 by J.B. Stetson. The "Boss of the Plains" style hat became his signature style.



"Suffering from tuberculosis, Stetson went west for the fresher air hoping to recuperate. From there he sought adventure and fortune by heading further west seeking gold. At camp suffering from the wind and the rain, Stetson knew he could do something to ease their misery. From his former apprenticeship at his father's hat shop he was able to take fur from rabbits, clean it and start the felting process using boiling water and the rudimentary tools he had at his disposal to make a waterproof blanket," said Matthew Range, Marketing Director for Hatco, the licensee and manufacturer of Stetson hats in Garland, TX.

Inspired by success with the blanket, he decided to use the same process to make a hat that would keep out the elements. But instead of making a hat familiar on the East Coast, he made the brim much wider to keep the rain and sun off of his face with a taller open crown.

This unique hat would become the prototype for Stetson's "Boss of the Plains" hat, which would be the keystone of the Stetson brand name making it known far and wide.

Stetson continued his stay in the West for another year, but the experience of selling his distinctive hat for a $5-gold-piece never left him. He knew his hat could become an essential tool for anyone in the west–or heading to it–seeking protection from the elements. He moved back East in 1865 and begin making hats. But while Stetson ultimately built one of the most successful hat businesses in the world, the early years were anything but easy.

Boss of the Plains Hat image source: www.antiqueshoppefl.com

the human CAPITALIST

"Stetson took a fatherly interest in the welfare of his employees, initiating a variety of company services from healthcare, education, and recreation, to banking, housing and religious services. He was motivated by his sincere Christian faith, a strong philanthropic conscience, and certainty that satisfied workers could be more productive, these are principles that we value today", states CFO Duane Prentice.

John B. Stetson chose the manufacturing mecca of Philadelphia, PA. to hang out his shingle. He was even confident enough to take on two employees.

From an outsider's perspective, this move might not have been the best decision. Philadelphia was known as a hatmakers' town; hat manufacturers and retailers seemed to be on every street corner. Determined that his hat was truly exceptional, Stetson borrowed $60 from his sister, rented a small room and purchased the tools and fur needed to make his hats.

His first hats were similar to ones already on the scene in Philadelphia, except his were much lighter weight. He wore his hats as he went from store to store but didn't make many sales. However, the experience of selling the western-style hat to the pioneers back out West for a $5-gold-piece kept nagging at him. With bills piling up and next-to-no sales to pay them, he decided to refocus on the needs of those migrating to the West.

"Stetson sent his hats out west to hat stores and trading posts that were frequented by pioneers. He told store owners that if they were happy with the quality of the hats, they should order in dozens. And the stores did. Orders that at first came in a trickle, turned into a stream, until it was a literal flood of orders coming in from far and wide," said Range.



Lon Megargee's
"Last Drop From His Stetson" from 1924
Source: www.americanmembers.com

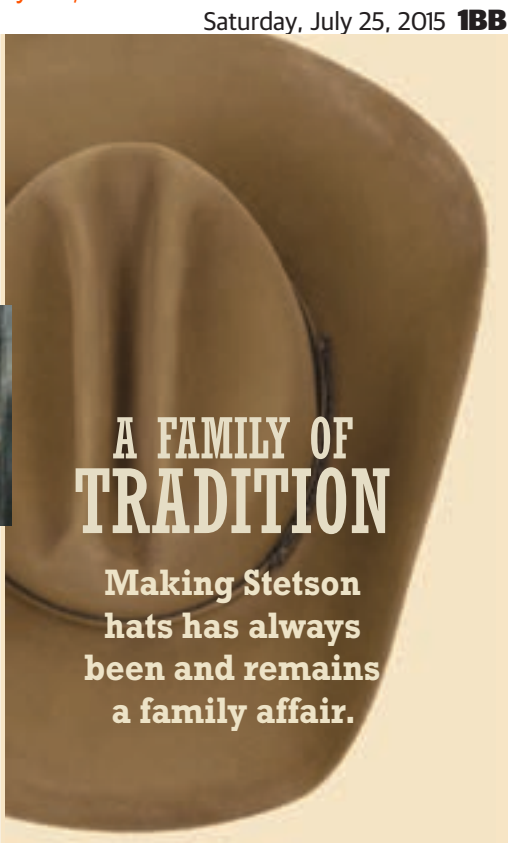
Stetson's decision to focus on the west began a period of unbridled growth for the business. He moved the operation from the central business district to the outskirts of Philadelphia, where he bought a three-story building to house a factory. By the late 19th century, the campus grew to 25 buildings, connected by aerial walkways. The "Boss of the Plains" hat had fueled a booming business and helped create the largest hat factory in the world.

