2 Men's Clothing

Overview

Men's clothing was almost the same among all classes of men. The major differences between economic groups was the cut of the clothes, the quality of the fabric, and the types of coats and leisure clothes worn.

Men wore trousers, jackets, shirts, and waistcoats, or some combination of these items. A laborer would wear a shirt and trousers, and a waistcoat and jacket when the weather was cold or on a special occasion. A businessman or storekeeper would wear a shirt, trousers, waistcoat, and jacket (perhaps removing the jacket while at work). A well-to-do or professional man (doctor, lawyer, teacher) would wear a shirt, trousers, waistcoat, and jacket. All men would wear hats while outdoors and most men wore braces (button-on suspenders).

The first part of this section summarizes the clothing options for men working in the different areas of the farm. Use the summary to find items you would like to wear, then continue on to the second part of the section. The second part provides detailed information on each item, on accessories you can use to change your outfit for different occasions, and on appropriate fabrics and colors. The section concludes with illustrations of clothing.

For example, after reading the summary, a man who is going to work as a farm laborer may decide on a shirt and trousers for everyday wear, and a waistcoat and jacket for special occasions. The detailed section will tell him how the items should be shaped, what type of hat and shoes to wear, what fabrics and colors to use, and what accessories he can add (such as a tie and tie pin for special occasions, a bandana around the neck while working, and so on). The illustrations will show him how trousers, hats, shirts, etc. should look and how different items can be combined to make several outfits.

Summary by Farm Area

Here's a summary of men's clothing by area of the farm. Use these recommendations when creating your outfit. For further details and illustrations, read the other parts of the section.

Farm: Denim, wool or sturdy fabric for pants. Colored shirt (floral-, striped-, checked-, or plaid-patterned fabric ok). Button-on suspenders or belt (but no belt loops). Hat. Waistcoats and sack coats were worn by farmers, especially when the weather was cool (use coarse wool, homespun, denim, or corduroy). Boots. Apron overalls not commonly worn by farmers. However, if a farmer is going to wear apron overalls, modern overalls are NOT authentic. See figure of 1890s overalls. Foreman should be more formally dressed than other farmers (at least a waistcoat). Ethnic clothing ok.


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Garden: Gardeners were more formally dressed than farmers and craftsmen. Waistcoat, apron, sleeve protectors, straw hat are possible accessories.

House: Suit (trousers, waistcoat, white shirt, tie, coat) or more casual (no coat). Fabrics more formal: light wool, tweeds. Shirt of cotton. No hats in the house. Boots or oxford shoes. Special costumes: oiled hair, smoking coat can be substituted for the waistcoat and coat; sports clothes (tennis, bicycling, or golf attire); a dandy's outfit (lots of mixed patterns, very richly dressed); military man on a visit.

Store, Food: Simple suit, or everything but the coat. Formal (no denim) and conservative (no dandies). Ties, waistcoats, white or light colored shirts, and watch and chain (at least a chain) should be required. Arm guards. Don't wear hats while indoors.

Train: All train/trolley personnel that worked with the public (for example, the conductor) wore suits and caps (usually a uniform). Workmen dressed like craftsmen and farmers (ethnic dress ok).

Carriages: Suit and hat.

Wagon: Farm attire.

About the Grounds: All of the above. Men should wear hats.

The Basics

The basics are: shirts, braces, trousers, waistcoats, jackets, suits, and coats.

Underclothes

If you want to be very, very stylish, you can wear a corset as some men did to reduce their figures. Long underwear and union suits were more common. They were made of cotton or wool and buttoned from the neck to the middle of the chest. If it's a cool day at the farm, long underwear can help keep you warm. Work men often rolled up their sleeves while working and the long underwear sleeves showed.

Shirts

Shirts looked just like modern shirts except they only opened to the middle of chest; the shirts did not button from collar to bottom of shirt. Collars were high (3 inches by the end of the 1890s), upright, with a gap in the center, and the collars turned over (like today). Button-down collars did not exist in the '90s.

Working men's shirts were made of flannel or other types of cotton and were made in bright colors. Blue was a popular color. The fabric was often patterned with stripes, checks, or plaids. Light stripes on dark background were popular. The shirts buttoned down the middle, were single-breasted, double-breasted, or buttoned off to one side of the chest (Russian style). Working shirts had collars like those worn today. Working shirts were not starched.

