

Siara Brown  
Prof. Zimmerman  
Textiles  
November 27, 2017

Construction workers are very hard working people. This job field consists of men who are constantly moving their legs, climbing buildings, adding bricks to buildings, sculpting, painting etc. Having a job like this can get quite messy quickly. Their job field is very intense and also dangerous and it would be ten times harder if they had no protective wear. Farmers are also hard working people. This job field consists of both men and women, mostly men, who are planting crops and feeding animals. Having a uniform that would keep you safe was mandatory. Also, if safety equipment was never found, the tasks they were asked to do would be very difficult to get done. Luckily, safety wear has been provided for them and they can get their tasks done while being safe and comfortable. This protective uniform that they wore is called overalls.

Overalls have been around since the late 1700s. They were always known as being an outfit for those who worked dangerous jobs. It was extremely rare to see a woman wearing overalls at this time."For years handymen, painters and farmers have known the value of a good pair of overalls." This quote stated by Clinton Daniel who wrote the article, "Overalls Moving from Work World with Playful Style" states that the people who wore overalls back then were mostly painters, handymen and farmers. Painters wore overalls because dealing with paint can get messy. The original name for them were bib overalls. They got this name because it covers the majority of a person's body with just one clothing item. Most of your chest and entire leg area was covered leaving your arms and some parts of your back out. People would wear them with a T-shirt underneath so that your skin wouldn't be shown. It was super simple to put on and it slowly became a fashion trend around the 1990s. It would be seen as street wear and not only workers started to wear it but everyday people, casual people, people who didn't have a reason to wear overalls were starting to wear them.

Denim is the main fabric used to make the popular overalls. A reason why overalls were chosen to be made out of denim is because since it was originally designed for the working men, they needed a strong fabric that won't tear while getting the job done. According to Matt Histan, The author of the article, "Decoding Denim" He states, "...The name is a shortened version of the French "serge de Nimes," which was a fabric created in the town of Nimes, France." He's saying that denim got their name from a fabric created in Nimes, France. Denim is made out of cotton. Cotton comes from a plant called gossypium. Several months after it was planted there would be fluffy balls of cotton. Afterwards, it was either picked from hand or by machine that would separate the cotton fibres from the seeds. The machine used was called a cotton gin. Denim is a cotton twill that is "made from interlacing warp and filling yarns in an alternating pattern." This small quote explains that denim is made by using an over,under,over,under pattern throughout the entire piece. How does denim get the blue color they are known for you may wonder. Well, the warp thread is dyed with an indigo dye. In this article, Histan also states that denim is made with about 10 to 20 percent of spandex allowing a better and more comfortable fit.

So many working men looked up to overalls as their uniform is because they were very comfortable. A quote stated by Lori Rotenberk, who wrote the article "Bib Overalls: From Farm Wear to Fashion Icon" is, "Alan Simmons, a 47-year old farmer at Chicago's Ginkgo Organic Gardens finds himself standing more comfortably when he wears overalls. "There's no belt, the bib protects my chest and I have all of these pockets," he says." This quote states that the farmer feels confident while wearing his overalls since he has nothing to worry about. His chest area was covered meaning it was protected and he had pockets to put his items so he'd have them with him at all times. In the article, "Comfortable, long lasting and affordable" written by Sylvain Desjardins, she states, "Denim, made from 100-per-cent cotton fabric by the 1870s, was durable, comfortable and affordable. Denim clothes could be washed countless times, and never needed ironing." This quote is self explanatory. It basically establishes the fact that denim was and still is a fabric that is strong and affordable meaning the price can't beat the quality of the product. Also, in another article, "Overalls Moving from Work World with Playful Style" written by Clifton Daniel, he says, "Conversely, wearers prefer the overalls themselves to be huge. "Most of them are buying them oversize, a size larger to two sizes larger," Ms. Adkins said. "The baggier the better." This quote establishes that people liked when their overalls would have a baggy fit for more room. Having a pair overalls that fit baggy was for work attire and later on around the 1990s baggy denim overalls were very trendy street wear.

Another main reason why they became so trendy throughout the years is because they're very durable. In the article "Durable Denim's New Day" written by Arthur Friedman, he states "after taking the performance apparel market with fresh street and flexibility technologies the last few years, denim fiber, fabric and jeans makers are tackling durability and similar added qualities..." This quote is stating that denim has become very flexible and durable overtime. Also, in the article, "Future Denim" by Janet Beater Rodie, she states "...denim offers two- to four-times greater tensile and tear strength than conventional cotton fabric of the same weight." This quote basically states that denim is a strong fabric and it won't tear so easily. Overalls were chosen to be made out of denim because since it was originally designed for the working men, they needed a strong fabric that won't tear while getting the job done. They were always moving around and needed a uniform that was wearable and heavy duty.

As previously stated, nowadays, anyone can wear overalls to either go to work or just to look fashionable and trendy. But before they became a well known clothing, they were designed for working men who were in dangerous fields in particular. Overalls were seen as protective uniforms for them. They were heavier and thicker. One of them in particular was from the brand RoundHouse. RoundHouse is a very old brand that became popular around the 1900s in Oklahoma. According to the RoundHouse website, "ROUNDHOUSE® brand jeans and overalls quickly became a favorite among rail workers, becoming known for their ruggedness and

affordability.” This quote says that these overalls were known for how affordable and durable they were. The quality of the overalls were great for the price and rail workers enjoyed wearing them. The RoundHouse overalls were very tough meaning they wouldn’t break as easily while you were working. The specific pair of overalls I would be explaining is the RoundHouse Men’s Classic Blue Denim Button Fly-Overalls. I chose these overalls because the style was simple yet showed a great reason as to why workers wore them and why it was perfect work attire.



