

Workbook  
on 1770's  
Colonial Fashion for Girls & Boys

Powder Springs Elementary  
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# Introduction

This little booklet is to help you understand what it was like to be a person your age in the American Colonies around the time of the start of the Revolutionary War. It does not talk about the War itself or the adults at the time, or even about where or how people were living. Your teachers will do that.

This is meant to help you feel what it was like to be someone your same age at that time by building real projects that will use your modern skills as well as teach you some "hands on" skills just like the Colonial kids had. Please respect that tools are meant to do a specific job, and be nice to your teachers as they probably aren't used to handing you sharp, pointy objects.

There were no cameras back then, so all of this information has to come from drawings, sketches, writings, or the real clothing that is now in museums. Portraits were usually only made of wealthy people or royalty, so to know what "every day" people wore, we have to make some good guesses based on whatever information is available.

Silhouettes Costumes uses data from many sources to create the best reproductions of clothing for people who want to feel what it was like to be living in a new America.

## Colonial Fashion Era

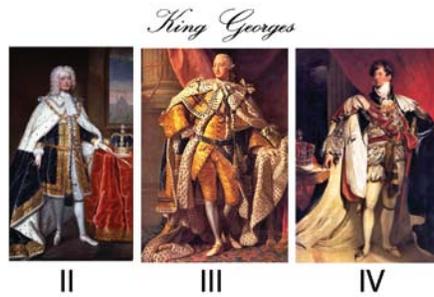


*A Silhouette is the recognizable shape of fashion as it changes*

Fashion depends on what people know, can get, can do, afford, and want. A Silhouette is the recognizable shape of fashion as it changes.

Most of the 18th century (years 1700-1800) was called the "Georgian Fashion Era" around the world, named after 3 King Georges of England. Because the United States was not yet created until after the Revolutionary War, the area that would become America was called the Colonies. When talking specifically about fashion in the geographical region that would become the United States, the "Georgian Era" was also called the "Colonial Fashion Era".

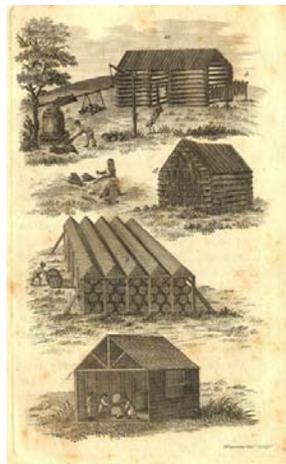
The 1770-1790 approximate period covering the War was known as the "Late Colonial Fashion Period". As with fashion today, there was no exact line that was crossed saying when one Era started and another began. Some women liked to keep their favorite clothing and wore it long after it went out of style, while others wanted to be right on top of what was new and fashionable.



*The fashion era was called "Georgian" around the world, but in what would become America, it was also called "Colonial"*

## World at The Time

### STRONG AMERICA



*Tobacco was one of the key exports of the Colonies*

The place we know as America was, during the Colonial Fashion Era, under the rule of England. The settled areas on the east coast were known as "colonies". The colonies by the 1770's had the benefits of being connected to a big country (England) with its manufactured goods, transportation, and access to trade. The colonies also had their own strong economies because they could trade raw goods like timber and ore plus agricultural products like wheat, corn, and tobacco for nice finished and manufactured things like furniture and clothing with countries around the world.

The new America at the start of the War had the highest per capita income in the world in 1776 because of a huge middle class made up of farmers and merchants. More people than in any other place in the world at the time could work really hard and rise (or fall) economically by their own efforts.

Colonists wanted to keep it that way, which became one of the reasons for the Revolutionary War because King George was involved with trade and production. Colonists thought they were doing fine without a king taking a share of their earnings through taxation and other government controls. The colonies wanted to be cut off from and to separate themselves from England and Europe politically and culturally and to set up their own country.

What would become America had become a "melting pot" of those who had settled already and those who were coming to find a new way of living away from the dictates of England. They had a new spirit of independence which focused on the individual's ability to succeed or fail based on his own efforts. It was called the "Years of Abundance" for America and England. France was headed to a Revolution too, which would affect trade and fashion in America in the years after the American Revolution.

## Inventions & Trade



*The "Spinning Jenny" patented in 1764 made it possible to mass produce fabrics, making them cheaper and easier to get*

In the 1770's, England dominated the world in the sale of wool, cotton, and silk, but the invention of steam for power and it's improvement and growing use by the 1790's changed the world forever. Steam engines had been used for pumping water and for boring holes for a few decades by the 1770's, but the James Watt improvements would lead to use of steam in ships and textile manufacturing.

Steam drove ships which speeded up transportation of goods around the world so more countries could trade with each other. Steam would be used to run machines that could make things people previously had to make by hand.

When an English man invented the "Spinning Jenny" in 1764, it meant fabrics did not have to be made in the home, but could be made in a factory by paid workers. As better large scale mass production weaving systems for wool and linen were developed in England, it meant women didn't have to stay home and make their own fabrics any more.

In 1752 Joseph Jacquard of France had invented the first "programmable" weaving loom which ran on punched cards would lead to today's modern computer operated industrial and tech equipment.



*(Left) The word "spinster" came from a word meaning a woman who lived her life preparing thread in her home. (Right) New inventions like the Jacquard weaving loom of 1752 would put many small home based businesses out of work*

A very early type of machine had a big needle that could punch thick leather and wool fabric to make coats for fishermen and soldiers. That would evolve into the sewing machine we know today, which was first made small and gentle enough to be used in homes by women in the 1860's. New methods of spinning, cutting, and making things like lace were developed to speed up the processes of making trims and decorations and specialty fabrics too.

When people manufactured complete clothing or textiles in their homes from start to finish to sell, it was called "cottage industry". With the invention of new machines, people no longer made the entire garment, but would make a part of it such as the sleeve on a shirt. One person would make a lot of sleeves in their home, and take them to town where people in a factory would put the shirt together.

Factories changed the way clothing was made, sold, and distributed throughout the world. It meant the Colonists could actually get cheaper clothing by importing it from big cities overseas. Unlike how people picture these early Americans as spinning and weaving all day and night in their homes to make clothes, most on the eastern Colonies were buying and wearing goods from England and other countries over the ocean. Only the really deeply rural or western colonists had to make all their own clothes.

The ships not only carried trade goods, clothing, and equipment, but they also carried information. An increase in trade and invention meant and more *ideas* in the Colonies.

## Fabrics & Dyes



*Cotton broadcloth is used today for "no iron" shirts*

Fabrics were becoming cheap and available in Europe with the creation of factories, and these items were quickly shipped to the Colonies. The French and the English had led fashion trends for the world for centuries, but in 1775, Colonists started to give ideas *to* the Europeans. News of the North American West with its beavers, furs, and backwoodsmen affected European fashion.



*Beaver fur from North America became a favorite of the French & English who wore it to their wars like this French military bicorne beaver hat (left): Napoleon Bonaparte's signature bicorne had was shot off his head in 1807 during a battle with Russia*

Colonials in places far away from the seaport cities used more simple, natural, and plain fabrics and designs than people on the east coast. Even with the vast trade systems from around the world, these

remote settlers couldn't get a lot of the heavily ornamented or fancy things from across the ocean into the backwoods. The simpler clothing which focused on "function first" suited their lifestyles.

"Broadcloth" became the "every day" fabric across new America. It was a simple very tight weave with a smooth and flat surface that was durable and easy to sew. It could be made of different materials that could be found in the Colonies such as flax or wool. It was strong enough to be used over and over in remaking garments.



*Cotton clothing and fabric had to be brought on special cotton ships to the Colonies before 1800*

There were English ships coming and going between India and the Colonies, so Colonial women could get lovely fabrics. Trade with some Asian countries and places like Holland and Spain made other special fabrics, laces, trims, and finished clothing available to those who could afford them. China and its lovely silk fabrics was not yet open to trade with the Colonies.

People who had money got silks or cotton from India, because the Colonies did not grow or process much cotton yet. The special worm that spun silk would not grow on North America. India had that special silk worm in a special area that made them the only source of that kind of silk in the world.

18th century silk fabric from India was much thicker and lighter in weight than anything we have today. It made the shape of the gowns stiffer so they could be very big but not too heavy. The 1770's silks made a special sound when a woman walked in her skirts that was notable of the Era.

India, which was under British rule in the 1770's, also had special dye processes for cotton and provided the many beautiful floral designs that are now notable of the Colonial Era.



*Trade with India made possible the import of beautiful florals printed on cotton and silk available to the Colonists. These designs are now notable of the era. Patterns became more delicate & detailed as printing processes & fabrics improved*

The new America would become the leading producer of cotton by 1820, but in the late 1700's, while it was being grown on southern plantations, it was still experimental there. There were few processing plants, so the making the cotton into fabric in the Colonies was costly. Most 1770's Colonial *homemade* clothing was therefore made of wool, flax, or linen which could be grown locally.



*The indigo plant which grew naturally in Eastern Asia, India, and Peru, was transplanted to England and used for the favorite blue/green color of the Colonial Fashion Era. By the 1860's it was produced in the Colonies and used to dye the blue of the "Blue & the Gray" uniforms of Union soldiers during the War Between the States*

Colonial people could buy nice fabrics from places all over Europe like England, Holland, Portugal, Spain, and France. These countries had their own unique materials, designs, methods, and dyes such as the making of "plaids" in Scotland that the Colonists bought.

European countries, and especially England, had brought the artistic, chemical, and manufacturing methods from other places like the West Indies and Africa. They were trying to grow plants to make special dyes with some success, but historians say their art and science was never quite as good as that in the places of the plant or art's origin.



*Colors from natural sources like berries or bark dyed onto natural fabrics like these linen samples are subdued and look like nature*

Dyes produced in the Colonies were from natural sources too, like berries for pinks and blues. Sticks, twigs, walnuts, and nutshells made browns. Many plants, mosses, and bugs were used to make greens. There was a favorite orange/red color that came from an insect, although it had to come on a ship from an island so was hard to get.



*"Red Dye No. 2" which is used in food today like pink frosting & soda pop comes from a female insect called "Cochineal" which lives on cactus in southern areas of today's United States and Mexico. It has been a favorite dye for orange/reds for centuries*

Indigo, which made the deep blue/greens of military coats (like blue jeans) was being grown in the south with some success, although it didn't flourish in the Colonies. The use of North American indigo was widespread, and that blue color would be one of the favorites 100 years later during the Civil War.



*The actual "Redcoat" military uniform of the British Counsel to America 1794 (left), and Major James Harely about the same time; both dyed in color from the cochineal insect*

The bright reds and pinks were a favorite of both men and women colonists, and the British used the insect dye to make their military uniform "Redcoats". Intense blue or purple other than the blue/green or purple/pink types of blues could only be found from rare sources outside of the Colonies, so only the very rich and European royalty wore certain blues and purples.



*Only ancient Etruscan royalty wore the bright purple of royalty (left); even today Royals like Queen Elizabeth II of England wear the intense purple color reserved only for the elite throughout most of history*

The favorite colors of Colonial women were the many pinks, browns, and a blue-green called "teal" plus the indigo blue. Synthetic dyes would not be invented until the 1850's when a man accidentally invented "mauveine" while trying to find a cure for malaria. With a huge fashion industry in the 1870's and a big interest in science at that time, most of the really bright and intense colors you see today were invented around that time, 100 years *after* the Revolutionary War. It was rare to have bright or intense colors in 1776 unless you were royalty.



*Even main streets in big cities during the 1770's were muddy like this modern day Colonial Williamsburg living history site*

The fabric of choice for every day women of the 1770's was linen. Linen acts much like cotton, but it is stiffer and has a shiny side to it, a rough feel, and has a more open weave. Both cotton and linen let air flow in and out, so they are very comfortable to wear and work in, and easy to clean.

People did not know about germs yet in the 1770's. It was only in the Late Colonial/Georgian period people figured out they should wash their clothes and themselves regularly to prevent sickness. A new type of detergent similar to today's bleach was being used. Because it turned everything white, white became the most popular color for things that would be worn a lot or touch the ground.

Roads in the Colonies were muddy. Even in dry places, dust would get dresses very dirty. Women worked hard and had no air conditioners or electric fans. Even women of wealth and royalty did work, and they would get sweaty. The natural fabrics and the design of their clothes kept them comfortable between washings. Only the bottom most layers would get sweaty and have to be cleaned often.

## What People Were Doing

### Boys, Girls, & Families



*Phillis Wheatley was a young woman in the 1770's when she became famous for her poems*

When you decide what to wear, you are really making the decision based on three things: what will I be doing (function), what do I have or what can I get (economy), and what do I like/want (fashion)? What children in Colonial America wore, depended a lot on two things: what they were doing and what could they get or make.

# Play



*Hoops or "Hoops and Graces" were a favorite game for Colonial children*

Boys and girls in the Colonies did not have an easy life. Most of their time was spent working. When they did have a few minutes to play they had to do it with things they could find, as most could not afford toys, have time to make them, or be able to buy them somewhere. Stores and factories were mostly in larger towns which were mostly along the eastern seacoast. People living on farms or outlying areas didn't go to town very often, so there was not much opportunity to buy toys or games near home.



