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A Kentucky Dressmaker, Mrs. A.H. (Carrie) Taylor: An Examination of Her Role in Fashion at the Turn of the Century

Janice Centers
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Centers,

Janice Faye Walker

1977

A KENTUCKY DRESSMAKER, MRS. A.H. (CARRIE) TAYLOR:
AN EXAMINATION OF HER ROLE IN FASHION AT
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department
of Home Economics and Family Living
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by

Janice Faye Walker Centers

Recommended July 7, 1977

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Approved August 3, 1977

Elmer Gray
Dean of Graduate College

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A KENTUCKY DRESSMAKER, MRS. A.H. (CARRIE) TAYLOR:
AN EXAMINATION OF HER ROLE IN FASHION AT
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Janice W. Centers July 1977 150 pages

Directed by: Sallye Russell, M.C. Jenkins, and V. Atkins

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and Family Living

One dressmaker, Mrs. A. H. Taylor of Bowling Green, Kentucky, was studied in order to draw attention to the role of the dressmaker in American fashion. A biography of Mrs. A. H. Taylor and the business history were compiled; available designs were analyzed in relation to current fashion; and an investigation of the business organization was made. It was found that the dressmaking establishment played an important role in the lives of women of that time period. Fashionable custom fit clothing was made available to local residents and to mail-order customers. The establishment was one of the few businesses which offered women employment in that area. Through a comparison with contemporaneous fashion magazines, the examples of Mrs. Taylor's work which were available were found to be in current fashion, although many distinctive individual characteristics were noted. By the late 1920's the acceptance of ready-to-wear items and the death of Mrs. Taylor had brought about the decline of the dressmaking establishment, thus ending an important phase of American life.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history women have endeavored to wear garments considered to be fashionable. For many centuries fashion was set by the French court and women in all civilized areas imitated it as best they could.

In America items imported from the Parisian haute couture were highly desirable. Since only a few were financially able to buy the garments, many women tried to copy the Parisian fashions at home. Others relied on the local modistes or dressmakers. Using illustrations from Godey's Lady's Book and Harper's Bazar, these artisans were able to keep abreast of the latest European fashions.

As the American apparel industry began to develop in the late nineteenth century, American fashion began to free itself from foreign direction. Local dressmakers served as a bridge between foreign and American fashion concepts. Although influenced by European trends, they were inspired to modify, adapt, and create designs of their own. One American modiste, Madame Demorest, became known across the nation for her designs during the late 1800's. She managed a dressmaking establishment and was co-editor of the Demorest Monthly Magazine. Other modistes also became quite successful-enlarging their establishments to employ many of the local townspeople.

With few exceptions, however, dressmakers have not been recognized as contributors to the cultural and economic development of the nation.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Mrs. Aaron H. (Carrie) Taylor of Bowling Green, Kentucky, became well known for her accomplishments as a fashionable modiste. The purpose of this study was to study in depth the dressmaking establishment of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company and thereby draw attention to the role of the dressmaker in American fashion.

The specific objectives and procedures were:

- I. To compile a brief biography of Mrs. A. H. Taylor and a history of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
 - A. Locate and review contemporary as well as recent literature pertaining to Mrs. Taylor and her establishment.
 - B. Locate deeds for property, wills, census reports, and death certificates relevant to the topic.
 - C. Interview relatives, employees, customers, or other persons having information pertaining to the subject.
 - D. Consult the Kentucky Library, Kentucky Museum, and relatives for letters and diaries containing references to Mrs. Taylor and the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
- II. To examine available designs created by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company and determine if they were fashionable.
 - A. Locate authentic garments made by Mrs. Taylor's Company.
 - B. Locate and identify original photographs of persons known to be wearing garments made by Mrs. Taylor's establishment.
 - C. Examine any publications by Mrs. Taylor for examples of dress designs.

- D. Consult contemporaneous magazines, books, catalogs, personal letters, diaries, and dated photographs in order to date actual garments and photographs.
 - E. Consult with museums and/or historical societies for information concerning Mrs. Taylor and her fashions.
 - F. Use contemporary magazines containing fashions in order to ascertain whether the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company produced clothing considered to be fashionable at the time.
- III. To study the organization of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
- A. To survey the employees and the production techniques used in creating fashions by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
 - 1. Consult contemporary newspapers for possible articles and photographs.
 - 2. Interview relatives, employees, customers, or any other persons having information pertaining to the subject.
 - 3. Consult the Kentucky Library and Museum, and relatives for letters and diaries with references to the production techniques, working conditions, and equipment.
 - B. To survey the advertisement, promotion, and sale of apparel by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
 - 1. Use census records and United States Government reports for comparison statistics regarding type of business, production, wages, number of employees and working women, etc.
 - 2. Check the city directory for a list of employees during the period when the business was in operation.
 - 3. Interview relatives, employees, customers, or any other persons having information pertaining to the subject.
 - 4. Locate business records for possible references to customers, cost of materials, cost of garments, employees, wages, and production growth.

5. Determine the methods by which Mrs. Taylor advertised the business by reviewing available publications of the period in that surrounding area.

Background of the Study

Historical Setting

From 1860 to 1910 America underwent a transition from a rural society to a faster paced industrial society. Thousands of rural families sought the promising opportunities of the cities. Never before in the nation's history had there been such a rapid growth of urban areas as cities multiplied more than seven times in population.¹ Industries increased more than six times during that fifty year period.²

This was an era accelerated by new ideas and inventions. More uses for electric power were being discovered by Thomas Edison and other inventors. With the aid of the power driven machinery, methods of mass production were developed. Elias Howe showed his model of the sewing machine at the London Great Exposition in 1851³ although it was not used to any extent commercially or in the home until after the Civil War. Developments in communication took many forms such as the laying of the Trans-Atlantic telegraph cable and the perfec-

¹Richard N. Current, Frank Freidel, and Harry T. Williams. A History of the United States Since 1865, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, Inc., 1969), p. 96.

²Ibid. p. 62.

³Sandra Ley, Fashions for Everyone, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. 7.

tion of the telephone. The first typewriter was patented in 1873. Each of these inventions offered women job opportunities. As positions such as telephone operators, secretaries, and sewing machine operators in factories were created, women quickly proved their efficiency and value. Never before had it been considered proper for women to work outside of the home; now acceptable positions were available and women went to work by the thousands.

Prior to the Civil War, women had few opportunities to obtain an education above the elementary or secondary level. A woman's place was considered to be in the home and education was deemed unnecessary. The years following the war saw change in the educational systems. It became more important for women, especially those of prominent families, to further their education and to be exposed to cultural activities. Concerned citizens and philanthropists across the nation established women's colleges including Vassar and Smith.⁴ In Bowling Green, Kentucky, Potter College for young ladies was established by several prominent townspeople. It drew as many as 400 students from across the nation.

By the late nineteenth century many women became involved in political and society reforms. One group, led by Elizabeth C. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, fought for

⁴Merle Curti and Lewis Paul Todd, Rise of the American Nation, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964), p. 524.

women's suffrage. Although the right to vote was not achieved until 1920, women gained recognition and limited rights in many states prior to that time.⁵

Americans were finding travel faster and easier with the expanding railway systems as the Atlantic coast was linked with the Pacific and more areas became accessible. Soon, however, a more personal means of transportation was perfected--the automobile. America's first successful automobile was built in 1893; in 1896, Henry Ford produced the first Ford model. At first the auto was a novelty for the wealthy but by 1900 there were nearly 8,000 automobiles. More than eight million were on the roads across the United States in the early 1920's.⁶

Improved transportation systems enabled the postal service to serve as the link between a new form of merchandising--the mail order business--and its customers. Customers could purchase in their own homes from catalogs mailed once or twice a year by the mail order businesses. These ranged from large general merchandise companies such as Sears and Montgomery Ward to small speciality shops.

With the arrival of the industrial era, families discovered time for leisure activities. Bicycling, baseball, golf, tennis, and croquet became just a few of the favorite pastime sports. The theater, amusement parks, the circus,

⁵
Ibid., 525.

⁶
Ibid., 570.

and expositions raged across the country providing new and exciting forms of entertainment. Women participated not only in the cultural events, but in active sports as well.

All of these changes, occurring during a fifty-year period, affected women's costume. As women obtained work in offices and factories, the bulkier styles were found to be impractical. The simple silhouette of the "Gibson Girl," worn by the career woman, became the fashion of the 1890's. Sports brought a variety of styles and more comfortable clothing for the active sportswoman. Bloomers were worn for bicycling and gym sports, and specially designed dresses were the vogue for tennis and golf. The early automobiles required protective garments--a duster and a veiled bonnet--since the rider was often exposed to dust and rain. For the reformers and "suffragettes," ribbons, badges, and pennants were worn to indicate their views and, in some instances, more masculine dress was adopted. The sophisticated woman demonstrated her refinement through her clothes as she attended teas, receptions, the theater, and gala parties. The sportswoman, the working girl, the reformer, and the sophisticated woman all required more clothing for different events and functions than at any previous time in fashion history.

Many women had the sewing skills to make their own garments, yet those who did not or who preferred not to sew relied on the modiste or dressmaker to furnish their fashionable outfits. There was no other choice for these women since

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the women's ready-to-wear industry had not yet developed into a fashionable alternative at this time. It was not only convenient but also very prestigious for women to have their garments made by a well known dressmaker.

By 1900 the occupation of dressmaker ranked third in the number of women employed. The United States Census for that year reported 338,144 women employed as dressmakers as compared to 290,308 in 1890. These women were located in all geographic areas although there was more concentration in the Northern and Western areas.⁷ About seven out of ten of the women workers were unmarried, and more were widowed than were married.⁸

Prior to 1880, most dressmakers worked from their own homes or lived with a family for a short period making clothing for the family before moving on to the next family. A fortunate few owned or rented one--or two--room shops and had homeworkers do most of the sewing. As the clothing industry was eventually touched by the industrial revolution, the factory method of working was introduced.⁹ The homeworkers were brought into a factory to work. Working conditions were not good in most instances; the hours were long, with wages as low as three dollars a week.¹⁰

⁷U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of The Census, Statistics of Women At Work-1900, p.70.

⁸Ibid., p. 72.

⁹Ley, Fashion For Everyone, p.35.

¹⁰Curti, Rise of American Nation, p. 511.

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Around 1880, a new system of making clothing, introduced in England, spread quickly to the United States. The division of labor system meant faster production by dividing the garment into sections.¹¹ Each worker made an assigned section or performed a specific task including hemming, sewing buttons, making sleeves, bodice, or skirt. Since each worker was specialized, work could proceed more quickly and uniformly, thereby increasing quantity and quality.

The ready-to-wear industry gradually gained acceptance from the lower and middle classes primarily through the popular ready-made shirt waist. The ready-to-wear industry did not offer the personal service of the dressmaker, but the clothing was ready for wear and cost considerably less than items made by dressmakers. As more and more ready-to-wear garments were accepted by the masses, the demand for dressmakers decreased until ready-made clothing became more prestigious to the majority. Few American dressmakers survived the competition. Today the American fashion industry is based almost entirely on the ready-to-wear concept and relatively few designers receive recognition for their efforts. The era of personal attention in design and fit by a skilled dressmaker has been lost to industrialization.

Reasons for Investigation

The topic of dressmakers was chosen in order to acknowledge talented women who interpreted fashion news and provided

¹¹Ley, Fashion for Everyone, p. 35.

their customers with the latest fashions. The service they preformed for American women has not been adequately recognized.

Contributions to the Field of Research

The subject of American dressmakers has received little consideration. The aim of the study was to draw attention to the role of the dressmaker in the nation's history and create interest in the topic.

Assumptions

It was assumed that:

1. Persons were still living who remembered Mrs. A. H. Taylor and the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company.
2. Primary sources were still available.

Definitions

Design- (verb) To make original plans, drawings, or pattern for a garment.

(noun) A sketch or a finished original garment.

Dressmaker- A person who makes fashionable clothing for women.

Fashion- The prevailing style of dress.

Manufacture- To produce articles by hand or machine using an organized plan of division of labor.

Modiste- A woman who makes fashionable clothing for women.

Limitations

1. This study was limited to one modiste and her dressmaking establishment, the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company of Bowling Green, Kentucky.
2. In analyzing the fashionablity of the garments made

by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, only existing garments were used.

Related Studies

Although researchers have examined the dress of American women, they have not specifically investigated dressmakers or dressmaking establishments. Studies of American women's dress have revealed some related information.

Elaine Lumbra (1969) determined that in the late 1880's changes in American women's dress were based on the trends of Paris and London. She also pointed out that change in the woman's role due to the advancement of communications and transportation systems was also an influential factor.¹²

Margaret Anne Lambert (1971) examined women's fashions in Northwest America during the 1890's and found there was a time-lag before many fashions reached that area. She found that dressmakers were in great demand, yet most women in the Northwest made their own clothes.¹³

Evidence given in Betty Mills' study (1969) indicated that wedding gowns designed in the prevailing styles between 1865 and 1965 reflected social and economic conditions. Mills determined that wedding gowns became slimmer as the

¹²Elaine L. Lumbra, "Every-Day Women's Dresses Worn In The United States During The Period 1878-1908," (Thesis, Indiana University, 1965).

¹³Margaret Anne May Lambert, "Women's Costume In Northwest North America During the 1890's, With a Time-Lag Study of Fashion Diffusion," (Thesis, University of Washington, 1971).

world became more mobile, and during depressions in the economy, wedding dresses were trimmed less than at other periods. The transition from one fashion to another was also found to be in most cases very gradual.¹⁴

Betty C. Hornback (1967) recognized the significance of dress designers during the period from 1939 to 1948 in her study of the effects of World War II on women's fashions. She recommended further study on American and French designers.¹⁵

¹⁴

Betty Mills, "Reflection of Social, Historical, and Cultural Influences on The Modes of Wedding Dress and Customs for 100 Years in America, 1865-1965," (Thesis, Texas Technological College, May 1969).

¹⁵ Bettye C. Hornback, "The Influences Upon and Identifying Criteria of Women's Fashion In The United States From 1939-1946," (Thesis, Indiana University, 1967).

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODS AND SOURCES

Information for this study was obtained primarily from several sources in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the home of Mrs. A. H. Taylor and the location of her business. Specific primary sources included relatives of Mrs. Taylor, former employees, customers, and other knowledgeable people, actual garments, photographs, fashion and women's magazines, diaries, letters, newspapers, advertisements, city records and directories, and business records.

