



Štěpánka Sekaninová • Eva Chupíková

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ORDINARY THINGS



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Albatros



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SHOES

Have you ever had the most splintery splinter stuck in your foot? Ouch! If you have, then you know it hurts like heck. Just take a stroll around the garden as you are—with bare feet. Picture it: dewy grass, the rising sun. You want to enjoy nature with all your senses but uh-oh! Your pampered feet immediately start protesting: “Help! What are you doing to us, you silly little human? The pebbles are sharp, the twigs prickly, and the grass tickles. Put on your shoes, right now! Phew, what a relief. Hail to the genius who invented shoes.” Well yeah, but who was it? And what’s the story of shoes, anyway?

PREHISTORY



The first shoemakers

Which material was used to make shoes in prehistoric times? That's a no-brainer! Plant fiber, bamboo, or palm leaves were more than enough to sew a pair of sandals. If you wanted sturdier footwear, you needed leather or fur.



Why bears, exactly?

The soles of some prehistoric shoes were made from bear skin. But why bear skin? It's thinner than cowhide and it's not waterproof. The answer is simple. Our ancestors believed that bear skin would give them the strength of this feared animal and protect them.

The Ice Age is coming

Even our prehistoric ancestors used to wear shoes. That's because back then, they traveled from warm Africa all the way up north. Unaccustomed to the cold, they immediately went about inventing clothing which would allow them to survive local winters. And since freezing weather didn't do any good to one's feet either, they came up with the first shoes to wear with their coats. The **first “shoes”** ever found were made in the Stone Age and boast an impressive 7,800 years of age.



simple open sandals



sandals with toe protection



later sandals with heel protection

Keep an eye on my shoes

Prehistoric times were followed by antiquity—and by masters of the shoemaking craft as well. These men could weave **sandals from tiny strips**, but also sew hard low-top shoes or rainproof high boots. In Egypt, the job was pretty easy since the hot arid climate required simple shoes—leather sandals that looked like the flip-flops we love today. They were worn mostly by rich men, and also the Pharaoh. When the Pharaoh grew tired of wearing shoes, he entrusted them to one of his servants, a so-called sandal-bearer.



ANCIENT EGYPT

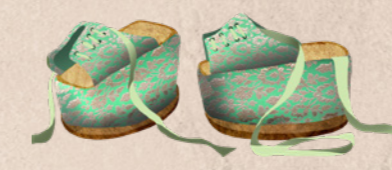


The Pharaoh's shoes were decorated with beads, gold, semi-precious stones (e.g., carnelian), and precious stones (lapis lazuli, etc.).

Shoe production in Egypt

The leather that went into Egyptian sandals was soft and supple. That's because shoemakers would soak them in a **special oily liquid**. This would allow the wearers to march through large puddles—if there were any puddles in Ancient Egypt, that is—without having to worry about water soaking through, or about the footwear slowly but surely rotting away.

TIMELINE →							
PREHISTORY	ANCIENT EGYPT	ANCIENT GREECE	ANCIENT ROME	THE MIDDLE AGES	THE RENAISSANCE	THE BAROQUE	19 TH CENTURY





Greek woman with Persikai shoes.

Diverse antiquity

While only men could enjoy footwear in Egypt, with their significant others stumbling around barefoot, Greek women pampered their feet in **Persikai** shoes, sown from the softest light leather. If you wanted to take the strain off your feet, you went for **Syconias** (a)—strap sandals. Tougher gentlemen wore **Karbatines** (b)—a strip of leather wrapped around the foot and tied with strings on the instep.

ANCIENT GREECE

Syconia, a type of Greek shoe, consisted of interlaced straps.



Karbatine shoes were made from a single piece of leather.

These shoes later inspired Roman shoemakers.