*Games like "Jacob's Ladder" (left) were imported on ships, but most children made their own toys like cornhusk dolls made of things laying around the farm plus scraps of fabric (right)*

If parents had some money they could order from a store in town that would bring in the item on a ship from England. Dolls, tea sets, metal figures, and board games were often available, but if there was something like a doll house, the parents usually made it. That was rare since the parents worked most of the time too.



*The childrens' game of "Rounders" was adapted by adults to become "Baseball" as this 1760 paper article about sport showed*

Children made toys out of things like the metal rings off of old barrels which they rolled around. They used string for hand games like "cat's cradle" and pebbles for hopscotch. Children were competitive in throwing horseshoes and a game called "Rounders" which was an early version of baseball.

## School



*Children in school in 1790 are shown wearing the same clothes as their parents, but a little more loose and comfortable*

Because Colony leaders felt educating children would produce good citizens, almost all children were educated in some way, although that didn't always mean in a school room. Many were taught at home either with just a parent or with a group of children from the farm or plantation under the instruction of a family member selected by all the families involved. Communities required parents who were home schooling to report their children's learning and progress regularly to make sure children were being taught with the values of the Colony.



*Historical Interpreter boy apprentice learns how to weave baskets from a skilled craftsman*

Many boys had apprenticeships where they would work alongside a specific trade such as blacksmithing, weaving, basketmaking, tailoring, innkeeping, or whatever their father was doing to learn it by doing it. Apprenticeships started as early as 6 years old, though most typically a boy was 14 when he started.

Some boys with wealthy fathers were sent away to college at the age of 11. The girls stayed home to help their mothers and rarely went away to school, although some went to live with relatives to learn.



*A Colonial boy from South Carolina, dressed in finery the same as his father would wear*

Colleges were larger places where the boys stayed and lived full time and came home only on breaks, much the same as college today but with much younger students. Boys and girls who went to a lower level school outside of the home went to one where all the children were taught in one room in one building by one teacher.



*The Nathan Hale one room school was originally located in East Haddam, New London, Connecticut in the New England Colonies, but is getting ready to move a 7th time as it sits next to a parking garage today. It was named after one of America's Founders, Nathan Hale, who taught in that building from when it was built in 1773 until the War started in 1775-76*

In the New England Colonies which were on the northern coast, most people lived near or in towns. There were many schools and school buildings located near population centers where there were the most children. The parents built and paid for the schools themselves, and paid for their children to attend by supplying firewood, food, or supplies as well as money for upkeep on the building and to pay the teacher.



*Simply called "The College", this was built 1695-1700 in the Virginia Colonies and the inside was burned down 3 times (twice during the War Between the States), and was eventually named "The Wren Building" after Christopher Wren, architect in 1931*

In the Middle Colonies, schools were part of the churches and based on religious teachings, and if you couldn't pay for the school, you could not send your child. Since it was a very agricultural area, school was in or out of session depending on planting and harvesting cycles.

In the Southern Colonies there were few people living near each other, and farms and plantations were spaced far apart. Some southern children were taught at home with a parent or an assigned family member or hired tutor. Some from wealthy families or with family in England were sent to live across the ocean to go to school.

Most children went to a school on the plantation with other children from the area. Many southern children did not have formal education, but learned about religious beliefs, morals, and values through their home based organizations such as churches or religious societies.



*A Hornbook was often the only book a student had*

Colonial schools had few books or paper, so most of what the children learned was from memorization. The Bible and the New England Primer were about the only books used in class. Some had a "hornbook" which was one piece of paper with the alphabet, numbers, and a prayer that was attached to a piece of wood and covered with a see through piece of cow's horn. It had a string they could wear it around their necks.

## Work



*A boy historic interpreter draws water from a real well at Williamsburg Historic Site*

What children did for chores and tasks was different depending on where they lived in the Colonies. Because one in every four children in the mid-1770's in a family died before they reached adulthood from things such as the diseases cholera and malaria, they had to grow up quickly.

Many families lived on farms in agricultural areas, so there were animals to take care of. Children were in charge of feeding and watering all the animals. They milked cows and collected eggs from chickens. It was their job to gather fruits and vegetables from the gardens. Even very young children helped to shell corn by removing the kernels from the cob.

Boys also helped their fathers hunt for birds and animals or fish to provide the meat they ate every day. They helped plant and harvest crops. Boys who lived in the city built furniture, sold things at market, and made repairs around the home.



*Girls who were indentured servants or slaves were assigned special jobs suitable to their age and skills, and often worked alongside their working mothers until sold, transferred, and in some cases married when they would work where their husbands were*

Girls were in charge of sweeping, cooking, knitting, and sewing. They would shear the sheep to cut the wool off, and then spin it into thread. They would use that thread to make clothing and blankets.

Girls made soap and candles too, and they did all this while watching, guiding, and teaching younger children. Girls learned to sew and run a household at a very young age, and were able to run the farm as well as house, plus do any special work their mothers might teach them such as caring for the sick.



*Colonial girls did farm work, house work, made items, taught children, helped their mothers, and also worked for other people*

Daughters of women who were indentured servants or slaves worked alongside their mothers or had special jobs. Many girls had jobs outside their own homes doing the same chores they had learned at home like laundry, cooking, cleaning, and even teaching or caring for younger children of employers.

They worked in houses and shops in towns, cities, farms, and plantations and were a key to the successful economy of the time as they provided both special skills and the labor necessary to produce and maintain the many small things that made the Colonies successful, comfortable, and profitable.

## The Family



*Girl historic interpreters demonstrate how sisters worked alongside each other at school and work*

In a family with great wealth and privilege the children did not do farm work or labor, but those were rare as most colonial families were not rich and almost every family of every class had 7 to 10 children to take care of. The parents themselves did most of the child care work with the help of grandparents and other family members. Many of those 10 children, however, were not always at home. At an early age they were often sent away to apprentice, or started their own families and moved out. Girls were trained to be married and to run their own households from as early as age 13.

Today's parents would be horrified to give a large gun to an 8 year old, to ask him to fill up a huge barrel of water from a rushing river, or to defend the sheep from a wild animal. Parents did not watch over their children while they did these things, although older brothers and sisters would watch out for the little ones. It was considered part of their job in the family to know the rules and how to keep safe.



*Colonial parents considered the most important lessons they could teach children were their religious beliefs*

Parents made sure before a child left home for whatever reason that the child knew very well about the religious beliefs and understood about morals and the consequences of one's actions. Children had to grow up fast, and what may seem harsh parenting today was necessary to keep them alive.



*Whether young or old, each person in a family had specific role*

All members of a family had a role to play and it was important to the survival of the family that each did their specific jobs to the best of their ability. The main idea for raising children was to "love but not pamper". Now and then a parent would make a small whistle or thoughtful gesture to each child which showed their "great love and nurturing nature".

Colonial families for the most part lived geographically closely to each other and helped each other. Extended members like grandparents were important to the survival and success of the family as a whole. Older generations made sure the young ones were learning the lessons they needed to be "good citizens" for the future.

## What People Were Wearing

### Europeans Follow Colonists



*1776 American militia man (left); King George III at the same time (right)*

There were philosophers in Europe who were teaching people to "simplify", and the informal American styles and use of soft, comfortable to wear, natural fabrics appealed to people of England, France, Spain, and other countries. Because it was a time of abundance in both Europe and the Colonies, people had the luxury to think about what they were wearing, and to make choices.

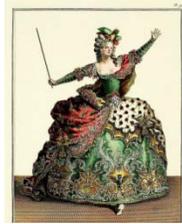
The English had more leisure time than Colonists, and were generally outdoors more than other Europeans at the time. The English culture valued open spaces and physical activity, and was still predominantly agricultural.



*Simple walking clothing for a Colonist (left), Englishwoman of London (center), turned into complex casual wear for a Frenchwoman in Paris (right)*

French culture focused on indoor activities and Court life. English and French clothes reflected each one's lifestyles of indoors or out. The French, however, were peeking at the English, who were peeking at the Colonists. The French especially liked the simple and rural type of clothing the English and Colonists were wearing.

Europeans gave the Colonial ideas of simplicity with natural colors, natural fabrics, and "plainness" to their fashion designers to make them into new designs. The new French fashions of the mid 1770's had the same shape, colors, and fabrics as the Colonist's, but the French added fancy work, ornaments, trims, and "flashy" details. The French "Colonial Fashion" was not much like the Colonial's "Colonial Fashion" by the time they got done.



*French opera costume sketch, 1774-75; supposedly based on Colonial fashion, strayed far from it*



*Style of the 1770's would become simpler by the 1790's, led by French designers who were peeking at the more comfortable clothes of working people in the Colonies*

"Regular people" around the world, those who worked or ran businesses or farmed and who were not royalty, were wearing more simple and comfortable clothes constructed from easier to make and cheaper to get fabrics. Through the 1770's and into the 1790's the French continued to build fashion to become excessive in design under the example of French Queen Marie Antoinette.



*Creole women embraced the looser, cooler, cotton Gaulle style of Marie Antoinette of France in the Dominican by the 1790's because it just made sense*

When Marie finally embraced a new, soft, and feminine style called "Gaulle", the French would swing back the other way to make the next fashion era, The "Regency Era" very simple. All the ornament and fuss of the "Georgian/Colonial Era" would disappear from the 1790's to the 1890's.

## Colonists Following Europeans



*French King Louis XVI & Marie Antoinette 1776 (left); same yet very different from American's real gown from 1776 (right)*

In the 1770's, the French demanded their royalty must look very different from "regular people", and the French King wanted those who had money to spend it all on French fashion which was made from French fabric, lace, trims, and notions. In 1775 the French Queen Marie Antoinette wore the highest hair ever on top of her head. Another woman, a friend of the King, Madame Pompadour, wore a sailing ship over a tall wig.



*Madame Pompadour wore a ship on her head*

Both women's dresses became so wide and so huge they couldn't fit through doors. Fashion dictated that breasts be pushed up and necklines go way down. There were never too many tassels, ruffles, fringes, laces, plumes, or artificial flowers for the French. Even the men in French Court wore elaborate wigs and had clothing covered in fancy trims and embroidery.



*French fashion leaders, Queen Marie Antoinette (left), and Madama Pompadour (right) in full Court ensembles*

By the end of the Revolutionary War, however, with a change in power in France, the crazy French court costumes were replaced with very natural and very simple looks. Even hair, after Benjamin Franklin of America went to the French Court in his natural hair after forgetting his wig, became natural again.

Colonists, by then calling themselves Americans, had been copying French fashion. The Americans along with the French and English pulled back to simpler and more comfortable styles in the 1790's.



Portraits of Benjamin Franklin: left natural hair and right in 1767 in his wig when he was at Court in London

Many Americans, particularly those with ties to the English before, during, and after the War, still wore the elaborate styles through the 1770's. Women of middle and high class status continued to wear the elaborate French Court styles long past when they had gone out of fashion in Europe, although they backed off a bit from what the Queen of France was wearing.



Queen Charlotte of England (left) and First Lady Martha Washington (right) in the mid 1770's

## Georgian & Colonial Fashion



Colonial clothing was known for its great diversity because there were people from royal governors to indentured servants and slaves and everyone in between living in what would become the United States before, during, and after the Revolutionary War. In the 1770's upper classes kept up to date on what was in fashion in England and France from imported garments, letters, news from travelers, and dressmakers or tailors moving into the region.

Women and girls living in the Colonies got most of their ideas on what to wear from England. The English got their ideas from France. The French had fashion designers and royalty who came up with the ideas. French Court fashion led the way in determining what women around the world would wear. Regular women would take the *ideas* of French royalty, and make them into things they could afford, make, and wear while doing whatever it was they did.



*People learned what was fashionable through letters, prints, and from travelers*

A wealthy planter's daughter in Virginia in 1775 for example, would have worn a gown of silk from India, underclothing made of linen from Holland, and shoes made in England which had gone through complex trades and a lengthy voyage across the ocean on a ship propelled by wind. A slave whose freedom depended on trade and commerce too would be wearing clothing made from inexpensive textiles imported just for his use such as a shirt of linen woven in northern Europe, woolen stockings from Scotland, or a knitted cap from Monmouth, England. Clothing and goods worn at the time came from all over the world, although most of the fashion *ideas* came from France.



*1770's Laundry Woman with skirts and sleeves hiked up*

As with today's people, men, women, and children of the Colonial fashion era valued comfort, warmth, and modesty. They also needed to meet the fashion "rules" of their society. If a woman did not wear the proper undergarments, or if a man did not have on a waistcoat in public, they were considered not dressed, so wearing the right thing was very important to both men and women to fit into their communities.

Like people today, Colonists would give up comfort and modesty just to be fashionable; for example, through the 1700's, women's fashion said a woman should wear long sleeves and long skirts. Even though it would be easier to wear short sleeves and short skirts while doing something like laundry in a tub, the women wore the long ones anyway and just pushed their sleeves up or hike their skirts up.



