



Family Apparel

Sketches of the Past

Iowa Clothes

1846 to 1996



Clothing is essential as a means of self expression, communication, and protection from the environment. Our use of clothing changes over time, reflecting changes in technology, culture and family roles, and creating an interesting history. This publication illustrates family clothing items like those worn in Iowa from the beginning of statehood in 1846 to the mid-1990s. The text includes a few clues about changes in technology and current events that affected fashion and the clothes worn by Iowans during that time.

The clothing sketched in this publication is part of the Iowa State University Costume and Textiles Collection. This collection makes it possible to study not only the clothing, but also to better understand family life and how family roles have changed over time. The collection has significant garments and accessories that belonged to men and children from Iowa, but women's styles are still predominant.

As statehood began

European settlers with hopes for prosperous farming and putting down roots moved into Iowa well before it became a state in 1846. They settled among Native Americans who had long called the area home. Life was hard and isolated for the settlers, and family members provided the skills essential to survival. In the 1800s children were both an economic necessity and a religious or moral obligation.

During the early years of Iowa's statehood, clothing was more difficult to obtain than it is today. Not only did families have to make their own textiles and clothes and wear the same outfit every day, their idea of fashion was very different.

Sewing machines were available as early as the late 1840s, but were quite costly and unreliable. Most homesteading families continued to sew by hand. Women usually made all the necessary garments for the entire family; therefore, people had very few clothing items. They wore them often and frequently wore them out, so few of these early everyday garments remain in historic costume collections.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

University Extension

Hand sewn functional fashions

A pioneer baby girl wore the dress in Sketch 1. The delicately scalloped sleeves and drawstrings at the front and back demonstrate that time and care were spent sewing this garment.

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers therefore are the founders of human civilization.” (Daniel Webster, 1840, in Conlin 1984.)

Iowans often remodeled their clothing or reused fabric to meet their needs. Pregnancy was seen as a “temporary illness” and it was often considered improper for a woman to be seen during this condition of “delicate health.” The 1860s maternity dress in Sketch 2 was called a “wrapper” and was created by adding contrasting taffeta to the front of the garment to accommodate the pregnant woman’s changing figure.

In addition to sewing all their own clothing, many pioneering and inventive Iowans dyed the fabric as well, using natural dyes from leaves and bark. The amazing skill and patience of the seamstress is seen in the attention to detail of the collar of the brown cotton dress from the 1860s. The brown dress in Sketch 3 is believed to have been dyed with hickory bark.

Many of the pioneers came westward to Iowa seeking religious freedom. Several religious groups, such as the Amish, moved into the state and continue to thrive today. Religion helped create a sense of community in the isolation of the prairie and was a way of maintaining values and identification with the past life left behind.

A Church of the Brethren minister’s wife wore the dress in Sketch 4. The garment is surprisingly small. Pioneers, as well as the general population in the 1800s, were much smaller in stature than Iowans are



Sketch 1. Child’s Dress. Date: 1841. Donor: Mr. William Minert. Description: Purple and white printed cotton gingham check with small star in the center of the purple square. Square neckline has drawstrings across front and back. Inside of waistband is backed with a plain, white muslin.



Sketch 2. Wrapper/Maternity Dress. Date: 1857-1865. Donor: Judith Erickson. Description: Brown, black, blue, tan, and rose plaid taffeta. Wrapper was remade into a maternity garment. Contrasting plaid taffeta was set into the front. Gathered sleeves were trimmed with wide bell-shaped cuffs of plaid to match front inserts.



Sketch 3. “Hickory Bark” Dress. Date: 1860s. Donor: Jeannette Earles. Description: Plain weave brown cotton, white collar with hook and eye front closure, tightly gathered sleeves. Completely hand sewn. Possibly dyed with hickory bark. Bodice and sleeves are lined in muslin.



