

The Beard Manifesto

or

The Beardifesto

I am a man. I wear a beard. It is harmonious. It is natural. It is the proper way of things. My face lives in its natural state, unconquered by razor, impervious to creams. It is how all male faces should exist. My vision is that one day in the not-too-distant future, we, the wearers of beards, the Kings of Men, will far outnumber our lowly, defeated smooth-faced brethren.

This is a call, lads! A call to all of you who feel the tingling in your face, to those of you who hear the rumbling within your follicles. You admirers of the beard who have yet to give in to the persistently consuming thought of letting your face have its own way for a change. Maybe you dream of it. Maybe you see yourself in your dreams, your long, flowing beard waving in the wind gloriously, like a flag on the victorious battlefield, your foot propped nobly on a rock as you survey the verdant valley below. You are the master of the domain. You are the archetypal man. Those feelings do not have to end at the buzzing of the morning alarm. You can arise and face the day with the confidence and gusto of your bearded ancestry. You have what it takes locked inside you. But you must break free of your conditioning.

Brainwashed! Today's man is brainwashed! He is bombarded with the most intense pressure to keep his cheeks smooth. Attacks arrive in the form of a commercial interrupting his favorite television entertainment to tell him how important the new mechanism from the evil empires of Schick or Gillette is to his wellbeing. How many blades will they need to tame his face? Three? Four? Perhaps a diamond-coated edge or soothing comfort strip will entice him? Or maybe he would prefer a device that plugs into an outlet and has three rapidly spinning blades, three whirling dervishes of destruction for his facial hair. And don't forget the miracle tonic that will make your hair stand at attention and lower its steely guard in preparation for the sacrifice. How many untold billions have companies made by keeping today's man convinced that a beard is to be avoided in order for him to be accepted into society? How many times can a man be shown images of beautiful women

daintily stroking the smooth cheeks of the man in the advertisement before succumbing to the siren call?

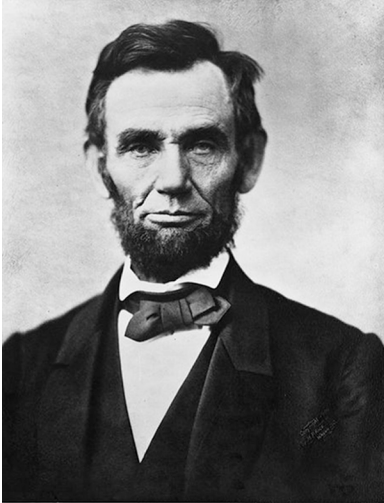
And the messages do not stop at the end of the commercial break. Watch any prime time television drama or reality program and what do you see? Nary a beard in sight, except for certain objectionable cases. No beard on *The Bachelor*. No beard on *McDreamy*. Even our most trusted evening news anchors refuse to suffer the slightest shadow to mar their perfect jaw lines. So, who has the beards? Those who are either *Lost* on an island, have gone crazy, or are the antagonists. Or perhaps the “*Men in Trees*,” the lumberjacks who couldn’t even hold a viewership longer than two seasons. And we are all too familiar with the evil twin episodes where a goatee is the only characteristic that helps us know which character is the evil one. “Oh that’s the evil Spock. I can tell by his goatee.” And what happened in the movie *Castaway* as soon as Tom Hanks made it home? Goodbye beard. Thanks but no thanks for the warmth and companionship on those cold island nights.

The anti-beard propaganda unfortunately doesn’t even cease when we turn off the TV. We are further pounded into submission by the fairer of our species. That’s right, our ladies are beard oppressors! Overlords of our facial regions! Thankfully there are those rare women out there who truly appreciate a robust beard, and they are heartily appreciated. Alas, they are far outnumbered by the ones who harbor beard fear. If you’ve ever worked up enough courage to try finally to grow out your beard and realize your destiny, only to hear the dreaded words, “Your whiskers poke me when we kiss,” you know the horrors of beard fear. Your caveman ancestors didn’t have to put up with this, and neither should you. What if cavewomen couldn’t stand being poked by whiskers? You wouldn’t be reading this “electronic document” on your “computer” because the human race would have gone extinct tens of thousands of years ago! The success of humanity is built upon the shoulders of women who toughened up their upper lips and made out with their hirsute mates. Thanks, ladies! It’s time to put our lovers to the test and let our whiskers fall where they may. If they can’t deal, then you can say, “You’re no better than a cavewoman” and move on.