The numbers behind the Stetson name for that time were impressive: By 1899, Stetson had 2,800 retailers across the United States and the factory was producing approximately 600,000 hats a year and employed 1,200 employees. But more than just a place to work, the Stetson factory was the heart of a close-knit community of workers who benefited greatly by being a Stetson employee.

When Stetson died in 1906, the business practices that he firmly rooted in place helped the company continue to grow. By 1915, there were 10,000 retail merchants and 150 wholesale distributors in the US, along with another 1,125 international retailers. The business had grown to 5,400 employees, producing approximately 3,336,000 hats a year – an average of 11,000 hats a day.

Over the years, however, hats began to wane in popularity. Big changes were coming to the hat industry, led by the John B. Stetson Company and an emerging startup company in Texas.

STETSON IS NOT JUST A HAT...IT'S THE HAT



A FAMILY OF TRADITION

Making Stetson hats has always been and remains a family affair.

From the time John B. Stetson first learned his trade from his father, to the long list of current employees who have followed in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents to keep the Stetson name as the iconic hat brand in America, families have been the backbone of the company.

THE ROSENTHAL FAMILY has been in the hat-making business for more than a century. A total of five generations so far have been part of the hat-making profession and, along with the Stetson and Guilden families, have played a part in keeping the Stetson brand alive and well. Gary Rosenthal who has been in the business 56+ years works with the product development team, while his son John who has been in the business 24 years directs plant manufacturing. A relative new comer going on 2 years, John's son, Ben assists his father in expediting production schedules.



L to R: Gary Rosenthal, Ben Rosenthal Jr. and John Rosenthal. Photo by Matthew Range

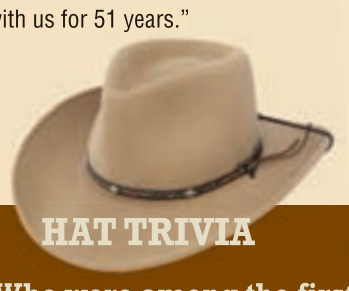
THE GUILDEN FAMILY also had a rich history with the Stetson brand. "My father, Ira Guilden, had a fascination with the American West even though he was born and grew up in New York City. It is what motivated him to rescue the John B. Stetson Company at a time in the 60's when the hat business was in severe decline. He cultivated it to become a more diverse and stronger brand. Were it not for him we would not be celebrating Stetson's 150th anniversary. Our family is only the second in its history to own John B.'s company, and we cherish its tradition" states Paul Guilden.



Hatco General Manager Ricky Bolin.
Photo by Glen Ellman

"Making hats is a craft. You can have machines galore, but if you can't feel and see what needs to happen with each individual hat, you aren't going to get a hat that deserves the Stetson name," states General Manager Ricky Bolin above.

"These are not cookie-cutter hats that just pop out of a mold. Every step of making a hat has a hand guiding the way. One-third of our factory employees have more than 20 years of experience making hats. We have one gentleman, Russell McDaniel who has been with us for 51 years."