Formal shirts came without cuffs and collars. The cuffs and collars were bought separately. Formal shirts were white and starched. They usually had a pleated, tucked, or embroidered bosom made of finer cotton than the rest of the shirt. Men who could not afford a white shirt used a colored shirt and attached a white starched
or celluloid collar and cuffs (and perhaps a bosom) to make the shirt more formal (the waistcoat and jacket covered the rest of the shirt). Colored shirts with white collars and cuffs were also worn for informal outings such as picnics. You can fake the cuffs and collar by buying or making a shirt with a white turned-down collar and white cuffs. Then, you just have to starch the collar and cuffs to make them look authentic.

If you are going to wear a waistcoat, then you can get away with wearing a modern shirt that opens to the bottom of the shirt (visitors won't know since the shirt will be hidden by the waistcoat).

See illustrations for collars and shirt styles.

**Trousers**

Trousers were medium wide for the whole leg, had a button fly, and no belt loops. The trouser hem covered the backs of the shoes and came forward over the insteps. Creased trousers started to be worn after 1895. Since creased trousers was a new style, it probably wasn't worn by everyone until the end of the decade. If you're a stylish gentleman accompanying a woman dressed in post 1895-style clothing, then crease your trousers front and back. Stylish sack suit trousers were cuffed after 1896.

Fine wool trousers were worn by middle and upper middle classes. Denim, homespun, corduroy, and coarse wool trousers were worn by by blue-collar workers. Denim trousers were called "overalls" and were worn by farmers, craftsmen, wagon drivers, and train workers. To create denim overalls, use 501 jeans. If you buy 301 jeans, remove the belt loops and the left rear pocket. Estelle Worrell in *American Costume* writes that denim jackets and trousers came in different colors for different trades as follows: white for grocers, cooks, waiters, butchers, painters, and paper hangers; blue and white checked or striped denim for engineers; blue for cowboys and construction workers; and blue or black for farmers. See illustration of denim jacket and trousers.

Bib trousers or apron overalls became popular in the '90s. They are the predecessor of the modern overalls and were worn by blue-collar workers. They were made of denim or canvas, had rivets on pockets and points of stress, and the shoulder straps were riveted to the bib. The shoulder straps were not detachable: men had to slide them off. Modern Osh Kosh overalls are NOT authentic. See illustrations for apron overalls.

Flannel trousers were worn for sports by those who could afford a special sports outfit.

**Braces and Belts**

Braces are button-on suspenders and were worn by most men to hold up their trousers. They crossed in back (see illustration). Braces were usually red, brown, or black. Fancy braces were made in silk or embroidered. If you aren't going to wear a waistcoat, then you should wear braces. If you wear a waistcoat, visitors won't know if you are wearing braces or not.

Leather belts were starting to be used by some working men in the '90s. However, the trousers did not have belt loops so the belt probably wasn't as effective as it is today. Poor men used old rope or a long piece of fabric tied around the waist as a belt.
Waistcoats: Waistcoats (known today as vests) were worn with or without an accompanying jacket. Waistcoats were double- or single-breasted, with or without collars, and had watch pockets, and 5 or more buttons. They were made of silk, fine wool, or fine cotton for the wealthy; denim, coarse wool, homespun, or corduroy for the lower classes.

Suits: Men in all walks of life wore suits. Even outlaws wore suits. Black Bart held up stagecoaches in a double-breasted sack suit. Suits consisted of three pieces: waistcoat, coat, and trousers. The pieces were made of matching or non-matching fabric. Crash suits were popular summer suits. They were linen, denim, or canvas sack suits made in light colors. See "Waistcoats," "Coats and Jackets," "Trousers," and illustrations for more details on the options and styles.

Coats and Jackets: There were a variety of coats and jackets that were worn as part of a suit or as an overcoat:

Sack or Lounge jacket: Suit jacket worn by all classes for most activities, including sports and informal outings. Working class men wore these when the weather was cold and for formal activities, such as going to church, getting married, and having a photo taken. These jackets had short, small lapels. They have 4 or 5 buttons and button from the top down. The first button was located just under the knot of the tie and was usually buttoned. The coat had a breast pocket for a handkerchief and was always worn with a waistcoat. Waistcoat and trousers were made of matching or contrasting fabric. See illustration.