*Northern warm layers (left) and cool linens of the south (right). What women of every shape and age wore had a lot to do with where they lived and what they did for a living*

Climate was the only thing that had a direct impact on whether people would give up wearing the latest fashion. In places like Virginia where it got very hot, all classes chose washable linen or cotton clothing instead of the many layers and fancy fabrics of northerners. In places like Richmond in the summer, men wore unlined coats and thin waistcoats that were more loosely fit than was fashionable at the time.

Women with money of the south preferred gowns made of "lustring", a crisp light silk similar to silk taffeta, and some women even went without their stays (underwear) when at home when it got really hot out, but they would always put them on if they left the house.



*Peddlers and storekeepers found a profitable market by going west to the frontiers to provide readymade goods to settlers that lived far away from towns or cities*

Some upper class men ordered suits custom made to their measurements in lovely fabrics from London. Women could order fancy things like lace, shoes, stockings, cloaks, and even stays (the basic corset-like undergarment) ready-made through shipping trade.

Their gowns were usually made locally though by seamstresses or mantua-makers. Some women from the eastern Colonies made their own undergarments, but only in the frontier areas west was most clothing homemade entirely. On the frontier they even trapped furs, tanned hides, and made their own fabrics by weaving or knitting. Not long into American history did they need to do it all themselves, for traders and storekeepers early in Colonial history made it to the backcountry to make imported and readymade goods available to settlers and pioneers.



*The Mantua-maker (seamstress) had to always be fashionable*

One of the biggest questions that remains today about what people of the Colonies wore is how big people were, because looking at museum examples it seems both men and women were very small compared to those you see today on American streets.

Historic garments indicate women's waists were between 21 1/2 to 34" wearing stays (the basic undergarment around the torso which made them a bit larger than natural), with the average about 25" (compared to 30-36" today), and bust lines averaged about 34" (compared to 36-42" today). Men were about 5' 7 1/2" tall on the average. Today scientists estimate the average man in America is 5'9" tall.



*Toussant L'Overture in the 1770's (left) and Don Barksdale in the 1940's (right) were both considered tall for their times*

# Colonial Women's Clothing

## CLOTHING WAS VALUABLE



*Camp followers, Revolutionary War*



*Dressmakers usually went to people's houses, but sometimes they rented a building and lived over their shop. This shows how the basic "sacque" (dress) is constructed*

Everything was sewn by hand. While women did sew and repair their own clothing and that of their families, it was more typical they would buy either used clothing from a peddler or a traveling tailor would come and stay at their house if they were wealthy. Tailors and dressmakers would alter, repair, or remake clothing more often than they created it. Tailors were the ones who made stays, bonnets, and most undergarments and they were always men because they needed strong hands.

For working and rural folks, tailors or mantua-makers would rent a shop in town for a few weeks and sew for everyone in the area, and then move on to a different place. They often came with the seasons so they could change and adjust clothing to suit the weather. The customer would go into town to take measurements or try things on, but would have the final package picked up by a neighbor since they didn't go to town often when they lived in the country.



*Selling used clothing was a very good business, and peddlers went town to town. In big cities, there were special streets set up just for selling clothing outdoors*

It was very typical for an employer to give an employee hand me down clothes as a job benefit, and the used clothing business was very profitable because clothing was difficult to get and expensive. A man's suit at the time cost the same as a sofa in the 1770's.

We have excellent examples in museums of all types of clothing from working women to fancy royal Court dress because people took very good care of their clothes. Many say there are not good examples of poor or working class garments in museums, but the museums have a little secret. Because visitors are more interested in seeing the fancy clothes of queens and kings, the museums store the not fancy and not exciting to look at clothing in closets. They bring them out for special events and programs.

## DESIGNS FOR WOMEN & GIRLS



*If you were a Patriot Spy in the Revolution, you were still fashionable, but in a different way so you could carry your ammunition and firearms in your gown*

Colonial women paid attention to French and English design ideas and then bought or had the closest they could make out of what they could afford, and what they could get. Depending on where she lived and what she did, a woman would change the fashionable idea just a bit to make it work for her needs. That meant Colonial fashion was usually more *functional* than high fashion of the day.



*The basic "sacque" was worn by young and old alike. It was the difference in decoration, fabric, and fit that distinguished one from the other*

All women and girls at the time wore about the same thing, although it was changed a bit for function. Everything was based on the same loose dress called a "sacque" or "mantua" as it had been for half of the century before. A dress at the time was called a "robe". Through the years the "robe" design changed as it was tucked or pleated and sewn in different ways to make it hang or wrap differently, or to raise or lower the neckline or hem, but it was still basically the same thing until 1800.



*The "sacque" was still the same thing even made out of poor fabrics and worn to the "nubs" like with this Camp follower*

Girls wore the same as their mothers. Everybody wore the same thing, *actually*, as employees wore the hand-me-downs of their employers. Class status was very important at the time, and the design and quality of clothing was a way women showed whether they were a working girl or the wife of the Governor. While the shape and styling was the same for everyone, the quality of the materials and construction and the amount of wear on the clothes indicated class status.

A girl living in the woods with her mother might wear a robe made of linen dyed tan with walnut shells, while a fine English lady might dine in Boston wearing silk floral taffeta and silk ribbons from India.

Sometimes a short skirt would indicate high status, and sometimes a long one. A farmer's wife would wear one petticoat, and a fine lady three.



*The 1775 high fashion French fashion silhouette had a big head, VERY wide hips, and upside down cone shaped upper body, and a big bust*

All the women would, however, be wearing the same design to create a certain "silhouette". A "silhouette" is the recognizable shape of fashion as it changes, and the Late Colonial/Georgian silhouette was one of a big head, wide hips, upside down cone shaped upper body, and big bust.



*The little red cloak served the very poor to the very rich men, women, and children for almost 200 years*

One of the notable fashions of the era for every girl and woman of every class was the red cloak. The "Little Red Riding Hood" worn by girls to birthday parties on the lawn to serving girls.

### **The Dress**



*Actresses wearing "Robe a l'anglaise" in the movie "Belle"*

The main garment that started the era was called a "Sacque" or "Mantua", and it was limp. As the 18th century moved into the 1770's, the mantua was stiffened and decorated. The way it was put together changed a bit depending on the geographical region, but the overall look was the same.

In America there were two main versions before 1770: the "robe a la francaise" which was a gown fitted in front that had straight pleats down the back, and the "robe a l'anglaise" which had a fitted waist all around. The terminology is French, because France was starting the fashion trends at the time.



*(Left) historic re-enactors wearing reproduction "Robe a la Francaise"; (center) an authentic "Robe a l'anglaise"; (center right) portrait of Queen Sophie Charlotte of England in Court Dress "Robe a l'anglaise" with "enfoureau" back; (far right) "a l'anglaise" also worn by lower classes*

In 1770 the "robe a la polonnaise" was introduced. It had a fitted waist, but there was a front opening. This would have the skirts of an "open robe a l'anglaise" pulled up like drapery into big poufs at the side or back and was known as a "shepherdess look". Women wore this look with live sheep in the parks in Paris!



*Robe a la polonnaise*

### **1776 Specific**



*The year 1776 featured a somewhat square bodice with fancy stomacher and lacey sleeves*

In 1776 women and girls' necklines were wide and low and for mid to upper classes usually trimmed with fine lace or at least ruffles. There was a piece in the front of the bodice called a "stomacher" which had been used for the previous century as part of the undergarments. In 1776 it became sewn into an as part of the top of the dress and was often very decorated. As 1780 approached, many women added frills and pleats and fancy work on the bodice, sleeves, and along the front of the "robe" (skirt).



*Rich or poor, fitted or loose, it was still the same design*

Among others, the "open robe" gained popularity. This was a dress constructed like the "a l'anglaise", the "polonnaise", or "la francaise" which had an opening in the front of the skirt. This allowed an underskirt called an "outer petticoat" to show through, opening many design ideas for embellishment of the skirt opening and the underskirt that ranged from quilting to elaborate embroidery, to fancy scallops and ruffles.

Women and designers played with matching colors and contrasting colors so there was a huge variety of design possibility. The amount of frill and the type of fabric made the difference between Court and working woman's fashion. The "open robe" of the poor had the same construction and overall appearance, but was of coarser fabrics, more natural colors, and of a looser and more comfortable fit than high fashion of the day.

### Undergarments



*Underneath any ensemble of the 1770's, regardless of whether they were fancy or plain, were the basic undergarments the shift, stays, stockings, and at least one inner petticoat. The difference was quality of fabric, materials, construction, and fit*



*Paniers*

As the 1770's went on, the skirt went very wide and was supported by metal and cloth structures underneath called "**paniers**". The underskirt was quilted or embroidered and became quite fancy.



*"False Rumps"*

The "Panier" was mostly worn for very fancy occasions like going to court, so regular women and especially those in America abandoned them before the end of the War and wore "**bum rolls**" or "**false rumps**" instead. These were sausage like tubes that were mostly in the back over the rear end and were used to lift up the skirts in back.



*Shift*

The most basic undergarment was worn neck at the skin from top to bottom. It was called a **shift** for those speaking English and a **chemise** for the French. Later everyone called it a chemise and it was worn in various forms until about 1910.

In 1770 the shift was almost always of the finest linen available in a bleached white for most, and unbleached or even brown or the fabric's natural colors for others. The design was to accommodate how low the neckline was so it would or would not show depending on fashion of the day.

From 1740-1780 the shift had sleeves almost to or past the elbows and they often would show outside the sleeve of the robe (gown/dress). The neckline of the shift/chemise was somewhat fitted and often had a string to adjust how it lay around the neck. Some had tiny ruffles or lace put on the sleeve and neck edges so they would peek out of the dress.

After 1780 the shift's sleeves were made shorter to accommodate the short poufy sleeves of the main robe. Necklines and the overall width were cut bigger and wider then, and could adjust wide or narrow to accommodate changing necklines. Shifts were always hemmed 1-2" below the knee and had special construction that used every inch of the fabric wisely.



*Stays made you have good posture*

The main undergarment to make the silhouette of the day was called "**stays**", which were the predecessor to the corset. Since there were no bras or panties, they had to have something on! The purpose of stays was to trick the eye into seeing an upside cone.



*Girls wore stays starting at about age 6. Some were fancy like the real ones (left & center) and modern reproduction (right)*



*Museum examples of authentic women's fully boned stays made in America 1775-76 There were many designs and materials used, but pink was a favorite with brown coming a close 2nd*

**Stays** were made of many things, but most were of several layers of linen fabric or silk. They were worn over the entire upper body but under the arms so they made a woman stand up straight and tall.

In the 1770's stays did not have straps, and were made very stiff using "bones". **Stays** were somewhat tight but comfortable so women could work in them. Because most Colonial women worked outdoors, they had less stiffening than upper class women who stayed inside and didn't have to bend so much. Whale "baleen", the cartilage from a whale's mouth was a favorite stiffener for "boning". Today's "stays" use bamboo reeds, metal, or plastic boning.



*The petticoat worn under the robe but which you could see when you looked at a woman was called the "Outer Petticoat" (above) It was usually white or an easy to clean color since it got splattered*



*The "Inner Petticoat" was special and personal to the woman - just for her - and was often beautifully embroidered or quilted to her taste. It was the Inner Petticoat that kept her warm from drafts and kept people from looking up her skirts*

**Petticoat** was the name of both an under and top garment. It would be called a "skirt" today, and was worn around the waist and hooked onto the bottom of the stays so it wouldn't droop. The number and type of petticoat(s) indicated a woman's occupation, status, and class. The more she had, the higher class she was. Red flannel inner petticoats were a status symbol and a favorite of women of all classes.



*There were many designs and decoration for mobcaps, but the basic one was white with simple ruffles around the face like this "American Girl" actress (left) or Williamsburg historical interpreter (older woman). The Wheatley cap (far right), worn by some women at the time is available as a sewing pattern today*

**Mobcaps** were worn by every woman of all ages and classes all the time from the 1760's to 1800 (except when wearing a wig and ship on the head). Women had fancy caps with lace and complex pleats and ruffles to wear for dress up, and plain small linen ones for every day. The "Phillis Wheatley" mobcap has been made into a commercial pattern available to re-enactors today. It features complex pleats and ribbon decorations and lace that most caps did not have at this time.



*The Flat crowned straw bonnet was worn flat or bent in a variety of ways both up and down*

A very wide brimmed and **flat crowned hat**, called a "**Straw Bonnet**" was worn over the mobcap. These were bent and shaped in all directions and either worn plain or decorated with ribbons and flowers or embroidery. Most often the bonnet was worn over the mobcap and tipped precariously forward or backwards. The bonnet was pinned to the mobcap using a small hammered metal straight pin; predecessor to hatpins of the next century.



