

THE CLOTHES PRESS

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Costume Society Christmas Party— left to right, Carol Watters, Margot Walker, Estelle Lalonde, Denise Hansen, Sheila Strong, Laura Legere, Anita Campbell, Andrea Melvin, Bonnie Elliott, Karen Pinsent

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In 2011 the Costume Society of Nova Scotia will be celebrating its 30th anniversary. We have much to celebrate, and our Annual General Meeting is a great opportunity for us to plan. Please join us in Halifax on Saturday, April 10th - see inside for more information.

A special thanks to all our contributors who provide a tour of costume happenings. Mary Guildford offers insight into the textile collections at the Museum of Industry; Andrea Melvin reports on her research in maternity clothing (and invites further information); and we have **the delights of Frenchy's shopping as well as a fashion show with a twist in Cape Breton.**

Grateful thanks are extended to the members of the editorial committee and our website designer whose efforts keep us connected

Chair, Karen Pinsent

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KIDS KLOZ EXTENDED TO MARCH 19

The exhibit *Kidz Kloz-100 Years of Children's Clothing* at the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives has been extended to March 19th, 2010. **It features some of the wonderful children's clothing in the museum's collection.** For more on the clothing in the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives see the Winter 2008 issue of the Clothes Press for the article by Susan Winship on boys' costumes.

CSNS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

When: April 10 2010, 9:30 to 4:30

Location: 989 Young Avenue Halifax

See page 6 for details

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MUSEUMS AND MATERNITY

Andrea Melvin

Three months pregnant and Sarah's clothing is getting a little tight. She has decided it is time to make a visit to the mall to buy her first maternity garments. Sarah's mother Anne joins her and is intrigued by all of the options and admittedly a little jealous. In the early 1980s, when Anne gave birth to Sarah, times were very different. She complained that maternity clothing was expensive in her day and that she disliked all of the bows and ribbons found on the designs...

This year I began a research project to study what Canadian women have worn while pregnant over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When I share my interest with others I am continually amazed at the opinions expressed about the subject and remarks on how much maternity fashion has changed in recent decades.

representations of clothing from such an important time in women's lives. In Nova Scotia for instance, when inquiring with three museums known for their extensive costume collections, I received one response identifying a nineteenth-century maternity gown from at Yarmouth County Museum. The fashionable gown, worn by Mrs. Nathan Walker, dates around c.1885 and has a front panel that appears to be a later addition to the garment.



Dress adapted for maternity, worn by Mrs. Nathan Walker c.1885, Courtesy of the Yarmouth County Museum, Yarmouth, NS

Seeing popular icons like Britney Spears on the cover of magazines with her "baby bump" fully exposed has piqued my interest, but more so, my work as a museum specialist in clothing history stimulated my curiosity on the subject. What baffles me is why museums across the country have so few



Canada Post Maternity Tunic 2003. Photo © Canadian Museum of Civilization, no. 2008.80.1.2, IMG2008-0555-0083-Dm.

An example from the Canadian Museum of Civilization is a Canada Post maternity uniform from 2003. This was the first maternity garment that Canada Post employees could select from the employer's catalogue. Prior to that, women working for Canada Post had to order their own maternity uniforms or wear larger sized men's uniforms. Employees at Canada Post lobbied to have a maternity uniform since the 1960s. Almost 40 years later, this garment symbolized a shift from the workplace being structured as a man's world to one that met the needs of female employees.

This gap in museum collections has led me to investigate the cultural history around maternity garments and how museums might work with the public to acquire more. Maternity clothing speaks to both public and personal issues for women. It can demonstrate that women, such as Mrs. Nathan Walker, maintained her social life in the nineteenth century while pregnant (while some might assume Victorian women hid away) and in the case of the Canada Post employees the maternity uniform enhanced their status as professionals.

Here are some interesting highlights of my research so far:

- According to a study on the history of childbirth in Canada by Dr. Wendy Mitchinson, many Canadians referred to pregnancy as an “‘interesting condition’, as ‘being in the family way, confined, indisposed, sick, having a cake in the oven, or knocked up.’” They rarely used the word pregnant which makes it a challenge for locating historic references.
- The first styles of purpose-made maternity clothing were introduced by Lane Bryant of New York in 1903. In Canada they appear in Sears and Eaton's Catalogues not long after and by 1918 there were full-page maternity spreads. Prior to that, women hired a dressmaker to make their maternity clothing, they made their own or wore loose fitting alternatives such as wrappers (gowns that wrap around).
- Well into the 1990s, store catalogues such as Sears and Eaton's displayed maternity fashions on models that did not have enlarged bellies. These representations are still common today.
- Maternity corsets and supportive belts or binders were sold in store catalogues until around the mid-1960s. Binders

in particular were often advised by medical physicians and midwives for support during pregnancy and after to retain their figure.