Valuable data were provided by a former employee of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company from 1905 to 1917. This employee was able to furnish details concerning the family of Mrs. Taylor, the business, and the clientele. Mrs. Taylor's grandchildren were very cooperative and provided photographs, letters, and a record book from the business. Family friends, former employees, former customers, and their relatives yielded additional information concerning working conditions, personal experiences, business organization, and in many instances, actual garments or photographs.

The Kentucky Library and Museum located on the campus of Western Kentucky University was the main source of garments made by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. The museum's

collection contained nineteen garments, two of which contained labels. The other Taylor garments were identified by the original owners. Many garments were either wedding dresses or pieces of trousseaux which were a specialty of the company. Items made by the Taylor establishment were photographed on dress forms padded to fit the garments and the silhouette. Detailed sketches of the garments were made and have been included in the study with accompanying descriptions. No garment was used unless it was identified as being a Taylor design. Photographs of persons wearing Mrs. Taylor's designs were also used (See Appendix B).

Selected issues of American fashion magazines such as Demorest, Delineator, and Vogue from 1870 to 1925 were used in analyzing the fashionableness of the garments. Two issues of the quarterly magazine The Styles And The Gist Of It published by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company and found in the Kentucky Library proved invaluable. These publications contained drawings of designs, descriptions of the latest styles, advertisements, and other pertinent information concerning the business.

Other primary sources included diaries with reference to Carrie Burnam Taylor, memoirs, a collection of letters, announcements, sample cards, contemporary newspapers, U. S. Census reports, property deeds, and wills. Copies of letters are found in Appendix C. Secondary sources were also considered such as more recent newspaper accounts, government reports and studies, fashion books, and a county survey.

This study of dressmaking establishments was limited to the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company located in Bowling Green, Kentucky from 1878 to 1922. The type of garments made by the dressmaking firm which were included in this study were: dresses, tailored suits, coats, and undergarments.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data collected concerning Mrs. A. H. (Carrie) Taylor and the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company will be presented in three parts: the biography of and history of Mrs. Taylor and her establishment, the organization of the business, and a discussion of the fashionableness of the garments made in the establishment. The interpretation of data will be found at the conclusion of this chapter.

Analysis of Data

Biography and History

Mrs. A. H. Taylor was born Carrie Burnam on April 1, 1855, in Bowling Green, Kentucky. She was the third child of Sarah D. Hampton and Thomas L. Burnam whose families had come to Kentucky in the early 1800's. John Burnam, the grandfather, brought his family from Virginia and maintained his southern sympathies during the Civil War.¹⁶ Burnam supported the Confederate State Government of Kentucky as its treasurer. Following the war the Burnam family, like

¹⁶ E. Polk Johnson, History of Kentucky and Kentuckyians, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912) 2:1137.

other families in the South, was left impoverished.¹⁷

Carrie Burnam received her preparatory training in Warren County schools. Due to her father's insistence that she improve her mind further, she attended Cedar Bluff College in Woodburn, Kentucky, and graduated in 1877 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree.¹⁸ While a college student, she became known among her classmates and friends for her fashion taste. Her advice was sought for the latest in styles and in many instances she designed fashions for those who requested, although she never made them herself.¹⁹ By 1878, through a gradual process, a small business had evolved in her family home as the number of persons seeking her advice and designs continued to increase.²⁰ In the beginning most of her customers were from the Bowling Green area and included some students attending schools in the county.

On December 9, 1879, Carrie Burnam, who by then had established a successful business, married Aaron H. Taylor. Unlike many women employed in that period, she did not give up her occupation when she married nor when she bore her children, William Burnam in 1880 and Louise in 1882.

As the business proceeded to build, it outgrew the confines of the family home. Consequently, the business

¹⁷Burnham P. Beckwith, personal letter.

¹⁸Johnson, History of Kentucky and Kentuckians, 2:1138.

¹⁹Burnham P. Beckwith, personal letter.

²⁰Interview with Miss Elizabeth Coombs, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 April 1977.

was moved to a room above a drug store on the city square.²¹ At first the townspeople were shocked by a woman operating a business outside her home, but with determination, Carrie Taylor ultimately gained their respect by successfully managing the business in a dignified manner.²²

Carrie Burnam Taylor was a no-nonsense, soft-spoken, refined person of small stature (See Figure 1.) She attended social affairs about the town and enjoyed giving dances in her home.²³ She tried to impress the employees in her establishment as being stern and immovable; however, she constantly displayed kindness and consideration to all.

A former employee of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company related how Mrs. Taylor helped her to "sneak in" whenever she was late without the time keeper and the other workers discovering her. Mrs. Taylor valued her employees and recognized their abilities. In return, her employees respected her and appreciated the opportunity she was offering since Mrs. Taylor's establishment was one of the few places where women could earn money for their sewing talents.²⁴

²¹Park City (Kentucky) Daily News, March 18, 1949.

²²Interview with Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxon, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 28 April 1977.

²³Interview with Miss Elizabeth Coombs, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 April 1977.

²⁴Interview with Mrs. Robert Rabold, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 14 April 1977.



Fig. 1. Mrs. A.H. (Carrie)
Taylor. Original photograph loaned
by Mr. Burnham P. Beckwith.

Consideration was also extended to customers by Mrs. Taylor. Mrs. Dick Duncan remembered visiting the business as a child with her mother. In order to entertain the child while her mother was being fitted, Mrs. Taylor gave her scraps of "luxurious materials" for doll dresses.²⁵ When Mrs. C. A. Duncan had two dresses for her trousseau made at Mrs. Taylor's in 1916, Mrs. Taylor spent some time talking about Mrs. Duncan's mother who died when Mrs. Duncan was small and offering advice about what she could wear well.²⁶ Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxon recalled Mrs. Taylor's attending a reception in her family home. Due to the time of day the reception was held, Mrs. Taylor did not have time to go home from work to change. Since she was so small however, she was able to put her "company" dress on over her work dress. Because it was "Miss Carrie" who had done such a thing, it was most acceptable.²⁷

By the early 1890's, the room above the drug store had proven unsatisfactory since it could no longer contain the expanding business. A larger building was rented near the square at 521 and 523 Main Street. The move allowed the company to add to the number of employees as customers increased.

²⁵Interview with Mrs. Dick Duncan, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 28 February 1977.

²⁶Interview with Mrs. C. A. Duncan, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 4 November 1976.

²⁷Interview with Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxon, Bowling Green Kentucky, 28 April 1977.

The continued growth of the clientele was due in part to the number of younger women who attended Potter College, located in Bowling Green, from 1889 to about 1909.²⁸

Students from all parts of the United States were introduced to Mrs. Taylor's establishment when they ordered their school uniforms. Most students returned for party dresses, graduation dresses, and trousseaux, and they continued to purchase items by mail order after they had returned home. It was not unusual for students to refer their friends and relatives to Mrs. Taylor's company. Mrs. L. K. Miller recalled her grandfather saying:

"that he thought my grandmother sent 'Bessie' to Dr. Potter's College so that she could have frequent trips to Mrs. Taylor's shop." 29

There is documented evidence that Mr. and Mrs. Taylor traveled to New York on buying trips as early as 1893,³⁰ and to Europe as early as 1895,³¹ although it was reported they made trips for thirty consecutive years beginning in 1887. They had offices both in New York and Paris while they

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Elise Dulaney, *Recollections of Bowling Green*, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, and Mrs. L. K. Miller, 21 April 1977, personal letter.

29

Mrs. L. K. Miller, 21 April 1977, personal letter.

30

Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, 2 August 1894, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

31

Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, 27 August 1895, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

were in those cities. In New York Mrs. Taylor spent as little as twenty-four hours buying materials valued at over a hundred-thousand dollars. Her cousin often accompanied her and was amazed at the quantities and the cost.³² From London and Edinburgh she obtained tweeds and woolens; in Paris she attended fashion exhibitions where she sketched designs and bought fine silks, velvets, and suitable trimmings; and in Germany, unusual buttons and trimmings were purchased.³³ The finest materials and trimmings were bought wherever she went. After returning from her trips, special designs were created and mailed with samples of fabrics to her regular clientele in the United States and abroad. In 1912, on one of the trips to England and France, Mrs. Taylor planned to return home on the maiden voyage of the Titanic. Fortunately, for some reason she was unable to make the voyage.³⁴

Mrs. Taylor and her workers always tried to please the customers and went to great lengths to do so. Many customers from out of town stayed in the Taylor home and received regal treatment during the days required for fitting and sewing. Often work was taken home by the employees in

³² Interview with Miss Elizabeth Coombs, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 April 1977.

³³ Mrs. L.K. Miller, 21 April 1977, personal letter.

³⁴ Interview with Miss Jesse Franklin, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 May 1976, and interview with Miss Margie Helm, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 6 June 1977.

order to complete an item in a short time.³⁵

The year of 1902 was important for the Taylor establishment. In that year the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company became incorporated in Kentucky with a capital stock of twenty-thousand dollars.³⁶ In May of 1903, land was purchased on State Street for the sum of \$3,000 and a new building was erected to house the company.³⁷ This was the final home of the dressmaking firm. With the new building, the business was more impressive than ever. During this period the payroll consisted of nearly 300 women at the beginning of the buying season, working six days a week, ten hours a day. For the Fall of 1904, Mrs. Taylor launched into the area of fashion magazines by publishing The Styles And The Gist Of It. Although planned as a quarterly magazine reporting the latest trends from Paris and New York, only two issues were published due to the folding of the bank which held its funds.

In an issue of Munsey's Magazine, Mrs. Taylor was one of the women featured in the article, "The Feminist Movement That Cashes In." It was reported in the article that Mrs. Taylor made "more than \$50,000 a year."³⁸ It

³⁵
Interview with Mrs. Robert Rabold, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 14 April 1977.

³⁶
Johnson, History of Kentucky and Kentuckians, 2:1138.

³⁷
Warren County Court Clerk Office, Property deeds, 181:347.

³⁸
Edward Hungerford, "The Feminist Movement That Cashes In," Munsey's Magazine, April 1914, p.480.

was reported that this was "a larger salary than any mere man within a good many miles of Bowling Green has ever earned."³⁹

When the United States entered into World War I, the Taylor company received a government contract to make shirts, trousers, and jumpsuits.⁴⁰ The Taylor grandchildren remembered visiting the business during this period and playing among the busy women at their sewing machines. Some of the orders were filled outside the business by women working in their homes.⁴¹ In a letter to his daughter Mr. Taylor discussed the contract:

"As the government contract has been completed, the Revival over, I feel that there is nothing in the immediate future to keep one so completely occupied as I have been for the past six months. I am glad to tell you that we made some money out of our contract. . . We had a Very satisfactory season in our dressmaking business."⁴²

It appears that during the war period Mrs. Taylor's health declined and she began to slow down in her own work, leaving the management to her son and husband. Mrs. Taylor died in November of 1917 leaving a successful business and an estate valued at over \$250,000. The family was offered \$100,000 for the business in 1918 by Kaufman

39

Ibid.

40

Park City (Kentucky) Dailey News, 23 April 1944.

41

Mrs. Elizabeth Vithoro, 2 March 1977, personal letter.

42

Aaron H. Taylor to Louise Beckwith, personal files of Sterling Beckwith, 1824 Doris Dr., Menlo Park, California.

Strauss, a Louisville store. The offer was refused.

When William died in 1920 the business had deteriorated greatly, the customers and the employees had decreased.⁴³

Mr. Taylor tried to manage the company alone using advertising campaigns to gain customers, but was unsuccessful.

Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxon married in 1921. In keeping with the tradition of other Bowling Green brides, she went to the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company to have a dress made for her trousseau. By that time there were only a few seamstresses, the buyer, the bookkeeper, and Mr. Taylor left. The stock of materials and trimmings was extremely low for the company. This was yet another implication that the business was failing.⁴⁴

The company closed to the public some time after 1927, ending almost a half century of service to fashion-minded women across the nation and abroad. The closing of the Taylor establishment as well as others across the nation reflected the increased dependence of families on the ready-to-wear industry to provide their fashionable clothing.

Organization of Business

The A. H. Taylor Company thrived in Bowling Green although the location was a small town. Possibly its success was due to the management and organization of the business.

⁴³Mr. Burnham P. Beckwith, 30 August 1976.

⁴⁴Interview with Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxon, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 28 April 1977.

Employees

The working conditions of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company were good for that time period. Figure 2 is a photograph of the sewing room at the Main Street location. The exact date is unknown, but it was probably made in the 1890's. In this room there was enough space for the employees to work and move about. The lighting and the ventilation were also adequate, although there may not have been sufficient lighting during the shorter days of the winter months.

Mr. A. H. Taylor served in the position similar to a supervisor. He kept an eye on the women at work and discouraged any talk or foolery. The work day began for the employees at 6:55 A.M. and ended at 5:00 P.M. Monday through Saturday. Employees had short lunch breaks and, in the afternoon, time was taken for a quick snack.⁴⁵ The type of work which required the women to sit and sew for long periods was very tiring. This may have been one of the reasons that many women worked only a few weeks then resigned.

Each minute was of importance to the management as related in the following story: Mr. Will Taylor, the son of Mr. and Mrs. A. H. Taylor, said to a young man riding his pony up and down the neighboring alley, "Harold, I wish you wouldn't make so much noise. It distracts these 300 women and when they look up they lose one minute, and

⁴⁵Interview with Miss Jesse Franklin, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 May 1976.

Copies

May Not

Film

Well!



Fig. 2. The sewing room of the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company when it was located on Main Street. No date was available. Loaned by Mrs. Eugenia Gerard Paxton from the Camillia Gerard Collection.

three hundred minutes is five hours lost."⁴⁶ Only a time-wise man would have made such a remark.

The company payroll records which were located were for the short period between 1905 and 1907. From the payroll records it was ascertained that beginning in September 1905 through 1906 the average number of employees was 206 though a total of 308 persons were hired during that period. In the 1910 United States Census, there were 9,495 Kentucky women classified as wage earners. Using the average number of workers employed at the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, the establishment employed 2% of Kentucky's women who were wage earners. This dressmaking firm was also one of 102 establishments in Kentucky that had between 101 to 500 persons employed.⁴⁷ With few exceptions most of the company's employees were either unwed, widowed, and/or the bread winner for their family.

Women had few opportunities to work, especially in manufacturing, until after World War I. Businessmen were cautious in hiring women for reasons such as the following: women did not have as much strength as men, they could handle only the simple tasks, they had few skills, and "women won't work for women" and men certainly wouldn't.⁴⁸ Mrs. Taylor and

⁴⁶Interview with Miss Margie Helm, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 6 June 1977.

⁴⁷U.S., Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, 3:38.