Morning coats: Worn by businessmen and professionals. The most common, formal daytime wear. Had a waist seam. The skirt of the coat sloped away to the back. Fastened with 4 buttons; top button usually buttoned. Notched collar. Popular fabrics included: gray pin checks, plain wool, subtle plaids, hairline stripes, rough-textured gray worsteds. Popular colors were black, navy, gray and brown. Had a breast pocket for a handkerchief. See illustration.

Frock coats: Worn by businessmen and professionals, particularly popular with ministers and doctors. The frock coat is knee-length, has a waist seam, and 3 or 4 buttons from the collar to the waist. The lapels are long narrow to medium width. Usually made of black broadcloth with black satin lapels. Worn with a matching or different colored dark trousers. Striped wool trousers were popular with the frock coat. Had a breast pocket for a handkerchief. See illustration.

Oiled Coats: Workers wore oiled coats to protect themselves from rain and cold. Oiled cape coats were worn by motor and grip men, drivers, teamsters, miners, and farmers. The cape coat was
black, flannel lined, had a detachable cape, and was fastened with metal clips, not buttons. See illustration.

Chesterfield:
Overcoat with velvet collar. Cut straight with no waist seam. Shorter than frock and morning coats. Worn in the city and for travel. Very popular coat with the upper classes. See illustration.

Inverness:
Loose overcoat with arm-length coat. Usually made in tweed and plaid. See illustration.

Special Costumes

The following paragraphs describe special costumes that can be worn in different areas of the farm: smoking jackets (in the house only), military uniforms, ethnic clothing, and sports clothes.

Smoking Jackets
Smoking jackets were worn in the house when a man was smoking. The jacket was very decorative and protected the clothing from becoming soiled by the smoke. The jacket was made of velvet or plush, sometimes with satin trim. Often the jacket had a shawl collar and a braid fastener. The jacket had pockets for smoking paraphernalia. A smoking jacket was worn over the man's shirt, tie and vest. See illustration. Men often wore turkish hats with the smoking jacket.

This is an item that you could make and share with other men giving tours in the house to help you all reduce your expenses. The house may also supply a jacket to be used for men giving tours in the house. Check with the house director. If the jacket you wear fastens fully down the front, you don't need to wear a vest and braces, since visitors won't be able to see what's under the jacket (unless you take it off for demonstration purposes).

Military Uniforms
I haven't had a chance to do research on 1890s military uniforms. However, a uniform would be suitable for someone pretending to be a visitor at the farm.

Ethnic Clothing
There were many immigrants working as laborers on the farm and a Chinese cook working in the house. If you'd like to portray someone of your ethnic background it would be appropriate if you are a laborer on the farm or with the train. If you decide to "go" ethnic, be sure the items you pick are authentic.

Sports and Informal Wear
The sack suit served as the basic all around informal and sports wear (complete with waistcoat and tie). Boaters and sports caps were worn with the suit.

For men who were wealthy enough to own special clothes for sportswear, the common outfit for bicycling, shooting, hiking, and hunting was knickers with a Norfolk or sack jacket, shirt, tie, wool knee-high socks, short boots, gaiters or leggings, and a sports cap. Knickers had a narrow knee band and were not very full. The Norfolk jacket had a low belted waist, an inverted pleat at the back, and two box pleats at the front. See illustration.

Tennis and yachting wear consisted of white wool flannel trousers, white shirt, bow tie, stiff turned down collar, a blazer (striped or plain, like a sack jacket but with patch pockets) and a boater. Striped blazers were usually black and white, some were
multicolored. The front corners of blazers were square or rounded. Reefer jackets (double-breasted sack jackets) were also popular. See illustrations.

Wool flannel, canvas, denim, or linen were used for croquet, tennis, and yachting suits in summer.

Some men wore wool or cotton turtleneck sweaters or sweaters with lace up collars for biking. They were often worn with knickers and wool socks. Sweaters were usually wine, black, navy, or tan. One popular style had white bands knit at cuffs and hip (Worrell, p. 123).

### Fabrics and Colors

**Working class** men wore denim, corduroy, homespun, or coarse wool for trousers, jackets, and waistcoats. Colors were dark and solid colored. Denim overalls came in indigo blue, black, brown, blue with white stripes or checks, and white. Working men's shirts were often flannel in bright colors. Most popular color was blue.