Sketch 4. Dress and Capelet. Date: c. 1869-76. Donor: Mrs. Henry A. Gilman. Description: Made of black sheer cotton adhered dotted Swiss. Straight sleeves gathered at the top. Dress front closes from neck to waist with 10 hook and eyes. Capelet fastens with 1 hook and eye. Selvage edge of fabric on capelet reads “Normandy Fabric.”



Sketch 5. Men’s Shawl. Date: c. 1850. Donor: Lillian M. Keeper. Womby G. Schwarz, grandfather of donor, whose daughters split the shawl, each taking half. Description: The shawl is wool with warp stripes of red, white, black, yellow blue, and grey-green. Handwoven in Germany. The piece in the ISU Collection measures 21 x 64 inches with three inch self-fringe on three sides.

today due to health and nutrition.

In the 1800s men wore shawls—even Abraham Lincoln had one. The 1850 hand-woven red-striped shawl in Sketch 5 was made in Germany. When central heating was only a fireplace, wool undergarments, layers of clothing and shawls were functional.

An active 4-year-old boy would have worn the tan taffeta and burgundy velvet dress from the 1890s shown in Sketch 6. It was considered quite proper for a young boy to wear a dress, ruffles, and have his hair in long ringlets. Dresses for younger boys also were functional because children in dresses were easier to diaper. In the days of large families before disposable diapers were available, this surely was a blessing.

Changing focus of women's fashion

Women's clothing at the end of the 19th Century began a series of changes that moved the focus to emphasize various parts of a woman's anatomy. Skirts in the 1870s and 1880s were usually worn with a bustle underneath to emphasize the hips and provide a very fashionable protruding or puffy effect in the back. Four spring coils and horsehair stuffing are used in the bustle in Sketch 7.

A hoop skirt was used underneath many 1860s and 1870s gowns. The hoop skirt shown in Sketch 8 is smaller than most.

By the 1890s the focus had changed to the arms. The 1896 wedding dress in Sketch 9 had large leg-of-mutton sleeves with a tight bodice, tiny waist and a full skirt with stiff petticoats underneath. A corset would have been worn to confine the waist.

During the late 19th Century women's feet also were confined with "high button" shoes. (Sketch 10) Imagine the time spent buttoning these 14-button black leather shoes.

Sketch9. Wedding Bodice and Skirt. Date: 1896. Donor: White family of Boone, IA. Description: Creamy white silk fabric with a small figured weave; fully lined with cambric. Bodice is draped, boned, shaped with front darts and back princess seams, and opens down the side. It fits over the skirt waist.



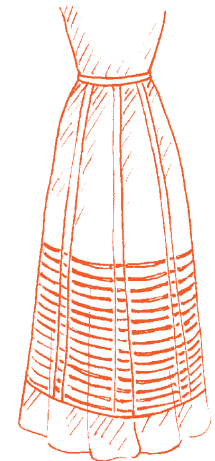
Sketch6. Boy's Dress. Date: 1888-1889. Donor: Mr. and Mrs. J.D. Morris. Description: Tan cotton twill with burgundy "boucle" yarn stripes, burgundy velvet panels on sleeves, chest, and back (bodice and skirt). Decorative metal buttons on front and back bodice, 18 each side.



Sketch7. Bustle. Date: 1890s. Donor: (University of Iowa), original donor, Mrs. Plant Hutchinson family. Description: Made of metal spring coils, cotton, and horse hair. Bustle consists of back and side "bumps" that are stuffed with horse hair. Under the back protrusion are five spring coils covered with cotton material. Ties around the waist, which measures approximately 22-24".



Sketch8. Collapsible Hoops. Date: c. late 1800s. Donor: Mrs. Plant Hutchinson family. From the University of Iowa Collection. Description: Cotton fabric. Waist is 25-26 inches; fastens with a metal buckle. Hoops consist of one continuous wire coil that forms 14 radiated spirals ranging from 15 to 18 inches in diameter.