⁴⁸Current, A History of The United States Since 1865, p. 385.

her employees certainly proved this belief false. It took the talents of both the employer and the employee in co-operation to make the business succeed.

The wages the employees received were as low as three dollars for a sixty-hour week, while a few received more than twelve dollars. The average weekly wage was \$5.78, far below the national average of \$9.90 in all industries.⁴⁹ Most employees worked only eight and one-half months of the year due to the period between seasons. Workers were given a Christmas break and time during the summer while the Taylors went on fashion related trips.

Comparison of statistics could only be made on the one year for which records were complete. The statistics were not indicative of the peak period of business. According to former customers and an employee the business continued to flourish until World War I.

Though it has been unsubstantiated, it was reported that the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company had 24,000 customers.⁵⁰ To have handled such a quantity of garments while maintaining high standards indicates that the employees and the management were very efficient in producing custom made ladies garments.

⁴⁹

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of The United States 1789-1945, p. 172.

⁵⁰

Hungerford, "The Feminist Movement That Cashes In," p. 480.

Techniques

Since there was no documentation of early dressmaking techniques used by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, it was assumed that one seamstress made an entire outfit until the introduction of better methods. Much of the work on earlier dresses was done by hand with some machine stitching. However, machine stitching gradually became more prevalent. By 1905 the establishment had adopted the division of labor system developed in England. It was a time saving system in which each seamstress was assigned a certain task such as the sleeves, skirt, bodice, attach trimmings, hem, etc. This system allowed the workers to gain speed and proficiency by repeating similar tasks. The firm did have specially trained women from New York City to oversee the making of all the coats. The coat department was large enough to fill the second floor of the building on State Street.⁵¹

Basic patterns were used in making garments with trimmings, ornamentations, and various design features decided by either Mrs. Taylor or the establishment's own designer. Each new customer filled out a fact sheet such as the one in figure 3 giving the customer's measurements and basic description. These sheets were kept on file and were referred to as the customers made their orders. When dresses were ready for fitting employees with exact measurements

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Interview with Miss Jesse Franklin, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 18 May 1976.

Fig. 3. Measurement sheet from the Calvert-
Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

MRS. A. H. TAYLOR, BOWLING GREEN, KY.

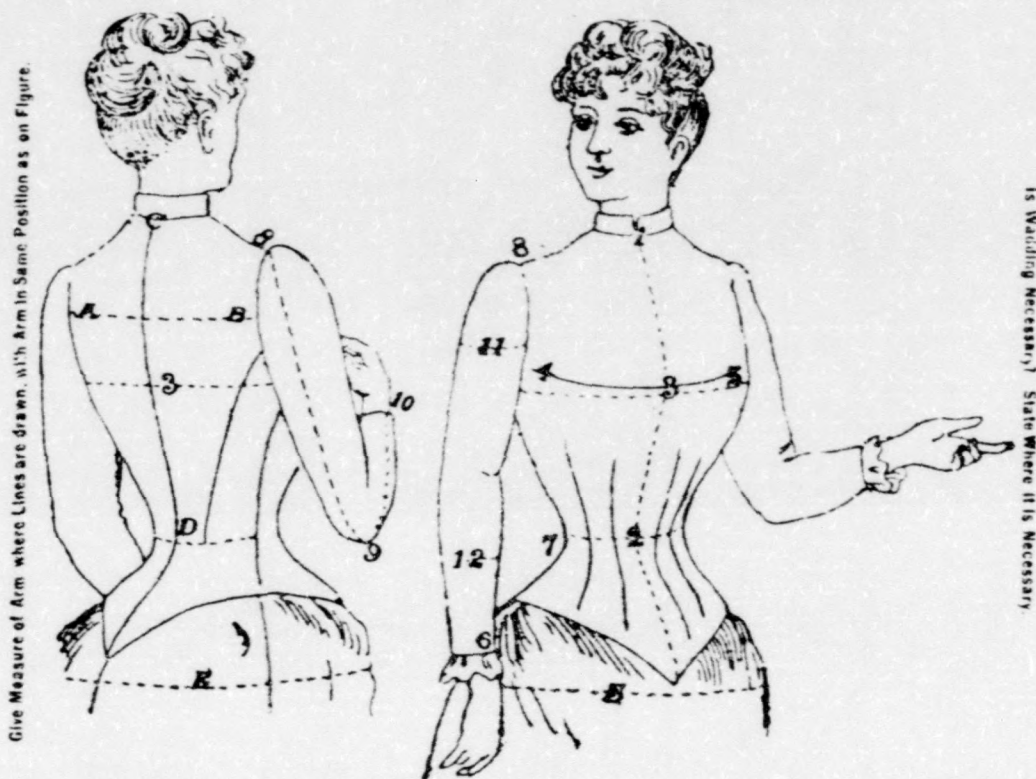
Answer Every Question. Measure Carefully.

Measure of
Town State

Be particular to measure tight, except bust measure, which should be taken MODERATELY tight over fullest part of bust. Give age

Height Complexion Color of Eyes

Color of Hair Size of Glove Size of Shoe



Give Measure of Arm where Lines are drawn, with Arm in Same Position as on Figure.

Is Waisting Necessary? State Where it is Necessary

- 1- 1—Around the Neck
- Side of Neck to 8—Length of Shoulder
- 2- 2—From Neck to Waist
- 3- 2—Around Waist
- 3- 3—Around entire Bust and back under Arms
- 4- 5—Across the Bust
- 7- 7—Under Arm to Waist
- 4- 6—Length of Sleeve Inside
- 8-10—Entire Length of Sleeve Outside, Arm Bent
- 8- 9—Length of Sleeve from Shoulder to Elbow
- 11-11—Around Arm above Elbow
- 12-12—Around Arm Below Elbow
- A- B—Across Back
- C- D—Length of Back to Waist
- E- E—Around Hips

were often used as models.⁵²

Mrs. Taylor's garments were distinguishable with their original trims. Rosettes, intricate buttons, and velvet dog ears became her recognized signature. One customer said, "She could always spot a 'Taylor made' costume and never hesitated to speak to the lady wearing it when on her

travels."⁵³ A detail of the decorative work found on one dress is shown in figure 4.

Only two actual garments which were located had the Taylor label sewn onto the inside bodice belt. Both garments were dated in the early 1890's. An example of the labels used is shown in figure 5. The Taylor establishment, evidently, used labels for a short period since garments dated close to the two labeled ones did not contain labels. Miss Jesse Franklin, who worked at the establishment from 1905 to 1917, said they did not label garments while she was there.

Equipment

Very little information was located concerning the equipment used in the dressmaking establishment. Perhaps the most important piece of equipment was the sewing machine since it did allow garments to be made much faster than hand sewing. The treadle machine was used as indicated by its presence in the photograph of the establishment in figure 2. When the treadle machines were first used is not

⁵²

Ibid.

⁵³

Mrs. L. K. Miller, 21 April 1977, personal letter.

Copies

May Not

Film

Well!



Fig. 4. Detail of a dress made by the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company. Dress was from the Kentucky Museum Collection. Photograph by Bruce MacLeish.



Fig. 5 . The Mrs. A.H. Taylor label. Garment was from the Kentucky Museum Collection. Photograph by Bruce MacLeish.

known. However, the earliest garment dated about 1890 had been stitched by machine.

Large tables were used for cutting out garments, and in the making of coats. Smaller work tables were provided for workers to perform other tasks.

Advertisement

The Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company had one unique form of advertisement for which it became known--announcements. These engraved cards were mailed by the Taylors from either New York or Paris while they were on fashion trips. The cards notified customers when new season styles would be available. The verse was often poetic. Examples are included in figures 6, 7, and 8. In 1913 a special card was mailed celebrating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment. More than 16,000 of these announcements were sent to 48 states and abroad.

Mrs. Taylor also advertised in the Potter College Green and Gold, a literary magazine published by the students at the college. Advertisements such as the one in figure 9 began in June 1903 and continued until a new format was presented in 1905 (See figure 10).

In the magazine The Styles And The Gist Of It, advertisements such as "Trousseau Orders A Specialty," and "Exclusive Designing And Ladies Tailoring Establishment" were found in the front and back of the magazine. One advertisement in the March 1905 issue claimed "The reputation of the women of Kentucky as leaders of fashion has been amply

New York Office, 47 Broadway.
Paris Office, 21 Avenue de l'Opera.

Fall 1896.



New York, Sept. 1st, 1896.

TO MY MAIL ORDER CUSTOMERS:

I would say I am again in New York City gaining ideas which I hope to carry out in your behalf. I have purchased a beautiful line of high priced, medium, and cheap materials, which will be made up according to the latest and most approved designs. My season begins early in September and I again ask your patronage. I hope by continued efforts in your behalf to express the gratitude which I feel for past favors.

Very truly yours,

MAIN STREET,
BOWLING GREEN, KY.

Mrs. A. St. Taylor.

Fig. 6. Announcement for Fall 1896. From the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.



New York City,
Feb. 25, 1897.

The earth is doffing Winter's garb,
And emerald green and flowers
Will cover soon each plant and bough
In wayside fields and bowers,
And Nature putting on new robes,
With neither care nor payment,
Gives warning to us all to don
The Springtime's change of raiment.
So maid and matron, too, must go
For Easter gown and bonnet
To one whose taste and skill can set
Dame Fashion's seal upon it.



Spring Season
Opens March 1st.

To one who knows the latest mode
In skirt or sleeve or jacket,
The latest whim in finishing
A cuff or ruff or placket.
Her name is known both far and wide,
For all her patrons hail her
The queen modiste, north, south or east.

'Tis—
Mrs. A. H. Taylor.

521-525 Main Street,
Bowling Green, Ky.

Fig. 7 . Announcement for Spring 1897. From the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

New York Office, 413 Broadway. Paris Office 26, Avenue de l'Opera.

New York, Sept. 1st 1898.

Fall 1898

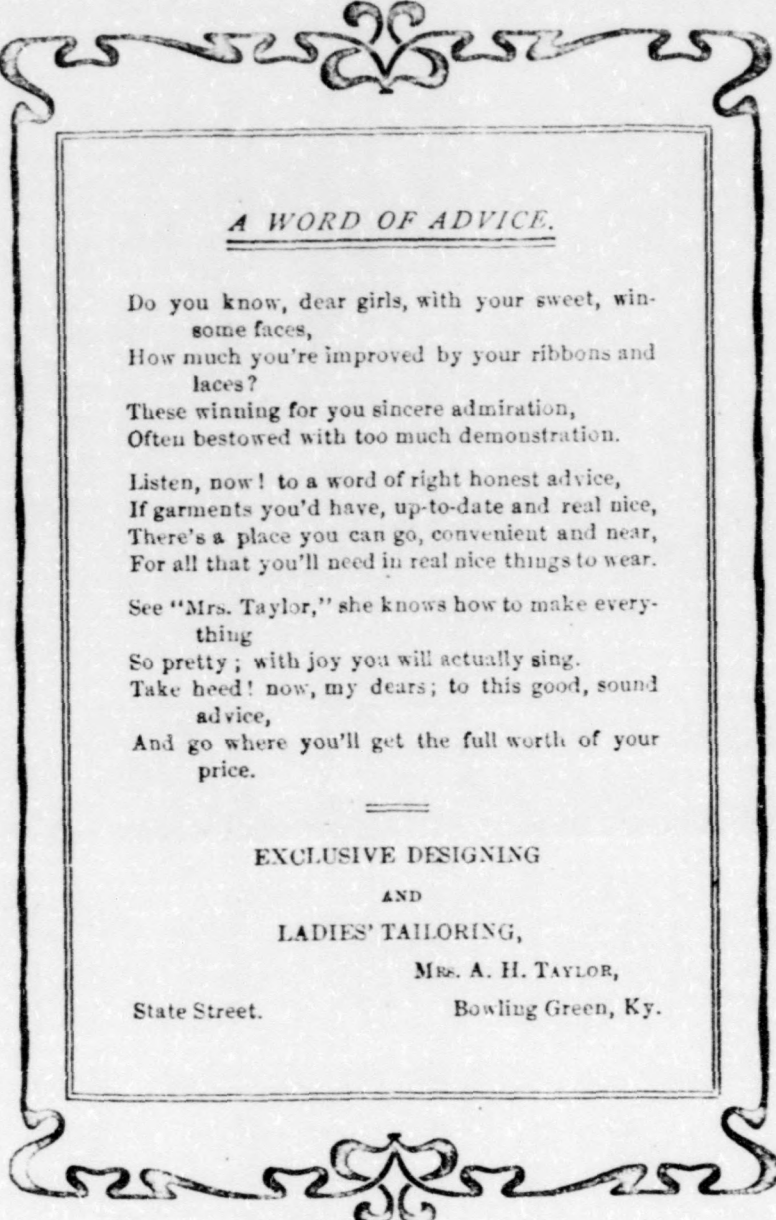


*Oh, lay aside your lawn and lace,
 For Autumn is at hand;
 And gowns and hats must all be changed
 At Winter's stern command.
 You know the way to styles au fait
 Where taste and skill will sell you
 The very best, or, if you doubt,
 This little card will tell you.*

521-523 Main Street.

Mrs. S. H. Taylor,
Bowling Green, Ky.

Fig. 8 . Announcement for Fall 1898. From the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.



A WORD OF ADVICE.

Do you know, dear girls, with your sweet, win-
some faces,
How much you're improved by your ribbons and
laces?
These winning for you sincere admiration,
Often bestowed with too much demonstration.

Listen, now! to a word of right honest advice,
If garments you'd have, up-to-date and real nice,
There's a place you can go, convenient and near,
For all that you'll need in real nice things to wear.

See "Mrs. Taylor," she knows how to make every-
thing
So pretty; with joy you will actually sing.
Take heed! now, my dears; to this good, sound
advice,
And go where you'll get the full worth of your
price.

EXCLUSIVE DESIGNING
AND
LADIES' TAILORING,
MRS. A. H. TAYLOR,
State Street. Bowling Green, Ky.

Fig. 9. Potter College's Green and Gold, June 1903. Located in the Kentucky Library.

EXCLUSIVE Designing and
Ladies' Tailoring Establishment

Mrs. A. H. Taylor Co.

(INCORPORATED)

824-826 STATE STREET,
BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY.