Okay, time to end the rant and get down to business. You’re about to get a serious beard education... a bearducation. Time to kick it old school with the five W’s and an H. Prepare yourself for the who, what, when, where, why, and how of beard wearing. Here it comes!

WHO wears a beard?

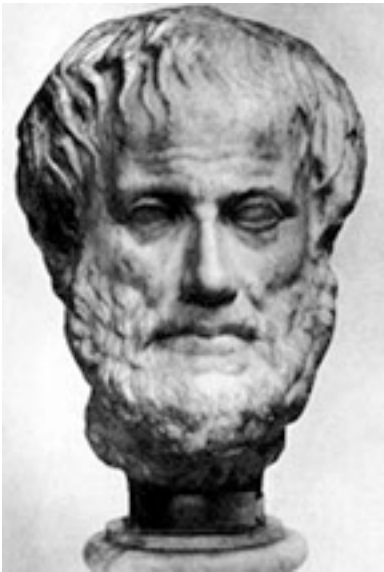
Only the manliest, take-no-crap, get-stuff-done men in history. Consider the following examples.



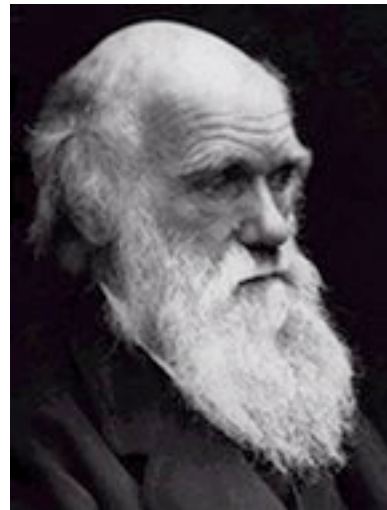
Abe Lincoln - Emancipator of slaves.



Ernest Hemingway - Writer of Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning works.



Aristotle - Founder of Western philosophy.



Charles Darwin - Discoverer of evolution.



Karl Marx – Author of some other manifesto.



Santa Claus – Deliverer of toys.



Jesus Christ – Savior of humanity.



Samson – This image basically says it all.

Let's also take a look at some stereotypical beard wearers.

The King: Can you imagine a king without a beard? I keep trying, but I can't. My mind *cannot complete this task!* Midas, Arthur, Aragorn, The Burger King, Old King Cole, King James, Henry VIII... all bearded. What is it about the beard that is so kingly? Perhaps it conveys strength, the strength to lead nations. Perhaps it conveys wisdom, the wisdom to successfully grow an empire. The King is required to be the consummate man, and what is manlier than a regal beard? Basically, nothing. It's hard *not* to submit as a humble subject to the beard.

The Viking: In addition to their horned helmets and leather tunics, these Nordic warriors are always depicted wearing giant braided beards. It only makes sense that the Viking has a braided beard. After a long day of hacking guys to pieces with your battle axe, of hoisting blazing torches to thatched roofs, of raiding a town's surpluses and gorging on roasted meat and wines, what better way to celebrate the day and unwind the stress than by braiding your long scraggly beard.

The Lumberjack: From the ground up a lumberjack is made up of work boots, blue jeans, a flannel shirt, a burly beard, and a wool cap. It is a fact that all lumberjacks look like this. The work boots are obviously needed for toe protection. The blue jeans are a great long-lasting pant. The flannel shirt provides warmth without weight and excellent breathability. The wool cap is to keep the head nice and warm during those rare rest periods. But what is the purpose of the beard? I like to think it is to provide a replacement habitat for wildlife displaced by the logging. Bluebirds happily chirping in their beard-nest as the lumberjack swings his axe and heaves his saw back and forth. Chipmunks darting in and out of the beard all the while. What a satisfying lifestyle.

The Sea Captain: The sea captain is always bearded, and for some reason, always old. I guess the grey in his beard looks nice with the navy blue of his pea coat. There really is no mystery as to why the sea captain wears a beard. I can only imagine his difficulty in trying to shave as the ocean throws his ship left, right, front, and back. I for one would not want a razor anywhere near my neck in such conditions. I imagine that hiding under their beards, all sea captains bear the scars left by the shaving attempts made in the folly of their youth.

