

COLUMBIA FISHING/SUNBLOCK SHIRT





As you can see from the vintage catalog scan below, F-E is short for W&G's term "Function-Engineered" which refers to the deep shoulder pleats tacked at the waist, the underarm gussets, and the elbow darts, all of which are intended to allow for enhanced movement for the wearer of this wonderfully beefy, well-made shirt. Note that there's no shoulder yoke although the shoulder seam is moved forward to about where it'd be if there was. Instead there's a curved back-neck insert, or label-holder, or whatever these things are called. The shoulder pleats are stitched down about 1 inch at the shoulder so they open in the back only. The underarm gussets are described as "double" but the seam in the center of each is actually just a pin-tuck. The sleeve darts require a two-piece sleeve and the second seam nicely coincides with the placket's position, which appears to have been made after the seam was finished. This ebay find is a smaller size than I'd normally choose, and that proved to be an instructive blessing in disguise in several ways. The too-small-to-button neck shows itself as the solution to a personal shirt quest: How to make open-neck button-downs look best. As well, the close overall fit really lets the F-E features do their various things in ways that a looser garment would mask, as we'll see more of shortly. The sleeves are just barely long enough to be wearable, but the back pleats and especially the elbow darts neatly make up for that. But at what cost, I wonder? Those same pleats certainly don't do any favors for my slouched posture, and what are they doing for the model...? But I'm going for those elbow darts! You'll find direction for altering any basic one-piece shirt sleeve for these truly functional additions in the pattern collection.



Below is the underarm gusset from the inside. I must say I'm dubious about the benefits, or even the point, of these things. For makers, they certainly add work, and sleeves must be set in, without much changing the shape of the sleeve. So what's it adding? (And what's the point of that tiny full-length pin-tuck? To look like a seam?) For a real increase in upward-reaching flex, I'd opt for a flatter sleeve cap and maybe even a reshape of the armhole to create a higher or even an upward sleeve angle, as in the example from the Metropolitan Museum, on page 79.





Here's another shirt explicitly engineered for freedom of movement (F.O.M.) like W&G's F-E on the previous pages. It's got the same pin-tucked gussets as the W&G, but a deep yoke and carefully shaped and pieced inserts at the armholes in back in place of those simple pleats. The sleeve darts are gone. I ordered an XL as advised by the Duluth web site's sizing info (choose by chest measure) and found it nearly as capacious as the Columbia, with a 28-inch chest width and a 25-inch yoke, once again a questionable but often the only route to long-enough sleeves, and an instructive blessing about how fit relates to these movement-enhancing features. But even with such dropped shoulders as this over-sized body creates, it's clear that the yoke and shaped back inserts are a cleaner, smoother option for my particular posture (when arms are down, anyway) than simple pleats and no yoke if a bi-swing back (the general term for all these deep back-movement structures) is what I'm going for.



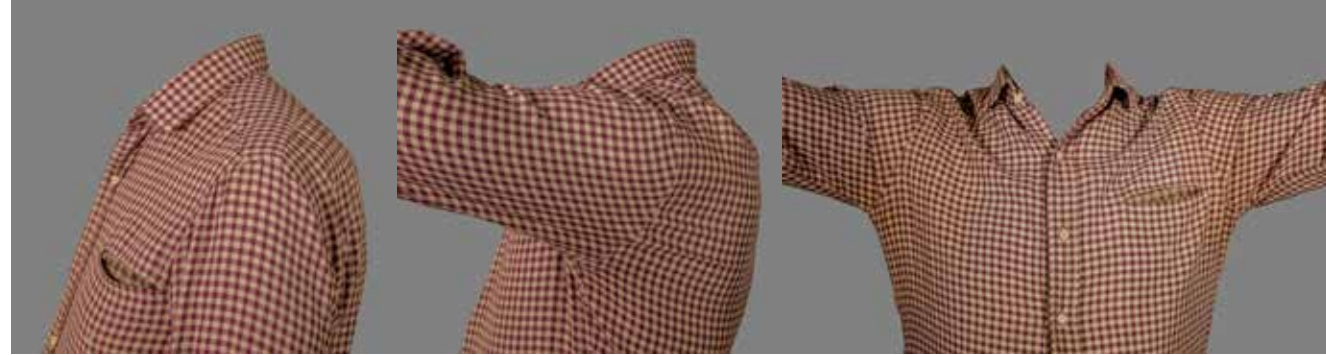
This coverall is full of interesting details which I'll return to soon, but here will focus on its back-movement strategies. Like the W&G, there's no yoke and a non-pieced pleat, but in every other way it's a more complex solution. Here the shoulder seam has been angled rather dramatically towards the back at the armhole. This keeps seams off the shoulders and moves the pleat back to where it needs no top stitching to keep it closed and helping the pleat, itself somewhat slanted towards the center at the waist, to lay relatively flat against the form but still higher up than the Duluth, nearer to where the body naturally bends. Note also that these shoulders are intentionally dropped or extended compared to the overall body circumference (which on me is close fitting), requiring slanting-outward side seams above the waist belt, unlike all the shirts shown up to now, which have straight side seams. And of course that waist belt covers the seam where the pleats end, without which they'd need that vertical seam that tacks them down above it to extend to the hem, or to be released or dealt with in some other way. And without a real arm inside, the sleeve looks pretty awful. So let's look closer at these various bi-swing approaches, in use, on a body.