Sketch10. High Button Shoes. Date: Unknown, probably late 19th century. Donor: Unknown. Description: Made of leather. Lined with maroon satin. Fourteen buttons up outer side. Rounded toe. Stacked military heel. Upper buttons have been moved. Shoes are worn, but structurally sound.





Sketch 1. Monobosom style dress. Date: c. 1900-1905. Donor: Mrs. Rosalie Rathbone Kraft, head of the Textiles and Clothing Department in 1964. Description: Black two-piece dress, trimmed with embroidery and accented at the neckline with tiny velvet ribbon and coarse lace trim that was made by the owner. Mrs. Kraft's mother owned the dress.

By the early 20th Century the focus of women's fashion shifted to the monobosom look or S-shaped silhouette shown in Sketch 11.

The 1910s hat featured in Sketch 12 is often referred to as a "peach basket" hat, because it resembles an overturned basket. Beads, velvet and fabric roses were often used as trim. Hats and hair-styles tend to go together; large hair meant large hats and vice versa.

Compared to the many changes in women's fashions, men's fashion tended to change more slowly and in more subtle ways.

"Nineteenth-century men's dress is distinguished more for the quality of the tailoring than for its innovation in styles" (Tarrant, 1994, p. 100).

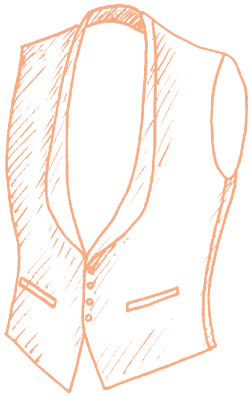
The fashionable 1880s man's silk vest with shawl collar in Sketch 13 has features in common with vests worn by both men and women in the 1900s.

Carrie Chapman Catt was a graduate of Iowa State University and is well known as a founder of the League of Women Voters. Catt purchased the blue silk for the dress in Sketch 14 in 1912, during a trip to China.

"Dress was always important to suffragists, who felt it vital to establish their respectability in the eyes of the influential." (Van Voris, 1987, p. 89).



Sketch 12. Woman's Hat. Date: 1910-1915. Donor: Mary Janet Dunlap. Description: Wire frame 5 1/2 inches high, 10 inches in diameter. Frame covered with an open weave, fairly stiff, natural-colored fabric. This is covered with open weave of raffia and twine. Chenille wires with wooden beads, pink velvet, and fabric-covered roses. "Peach basket" hat.



Sketch 13. Man's vest. Date: late 19th century. Donor: Unknown. Description: Green and black figured silk. Shawl collar. Fastens with 3 pearly stud-type buttons. Two welt pockets, pointed lower front.

Sport clothing

Iowans have always been big sports fans. Thus, it is no surprise that sportswear is included in the collection. Cotton and wool were used in swimwear between 1910 and 1920 regardless of the heat and



Sketch 14. Dress. Date: c. 1915. Donor: Carrie Lane Chapman Catt's estate. Owned by Ms. Catt, an 1880 ISU graduate and active suffragette who started the League of Women Voters. Description: Wadsworth blue silk damask and chiffon, embroidered cuffs. Made or sold by C.A. Burke, NY, from silk purchased in China on Catt's world tour of 1911-12. The silk has split leaving the dress in a fragile condition. The color of the lining fabric has fume-faded.



Sketch 15. Bathing Dress. Date: c. 1900. Donor: Mrs. William Shewchuk. Description: Black wool etamine 2-piece bathing dress. Plain weave bodice and will bloomers. Buttons down center front. Sailor collar and short puffed sleeves. Plain weave wool skirt. Man's Bathing Suit. Date: 1905-1920s. Donor: Mrs. (Leslie) (Dorothy) Moeller of Iowa City, IA donated to U of I. Description: Cotton jersey knit with hard rubber buttons. Black and white striped bathing suit.

humidity common to Iowa summers. Consider wearing these suits (Sketch 15). The man's suit is on the right and the woman's on the left. Even showing this much flesh was scandalous, so the bather might also wear stockings and shoes down to the riverside. Ideas of function, modesty and appropriateness have changed dramatically, as evident in these suits with comparison to suits of later periods.