The Gods: Greek gods, Roman gods, Hindu gods, Yahweh. These guys love to sport the long flowing beard. The obvious conclusion is that the beard is a sign of perfection. God created Man in his image... only for Man to deny his Father and shave his perfect beard. Am I suggesting that shaving is a blasphemous act? God gave you a beard and you keep cutting it off. I'm just saying.

In the long saga of human civilization, it is undeniable that beardedness is closely linked to greatness. It takes a certain kind of man to grow his beard. It takes patience, a disregard for convention, a will to innovate, and a desire to stand out. Reading this list of qualities, is there any doubt as to why the great

men are bearded men? No. Yet the beard is not reserved solely for those who have proven themselves as leaders of men. Any post-pubescent man holds the potential to be a beard wearer. And that's the wonderful thing about it all. We may not all be great, but we can damn well look like we are. "But my facial hair is all patchy!" you may cry. Do not let your genetics hold you back. The beards of greatness have not all been robust. Just look at Confucius here.



This man was not afraid to grow out a patchy, wispy beard. He said, "To hell with it!" and let his face do its thing. If all the wispy bearded guys just go for it, then what was once the anomaly will become the norm.

In conclusion,

Q: Who wears a beard?

A: You do.

WHAT defines a beard?

According to the World Beard and Mustache Championships, there are six types of partial beard and four types of full beard. There are also "freestyle" versions in each category; so really, you are only bound by your imagination as to what constitutes a beard. As long as you have some hairs on your face that are too long to be considered as stubble, you have a beard, my friend. A hearty congratulation to you! Listed below are the beard styles recognized at the WBMC. All images and descriptions are from the official website www.worldbeardchampionships.com

Partial Beards



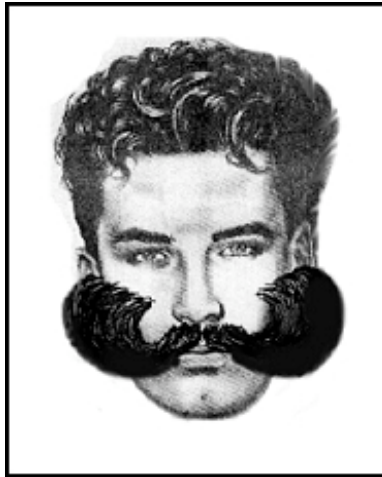
Natural - “Goatee as it grows naturally, the more natural the better. Moustache not required. Goatee and moustache can be accentuated but without aids. No curled moustaches. There must be a clean shaven section at least 4 cm wide (the width of a razor blade) between the onset of the head hair and the beard.”



Musketeer - “Narrow chin beard that comes to a point. Moustache narrow, long, slightly curved, and combed to the sides. Moustache may consist only of hairs that grow within 1.5 cm past the end of the upper lip.”



FuManchu - “Hairs growing from within 2 cm past the end of the upper lip and downward to the beginning of the chin, with the tips long and pointing downward.”



Imperial - “Hair on the cheeks and upper lip. There must be clean-shaven spaces of at least 4 cm wide (the width of a razor blade) on the chin and between the facial hair and the onset of the head hair. The whiskers are styled upwards. No closed curls. The hairs on the upper lip may not be separated from the hairs on the cheeks. The hairs may not be too long, not above the level of the eyes.”



Alaskan Whaler - “Traditional Alaskan seafarer's beard. Bushy hair grown on cheeks, chin, and lower lip. No hair grown on upper lip.”



Sideburns - “Must be a true sideburn. No natural or shaven gap by the ear. Chin is shaven and hair is optional on the upper lip.”

Full Beards



Natural - “Full beard as it grows and left natural, the more natural the better. The moustache is blended into the beard.”



Verdi - “Beard: short and round at the bottom, no longer than 10 cm below the bottom of the lower lip. As it grows naturally, the more natural the better!!! Moustache, consisting only of hairs growing from within 1.5 cm past the end of the upper lip, should be prominent and not integrated with the beard.”



Garibaldi - “Beard: round and wide at the bottom, no longer than 20 cm from the bottom of the lower lip. The beard is as it grows naturally, the more natural the better!!! The moustache may not be separated from the beard or made prominent.”



Styled Mustache - “Moustache prominent and consisting only of hairs growing from within 1.5 cm past the end of the upper lip. Aids allowed. Beard: as it grows naturally, the more natural the better.”