BI-SWING BACKS IN ACTION

No matter how you feel about the appeal of these various back-swing features, there's no denying that the simplest and most smooth-looking way to ensure great freedom of arm movement in a shirt-type garment is for it to fit closely, especially right at and just below the shoulder joint and underarm, which is, after all, the body hinge that needs not to be restricted for arms to move with maximum freedom. So, for comparison's sake, here's me moving around inside a very snug shirt, cut that way in

error in my early shirtmaking days. Overall, it feels tighter than I'd prefer, but moving my arms up and forward isn't at all restricted and creates very little more pulling on the body than already exists. Note particularly that the body hardly shifts up at all when my arms are raised; the armhole "hinge" here is exactly matched to the body's hinge and the fabric's natural flex is all that's needed to accommodate movement, with hardly any wrinkles. The look reminds me of how 50s cowboy stars wore their "action" shirts: tight!



Here's the XL Duluth FOM shirt, obviously the wrong size in the shoulders and body, and in particular, with armholes—including all their extra features—completely misplaced in reference to my shoulder joints. So here it's my arms that hit the armholes, not my shoulders, when raising them,

pulling the entire shirt body up with them despite all those features and the extra room. And when I move my arms forward, the lower edge of the too-wide, too-deep yoke is where the strain hits and gets stuck, not in the bi-swing layers where they might help.



Even down two sizes to a M (as small as the product goes!), the Duluth yoke and the sleeves are still so wide—in other words, the hinge is still so misplaced—that the entire body still gets pulled up when my arms are raised. At least the

yoke in back is just barely raised enough so it's above the main tension from reaching my arms forward. But does the back look smooth?



Here's a shirt with no special movement features that fits overall much like the M Duluth, with narrower sleeves and a less deep yoke in back. I'm feeling no movement restrictions or strain and to my eye the back is noticeably smoother with no bi-swing

structure to be activated (distorted?) by my reaching movement. And even the body is less lifted when raising arms, due to the narrower sleeves, but no doubt also from the higher sleeve angle (from a shallower sleeve cap) and less sloped shoulder.



Here's that close-fitting W&G, showing how much better movement features work when the garment is overall more body-fitting, as on my red-checked shirt at top left (perhaps because they're less needed?); my raised arms here are hardly budging the shirt body either. Note that my elbow is hitting squarely in the middle of the elbow-dart fullness, releasing the tension that would otherwise be there from barely long enough sleeves (check back

with that catalog shot where they seem not to match the model's elbow). But are these better than sleeves that fit to start with and need no darts? And are any of these features really needed? The conclusion seems inescapable, and not very surprising: Better fit means easier movement, and added features don't reduce the need for fit or make up for the lack of it. **They increase it, because they aggravate the lack of it.** At least that's how it works on MY body.



And of course, that's the real point: All these comparisons are on my particular, by no means ideal, body, and you should evaluate these features on your own body if they appeal. It's not an inherent fault in any shirt that it's the wrong size for me, is built on a fitting model that will never fit me well, or has features not ever going to suit my posture no matter the size; it's just not a good choice for me.

Still, I do like the look of a bi-swing back when it's working, so I'll pursue the type that seems best suited to my slouch even when the fit could be improved elsewhere: The no-yoke, high mid-shoulder, slanted pleat type found on the Pointer Coverall and also on this way-too-loose LLBean Barn Coat featured in the Jacket Block chapter, which could use narrower sleeves but is still smooth without them; nice!



FEATURED SPORT DETAILS



POINTER COVERALLS

There's a host of clever, and sometimes baffling, details on this classic example of industrial production construction for work-wear, prewashed at the factory and nice and soft despite the heavy twill. There's plenty of single-needle lockstitching, just like home machines make, on the front opening and around pockets, cuffs and collar, plus a bit of double and triple needle chainstitching, often right next to the same look created with lockstitches one at a time, such as at the top edges of the pockets. Obviously the hem is serged with a 5-thread setup that creates a chain stitch for the seam at the same time as finishing the edge, as are the sides above the waist, the armholes and the underarms. The fronts have simple folded-under facings up to where the shaped "lapel" edge begins, at which point there's a stitched-on piece inserted inside, very like a combo-collar's short front facing, but not extending into the collar. This is also where buttons switch to snaps. Both the pocket

flap and the cuffs have a concealed buttonhole, going through only the inner layer (fiddly!), presumably so the buttons can't catch on anything (why's that not a problem for the front buttons...?). The back patch pockets (and the front pocket bags) get unceremoniously cut off by the serged hem (less so on larger sizes, since the pockets aren't scaled), and the faced cuffs also get swept up in the serged arm seam, where a quick clip and a bartack could have allowed them to lap, but this could still easily be done. The lower front pockets are my favorite feature besides the shoulders and back described earlier. Just inside the angled edge there's a simple curtain-like underlap (pinned back in the photo) behind the pocket facing whose edge is left free that creates an entry to the pants pockets below, closed by a bartack and topstitching below the angled opening; simple and neat.

