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# Hats Off! Headgear Coming Back

**M**EN'S hats are coming back into style! This is an encouraging sign that the era of fashionable sloppy attire may be nearing an end.

The Headwear Institute of America reports that retail sales of hats, especially western and casual hats and "logo caps" will set a record high this year, more than doubling sales of five years ago.

There was a time when hat models changed regularly with the seasons. Nobody would be seen in a flat-brimmed sailor or gleaming white panama hat until the local newspaper announced the mayor had officially proclaimed "straw hat day." Then everybody wore them.

Now many men's stores do not stock hats at all and specialty hat stores have disappeared.

Two major reasons probably account for the decline in the wearing of hats. One was many men couldn't remember where they had left their hats. The other was that those who remembered had to fork over pork-

Automobile manufacturers also gave hats a kick when they installed air conditioning and designed compact, low-ceilinged models that left too little room for a high-crowned hat.

Head coverings of various kinds undoubtedly first came into use because of their value as protection from heat, cold, wind and rain. They quickly acquired meaning as status symbols, also.

Long before the white man began trading Indians out of their beaver furs to make hats, the native Americans had adopted codes of headwear to denote rank. Only chiefs were allowed to wear headpieces with eagle or turkey feathers all around and trailing down the back.

Metal helmets adorned knights of merry old England, probably with considerable discomfort, both as a demonstration of strength and as possible protection in battle.

Headgear often has been used to signify professions and interests. Bankers wore top hats, derby hats, bankers regoras, oilmen snap brims,

collegians "pork pies." Farmers wore straw hats and cattlemen or cowboys wore 10-gallon sombreros or Stetsons.

Certain professions utilize headgear as badges of authority. A sheriff with a big hat or a policeman with a badged cap just naturally seem to be more official than bare-headed cops.

Hats are not always regarded as symbols of character, however. As a young writer for The Farmer-Stockman magazines 40 years ago, we learned that farmers and ranchers of that day did not trust strangers who didn't wear hats. Now many of them leave their hats at home and go around bareheaded like other men.

Then there's the case of the janitor who wouldn't deposit his check in the bank where he worked. When asked why not, the janitor told the bank president it was because, "You always have your hat on, just like you was fixin' to go somewhere."

Still, a man looks better dressed wearing a hat!