Persikais—typical female footwear



Caliaje shoes

ANCIENT ROME



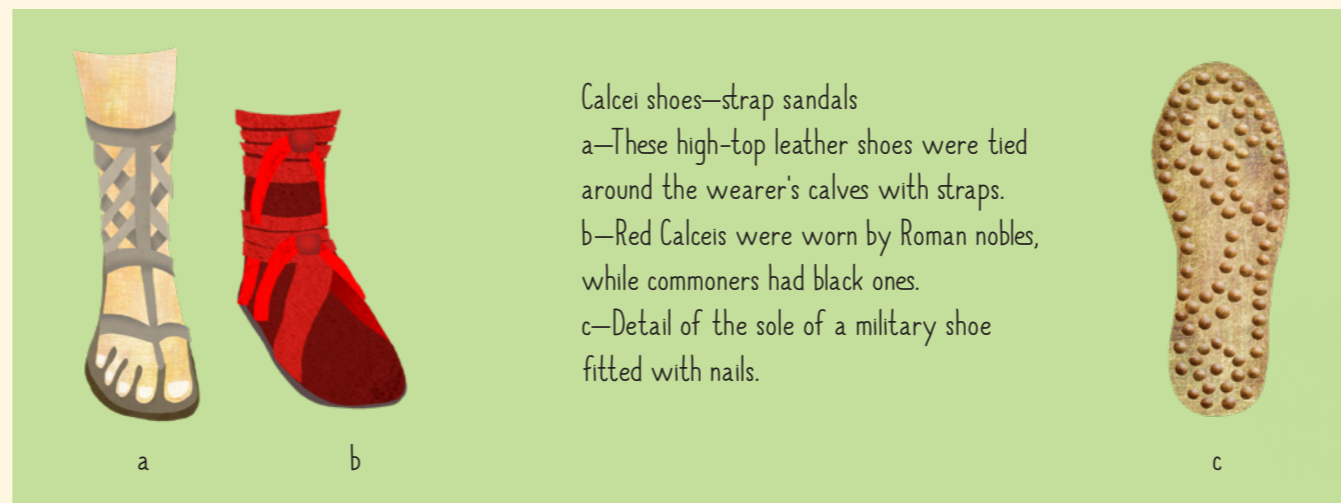
Their lacing reached high above the ankle.

Roman nobleman with Calcei shoes.



Vain Romans

Save your sandals for home, thought Romans while strolling in the streets, wearing lace-up shoes which reached up to their mid-calves—so-called **Calceis**. The rich and noble preferred them to be made in an attractive **red color**, while the serious-minded senators opted for the **elegant black**. Meanwhile, tough Roman soldiers wouldn't wear anything if its soles weren't reinforced with nails—to keep sleepiness at bay.



Calcei shoes—strap sandals

a—These high-top leather shoes were tied around the wearer's calves with straps.

b—Red Calceis were worn by Roman nobles, while commoners had black ones.

c—Detail of the sole of a military shoe fitted with nails.

TIMELINE →

PREHISTORY

ANCIENT EGYPT

ANCIENT GREECE

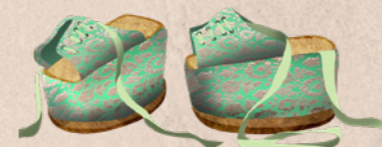
ANCIENT ROME

THE MIDDLE AGES

THE RENAISSANCE

THE BAROQUE

19TH CENTURY



The tips of noblemen's shoes were so long they made walking very difficult, leaving the owners with no choice but to tie them to their waist. The men looked like jesters because of it—after all, the shoes were colorful and adorned with bells.



Shoe tips could be up to 1 foot wide, while heels tended to be very narrow.

leather strap
MIDDLE AGES

Shoes were knitted from different materials, such as leather.



thin leather sole

Their tips were sometimes called the stork's beak.

Be careful, you could poke my eye out!

The bigger the beak, the more expensive the shoes. No, we're not talking about the animal realm. In the Middle Ages, leather shoes had no heels but instead boasted an elongated tip, earning them the name "**beaks.**" Women who favored less eccentric footwear wore wooden or leather soles under their skirts, attached to their instep with a belt.

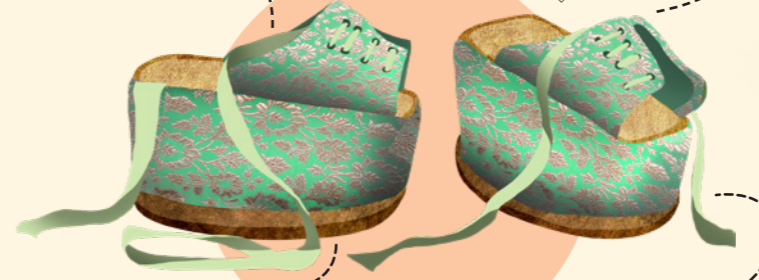


beaks tied to the waist

These extravagant shoes remained fashionable for 100 years.

THE RENAISSANCE

Complicated embroidery was sometimes underlined by golden ornaments.



The soles were made from cork or wood.

Shoes were tied with a silk ribbon.

Just don't swallow me, OK?

While the Middle Ages elongated, the Renaissance broadened. What do we mean? Shoe tips. Long beaks were replaced with **duckbills** or **cow mouths**—wide tips that needed to be padded in order for the shoes to be worn. What colors were fashionable back then? Yellow, red, blue, pink, black, and green. Materials? Soft leather and luxury textiles. Which shape was in fashion? Low flat shoes the wearer had to tie to their feet. Ladies, however, would ruin their feet in ultrahigh platform heels of 1.6 feet—nothing to sneer at. No wonder the stumbling fops had to be physically supported.