RoundHouse #966 Made in USA Classic Blue Denim Fly Overalls

The Round House mens classic blue denim overalls were made out of heavy weight 100% cotton. As mentioned before, we know that cotton is a very durable and comfortable fiber that has been around for many years. It was the main textile used back in the day. Cotton is also gentle on the skin. When the designers of RoundHouse were thinking about making jeans and overalls, they thought of how they can have a strong yet wearable piece of clothing. As stated by Anonymous in the short article “Protective Clothing”, “....it is important to cover as much of your body as possible with non-flammable clothing.

Wear loose-fitting clothes made from natural fibres like pure wool, heavy cotton drill or denim.” This quote says that covering up your body was a must and that natural fibers would be the best fibers to do so. There was no such thing as manufactured fibers in the 1900s so the designers of round house was only able to work with cotton.

Another type of fabric that was created by cotton is corduroy. Corduroy fabric could be as strong as denim but it has a softer feel to it. This type of fabric was made a while ago but it was not as popular as denim our used they way denim was used. According to the article “Denim at Interviews” written by anonymous, corduroy was not only used for clothing. It was a “durable fabric used by genoese sailors to cover and protect their goods on the decks from all time whether” meaning that corduroy was used to protect goods while they were on boats or behind trucks etc. This author also says that corduroy wasn't necessary used for clothing purposes but to protect people's goods when it was raining.. This writer also states, “The Genoa corduroy material became popular in the Europe and the French called it Genes, the French word for Genoa. Maybe the word "jeans originated there. In the French city of Nimes, they developed another fabric similar to corduroy that became known as denim, the name of the city, literally "de Nimes.” This quote explains that both, corduroy and denim fabrics are durable and come from cotton. According to encyclopedia.com, “corduroy is woven with loose threads that are then cut to create a pile, or thick, soft texture.” Since it's woven with loose threads, it has that softer feel

to it then denim. Corduroy wasn't seen as a fabric that would benefit construction workers, painters, farmers etc. Nowadays, corduroy is used in many different styles of clothing.

A brand that sells corduroy clothing is Forever 21. Forever 21 is a fast fashion clothing store that also sells accessories. The overalls I would be comparing are the skinny corduroy overalls found in Forever 21. These overalls retail for \$32.90. These overalls are very similar to what the original design but many things changed. Overalls aren't used just for work or just for men as I have mentioned. These was designed particularly for a woman to wear and they have a different look to them. Since they are skinny, they have a more elegant look to them. These corduroy overalls can be worn to other parties, dinners, nights out almost any occasion except for work if you are in a dangerous field. These overalls are more lightweight although the design is very similar. You wouldn't be able to move your body around if you wore these if you were a

farmer. Also, the color of these overalls are very different from what we would usually see. They are a nice soft pink color.



Forever 21 Skinny Corduroy Overalls

The difference between the Roundhouse overalls and the Forever 21 overalls is pretty big. The most noticeable difference is that Round House made these overalls for mens while the Forever 21 ones were for woman. Men still have newer designs for their overalls but things have changed over the years and now women are the ones who wear them most or are the ones being seen with them. Another difference is how the bottom of the overalls are styled. Both cover the legs entirely but the roundhouse ones were more flare and baggy while the forever 21 ones are

super tight on the legs. Tight fitting jeans are very trendy nowadays and most of the new styled overalls have that tighter look to them the the original design. Another noticeable difference is the color. Pink overalls were something that came along when colored clothing was a trend. Also the fabrics used to make these are different. Roundhouse used heavy duty indigo denim while forever 21 used corduroy. Both fabrics are strong however, since forever 21 is fast fashion, this product won't last you as long as the roundhouse ones so the overall quality of the overalls have slightly decreased. The forever 21 pair as mentioned before were designed for a woman to wear meaning that it would be more lightweight. The roundhouse pair is much heavier since farmers, railroaders, painters construction workers etc. wore them, it had to be heavy weight. Lastly, there is a similarity between these two besides they are both overalls. They're both known as bib overalls and they both have pockets and buttons.

Overalls have been around for many of years. Technology is always changing the designs of overalls are also changing. Overalls don't come in just pants as the bottom finish anymore. They now have skirts and shorts in overalls while still keeping that original bib to cover your chest. Overalls will always remain an on and off trend and literally anyone can wear them. People even put their kids in overalls and overalls can be seen as school uniform for either children who are still in elementary/middle school. Men still wear their heavy duty overalls to work since it keeps them protected and covered and they are still comfortable to wear.

## References:

Bib Overalls: From Farmwear to Fashion Icon. (2013, October 24). Retrieved November 24, 2017, from <https://modernfarmer.com/2013/10/bib-overalls/>

Comfortable, long-lasting and affordable. The Gazette (Montreal, Quebec), Retrieved from [www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic](http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic)

Corduroy. (n.d.). Retrieved November 26, 2017, from <http://www.encyclopedia.com/sports-and-everyday-life/fashion-and-clothing/textiles-and-weaving/corduroy>

Denims at interviews. Daily News (Sri Lanka), (February 8, 2014 Saturday ). Retrieved from [www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic](http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic)

FRIEDMAN, A. (2016). Durable Denim's New Day. *WWD: Women's Wear Daily*, 211(42), 20-22.

From field to fabric to shirt. (2017, April 11). Retrieved November 25, 2017, from <https://tootal.nl/en/fabric-news-en/from-field-to-fabric-to-shirt/>

Hiland, M. (2008). Decoding Denim. *Wearables Business*, 12(7), 32-33.

Protective clothing. Countryman (Western Australia), Retrieved from [www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic](http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/lacademic)

RODIE, JB. Future Denim. *Textile World*. 165, 5, 62, (Sept. 2015)