

# ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ *Interwoven: Women's Fashion and Empowerment* ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



*Welcome to Interwoven* an online exhibit of the Bangor Historical Society(BHS) based on its Quipus Collection. The collection was donated in 1999 by the Quipus Society, a Bangor-area group that has participated in Bangor events for years with their period fashions. Spanning over 100 years, the Quipus Collection covers a vast array of fashion ranging from evening gowns to petticoats and hoopskirts to flapper dresses. The collection contains more than 1000 articles of clothing spanning from the 1860's to the 1970's. Complemented by other articles of clothing in the collection and images from other museums and sources representative of the periods covered before 1860, the exhibit examines the relationship between women's fashion and freedom. Through the lens of fashion, we highlight not only the fight for suffrage but other legal, property, and equality rights issues of American women.

It had been the hope of BHS to hold this exhibit at a location in downtown Bangor around the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women's Right to Vote on August 26, 2020. However, because of COVID-19 this is not possible at this time. It is our intent to hold the exhibit when it is safe to do so.

We thank Bangor Savings Bank for sponsoring the exhibit and helping us celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Women's Right to Vote. We look forward to the day when we can cut the ribbon to the exhibit and share this part of our collection with you in person so you can see these amazing garments and their detail up close and walk through the history of women's empowerment.



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## *An Overview and Guide to the Online Exhibit*



This online exhibit has been created to give you a glimpse into the exhibit that had been planned for 2020. The slides that follow outline a few of the mileposts and benchmarks of the legal, financial, political, social and/or economic status of women for the first 200 years of America alongside the fashions of the day.

While this online exhibit is more succinct than an in-person exhibit would be, we hope your interest is piqued and that it provides an overview of the American woman's struggle for equality especially suffrage.

Except for the first few slides which set the stage and indicate the status of women at the beginning of the republic, each slide focuses on a decade of time. The information on the left of the slide highlights economic, political, financial status of women and/or information about notable people or events of the time period. Below the stars are benchmark events during the decade. In the center is an image of a fashion plate or a photograph of a garment(s). On the right side of each slide is information about the fashion during the time period. Smaller images on this side are illustrative of elements noted in the fashion information.

We hope you enjoy this peek into history and into the collection of the Bangor Historical Society. Thank you for your interest and support.

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Abigail Adams as depicted during the American Revolutionary era. (Public Domain)

**A letter from Abigail Adams to her husband John on March 31, 1776, while he was attending the First Continental Congress, may have been the first “petition” for women’s rights in America**

*I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.*

**Her words were not heeded and it would be more than 140 years before women earned the right to vote in America.**

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## 1776-1799

At the beginning of the republic, married women had no property, legal, custody, voting rights, or separate economy (the right over any earnings made). They were bound by coverture an English Common Law doctrine brought to the colonies from England. The marriage and property doctrine of coverture prescribed that when a woman married her legal rights and obligations were incorporated into those of her husband and she had no legal identity. The only saving graces were her husband needed to support her appropriate to his status and he could not sell any real property that she brought into the marriage without her permission. The right of dower for married women was another very important doctrine followed as it provided support during widowhood. It consisted of a life estate of one third or one half of the husband's real property at the time of his death.

Single women, including widows, could enter into contracts, sue, write wills, control their earnings, and work at anything that did not require a license or college degree



**1787** – U.S. Constitution was ratified without any voting rights for women. Coverture still applied.

**1797** – Lucy Terry Prince of Vermont, born in Africa, enslaved in US, and freed when purchased by her husband presented oral arguments on her property dispute before the Supreme Court. Probably being the first African-American to argue before the Supreme Court.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)

## Fashion Notes

During this time period women wore several layers of clothing - a chemise, stays, 2 to 6 petticoats at least one of which was usually horsehair, and finally the outer dress of heavy fabric which was often split in the front to reveal a petticoat. The garments altogether could weigh 40 pounds or more.

Bodices were low cut. The use of gauze scarves became popular for some modesty. Panniers and hoops were going out of fashion except for formal occasions instead hip and back pads were used to hold out the skirts. So at least women could walk straight through a door instead of sideways.



Wikipedia (Public Domain)

These clothes were heavy, uncomfortable, and limiting. Women were essentially bound up in heavy fabrics and restrictive undergarments that made it difficult to move, sit, or in some cases even breathe.

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## 1800-1809

Following the Revolutionary War and the ratification of the Constitution not much changed legally, politically, or socially for women. In fact in some states where they had previously been allowed to vote that right was taken away. Education was still primarily for white males with the exception that white girls were often taught to read, though not always to write, so they could read the Bible.

As the country reached westward with the Louisiana Purchase, women on the western frontier were expected to raise the children, supervise the household, care for the sick, and look after the gardens. Women would often organize neighborhood social activities such as quilting bees or church events. This allowed them to exchange information and not be so isolated. Their husbands made the financial decisions and participated in public involvement such as voting.