*While black was the favorite color for daily wear, women dyed their shoes or covered them with fabric to match their robe. These "mules" (right) were made by a cobbler who made a doll size pair first to test out the new design*

**Shoes** for men and women were very much alike and black leather was the most popular. They either tied or had buckles and straps. For high fashion wome would cover their shoes with the same fabric as their robe, or would wear coordinating silk. Heels varied in height depending on if a woman was working or for dress up. **Mules** were a shoe without a back with a small heel that were inexpensive and easy to work in.

### Prints & Colors



*Floral prints were very popular, as were tiny prints as seen in these real "open robes a l'anglaise" of the mid 1770's. The shorter version was called a "jacket" or "caracao" depending on its construction*

Most outfits were either plain in color or had tiny prints or delicate flowers. Stripes were very wide in the 1770's, and often had flowers in between the stripes. New trade with India brought in beautifully dyed prints and stiff silks, so someone with money could wear beautiful fabrics, while those who made their own fabrics or could not afford anything imported wore linen, wool, or flax.

Light colors were common for dress up, and darker colors for working. Generally as the 1700's progressed, the overall look went from the older, darker fabrics, to brighter and lighter ones. Petticoats ("skirts") were often of colors that contrasted with the main robe ("dress"); e.g. blue with gold or green with yellow. Petticoat and robe were sometimes of the same color, but one would be darker or lighter than the other like light green with dark green in the same hue.



*Queen Charlotte of England in Court clothing with her children show the light colors preferred for fancy occasions in the mid 1770's*

# Interesting Facts about Colonial Women's Clothing

- Hair worn by Royalty at this time rose up to 36", the highest ever and since in history
- To get the "poufs" in Court dress, women stuffed paper under their skirts, making the era notable for "rustling noises"
- 6 times hand me downs were common
- The insides of clothing were sewn very messy as they were worked over so many times and all the time sewing was done by hands
- Only men were tailors at the time because the stays required strong hands and the men wouldn't let women into their Guilds
- Every girl was taught to sew, but she did more remaking clothing than creating it



*Women and girl historic interpreters in authentically reproduced costume ensembles*

## Men's Clothing



Men and boys during colonial times dressed differently than they do today. The clothing Colonials wore everyday would be considered hot, heavy, and uncomfortable now. Predominantly made of natural fabrics like linen, silk, wool, and a thick type of wool used in military uniforming that came from England called "Kerseymer", most of what men wore was of fabric that weighed a lot.

Men and boys in order to be fashionable also wore many layers all the time. What they wore though really depended on the same as women: what they knew about, liked, could get, and could afford.

### OUTERWEAR



*(Left) Authentic beaver skin tricorn hat; (Right) Re-enactor in reproduction wool felt tricorn*

Starting at the top was a "**Tricorn**" hat. Colonial frontier trappers made a good living selling beaver fur around the world to be made into hats, as most military and fashionable hats in the 1770's were made of wool or beaver. The Tricorn had 3 turned up parts that protected the person from the sun but also worked like gutters to send water away from his face. They were easy to carry in one hand too, and could easily be fit to stay nicely on the head and not blow off in a strong wind.



*Even boys wore wigs*

**Wigs** were very popular for men in the middle of the 1700's in particular. Wealthy men would wear giant wigs with long hair, curls, and ponytails. King Louis XIII of France had started the fashion trend 100 years earlier.

The first wigs were made from goat or horse hair and because they were never washed they smelled terrible, and attracted lice. To combat the smell and the bugs, the wearer would "powder" his wig using finely ground starch scented with lavender. Mice loved them.



*John Hancock in his powdered wig*

No matter how old a man was or what his natural hair color or shape was, all the wigs looked the same and were white or gray. Wigs were associated with specific professionals like law or education, but most had no meaning at all. Ones closer to the end of the century were made of the hair of humans, horses, goats, and yaks. The style changed constantly, and stayed popular with all men until about 1800 when young men refused to wear them.



*Banyans were based on the Asian kimono like clothing*

A **Banyan coat** was a loose robe worn by men of wealth that were fashioned like a giant "T" and were worn when a man wanted to be comfortable or was in private. They were of patterned materials and were of all types of fabrics and materials so they could be cool or warm.



*Sailors and Boy with Monmouth Caps; Patterns to make reproductions today*

A **Monmouth or Monmoth Cap** was a small knitted cap worn by sailors and people who worked hard outdoors, especially in the northern Colonies and on open waters where it was cold. Knitting was a common pastime for sailors who sold the caps on the docks when they were ashore.



*General Wolfe's Field Cloak*

**Cloaks** were also called "**rockets**". **Cloaks** were worn by men, women, and children throughout the 18th century. They were usually circular if you laid them on the floor, and made of thick wool. A favorite color was scarlet, although there were often plaids, tan, black, and greens. Most were of natural colors, although many were dyed for military uniforming. They had a collar at the neck, an (optional) cape over the shoulders for extra protection from rain and snow, and hung down to the knee or below the knee.



*John Singleton Copley in Frock and Waistcoat*

A **Coat or Frock Coat** was the uppermost layer of a man's "suit" which was worn over a waistcoat and breeches. Through the fashion era, the cut and name changed often. It was a fairly straight and loose garment with slight fullness at the knee with "skirts" falling into folds over the backside and the hips. By the 1770's a "frock" was replacing the full-skirted coat though, and the term "Frock" was used to describe a narrower and straighter garment. Today "frock" general refers to a clergyman's garment.



*Pink was a favorite color for men's waistcoats, and silk the favorite fashion for high status. Many were highly embellished and embroidered*

The **Waistcoat** was worn under the Coat and over a Shirt. It was a tight fitting vest made from most any fabric. It could be plain or very decorated with lace, embroidery or tassels. A man was never seen in public without his waistcoat or he would be considered "undressed". Waistcoats of the 1770's were worn to the upper part of the thigh and had a "V" opening below the stomach. They were the most elaborate of all men's clothing. When worn without a coat and for working, they were called "**Jackets**" instead of "Waistcoats" and were the outer layer.

#### NECKWEAR



*Olaudah Equiano, Abolitionist wearing a cravat*

A Colonial man always wore some sort of neck cloth, whether they were trying to be in fashion or just working. The "**cravat**" was the most popular type. It was a narrow length of white linen that would have tassels, lace, fringe, or knots on the end. It was wrapped around the neck and loosely tied in front.



*Toussant L'Ouverture in military suit with Stock*

A **stock** was the very most formal neckwear, worn for events requiring the height of fashion or in military uniforms. It was always of very fine white linen and had pleats that fit beneath the chin. Sometimes there was elaborate lace and ruffle down the front below the neck. For military it was of black leather or woven horsehair. For the clergy the white linen stock had bands added. All of these were buckled behind the neck of the wearer.



*Neck handkerchiefs worn by drummers*

A **Neck handkerchief** was an informal sort of neckwear worn while sporting, by workers, and by slaves. It was most often a square folded and tied around the neck, made of linen, cotton, or silk. They were white, plain colors, woven checks, stripes, or prints.

## **BASIC & UNDERGARMENTS**



*Shirts were long and worn to sleep in; also wearing neck scarf*

A **shirt** was usually the only underwear that a man would wear. It was usually made of white or unbleached natural colored linen fabric and was long all the way to cover the knees. A man's best shirt for fancy wear had ruffles ("ruffs") at the wrist and breast. A worker's shirt would be of unbleached linen or small patterned checks or stripes. A man might wear his shirt to sleep in.



*Few examples of hunting shirts exist today*

A **Hunting Shirt** meant a protective type of garment that was worn at first only in the North American frontiers and was similar to what European wagon masters or farmers at the time wore. It came to represent the Patriots during the Revolutionary War and different companies would have mottos such as "Liberty or Death" or the name of their military group embroidered on them.

While the Hunting Shirt is most associated with the expansion of the country west, it is historically correctly considered the "uniform" of the Patriots. Unfortunately very few examples survived to look at them, so the actual design is still unknown.



*The same kind of breeches were worn by men and boys starting at age 3-6, whenever the parents decided a boy was ready to "breach"*

**Breeches** were pants that stopped just below the knee. They were the main lower body garment, and the design changed through the century. Early in the 1700's breeches could barely be seen below the Waistcoat or Coat. Later they were more noticeable, especially because the coats were worn more open so that breeches could be seen in the front even if they weren't long enough to be seen below the coat in the back.



*"Fall Front" breeches had a flap and pockets. They buttoned at the waist and knee to allow a very tight fit that revealed the entire shape of the leg*

There was a flap called a "fall front" in front at the waistband that buttoned up to be able to put the breeches on or take them off easily. Pockets were built alongside the flap.

By 1770 **breeches** became very tight and revealed the shape of the leg from knee to waist. They were worn by every man of every class and were made in silk, cotton, linen, wool, knit, and leather. The Founding Fathers wore breeches at the knee held up by buttons or drawstrings. Today they are still worn for horse riding events by both men and women.



*Sailor in Trousers and Neck Scarf*

**Trousers** were what we call today pants that went all the way to the ankle, and were only worn by sailors and laborers. They were cut straight and stopped above the shoe at the ankle. They were almost always made of thick and durable linen.



*Leggings were worn while working, in the military, or for sport*

**Leggings or Spatterdashes** covered the lower leg of a man to keep him warm and protect his legs while working at jobs that things could hit him, or riding a horse. They were usually of thick wool or linen cloth or leather and were worn during sports, laboring, and in the military.



*This is the well put together fashionable ensemble of the mid 1770's*

**Stockings** covered the rest of the leg from knee to toe. They were worn by both men and women. The "knitting frame" (machine) was improved during the mid 1700's so that handknitters were put out of business.

Fashionable stockings were made of silk or cotton and were white and sometimes were decorated with white or single solid colored embroidered patterns at the ankle called "clocks". Worker's stockings were made mostly of wool and some rough linen, with blue and gray the most common.



*Black leather shoe reproductions (left) with historic buckles; authentic boots from mid-1700's (center), Major Hartley in riding boots (right)*

**Shoes** for both men and women were in great variety of styles and qualities. Low heeled shoes were considered fashionable and were of soft leather. Black was the most popular, and other colors were seen only once in a while. Buckles were the most commonly used way to keep them on, but many had ties.

There were many kinds of **boots** too, but they were not worn in public for social events, only for hunting, riding, or working. Boots were specific to the task at hand; e.g. riding, working, or military. Because "left and right" shoes had not been invented, boots and shoes could be very uncomfortable.



*"suit in ditto"*

A **suit** is what we recognize today as a man's 3 or 4-piece ensemble consisting of trouser/pant/breeches, shirt, waistcoat, and coat/jacket. The shorter waistcoat, breeches, and coat of 1774-76 became known as official "formal dress" when worn all together. To wear all pieces that matched was called "suit in ditto", but more often a man would choose different waistcoats that did not match the coat and breeches, but coordinated with them.



*J.B. Belley in coordinated but unmatching Suit about 1780*

## Interesting Facts About Men's Clothing

- Wealthy men padded their shoulders with rags or horsehair to look bigger
- When a boy turned 5 or 6 he would begin dressing exactly as his father
- Servants often wore blue
- The word "bigwig" comes from influential men wearing Big Wigs
- It was considered crazy for a man to cut his hair and for a woman to wear breeches



*Even very young boys wore suits*

## Difference Between 1770's Adult & Children's Clothing

Families needed children to grow up fast and to do jobs to contribute, so their clothing was aimed at making the child capable and independent as fast as possible.

When a child was little, their clothes fastened in the back and they had "guiding strings" or "lead strings" attached to the shoulders so parents could help a child learn to walk. Sometimes they were used to control a child who was running around.



*Leading strings on little girls' dresses in museum displays*

In the beginning of the 18th Century, babies were swaddled using stays and similar wrapping garments like what we now call "thundervests". Even young children wore types of stays because the parents thought it would make them braver and more independent.

Through the 18th century those kinds of things were discarded in favor of dressing children from a very young age to look like their parents. Girls wore dresses with bodices much like their mothers, but sometimes they still had leading strings on a girl's dress as a symbol of youth that she wasn't a woman yet.

Both boys and girls wore stays, especially when dressed up because the parents thought they made good posture and supported their backs. Not all children, especially those of the labor class wore them though.



*These children of 1755 were dressed and expected to behave like adults including perfect posture*

By 1760 there was a philosophical movement for children to wear less restrictive clothing, Girls wore "frocks" with sashes. Boys wore suits with long trousers rather than knee breeches almost 20 years before men would change to the longer version. When a boy went from skirts to short pants sometime between the age of 3 and 6, it was called "breeching" and was an important step to becoming a man.