HAT TRIVIA

Q. Who were among the first celebrity Stetson wearers.

A. Buffalo Bill and Annie Oakley

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CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

As it did in 1865, Stetson today embodies the resourceful, authentic, and diverse American spirit.

Two powerful brands join forces STETSON AND RESISTOL

Like in many U.S. industries, countless consolidations, sales of whole companies and purchases of portions of businesses have run rampant through the hat manufacturing industry.

REMAINING TRUE TO CORE VALUES

No matter how much has changed in the world, Stetson has remained relevant while staying true to its core values. Like the wide brim and high crown that made it the "Boss of the Plains" so many years ago, two fundamental elements remain a part of the Stetson culture: one, the focus on the people and families who have kept the Stetson name alive; and two, the quality of the quintessential American product that John Wayne called "the hat that won the West."



Gary Rosenthal, John Rosenthal and Ben Rosenthal Sr. taken in 1970.

In the late 1960s, the J.B. Stetson Company was continuing a long decline that started in the 50s: less personal treatment of its workers by management, stiff demands by recently formed unions, rising costs of fur and declining wearers of headwear. By 1970, most of the company's properties had been sold or leased; there were only 800 employees left. The once extremely profitable company was now in financial stress.

In that same year, the John B. Stetson Company was sold to the Guilden family. With little to no recourse, they were forced to shutter the Philadelphia plant. To keep the Stetson name alive, Ira Guilden negotiated a licensing agreement with Stevens Hat Company, which was owned by the Rosenthal family, and the manufacturing of Stetson hats moved to in St. Joseph, Mo.

Meanwhile, another American hat manufacturer success story, also committed to product innovation, quality and commitment to its customers, began in the late 1920s in Dallas. By 1938 the Byer-Rolnick Company had expanded to its present Garland, TX location, with its famous Resistol brand. Following the commitment to hat quality that John B. Stetson had demonstrated many years earlier, they built their own hat body manufacturing facility in Longview, TX in 1953.

BY THE MID-1980S, SEVERAL FACTORS LED TO STETSON AND RESISTOL BEING MADE UNDER THE SAME ROOF.

STETSON
LEGENDARY HATS

Where the PAST AND PRESENT COME ALIVE

HOW DOES A BRAND STAY RELEVANT FOR 150 YEARS?

Product innovation, integrity, quality and priced at a fair value.

From the time that John B. Stetson first began making felt hats inspired by the waterproof blankets made of animal fur to keep his friends and himself warm and dry out on the trail, to the 200-step process requiring a craftsman's attention to detail, to the integrity of the "X" mark, these tenants have remained sacrosanct for Stetson hats.

The integrity of the "X" mark

Stetson ensures its materials to be the highest quality because Hatco is the only vertically integrated fur felt hat company in America.

"Controlling every aspect of production ensures that the customer is getting a 100 percent pure fur product," said Bolin, "By manufacturing the hat body in our Longview facility and finishing the hat in Garland, we fully control the purity of the material content. This is reflected as the 'X' marked inside the hat. (The higher the X's reflecting more expensive rabbit and beaver fur).

"Other companies have less control of this and often their hats rated with similar X's have a significant percentage of wool and lower quality fur" Bolin adds. "This can be confusing to consumers when comparing our hats with others. We are confident in the integrity of our X marking and its corresponding value. Additionally, their hat bodies are often purchased from other countries. We are the only U.S. hat manufacturer that is vertically integrated. So we truly are 'American Made, Texas Proud'. I think John B. Stetson would be proud that his name is on our hats."

It's not just the hats that seem to last forever. The machines and equipment used to produce these iconic hats have also stood the test of time.



The perfection of hatmaking continues today in the true Steston tradition by supplying the world the most celebrated iconic hat. Photo by Glen Ellman

Source: Stetson Archives



- World's largest hat factory built in 1870.
- Photo courtesy of Stetson Archives

Over time, most factories receive major overhauls to keep current with the available technologies. Equipment gets replaced and machines are upgraded.

