

WORLD FOOTWEAR

For many women, Manolo Blahnik's high heels are the epitome of fashion. He, however, is merely following in the footsteps of generations of shoemakers who have catered for women's cravings for high heels. Northampton's Museum & Art Gallery in the UK has a remarkable collection of footwear through the ages and here is a selection reflecting the development of ladies fashions and heels during the past 350 years.

High heels are nothing new



Latchet tie shoe from around 1630-1669. The sole extends under the high Louis heel to form the slap sole so fashionable in the mid 17th century. Possibly made in Italy.



Buckle latchet shoe from the 1730s. It has a 9.5cm covered Louis heel with leather sole and top piece all stitched together. Made as straights (no left or right).



Pointed toe with 7.5cm wedged Italian heel from the 1780s. Heels are gradually coming down in height and becoming narrower. This one is triangular in profile.

Mule from the 1880s with a 6cm knock-on heel. Women's shoes were almost flat during most of the 19th century and this styling reflects a move back to heels.

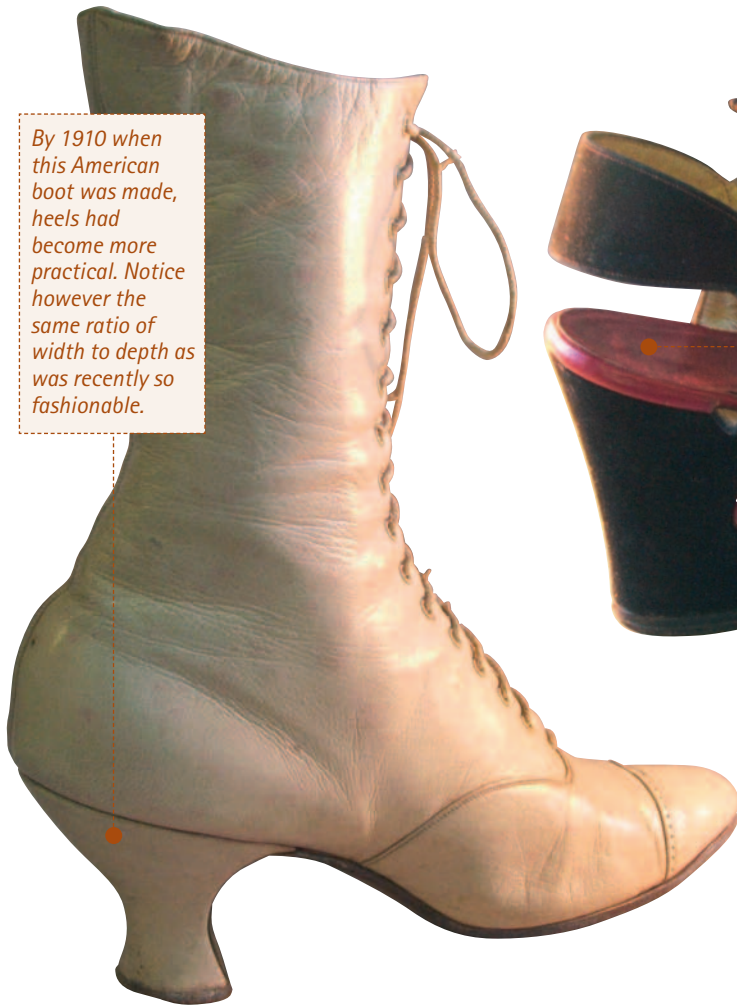


At the end of the 19th century, high heels were back with a vengeance as this 17cm Louis' wooden cored heel demonstrates. Walking must have been quite a problem.

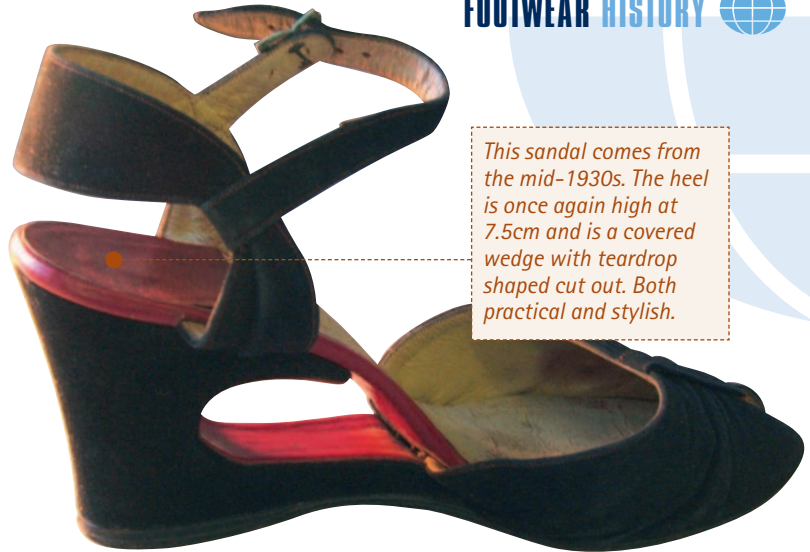


FOOTWEAR HISTORY

By 1910 when this American boot was made, heels had become more practical. Notice however the same ratio of width to depth as was recently so fashionable.



This sandal comes from the mid-1930s. The heel is once again high at 7.5cm and is a covered wedge with teardrop shaped cut out. Both practical and stylish.



Typical winklepicker style from 1960 with a high stiletto heel. The heel was still a full Louis whereas today, on shoes of this quality it would be a plastic moulding.



Extreme platforms dominated the 1970s as this example in laminated wood clearly demonstrates. Without the platform, the heel height is actually not too extreme.

Manolo Blahnik in 2000. Pointed toe and square stiletto heel and still with a full Louis flap. Whatever else women might go without, it will not be high heels.

