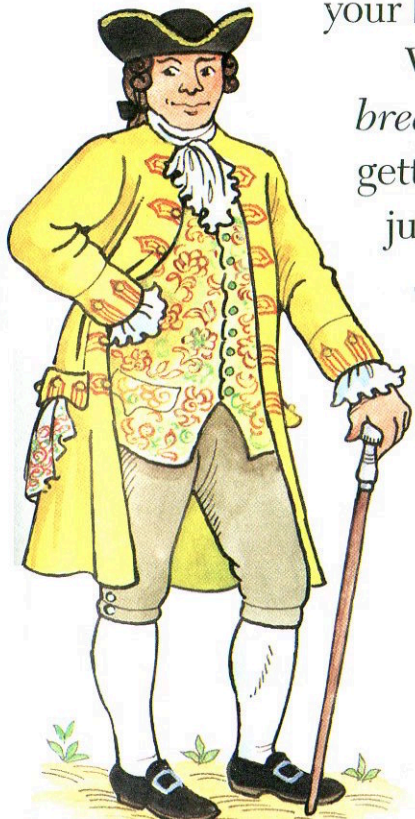


## *What kind of clothes did men and boys wear?*

Baby boys and girls of colonial Williamsburg were dressed almost alike, in a long gown (dress), a *shift* (a nightgownlike garment), or a shirt. Early on, parents began to train their children to stand up straight. As a toddler, you would have been put into stays, a kind of cloth brace stiffened with whalebone, which would keep your back straight and give you good posture.

When a boy was about four years old, he was *breeched*. He graduated from babyhood to boyhood by getting his first pair of *breeches*, pants that came down just over the knees, the way men's breeches did. The stays came off, and the boy dressed like a smaller version of his father.

Gentry men and boys wore breeches of silk, satin, or fine linen. If you were of the middling sort or poor, your breeches were likely to be wool,



cotton, or coarse linen. Most men and boys didn't wear underpants. Instead, they tucked the long tails of their shirts inside their breeches.

Next came a *waistcoat* (vest), a coat, and maybe a three-cornered hat. The cut of the coat helped your posture by pulling your shoulders back.

Neckties didn't look like they do today. Some men wore *cravats*, which were long, narrow cloths that wrapped around the shirt collars. Other men wore bands of white linen called *stocks*.

Stockings and shoes finished off the outfit.

There wasn't much variety in men's and boys' clothes. About all you could do to make a more original fashion statement was to wear a different color or add interesting trim.



*Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John  
Went to bed with his breeches on,  
One stocking off, and one stocking on;  
Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John.*