**Wealthier** men wore fine woolens for formal and business clothes (popular wools included: gray pin checks, plain wool, subtle plaids, hairline stripes, rough-textured gray worsteds), linens (for crash suit), wool flannels and tweeds for sports and informal clothes. Silk waistcoats were worn by those who could afford them. Wools with large checks and plaids were worn by the well off for casual wear. White was worn for tennis and yachting.

Trousers and coats were usually dark: navy blue, black, brown, gray, and gray-green were popular. Striped trousers were popular for formal wear. Waistcoats were light or dark colored.

**Shirts** were made of cotton or flannel. White shirts were worn by professionals, businessmen (white-collar workers), and by everyone for formal wear. Light or dark colored shirts were worn by the working class (blue-collar workers), and other classes for casual and sports wear. Colored shirts also came with patterned fabric in stripes (most popular pattern, usually with a dark background and light stripes), checks, plaids, and flowers (particularly the poor who use any left over fabric).

**Ties** had light or vivid colors.

**Buttons** were made of bone, ivory, metal, wood (used by the poor), mother-of-pearl, or were covered in fabric to match the clothing. Buttons were functional and inconspicuous and sized like modern buttons.

### Hair and Headwear

Hair was cut short at the back, parted on the side or in the center, brushed back over the ears, or instead of parted there was a small pompadour in front. The stylish look for men was a moustache but no beard. Artistic men were completely clean-shaven. Less stylish men wore beards, large sideburns, or side whiskers. Long hair was definitely uncommon. White collar workers, blue collar workers dressed for a formal occasion or an outing, and men of leisure oiled their hair with macassar oil (if you portray one of these you should oil your hair too!).
Hats were worn straight on the head. There were many types of hats:

Stetson felt hats: These were worn by farmers, rural craftsmen, laborers, and cowboys. They have a round crown and a round brim. These hats are similar to Amish hats. Worn with leather around the crown. This is how Douglas Gorsline describes them in What We Wore: "In the southern plains areas of Texas and the Southwest, the Stetson had a brim four inches wide and a crown seven inches high; farther north both brim and crown were somewhat smaller. In the Southwest the level-brimmed, high-crowned hat was worn pinched in, while in the North the top crown was dented in all around." The brim is not curled up like modern cowboy hats. See illustrations.

Panama straw hats: A popular outdoor hat made of straw. Worn for informal occasions and when working outdoors.

Boaters or Sailors: Hat worn for sports or informal wear. Made of coarse straw with a colored ribbon around the crown.

Top hat: Worn with formal wear. Silk top hats were the most formal. Worn by businessmen and professionals.

Boulers: Next most formal hat after the top hat. Worn by tradesmen, businessmen, servants, clerical workers, artisans, and some laborers. Moderate crown, curled brim. Came in black, fawn, and light gray (for summer).

Deerstalker: Sherlock Holmes style hat. Worn for sports such as hiking and hunting.

Caps: Small close-fitting cloth or wool cap—similar to today's golf cap. Worn for informal and sports wear.

Homburg or Fedoras: Felt hat similar to today's version, but with a smaller, rolled brim. Worn mainly by professionals and the wealthy. The crown was dented in the middle.

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**Footwear and Socks**

Boots had round or square toes, broad heels and thick soles. Shoes had square or pointed toes. Everyday shoes and boots were brown; formal shoes were black. Pull on or lace up boots were worn by all men (pointed and decorated modern cowboy boots are NOT ok). Black boots with canvas tops were also popular. Two-tone or plain tie oxford shoes were worn by middle and upper classes for formal and informal occasions. Oxfords had tips and squared toes. See illustration.

White buck or black canvas shoes with rubber soles were worn for tennis. High top shoes were worn for biking. Hiking and golf shoes had spikes in the soles.