**1804** – Joseph Marie Jacquard invents the jacquard loom, which used punch cards to create complex designs.

**1807** – New Jersey took away the right to vote from women, black men and aliens

**1808** – John Heathcoat patents a bobbin-net machine, allowing net to be manufactured much more affordably.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)  
Gift of Woodman Thompson Plate 82

## Fashion Notes

With the new century came new fashion. Neoclassicism designs were emerging in art, architecture and fashion.

High waisted silhouettes with lightweight fabrics were taking over from the heavy silks, brocades, and wide panniers were gone. Natural body shapes were revealed harkening back to ancient Greek and Roman statues.

Necklines were low and revealing and could be round, square or v-shaped. If there was any fullness to the dress, it was in the back. The number of petticoats was down to one or none making for much lighter garments. Short stays or corsets were worn to support the bust. All of this added together to make for much freer and more comfortable movement.



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## 1810-1819

The Female Seminary movement began in about 1815 in order to provide higher education to women. The schools trained women to become teachers, the only socially accepted occupation for women. However, only single women could become teachers. It was acceptable because women were the teachers of America's future leaders - the white males. This dedication to training America's boys became known as Republican Motherhood. This moral responsibility given to the women seems to have been meant to replace any political involvement with the community.



**1810** – Edward Cartwright's power loom was commonly used in both Britain and the United States.

**1812-1814** – The War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain.

**1813** – Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is published.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public domain)  
Gift of Woodman Thompson Plate 44

## Fashion Notes

High waists and Neoclassical silhouettes were still in vogue during this time period but many more trims were added to the sleeves and skirts.

The gauzy fabrics used required adapting the underpinnings. Shorter corsets continued to be used to support the bust and give the desired rounded shape. No hoops were worn and lighter and fewer petticoats, if any, were needed, making movement freer. Pantaloones were also worn to keep legs warm and to create some modesty under the almost see through fabrics.



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(Public domain)

Pantaloons were often left open to make it easier when nature called.



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## 1820-1829

The country was slowly shifting away from an agrarian society and more and more men and women were working outside the home in the new industries. Single women would often work in the mills or domestic servitude before they were married.

Married women still were expected to raise children to become productive citizens for the new republic. In order to better teach their children, women were slowly being allowed more education and female seminaries became more prevalent. But voting rights were still out of reach for all woman along with the legal and property rights that single women enjoyed.



**1820** - Maine was admitted as a free state under the Missouri Compromise.

**1821** - Maine women could own and manage property during incapacity of their spouse.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public domain)

## Fashion Notes

The Regency dress lost favor at this time and the Romantic period swept in with large leg-o-mutton sleeves, ever widening skirts and lots of decoration on the sleeves and the skirts. Waistlines were dropping and necklines varied from day to night. By the end of the decade the waist was tightly cinched and the skirts were bell-shaped. Machine made fabrics were becoming more available. Fabrics were lighter and brighter. Longer corsets made a comeback and sitting and moving became as uncomfortable and hampering as ever.



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Gift Woodman Thompson  
Plate 082  
(Public domain)



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## 1830-1839

More and more women were becoming involved with social reform including temperance and abolition societies. Bold women such as Angelina and Sarah Grimke, women from South Carolina, traveled north and started giving speeches in public against slavery. They were often treated abusively and ridiculed. In 1838 the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women drew 3,000 white and black women to Pennsylvania. A mob formed outside and drowned out the speakers. Although the women stood together, the next day the mob came back and burned down the hall.

This decade might well be called “the education for women decade”. The Female Seminary Movement was maturing with the establishment of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1837 and Georgia Female Seminary (now Wesleyan College) opened in 1839 along with others. In 1837 Oberlin College becomes the first coeducational college in the United States. Early graduates include Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown.



**1831** – Maria W. Miller Stewart, an African-American, is the first woman to become a professional orator. Speaking on abolition, and the education of women, she foreshadows Sojourner Truth by asking “What if I am a Woman? She had to give up lecturing shortly after beginning because of the disapproval by men of women speaking in public.

**1837** – Queen Victoria ascends to the throne.

**1839** - Mississippi, grants married women the right to hold property in their name, with permission from their husband.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)  
Gift of Woodman Thompson Plate 35

## Fashion Notes

Fashion in the 1830s looked to Romanticism with a look back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dresses featured small corseted waists that fell just above the natural waistline giving everyone the look of being short waisted. Large and puffed sleeves were a significant feature at this time. Cone shaped skirts and low necklines on evening gowns were also trends of the decade.

With Victoria's ascension to the throne, fashion became more conservative. Sleeve fullness moved to the forearm.

Undergarments once again changed to accommodate the new styles. Starched petticoats of linen or cotton held the skirts out to help make the waist look smaller. Bustles were tied around the waist to support the skirts. These bustles were the precursors of the wire ones to come a few decades later



Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Public Domain)



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)

There were sleeve supports tied to the upper arms. These supports could be filled with feathers or reinforced with buckram or wire. All were restricting to arm movements.

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## 1840-1849

In July 1848, 300 women and men gathered in Seneca Falls, NY for the first women's rights convention. 100 of the attendees (68 women and 32 men including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Frederick Douglass) signed the Declaration of Sentiments. The Declaration, written primarily by Stanton, was based on the Declaration of Independence and outlined the rights that women should have based on their citizenship.