*Children's shoes were much like their parents' ; boy's (left) and girl's (right)*

## More Re-enactors & Real Girls

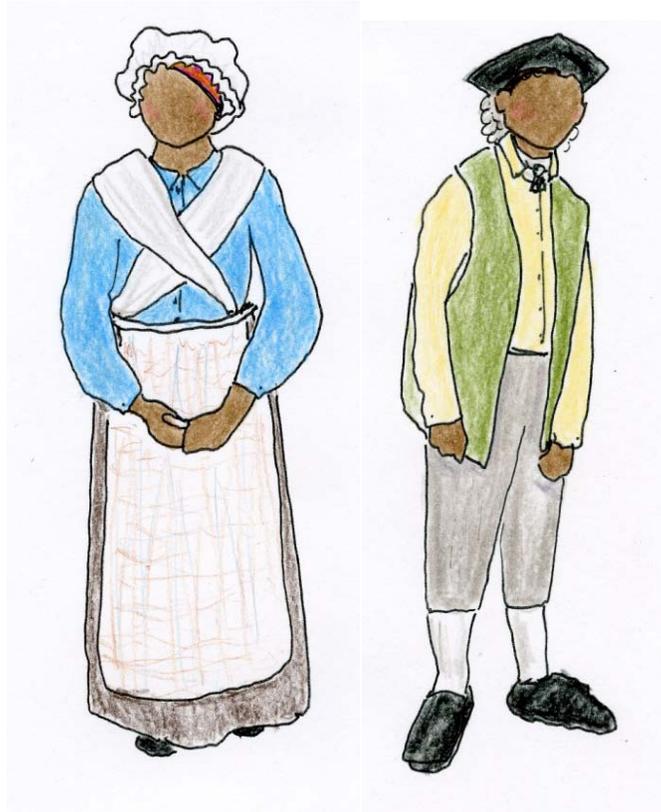


## More Re-enactors & Real Boys



# Dress Like a Colonial!

## PROJECTS



### WHAT YOU WILL NEED

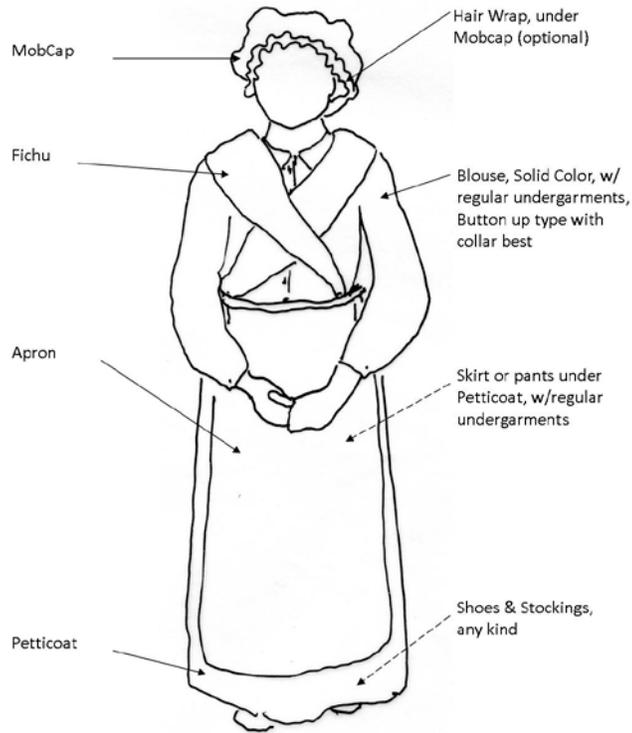
#### Supplies for the Group

- Measuring Tapes (about 1/3 children), flexible cloth or plastic kind used for sewing
- Pencils, Pens (the kind with a clip)
- Glue, the kind that works on fabric
- Yardstick, Rulers (need both; rulers not long enough for some measurements) 1 /1 or 2 children
- Scissors that will cut fabric; best are shears that bend for flat table cutting 1/child
- Fabric & other supplies itemized by project below
- Flat cutting surface as large as possible
- Sewing needles; tapestry needles are larger and easier to handle but be sure to get pointed (not blunt) Be sure needles have big enough "eyes" to thread through whichever thread or floss you choose, so best to have an assortment
- Sewing thread or embroidery floss, thin but strong string, yarn. Heavy duty craft or regular weight sewing thread is best
- Straight pins for sewing Challenging or Advanced projects
- Sewing machine that can do straight stitch for Challenging or Advanced projects (optional - all can be sewn by hand)

# PROJECTS FOR GIRLS

## To Make:

## From Home:



*To complete the look above you will also need from home:*

- Shoes, socks - any (black shoes or leather best; no or low heels)
- Long skirt or pants/trousers (ankle length skirt best if not making a petticoat; pants go under)
- Blouse plain & solid color (not t-shirt or pullover, but something that buttons up and has a collar of some sort; print or plain if print, small pattern design preferred)
- Headwrap - scarf, fabric, bandanna, premade. Any color or pattern you like but avoid intense colors. Aim for solid, stripe, tiny print and colors that are found in nature

# Girl Basic

## Plain Ruffled MobCap

*MobCaps were worn by every woman and girl of every age all the time. This meant there were daily ones, ones to sleep in, ones to wear to parties, and most of them were white. A few had elaborate pleats or bows, but most were very simple and plain. A few for low and rural women were of unbleached fabric with very faint stripes but this was unusual. Ruffles and caps were fairly small in the mid 1770's and then they would get HUGE by the 1790's.*



### Supplies:

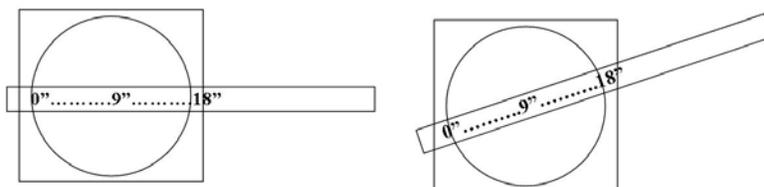
- Long ruler or yardstick
- Pencil
- Optional triangle with right angle (to square fabric)
- Needles; different sizes to try
- Sewing Shears for fabric

### Materials:

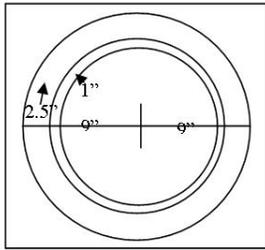
- 1 yd fabric 45" wide will yield 4 caps
- (18"x18" square per cap)
- Plain white or ivory very thin handkerchief cotton, linen, or similar. Aim for somewhat sheer fabric. Delicate stripes or patterns OK if very subtle
- Thread, any type good, test with different needs (embroidery floss, yarn "Ok" too depending on fabric) (Test it on a scrap to see if it tears the fabric or is too big to go through the weave. You want your needle and thread to not break the fabric fibers, but to poke between them)

### Instructions:

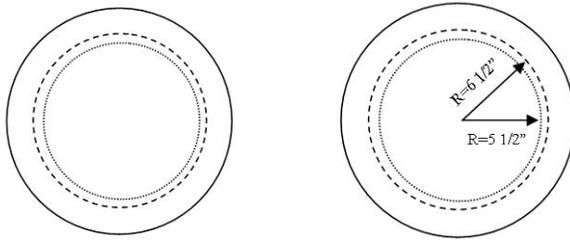
1. Iron fabric if needed so it is flat
2. Lay out flat on big surface where you can reach all around
3. Lay yardstick on fabric alongside the woven edge ("selvedge") so the "0" is still on the fabric.
4. Find the number "9" on the stick. Put a light pencil mark or a pin at the "9". Spin the yardstick around the "9" to make sure the "0" never goes off the fabric:



5. Spin the yardstick, making very LIGHT pencil dots every 2-3" at the "0" and at the "9" until you have drawn enough dots to make a circle.
6. Connect the dots by drawing a light line

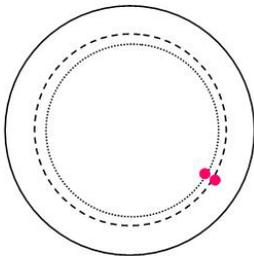


7. Repeat the process, only this time make your marks at the 2 1/2" and 16 1/2" marks instead of "0" and "9"
8. Repeat yet another time, only this time make your marks at 3 1/2" and 15 1/2".
9. Cut out on the biggest circle you have drawn, using sewing shears
10. You should have a big circle of fabric with two circles drawn in the center of it.

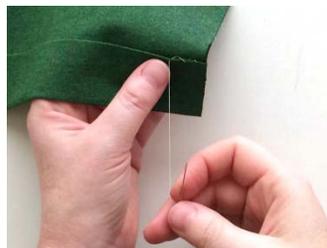


11. Thread a needle with thread (best, can also use yarn, embroidery floss), making sure there is enough thread to go all the way around one of the drawn circles PLUS another 6" on each end (add 12"). You can either lay it on the marks to measure, measure the marks, or use mathematics to calculate the circumference of one circle with a radius of 6 1/2" and another circle with a radius of 5 1/2"

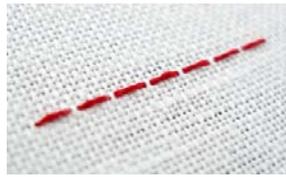
12. Put a big dot on each of the circles as shown



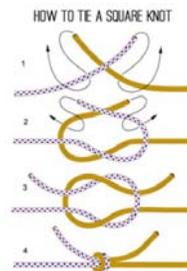
13. (Optional) Hem stitch the outside edges using a hemstitch. You can also glue it or machine stitch it. You can always do this after the cap is all done too. It's easier to hold at this point.



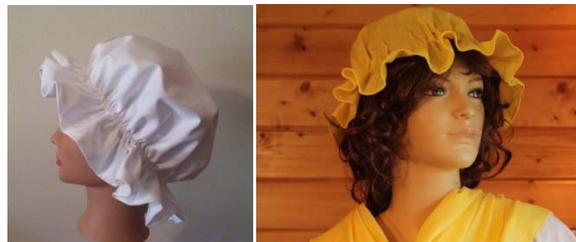
14. Using a "running stitch" (below) go in and out and in and out, catching up 2-6 threads of the fabric each time. Start at the dot and stay on the one circle until you have sewn all the way around to the dot again. Be careful not to pull the thread all the way out (make a knot if you know how), and when you get to the end, take the needle off and leave the big string hanging loose



14. Do the same thing with the other circle until you have two circles sewn and 4 strings hanging out.
15. Grabbing all 4 strings, very GENTLY so the thread doesn't break!!! (or you have to start all over again!) pull all the strings and push the fabric down until it scrunches up and looks like a little bag.
16. Pull the fabric back a bit so you can put it on your head.
17. It doesn't have to fit down over your head, just on top of it.
18. When you are happy with that, tie a square knot with each pair of strings:



19. Trim them off so there's still a lot of string left in case you need to change it sometime.
20. Move the fabric around on the strings until you get the shape you like. Turn inside out to wear.
21. Use bobby pins to pin it to your hair - done! Depending on how straight your stitching is, and how far apart your sewing circles end up, it will look more or less like this:



#### HINTS:

- Put pencil lines and dots on LIGHTLY. It will wash out, but then you will have to iron.
- Wait until both inside circles are completely sewn before pulling the threads

#### NOTES:

- You can make this smaller as lots of sizes were appropriate to 1770. Try 12" diameter circle with 1 1/2" and 1" inside circles (instead of 2 1/2", 1"), especially good for a smaller or young girl
- You can also do just one inside sewing circle on a smaller cap like one with 12" diameter, but it will lay flat on the head and not pouf up.

# Fichu (Scarf)



## Supplies:

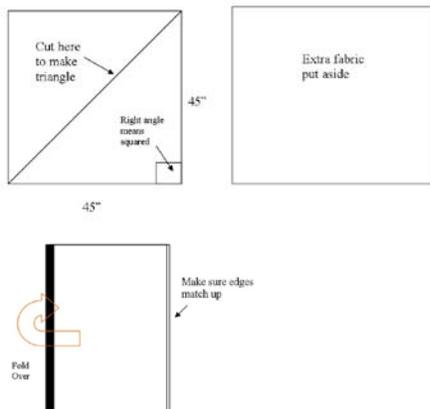
- Long ruler or yardstick
- Pencil
- Optional triangle with right angle (to square fabric) or "T-square"
- Needles; different sizes to try
- Sewing shears for fabric
- Same fabric as apron is nice

## Materials:

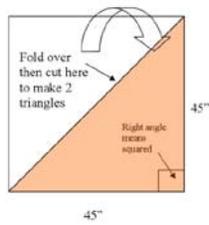
- Fabric comes in 44-45", 54", 60" widths. 44-45" will be easiest for this
- 1 1/3 yards (about 48") of 45" wide fabric will yield 2 fichus or one fichu and one apron (best)
- Plain white or ivory very thin handkerchief cotton, linen, or similar. Aim for somewhat sheer fabric. Delicate stripes or patterns OK if very subtle
- Thread, any type good, test with different needs (embroidery floss, yarn "Ok" too depending on fabric) (Test it on a scrap to see if it tears the fabric or is too big to go through the weave. You want your needle and thread to not break the fabric fibers, but to poke between them)

## Instructions:

1. The woven edge of fabric is called the "selvedge". Lay fabric flat on a very big surface where you can cut, and look for the selvedge.
2. Near one end of the fabric, and an inch or two away from the cut edge, make a mark on the selvedge with your pencil
3. You are now going to make a square out of your fabric. If your fabric is 45" wide, measure down the selvedge at your mark until you reach 45" and make a mark. (For wider fabrics. mark at 45" anyway).
4. Using a T-Square, square, or following the lines of the grain of the fabric, draw a line with your pencil "perpendicular" to the selvedge into the fabric. Remember, you are trying to make a 45" square.
5. Cut across the fabric on your line. You will now have a right angle like this:



6. Fold over on the triangle line. Don't worry if it's not perfectly straight



7. Once you have your triangle, you can hem it as with the cap above, glue it, or leave it unfinished.

8. Wear it around your neck and crossover the front of your body. Tuck it in to your apron, skirt, pants, belt, or use dressmaking pins to pin it to your clothes



## A Simpler Fichu

Using an old curtain or lace fabric with an edge on it makes a lovely fichu quickly and easily. Typically white, working women did use heavier fabrics and earthy colors, but most typically they were sheer and delicate. Hem your edges right away or wait 'til later and do elaborate embroidery.