- Artefacts Canada's online database which links museum collections across the country shows 88 hits for “maternity”.
- Canada's national museum of human history, The Canadian Museum of Civilization, has 20 garments identified as maternity among their collections of approximately 7,500 clothing items.
- Library and Archives Canada has three photos of women identified as pregnant in their online collection.

The private nature of pregnancy only partially explains the lack of maternity clothing in museum collections. The short-term use of maternity clothing and tendencies to recycle or adapt could also explain their absence. Furthermore, the small number of artifacts relating to pregnancy speaks to the conservative collecting habits of museums and the more general exclusion of women's history from museum collections. With the many challenges of locating source material for research, talking to women might ultimately be the best way to bridge this gap and gain a better understanding of the cultural significance of maternity clothing. As Anne expressed in the introductory scenario, it is also possible that some women did not hold onto their maternity clothing as keepsakes because they did not place high value on these garments, or in other words, were just not fans of all the “bows and ribbons.”

If you are interested in finding out more about my work or if you have any information to share about maternity clothing I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to send me an email at andrea.melvin@civilisations.ca or join my Facebook Fan Page “[The Maternity Clothing History Project](http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Maternity-Clothing-History-Project/433661810452)” found at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Maternity-Clothing-History-Project/433661810452>.

Andrea Melvin is a graduate of the Costume Studies Program at Dalhousie University, 2002. She is from Halifax and currently resides in Ottawa, Ontario where she is a 2010 Research Fellow at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, QC.

1. Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 108.
2. Rebecca Lou Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy: An Analysis of Selected Cultural Influences*, (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan 1981) 3.
3. *Artefact's Canada*. 4 February 2010. <<http://www.pro.rcip-chin.gc.ca/bd-dl/artefacts-eng.jsp>>
4. *Library and Archives Canada*. 4 February 2010. <<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca>>

TREASURE SEEKING – THE TRADITION OF FRENCHY'S SHOPPING IN THE MARITIMES

P. Henebury

Purse by Annie Laurie, ostrich feather hat by Stephen Jones and a vintage tuxedo made in 1948, all purchased at Frenchy's. These are just a few of my favourite things. I am a Frenchy's shopper who learned the art of shopping second hand from a friend who has been perusing Frenchy's for over 20 years, long before it became popular. In the early 1970s the first Frenchy's used clothing stores opened in Digby County, Nova Scotia. Now there are over 20 stores throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Each day the stores process thousands of pounds of clothing which are imported in bales from the states.



Annie Laurie owl relief purse on Hudson's Bay Eight Point Blanket

Frenchy's shopping for many people is therapeutic and exciting at the same time. You never know what treasure may be hidden in that mass of tangled clothing. According to my friend the best way to "shop" is, upon arrival; grab a large basket or shopping cart as some stores have them. (Secretly I am always a little embarrassed when my friend uses the cart!) Scan the perimeter for dresses, shoes, coats and suits. Do the touch test, if the fabric feels like cashmere, linen, silk, put it in your basket and check it out later. Next do a quick check of the "odds" bin. This is where I found my Annie Laurie purse, a king size Hudson's Bay Eight Point Blanket and hat by Stephen Jones. One of Annie Laurie's purses from the 1950's that is similar to mine is on display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Some shoppers enjoy going through every article of clothing in a bin. Personally I don't do that, preferring the touch and see method. If it feels good and draws your eye to it, check it out. If in doubt about an item my friend says don't buy it. Most stores restock the racks and bins on the hour every hour. Be careful during this time as some shoppers become quite aggressive and possessive. I have witnessed grown women verbally and physically fight over an item!



Pure wool tuxedo with satin lapels from 1948

If you are planning to explore the world of Frenchy's shopping, I recommend you and no more than three of your best friends take the largest vehicle available and head for the "French Shore" for an over nighter. Start in Shelburne and work your way to Yarmouth, Meteghan, Weymouth and Digby on the first day. Stay overnight in Annapolis Royal at one of the fabulous B&B's and have a fashion show and decide who has the best treasure. You will get more purchases the next day when you tackle the Valley Frenchy's, so repack your items tightly and use your vehicle space wisely. I have been with friends, when on the trip home, we had to wear coats, hats and scarves we had bought!

Frenchys is not for everyone, but the adventure and rewards are worth it for me.

