

Cultural Daily

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Linen: A Walk Down Memory Lane

Our Friends · Monday, April 26th, 2021

While linen seems to be a fabric that people have recently discovered, that's hardly the case. If anything, linen has been around for longer than anyone can remember. We look into its journey from ancient times to the present day and why people took to it back then and now.

History

If we were to give a specific time when people started using linen, we would go with several thousand years ago. That's right. This fabric has not been around for centuries but rather millennia!

Georgia

Our first journey takes us to the southeast of Europe (what we know as Georgia) a good 36,000 years ago. Archeologists have found proof that even back then, people relied on wild flax fibers to make clothes. While the fabrics were not like the linen we have today, they had a lot of similarities.

Switzerland & Mesopotamia

Let's move again and this time, let's go to Switzerland. Once again, there's proof of linen usage around the lake areas from as early as 8000 BC. As we move towards the southwest, where ancient Mesopotamia lay, there's evidence of flax growing. At this time, the domestication of flax had started. A look at some ancient works of art in the region reveals that the wealthier people used flax and linen.

Egypt

Egypt has a strong place in history, and it comes as no surprise that the region also used linen at some point. Not only did ancient Egyptians use it to make clothing, but they also used it for mummification. It makes sense that they would wear this fabric in that sweltering heat. Evidence dates back to around 3102 BC, in this case, as we get closer to the present day. Interestingly, archeologists found the remains of Pharaoh Ramses II wrapped in linen, which was a show of wealth and purity. The linen fabric was still intact and in good condition.

Germany & Ireland

Come the middle ages, it was clear that this fabric was indispensable, and by then, German flax was quite popular. Trade in the fabric began in the 9th century. It spread so much that the Lower

Rhine was a linen hub during these times. By the 11th century, the fabric had gained a place in Ireland, and flax was under active cultivation. The same goes for southern England during the 12th century moving forward.

America

From the 16th century, it becomes much easier to find evidence of linen usage. For example, in England, machine linen production started around the 18th century, taking away from the home production units that were commonplace before then. This practice soon moved to American colonies such that by the 19th century, most farmers knew how to grow and use flax fibers. Around this time, linen had grown to be one of Russia's main exports.

Present Day

Today, the biggest exporters are China, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, and the United States. There's been more emphasis on its use as environmental conservationists and NGOs encourage people to use more natural fibers. Manufacturers such as [Linenfoxclothes.com](https://www.linenfoxclothes.com) have heeded this cry and produced sustainable clothing as a result.

You may wonder why this linen has lasted the test of time. Other than its minimal impact on the environment compared to other fabrics, it's also breathable. There's nothing as amazing as being cool under the summer heat. As opposed to clinging to your skin, the fabric wicks away the moisture and leaves you feeling cooler. Additionally, it's durable. From historical records, it's clear that mummies wrapped in linen were uncovered, with the linen still intact. This fabric can outlast you, making it the ideal investment. Furthermore, it's hypoallergenic, making it suitable for people who suffer from allergies.

It's not every day that you come across a fabric that has lasted the test of time, but linen has, and this says quite a lot about its fibers. With more designers taking it up in their fashion lines, it's only set to become even more ingrained in our history.

Photo by [Mel Poole](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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