Fig. 10. Potter College's Green and Gold, June 1905. Located in the Kentucky Library.

sustained by the styles which we have designed and created." The statement was both confident and direct.⁵⁴

Two seasons beginning the first of March and the first of September were promoted by the Taylor establishment. For the spring of 1905 an announcement of the opening was found in The Styles And The Gist Of It:

"Spring Opening-March 1st, 1905, - With a large and choice assortment of the dress fabrics and trimmings for the season's modes, our customers are cordially invited to attend our Spring Opening--Mrs. A. H. Taylor--Bowling Green, Kentucky.⁵⁵

Announcement cards were also used to notify customers of the seasonal openings.

No other form of publicity was found until after the death of Mrs. Taylor and her son, William. In March 1921, the Park City Daily News featured an ad by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. It contained a write-up on the fashions of that year and offered special prices to local trade.⁵⁶ In April of the same year, prices were quoted for various types of dresses made by the establishment.⁵⁷

Perhaps the most important advertisement was the word of satisfied customers who referred Mrs. Taylor's establishment to their friend and relatives. The role of this form

⁵⁴The Styles And The Gist Of It, March 1905, Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky Library, p. 3.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁶Park City (Kentucky) Daily News, 31 March 1921.

⁵⁷Park City (Kentucky) Daily News, 2 April 1921.

of advertisement as well as other means played a great part in acquiring the 24,000 customers attributed to the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company at the company's peak.

Sales

The front room of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company on State Street was designated as the sales room. Former customers described it as being similar to a dry goods store full of shelves with materials and accessories. The fitting rooms were located nearby. After the customer talked with Mrs. Taylor, the materials and trimmings appropriate for the design were shown and chosen.⁵⁸ From one to three fittings were usually required in order to insure the perfect fit. An order could be filled in three to ten days. Until former Potter College students began to write for garments, all sales took place in the establishment.

Gradually, because of the demand, the company branched into the mail order business. It did not take long for the mail order purchases to exceed those made by local clientele. Twice each year circulars were mailed to customers across the United States and abroad. Sample cards with dress fabrics and trimmings were also provided to those who requested them. Figure 11 and 12 are examples of these cards.

In a letter to one of the employees, Mr. Taylor commented on the response of the customers in August of 1894:

58

Interview with Miss Elizabeth Coombs, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 8 April 1977.

"Our mail for the past week indicates an early season and I wish to ask, if possible for you to arrange your trip so you can be here by the first of September. Work has been promised the first week of September. We are in sight of three wedding outfits to begin the season with."⁵⁹

Many young brides, especially those living in Warren County, went to Mrs. Taylor's for all or part of their trousseaux. These included such garments as the wedding gown, the second day dress, suits, party dresses, a coat, and lingerie. In many instances pieces from trousseaux made by the Taylor Company are the garments which have been saved.

To have a garment made by the Taylor dressmaking establishment cost the customer \$7.00 for wool and silk gowns. Waists cost from \$3.50 to \$4.50, however, these prices did not include the cost of materials.⁶⁰ In the November 1904 issue of The Styles And The Gist Of It, prices were quoted for various "Robe Pattern Gowns." Description for two robes, not the most expensive ones featured, were as follows:

"Pearl gray chiffon cloth with herringbone and cut work embroidery. Skirt is in panel design to flounce and the flounce design is in van dyke points with the embroidery between. Waist also in pretty design. . . finished with silk lining throughout will be \$55.00."

59

Aaron H. Tylor to Josephine Calvert, 2 August 1894, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

60

Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University Bowling Green, Kentucky.

42

SAMPLES.

When requesting samples please inclose postage for a reply. It is best to give an idea about colors preferred, also give a limit in price. This will enable me to select to better advantage. The terms, "Cheap" and "Low-priced," so frequently used, are indefinite and prove poor guides.

One customer considers material at \$1.00 per yard "low-priced," while another thinks it "rather expensive." Respectfully,

MRS. A. H. TAYLOR,

MAIN ST. : : : : BOWLING GREEN, KY.

Fig. 11. Sample card from the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Dear Madame :

The trimmings pinned to samples are intended to give an idea of the general effect, and do not necessarily mean that the particular combination with each sample will be used. In designing the gown it is frequently necessary to make slight changes. Please understand that all suits will be appropriately trimmed. It is impossible to trim up each sample sent out.

Respectfully,

Mrs. A. H. Taylor.

(a)

DEAR MADAME :

In reply to your request, I send you samples from which I trust you may be able to select. **KINDLY MAKE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CHOICES,** and say whether or not you are willing to leave the selection to me in case all are sold. The prices marked give an idea of the cost of finished suit, the first price allowing for less trimming. Hoping to have an early reply, I am,

Respectfully,

MRS. A. H. TAYLOR.

(b)

Fig.12. Sample cards from the Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

"White satin robe in elaborate design of white applique work with cluney lace inlet. Both skirt and waist elaborate and beautiful. The finished suit silk lined, \$75.00."⁶¹

On one of the price sheets mailed to their customers, it was requested that "of those who order from us to advance one-half the amount of bill and furnish good references."⁶² It appeared that the company had difficulty, as do present day businesses, in obtaining overdue bills. Mr. Taylor was concerned with this matter in the following letter to one of his employees:

"I presume Carrie gave you all the instructions necessary relative to accounts uncollected and etc. But I want to impress the necessity of you urging every one to settle their bills at once. I would suggest that you say on your first statement that it is both urgent and important that they remit by return mail, (I mean to suggest the idea not the words) I want you to use your strongest expression to two town customers especially Professor _____ and Professor _____."⁶³

These were rather mild words in comparison to what might be used today by businessmen trying to collect debts.

Mrs. Taylor's publication, The Styles And The Gist Of It was "devoted to fashion plates, notes, and descriptions only these to be the class that usually are confined to expensive dressmakers and dressmaking establishments at a rate within

⁶¹The Styles And The Gist Of It, November 1904, p.14.

⁶²Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library, Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

⁶³Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, 8 July 1895, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection, Kentucky Library Manuscript Division, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

reach of all and in style and manner practical for all."⁶⁴

The magazine (See figure 13) was overseen personally by Mrs. Taylor. In each issue the fashionable fabrics, styles, millinery, and coiffures were discussed. The magazine also had its own exclusive "Letter From Paris" reporting on the Parisian fashion houses. Though the author was not given, it is certain that it was written by Mrs. Taylor.

The fashions featured in the Taylor publication were designed especially for the Taylor establishment by New York and Paris pattern firms. The readers were offered paper patterns of the illustrated fashions cut to measure at various prices ranging from 75 cents for a sleeve pattern to \$3.50 for a coat pattern.⁶⁵

Personal attention was given to each customer whether she ordered through the mail or visited the establishment. The ability of the sales department in managing the number of clientele was a remarkable achievement, especially when considering the conveniences available today in sales departments were not available then.

Fashionableness of Garments

The following fashions were products of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. For each garment, any available information was recorded, a description was written, and a sketch

⁶⁴The Styles And The Gist Of It, November 1904, p.4

⁶⁴Ibid., p.2.

Figure 13. Cover page of The Styles And The Gist
Of It, November 1904.

MID-WINTER NUMBER

Price 35 ce

STYLES
&
THE GIST OF IT
 PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
 BY
MRS. A. H. TAYLOR
 BOWLINGGREEN, KY.

THE FINISHING TOUCHES.

Volume 1 | Subscription, \$1.00 per year | November 1904
 Number 1

was drawn. Similarities between actual garments and design found in The Styles And The Gist Of It were noted. Garment designs similar in silhouette and style lines were sought from other fashion magazines to use in ascertaining if the Taylor designs were fashionable.

Figure 14

Silk faille was used in creating this black basque. The design utilized the stand-up collar, center front closure, and lapels which could have been buttoned as illustrated or folded back revealing the gathered yoke underneath. The sleeves were fitted with diamond shapes cut out showing the gathered fabric underneath. The jacket was mid-hip length.

Similar jackets were found in Demorest magazine (Figure 15 and 16) in the Spring of 1889. The basque was not dated, thus no comparison of the fashionableness could be made. This garment was the earliest located design made at Mrs. Taylor's establishment. This design was from the Kentucky Museum's collection. The original owner was Mrs. Ella Nora Walker of Adair County, Kentucky.

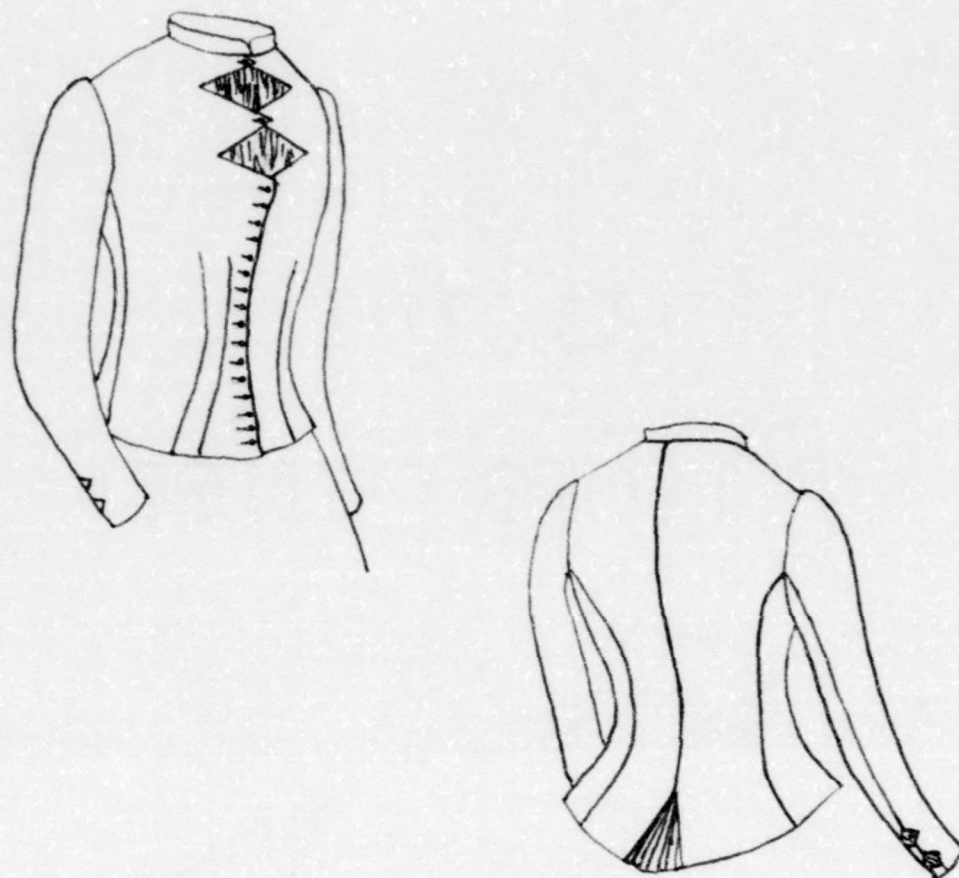


Figure 14
Black Basque



Fig. 15. From Demorest Monthly Magazine, May 1889, p. 391. (Chandos Jacket)



Fig. 16. From Demorest Monthly Magazine, April 1889, p. 457. (Laurina Jacket)

Figure 17

The Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company label was in this highly decorated basque. The lavender, silk surah of the basque contrasted with the purple velvet in the dog collar, arm banding, cuffs, and waist band. The full front was made of gathered chiffon with three rows of ruching across the upper chest area. Chiffon was also used to encircle the collar and the armhole. Two velvet straps extended down the back and onto the skirt. Embroidered chiffon was used along the edges of the broad cuffs and the collar.

No exact date was given for this garment although it was believed to have been made about 1890. Fashions in the same silhouette were not found, but garments containing a number of similarities were located in various issues of the Delineator from 1890 through 1895. The sleeves on the design in figure 18 were similar to the Taylor garment. With the exception of the sleeves, the front bodice in figure 19 is almost identical to the Taylor garment. Another similar front bodice is shown in figure 20.

Mrs. Ryan Monroe Robertson of Bowling Green, Kentucky, was the original owner. The garment was located in the Kentucky Museum's collection.



Figure 17 (a).

Silk Surah Basque (front)



Figure 17 (b).

Silk Surah Basque (back)



Fig. 18. From Delineator,
March 1890, p. 421.

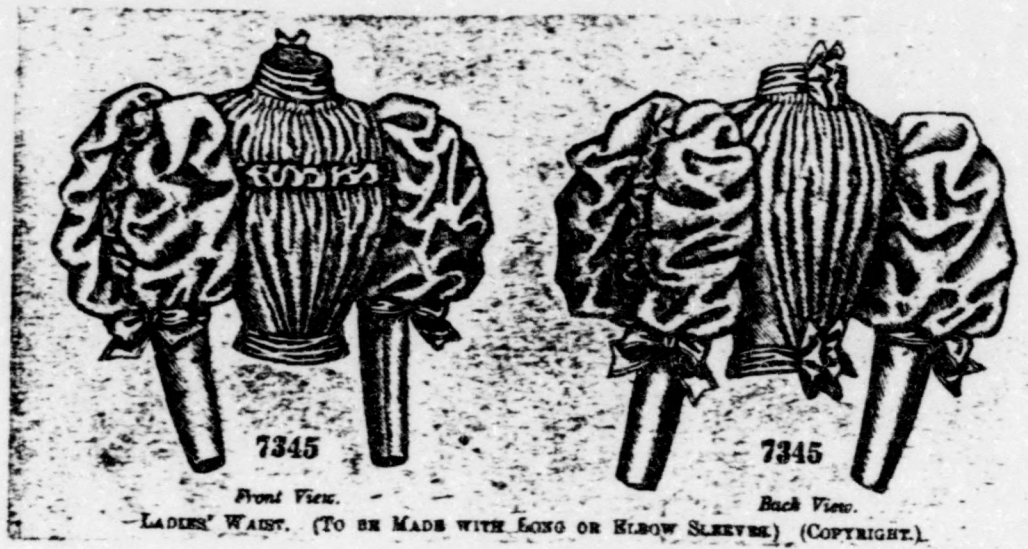


Fig. 19. From Delineator, January 1895, p.52.



Figure 20. From Delineator,
May 1893, p. 14.

Figure 21

For many years the Fair Hop was one of Bowling Green's more exciting events of the year. This dress was especially made for one such event in the early 1890's. The fabric was China silk with a yellow pansy and daisy motif on the cream colored background. The pointed bodice had a boat neckline edged in a hand sewn ruffle, elbow length puff sleeves, and pleats in both front and back. It was lined in brown cambric. The trailing skirt was very plain with large pleats providing the fullness in the back. A ruffle was used around the hem.

This garment was altered from its original state since some of the darting had been removed and the plaiting rearranged. The silhouette of the bodice and skirt in figure 22 was very similar to the Taylor design; however, the style lines were very different. The design in figure 23 had some similarities, such as sleeves and unpressed pleats on the bodice. The skirt in figure 24 had similar style lines.