P. Henebury leads an active retired life on the South Shore of Nova Scotia that includes heaps of Frenchy's shopping.

CAPE BRETON VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS FASHION SHOW AND TEA

Bonnie Elliott



Christine Thomson models a purple velvet and mauve satin outdoor winter outfit. A severe winter storm did not dampen the

A successful fundraiser was held on the afternoon of December 6th, 2009 at the McConnell Memorial Library in Sydney. The impetus for this novel event was the collection of theatrical reproductions created by Pam Newton and modeled by the staff and friends of the library. In spite of the severe snowstorm that walloped Sydney that day, ticket goers braved the high winds and blinding snow for an afternoon of fun and festive good cheer.

Held in the children's wing of the library a centre aisle was created to create the 'cat-walk'. Standing alongside a small platform at the end, costume designer and MC Pam Newton accompanied by David Newton in coat and breeches, introduced each outfit and offered historical notes of interest.

The theme of the show was a romp through women's wear in the Victorian period and as such there were examples of everyday wear, sporting wear (particularly bathing suits), wedding gowns etc. Each outfit aimed at reflecting 19th century fashions from different decades. A generously compiled colour programme was handed out describing the show program. Following the show attendees left the room to look at the tempting silent auction items while the staff set up tables for tea.

A mostly self-taught costumer, Pam's talent lies in the prodigious output of costumes combined with her exuberant approach to decoration. All the 19th century finery and ample accessories were dressed up with, lace, flowers and flounces in bright and stunning colours that regaled the audience and sent the models into giggles when manoeuvring the large crinoline laden gowns.

Pam first became interested in costuming when her children were enrolled in musical productions at Riverview High School although she had sewn through most of her life. For staging previous shows the high school had rented costumes from Malabar Costume Rentals in Toronto and Pam's efforts and energy were well appreciated. On two other occasions Pam put together a costume exhibit of historic garments for the Cape Breton Centre for Heritage and Science, and on another designed the costumes for the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Halifax.

CONFERENCES/SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS

DRESSING NEW ENGLAND: CLOTHING, FASHION, AND IDENTITY
DUBLIN SEMINAR, DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS, JUNE 18-19, 2010
Details at <http://www.bu.edu/dublinseminar/CallForPapers10.html>

CROSSROADS: FROM COWHIDE TO COUTURE
A HUB OF ACTIVITY* A POINT OF DECISION * A CHANGE OF DIRECTION
KANSAS CITY, MO. MAY 25-30

Costume Society of America, 36th Annual CSA National Symposium

Details at <http://www.costumesocietyamerica.com/natsym.htm>

STUDY TOUR OF OTTAWA/GATINEAU. OCTOBER 1-2, 2010
CALL FOR PAPERS- DEADLINE APRIL 1, 2010

Midwestern Region, Costume Society of America

Details at <http://www.costumesocietyamerica.com/RegionIII/event-workshop-sum.htm>

Costume Society OF NOVA SCOTIA

Annual General Meeting

Saturday, April 10, 2010

9:30 am – 4:30 pm

Venue

989 Young Avenue, Halifax
at the corner of Young Ave. & Inglis St.
The Local Council of Women of Halifax Building*

Directions – traveling south on Robie, turn left at Inglis and right at Young Avenue.

Parking on both sides of the street.

Our Day

9:30 am	Registration, Morning Beverages and <i>'Hello'</i>
10 – 11:30 am	Annual General Meeting Election of Officers
11:30 am–1:30 pm	Pot Luck Lunch
2 – 4 pm	Afternoon Program

*Since their founding in 1894, the Local Council of Women of Halifax has been instrumental in many community events. Their meeting house was donated by philanthropist and developer George Wright in 1913. The Council House is a designated Heritage Property.

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TEXTILE ARTIFACTS AT THE MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY, STELLARTON N.S.

Mary Guildford

The Museum of Industry isn't all locomotives and steam engines. Textile manufacturing has been an important part of Nova Scotia' industrial past and of course workers had to get dressed for the job. Over the years several pieces of Nova Scotia made clothing and clothes for work as well as tools of the textile trade have been added to the collection. MOI makes a point of including women's work at home so we have included home sewing machines as well as industrial ones and some interesting samples of handwork.

During my years at the Museum I've been fortunate to have chances to add to our collection of textiles and tools. In 2006 we collected a group of industrial knitting machines originally owned by Donato Faini & Figli, an Italian knitwear company that set up in Stellarton in 1958. The company was the first to take advantage of the incentives offered by Industrial Estates Limited, a Nova Scotia crown corporation created to entice new employers to the province. The company brought skilled Italian workers with them to set up the plant and hired locals to make quality knitwear for men and women. The company failed in the 1970s and two of the Italian employees bought some of the machines and set up in business as RARE Knits. There are two very large machines that stand over 8 feet tall. They are fascinating in their intricacy. Thousands of tiny latch hooks arranged in a circle create fabric in the round. A skilled operator can program the machine to knit patterns in colour and texture. One of the machines was still functional when we got it and it was a very impressive thing to see in motion.