At the beginning of the decade 10% of women worked outside the home as the Industrial Revolution came to America. By the end of the decade 15% of women worked outside the home. While women were becoming more involved publicly, they still did not enjoy the benefits of citizenship.



**1840** – Delegates Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were denied seating at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London because they were women and had to sit in the gallery.

**1844** – Maine women were granted separate economy.

**1846** – Elias Howe patents the sewing machine.

**1848** – In New York the Married Woman's Property Act passed, It was used as a model for other states. By 1900 all other states passed a similar act.

**1849** – Elizabeth Blackwell is the first woman to receive a medical degree.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)

## Fashion Notes

Some have described this period as Gothic Revival. The dress to the left is a good example of the dyed and patterned fabrics that were used. Fitted bodices and wide skirts came back along with their underpinnings. Fortunately the heavy multiple petticoats were gone replaced by lighter graduated hoops made of cane, baleen, or metal. While that sounds and was restrictive and uncomfortable, it was also an improvement at the time. The seams were also boned further restricting movement. The corsets were long and had a channel for a wooden, whalebone, metal rod or heavy cord that went from the bosom to the belly so women could not bend.



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(Public Domain)

English costume historian, C.W. Cunnington described the fashion of the time as this: *Female moral virtue was displayed through fashions that while covering more skin than in the past few decades, also took on a rigid, almost Puritanical restraint. Women's clothes became so constricting that her passivity in society was clear.*

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## 1850-1859

Susan B. Anthony became involved in the women's movement after meeting Elizabeth Cady Stanton in 1851. She replicated her experience working in the temperance movement for her suffrage work. Anthony and Stanton founded the American Equal Rights Association. They worked together for 50 years seeking equality for women. During this decade there were seven national conventions held on women's rights around the country.

In 1857, women in Maine became among the first to petition their state legislators for the right to vote. The petition was signed by women and men from Bangor but it did not pass. Anne Greeley of Ellsworth hosted Susan B. Anthony, who spoke in Maine several times.

During this time, women were admitted to Midwestern Universities but only if there was a shortage of male students.



**1851** – Sojourner Truth, former slave and abolitionist, delivers her “And Ain’t I A Woman” speech in Akron, Ohio

**1852** – Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was published. She became a popular anti-slavery speaker.

**1857** – U.S. Supreme Court issues the Dred Scott Decision.



Metropolitan Museum of Art (Public Domain)  
Gift of Woodman Thompson Plate 068

## Fashion Notes

The Victorian Era is in full swing now with small waists, dome shaped skirts, and drooping shoulders. Multiple petticoats, up to seven hoops, were worn until the cage crinoline appeared giving relief from the heaviness of many petticoats.

Bodices shortened and sleeves loosened until by the end of the decade wide loose sleeves with removable white under-sleeves called engageantes were popular. White collars for day dresses were also worn. Removable collars and undersleeves could be laundered easily. Trims such as fringe, tassels, ribbons, braids, and cords were also very much in vogue on both the bodice and skirt. The fashion sensation in 1850s were bloomers. In 1851 Amelia Bloomer wore Turkish trousers under a shortened skirt for comfort. Women who adopted the costume were ridiculed by many and the bloomers never became mainstream.



Wikipedia  
(Public Domain)



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## 1860-1869

Women concentrated on abolition rather than gaining their own rights during the years of the Civil War. They were very disappointed when in 1868 the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed affirming the rights of freed men and women as citizens and went on to declare that all male citizens over 21 could vote. Up until then only states used the word "male" in reference to voting rights. This new Federal law declaring only men could vote was a blow to the women's rights movement.

In 1869 the suffrage movement became divided into two groups, one the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) established by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. The NWSA accused the abolitionist and Republican supporters of emphasizing black civil rights at the expense of women's rights. The NWSA believed in securing voting rights for women was through an amendment to the US Constitution. The other group, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), was founded by Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. The AWSA disliked the aggressive tactics of the NWSA and tied itself closely to the Republican Party and focused on getting the vote for women state by state.



**1861-1865** – American Civil War. Dorothea Dix served as the Superintendent of Female Nurses - there were 3000+ nurses.

**1866** – Suffragists present Congress with 10,000 signatures for an amendment prohibiting disenfranchisement based on sex.

**1868** - The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified.

**1868** - Louisa May Alcott publishes *Little Women*

**1869** - The territory of Wyoming is the first to grant unrestricted suffrage to women.



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Quipus Collection

## Fashion Notes

During this time hoop skirts reached 12-15 feet in circumference. Throughout the decade the shape changed to be flatter in the front into more of a pyramid shape. Because the skirts were so wide the corsets didn't need to be cinched so tight to create the appearance of a small waist. Waistlines moved up and hemlines often revealed the bottom of the petticoats which now were often pleated or ruffled. The cage crinoline became so affordable, because they were now ready-to-wear with the use of the sewing machine, that all women could afford to wear them.

Daytime bodices had high necklines with tight sleeves. Evening necklines dropped to off-the-shoulder.

