

Fashion Outlook

Pendleton Woolen Mills still a classic success

By Joan Lebow

Always racing to offer the latest first, most fashion companies churn out new styles and colors faster than you can say, "Madonna's had a makeover."

Three thousand miles from trend-setting Seventh Avenue, in an Oregon mill town, Pendleton Woolen Mills is also sensitive to the fashion flux. Why, last year the company actually slipped some brighter-color stripes into its plaid wool men's shirts — for the first time in its 78-year history.

Fashion critics overlooked this subtle design revolution, but family-owned Pendleton could hardly care. The name has a strong consumer following, spurred by the popularity of its "Pendleton shirt," a classic long-sleeve button-down men's shirt that debuted in 1924.

Pendleton products don't come cheap. "There's a lot more pressure on American manufacturers today," concedes company chairman Mort Bishop. "More than half of the apparel bought in this country is made overseas, and the percentage is greater for sweaters and blouses."

Founded in Pendleton, Ore., in 1909, Pendleton has always used wool

manufactured in its own mills. The company made blankets for the Navajo Indians that eventually replaced their own hand-woven designs, and later manufactured sportswear for the men of the Wild West.

In the early 1920s, Pendleton began making suits and coats for men and women, including the now-famous Pendleton shirt, which now sells for about \$55 and is still the company's single best-selling item.

Today, women's apparel accounts for the largest part of the company's business. Pendleton makes women's suits, coordinates, sweaters, coats and casuals, as well as men's sportswear, robes and accessories. And it still sells blankets.

If the Pendleton name rings more bells of recognition with American consumers than do the names of a dozen "celebrity" designers, it's not because Pendleton has been grabbing headlines.

In fact, Pendleton has never veered from its classic, quality, all-American wool apparel. Silhouettes are modified, never overhauled. The same navy blue is offered yearly, as are the same red, green and gray. New colors are also added, but Pendleton's loyal following never has to discard past

styles; new seasons' offerings are all coordinated with what preceded them. Pendleton's "Christmas tartan," a different pattern each year, is always its most popular plaid. The navy and green pattern called "black watch," a national favorite, has almost become a Pendleton signature.

Today, Pendleton makes petites and larger sizes for women and big and tall men's clothing. It has a line of outdoor wear for men and has pursued the burgeoning women's career market. Dick Poth, manager of Pendleton's women's wear, says the company benefited from the "dress for success" suit that became the young working woman's uniform. But now that the demand is for softer-looking career clothes, Pendleton offers a two-piece wool challis dress and more fluid-looking worsted woollens to go with blouses and sweaters.

Pendleton has made other efforts to keep up with the times. It has banished its once immensely popular re-

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versible skirt — which would be considered more akin to a horse blanket by contemporary women. Customers still ask for some versions of the \$18 "49er jacket," a women's jacket that debuted in 1949 and was de rigueur during the better part of the '50s. Actually, some of the fashion scene's slimmer belted jackets for fall, with their well-defined waists lines and rounding hip lines, look suspiciously like this discontinued style.

More current is Pendleton's tent-

shaped jacket in chrome yellow with big contrasting buttons; it's a knock-out with a slim skirt just at or below the knee. Of course, plaids and solid flannels remain a Pendleton strength, and coordinating pant, jacket and skirt separates are available for classic-minded shoppers.

This fall, Pendleton customers will find a modern oversized houndstooth-check jacket for women and bold Italian-style sweaters for men. The more conservative items, however, are still far and away the best sellers.

"Sometimes stores encourage us to go too far with fashion," admits Poth. "But we try to remember to just stick with what we do best."

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PENDLETON'S staid black Stewart tartan pants and outdoor coat (about \$73 and \$165) meet their match with an Italian-inspired Intarsia sweater (about \$75). At right, oversize styling updates this classic black-and-white houndstooth jacket (about \$420).

ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

Having your healthy baby

If you're pregnant or want to become pregnant, consider this: everything you put in your body goes into your baby's body too.

Whatever you eat, drink or swallow passes from your body through the placenta and into your baby. So, if you're taking any medications, either prescription or non-prescription, they can adversely affect your unborn child.

There's no doubt some medications have saved the life of many unborn infants, but there are commonly used medications that can harm them. Many are particularly harmful during the first three months of pregnancy when the fetus and major organ systems are rapidly developing. Therefore, if you are pregnant, ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medication, either prescription or non-prescription.

Some tranquilizers, for example, have been known to cause a cleft lip or palate. When taken during the last weeks of pregnancy, certain tranquilizers may cause adverse reactions in newborns such as drowsiness, unusually slow heartbeat, shortness of breath and other breathing difficulties.

Estrogens and progestins (the primary ingredients of most birth control pills) can cause birth defects if taken during pregnancy. If you suspect you may have become pregnant while taking birth control pills, stop taking them immediately and check with your doctor.

ASA and similar painkillers are so common we often take them for granted. However, if taken during the last three months of pregnancy, they can prolong pregnancy and cause excessive bleeding before and after delivery. If you need medication to relieve pain, always ask your doctor or pharmacist which is best to take.

Your pharmacist wants you to know and understand the medications you take and their effect of your unborn baby. The more you know, the healthier you and your baby will be.

In our next column, we'll look at the effects of alcohol and cigarettes and the benefits of good nutrition and exercise.

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