-or-

Buy premade lace that comes by the yard. 8-12" wide with both ends finished ("lace trim" or "trim lace"), found in the wedding supplies at craft and fabric stores. Cut it 40-45" long. Hem the ends so they are finished with any stitch. Pin to petticoat or tuck in dress, pants, belt, or apron same as above.



# Apron

*Sheer, lacey, delicate white aprons were worn for women of high class and for dress up, while heavy fabrics, textures, patterns, and earthy colors were worn by farm wives and working women.*



## Supplies:

- Long ruler or yardstick
- Seamstress measuring tape
- Pencil
- Optional triangle with right angle (to square fabric)
- Needles; different sizes to try
- Sewing shears for fabric
- Medium size safety pin

## Materials:

NOTE: You can use the 2nd triangle from making the fichu (steps 1-7 above) and "start with a triangle" and then go to #1 below to complete, -or-

Start with new fabric and "start with a rectangle" at #5 below.

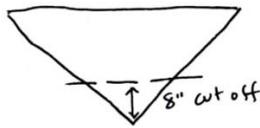
-or-

*If you don't want to do anything else at all with this, you can wear the triangle just as it is! Just wrap the longest edge around your waist, and take the long pointed ends and tie them in back of you. (You might still want to cut off the point like #1 below, or cut a shape you like out of it though).*

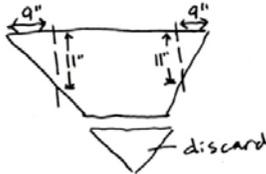
- Use the 2nd triangle from making the Fichu - or - choose new fabric and cut a triangle following instructions 1-7 for fichu above and pick up at #1 here below
- Or - if starting from scratch - make a rectangle. If 45" wide fabric, need 1 yard; 1/2 yard 60" wide
- Same fabric as fichu nice. Lace with at least one finished edge very nice
- 1 1/3 yards or 48" approximate/apron (45"x45")
- Plain white or ivory very thin handkerchief cotton, linen, or similar. Aim for somewhat sheer fabric. Delicate stripes or patterns OK if very subtle
- 1/2" cotton twill tape enough to go 3x waist measurement in inches (about 90")(2-3 yards/fichu) or same length ribbon, cord, thick string
- Thread, any type good, test with different needs (embroidery floss, yarn "Ok" too depending on fabric) (Test it on a scrap to see if it tears the fabric or is too big to go through the weave. You want your needle and thread to not break the fabric fibers, but to poke between them)

## Instructions for apron starting from Triangle Fabric:

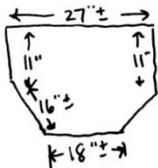
1. Make 45" right triangle as per instructions 1-7 for fichu above EXCEPT do not finish edges!



- If you are short, cut off 12" and give your discard triangle to a boy to make a kerchief out of. Otherwise, keep going.
- Measuring from the points of your triangle, in 9" on each end, cut them off perpendicular to the horizontal cut you just made.



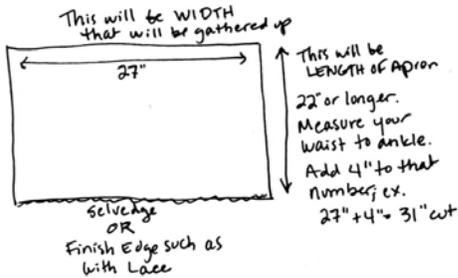
- It will look like this shape. Don't worry if your measurements aren't exact, or if the edges aren't straight:



**5. TO START FROM A RECTANGLE (if you are working from a triangle, skip this and go to step 8)**

Cut a rectangle from your fabric, using the selvedge (woven edge) as one of your edges. Measure along the selvedge.

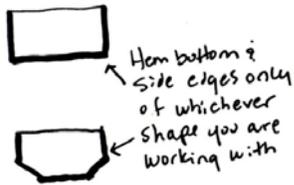
NOTE: if you have stripes, make sure they are going up and down (waist to feet). You may have to adjust how your rectangle is laid out on the fabric.



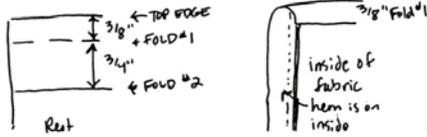
- Measure 27" or more along the selvedge (the longer, the more gathers and fullness it will have) and cut at those spots. That will be the WIDTH of your apron fabric, but not the finished width. the finished width will depend on how much you scrunch it up.

7. Measure from your waist to 6" above your ankle. Take that number and add 4". That will be the LENGTH of your apron.

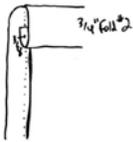
8. **BOTH RECTANGLE & TRIANGLE FINISH THE SAME FROM HERE.** You may make any kind of hem you like on all the edges, or leave it unfinished. It is fine to glue it if you are not good at sewing. Finish/hem just the bottoms and sides and not the tops.



9. Fold #1 down 3/8" on the WRONG side of the fabric all the way across the top, the edge you didn't hem:



10. Fold #2 AGAIN but this time 3/4" down in the SAME direction (to the wrong/inside) You are making a "casing" (narrow tube to put something inside):

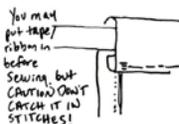


11. Iron or smash flat your two turns. Sew it down FLAT.



12. Measure your waist. Take that number times 3 (ex. 20" waist x 3 = 60"). Cut one long piece of twill (ribbon, string, yarn, etc.) about that long.

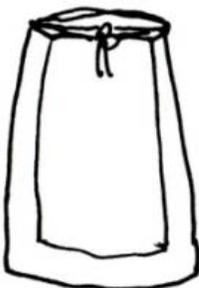
13. If you want to put the tape inside the tube and THEN stitch, you can do that if you are careful not to get the tape caught in the stitching.



14. Otherwise, put a safety pin on the end of one piece of tape. Feeling it (you won't be able to see it), push the pin along the channel/tube until it comes out the other end. The tape should go with it. Make sure the tape stays flat in the tube (doesn't get twisted). Try not to pull the tape all the way through or you will have to start all over.

15. Leave the extra string hanging out both ends. Pull on the tape until both ends measure about the same. It doesn't have to be exact.

16. To put it on, hold apron to front of your body. Take both strings to the back. Switch hands and cross over. Bring both strings back to the front. Tie a nice bow in front:



# Girl Challenging Petticoat



*This can be either an undergarment that is not seen, or the main "skirt" of your ensemble. It can be very fancy and decorated, or of very plain and basic design and fabric. Instructions here are best done on a sewing machine because the seams are very long and will take a very long time by hand. In the 1770's they did do them by hand, but with very big stitches.*

*Authentic petticoats tied at the sides, and there was a special way of tying them that kept them from sagging in center front and center back. We have simplified for a back tie here, but ask Silhouettes if you would like instructions for the accurate design which is not that much harder to make (but harder to dress in).*

## Supplies:

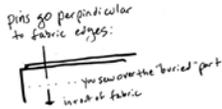
- Long ruler or yardstick
- Seamstress measuring tape
- Pencil
- Optional triangle with right angle (to square fabric)
- Needles; different sizes to try
- Sewing shears for fabric
- Thread to match fabric
- Sewing pins - long thin ones good
- Medium size safety pin
- Sewing machine (trained previously to use it)
- Iron (trained previously to use it)

NOTE: Make sure if your fabric has a pattern where there is a distinct "up and down", make sure your tops and bottoms match of your big pieces

## Materials:

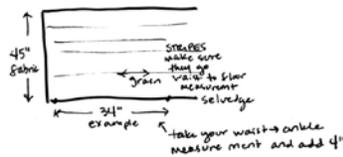
- Fabric: Enough to make a rectangle: measurement of your waist times 2 + 8" (example 30" waist x 2 = 60" + 8" = cut 68") by measurement of your waist to ankle +4" (example 30"+4"=34"). In our example we need a piece of fabric 68"x34"- or 2 yds of 36-45" wide fabric
- Best! use 60" wide fabric (requires 1 seam). If you use 45" wide fabric you have to make 2 seams

- Standard fabric for an average woman or girl: (use anything! silk, pretty cotton, brocade, quilted, linen, plain): 54-60" wide fabric x 1 1/2 yards or 45" wide x 3 yards (only 2 1/2 yards needed if you are shorter than 5'0" overall)
- 1/2"-3/4" wide twill tape, ribbon, string, cord, binding strips, etc. Length 2x your waist measurement - or - standard 2-3 yards total length

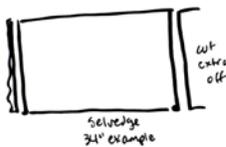


**Instructions:**

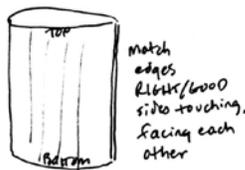
1. Lay your fabric out flat on a large surface. Watching out for stripes and patterns, mark/note which end will be the top (at your waist) and which will be the hem.
2. Using the selvedge (woven) edge to start measurements, put dots on the edge for the measurement that will be your waist to hem:
3. Measure your waist to ankle. Add 4" to that number. Measure along the selvedge (woven) edge that amount; example 30" waist to ankle + 4" = 34":



4. Trim the end using T-square or angle to be square. Do the same to cut off at your measurement dot:



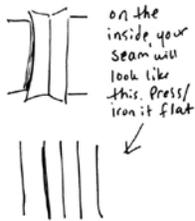
5. If you have only 45" wide fabric. Repeat 1-4 so that you end up with two panels
6. Flip your 1 (or 2) panels around so you know where the tops are. Make sure they match, and that if you have a pattern the top is on the top. Mark this with a pin or a small pencil mark on the edge on each (both) panels.
7. If you have one panel, fold it into a tube, making sure the top that you have marked and the bottom are left free. Right/good sides together.



8. Sew it using running stitch and reinforce tops and bottoms. IF YOU HAVE 2 PANELS, do the same for both:

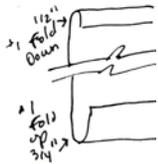


9. You have just made a tube. This is absolutely historically correct. Your seams will look like this. Put the tube over an ironing board and iron flat:

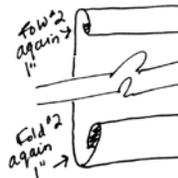


10. Turn your tube inside out and be sure you still know which is the top and which is the bottom. It's easiest to do this on the ironing board and to iron when you turn the edges down.

11. On both top and bottom, the edges that are not finished, fold in (and iron) 1/2":



12. On the top, fold it again to the inside but this time 1". On the bottom, fold it again to the inside (wrong side/back side) of fabric 1" or more if you want it shorter. This is a good time to measure yourself again and measure it to decide what you want the final length to be:

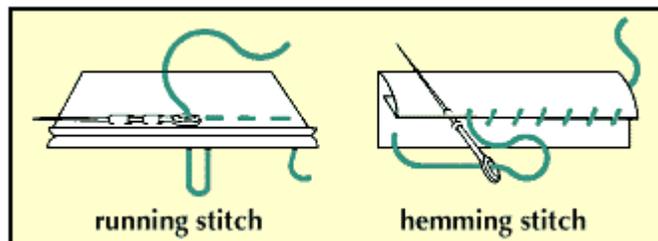
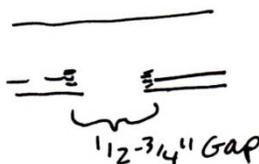


13. Iron your folds flat, and sew. Top running stitch (straight stitch on machine), and bottom whipstitch or hem stitch (see samples at end of instructions).



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you have only one panel (and so one seam). Start and end your top running stitch at the seam. You must leave at least 1/2" GAP there so you can get the tape/ribbon in!

If you have two panels (and so 2 seams), fold the big tube on top of itself so the seams are laying on top of each other. Smash it flat. Pick one folded edge from where you smashed it. This will be center back (and your seams will be at the sides, the side seams). You must leave at least a 1/2" GAP at this center back "in the middle of nowhere" spot for the tape/ribbon to come out. You must reinforce (backstitch) really well because you'll be pulling on it every time you put it on and tie it.



