

Historical Overview of Sunglasses

Sunglasses can be found around every corner you turn today. You can find them in grocery stores for a few dollars or in specialty stores for a few hundred dollars. Sunglasses come in so many different shapes, designs and colors that there is a pair out there for everyone. But the market for sunglasses has not always been this way.

Sunglasses have been in use for centuries and have evolved over time into what they are today. They were not always the fashion icon they are today. Similarly, they were not always used for the same reason they are today either.

Surprisingly, the first form of what we have as sunglasses today were not originally developed to shield eyes from the sun or help poor vision. In Ancient China, sunglasses were developed out of smoky panes of quartz glass. Judges wore these prehistoric ray bans as a way of keeping their expressions to themselves. Little did they know that poker players centuries later would adopt this same principle use of the eyewear.

Ancient Rome can also take part of the credit for today's sunglasses. The Emperor Nero, while watching gladiator fights enjoyed doing so through polished gems. It is possible that the Emperor saw the benefits of distorting the sun's beams as a way of seeing more clearly. It is also possible that he enjoyed these early sunglasses because he thought the gladiators looked better in different colors. For whatever reason, sunglasses still today are available in any lens color you can imagine.

During the eighteenth century, the design of the sunglasses were altered by an inventor seeking to use color as a vision correction. He was convinced that blue and green tints helped the eye see better when vision was poor. He had no reason to consider the advantages of shielding the eyes from the sun, as no one knew what a UVA ray was at the time. It was not common knowledge during this time that the sun could be harmful and cause future vision problems.

Sunglasses were finally introduced in the United States in the early twentieth century, around 1930. These innovative eye pieces were marketed on the boardwalks of Atlantic City and promised to protect the wearer's eyes from the harmful sun. It was in this same decade that polarization of the lenses was developed as well. The inventor of the famed Polaroid camera integrated his Polaroid filter into the makeup of the sunglasses' lenses. This technology, which is still used today, was the greatest step of its time toward the

protection of the eyes from the sun.

Since the 1930's, sunglasses have steadily become a favorite accessory for everyone from the true fashion icon down to the style novice. Sunglasses have been implemented as a way of showing off one's style, sophistication, and social status. Individuals have made their own styles famous and timeless.

The most famous of all the sunglasses style icons is unarguably the late Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, or simply "Jackie O.". The oversized sunglasses of the same name were a token symbol of the former First Lady and American Icon. Around the year 2000, Jackie's signature style was made popular again for young women by another style icon, Nicole Richie.

Sunglasses have come a long way over the centuries. They have evolved in uses, styles, popularity and technology. With sunglasses what they are today and their importance in popular culture, it is difficult to imagine where and in what form they will turn up next. Keep your eyes open-and your sunglasses handy-to find out!