At the Hatco factory in Garland – which also produces Charlie 1 Horse, Wrangler and Dobbs hats – most of the machines and equipment are vintage mechanisms. The reason? Most hatmaking machines are very unique. The same blocking, sanding and sewing machines that were created in the early days of the hatmaking industry are still essential today.

"With many of our people in the factory working here more than 20 years, and employing the same hat-making equipment used as far back as 1892, you can tell the process hasn't changed much. Hats from 'back in the day' are our bench mark, and it's comforting to know that the equipment that made those hats 100 years ago are making our hats today," states V.P. of Operations Dan Brown. "We're not taking shortcuts. We're not cutting corners. We have customers who might buy a hat every 20 years. They are going to compare them, and they'll see nothing's changed."

Hatco realized this when they purchased the company, and not only bought all of the equipment and tooling, but also developed machine blueprints so they could know each machine intimately when it needed repair.



Workers today use the same hat-making techniques as those from the 19th century. Photo by Glen Ellman

"Some of the companies that made this equipment are no longer in business. It's imperative that we keep these machines in top condition. That's why we have a machine shop that not only makes repairs, but machines new parts as they wear out," said Brown. But while the factory might be a working museum, Hatco management relies upon current manufacturing "LEAN" processes, which allows them to be as efficient as possible. "While hat manufacturing processes have stood the test of time and continue to be made essentially the same way they were 100 plus years ago, we have embraced 21st century LEAN manufacturing principles to further improve our quality, cost and customer on-time delivery. We like to say this is where the Past and the Present come alive," said Prentice.

FACTORY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

To celebrate the factory as a working museum, and to give the public an appreciation of this historical process, the Hatco management team decided in 2015 to open up the factory.

TOUR HOURS:
Tues and Thurs: 9:30am & 2:00pm
Cost: $5 Per Person
Appointment Only: 1.800.288.6579

It is a walking tour with the opportunity to go back in time.
601 Marion Drive • Garland, Texas 75042
www.stetsonhat.com

STETSON TOUGH AND TWO STORIES THAT PROVES IT

In one case, a road crew in Montana unearthed a grave of two men in 1924 who had been buried still wearing their boots and Stetsons. They were identified as bandits who had been caught, killed and buried in 1882. While their bodies were merely skeletal remains, their Stetson hats remained in good condition.

In the second case, a Stetson hat was found during the exploration of the battleship Maine in 1912 after the ship was sunk in the Havana harbor in 1898. The ship had been underwater for 14 years – everything on it was exposed to saltwater, mud and sea creatures of all shapes and sizes. Still, after all that time and all that exposure to an assortment of contaminants, the Stetson only needed a good cleaning and renovation to look as good as new.



Hatco at the original Garland, Texas is largest fur-felt hat factory in the country. Photo by Glen Ellman



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OUTFITTING AMERICA SINCE 1865

Fedoras Panamas Ladies Homburgs Derbies Boaters Outdoors



more than just WESTERN HATS



In the minds of many, the name Stetson is a generic term for a wide brimmed, felt hat with a tall crown worn by ranchers, cowboys and others who like the westerner lifestyle. In reality, the range of Stetson hats produced is much broader.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, it wasn't uncommon for urban men to spend a small fortune on their wardrobe, and no city dweller's outfit was truly complete without a dress hat to top it off. Stetson's line of men's dress hats included the bowler, fedora, Homburg, top hat and trilby. It was also during this time that the skyrocketing dress hat demand caused production of dress hats to overtake the production of western hats as the company's number one selling product.

To keep the Stetson dress brand relevant, the challenge is to continue the creativity and ingenuity that first made Stetson successful not only in western but also in dress hats. In the last decade, there has been a resurgence in dress headwear with the public, and within the company. Hatco designers of Stetson and Dobbs (their other dress hat with a rich tradition) are responding to that challenge with hats that continue the tradition of telling the world about the man or woman underneath the brim.

