

Title:

Memories on Hand: The Beauty of Class Rings

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380

Summary:

The first recorded instance of class rings for a graduating class occurred at West Point in 1835

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Article Body:

The first recorded instance of class rings for a graduating class occurred at West Point in 1835. The tradition has spread, and now in the United States class rings are a common purchase by students, often times seen as almost an integral part of tradition as the caps and gowns on graduation day. Class rings are a great way of not only having a living memento to your high school or college years, but also as a way to tie you to your fellow classmates, to increase that sense of comradery and belonging to something greater.

At one time class rings were generally a single design made by the high school or college, and the only design change would be the graduation year, but today class rings are usually at least somewhat customized by each student. Because of this, there no longer really is a "typical" class ring, though popular generalities still exist. Men's rings are generally larger than women's. The most popular color is gold, though that differs depending on the school and company providing the rings. Students have the option of ordering rings made of white gold, silver, or different alloys of other metals. The center stone is traditionally one of the school's colors, but there are no guidelines for the size or cut of the stone, and that can easily be customized however a student wants. Josten's is probably by far and away the best known maker of class rings, though Balfour, Herff-Jones, and ArtCarved are three other major companies that also sell class rings to students.

The school's name usually appears on the side, though the year of graduation is necessary on at least one side. This is, after all, the distinguishing mark that shows exactly where you belonged in the long history of whichever institution you attended. The school's logo, motto, or insignia is also a common choice for design. Many students have their name, initials, or nickname

engraved on the underside of the ring, underneath the stone, to mark it as their own. This further gives the personalized feeling to the ring, while still keeping you attatched to the larger whole. The ring belongs to you and you only, and yet the year of the class is there, the school emblem is there.