IOWA 4-H GIRLS UNIFORM- DRESS HISTORY

Six different uniforms have played an important part in the history of the Iowa 4-H program.

Dates of the first 4-H uniform are not certain. In the 1920’s and part of the 30’s the uniform was a two-piece dress of medium blue cotton. The skirt had knife pleats all the way around. The blouse was a straight top gathered onto a band at the waist. The sleeves were elbow length with a white cuff. The collar was a white middy style. The tie was a black fabric knotted at the front edge of the collar.

The next uniform, which came into existence sometime in the 1930’s and continued through 1947 was a two-piece dress of bright blue cotton. The skirt with two pleats in the front was fastened to an under-bodice. The blouse of a sailor-type design had long sleeves. The middy collar of the same fabric as the dress was distinctive with three rows of white braid. A black tie with a square knot was worn almost waist length.

Also, during the 1940’s in keeping with the Second World War, "service stripes" were placed on the left sleeve indicating the number of years a girl was a 4-H member.
In 1948, a change was made to a one-piece dress. The color and fabric was blue-green broadcloth. A new addition was the crease-resistant feature. The skirt was six-gored. The dress had a front zipper and was worn with a self-fabric belt. The short sleeves were made with a rolled cuff. The middy collar was continued with the distinctive feature of the two rows of white cotton braid. The tie was also continued as a white plain fabric worn as a square knot.

In 1963, a major change was made in the uniform including the dropping of the middy collar and the square knot tie. The one-piece dress was worn with a self-fabric belt. The color and fabric was a green and white cotton cord. The blouse front was buttoned. The convertible collar was a new feature. The short sleeves were made with roll up cuffs. The wearing of a 4-H chevron on the left front of the blouse became an identifying feature.
In 1968, the one-piece dress style was changed to the basic A-line skimmer. This dress with a jeweled neckline was worn with either short set-in sleeves or sleeveless. A back zipper closing was a part of this design. An optional jacket with notched collar, three button closing, and wrist-length sleeves was a part of this outfit.

The color and fabric was a clover green and white striped chambray. For the first time, fabric other than all cotton was used. The 50% kodel polyester and 50% combed cotton also had a permanent finish and a soil release finish. The 4-H chevron was again worn on the left side of the blouse.

In 1973, the most recent change finds the uniformity of the 4-H dress in the fabric color. A solid green double knit of 100% polyester or a solid green seersucker of 65% polyester and 35% cotton is the unifying feature. Garment designs and styles include any style pants, blazers, jackets, dresses, skirts and blouses.

Currently, 4-H members do not have a standard uniform. Youth are encouraged to wear shirts identifying them as part of the Iowa 4-H program. Many wear t-shirts or polo shirts appropriate to the activity.

(All photos from Iowa 4-H Archives)