

# Clothing - Men

## Clothing Guidelines

RGA's goal is to present an honest representation of the 19th century. Clothing will be historically/authentically as accurate as possible. Completing a character or persona with garments, clothing, accoutrements and props that are in sequence with the era is what will make a presentation come alive. Seeing the appropriate clothing on all performers is not only educational but is visibly appealing to the believability of the performance. These guidelines are to get you pointed in the right direction in researching and establishing your characters wardrobe.

## CLOTHING

**FOOTWEAR:** There are numerous styles of footwear. The most popular boot was the stovepipe or military style (cavalry, infantry and officer styles) . The period correct toes are coffin toe, square toe or round pointed toe. The pointed toe, ( roach killers), were not introduced until well after the 1900's. Fancy stitching was introduced in the late 1870's, (cathedral style). In the 1880's the fancy stitched boots were introduced and became popular by the mid 1880's including scalloped/v-topped and toe stitching. Townies commonly wore brogans. Gentlemen, businessmen and high rollers wore low laced dress shoes with shined finishes. Logging boots, low top work boots like Wellington were an expensive alternative to boots as well as moccasins and leather sandals depending on the character and the area which is being portrayed.

**PANTS/BRITCHES:** Were made of various materials including, wool, cotton, cotton duck canvas, corduroy, denims, etc... The pants of the era had no belt loops and had 6 buttons on the belt, four in the front and two on the back to accommodate a pair of braces. Styles of the day had button flies or button flap fronts, (sailor style), with no zippers. Front pockets and a watch pocket was standard and one or no back pocket was common. Some pants had holes in the back for a lace to synch, (military styles), while others were equipped with a sewed on strap that form fitted the britches across the upper back. These styles are approved as period correct.

**BRACES/SUSPENDERS:** Most wool and dress pants were loose fitting and required some extra support and suspenders were popular items in the 1800's. Cotton, silk, linen, canvas and leather were commonly used materials; some were fancy stitches and/or embroidered. Although there was elastic available it was a very high dollar item and was not used in abundance by common folk. A small piece would sometimes be on the lower back of a pair of braces for elasticity. Many cow hands wore tight pants and did not need suspenders but others liked the looser fit. Braces in the y configuration had leather tongs that laced through the end of the braces with two button holes on each end. X or H configurations were popular as well and many of these styles had a single button hole on

the end of each strap with an adjustment strap on the front. Braces available today are all elastic and are allowed as long as a vest is worn over them.

**VESTS:** Were made of many materials depending on the character wearing them. Example: A Dandy or gambler would wear a more distinct vest made from silk or satin with colors and prints of all types common then with a slight inverted V front and generally two outside pockets. Vests worn by cow hands were made of more durable materials including cotton, wool or canvas and commonly had 4 front outside pockets straight cut along the bottom. The lapels came in shawl/rounded and notched. No collar vests were seen but lapels were the most common until the 1890's and were made to continue around the back of the neck in most styles in the 1800's. However, most vendors only make lapels that end at the shoulder so this style is allowed. NO Polyester.

**SHIRTS:** Pull over style's were made of wool, cotton and silk. The collar was usually banded that rose up to 1" and remained buttoned and had a stud in the back so a false collar could be added. Shirts with full collars usually had rounded collar tips. The tux shirt is correct when worn with a vest but should be 100% cotton. Buttons were made of metal, glass, stone, bone, shell and wood. Most manufacturers of period clothing use plastic buttons and are acceptable if they appear to be duplicating an authentic material. We should try and stay away from those that are obviously plastic or replace them with suitable alternatives.

**FIREARMS:** Any original or replica firearm that conforms to the time period is RGA approved, i.e. Traditions, Dakota, Cimarron Arms, Vaqueros, Colt, EMF, U.S. Patent Arms, American Arms, Winchester, Marlin, etc. The Cimarron Arms Lightning or Thunder resembles the original Colt Lightning and are acceptable even though they are not double action. The Uberti and Ruger Bird's head are not acceptable because of the shape of the grip.

**GUNLEATHER:** Will be period. Civil war flap style, Slim Jim and Mexican loop holsters are some examples. No Buscadero, one piece rigs or leg tie downs will be allowed.

**HATS:** Probably the foremost key in bringing out the wardrobe. Hats worn in our time period were usually made of three types of materials, felts of wool, beaver and wool blend with beaver. Some were made of leather but were not common due to the way they hold in heat and were not comfortable. The important thing about hats was the crease that was in them. The creases of today's cowboy hats are not period such as the cattleman and rodeo crease. Common were the flat top, round or the semi Gus, campaign dimples etc. Modern felt hats can be reshaped by using steam in a tea kettle or pot of water and recreating the crown. This is the way to make a crown permanent. Blends that contain cardboard in the center are not approved by RGA. It is best to get photos of the character you are portraying and recreate the brim and crown appropriately. Any major hat company, garage sale and/or thrift store can be your source in obtaining a good hat. Of course if you have the budget for it there are numerous companies that make period hats.

COATS: were common for all types. One worn by outlaw to lawman was the frock coat. This coat came to about the knees and was skirted for our time period. Others were town coats, morning coats or cutaways, sack coats as well as cape coats. They were usually wool including gabardine in black, brown and gray in solid colors but were available in complete suits in checkered and plaids known as dittos.

ACCOUTREMENTS: These were the common accessories worn by the men of our time period again depending on the character one is portraying. The character is what would be the factor on what accoutrements to wear.

Wild Rags we know today as bandanas were usually cotton for the cowboy but could be made of silk and canvas. They were longer than the common bandana of today and were worn in two ways. Tails tied in front or back were used for protecting the respiratory system when riding in dust but were common as a fashion as well. Ties worn besides wild rags were regular neck ties, bow ties, string ties and cravats. They were topped off with a stick pin and were the common dress for all as well as Dandy's and professional types.

Pocket Watches were very common for all types of characters. As today, a time piece was very important. They were worn attached to a chain and had a fob or attachment at the end of a gentleman's favorite symbol to his liking. The vest pocket is where it was kept with one part of chain attached to a button hole so the watch would not fall to the ground when time was being checked.

Spurs were common for the cowboy that spent most of his time on the range and cattle trails. Be sure they are period; hardened, cast steel or nickel. No stainless steel! Spur straps are leather and need to be designed as period as possible.

Reference books: These are all excellent books for beginners and will be an excellent addition to any reference library!

Packing Iron, by Richard C. Rattenbury

I see by You Outfit by Tom Lindmier & Steve Mount

The American Frontier (series) by William C Davis

Age of the Gunfighter , by Joseph G Rosa