Miss Hattie Strange of Smiths Grove, Kentucky, was the original owner of this dress. It was a gift to the Kentucky Museum.

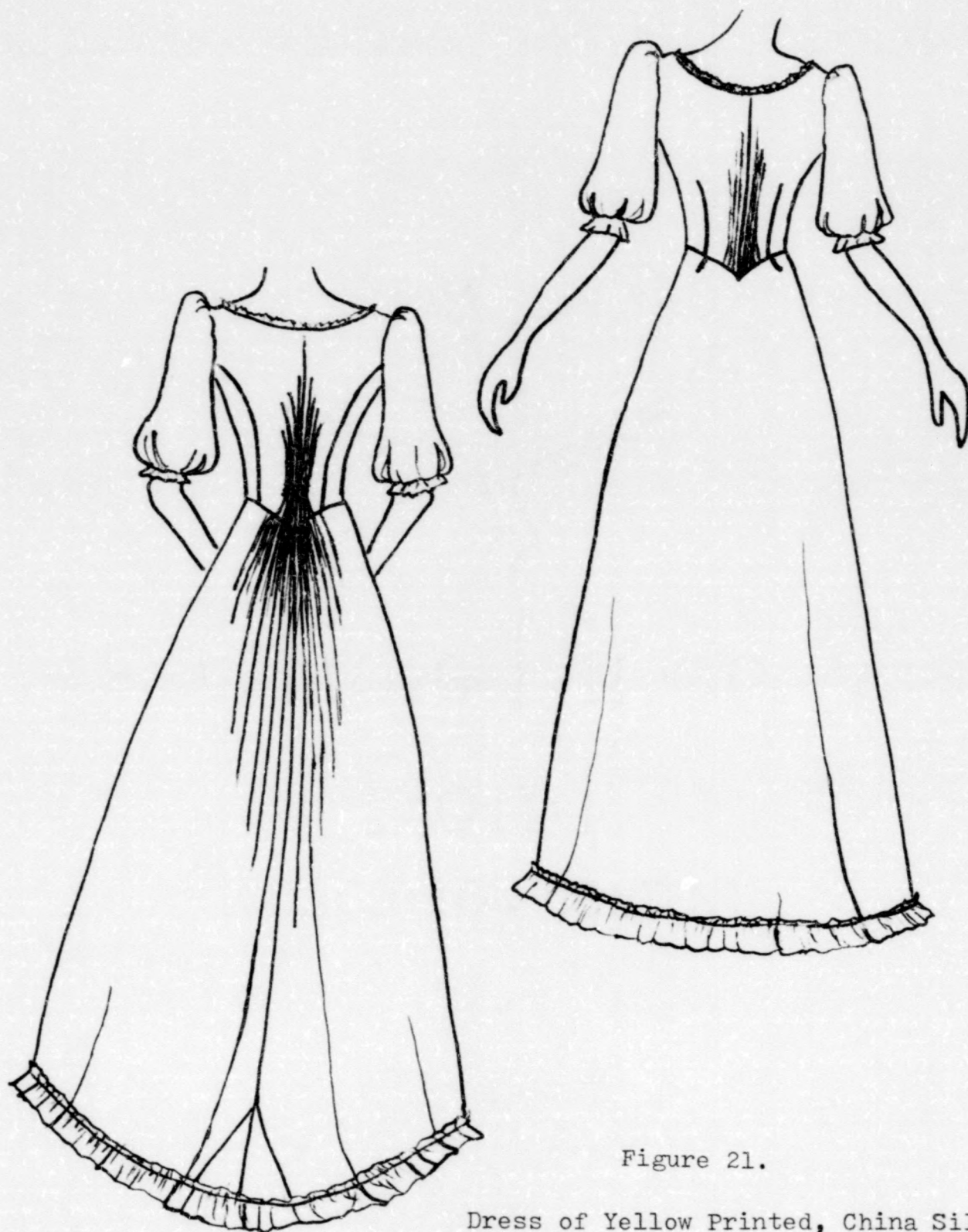


Figure 21.

Dress of Yellow Printed, China Silk



Fig. 22. From Harper's Bazar, December 1893, p.23.



Fig. 23. From Delineator, May 1894,
p. 340.



Fig. 24. From Delineator, May 1894,
p. 340.

Figure 25

This dress had the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company label sewn into the inside bodice belt. The material used was a gray and beige printed foulard in a stylized pattern. The fitted bodice had several rows of metal beads and sequins with three rows of shirring underneath. On either side of the front closure, unpressed pleats were used. Attached to the collar and at the wrist were lace frills. The sleeves were tiered to below the elbow and fitted to the wrist. The back bodice was similar to the front. The skirt was four gored with large plaiting at the center back. The hem was finished by a ruffle.

Made in 1892, this gown was part of Mrs. Florence Russell's trousseau. It was donated to the Kentucky Museum. No garment in a fashion magazine was found with the exact style lines of the Taylor garment.

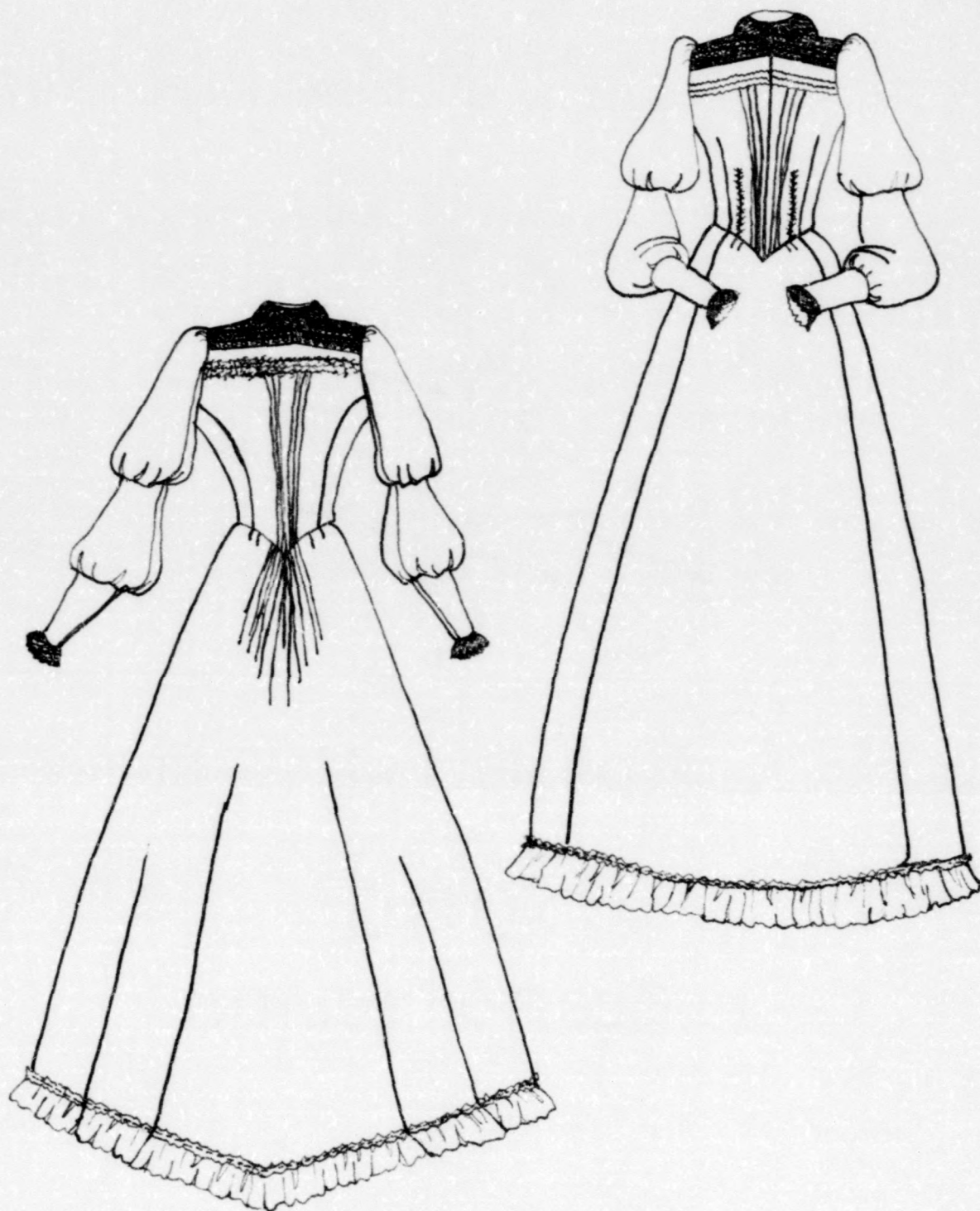


Figure 25

Dress of Gray Printed, Foulard

Figure 26

The date given for this garment was 1896, the year in which the original owner married, indicating it was probably part of her trousseau. The two pieces were done in pink, silk moire. The low decollete appeared to lack some type of decoration since the unfinished edge of the corsage was revealed. The look of extra fullness in the front was achieved by the odd shaped corsage. The waist was belted in by a pleated band. The sleeves were tightly fitted with four groups of tucks near the shoulder.

The stiff lines of the eight-gored, godet skirt emphasized the great amount of flare. Deep plaits took up extra fullness at the waist. Satin ruffles were sewn to the lower edge of the skirt and a velvet dust ruffle adorned the reverse side. The entire dress was lined with white cambric adding to the tremendous weight of the dress.

The Marshal Field and Company featured "Coming Styles Designed By The Great Costumers of Europe" in 1896. One dress shown (figure 27) had the basic silhouette of the Taylor design without the frills and trimmings. Another design (figure 28) presented in the Delineator was similar to the bodice and skirt, although it featured large puff sleeves.

The original owner was Mrs. Henry Thomas Hagerman. It was given to the Kentucky Museum.

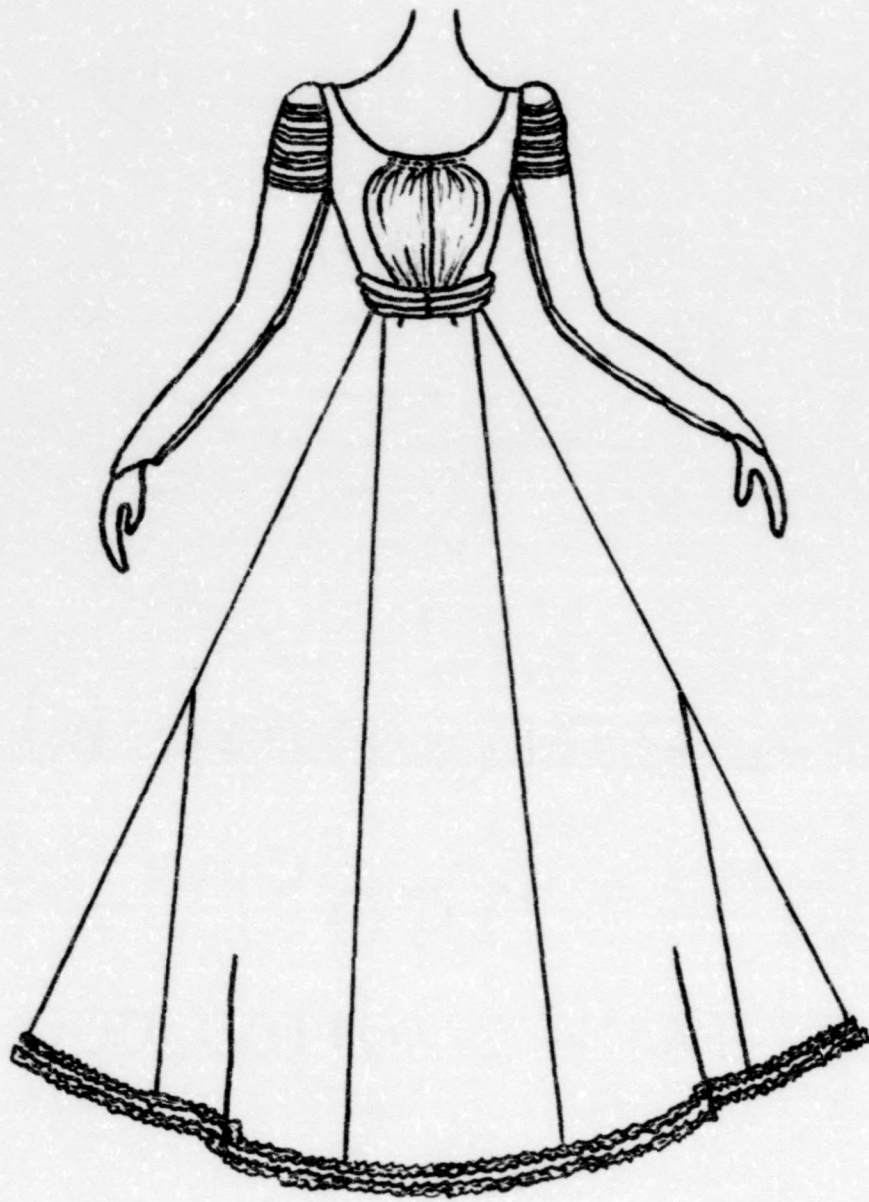


Figure 26 (a).
Silk, Moire Dress (front)

