

A little hair says a lot about a man. Since prehistoric times, men have worn mustaches for reasons related to religion, social custom, occupation, fashion, or personal taste.



NORTH AMBULATORY

“The Pencil”

Relief from the Tomb of Ny-ankh-Nesut, ca. 2300 BC

In ancient Egypt, both men and women shaved off their body hair, including the hair on their heads, to stay cool and protect themselves from lice. Beards were not worn, other than the false beards worn by Egyptian rulers on special occasions. Thin mustaches, however, were seen on male figures displayed on pottery and other artifacts during the

Old Kingdom. On this tomb relief, you can just make out thin closely clipped mustaches on some of the figures. This style of mustache is commonly referred to as “pencil style” because it appears to be drawn on as if by a pencil.



WILLARD-NEWELL GALLERY

“The Van Dyck”

Sir Anthony van Dyck, Portrait of a Bearded Man, 1615

The “Van Dyck” was a style of facial hair popularized by the Flemish painter, Sir Anthony van Dyck, which included the growth of both a mustache and a goatee. There are many variants of this style, with some wearers favoring curled or non-curved mustaches, soul patches, or hair connecting the beard to the mustache. During his career, Van Dyck

Painted many aristocrats with his signature facial hair. While this style remained popular for some time, it soon fell out of favor with the rising popularity of wigs.



KING SCULPTURE COURT

“The Handlebar”

Edmonia Lewis, *Bust of James Peck Thomas*, 1874

A “handlebar mustache” is a facial hairstyle that fills the entire upper lip, with the ends of the mustache waxed and twirled to resemble the handlebars of a bicycle. The Handlebar Club, a London-based international organization for men who wear a handlebar, was founded in 1947 to support servicemen who did not want to shave their mustaches like most civilian men of that era. Although this bust is a little too early for James Peck Thomas to have been a member of the club, his prodigious growth would have made him an excellent candidate.

WILLARD-NEWELL GALLERY

“The Painter’s Brush”

Michiel Sweerts, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1656

Moustaches, like most hair, can either be left how they appear naturally or they can be highly stylized. The style worn by Sweerts in this self-portrait is known as the “painter’s brush” and is a more natural style characterized by the way it covers the width of the lip and has slightly rounded edges. Some of the more intensive styles though might require tools and waxes. During the 1800s, a number of accessories and tools were invented to help stylize moustaches, including guards, protectors, trainers, curlers, holders, adjusters, shapers, and bands.



WILLARD-NEWELL GALLERY

“The Fork Beard”

Flemish, *Holy Face*, ca. 1510–15

During the Renaissance, there was a movement in art to emphasize the humanity and passion of Christ. One way of achieving this effect was to portray Jesus as an idealized Renaissance man. Facial hair was key to the concept of masculinity valued in the Renaissance, because it was thought to indicate a man as being virile. The mustache and forked beard shown on Christ’s face are essential to his identity as a man and all of the implications that come with that identity.