Charles Frederick Worth, the father of haute couture, began his rise to prominence and became a dominant fashion force for the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Metropolitan Museum of Art  
(Public Domain)



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## 1870-1879

After the Civil War many states granted women separate economy which was the right to have control over their earnings. However, little progress was made in the struggle for voting rights. The newer western territories/states seemed to be the only areas willing to consider women's suffrage.

After the disappointment of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments not including women, the suffragists were determined to redouble their efforts.



**1870** – The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment is ratified confirming that voting rights could not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

**1871** – Victoria Woodhull argues for the women's right to vote under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment before the House Judiciary Committee.

**1872** – Victoria Woodhull is the first woman to run for President.

**1872** – Susan B. Anthony arrested for trying to vote for Ulysses Grant in the presidential election.

**1873** – Comstock Act passed making sending contraception information through the mail illegal.

**1875** – Minor v Happersett, 88 U.S. 162 declares that despite the privileges and immunities clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, a state can prohibit a woman from voting holding that women constitute a "special category of non-voting citizens".

**1878** – The "Anthony Amendment", the Women's Suffrage Amendment was introduced into Congress.

**1879** – Belva Lockwood became the first woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court. She had to get Congressional legislation passed to do so.



Bangor Historical Society  
Quipus Collection

## Fashion Notes

From the crinoline to the crinolette, a half hoop often made out of horsehair, the emphasis on the back of the skirt defined the first part of this decade. Skirts were essentially flat in the front with ruffles, pleats, and flounces in the back. Waistlines rose above the natural waistline and bodices often had a type of peplum called a basque.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the decade was defined by the "princess line" which was characterized by no waistline. Rather the trend was for a long bodice fit down around the hips and the bustle disappeared with cascading ruffles down the back.

Dress reform societies exclaimed the evils of corsets. They portrayed corsets as bad for women's internal organs, fertility, and generally harmful to health. Tight lacing, though not practiced by all women, had some women trying to take a 28" waist to a 16" waist. The women abolitionists and suffragists were demanding garments that were less restrictive and more comfortable.



1859 Corset  
(Public Domain)



1878 Corset  
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## 1880-1889

The women's rights movement struggled to make progress during this period. The AWSA was better funded but was only regional in its reach. The NWSA drew recruits from around the country influenced mostly by the many and widespread speeches of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Anthony and Ida Harper co-wrote, "In the indifference, the apathy of women, lies the greatest obstacle of their disenfranchisement."

Women were starting to enjoy more freedom of movement and venture into public with the advent of a newer, safer bicycle. The bicycle allowed women to travel about without a chaperone and as they pleased for the first time.

During this period, women became more active in volunteer organizations, women's clubs, professional organizations, temperance societies, and charitable organization. They were starting to become more comfortable being out in public and seeking like minded women to associate with and discuss issues that were important to them.



**1880** - Mary Gage opens a stock exchange for women who want to use their own money to speculate on railroad stocks.

**1884** - Belva Ann Lockwood runs for President and tries to revive the Equal Rights Party. She received over 4,000 votes.

**1886** - The first professional organization for women lawyers is formed at the University of Michigan.

**1887** - The first vote on women's suffrage is taken in the Senate where it is defeated 34 to 16 with 25 absent.



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Quipus Collection

## Fashion Notes

The fashion for the 1880s started out continuing the princess line from the late 1870s. No waistline and a fitted bodice using darts and seaming to create shape. The majority of the decoration was concentrated in the back with a slimmer silhouette from the front.

Also continuing was the criticism from the dress reformer societies about the restrictive nature of the dresses, the corsetry and the bustles. As women began venturing out more, they needed less restrictive garments.

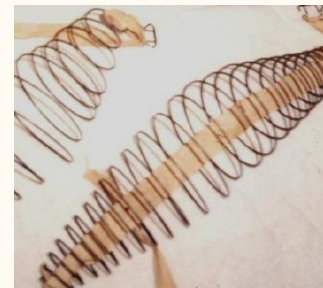
Nonetheless, the bustle returned late in the decade as hard shelf like protrusion. This bustle emphasized the back of the skirt as the pronounced decorative feature. There was also the "lobster tail" bustle that aided in the desired silhouette of slim in the front and prominent in the back. And yet another version of bustle was a coil of wire that tied around the waist. None of these were comfortable.



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## 1890-1899

This period was referred to as the Gilded Age and the Gay Nineties. More and more women were staying unmarried, working outside the home, becoming educated and working as lawyers, doctors, and professors. The term New Woman emerged to define women who took control over their lives socially, economically, and personally.

*Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world.*

~ Susan B. Anthony, *New York World*, 1896

Bicycles had become very popular and they allowed women more freedom than they had ever had before. Bicycle riding showed that women were not fragile, dependent beings but rather competent, physically able, and independent people.

In 1890 NWSA and AWSA joined forces to form the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to fight state by state for passage of women's suffrage. The new organization drew support from women activists in the Women's Trade Union, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the National Consumers League.



