

# BOXERS OR BRIEFS? TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF MODEL A ERA UNDERWEAR FOR MEN

By Jeanie Adair

To begin with, there were no briefs for men in the Model A era!

Men's underwear consisted of:

Union Suits

Drawers

Athletic Shirts

Shorts

That's boxer style shorts – so the answer to the opening question is boxers!

Shorts came in cotton broadcloth, silk or Rayon knit. Some styles had a scooped yolk with three button closure and elastic on the sides or around the back. Some styles had ties at the side. Other shorts had elastic all around the waist with no yolk in the front.

I was surprised to learn they even came in colors – white, peach, pink and light blue. The cotton broadcloth shorts came in many different colors of prints and stripes.



(Also pictured here are Athletic Shirts – see page 4 for description.)



## Boxers or Briefs?

Union Suits were the one piece underwear – think Long Johns! This garment covered the torso, arms and legs. Union suits came in long and short sleeves, and ankle length, knee or short thigh length called “Athletic style” in the catalogs. The Union Suit could have a V-neck, scooped neck or ribbed crew neck style. They had buttons down the front, or two left shoulder buttons for ease of putting on and removing the garment. They all had the famous drop-seat.

The fabric could be pin-check Nainsook, a woven cotton; cotton broadcloth; cotton mesh weave; knitted Rayon; and of course the well known wool.



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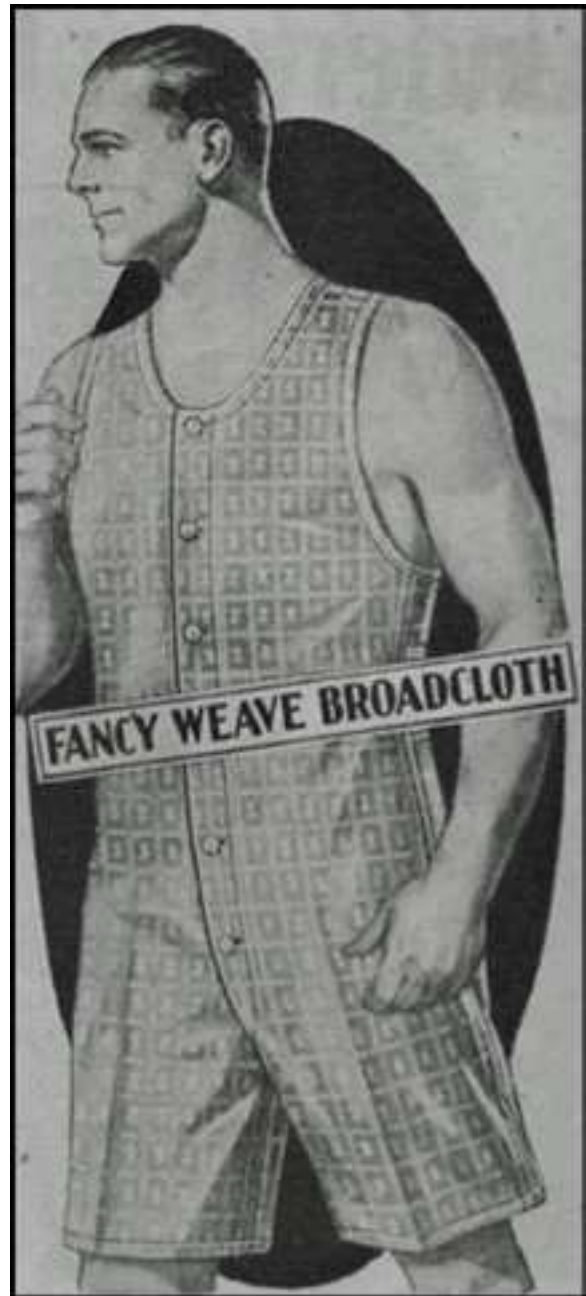
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## Boxers or Briefs?

Union Suits continued:



- A. Self-material reinforcements full length of back
- B. Bar tacked at all points of strain
- C. Snubber across the ribbed knit insert
- D. Principal seams triple stitched
- E. Firmly attached seat button
- F. Barracked and reinforced crotch



This example of a Union Suit is from a 1929 *Montgomery Ward's*, spring and summer catalog. The neckline and armholes are taped and it features fisheye pearl buttons in a fancy white pattern cotton fabric.

Other examples of men's underwear in this article are from *National Bellas Hess*, S/S 1931.

## Boxers or Briefs?

Drawers were the bottoms of the two piece underwear set. They had a three button yolk front closure. This could be worn with a short or long sleeve shirt which also had three button center front closures.

Drawers could be flat knit cotton with rib knit cuffs. There were cotton and wool blends, and all wool for cooler weather.

Athletic Shirts were similar to the ones men wear today. They had a scoop neck and a deep sleeveless cut of flat knit, various rib knit cotton or Rayon knit. They look like the tank tops we wear in today's era.

Examples of Athletic Shirts are in the picture on this page, left model; also shown on the first page of this article with the Shorts.



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