# PROJECTS FOR BOYS

## To Make:

Wig

Cravat (tie) or  
Handkerchief Scarf

Waistcoat (vest)

## From Home:

Tricorne Hat, buy at  
costume store  
(optional)

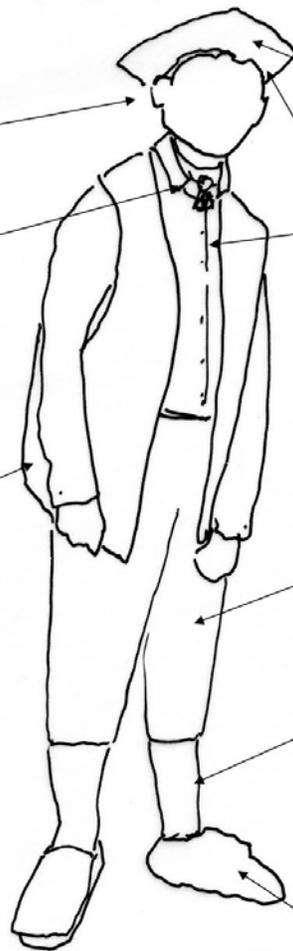
Monmoth (stocking) cap  
(not shown) Brown, red,  
yellow knit cap plain with  
no turned up edge

Shirt, plain color cotton  
with collar & buttons best

Pants, Khakis, loose fit  
best, no jeans. Shorts  
if go to or below  
knees. No intense or  
shiny colors. Regular  
undergarments

Knee or long socks,  
white, black, brown,  
yellow best

Any shoes, black or  
brown leather dress  
shoes best. Tall boots  
great



To complete the look above you will also need from home:

- Shoes or boots (short, knee high, or over the knee)
- Stockings that go up to or over your knee. Any color but white, yellow, or black preferred
- Long trousers (you will stuff the legs into your socks, so the narrower the better)(loose fit in the body is better than a tight fitting jean or legging)
- Shirt (any kind, plain white, gray, tan, beige, and solid with no color and no print best)
- Tricorne hat from a costume store. (You may be able to make one on your own out of construction paper, but that project is not included here)
- "Monmouth Cap" basic knit stocking cap in brown, red, yellow - plain without the bottom turned up. No flop. Fits tight to the head and covers only half the ears. We have knitting patterns for those who would like to make one. Worn instead of Tricorne by laborers and especially sailors and dock workers who knit them

# Boy Basic

## Cravat (necktie)



*Lessons: measurement, "selvedge", tying knots, simple seam, reading drawings, multiplication & division*

*While fancy gentlemen used silk or fine fabrics, this can be made from "dirty" linen or plain cotton - always white or ivory and plain (no lace - that's another thing). It can be very long or just long enough to go around the neck 3 times. Authentically there should be a little fringe or trim at the ends, but not for lower class. Fancy ones had finished edges, but most were just raw material, or had a little hand hem. The trick is getting a square knot right in front; takes practice.*

### Supplies:

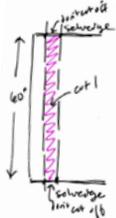
Sewing shears  
Yardstick  
Pencil  
Needle assortment  
Mirror (to practice knots)

### Materials:

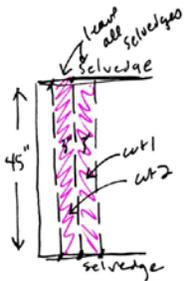
Fabric: 45-60" wide 1/4 yard (or less) long thin scraps, very lightweight handkerchief type linen, cotton lawn, blend, silk, satin - must be WHITE or IVORY (rarely red or yellow). Somewhat sheer, easy to tie  
Thread: to match

### Instructions:

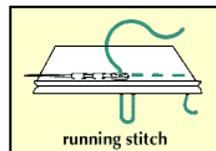
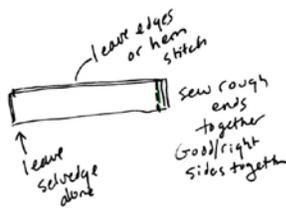
1. Measure your neck. Multiply 3.5 x your neck; example 12" neck = 42. Add another 6-10"; example 48"
2. Lay out your fabric flat on the table.
3. If you have 45" or less wide fabric, cut two pieces the whole width of the fabric:
4. **If you have 60" fabric**, cut one piece the whole width of the fabric and **skip to #9**:



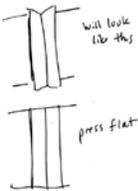
- For fabrics less than 60" wide: Take your measurement from #1 and divide it by 2; example above 48" divide 2 - 24". Add 1/2" to this; example 24 1/2"
- FOR 45" FABRIC ONLY (for which you have 2 strips). Cut the ROUGH EDGES (IMPORTANT, Don't cut the selvedge edge!) so you have two pieces the measurement you got in #5 above; in our example that's two at 24 1/2":



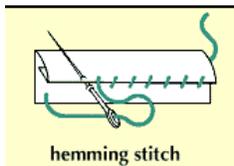
- Sew right/good sides together of the raw small/tiny edge at 1/2" in from the edge a seam. Use a running stitch.



- Iron it flat:



- ALL FABRIC WIDTHS CONTINUE HERE. No need to finish the edges, although you may do a zig zag or hemstitch. Historically there is a narrow hem stitch which is rather difficult to do. Contact Silhouettes if you have advanced skills and would like to do it. Otherwise leave all your edges raw!

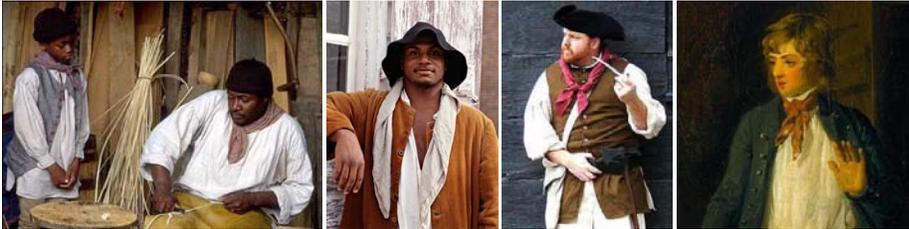


- With this long skinny strip - put the seam (or fold the 60" one in half and note the spot) - on the back of your neck.
- Using one hand on each of the strips, bring the strips around the front of you and cross over at the front of your neck.
- Take to the back again and cross over back there, switching hands.
- Bring the now rather short ends to the front of your neck and tie a knot - any knot you choose. Examples of possible ways to tie are below. Which you can do depends on your skills and how long the final tails are after you've gone around your neck 3 times:



# Neck Scarf/Kerchief

The difference between the Cravat and the Neck Scarf is the Cravat is a formal wear and high class accessory. The Scarf is daily wear used by those who labor or during sport. The Neck Scarf had a function to keep dirt out of your face and mouth, or to absorb or wipe up sweat. Notably worn by tradesmen and sailors, it was tied usually in a square knot so it wouldn't fall off, while the Cravat was done artistically. The Neck Scarf was just tied, the Cravat went around and around. A gentleman would have both in his wardrobe to be worn at very different times.



*Lessons: Very simple math, triangles, measuring tools, reading instructions, relating drawings to real objects, skills at knots and tying*

## Supplies:

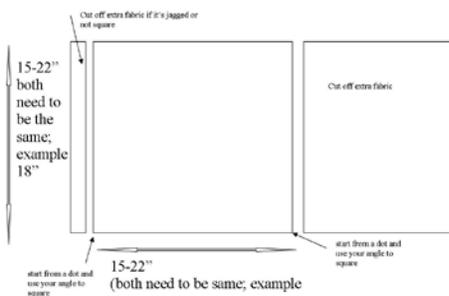
- Sewing Shears
- Yardstick
- Needles assorted (optional)
- Thread (optional)
- Angle or T-square
- Pencil

## Materials:

- 1/2 yard of anything very lightweight and/or sheer. Handkerchief linen. Only in solid colors of earth tones like blues, browns, greens, deep pinks - usually brown or blue or unbleached linen - rarely white (wouldn't stay white long)
- Thread to match (optional)

## Instructions:

1. Lay fabric flat on large surface
2. Using the "selvedge" edge as a guide, measure 15-22" along it. 18" recommended for short scarf



3. NOTE: 15" square will fit a 10" neck with a small knot and not much left over
4. Hem or leave unfinished the edges.
5. Fold in half to make a triangle to wear, or hang around your neck loosely:



*(Almost the only way to tie. A square knot - high or low, tight or loose, but a square knot)*

# Wig

There are wonderful "George Washington" wigs available for about \$10 + shipping on the internet from costume stores. We recommend investing in one of these. There are several specifically fit to children.

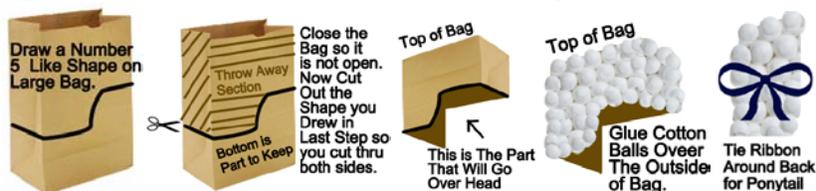
If you would like to make your own, there are videos on YouTube for how to make one from cotton balls, a sheet of fabric, a balloon, and white glue. We highly recommend learning the process from a video rather than following instructions here: [How To Make George Washington Hair // With AdamNoahTube](#)

## Supplies:

- 1 large balloon, blown up to approximate size of the child's head
- 1 sheet of very thin and cheap fabric about 1 yd x 1 yd
- Large bottle of white glue (child safe and non-toxic)
- 2-3 large bags of cotton balls (enough to cover 2/3rds of the balloon)
- Jar, vase, or bowl to hold the balloon in while it is drying
- Felt pen, dark color

## Instructions:

1. Tie the balloon at a little bit larger than the child's head
2. Put it in bowl, vase, etc. deep enough it will stay there
3. Mark with a pen GENTLY! where the hair would be on the balloon if it had a face. You can draw a face if that helps you.
4. Put a little bit of glue on the back of the fabric and the balloon - just little spots because you'll be taking it off the balloon, only enough to hold it there until it dries.
5. Stick the fabric over the balloon where you want the hair to be.
6. Staple, sew, or tie on a pony tail in the back
7. One by one glue the cotton balls DOWN to the fabric and glue to the SIDE so they stick to each other
8. Keep going, putting the cotton in rows and rows until the whole shape is done. Go on down the ponytail too.
9. Let it dry overnight and CAREFULLY remove the fabric from the balloon. If it gets stuck, you get to pop the balloon.
10. Let it dry a bit more in case the inside was still wet before putting it on. 11. Put on your head and bobby pin in place. Kind of tuck the edges so it covers your own hair and looks real.



# Boy Challenging

## Waistcoat (unlined vest)

*Lessons: Terms "parallel", "perpendicular", "fold", "grain", "selvedge", new stitches, 3D construction, using pattern*

*NOTE: This does not include pockets or buttonholes. Use pattern marked "unfinished felt" in your size*

### Supplies:

Fabric shears

Dressmaking straight pins

Needles

Thread: appropriate to fabric - heavy coat thread for felt

Can be hand or machine sewn

### Materials:

Fabric : Best! Wool felt, or a wool felt blend (will not need hem or edging; can just cut out); small/med: 1 1/2 yd; large 2 yds - any width medium weight like broadcloth, denim, brocade. Check your local hobby store scrap bin for something fun as this can be plain like a burlap bag to very fancy embroidery  
Buttons: small-6, med-8, large-10. Wood, horn, leather, or fabric (or plastic to look like those) 1/2"-1" diameter

### Instructions:

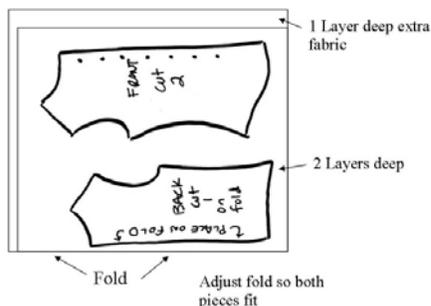
1. Study pattern. There are 2 pieces, a front and a back



2. Lay out fabric flat on large flat surface

3. If using felt, it doesn't matter which direction you put it on the fabric. If using any other kind of fabric, note the selvedge (woven) edge. There is a line on each pattern piece that says "grain". The grain of the fabric runs parallel with the selvedge

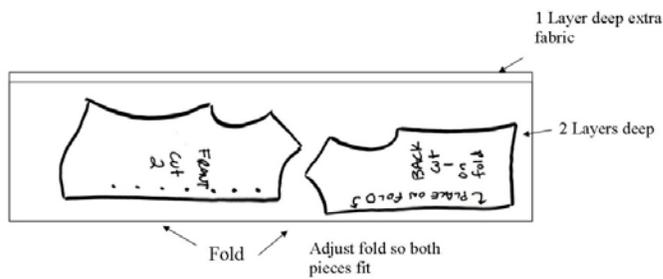
4. Fold the fabric ON THE GRAIN so that it is wide enough to place the entire "back" piece on it.



