

# Regional Differences Of Shirt Colors, Collars And Fabrics Of 1928-1931

By Donna May Bewley

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Dress shirt fashions varied by regions of the nation. Colleges and universities set shirt fashion trends which are useful in tracing the changes in dress shirt styles and tastes during the Model A Era. The differences in shirt fashions centered on color, fabric and collar type. It is hoped that the fashion entrant who wishes to take into consideration regional dress shirt styles and tastes when putting together an ensemble will be assisted by the following information.

1928

Tab and pinned collars were very popular on Ivy League and Midwestern campuses at this time. Button-down collars were popular with the exception of the New England schools. Southern Universities in 1928 generally did not favor pinned or button down collars. They preferred a somewhat shorter collar than the three-inch collar popular among Ivy League and New England schools. Some West coast campuses favored the Barrymore shirt, with long collar points (four and one-half to five inches) and no neckband, made in honor of the actor John Barrymore. A "milkman's shirt," with equal narrow black and white stripes was a favorite at the University of California at Berkeley.

Colored shirts were very popular at the work place and on college and university campuses. Ivy League schools preferred white broadcloth and blue and white striped shirts. Midwestern universities favored blue, tan and white shirts. On Southern university campuses tan, green and white were popular solid colors. The California schools favored blue and white. Green was also a popular color, either plain or with white stripes separated one inch apart.

1929-1930

On Ivy League, New England and Midwestern campuses, shirts with short rounded points worn with a pin were very popular. Tab and button-down collars also remained popular on most campuses, including the New England schools, which in 1928 had seen the popularity of the "button-down" collar fading. Southern universities, saw a modest increase in button-down collars. On the West coast the Barrymore collar was being abandoned in favor of shirts with collar points of less than three inches. Pinned collars were gaining in popularity as well as a beginning interest in button-down collars. At this time, the well-dressed business and professional man favored short point collars of the three-inch variety. Many of these short point collars were worn with a collar pin.



Tab Collar 1928-1930's



Pinned collar, worn with pins that went through the collar and snapped at the points 1928-mid-thirties



Button-down collar with soft roll and points buttoned in place. Popular in every decade since 1929



The Barrymore collar 4 1/2 - 5 inches long 1928 thru 1930's



Plain collar with medium-length points, basic fashion 1920s and 1930s



Eyelet collar in rounded or angle style, had tiny holes with a stitched edging to insert a collar pin 1930-1960

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Ivy League schools preferred shirts in white and solid colors, blue being the most popular solid color. All white shirts decreased in popularity at New England schools as blue and white shirts gained in popularity. Green and white striped shirts also increased in favor. At Midwestern universities blue, tan and multicolored stripes were very popular. Cross-striped shirts were popular in Southern universities. West Coast schools preferred shirts of blue or tan.

Business and professional men increasingly preferred striped shirts at the expense of the popularity of white shirts. Gray and white, blue and white, and lavender and white were popular striped shirt combinations.

1931

As the country moved deeper into the Depression, many men continued to have a keen interest in fashion. Generally, the most popular collar continued to be the three-inch high-pinned collar. Tab and button-down collars continued to be worn. Plain collars declined in popularity.

Colored and striped shirts continued to gain popularity in 1931. Narrow stripes of equal width were popular in many color combinations. Some examples are blue and white, tan and white, green and white and gray and white.

Generally, broadcloth and oxford were the two most popular shirting fabrics during the Model A Era. Madras and silk were also very popular especially among professional and businessmen who considered them a “cool fabric” and favored them during the summer months. Cheviot, chambray and flannel were less popular choices. Striped shirts were most often made from finer, smoother fabrics.

## RESOURCES

- *1931 Montgomery Wards Catalog*
- *2006 Land's End*
- *2006 Travel Smith*
- *Esquire's Encyclopedia of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Men's Fashions* By O.E. Schoeffler and William Gale



Entrants do not often wear colored or striped shirts during judging competition.



Two examples of modern men's shirts for “Model A Era Image” or “Fun Fashions.”