So there you have it, the officially recognized categories from the World Beard and Mustache Championships. Take your pick and go for it! Or be an innovator and create your own beard style for the rest of humanity to admire into posterity. Along with the “Verdi” and the “Garibaldi” maybe we’ll someday speak of the “Schultz” or the “Humperdink.” Please just promise that you will not style your head hair like any of the seriously attractive men illustrated above. It really is weird looking.

WHEN are beards acceptable?

Two different approaches to this question present themselves. I will tackle each one in turn.

“What stage of a man’s life is right for a beard?”

It is indisputable that old men must wear beards. The long white beard is a symbol of sage wisdom, or it shows that you like to give away toys one night per year. Either way, a beard is a must for the elderly gent.

Working backwards through life, it is still fully appropriate to grow a robust beard within each stage. A man in his forties, handsomely attired, his temples flecked with grey, children playing at his feet, satisfied wife stroking his full beard... this is the very symbol of virility and a goal to which all men certainly strive.

Moving backward still to the thirty-year-old man. Surely he does not possess the wisdom or fatherliness of the previously discussed men! However, a beard is still acceptable as a symbol of willingness to attack life’s adventure with gusto. The bearded thirty-year-old dashes head first, indeed, beard first into career and family responsibilities with confidence and aplomb.

Now we come to the age where, indubitably, a beard is inappropriate. No man in his twenties would be caught wearing a full-bodied beard, right? That, my friend, is where you are wrong. The twenties can be a prime time to live the bearded lifestyle. This beard demonstrates a young man’s desire to break away from the masses, to shake off the shackles that an unacceptable society has cast upon him. The bearded twenty-year-old is a mainstay of counterculture. He is the very essence of a revolutionary. Plus, by the time he is the old man discussed above, his beard will be crazy long!

If you are younger than twenty, grow at your own risk. Although it can be done, I've seen some pretty bad teen beards. You know, why not just let it fill out a bit before you go all in?

“What time of year is good for beard growing?”

Starting again with the obvious answer, the winter is optimal beard season. Not only does it effectively buffer your cheeks from the stinging winds and snows, but also it is generally a bit more acceptable by society at this time. Lots of guys grow out “winter beards.” Of course, to me that's kind of like having “summer biceps” or an “autumn penis.” But at least they are doing things right some of the time.

Another popular beard time is the fall. The air becomes brisk, the flannel shirts come out, and mulled apple cider is sipped through the mustache and wiped away in satisfaction with the back of the hand. Hunting season is on, and a man can't resist a full reversal into his primal mammalian self, made complete with a large, ungroomed caveman beard. How grand is the scent of wood smoke from the campfire as it lingers in the beard!

“Surely the remaining seasons do not lend themselves to beards,” you think. I assure you that they do. The spring is a wonderful time of year to grow a beard. The natural world is awakening. The animals stagger sleepily from their hibernation beds. The grass greens with the fall of spring rains. And just as the trees put forth new shoots of growth, so does your face. How often can you be so fully a part of the yearly rebirth of the outdoors? Well... yearly, I guess.

Lastly we come to the most unlikely and unheralded beard days of all, the summer. Yet this is not a time for baby-faced men to prance about. There is much man-work to be done, and it must be done properly bearded. Just think of your neighbor's envy as you whisk around on the riding lawnmower, your beard blown back by the wind like an aviator's scarf. Think of the joy of eating watermelon, laughing with pure bliss as the red juices course through your beard like fruit blood.

WHERE are beards completely banned?

There are those so vehemently opposed to beards that they have fully banned their growth. This is as deplorable as it is outrageous. Banning the growth of beards is a clear intrusion on personal freedoms, and a direct denial of our inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness. But, alas, as a bearded man, here are some places I would be most unwelcome.

Brigham Young University - Although Brigham Young himself sported a beard, the university bans its students from wearing one. The Honor Code by which the students are bound explicitly states “Men are expected to be clean shaven; beards are not acceptable.” Why the beard hate, people? I guess it’s hard enough to find just one woman who likes beards enough to marry you.

The cockpit of a commercial plane - This ban is in place so that the oxygen masks needed in an emergency situation can form a proper seal with the face. This one actually makes a lot of sense. If you are a pilot, please stop reading this essay now. You may not get any more fired up about beards. If you grow a beard and cannot use supplementary oxygen as you try to land a rapidly descending plane, that’s just a bad situation for everyone involved. I’ll be out of luck of course, as my beard will be preventing my intake of delicious, life-preserving oxygen, but that’s a risk I’m willing to take.