Shoes like these were worn long ago by actors.



Low flat shoes were hard to keep from slipping off.



The poor had very simple shoes—sometimes, they used just a piece of fabric.

TIMELINE →

PREHISTORY

ANCIENT EGYPT

ANCIENT GREECE

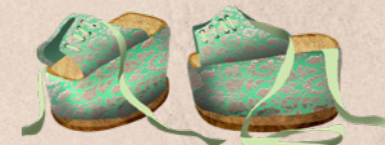
ANCIENT ROME

THE MIDDLE AGES

THE RENAISSANCE

THE BAROQUE

19TH CENTURY





Bows decorated both women's and men's shoes.

Baroque shoes were decorated with embroidery and lace.

THE BAROQUE PERIOD



red heel to indicate exclusivity and noble status

thin leather sole

Shoes with heels up to 4.5 inches long were worn by gentlemen and ladies.

The more decorations, the better!

They were all the rage with Baroque ladies, as well as with their chevaliers. Simply put, the 17th and 18th centuries were more than open to various ribbons, bows, laces, pearls, decorative clips, and alabaster. Noblemen and noblewomen would make themselves appear taller with **red heels**, which were becoming increasingly popular. Men advertised their masculinity with **high musketeer boots**, adorned with spurs and broad turn-ups. The highest boots would reach all the way up to your mid-thighs. And what did the destitute wear? What they always did—clogs or regular boots.



Baroque footwear became more and more comfortable.

The cuffs of high leather boots—musketeers—was folded.

TIMELINE →

PREHISTORY

ANCIENT EGYPT

ANCIENT GREECE

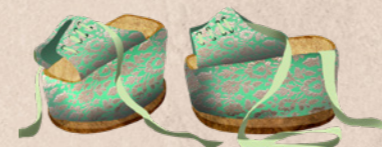
ANCIENT ROME

THE MIDDLE AGES

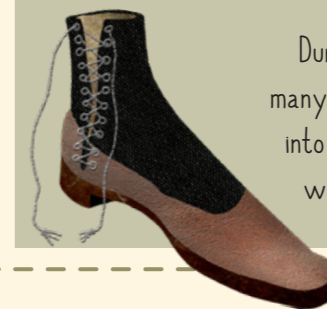
THE RENAISSANCE

THE BAROQUE

19TH CENTURY



In the middle of the 19th century, ankle-high shoes fastened by a row of buttons were favored among women.



During the "century of steam," many different types of shoes came into being including elegant shoes, work shoes, and sports shoes.

The Steam Revolution

The 19th century removed the flashy red color from the heels and soles of noblemen's shoes. Nobility could afford higher-quality materials and design—that was the main difference between the rich and the poor. Elegant dandies would walk around in shoes made of **patent leather** or made with rubber straps. Unlike previous fashions, women's shoes reached up to the ankles, heels became much lower, and the fastening included buttons. The modern age also took footwear for children and athletes into account—the first baby and gym shoes were created.



ankle-high shoes

popular button fastening

low heel

elongated and rounded tip

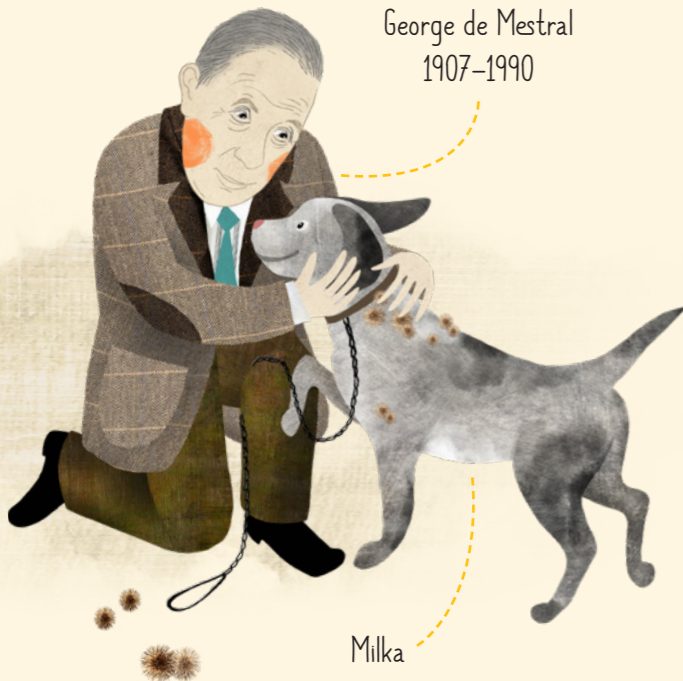


Why tie shoes only with shoelaces?