1970-1999
Stetson establishes itself as a lifestyle brand.

Stetson divests from manufacturing and moves to licensed production extending merchandising to fragrances and eyewear. Films such as "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Urban Cowboy" spark hat sales.

2000-Present
The Dawn of the 21st Century

Defining the Stetson lifestyle: Product additions include apparel, footwear and housewares. License is inked for Europe. A salute to history with a limited edition collector's Colt® revolver. With the advent of "hipster" fashion, dress hats enjoy a resurgence.

The Stetson 150 Year Anniversary section was produced by the Star-Telegram Marketing Features Department. Karina Ceuterick, project designer; Mark Fadden, contributing writer; Glen Ellman, contributing photographer. Contact Debbie Yarbrough,Special Features Manager, at dyarbrough@star-telegram.com

THE FUTURE WILL BRING MORE COLORFUL STYLES



"Today, just as back when we began making hats, Stetson has built its reputation by providing that balance between utility and fashion, whether a classic hat that a man can toss on as he heads out the door or a roll-up swagger hat that a woman can take out of her purse on a rainy day or an outdoor hat for a day's hike through a national park. The future will be colorful styles, new innovations in durability and comfort, looks that accentuate the wearer, but don't overwhelm them and as always, hats that we make from start to finish with pride in the USA," states dress hat product designer Matt Deckard.

past and present STETSON





While hats were once seen as a necessity, they have also always been fashion statements. Once we place a western hat low on our brow or tip a dress hat to the side, we are making a fashion choice. We are choosing to tell the world who we are with one glance.





the essence of





the American spirit





What if you could tell the world about yourself without saying a word? John B. Stetson got into hat making in the late 1800s to solve a major problem – keep working pioneers as safe as possible from the elements. Dress hats of that era served perhaps an equally important purpose of style and status. If a man wore a Stetson dress hat, people knew he was a successful businessman. If a woman donned a Stetson, the world knew she had considerable status. In today's world of hectic schedules and multitasking, there is a yearning for simplicity. Perhaps there is no clearer message than seeing someone impeccably dressed and crowned with a dress hat, or watching a cowboy underneath the brim of a hat working hard in the elements to get the job done.

The right hat holds purpose and punch. It adds a bit of flair and mystery to the wearer and has the ability to open up a world of possibilities. For a seasoned hat wearer like Bolin, it has become part of his identity. "I rarely leave my house without my western hat on. It is part of who I am."

For a relative new comer to headwear like Prentice, it has been a fun process to try various styles. "Whether it is a western, dress or outdoor hat, I have learned to become confident and comfortable. It is an opportunity on occasion to change things up."

The next time you pass someone wearing a western, dress or outdoor hat, take a moment to really look at them. What statement is that person making with their hat?

When you pass a hat store, take a few minutes to go in and browse through their hats. Talk to the knowledgeable salesperson about the various hats and try on a few. Look in the mirror and ask yourself, "What is this hat telling the world about me?"

And if you look inside the crown and see the Stetson brand, you know you have something special in your hands.

You hold a legendary piece of American history that has lasted for 150 years and, thanks to the people at Hatco who are committed to making the same quality product John B. Stetson was known for, Stetson hats will continue to thrive into the next generation.

be timeless
Stetson

It is possible to say without too great exaggeration that America grew up under STETSON.



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A Snapshot OF HISTORY

Camera Collection Courtesy of Arlington Camera



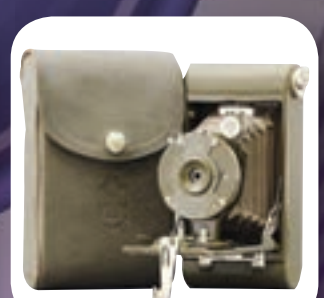
1917

Graflex Junior
Built by the Folmer & Schwing Division of Eastman Kodak from 1914-1924. Used 2 1/4" x 3 1/4" sheets of film.