**1890** – The first state, Wyoming, grants women the right to vote.

**1892** – Charlotte Perkins Gilman, feminist economist, publishes *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, an important early work of American feminist literature for its illustration of the attitudes towards mental and physical health of women,

**1893** – Colorado grants women the right to vote.

**1896** – Utah and Idaho grant women the right to vote

**1898** – Women founded Washington College of Law in D.C, (now American University) for women rejected from law schools because of their gender.



Bangor Historical Society  
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## Fashion Notes

At the beginning of the decade, the silhouette continued the late 1880s style. Sleeves did develop a small vertical shoulder puff to start the decade. By the end of the decade sleeves became large leg-o-mutton or gigot sleeves. The stiff, protruding bustle completely disappeared. Skirts became bell-shaped, and were gored to fit smoothly over the hips.

Towards the end of the decade a new straight front corset became dominant. It was supposedly healthier but it forced the chest forward and the hips backward to make an "S" shaped silhouette.

The popularity of cycling and other sports required a change in women's garments. Divided skirts and skirts that were convertible with the tug of a "pulley". The Reform Dress societies suggested women wear trousers. Corsets for sports needed to be shorter, and some companies even made ventilated corsets.

The Gibson Girl who was the vision of the ideal woman – thin, tall, dressed for every occasion, and independent became popular.



Charles Dana Gibson (Public Domain)



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## 1900-1909

For more than a 100 years, men had been solely in charge of making the laws and forming social policy from their particular perspective. Women had been essentially confined to home in the role of moral authority and trainers of America's future leaders. Industrialization changed that with women entering the workforce in great numbers going from about 5.3 million (18.1%) in 1900 to 7.4 million (21.5%) in 1910.

Women became reformists and organizers for better working conditions and wages, better education, and voting rights. The temperance advocates grew more active. The Anti-Saloon League and the Women's Christian Temperance Union would hold prayer vigils outside taverns and pubs. Carry Nation rose to prominence as a temperance activist. These women faced arrest and discrimination.



**1900** – By now every state has granted married women some control over property and their earnings.

**1901** – Queen Victoria dies.

**1903** – NAWSA in New Orleans voted to accept a states' rights structure permitting southern state organizations to exclude black women from their organizations.

**1908** – The Portia Law School in Boston is created for women to attend in evenings. A day program is added in 1922. In 1969 it becomes the New England School of Law.

**1909** – NAACP formed.

1909 - -The Woman Suffrage Party is founded.



Bangor Historical Society  
Quipus Collection

## Fashion Notes

The "S" shape silhouette that became dominant at the end of the last decade continued with the new "healthy corset". Bodices were loose and blousy and skirts were bell shaped with small waists. During the day sleeves were long and necklines were high, but in the evening a low décolletage and short sleeves were in vogue. All day there were lots of lace decorations for those who could afford it and Irish crochet for those who couldn't. Rich fabrics like silk, brocade, and satin were popular as was chiffon.

Suits had started to emerge in the 1800s as more women entered the workforce in offices suits were by now a staple of the working woman. A well fitting suit said that women wanted to be taken seriously at work. If a suit was out of reach financially, women would forego the jacket and wear a good blouse and skirt.



The Victoria & Albert Museum

While there was a greater sense of freedom because of the bicycle and work outside the home, clothes were still restrictive mimicking the marginal gains in property and legal rights and little movement on voting rights except in the West.

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## 1910-1919

This decade saw many changes and an acceleration of activities regarding suffrage and temperance in particular. In 1913, Alice Paul organized about 8,000 women to march from the Capitol to the White House the day before President Wilson's inauguration. On March 17th Paul and others met with Wilson who said it wasn't time for an amendment for the women's vote. In April, Paul founded the Congressional Union for Woman's Suffrage. In 1917 Paul organized picketing at the White House gates with signs that said "Mr. President, how long must women wait for liberty?" After the US entrance into World War I spectators physically and verbally attacked these women. Paul and others were arrested and sentenced to 18 months in jail. They went on a hunger strike. In 1918 Wilson announced his support for women's suffrage.

There were more anti-suffrage sentiments and the first national anti-suffrage organization was formed, National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. Some anti-suffragists believed that giving women the vote threatened the family institution, some felt women should only be involved in children and church, others thought it would be the end of "true womanhood" and there were those who thought women could not handle the responsibility of voting.



**1911** – Triangle Shirtwaist fire killed 146 women because the fire escapes were locked.

**1916** – Jeannette Rankin of Montana becomes the first woman elected to the House of Representatives.

**1917-1918** – US in World War I.

**1918** – Spanish Flu pandemic

**1918** – Margaret Sanger wins her suit in New York to allow doctors to advise married patients about birth control for health reasons.

**1919** – League of Nations chartered.

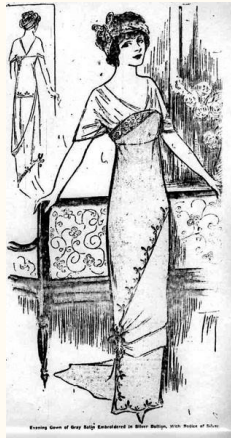


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## Fashion Notes

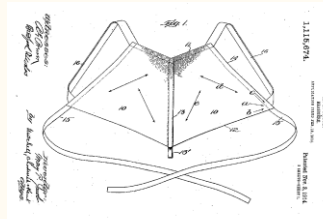
This period brought some softening of the silhouette. The "S" corset disappeared during the early part of the decade.