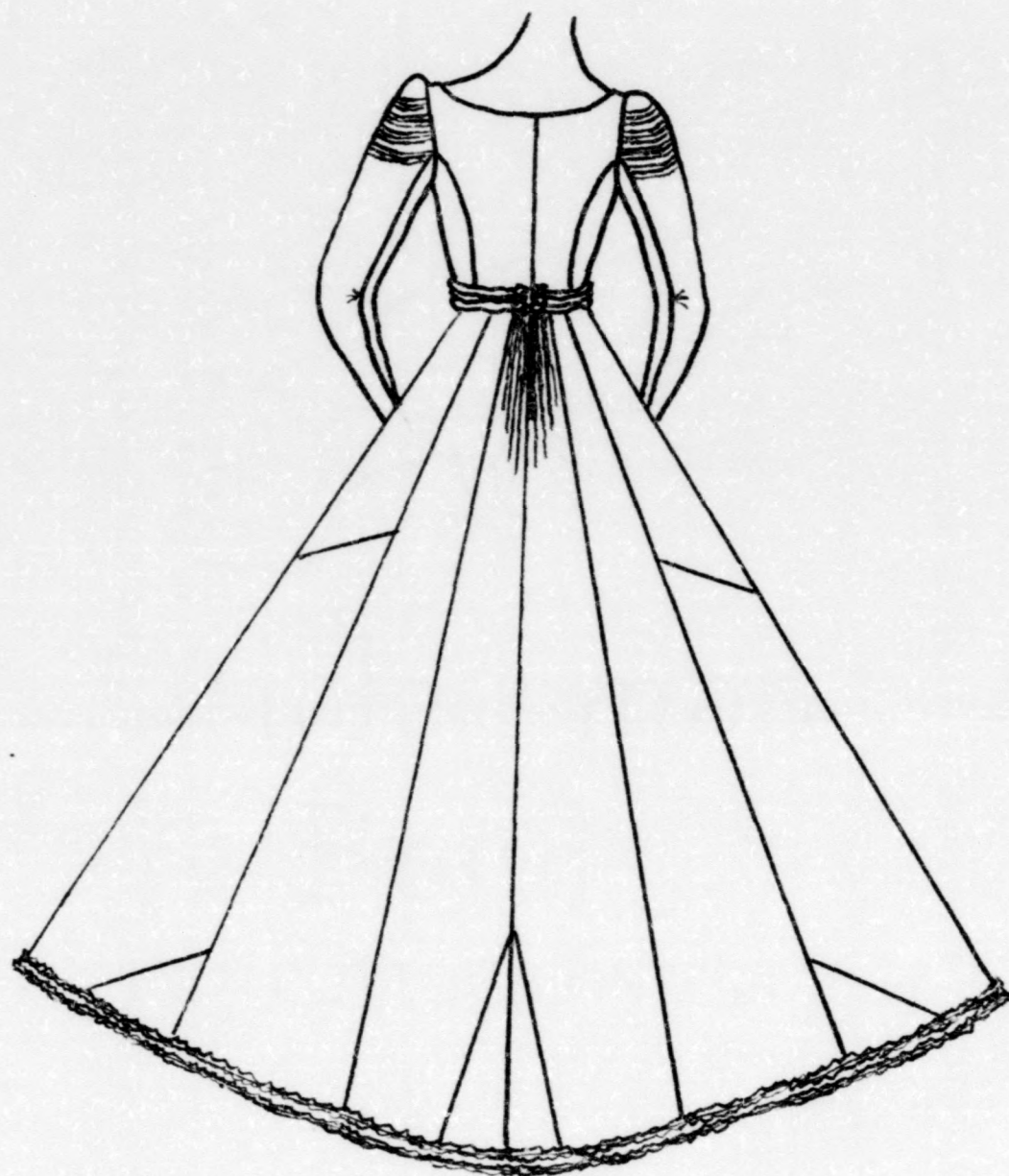


Figure 26 (b).

Silk, Moire Dress (Back)

Les robes de
Madam Sarah Bern
Miss Ada Rehan, e
François du Vau



Fig. 27. From Marshal Field and Company, 1896.



8075

Fig. 28. From Delineator
January 1896. p. 411.

Figure 29

A combination of ivory China silk and needlepoint lace was used in creating Mrs. Nora McGee's wedding dress worn in the summer of 1903. In the tradition of the "S" silhouette the design had a considerable amount of fullness in the waist area and at the hemline. The bodice yoke and boned collar were of needlepoint lace with seed pearls sewn at the top and base of the collar. Five rows of ruching with five rosettes divided the yoke from the lower bodice. The rosettes were made with four rosebuds dangling on satin ribbons from the center front rose made of the same fabric as the dress. The bodice and hip area of the skirt were made of shirred fabric. The trailing skirt was divided into two sections by more rows of ruching and shirring. The bishop sleeves were created by shirring on the upper arm and at the cuff.

Comparable dresses were shown in the Delineator in 1903 through 1907. The La Mode Artistique of 1906 contained a plate of a promenade gown also very much like the wedding gown with the exception of the sleeves. See figure 30, 31 and 32.

Considering the year in which the wedding dress was worn and that similar dresses were shown in fashion magazines from 1903 to 1906, the wedding dress was very fashionable for its time and would have been so until at least 1906.

The dress was located in the Kentucky Museum. It was a gift of Mrs. Nora McGee.



Figure 29

China Silk Wedding Dress



Fig. 30. From Delineator, February
1903, p. 205.



Fig. 31. From Delineator
1904. Courtesy of Butterick
Fashion Marketing Company.



M. A. 1041

Fig. 32. From La Mode Artistique, 1906, as found in Fashion Through Fashion Plates, p. 139.

Figure 33

This second day dress from the trousseau of Mrs. Nora McGee was also made in 1903. The two piece design was made from a Copenhagen blue silk fabric with ecru lace. The bodice had a yoke of Valenciennes lace with a matching lining bordered by several rows of shirring. The collar and the front revers were decorated with blue and ecru re-embroidered lace and picot. Lace medallions were used on each side of the bodice. The lower waist was shirred and belted in by a pleated band. The sleeves were below the elbow, cuffed in lace. The back bodice was identical to the front. It was lined with blue cambric and a small muslin label was sewn in with undistinguishable writing.

The skirt was fitted at the hips by pleating and shirring. It flared at the bottom edge with a small godet at the center back. Two rows of tucks circled the hem.

The year 1906 was the year in which the Delineator featured gowns such as Mrs. McGee's second day dress (figure 34 and 35). Fashion advice for summer wear included, "Sleeves, as a rule are puffs to the elbow, and nearly all the new frocks are made with a fancy yoke." An earlier magazine, La Mode Artistique, in 1905 showed a winter gown by the Belgian designer, Drecol. The Drecol dress was the earliest design located in which the style lines were similar to the Taylor design. Based on these findings, Mrs. McGee's gown was designed three years before the style became popular in



Figure 33.

Second Day Dress



Fig. 34. From Delineator,
December 1906, p. 927.



Fig. 35. From Delineator,
August 1906, p. 543.



Fig. 36. Dress by Drecol from La Mode Artistique, 1905, as found in Fashion Through Fashion Plates, p. 138.

fashion magazines.

Mrs. Nora McGee of Glasgow, Kentucky, was the original owner. She donated it to the Kentucky Museum's collection.

Figure 37

The lustrous fabric, *peau de soie*, was used in creating this godet skirt. The front had four pleats beginning at the horizontal bands spaced at various levels and stitched to the knee. Top stitching was used on seamlines, darts, bands, pleats, and on the hem. The back of the skirt had more flare than the front.

The skirt was located in the Kentucky Museum, a gift of Mrs. Nora McGee. No date was available.

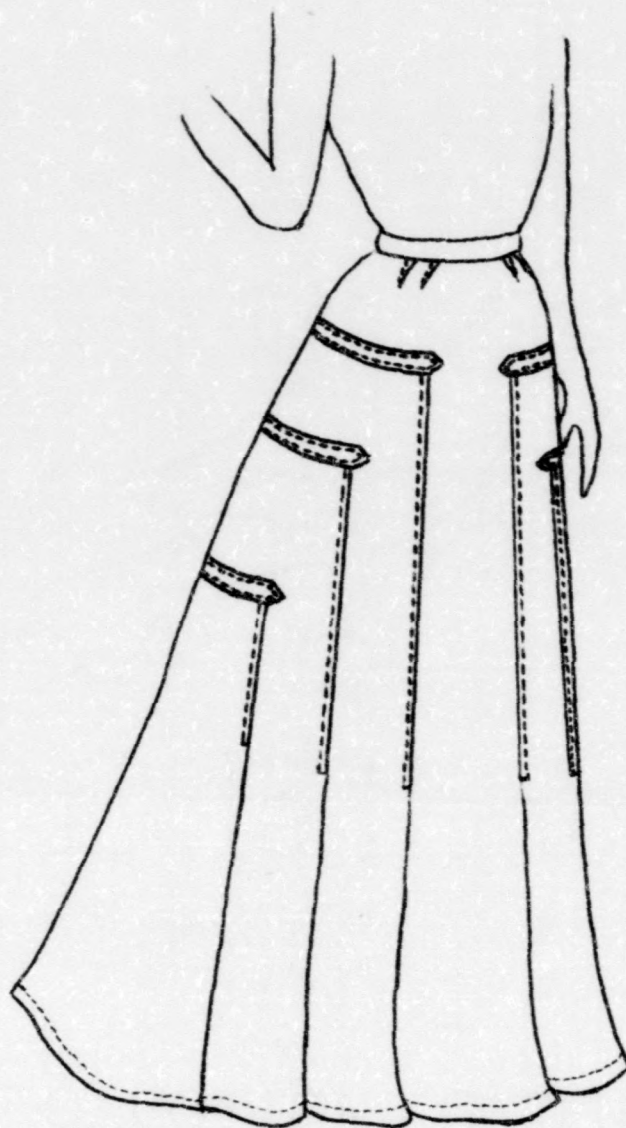


Fig. 37

Peau de Soie Skirt

Figure 38

When Mrs. Nell Gooch Travelstead married in 1904, her trousseau was made by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. The coat pictured was part of the ensemble she wore on her wedding day (See figure 60 in Appendix B for the wedding gown). The loose fitted three-quarter length coat featured large pagoda sleeves and simple style lines. The ecru wool flannel was lined in silk crepe de chine with passementerie motifs down the front, back, and on the sleeves. The handmade passementeries were formed by two types of silk braid, a plain heavy braid, and a smaller lacy braid often connected by knotted silk yarns. The neck, front, and sleeve areas were emphasized by fine Brussels lace in a flower and vine motif.

This type of garment was presented as an evening coat in the Delineator over a number of years. In the January 1903 issue, a coat very similar to Mrs. Travelstead's was featured (figure 39). The style lines were essentially the same with the exception of the collar, with Mrs. Travelstead's being much smaller since it was fashioned by the lace. In 1905 and 1906, other similar coats were shown in the Delineator although they differed in the length and sleeve treatment (figures 40 and 41).

In the November 1904 issue of The Styles And The Gist Of It published by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, two afternoon or evening coats were presented which were similar to the Travelstead coat. They are shown in figures 42 and 43.

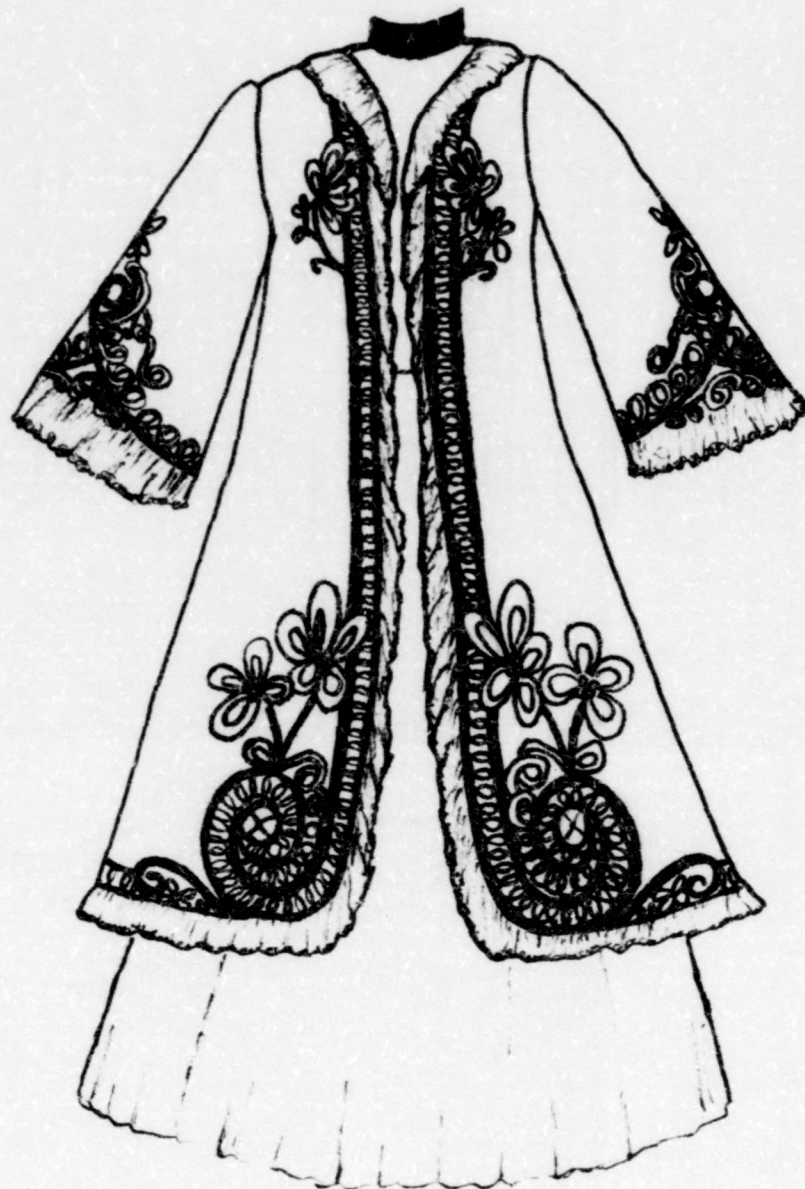


Figure 38 (a).

Wool Flannel Coat (front)



Figure 38(b).

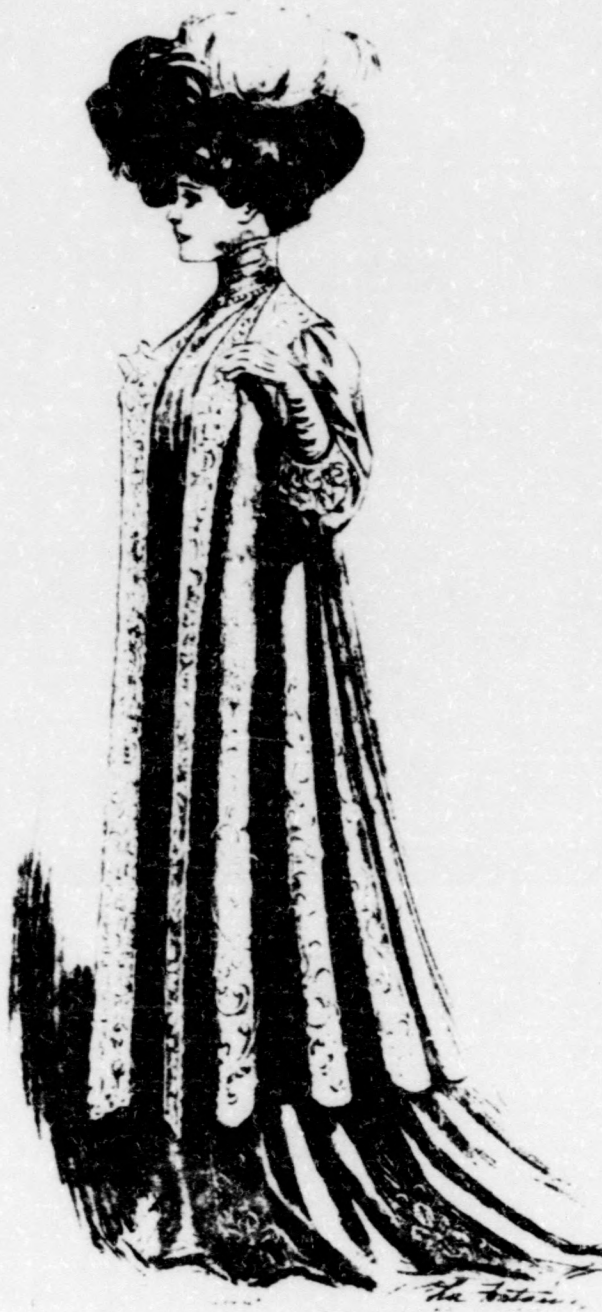
Wool Flannel Coat (back)



Fig. 39. From Delineator, January 1903,
p. 29.



