

# The Prince of Wales



No one more completely personified English qualities [in attire] than the Prince. Here was a young man who had captured the imagination of Americans by his pleasing manners and colorful exploits. Unofficially England's "Ambassador of Good Will," every time he came over here his clothes were closely scrutinized. He came with the reputation of being one of the best-dressed men in the world. When newspapers and magazines reported that he wore a navy blue Guards coat, for instance, there were dozens of photographs to prove it.

Thus, as a fashion leader he was a great success from the very beginning, even as a boy, and his clothes were copied far and wide. Whatever he chose to wear was considered correct and in good taste and was accepted by millions of others in America and elsewhere. Following are a few of the styles that can be traced right back to the Prince of Wales, either because he wore them first or was responsible for their spread.

By wearing a *big Panama hat* at Belmont Park, Long Island, where more than 50,000 people saw him, he revived the wearing of Panama hats in this country at a time when they were out of fashion.

*The tab collar* (the rather high front soft collar with strips attached inside the outer fold and fastened over the collar button).

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*The Windsor knot tie* (the four-in-hand that is tied so as to make a larke knot) and the widespread collar which was originally designed for this knot.

*The double-breasted jacket with the long roll lapel.* This style became known as the Kent, named for the Prince's brother, the Duke of Kent. Actually, Wales was the first to wear it but encouraged the description out of deference to his younger brother. This is the jacket on which the lapels roll to the bottom button.

*The Fair Isle sweater.* This is the very colorful, patterned sweater, each horizontal row having a different pattern from the other rows. The Prince was visiting the Fair Isles, just off the English coast, in the 20's, at a time when the natives were undergoing an economic depression. Told that if he appeared on the golf links wearing one of these native products and permitted the news cameramen to photograph him, it might materially help the islanders' market, he consented gladly. Almost immediately after the pictures made the newspapers, the crofters were swamped with orders for their hand-knit sweaters. These subsequently sold in the finest shops in America for as much as \$35 each.



*The white waistcoat worn with the black dinner jacket.* Up to 1919 this combination had not been seen in either England or America, but following World War I, with nearly all Europe mourning its dead, Wales came to feel that anything he could do to partially relieve the monotony of black would be well worth while. Thus he substituted the white waistcoat. Others followed his lead; King Alfonso of Spain, for instance, and well-dressed Americans who were frequent visitors to London—men like Anthony Drexel Biddle and William Goadby Loew. Soon it spread to the U. S. until in the middle and late 20's black evening waistcoats were seldom seen on our better dressed men.

*The Guards overcoat.* Though this was a favorite style of

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coat with all of England's smartly dressed Guardsmen, it remained for the Prince to accelerate the demand for it in America. Following visits in 1919 and in 1924, the popularity for this coat spread perceptibly.

*Sportswear of the seashore resort type.* Many of the various styles of sport shirts and slacks that became popular in this country were first worn by and photographed on Wales at fashionable resorts along the French Riviera. The dark blue linen sport shirt and the fisherman's red linen slacks are examples.

*Brown buckskin shoes.* On one visit he appeared at a big polo match at Meadow Brook, Long Island, wearing brown buckskin shoes with his chalk-striped flannel suit, the only man at the game so shod. Brown buckskin shoes were new, but the next year hundreds were seen at Meadow Brook.

These are just a few of the many styles that are credited directly to the Prince. While he did not actually create any of these himself, he merely made them fashionable. From 1920 to 1936 he was a source of inspiration (and income) to designers and producers of men's apparel. That the clothing industry of America owes him a debt of gratitude there can never be any doubt, for nobody ever did so much to sell men's fashions as he, right up to the day of his abdication. There has been no serious contender since.