Paul Poiret, a French designer, who introduced loose fitting garments made from draped fabric, bright colors, and slim silhouette; and they didn't need corsets. His designs were new, inventive, and playful such as the Hobble Skirt form 1911 and the lampshade tunic. These designs set the stage for the 1920s.



Public Domain

New undergarments were needed under the lighter fabrics that were becoming popular. The modern brassiere made from two handkerchiefs and ribbon was patented in 1914 by Mary Phelps Jacob. It was more for flattening than support.



Wikipedia (Public Domain)

The war did slow changes in fashion but the lighter, slimmer fashions that evolved during the decade set the stage for the '20s. The war did help rid women of the corset since the metal was needed for the war effort. And as more women took on men's jobs while they were at war, corsets had to go.

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## 1920-1929

The Roaring Twenties started with the implementation of Prohibition, and an economic boom which ushered in an age of consumerism. Cars, radios, and refrigerators were all in demand. Jazz and the Charleston signified America's desire to have fun. But there was also deep poverty and racism especially in the south where both were endured.

In this age of speakeasies and flappers, women cast off the Victorian era. Divorces doubled and woman in the workforce grew by 25%.

The average weekly wage for men in 1927 was \$29.35 while for a woman it was \$17.34.

With the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, white women could now freely vote but Jim Crow laws suppressed the vote for black women *and* men until the 1965 Voting Rights Act.



**1920** – The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Prohibition, went into effect.

**1920** – The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment is ratified declaring “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex

**1923** – The Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution is introduced. Drafted by Alice Paul. A 1943 revision passes in 1972. It falls short of ratification by 3 states in 1982. Subsequent versions do not pass Congress.

**1924** – Suffrage is extended to Native Americans. All women can vote except those in DC and Puerto Rico.

**1929** – Stock market crash.



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## Fashion Notes

Waistlines dropped and hemlines rose at the beginning of the decade. Dresses were more comfortable, lighter, and much slimmer. But simpler did not mean completely lacking in style and decoration. Beadwork in ornate designs, sequins and embroidery all helped create glamorous dresses for evenings and dancing the night away. Later in the decade hemlines came back down and waistlines went back up.



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Popular culture says that the dance halls had “corset checks” like coat checks for those young women that were required to leave home wearing a corset.

Sportswear for women became more acceptable and popular for women. Tennis was the most popular sport for women at this time. Tennis dresses even became acceptable for lunch dates.

This drastic change in fashion meant that undergarments had to change especially with the *garçonne* silhouette. Going from the Victorian chemise, corset, corset cover, 1-6 petticoats, and drawers to a bra, slip, and tap pants or just a combination teddy. Some younger women bound their busts to fit the androgynous look. Rayon was developed in 1924 and made lingerie more affordable for everyone.

Comfort and freedom seemed synonymous.

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## 1930-1939

"The woman 'pin-money worker' who competes with the necessity worker is a menace to society, a selfish, shortsighted creature, who ought to be ashamed of herself," Frances Perkins, New York's Commissioner of Labor said. During the Depression, there were many bans and even laws against married women working. The debate over married women working was not new and had been going on since the 1880s.

Despite all of the controversy, employment for women actually rose by 24% to 13 million by 1940, mostly because the jobs they had were insulated from loss. Those jobs were teaching, domestic service, and clerical work. They were lower paying jobs.

According to T.H. Watkin's *The Great Depression: America in the 1930s*, over 25% of the National Recovery Administration's wage codes set lower wages for women



**1932** – Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas is appointed to the US Senate and in 1933 becomes the first woman elected to that office

**1932** – The National Recovery Act forbids more than one family member from holding a government job. Many women lost their jobs.

**1932** – Amelia Earhart is the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic.

**1933** – Frances Perkins becomes the first woman Cabinet member. She was Secretary of Labor.

**1934** – Florence Ellinwood Allen is appointed to sit on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

**1938** – The Fair Labor Standards Act passes a minimum wage without regard to sex.

**1939** – WWII starts in Europe.



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## Fashion Notes

As shapeless as the twenties were, the thirties brought back the feminine curves but in a new way. Hemlines went down and waistlines returned to their natural place. Shoulders were wider and while skirts were slim there was often a flair at the bottom. The slim silhouette was clinging to all the right places. One of the distinct new attributes that helped the new silhouette was the new bias cut which allowed fabric to drape gracefully over the body.

Evening wear inspiration came from Hollywood, the movies were a great diversion during the Depression.

Fashion icons like Betty Davis, Greta Garbo, and Rita Hayworth were often copied for their glamorous style.

And under it all, there was a chemise or slip, bra, and tap pants. But a new restrictor, the rubberized girdle with garters came along. Girdles or corsets and single garters were used to hold up the new rayon stockings that were much more affordable.