Fig. 40 . From Delineator, 1905
(no exact date given) p. 929.



The long, loose coats are often richly embroidered.

Fig. 41. From Delineator, November 1906, p. 706.



Fig. 42. "Evening coat in black chiffon velvet in handsome shirred design. This coat is trimmed around the bottom with a very rich and heavy open work applique in black showing white underneath. Sleeves are finished with soft frills of lace and chiffon. Price, pinned paper patten, cut to measure, \$3.50." From The Styles And The Gist Of It, November 1904, p.11.



Fig. 43. "Coat for afternoon or evening wear in cachon colored cloth trimmed in velvet ribbon of darker shade. Coat is shirred. Has large full bishop sleeve with wide cuffs and lace frills to finish. Price pinned paper pattern, cut to measure, \$3.50." From the Styles And The Gist Of It, November 1904, p.6.

The evening coat appears to have been fashionable for a number of years after the turn of the nineteenth century. There were some differences in the length of the coats shown during the same periods and some style lines were more simple than others; however, one variation did not appear to be more fashionable than another at any given period. Based on these findings, Mrs. Travelstead's coat was fashionable as compared with other similar coats found in magazines during that same period.

The coat was in the Kentucky Museum's collection. It was donated by the original owner, Mrs. Nell Gooch Travelstead of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Figure 44

The owner of this dress had it made at Mrs. Taylor's establishment in 1906. The lines of the dress reflect the "S" silhouette of the early twentieth century. This design was done in Alice blue, wool serge with alpaca guipure. The bodice was very ornate with shirring in the front and back shoulder area with guipure encircling the upper front and back bodice. Down the front and back of the bodice, the material was used to create a V inset with Valenciennes lace in the upper portions. The bloused effect of the bodice was created by the small unpressed pleats in the front and back. The waist was held by a wide band of pleats with vertical rows of ruching in center front and back. The sleeves were fitted to the lower arm by stitched pleats then gradually became fuller at the shoulder. The cuffs were of the same lace as the inset. The bodice was closed in the back by twenty-two small hand painted buttons. The skirt was fitted to the waist and hips by pleats and shirring and then flared to the hemline. The pleats in center front were double top stitched to the knee. Figure 4 is a detail of the bodice.

In 1905, the Ladies Home Journal showed the shirtwaist suit. The silhouette was comparable to the dress made by the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company although trimmings and style lines differ. The Delineator presented similar two piece dresses in the Fall of 1906 with the designs much the same as Mrs. Taylor's. Thus, the 1906 Taylor dress was in keeping with



Figure 44

Dress of Wool Serge



Fig. 45. From the Ladies Home Journal, 1905, (exact date unknown).



Fig. 46 . From Delineator,
September 1906, p.597.



Fig. 47. From Delineator, November 1907, p.727.

fashions of the time.

The dress was located in the Kentucky Museum. It was a gift of Mrs. Ibbie (Beard) Allen of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Figure 48

This interesting dress was made of black silk faille and trimmed in jet beadwork. The silhouette reflected the change from the large "S" to a narrow sheath. Although the design appeared to be in two separate pieces the tunic and underdress were made together with a broad, pleated band at the waist. The distinctive features of this dress were the skirt panels and the beadwork outlining the tunic. Black lace frills were used to finish the sleeves at the wrist. The length of the dress was short enough to reveal a full view of the ankle.

The original owner of this garment was unable to give an exact date for when this dress was made; however, it was fashionable from 1917 to 1919. Several issues of Vogue magazine contained dresses with similar silhouettes in 1918 (figures 49 and 50). They emphasized the sport look while Mrs. Taylor's design was more formal due to the materials used. The Sears catalog featured a similar style in 1919 as shown in figure 51.

The dress is located in the Kentucky Museum. The original owner was Mrs. J.G. Denhardt of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

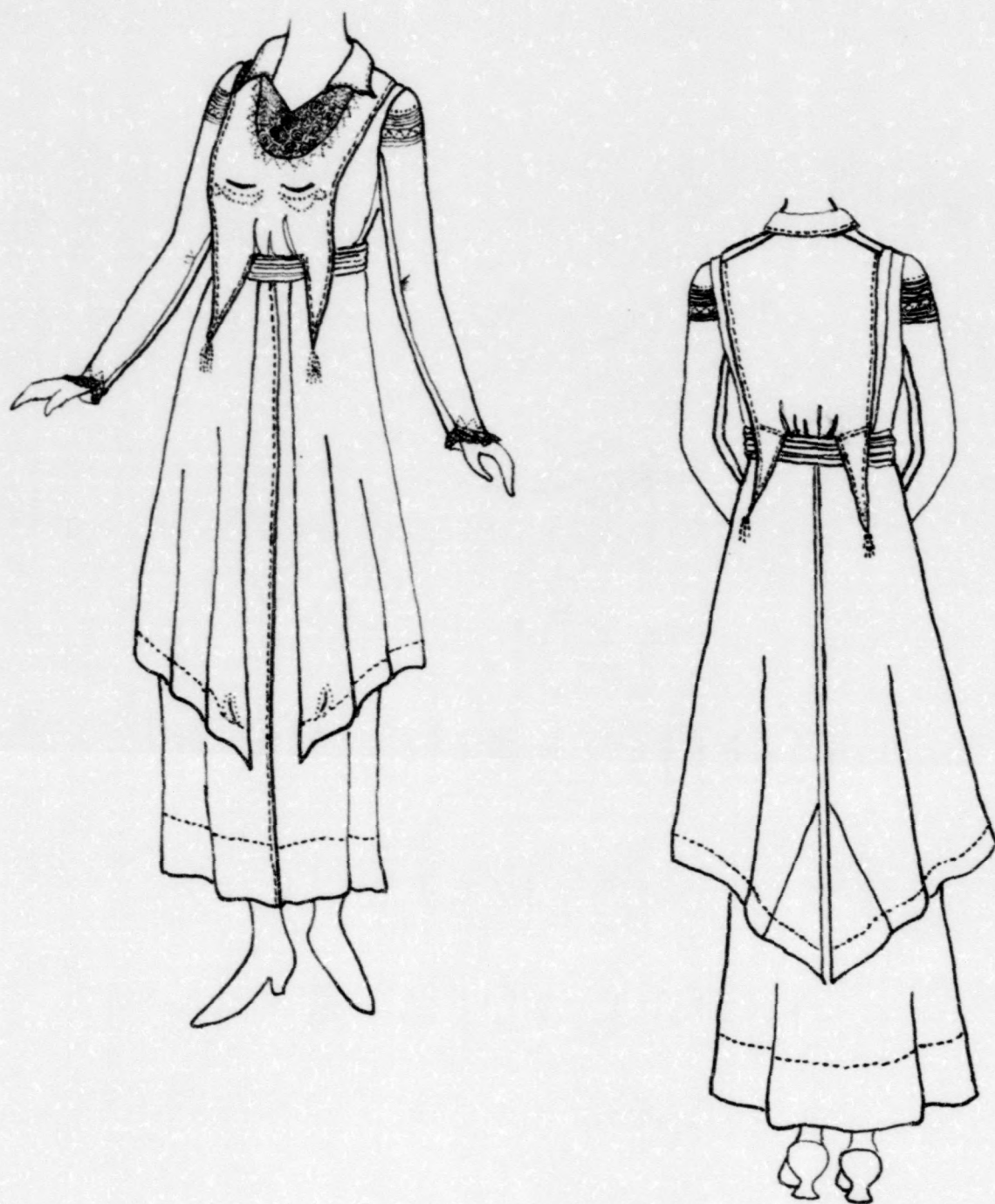


Fig. 48

Dress of Black, Silk Faille



Fig. 49. Vogue, February 1, 1918, p.70.



Fig. 50. Vogue February 15,
1918, p. 72.



31T6745
Satin
Messaline
\$24⁷⁵

31T6750
Wool Mixed
Serge
\$12⁹⁸

page are
at figure
following
1 53 inches
sches waist
iches with
and waist
actions, see

31T6745—Navy blue. EACH | 31T6750—Navy blue. EAC
31T6751—Dark green. . . .

Fig. 51. From Sear's catalog, 1919.

Figure 52

A photograph was made of the original owner in this dress and printed in a 1922 trade magazine. The dress was made of navy blue silk chiffon with jet beadwork. It featured a V neckline, long narrow armholes, dropped waistline, and a handkerchief hemline. The closures were located at the right shoulder and underarm seam. An open slit was created below the side waistline by the draping of the skirt. An underdress was worn with it; however, it did not survive with the garment.

The earliest similar fashions were found in two issues of Vogue in 1922 as shown in figures 53 and 54. The design in figure 53 utilized the same material as the Taylor design. A later design was featured in a 1923 issue of the same magazine.

The Taylor design was the latest fashion at the time it was worn and was probably introduced as Vogue showed similar designs. This style proved to be popular throughout the "Roaring Twenties."

Mrs. Clara Mae Connors was the original owner of the Taylor dress. Her niece, Mrs. Wilson Cook, Bowling Green, loaned the dress for use in this study.



Fig. 52

Dress of Silk Chiffon with Jet Beadwork



Fig. 53. "Jet bands and lines of jet beads trimmed this very graceful chiffon dance frock sketched at the Club de Vingt." Vogue, March 1, 1922, p. 37.



Fig. 54. "Mauve point d'esprit over gold metal cloth forms the dancing frock above. The bateau neck-line continues its sway, but the long narrow armholes are a new feature, emphasized by a binding of velvet ribbon, which also outlines the distinctive draping of the overskirt." *Vogue*, November 1, 1922, p. 86.



CYBER

Fig. 55. Vogue, 1923.
From Fashion Through Fashion
Plates, p. 154.

Interpretation of Data

The interpretation of data will be discussed in three parts as in the Analysis of Data section. The parts include: the biography and history, the organization, and the fashionableness of the garments.

Biography and History

Many modern women are involved in careers outside the home; however, being responsible for a business employing more than 200 persons is still not a common situation. Yet, in the early twentieth century, Mrs. Taylor proved that a woman could be very successful in the business community. As the proprietor of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, she was an exceptional advisor, designer, and business woman.

The fashion advice she offered to her customers was not entirely based on contemporary fashion magazines. She kept abreast of the latest fashions by going to the fashion capitals once or twice a year. The fashions she produced were designed for the individual, not the masses. Mrs. Taylor's keen business astuteness enabled her to take advantage of her talents and become a highly successful businesswoman.

The Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company provided two services important to women of that era. For local residents, the dressmaking firm was a fashionable place for women to have their clothing custom made. A trip to Nashville or Louisville was not necessary in order to buy the latest fashions. Through mail order, women living throughout the nation were

able to buy the same fashionable clothing in their own homes. The dressmaking establishment was also the main source of employment for women in the community. Many women supported their families on the wages they earned at the establishment.

Women wearing "Taylor made" garments felt assured they were wearing were the latest fashions. Taylor designs were worn to the theater, balls, receptions, weddings, expositions, and other social and cultural events throughout the nation and abroad.

The decline of the business was due in part to the death of Mrs. Taylor, the management after her death, and the ready-to-wear industry. After her death, the company did not have the attraction of customers particularly since Mrs. Taylor's advice could not be substituted. Under the management of her son and later her husband, the stock of materials and trimmings were not kept as they had once been under Mrs. Taylor's direction. Customers, not finding what they had grown accustomed to, turned to other dressmaking establishments or to ready-to-wear. The convenience of ready-to-wear items increased their popularity. Gradually, it became more fashionable to purchase ready-made garments than to have garments custom made.

Organization

There was a considerable amount of cooperation and respect between the employer and the employee. Without this combination the business could not have flourished as it did.

For the company to fill the quantity of orders at its high quality during the peak years, indicates that the management and the workers were efficient and competent.

Few positions were available in the Bowling Green area for women to earn money. The employees appreciated the opportunity Mrs. Taylor offered even though the hours were long and the work tedious. The conditions of the working areas were good as compared to other manufacturing firms, which were often overcrowded, poorly lighted, and poorly ventilated.

The division-of-labor system permitted the employees to become specialized in making one aspect of a garment. This system allowed garments to be made faster, thereby increasing production.

The announcements mailed from New York and Paris were a unique means of advertisement. Customers were impressed by the cards, thereby increasing the number of orders as the cards indicated the Taylor Company had the latest fashion information.

The effectiveness of the magazine The Styles And The Gist Of It could not be determined since only two issues were published, and no records were found of the sales due to the issues. The magazine, however, did provide excellent contemporaneous fashion notes and plates. Most of the designs found in the publications were more elaborate than those found in other fashion magazines of the same period. Those fashions, however, were not designed by Mrs. Taylor but by pattern

firms in New York and Paris.

Fashionableness of Garments

When a customer sought Mrs. Taylor's advice on what fashions to choose, Mrs. Taylor took into consideration both the features of the individual and her tastes. The designs which Mrs. Taylor created also tended to reflect her personal tastes since many customers left the styles and trimmings to her discretion. From the garments which have been saved, most were found to be fairly elaborate and/or have some unique feature. Perhaps these were identifying marks by which other customers could recognize a "Taylor made" garment.

As a result of inaccurate dating and the limited number of existing garments made by the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company, the sample was considered too small to determine whether or not Mrs. Taylor's designs were actually fashionable. One of the remaining dated garments had been altered in appearance, while the other one was unlike any design shown for that particular time period.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to draw attention to the role of the dressmaker in American fashion by studying in depth the dressmaking establishment of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company. The business was unique at the turn of the century due to the number of women employed by the facility and the widespread range of clientele. Only limited studies have been conducted on American women's dress and none specifically concerning dressmakers.