Gideon Sundback
1880–1954

In the early 20th century, the Swedish inventor **Gideon Sundback** made some improvements to the slider, increased its lifespan, and started its successful career.



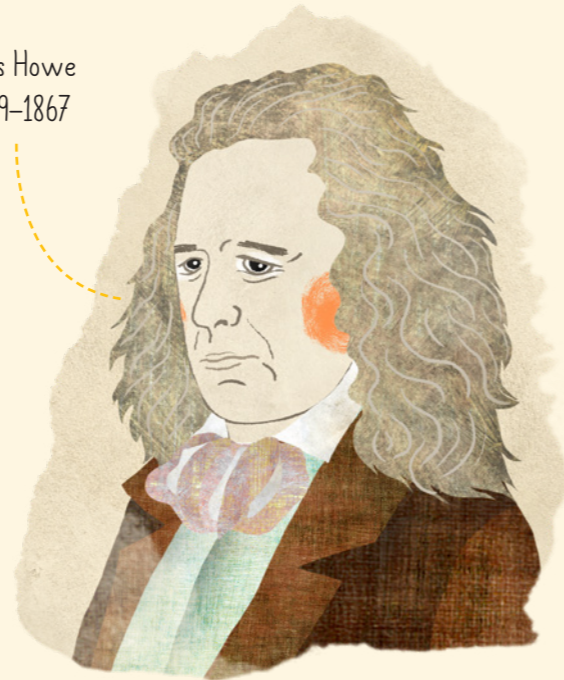
George de Mestral
1907–1990

Milka

Zippers

Why bother with laces when you can easily fasten your shoes with a zipper? Who do we have to thank for this change? How about **Elias Howe**, who came up with a sort of predecessor to the zipper, but wasn't very successful with it. In 1893, **Whitcomb Judson** came up with a similar zipper-based idea. His zipper had two rows of hooks which would get attached to one another by the slider. All one needed to do after the deed was done was put the slider in their pocket or closet, and that was it.

Elias Howe
1819–1867

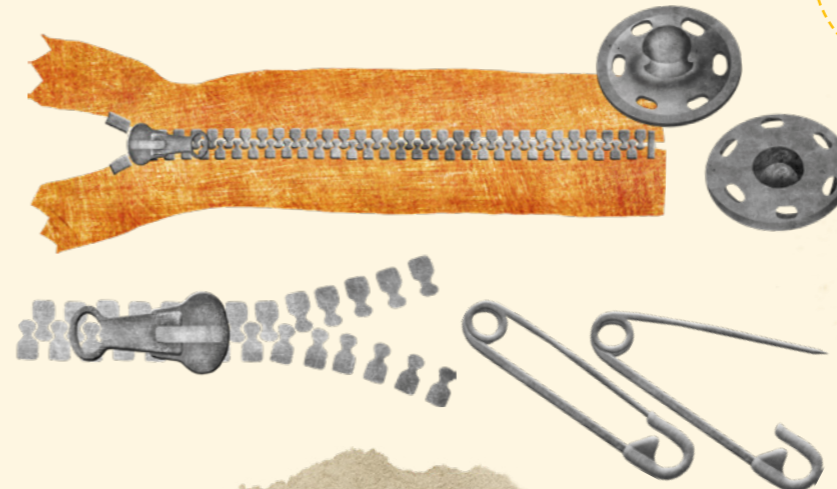
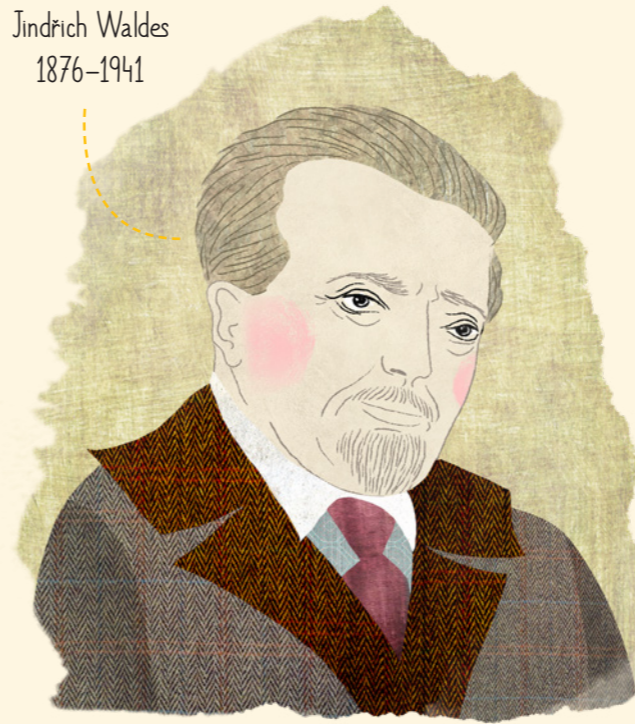


