

Oxford Bags Encyclopedia Article

Oxford Bags

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In 1924, Oxford (and Cambridge) students, reacting to a ban on knickers in University classrooms, began wearing wide trousers, 25 inches around at the knee and 22 inches around the bottom, slipped over their knickers. Capacious pants became an immediate fad in America, copying the dimensions, but not hiding knickers within. John Held's collegiate caricatures featured undergraduates in vast pants cavorting and Charlestoning with girls in short skirts. New Yorker John Wanamaker advertised the pants at \$20 a pair in the spring of 1925 and *Men's Wear* reported on their presence in San Francisco and on the University of California campus in the fall of 1925. Even for those not enthralled by the outlandish width of the Oxford Bags, young men's pants were loose and roomy through the 1930s. Many on American campuses enjoyed genuine or spurious Oxford pedigree—Oxford cloth shirts, Oxfords (shoes), Oxford gold eyeglass frames, and Bags, these last as much a fad as goldfish swallowing.

Further Reading:

Schoeffler, O. E., and William Gale. *Esquire's Encyclopedia of 20th Century Men's Fashion*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1973.