1929

Kodak #1A Pocket Autographic
Smaller than it's predecessors, but larger than the "Vest Pocket" series, this folding camera shot photos measuring 2 1/2" x 4 1/4" using roll film.



1929

Kodak "Boy Scout"
Folding vest pocket camera made especially for the Boy Scouts of America. The camera shot 127 size roll film and took photos measuring 4.5cm x 6 cm.



1932

Leica Model II
One of Germany's first 35mm cameras with interchangeable lenses to be mass produced. It was available in black or chrome and produced until the end of World War II.



1936

Kodak Magazine Cine
An affordable camera for home movie buffs. It used 16mm motion picture film loaded into special magazines that could be loaded into the camera in daylight. Quite an advance at the time!



1950

Riken Stecky
A fine example of miniature film cameras, the Stecky used 16mm movie film and took 10 exposures per film loading. Surprisingly heavy for its small size due to all steel and brass construction.



1952

Wardette 120 box Camera
It has two viewfinders, one on the top for vertical shots and one on the side for horizontal. It didn't do well at all with product photography. Performed okay w/portraits. It takes 8 6x9 exposures on 120 film.



1953

Paillard-Bolex B8
Swiss made 8mm movie camera with removable trigger grip. Movies could be shot from 8-64 frames per second allowing for slow motion and other effects.



1954

Voigtlander Vitessa N
An extremely popular camera in the fifties, mainly because of its folding "barn doors" that enclosed the lens and shutter when not in use. Also, the unique plunger on top of the body that actually wound the film.



1961

Petri 7 35mm
The Circle-Eye System coupled rangefinder, leafshuttered model, that was used by some professionals in the Sixties. It was so well built that this model is still used by enthusiasts & Street Artists today.



1961

Yashica Rapide
It's unusual vertical design was likened to transistor radios of the time. It used 35mm film, but shot at what is called "half frame". In other words, the photographer would get 72 photos from a 36 exposure roll of film.



1963

Agfa Silette I
Affordable plastic body with detachable flash that used tiny flashbulbs one at a time for indoor shooting. The camera back was removable to facilitate film loading.



1963

Polaroid Auto 100
The first Polaroid that allowed film to be developed OUTSIDE the camera thus allowing the photographer to continue shooting while someone nearby could be timing the development process.



1965

TRAID Corporation Fotron
Often called "The Greatest Rip-off of the Century", this futuristic camera was sold door-to-door and used special film cartridges and had a built-in flash. Customers were usually taken for anywhere from $300- $500.



1967

Nikon Photomic FTn
An extremely rugged 35mm interchangeable lens camera with a highly accurate built-in meter. This camera became the photojournalist's favorite during the Vietnam War.



1977

Polaroid One Step
This "Rainbow White" edition sold by the thousands and is still popular today. It was powered by a battery in each pack of SX70 film and used a flash bar for indoor shots.



1984

Leica M6 Royal Photographic Society
One of the many Leica 35mm commemorative cameras made for special groups and dignitaries throughout the world.



1991

Pentax IQ Zoom 90WR
Fully automatic and weather-resistant 35mm compact camera with 38-90mm zoom lens. Also featured auto film loading and film advance. Main feature was its splash proof housing.



1998

Kodak DCS330 early Digital
The digital portion (bottom) of this camera is Kodak. The upper portion is actually a Nikon Pronea, which started as an APS film camera. At the time, 3 megapixels was considered huge.



2012

Canon 5D MKIII Digital
Arguably one of the best professional digital cameras being produced today. It contains a whopping 22.3 megapixel sensor (the same size as a frame of 35mm film).



2014

Nikon D810 (present day)
Full frame (35mm sensor) digital SLR body capable of capturing and producing wall sized images with stunning clarity. A "must have" camera for wedding and portrait photographers who shoot Nikon.

Stetson - Congratulations on 150 years !

Arlington Camera

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