

Dress Requirements of the College Girl of the Model A Era

By Anne Neely-Beck
MAFCA Era Fashion Committee

I have often thought what it would have been like to attend college during the Model A years. Was it really fun like I imagine it or was it difficult after the crash of the stock market in 1929?



Living in the south, I picture the Ramblin Wreck of Georgia Tech, which is now a 1930 Model A Sports Coupe. Back during the Model A Era, it was a 1928 Model A that was bought after Dean Field got rid of his beloved Model T.

Going to college and riding a round in a Model A, wow that sounds like it would have been fun.

I have read several books and articles about going to college during the Depression and according to the articles and books times were tough.

In *Woman's World* magazine August 1929 there was an article about dress requirements for the college girl. The main focus of the article was about the sacrifices families make when their daughter attends college. Not much different than today with hard economic times but now there are more scholarships and grants available to girls.

Standard Needs of the College Girl

The mother and the daughter should decide what is needed and more than likely the daughter is going to disagree with the mother.

The daughter will tend to think she needs the following:

- Gay pajamas and negligees
- Sports clothes
- A brilliant raincoat
- Dresses to wear to sorority teas and rush dinners
- Crisp fluffy evening gowns and dancing shoes

The mother will have more practical thought of what is needed:

- Underwear and lingerie
- Wool hosiery
- Stout shoes and galoshes
- Warm coats
- Dresses for everyday class wear
- A practical hat or two

Activities Governing Types of Clothes

The principal activities of the college girl are study, exercise, play or social life, and rest. Suitability is the main requirement of the girl's college wardrobe; suitability to the person and to the activity, purpose and occasion; suitability in material, color, design, style and cost.

Homemade Versus Ready-Made Garments

Cost of making clothes is much less than ready-made and often with a homemade garment one can purchase better fabric than what is in ready-made items. If mother and daughter are both skilled in sewing then make the garments at home and purchase a ready-made coat and evening gown.

In the book *'We Had Everything but Money,' Priceless Memories of the Great Depression*, a quote states "she grew into her winter coat...for 8 years."

The Freshman Chooses Her Clothes With Care

The college girl will find that the regrettable fact is that until she is known in other ways she will be judged to quite a degree by the clothes she wears and how she wears them. The most important thing to remember is the suitability of the clothes the girl is to wear must be proportioned to the family's income.

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The Well Planned Wardrobe

Classroom clothes and afternoon wear:

Four years of college requires durable garments. Suggestions for fabric are wool and cotton. Two wool dresses and four cotton dresses are needed for everyday wear. One or two separate skirts, blouses and sweaters round out the educational side what clothes to have. An afternoon or church gown could be made of crepe or velvet and should last two years.

Active clothing:

This clothing should include clothes for recreation, gym class, hiking, horseback riding, and that interesting collection known as sports clothing. Two sports dresses will be needed in addition to the separate skirts and sweaters which the girl has for classroom wear. One sports dress may be sleeveless and of the type know as a tennis dress, but she will need a coat to sweater to wear with it.

Frivolous clothing:

Two evening gowns are suggested, one ready-made and one sewed at home.

Rest and relaxation:

Three sets of fancy pajamas like the new sleeveless style, made of silk, satin, or rayon in dazzling colors would be appropriate. Three sets of practical pajamas or nightgowns and a warm flannel bathrobe are a must.

In Clyties's College Capers-During Devastating Depression Days by Nell Lay Vance

Clytie went off to college without a decent bathrobe; she wore her old high school orchestra uniform for a bathrobe.

Now the girl of the Model A Era is ready to go to college. Too bad what they didn't know in August of 1929 was that the stock market would crash in October of that year and going to college after that was going to be a very frugal affair.

On the following pages are my choices of what I would have chosen for my college wardrobe during the Model A Era.

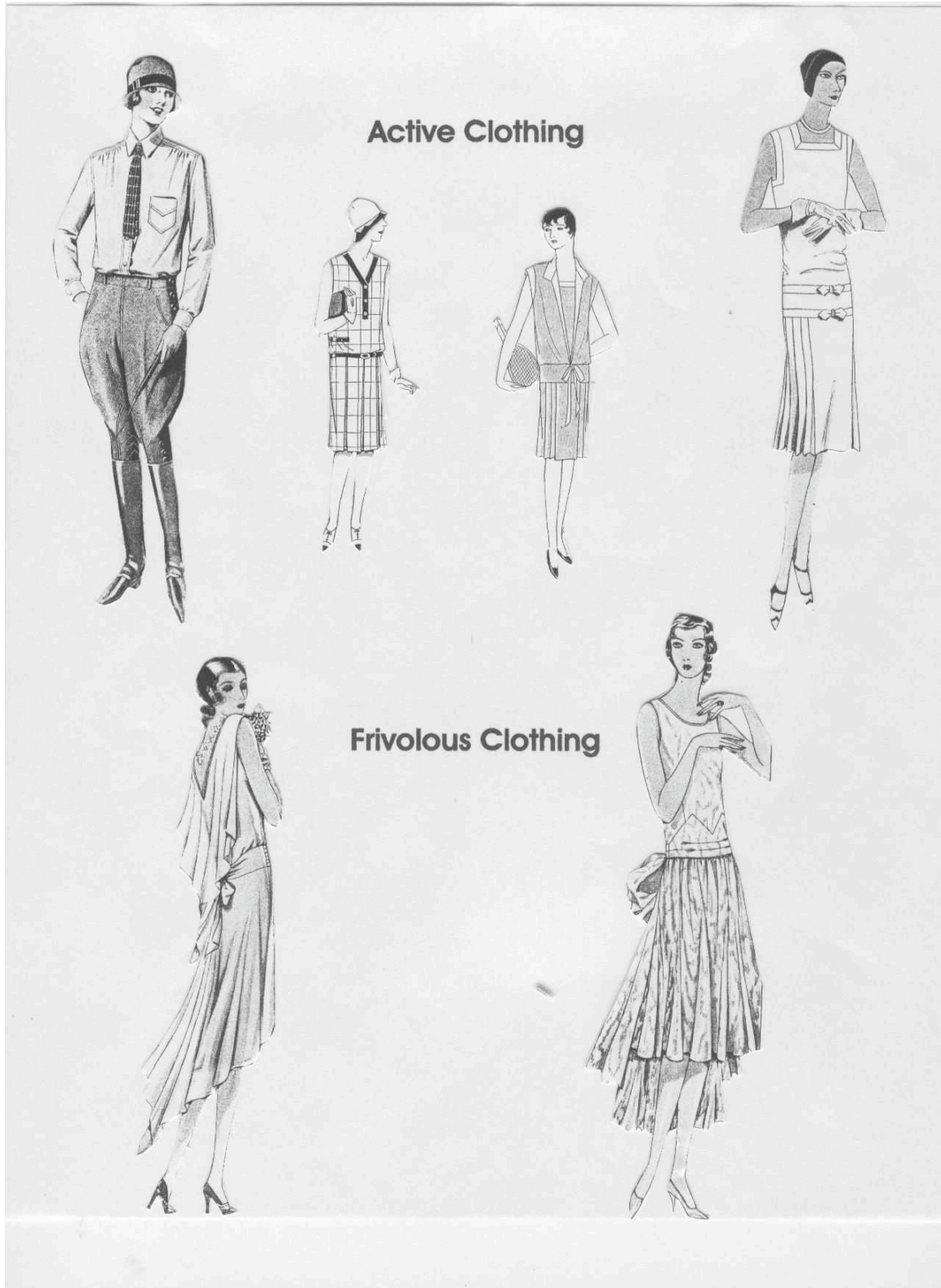
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