5. Lay the edge of the pattern marked "place on fold" near the fold. The new pattern does NOT GO ON THE FOLD THOUGH. Pin it down straight and cut it out from the pattern shape.

6. Put the "front" piece on the rest of the folded fabric. There will be 2 layers of fabric, and you will cut out 2 pieces. Each will be a mirror image of the other.

7. If your fabric is too narrow, put the "front" piece below the "back" piece.

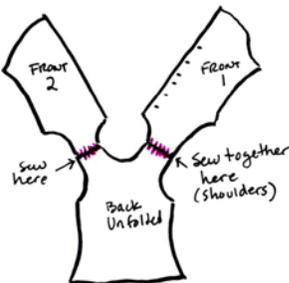


8. After everything is pinned down. Cut along the pattern lines and all the way through all layers of fabric below to make the shape of the pattern piece.

9. Take the pattern pieces off the fabric, keeping them organized with the pieces laid on top so you know what they are still. Lay them out so the good/right side is facing up. You should have one back piece and two front pieces that are a flip-flop (mirror) of each other.

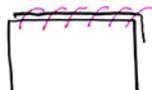
10. Line up the CENTER BACK edge of the back piece. Place them right/good sides facing each other in. Sew 1/2" along the part marked "seam", while leaving the lower part open (for the "vent")

11. Find the narrow shoulder parts and lay them out like this with the good/right side facing up. Lay it out flat to be sure you have it right and that it looks like this:



12. Flip the pieces back down so you can put the right/good sides together to sew, or sew it flat if that's easier for you.

13. Sew shoulder seams together.



To sew felt, a "whipstitch" is strongest:

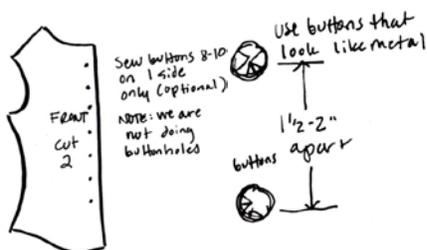
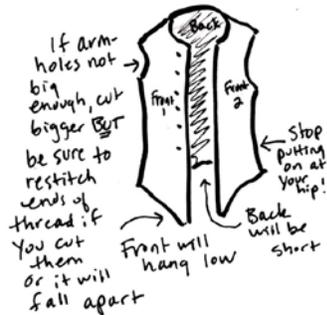
- a. it doesn't matter which side you start on, or whether you go left or right
- b. Put the two pieces together as shown
- c. Make a knot in one end of thread
- d. Thread the other end through the needle and pull about 6" of extra so it doesn't come out of the needle
- e. Stick needle with thread from the front through all layers of fabric and out the back
- f. Grab the needle from the other side and pull it through, bringing thread with it
- g. Bring the needle back over to the front. It will look like one loop in the picture above
- h. Go 1/8-1/4" to the side of the hole you just made and stick the needle in again
- i. Repeat until you get to the very end or 1/4" from the end of the fabric. If the end edges don't exactly meet it's OK. Try to keep the two pieces of fabric even though
- j. Make a couple loops at the end and tie a knot in your thread before you cut it off
- K. Iron it open if you can. Test to make sure it is strong.

14. Sew side seams together. Use same technique as for shoulder seams. Make sure you have good/right sides together again!



15. Put the vest right side out. It should look like this. Put it on to make sure the armholes are big enough. You can use the shears to cut them bigger as you like, as long as you don't cut your end threads. CAUTION! Don't cut your seam threads!

16. Your waistcoat is fine without buttons or decoration, but you can add buttons, pockets embroidery, or any trim at this point to your heart's desire.



## Boy Advanced Waistcoat (Finished Edged Vest)

*Lessons: Machine sewing intermediate skills*

*To make a vest that has all the edges finished, and is pretty inside and outside, you need to either hem or finish all the edges, or you need to add a lining. These are very advanced skills.*

**NOTE THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE POCKETS OR BUTTONHOLES LIKE THE EXAMPLE HAS.** Use pattern marked "lined/finished waistcoat". Use pattern marked "Lined/finished" in your size

### Materials:

Fabric and buttons same as main vest above plus matching thread

### Instructions:

1. Make it the same as Basic waistcoat above EXCEPT since you will have continuous seams from under arm to bottom - STOP SEWING at the places marked!!
2. The other EXCEPT is you will put the buttons on last

3. After the vest is completed, iron or turn in 1/2" on all the unfinished edges. Turn from the outside to the inside.
4. Sew the edges down, and be sure to include the armholes.
5. Put the buttons on after the edges are sewn.

## Waistcoat (Lined Vest)

*NOTE: This does not include instructions for pockets or buttonholes. Use pattern marked "Lined/Finished Boy's Waistcoat" in your size*

### Materials:

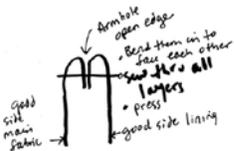
Fabric - same amount as main vest above plus matching thread

### Instructions:

1. Make the vest as above, all the way to step 14, except don't cut out the armholes (yet, if applicable), and don't put on any trim or buttons
2. Using a light and pretty fabric that is a bit slippery like silk or satin. Flowers and stripes are nice as well as plain fabrics. This will be the inside of your vest
3. Take the two vests that should be identical at this point, and lay them RIGHT/GOOD SIDES TOGETHER. Pin all the way around, making sure every corner, point, seam, and edge match exactly.
4. Best done on machine, using a straight or running stitch, sew 1/2" in from all the edges. Leave only the armholes unsewn. Go all the way around each and every edge.
5. Check to be sure you caught both sides and every fabric so they are matched up exactly before trimming
6. Trim off lumps and bumps so that you have cut a nice neat edge about 1/4" all the way around from the sewing line to the cut edge. Be careful not to clip your stitches!!



7. Pulling through one armhole, turn the whole thing inside out
8. Try it on, and if the armholes are OK. Iron all the edges flat (your armhole edges will still be rough)
9. If the armholes are too small, iron all the edges flat. Match up the seams on the armholes and trim being CAREFUL NOT TO CUT STITCHES!
10. Pin the armholes (pin perpendicular). You can either:
  - a. Iron or fold the edges inside facing each other and then sew them together using a whipstitch:



- b. put a binding on the armholes
11. Putting a binding on is the other way to finish the edge.

### PUTTING A BINDING ON.

A binding is a long skinny strip of fabric or leather that stretches a little bit. It is put on every edge even around curves and corners. Contact Silhouettes for examples and details of binding as this is a very advanced skill and will need quite a bit more fabric and special cutting techniques.

# Supplies Summary

## When making in Class - For the Group to Share

- Measuring Tapes (about 1/3 children), flexible cloth or plastic kind used for sewing
- Pencils, Pens (the kind with a clip)
- Glue, the kind that works on fabric
- Yardstick, Rulers (need both; rulers not long enough for some measurements) 1 /1 or 2 children
- Scissors that will cut fabric; best are shears that bend for flat table cutting 1/child
- Fabric & other supplies itemized by project below
- Flat cutting surface as large as possible
- Sewing needles; tapestry needles are larger and easier to handle but be sure to get pointed (not blunt) Be sure needles have big enough "eyes" to thread through whichever thread or floss you choose, so best to have an assortment
- Sewing thread or embroidery floss, thin but strong string, yarn. Heavy duty craft or regular weight sewing thread is best
- Straight pins for sewing Challenging or Advanced projects
- Sewing machine that can do straight stitch for Challenging or Advanced projects (optional - all can be sewn by hand)

## Per Individual When Making at Home or in Class

### Mobcap

- 1 yd fabric 45" wide will yield 4 caps (or 18"x18" square per cap)
- Plain white or ivory very thin handkerchief cotton, linen, or similar. Aim for somewhat sheer fabric. Delicate stripes or patterns OK if very subtle
- Thread, any type good, test with different needles

### Fichu

- Fabric comes in 44-45", 54", 60" widths. 44-45" will be easiest for this
- 1 1/3 yards (about 48" length) of 45"wide fabric will yield 2 fichus or one fichu and one apron (best)
- Plain white or ivory very thin handkerchief cotton, linen, or similar. Aim for somewhat sheer fabric. Delicate stripes or patterns OK if very subtle
- (optional, can leave unfinished) Thread, any type good, test with different needles

### Petticoat

- Fabric for an average height woman or girl: (use anything pretty! colors from nature and plain or simple small patterns or florals best. Avoid modern colors and designs):  
54-60" wide fabric x 1 1/2 yards  
- or -  
45" wide x 3 yards (only 2 1/2 yards needed if you are shorter than 5'0" overall)
- 1/2"-3/4" wide twill tape, ribbon, string, cord, binding strips, etc. 2-3 yards total length/girl

### Cravat

- Fabric: 45-60" wide 1/4 yard (or less) long thin scraps, very lightweight handkerchief type linen, cotton lawn, blend, silk, satin - must be WHITE or IVORY (rarely red or yellow). Somewhat sheer, easy to tie (1/4 yard will make 2-3 depending on how wide the strips are)
- Thread: to match

### Scarf

- 1/2 yard of anything very lightweight and/or sheer. Handkerchief linen. Only in solid colors of earth tones like blues, browns, greens, deep pinks - usually brown or blue or unbleached linen - rarely white
- Thread to match (optional)

### Basic Waistcoat

- Fabric : Wool felt, or a wool felt blend (sm/med - 1 yd)(lg/xl - 2 yds)
- Buttons: (sm/med - 8, lg/xl - 10) Wood, horn, leather, or plastic to look like those 1/2"-1" diameter

### Wig

- 1 large balloon, blown up to approximate size of the child's head
- 1 sheet of very thin and cheap fabric about 1 yd x 1 yd
- Large bottle of white glue (child safe and non-toxic)
- 2-3 large bags of cotton balls (enough to cover 2/3rds of the balloon)
- Jar, vase, or bowl to hold the balloon in while it is drying
- Felt pen, dark color

## If You Would Prefer to Buy

The basic and challenging projects above can be made by a student with assistance or at home by beginner seamstresses. Some of these projects get complicated and are best done on a sewing machine and using an iron.

For those who have family or skills that want to build a more complete look, or who want to make a project at home, Silhouettes offers hand-drawn patterns at a low price. For those who want the whole garment made complete for them, prices are given for that too.

Order forms for the following items are below. Be sure to include measurements as these are custom and hand-made to fit correctly per Colonial standards.

### Boy's Shirt



Basic/only undergarment boys & men wore. Long body with long sleeves and ruffles or cuffs. Open neckline with either clerical collar or standard collar. White or ivory 100% lightweight cotton or 100% handkerchief linen.

Pattern: \$8 + \$3 shipping

Complete: \$45 + \$7 shipping

### Girl's Shift (chemise)

Basic bottom layer for all women and girls. Below the knee length with short sleeves and no ruffles. Plain construction with drawstring neck tie and under arm gussets for comfortable movement. Authentic construction. White or ivory 100% lightweight cotton or 100% handkerchief linen. Pink or brown also available although not historically accurate.



Pattern: \$8 + \$3 shipping

Complete: \$45 + \$7 shipping

THESE BASIC ITEMS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE COMPLETED . Made as per instructions in booklet:

Mobcap: \$12 + \$4 ship, 100% cotton lawn or 100% handkerchief linen white or ivory

Fichu: \$12 + \$4 ship, 100% cotton lawn white

Petticoat: \$45 + \$7 ship, select from fabrics (contact Silhouettes), otherwise Silhouette's choice

Basic Waistcoat: \$12 + \$4 ship, wool/acrylic blend felt (like sample), navy blue, brown, olive green, gray with historical reproduction buttons (Silhouette's choice)

Finished Edge Waistcoat: \$16 + \$4 ship, same fabrics and buttons as basic

Fully Lined Waistcoat with pockets and buttonholes (like example): \$50 + \$8 ship

# Order Form



email: info@silhouettescostumes.com  
Include check for full amount of purchase  
or contact Silhouettes via email to make payment through PayPal

Parent/Guardian First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student First & Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class/Room Number \_\_\_\_\_

Item(s) being purchased (check)  Girl's Shift  Mobcap  
 Boy's Shirt  Fichu  
 Boy's Basic Waistcoat/Vest  Petticoat  
 Boy's edged Waistcoat/Vest  Girl's Shift, Pattern only  
 Boy's fully lined Waistcoat/Vest  Boy's Shirt, Pattern only

**Student measurements using cloth tape.** Round up or down to nearest 1/4":

Bust (fullest part of the chest) \_\_\_\_\_

Waist (where it narrows) \_\_\_\_\_ How tall is the student? \_\_\_\_\_ inches

Hip (fullest part, about where the hipbone is) \_\_\_\_\_

**Write your address if you would like it sent directly to your home or business.** Shipping is US Postal

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street # and name \_\_\_\_\_ Apt or Unit # \_\_\_\_\_

Town name \_\_\_\_\_ State name \_\_\_\_\_

5 number zip code \_\_\_\_\_ Your email, phone or best way to contact you \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NOTES: (Color or fabric choice, special needs or preferences, etc.)