Inspired by nature

Nature sometimes inspires scientists and inventors to come up with groundbreaking discoveries. And so it happened that the Swiss engineer **Georges de Mestral** stumbled on balls of thistle while walking his dog. Try removing thistle from animal fur—it stuck as if glued to it. While studying the system of clusters, the smart innovator noticed small hooks which fitted one another—he discovered Velcro. All of this occurred in the first half of the 20th century, and many years have passed since the walk and the zipper breakthrough, naturally. Since then, however, Velcro has been pretty busy.



Jindřich Waldes
1876–1941



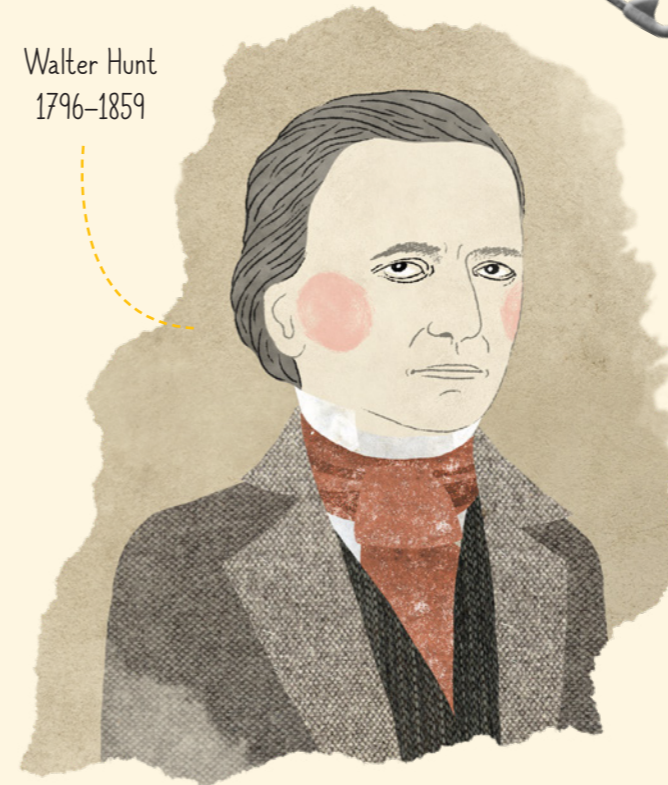
Snap fasteners

The first snap fastener—a **two-piece metal snap button**—was most likely invented by former traveling businessman **Jindřich Waldes**. At any rate, what we do know is the name of the person who invented the groundbreaking machine to produce this fashionable metal article mechanically and sent it out into the world. The person was **Hynek Puc** and he did this in 1902.

Hynek Puc
1856–1938

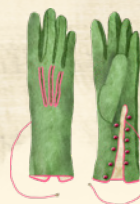


Walter Hunt
1796–1859



Safety pins

If there's no other alternative, a safety pin is a good substitute for a button, zipper, or snap fastener. You might think that the person who came up with this practical idea was worth their weight in gold. Well, **Walter Hunt**, the American mechanic who invented it, was actually up to his ears in debt and couldn't pay it off. Luckily, a friend who once lent him some money had a heart of gold and the soul of a joker. He gave a piece of brass wire to the desperate Hunt and promised that if he'd make something useful out of it, he'd write the debt off and reward him to boot. And so Hunt thought and thought about it, bending the wire this way and that, until he made a **safety pin**. This was way back in 1849.



Written by Štěpánka Sekaninová
Illustrations by Eva Chupíková

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ORDINARY THINGS

They're all around us. We use them daily, pass them by, and it never occurs to us to stop and think about where they came from. What, you ask? The most ordinary things in the world, of course! Shoes, umbrellas, toothbrushes, toothpicks, socks, dolls, and so on and so forth. How did they come to be? Who invented them? How did they develop and change over time? If you want to know the answers to these questions, to peek behind the curtain that drapes the most ordinary things in mystery, then read on and learn the story of common things.



ISBN 978-80-00-06128-3



9 788000 061283

5 1 6 9 5



\$ 16.95

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