The amateur boxing ring - My only guess as to why amateur boxers are prohibited from wearing beards is because a nice puffy beard would provide facial cushioning to the wearer. Since not everyone can achieve the same level of beard puff, it would create an unfair situation for the competitors. Also, it can be hard to tell exactly where the jaw lies beneath a heavy beard, so boxers would not know where to aim their blows to the head. Thus, every fight would descend into a points battle to see who can land the most body punches. Booooooring!

The battlefield - All branches of the US military ban beards. The obvious reason is similar to the pilot’s ban. A soldier needs a good seal between his gas mask and his face. That’s cool, but veterans, please remember to grow a big ol’ beard as soon as you get back to the states. Nothing says “Gee, thanks for sending me off to die” like a nice scraggly beard.

WHY grow a beard?

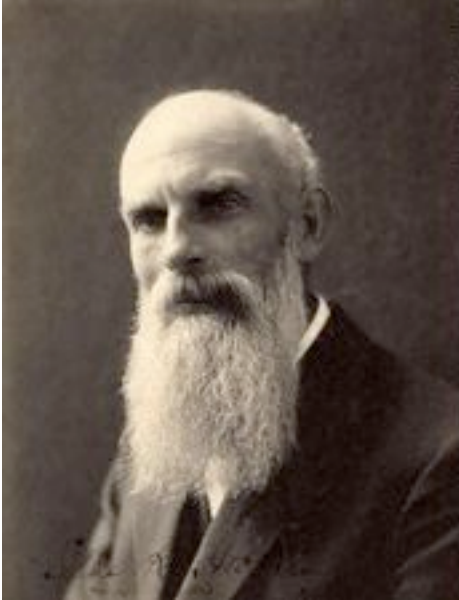
So now we come to it. Maybe you are unconvinced as to why you need to be proudly wearing your beard. Maybe you think that the standard quo is fine, that there is no need for you to stop shaving. Maybe you are nonplussed by all the righteous men of history who wore equally righteous beards. Maybe you didn't find inspiration in the beard styles presented here. Maybe you just need a bit more convincing. Well, okay.

First, it makes good financial sense to grow your beard. How much do you spend a year on shaving creams, on razor blades, on aftershave? If you would just grow your beard, your grooming costs will drop dramatically. I'm not going to lie and say that you will have to spend no money on beard care. A handsome beard does require maintenance, such as shaving the small areas where you want your skin to remain exposed. But compared to shaving your whole face everyday, the savings are monumental.

Second, it saves time. Less surface area to shave plus reduced shaving frequency equals a whole lot of time you can use otherwise. Start a band. Learn a language. Practice martial arts. Use a lathe. Stroke your beard. Get a dog. Get another dog. Restore a muscle car. Build a tree fort. Clean the bathtub. Eat a pizza. Write a manifesto. The opportunities are endless when you're a beard wearer.

Third, you have a deep psychological need to. It is a fact that men who do not have beards long for one. I'm sure it has to do with some Freudian stage of development during infancy, perhaps just after you realize that you compete with your father for your mother's attention. If your father was bearded, then as an infant you craved to grow a longer one. If your father was shaven, then your infant mind knew that a robust beard would win your mother's favor away from your father. Of course I'm just making this stuff up. See how easy it is to develop psychological theories? I don't know why you feel the desire to grow a beard, but I do know this. Freud had one. End of story.

Fourth, it looks amazing. I mean look at this dude.



Amazing! This guy could be a wizard. Or a king. Maybe he's a psychologist. Perhaps a philosopher. Maybe he's that old hippie down the street that drives the truck with all the stickers on it. Maybe he invented the English muffin. (Of course, it's actually novelist and Methodist preacher Silas Kitto Hocking!)

Fifth, it gives you instant credibility in so many fields. Once you grow a beard, you can talk all day about mountaineering and people will hang on your every word. Make up some crazy new philosophical ideas and people will want to study them. If you bring up crabbing in Alaska, people at dinner will stop mid-bite to hear what you have to say. Give someone organic gardening tips... they will go home and try them out *that afternoon*.