Socks came in neutral colors and were made of wool, cashmere, cotton, and silk. Thick wool stockings with gaiters over them were worn with knickers and short boots for sports. Some socks had decorations on the sides. See illustration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessories</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neckerchiefs:</td>
<td>Bright neckerchiefs (bandanas) were worn by working men.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handkerchiefs:</td>
<td>A nice handkerchief in the breast pocket of a suit coat was worn by stylish men.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glasses:</td>
<td>Glasses were wire-framed, small, oval or round.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collars and Cuffs:</td>
<td>Starched and white. Collars were high (3 inches by the end of the decade). See illustration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arm Bands:</td>
<td>Used by business people to keep the sleeves out of the ink. Took the form of a strap on the upper arm to hold the sleeve up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeve Protectors:</td>
<td>Used by business and working men to keep sleeves clean. Usually made of a darker color in a sturdy fabric. They completely covered the forearm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aprons:</td>
<td>Work aprons were worn by tradesmen and craftsmen. They were made like short or long butcher’s aprons, with or without pockets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ties:</td>
<td>Puff (ascot) ties were worn with frock and morning coats. Large loop and small bow ties were considered less formal and usually worn only with sack suits. Four-in-hand ties (like the modern tie) were worn with any suit. The ties had small geometric, abstract, or diagonal stripe patterns and were usually made of silk. They were light or vividly colored. See illustrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloves:</td>
<td>Kid or suede gloves were worn by fashionable men. Gloves were made in a light colors such as fawn, lavender, lilac, cream, yellow, and gray. White gloves were only worn in the evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry:</td>
<td>Little jewelry was worn by men. Most men had a watch and chain. Wealthier men added fobs to the watch chain. Wristwatches weren’t developed until WWI. Don’t wear a wristwatch; hide it in a pocket. Middle and upper class men wore signet rings, jeweled tie pins, shirt studs, and cuff links. Tie pins were shaped like stick pins and were stuck into the knot of a four-in-hand tie to keep the tie under the waistcoat. Stickpin heads were decorated with a gem, emblems of fraternal orders, images of small insects, and oval discs with the wearer’s initials.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spats or Gaiters:</td>
<td>Spats were worn with frock coats starting in 1893. Gaiters were worn with knickers for sports activities. See illustration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umbrellas, Canes:</td>
<td>Most stylish men had a cane or walking stick. Canes and walking sticks were cut to measure and had gold, ivory, metal, or wood heads. Some walking sticks concealed swords, pistols, vials, and drinking goblets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags:</td>
<td>Leather, metal-framed business bags were carried by doctors and some other business men.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Working + Cutting Trousers

Men's Working Trousers

Apron overalls + work shirt.

Sack Jackets and Suits

Denim jackets + Trousers
Prince Albert Coat
black cloth-black satin facing on
sleeves-waistcoat pearl-gray caviar
pearl buttons-trousers darker
gray cloth-blue silk scarf-heavy
gray waistchain-black
shoes-gray
sleeves-gray
gloves-black
1840's

Morning Coat
Heidelberg Hat

Duster-coat-
gray striped

Cabinet Jacket-
made of blanket-

Oiled Coat
Sports Wear

Boater + Blazer + Knickers + Norfolk Jacket + Knicker

Men's Bicycle Breeches

Smoking + House Jackets

Men's Smoking or House Jackets

Gentlemen's House Cap

Gentlemen's Hatting

6285

3179 3172

4715

Gentlemen's House Jacket
Braces

No. 5. Men's Silk Braces, hand-embroidered, in all colors, suitable for presents, at $2.50, 3, 5.50, 4, 5, to 8 per pair.

Figures No. 1 and 2—Gentlemen's Braces.

Collars + Cuffs

Men's and Youths' Standing Collars and Line Cuffs (For Full Dress and Other Wear.)

Men's and Youths' High-Band Turn-Down Collars and Line Cuffs

Men's and Youths' Low-Standing and Turn-Down Collars and Reversible Cuff.
Figure No. 1—Gentlemen’s Knot Scarf.

Figure No. 2—Gentlemen’s Knot Scarf.

Figure No. 3—Gentlemen’s Knot Scarf.

Figure No. 4—Novelties in Scarf-Line.

Figure No. 5—Novelties in Scarf-Line.

The Latest Shield Bow. 12 cents.

No. 341416. This Handsome Shield Bow magnificently worn with the stylish high turn-down collar, comes in a beautiful assortment of designs and colors, to suit the taste and fancy of every man. Write your special preference and we will send you a suit for only 12 cents. It can also be worn with the ordinary turn-down collar.

Figure No. 6—Men’s Linen Handkerchiefs.