Eric Wilson, a sprinter at the University of Iowa, represented the United States at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924. He wore this wool letter sweater, blazer and hat (Sketch 16). With the closing of the Home Economics Department at the University of Iowa, these items were donated to ISU.

Golfing became popular in the 1920s and special clothing followed. The pants in Sketch 17 are golf knickers and are often referred to as "plus fours." Four inches of length were added to the knees to create a puffy effect, hence the name "plus fours" (Payne, 1992).

Women in the 1920s adopted short hair and clothes with straight lines. This boyish look was worn by "flappers" who were very young and daring. A 1924 bride wore the taupe silk crepe dress with a blue beaded Egyptian motif shown in Sketch 18. Iowa wedding dresses have often been of more "practical" colors, rather than white. They were used afterward for special occasions or everyday wear.

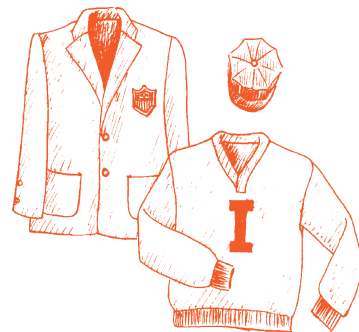
Work clothing

During the hard economic times before and during World War II, animal feed and flour companies sold their products in cotton bags printed with attractive patterns and colors to entice the home sewer. The flour sack apron in Sketch 19 is an example.

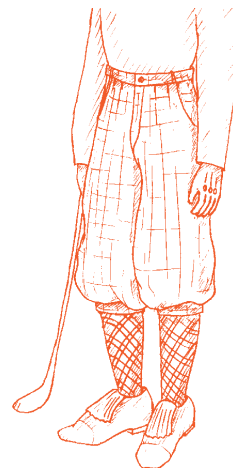
Sketch 19. Flour Sack Apron. Date: early 20th century. Donor: Mrs. Kim Williams and Mrs. Evelyn Shibles, TC Faculty. Description: Floursack print cotton. Red, white, and blue long apron. Flared skirt. Center front piece rises over chest and goes around neck. Neck and upper edges bound with royal blue. Ties in back.



Sketch 16. Olympic Uniform—Blazer, Sweater, and Cap. Date: 1924. Donor: Betty Wilson. Womby Eric Wilson, sprinter from University of Iowa, "marching into the stadium ceremony." Description: Blazer: Navy blue wool. Sweater: Pullover of gold wool knit. Black felt "I" on center front. Cap: Navy blue wool.



Sketch 17. Plus Fours/Golf Knickers. Date: c. 1920. Donor: Mrs. Clifford Powers, Oskaloosa, IA. Description: Wool twill weave, grey with black slubs and fine blue plaid. Cut full and tapered into bands below the knees. Bands adjust with nickel-plated buckles. Waistband has belt carriers. Set-in pockets on sides and front, watch pocket at right front.



Sketch 18. Wedding Dress. Date: February 27, 1924. Donor: Mrs. Mary Margaret Moffatt Freeburne. Description: Owned by donor's mother. Taupe silk crepe with grey and cobalt blue glass beads. Straight silhouette. Bodice has wide round neckline with short, kimono sleeves and is seamed to the slightly gathered skirt. A rectangular panel drapes from each side. Center of bodice and skirt are heavily beaded.

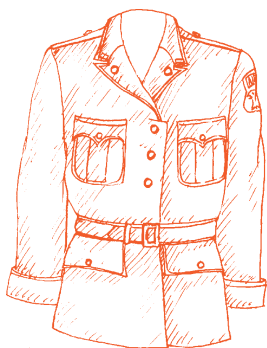


Sketch 20. Man's Overalls. Date: c. 1958. Donor: from ISU Textiles and Clothing research (Olson thesis). Description: Blue cotton denim man's jean overalls. Penney's "Pay-Day" brand.