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## 1940-1949

As much as the government wanted married women to not work in the 1930s, they recruited all women in the 1940s. Between 1940 and 1945, 5 million women entered the workforce and in jobs that were previously held only by men. As much as World War II provided new opportunities for women, there was a challenge in providing them with childcare. It was such a big problem that Eleanor Roosevelt got involved convincing her husband that the Federal government should help with childcare in order to keep the women working. Under the Lanham Act from August 1943 to February 1946 the Federal government spent \$52 million (more than \$1 billion in today's money) on childcare.

350,000 women served in the armed forces during World War II. They served as nurses, clerks, truck drivers, airplane mechanics, and ferry pilots flying airplanes from factories to military bases.

After the war was over, many women were fired to make way for jobs for men.



**1941 – 1945** – US is in WWII .

**1945** – The United Nations charter is signed reaffirming equal rights to men and women...

**1946** – US v Ballard, the US Supreme Court eliminates gender bias on federal juries.

**1947** – Fay v New York, US Supreme Court says women are equally qualified to serve on juries but are granted an exemption to serve or not as the woman desires..

**1949** – Margaret Chase Smith becomes the first woman elected to the US Senate without first being appointed.



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## Fashion Notes

With another World War occupying the world, fashion adapted to the make-do-and-mend era, rationing, and more utilitarian styles during the war. War fashions were simple and used less fabric due to rationing.

Shoulder padding, slim waists and skirts below the knee were day wear's hallmarks. Utility suits became a staple of 1940s wardrobe. Peplums and jacket details were popular. Shorter skirts worked best for the jitterbug and trousers became popular for work and leisure and they never really went away.



Wikimedia

Evening wear was still influenced by Hollywood but during the war short dresses and suits were usually worn for all but the most formal occasions or Hollywood party.

After the war, Christian Dior ushered in the New Look. Rationing stayed around in Europe, but by 1947 America was ready for softer shoulders, fuller skirts, and pleats. Some women feared the new feminine look would set back their progress.

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## 1950-1959

After the strife and devastation of the Depression and World War II, peace and family became central to America's life. In many ways there was a reversion to the attitude that a "woman's place is in the home". In the 1950s 65% of all women were married. In 2011 47% of women were married. In 1920, 47% of college students were women; by 1958 that figure had dropped to 38%. There was a lot of pressure for women to stay home and take care of the family.

Media including television and magazines both promoted domestic bliss as the ideal and working outside of the home was not for married women. Television shows such as *Leave it to Beaver*, *Donna Reed*, *Father Knows Best*, and *I Love Lucy* were all showing America what life should be and particularly what women should strive for in their lives.

This was the core of the Baby Boom. In 1950 there were 3.5 million births compared to 2.1 million in 1935. Families were moving to the suburbs further removing women from the job market and emphasizing the stay at home philosophy.

Working women were mostly confined to private home workers, teaching, nursing, secretarial, sales clerks and bank tellers.



**1953** – Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

**1953** – Clare Luce Booth is the first woman to be a US Ambassador to a major posting, Italy.

**1955** – Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery, Alabama when she refuses to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man.

**1959** – Debut of the Barbie doll.



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## Fashion Notes

This decade started out with nipped in waists, full skirts and hemlines less than a foot off the ground. As the decade went on the silhouette became slimmer with sheaths becoming trendy. The boxy skirt suit was introduced by Chanel, Balenciaga, and Dior.

Pedal pushers, poodle skirts, twin sets, and pencil skirts are all icons of the 50s. The lasting new fashion that evolved during this time was the cocktail dress, knee length like daywear but decorated and styled like evening wear. Strapless dresses were popular and the full skirts balanced out the more simple bodice. Evening wear was embellished and feminine.



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Underneath it all was a bra, girdle or merry widow, and panties and/or a slip or petticoat and yes, even the corset had a comeback.

In 1959 pantyhose was introduced eliminating the need for one more undergarment. But nylons and garter belts were more popular during this period. It is hard to say which were more restrictive.

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## 1960-1969

One of the biggest changes for women in the 1960s was the availability of contraception, freeing women to make choices. By the end of the decade more than 80% of married women were using contraception.

More women entered the workforce which led to more dissatisfaction with pay disparity. Women earned 63% of what men earned for equal work. As well, job opportunities for women were still an issue. There was still the perception left over from the 1930s that women were working for “extra” money not to support the family.



**1960** – Oral contraceptives approved by FDA

**1961** – Hoyt v Florida, the US Supreme Court upholds rules that make it unlikely for women to be chosen as jurors.

**1963** - Equal Pay Act passes requiring equal pay for equal work regardless of sex, race, color, religion, or national origin.

**1963** – Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*, a keystone to the modern women's rights movement

**1964** – Title VII of the Civil Rights Act passes guaranteeing equal opportunity in employment.

**1965** – Griswold v Connecticut, the US Supreme Court overturns one of the last state laws prohibiting the prescription and use of contraceptives for married couples.

**1966** – The National Organization of Women is founded which publishes a charter outlining women's grievances and demanding change.