Sixth, it just feels good. Walking around town, you will notice people peering out the corner of their eyes to get a longer look at you. At any time of the day, whether your cat or dog is nearby or not, you have something soft and soothing to pet. In winter, you have extra warmth and in summer a wet beard is much more cooling than bare skin. You can feel a direct connection to great men of history coursing through your veins. You are part of a brotherhood. You are connected to the distant past. You are the ultra-man.

HOW do I grow and care for a beard?

Let's clear the air. This is no Chia pet you are about to grow. There are trials and there are tribulations and there are hurdles that must be leaped. The bearded lifestyle is not one of complete luxury and carefree maintenance. Regular grooming is key! So with that in mind, let's approach this section in two stages, growth and care.

How to grow a beard

Step 1: Don't shave.

There you have it! You see, being bearded is man's natural state. Countless men spend countless hours fighting a war they will never win. They subject themselves to the daily drudgery of running razor after razor over their tired skin. The skin protests by creating razor bumps and bleeding from invisible wounds. The men respond by affixing tiny squares of tissue to the tiny cuts and dousing their already irritated face in scented alcohol. Ridiculous.

Although ceasing the shaving cycle and letting your face revert to its natural state sounds like an easy thing to do, rest assured that many men find great difficulty in undertaking this task. Inevitably after a few days' growth, the whiskers find ways of tormenting their very creator via incessant itching sensations. You feel as if you could scratch your face right off and be done with it. Just apply a belt sander until there is no more skin to be itchy and walk around like some freakish living anatomy class dummy, bare jaw muscles glistening in the sun's rays. But that would be the easy way out, my friend. No, yours is a long, drawn-out torment that will take days, even weeks to resolve itself. It will take the patience of the Buddha sitting under the Bodhi tree awaiting enlightenment, but you will have relief if you can simply wait.

Once the Threshold of Itchiness is crossed, you have passed the test. You may now cruise into beardhood with the comfort of knowing that the worst is over. Enjoy your well-deserved reward. Wake up each morning and savor the new growth. Bask in it. Revel in it.

The care and feeding of your new beard

Depending on your chosen style, you may end up with a high-maintenance beard or a low-maintenance beard. It is imperative that you tailor your beard to your existing lifestyle. Do you enjoy the process of grooming yourself daily? Then by all means, grow yourself an Imperial beard or the Musketeer. Is grooming a loathed necessity, only to be engaged in when pressed to impress? Then you should most definitely opt for the Natural style. There are enough beards with varying grooming requirements to fit any man's lifestyle.

If you choose any but the full-blown, natural, let's-just-see-what-the-hell-happens style, you will need certain tools. Just as the groundskeeper needs hedge clippers and mowers of various types, you will need several different cutting instruments. First, you will need to hang on to your bladed razor. You will want portions of your skin to remain hairless, and there is no substitute for a good safety razor. I recommend one with replaceable blades rather than fully disposable one. Of course, the manliest thing would be to use a straight razor, but unfortunately not many men younger than seventy know how to wield one of those frightening things. They are sharp!

Next you may want to invest in a cordless electric beard clipper. This tool is great for maintaining a close-cropped beard or one with intricate patterns. I am a fan of Norelco's offerings, which have a safety guard that has several settings and can be adjusted with a quick turn of a switch. The typical lengths that can be achieved with this device range from super-short stubble up to about one inch of length. This encompasses the desired lengths for all but the most serious and dedicated beard cultivator.

And for that special, super beard, nothing beats a good pair of barbering shears. If you scoff at a one-inch beard like you would scoff at a one-inch candy bar, then you can skip the more expensive electric clippers and just buy yourself a good set of shears. It takes some practice to get an even trim, but you can enjoy the smug satisfaction that comes with not needing a "safety guard" to guide your hand. The best technique for getting an even trim is to brush your beard hair so that it stands straight out from your face. That way it is easy to see places you have cut and places still waiting to taste the blades. Once you brush your beard back to its normal resting place, it will lay quite nicely.

Some gents enjoy using what are known in the bearded man's world as "aids." These are nothing but styling products for your facial hair. If you are the type of man who loves to slather gel into his spiky do, you may also be interested in sporting an aided beard. The most effective styling aid is mustache wax, just like Salvador Dali, Rolly Fingers, or the Guy On The Pringles Can uses. But don't limit yourself to curling that 'stache. Get creative! This guy did.



Dang!