“Women’s dresses required three to four large flour bags; children’s clothes could easily be cut from one-and-a-half or two bags” (Connolly, 1992).



Sketch 21. Army Officer's Jacket. Date: WWII, early 1940s. Donor: Alfred Richard Fratzke, Sr. Description: Dark green (olive drab) wool twill of officer's jacket. Modified from an enlisted man's jacket due to shortages. "U.S." pin on both collar corners and a pin on each lapel. Bright gold buttons of "E Pluribus Unum" insignia.

Overalls (Sketch 20) were and are often considered the uniform of farmers. They originated during the early 1800s and are still in use today. The term “overall” has been used to describe various garments of denim or heavy cotton that are used by working people.

The standardization of men's uniform sizes by the military during the Civil War was the forerunner of the standard sizes of civilian ready-to-wear and the industrialization of apparel production. Military professionals can identify each other at a glance because their uniforms show their branch of service, rank and honors achieved by the various braids, badges and brass. The Army officer's jacket from World War II shown in Sketch 21 was worn with khaki pants, called “pinks,” but they are not part of ISU's collection.

Nylon was developed in 1938, and with supplies of silk interrupted by World War II, it was an innovation that inspired new fashion afterward. The “waffle” or “bubble” see-through nylon dress in Sketch 22 from the 1950s was lightweight, wrinkle-free and inexpensive, but soon lost popularity because it was as hot as wearing a plastic bag.



Sketch 22. Turquoise Puckered Nylon Dress/“Bubble Dress.” Date: c. 1950. Donor: Mrs. Gordon (Muriel) Bivens (wife of former Family Environment Dept. Chair). Description: Knee-length dress has shawl collar, nine white plastic buttons down front center. Sleeves slightly capped; six front darts and four back darts with side seam zipper. Popular for traveling in the 1950s. Known for heat retention and stickiness due to nylon content and close weave.

Casual clothes

Understated simplicity marked high fashion for women in the 1960s. The blue poodle cloth suit in Sketch 23 is an example. The suit was donated to the ISU Collection by Mary Barton, more widely known for her quilt collection.

The 1970s brought the polyester double-knit leisure suit (Sketch 24). The wild and crazy bright colors and knit patterns of double-knits were a real change for



Sketch 23. Two-piece Woman's Suit. Date: c. Early 1960s. Donor: Mary Barton. Description: Baby blue wool fabric has loop yarn; known as “poodle cloth.” Suit lined with acetate tafeta. Double-breasted boxy jacket with shoulder pads, three-quarter length sleeves, princess seams. Jacket length fits to about 3 inches below waist. Straight knee-length skirt has set-on waistband.



Sketch 24. Man's Leisure Suit. Date: c. 1975. Donor: Cheryl and Michael Popelka (owner). Description: Beige polyester woven man's leisure suit. Jacket cut straight; buttons down center front with four brown and white (mock wood) plastic buttons. Wide convertible collar; stitched down epaulettes. Two-piece sleeves have button cuffs. Patch pockets on chest; welt pockets with flaps at hips.



Sketch 25. T-shirt. Date: 1993. Description: White jersey cotton knit. Crew neck; short sleeves. By “Fruit of the Loom.” Screen printing reads: “Summer Floods of '93, Iowa, A Place to Row.” Printed back reads: “Presented by Scoop and Phil Entertainment: 1993 Sandbagger Tour”



men. But the casual, washable and easy care polyester outfits were also worn by women and children. With about 50 percent of women in the work force outside the home, easy care had strong appeal.

By the 1980s casual clothes including sweatshirts, t-shirts and jeans were popular among all family members. In the mid-1990s t-shirts were used as billboards to proclaim, complain or explain status and opinions. The example (Sketch 25) from the 1993 Iowa Floods demonstrates the humor and positive attitudes among Iowans who have long faced difficult challenges in a spirit of cooperation and good will.