**1967** – Loving v Virginia, the US Supreme Court strikes down anti-miscegenation laws, guaranteeing the right to form traditional marriages regardless of race.

**1967** - Affirmative Action is expanded to include women

**1969** – Bowe v Colgate-Palmolive, a court ruled physical labor cannot be limited to men.

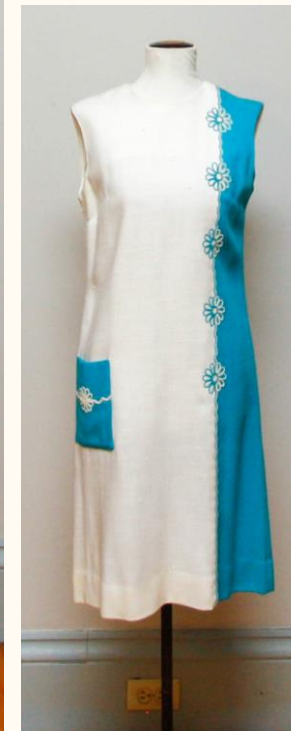


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## Fashion Notes

From the boxy skirt suits like Jacqueline Kennedy wore to the hippie dresses of Woodstock, and the mini-dresses of Twiggy's Swinging London style, 60s fashion spanned a wide range. Sheaths and A-line dresses without waists were more comfortable and freeing than the nipped in

waists of the 50s. New materials like acrylics and polyester were used as designers took inspiration from pop art.



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Mini-skirts and dresses that ended at mid-thigh were very popular especially with younger women. At the other end of the spectrum by the end of the decade was that mid-calf “hippie” skirts and dresses that were very loose, and flowing. Picture Janis Joplin at a Woodstock type concerts in these totally unrestricted clothes with underwear optional.

In the middle of these two extremes were the boxy skirt suits and sheaths typified by Jackie Kennedy and Audrey Hepburn.

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## 1970-1979

In 1970 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment granting women the right to vote the Women's Strike for Equality took place with 50,000 women marching in New York City. If you read through all of the benchmarks below, it is easy to see why.

In 1970 women were far from equal in the male dominated worlds of business, politics, education, and almost any other area outside the home. For all the gains previously made, now women faced discrimination, sexual harassment, and pay inequity. Legislation passed in 1970 addressed many issues but translating those laws into action was another challenge.



**1971** – Philips v Martin Marietta Corporation. US Supreme outlaws private employers from refusing to hire women with pre-school children.

**1971** – Reed v Reed. US holds unconstitutional preference of men as administrators of wills. The Court declares women as “persons” using the “reasonableness” test rather than making sex a “suspect classification” analogous to race, under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**1972** – Title IX of the Education Amendments prohibits gender discrimination in all aspects of education programs receiving federal support.

**1972** – Eisenstadt v Baird. US Supreme Court rules that the right to privacy includes an unmarried person's right to use contraception.

**1973** – Pittsburgh Press v Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations. US Supreme Court bans sex segregated help wanted ads.

**1973** – Roe v Wade. US Supreme Court declares protection of a woman's right to terminate an early pregnancy.

**1974** – Equal Credit Opportunity Act passes making it illegal to refuse credit based on gender.

**1975** – Taylor v Louisiana denies states the right to exclude women from juries.

**1978** – Pregnancy Discrimination Act bans employment discrimination against pregnant women.



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## Fashion Notes

From prairie dresses and disco dresses to hippie styles and mini-dresses, the 1970s started out with the trends from the 60s. The handcrafted features, like quilting and crocheting, shifted to ready-to-wear garments.

Polyester fabric became the most prevalent fabric. That is not to say that cotton and silk disappeared, but polyester became an affordable alternative especially for daywear.

As women gained more freedom and opportunity to work outside the home, they wanted more comfortable and “freeing” clothes for work and play. The wrap dress, pant suits, hot pants, halter tops, and jumpsuits filled the need. And bra burning expressed how women felt about being restricted in any way in a very public way.

By the end of the decade hot pants and skirts were both longer and athletic wear was becoming more popular – thank you Jane Fonda. Clothes were definitely more comfortable and women were more free but equality was still elusive.

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## *Beyond the 70s*

The Quipus Collection of garments may end in 1970 but it's not the end of the story. Women have continued to fight since the 1970s and continue today to point out biases and prejudices against women as they strive for equality. From the power suits and "Dress for Success" of the 80s to the casual nature of today's fashion there is a statement there.

Women may have the right to vote and more legal, property, reproductive, custody, and divorce rights along with separate economy today but the vestiges of coverture are still with us as it only eroded away and was never formally and legally abandoned. If you are a married woman, think any marital joint contract or application – who is usually listed first no matter the financial reality of who the primary wage earner is in the family? And pay equity is still a challenge – currently women on average earn 80% of what her male counterpart earns.

Today's fashions are no less an expression of a woman's place in society than they were in 1800 or 1900, it is just different and evolving as it has throughout history. 100 years from now what will the historians say about the connection between women's fashion and empowerment? Will there still be a connection? Will there be equality?

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