Okay, now that we have discussed the trimming and cutting and waxing aspects of beard grooming, we turn to the cleaning aspect. How exactly do you wash a beard? It's hair, so maybe you shampoo it. But it's not on top of your head so maybe you just use the soap. Then again, it's on your face, so maybe you use a face wash. My advice based on experience is as follows. If you are using the electric clippers to trim your beard, it is probably short enough that you can just use regular soap. If you decide to forge boldly past the boundary of your longest clipper setting, there is no set shampoo transition point. Rather, one day while trying to soap up your face, you will find that the soap simply does not produce enough suds to work deep into your beard. You try and try to work enough lather from the bar, but it is to no avail. That's your sign to start shampooing the beard. And also when your lady friends start to complain of lingering beard smells. Either way, you have graduated to shampoo. You can easily make it a part of your existing shampoo routine. Simply squeeze a bit more into your hands and make a fluid transition with your hands from your head to your face. A quick rinse leaves you with a head and face full of fresh-smelling hairs.

Lastly, concerning conditioner. I personally do not see the need in using precious time conditioning the beard. I have tried it and really did not see a difference in the feel or the look of my beard. It could just be that my facial hair is extra surly and resistant to change. Yours may be more compliant. The only way to tell is to give the conditioner a try and see if you like the results.

To Sum Up

It's beard time, people. It's time for the men of the world to stand up and proudly display the best beards they can grow. Let's take it back to 1860. Let's create a world where radical facial hair is the norm, not the exception. Why should the homeless, the Hasidic Jews, and the Amish have all the fun?

I want to see lawyers that look like this guy.



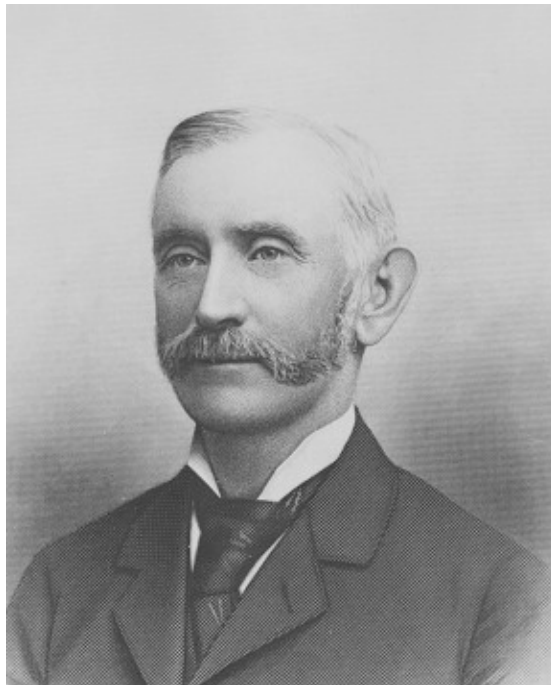
James Maurice - 1800's lawyer

I want to see doctors that look like this guy.



Surgeon Edwin Ward - 1863

I want to see bankers that look like this guy.



William S. Woods - Late 1800's banker

Come on, lads! The professionals in the days of yore were not afraid to wear facial hair that would be considered outlandish by today's standards! The secret is that if we all commit to bringing beard styles back, then we can return to the glorious days of cultured men who proudly expressed themselves through their facial follicles.

And it doesn't have to stop with the beards. This is simply the first step. Let's create a society of renaissance men. Down with the specialist and up with the generalist! You see Mr. Woods up there? Not only was he a banker, but he was also a physician! How many of your friends working in the financial field would have loved to have a medical practice to fall back on when the banking world collapsed? We can do it, people. I want to see a society of teacher/lawyers and plumber/preachers. Are you currently an engineer? Then in your spare time become a poet. Remember, your new beard will afford you the free time to undertake such a task. Poet/engineers, Carpenter/chefs, Journalist/barbers. Bearded men all. Can you envision it?

But it all starts with you. This vision of glory can only be achieved if you commit to growing your beard. It's no coincidence that the decline of the professional beard wearer and the fall of the renaissance man occurred together. Society is counting on you to put down the razor and allow your beard to rise like a phoenix from the ashes.

Arise fine brethren! Claim your destiny! This is the hour!

Let the growing begin!

For more bearducation, beardutainment, and beard growing advice, visit <http://beardcoach.com>