As we continue to create our own histories in the 1990s, our production of clothing in the apparel industry in Iowa and our use of clothing and fashion will continue to be interesting and constantly changing. The use of clothing to express individuality, communicate our roles in families, and protect us against environmental conditions will continue to be an important expression of our material culture.

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Bertha and Edward Waldee Center for the Study of Costume

Textiles and Clothing Department Iowa State University

The Iowa State University Textiles and Clothing Department houses the Bertha and Edward Waldee Center for the Study of Costume. The department has been given a deferred estate gift to establish the center. A companion endowed fund will support activities related to the costume and textiles collection. The Waldee's donation helps to promote and encourage the study, research, and appreciation of historic costume and textiles. It is a valuable contribution for textiles and clothing scholars, students, and interested Iowans. However, additional resources also will be required to renovate space in LeBaron Hall and maintain the center.

The Costume and Textile Collection in the Textiles and Clothing Department at Iowa State University is

preserved for educational purposes. The clothing in the Collection is displayed only for use during historic costume or textile classes or by special arrangement with the curator.

The Historic Costume Collection of the University of Iowa was given to Iowa State University when the Home Economics Department at the University of Iowa was dissolved by the State Board of Regents. A few of those items are shown in this publication (the Olympic uniform; the man's shawl and bathing suit; the hoop, bustle, and high-button shoes).

Preservation and conservation of clothing in the Textiles and Clothing Department's Costume and Textile Collection is of primary concern to the curator and the department.



Acquisitions Plan and Policies

Costume and Textile Collection Department of Textiles and Clothing Iowa State University

The Costume and Textile Collection supports teaching and research for the benefit of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty members.

1. The Department accepts only those donations that help to fulfill those purposes. Once accepted, donated items become the property of the Collection. Due to crowded storage conditions, we are limited in the donations we can accept.
2. The type of donation accepted varies over time, with emphasis given to creating balance in the holdings. Preference is given to clothing of the Midwest, but may include textiles and clothing from historic or contemporary ethnic groups or geographic regions not represented in the collection. Products which represent historically important technological innovations in textiles also may be given priority.
3. Donations must be in good condition. This means that, as appropriate to their age, they must be clean and not excessively worn-out or damaged. They should be complete, not lacking any parts. The department cannot accept articles that endanger other items in the collection, such as fur, celluloid, natural rubber, and foam-bonded textiles. The collection's staff need documentation of when, where, and by whom items were used.
4. The Textiles and Clothing Department does not give or endorse appraisals. If prospective donors wish to have objects appraised, they must complete that process before transmitting the articles to the Textiles and Clothing Department. **ACCEPTED ITEMS ARE NEVER RETURNED TO DONORS.**
5. Textiles and Clothing declines articles offered under

restriction of present or future use. The department needs to be free to remove an item from the collection if it becomes desirable to do so. Staff will not discard items indiscriminately or use them carelessly, but must be free to employ the collection to realize its teaching and research potential. In rare instances, an item may be consumed or altered in meeting our educational goals. Staff cannot promise to display items, or to make them available for examination without prior arrangement.

Steps in Processing a Donation

1. Potential donor or surrogate contacts the Curator, who sends that person a copy of the Acquisitions Plan and Policies and discusses the feasibility of the donation. The Curator may be contacted at 1052 LeBaron Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-1120; (515) 294-4233. The Department cannot be responsible for items left or sent without notice.
2. The Collection Committee reviews offered objects at its regular meeting. This committee consists of the Curator, the Collections Manager, one or more faculty members representing cultural, historic, and natural science aspects of the curriculum, and the graduate student who assists with the collection.
Note: Donations made during the summer will be reviewed in September, near the beginning of the academic year.
3. The objects are either accepted or returned to the donor. The Collections Manager sends a letter of appreciation and Deed of Gift for any objects accepted. Donors are notified of the decision within four weeks of receipt of potential donation, except as noted in 2, above.

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