We also got two smaller knitting machines that make flat pieces for trims and collars and industrial sewing machines. RARE Knits made house brand sweaters for Mills Brothers in Halifax and even Nova Scotia's Canada Games uniforms in the 1970s in addition to custom work for their dressmaking clients.

Nova Scotia has had a number of garment manufacturers over the last one hundred years or so. Stanfield's of Truro is of course the most famous and the last man standing in the industry. MOI has collected some samples of their clothing and recently we've had the chance to collect some artifacts from their yarn manufacturing process. If you've even been to the factory outlet store in Truro you may have noticed the large window at the back that looks into the yarn spinning room and another window at the side provides a glimpse into the carding room. These machines were silenced recently. From now on the company will only import yarn from Bulgaria and not spin any of their own because it is cheaper and better. It's been many years since they used Nova Scotia wool, using a combination of new imported wool and recycled fibre for their rugged grey woollen underwear.

We've also been able to collect samples of garments by Clayton and Sons, the Halifax menswear manufacturer that was once a very big presence in the city's downtown, selling its suits and work pants all over the region and dressing men in uniform in both world wars in addition to clothing train conductors and policemen. Founded in the 1870s, the company went out of business around 1955 after a long decline. There is one of their naval jackets on display at MOI along with some Stanfield's underwear and socks next to an industrial cotton loom from Dominion Textiles, Yarmouth.

Windsor Wear was another important manufacturer that only closed its doors for good a few years ago. They were one of the original Nova Scotia cotton mills that opening in the 1880s. Its main product line consisted of t-shirts, sweatshirts and cotton underwear. We have a box with a wonderful image of sleek haired fellow striding forth manfully in his Windsor Wear long johns with his dressing gown over his arm. Be still my heart!

We were fortunate about two years ago to collect several unworn garments that were leftover stock from an old general store. **These included items from Windsor Wear, Stanfield's, Lewis Cap & Hat of Truro and the Maritime Pant Co. of Amherst.** That last company was a new one for me. They were active during the second world war. If anyone has more **knowledge of the company I'd be delighted to hear all about it.**

Because we recognize the importance of women's work in the home, we have an area devoted to traditional crafts like quilting and a group of volunteers that come in once a week to work on projects. Recently they made a quilt for a member of our seasonal staff who lost everything in a fire. We have also **had textile and craft related exhibits like last summer's show of Diane Shink's star quilts. This summer we'll be working with the Pictou Antigonish Branch of the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia to mount an exhibit of new work by its members. It will open July 30 and finish on Labour Day.**

We also added an interesting hooked rug to our collection last year. Made by a Pictou County woman, it depicts the locomotive **Samson which is MOI's star attraction (Canada's oldest surviving locomotive built in 1839). It's quite a charming piece and likely an original design.** I checked with Linda MacDonald of Rags to Rugs, Pictou, who now owns designs created by **Garrett's of New Glasgow, and she says it's not one of theirs.**

Since I have a special interest in costume and textiles acquisitions like these are always especially exciting for me. We're always on the look out for more industry related treasures so spread the word.

THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

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THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

The Society encourages interest in the history, development and conservation of Nova Scotian costume and personal adornment, and offers learning opportunities through workshops and hands-on programs. The Society's membership is diverse, including collectors, museum professionals, designers, costumers, reenactors, researchers, historians, and students.

CSNS was founded in 1981 and is a member of the Costume Society of America, the Association of Nova Scotia Museums, and the Dartmouth Heritage Museum.

CSNS Board of Directors 2009-2010

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Library Resources

The Costume Society of Nova Scotia donated its library collection to the Costume Studies Program at Dalhousie University. This costume reference library is available to members of CSNS by contacting Dianne Kristoffe @ 494-2178 dianne.kristoffe@dal.ca. The library collection is housed within the Costume Studies accommodations at 1515 Dresden Row, Suite 202 in the City Centre Atlantic. Please allow time for scheduling visits as the room is used for classes also.

Also check out the Spring Garden Branch of the Halifax Public Library. There is a growing costume collection in the Reference section on the second floor.

The Clothes Press

Editorial Committee

Sally Erskine Doucette, Karen Pinsent, Bonnie Elliott, Anita Campbell

Contributors

Bonnie Elliott, Mary Guildford, P. Henebury, Andrea Melvin,

Submissions

The Clothes Press encourages content from its readers. Send articles, reviews, and letters to the Editorial Committee. The Clothes Press is published quarterly by the Costume Society of Nova Scotia. Views expressed in The Clothes Press are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent CSNS or its supporters.