The procedure for this study included several parts. The first part consisted of the compilation of a biography of Mrs. A.H. Taylor and the business history of the company. Secondly, available designs created by Mrs. Taylor were examined and their relation to current fashion was analyzed. Thirdly, the business organization was investigated to determine the number of employees, working conditions, production techniques, equipment, advertising and promotional methods, and sales procedures.

The dressmaking firm was found to have provided two services for women of that era. Fashionable clothing was made available to local residents as well as to consumers

in other regions by means of mail order. The establishment provided employment for an average of 206 women during its fifty years of existence. Twelve garments known to be the work of the Taylor Company were examined in detail and each was compared to similar garments of the time period as shown in contemporary fashion publications, thereby determining their fashionableness. Based on the sample of garments studied, the Mrs. A. H. Taylor establishment appears to have been abreast of current fashion, although many distinctive individual characteristics were noted.

From the study it was concluded that the dressmaking establishment played an important role in the lives of women around the turn of the century, both as the producer of fashionable clothing and as the employer of many local women. By the late 1920's, the convenience and increasing acceptability of ready-to-wear items and the death of Mrs. Taylor brought about the decline of the dressmaking establishment with its emphasis on custom design and fit, thus ending an important but neglected phase of American life.

1. Further study is needed concerning other dressmakers across the United States. One specific phase, such as the designing of garments, the dressmaking techniques, the equipment used, or the working conditions could be investigated.
2. Museums which obtain garments also need to obtain as

much information about the garment as possible, such as the date the garment was made, the original owner, the name and address of donor, the maker, the purpose for which garment was made, and if alterations were made and of what type. Special notes and photographs of garments kept on file would be beneficial to clothing students or other interested persons.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

- Alpaca. A fine, lustrous hair fiber from the Angora goat
- Basque. A shaped, jacket-like bodice usually with side front and side back seams
- Bishop Sleeves. A full sleeve gathered to a cuff
- Brussels Lace. Bobbin net lace with the design heavily outlined
- Cambric. Closely woven, solid-color fabric with a glazed or glossy appearance
- Chiffon. A delicate, sheer, plain woven fabric made of highly twisted silk yarns.
- China Silk. A plain woven fabric that is very strong, yet light weight. Irregularities of the thread are characteristic of the fabric.
- Corsage. A fabric arranged over the rib cage of a bodice.
- Crepe de Chine. A fabric with a fine crinkled effect produced by alternating twisted filling yarns. It has a very soft hand.
- Dog Collar. A tall, stiff collar, often boned
- Ecru. A light tan or beige color
- Faille. A slightly glossy, light weight fabric with a fine rib in the weft direction
- Foulard. A soft fabric in a twill or plain weave, often printed
- Godet. A piece of cloth wider at the bottom than at the top, inserted in a skirt to create more fullness.
- Guipure. A heavy lace with large pattern, usually without a background or with designs joined or held in place by

- bars or coarse threads.
- Horse Hair Braid. A stiff braid made of horse hair
- Jet Beads. A black mineral bead that polishes to a high gloss.
- Moire. A ribbed, silk fabric with a watered or wavy effect
- Needlepoint Lace. A type of lace in which the design is created by buttonhole stitches.
- Pagoda Sleeves. A flared sleeve fitted at the armhole and very large at the bottom
- Passementerie. Applied trimmings such as braid, gimp, cords, and heavy embroideries
- Peau de Soie. A heavy weight, soft satin of silk with a fine cross rib and dull luster
- Picot. Small decorative loops along the edge of a fabric or lace
- Plaiting. Also known as pleating, it is the arrangement of cloth in pleats or folds.
- Re-embroidered Lace. A type of lace with designs outlined in embroidery stitching.
- Revers. The lapels on dresses, jackets, or coats
- Ruche or Ruching. A narrow band of fabric, lace or net plaited or gathered applied to dresses.
- Serge. A fabric usually made of piece dyed worsted in a twill weave.
- Sequin. Also called spangle or pillettes, they were discs made of metal and used as decorative trimming.
- Shirring. A effect created by drawing up fullness by rows of stitching visible on the outside.
- Surah. A soft twill fabric made of silk. Surah is similar to foulard but heavier.
- Valenciennes Lace or Val Lace. A bobbin lace with a mesh ground and distinctive floral or scroll effect created by one thread.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS OF FASHIONS

The following photographs are of persons wearing Mrs. Taylor's fashions. Available information about each photograph is given. They are examples of how Mrs. Taylor's fashions looked on the human form and in most instances in contemporaneous settings.



Fig. 56. "One of the very largest audiences ever assembled at a wedding congregated at the main Street Baptist Church last night to witness the marriage of Mr. Henry T. Hagerman and Miss Bettie Robertson. The ceremony was one of the most novel and beautiful ever witnessed in this city. No more popular couple was ever married here than the one last night, as was attested by the hundreds of people present."⁶⁶

Mrs. H.T. Hagerman's wedding dress was made at the Taylor establishment as well as the matron of honor's and the brides maids' dresses. The original photograph is located in the Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University.

⁶⁶Evening (Bowling Green, Kentucky) Journal, November 12, 1896, p.1.



Fig. 57. Mrs. George A. Hopson had her photograph taken in the red organdy dress the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company made for her to wear to the Bowling Green, Kentucky Fair Hop in 1901. The original photograph was loaned by Mrs. Dick Duncan.



Fig.58. The young woman in the center of the photograph was Mrs. Taylor's daughter, Louise Taylor Beckwith. She was probably wearing one of her mother's designs since most of her clothes were made at the Taylor establishment. The original photograph was loaned by Mr. Burnham Beckwith.



Fig. 59. Mrs. Nell Gooch Travelstead was probably wearing a Taylor design in the above photograph made sometime between 1902 and 1907. The original photograph was loaned by Mr. C.C. Travelstead.



Fig. 60. Mrs. Nell Gooch Travelstead married in 19 and was one of the few who had a wedding portrait made at the time. The Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company made the wedding dress and the trousseau. The original photograph was loaned by Mr. C.C. Travelstead.



Fig. 61. Mrs. I.R. James married in 1976 in her great grandmother's wedding dress. The Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company made the dress for Mrs. John Porter Hines in 1899. White organdy and lace insertion was used in this design. Some alterations had been made on the dress. The original photograph was loaned by Mrs. Jane Morningstar.

APPENDIX C
CORRESPONDENCES

Letter 1

"August 2, 1894

"Dear Josie,

"Our mail for the past week indicates an earlier season and I write to ask, if possible for you to arrange your trip so you can be home by the 1st of September. We have decided to start East earlier than we expected when you left. We leave next Thursday the 9th. Work has been promised the first week in September which of course necessitates our getting back home by the 1st of September. We are in sight of three wedding outfits to begin the season with. If you were only here to write them and arrange the samples I would feel more comfortable. Mattie Hines has agreed to look after the mail while we are away assisted by Miss McNain (pray for them). I trust your treatment has been a success from the beginning and by this time you feel very much improved. Carrie send love (so do I), remember me kindly to Miss Maggie. I hope you all are pleasantly located and that your trip may be a pleasant recreation for you. Our local address in New York will be the same as last season.

"Yours truly,

"A.H. Taylor"

Aaron H. Taylor from St. Louis, Missouri to Josephine Calvert, 2 August 1894, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Letter 2

"July 8, 1895

"Dear Josie,

"I presume Carrie gave you all the instructions necessary relative to accounts uncollected and etc. But I want to impress the necessity of you urging every one to settle their bills at once. I would suggest that you say on your first statement that it is both urgent and important that they remit by return mail, (I mean to suggest the idea, not the words) I want you to use your strongest expression to two town customers especially Professor Cabel and Prof. Taylor. However you be governed by our own good judgement and whatever your effort or the result from same, it will be as in all past time _____ satisfactory to us. I have left you our London and Paris address and I hope we may have letters from you at both places. You will fuide (sic) check from Mrs. Gearand in the safe for her account. In the event you need any money for any purpose while we are away make out check from check book number _____ as I have been doing, sign Mrs. A.H. Taylor's name by you and it will be alright. You will also fuide (sic) some C O D packages in safe which has just come in. I believe this is all I wanted to say. Except to wish you as much pleasure as possible in looking after our business while away, and accept thanks in advance for your kindness in representing us during our absence.

"Truly your friend

"A.H. Taylor"

Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, 8 July 1895,
Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Letter 3

"August 27, 1895

"Dear Josie,

"Your letter of the 15th was received here the 25th. You will never know how much it was appreciated unless you should at some sweet day be many thousands of miles away from home friends you love. You may have written better letters, to sweethearts or possibly those you love better than me, but no effort of your life was ever more appreciated than this. Carrie has expressed a desire to have it lithographed and framed on our return home. We note with pleasure the way you take charge of our little business during our absence. The business like manner in which you refer to things in general is highly satisfactory to us, and will serve in a measure to make our visit to Great Britain, the Continent more satisfactory than we had ever expected. We confidently feel that our little interest at home is in safe, good hands. I trust you may be satisfactorily _____ for all in course of time. I have in time past had charge of employers interest, and I know how anxious you feel to direct and execute satisfactorily and to release you from any worry of minde (sic). Allow me to say that we shall be pleased with your efforts whatever the results may be. We are very much pleased with London as well as Edinburgh. Will tell you all about both places when I see you. We leave here Tuesday morning for Paris where we hope to hear from you again, Mrs. Taylor joins me in best wishes and love

"Yours very truly

"A.H. Taylor"

Aaron H. Taylor from Langham Hotel, Portland Place, London W., to Josephine Calvert, 27 August 1895, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Letter 4

"December 12, 1898

"Dear Josie,

"Doubtless you have heard that Will is ill with pneumonia. Carrie can't leave home to look after the mail and she wants you to attend to it for her for the next few days or until Will is better. Katie McHugh and myself will be at the _____ this afternoon from 1 o'clock on and we want you to please come up to the store and attend to yesterdays and todays mail this p.m.

"Cordually and sadly yours,

"A.H. Taylor"

Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, 12 December 1898,
Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Letter 5

"Tuesday

"My dear Louise

"As the government contract has been completed, the Revival over, I feel that there is nothing in the immediate future to keep one so completely occupied as I have been for the past six months. I am glad to tell you that we made some money out of our contract and that the revival was a great success. We have had a Very satisfactory season in our dressmaking business. Mama seems delighted that we have done so well and that she is convinced that we can handle it without her, she is satisfied to take things Easy and have a good time. She has been having such a good time since she came home. You would be surprised to see how well she looks and she feels well, so long as she don't over eat. Seems hard to control her appetite. We have perfect weather but weather makes us home sick to see the children. I hope you and the children are all well and having a good time with love

"Papa"

Aaron H. Taylor to Louise Taylor Beckwith, personal files of Sterling Beckwith.

Letter 6

"Dear Josie,

"I appreciate very much your kind note of yesterday tendering sympathy in our hour of trouble. Mrs. Taylor has been quite ill but she is very much better and we hope to see her up again in a few days.

"Concerning business, Dear Josie, permit me to say that if you will comply with our request and arrange to come to the office by 7 o'clock, you can occupy your desk any day you wish to come back. If you conclude to come we would be glad to see you Monday morning. I am so glad you decided to write me the note, it did us all good. You will please excuse me for briefness.

"When I see you, we will talk everything over and all will be satisfactory I am sure.

"Very truly your friend,

"A.H. Taylor"

Aaron H. Taylor to Josephine Calvert, Calvert-Obenchain-Younglove Collection.

Letter 7

"August 4, 1976

"Dear Ms. Centers:

"Your letter of July 6th asks for information about Carrie Burnam Taylor.

"Carrie Burnam Taylor was my grandmother, my mother being Louise Taylor Beckwith. I am one of her four children, being William Taylor Beckwith and I have two brothers and a sister, Burnham Putnam Beckwith, Sterling Beckwith and Louise Caroline Beckwith Morris. All of Louise Taylor Beckwith's children are still living.

"I remember back during the First World War going to Bowling Green each winter from Pasadena where we lived and riding my tricycle up and down the aisles between the rows of sewing machines in my grandmother's place of business, which was on State Street. At that time my grandmother and grandfather lived right around the corner on Main Street about halfway up the hill.

"I am enclosing an article which was sent to me some years ago about my grandmother which came out in the 'Park City' paper. It might give you a little more information. My sister and I still own a half interest in what was the Princess Theater and which is now leased to Peyton's Inc.

"The Earl Rabold family own the other half, and Earl Rabold could probably give you quite a bit of information on my grandmother.

"Yours very truly,

"W.T. Beckwith"

William T. Beckwith, personal letter.

Letter 8

"8-30-76

"Dear Ms. Centers,

"My brother has advised me of your interest in my grandmother, Mrs. Aaron H. Taylor, and in her mail-order dress-making business.

"I am the oldest (72) of her grandchildren and I have very pleasant memories of several visits to her home and place of business before she died. Also, I am the family geneologist and have the largest collection of pictures of her and her family. My own mother was very close to her mother and often talked to me about her. I should be glad to give any information I can about her.

"When my grandmother died she left an estate of about \$250,000 allowing \$100,000 for the value of the business. My mother told me Kaufman Strauss of Louisville had offered this sum for the business in 1918. However, my grandfather refused to sell, and the business soon became worthless, partly because of bad management and partly because of changing economic conditions. My grandmother was the designer and business manager who had built the business. She merely employed my grandfather to give him a job.

"According to my mother, her mother began designing dresses for her Potter College friends, who later carried her reputation throughout the South, where small town stores could not supply fashionable ladies clothing. My grandmother was never a seamstress. She began as a dress designer and always hired other persons to make the dresses.

"My grandmother was the daughter of the aristocratic (slave-owning) but impoverish Burnam family. Her grandfather supported the Confederacy in the Civil War and was treasurer of the Confederate State Government of Kentucky. His home later housed the first public high school in Bowling Green. There should be pictures of it in local education or government files.

"My grandmother made almost annual trips to Paris to check on styles and buy materials. She stocked only dress materials. All of her dresses were made to order. Once or twice a year she mailed out new dress designs and samples of material to her regular customers. She kept their

measurements on file. I know she sold many dresses to the wives of Army and Navy officers because she saved the foreign stamps for me. Many were from the Canal Zone and the Philippines.

"I believe my grandmother's home is still standing, half way up the Main Street hill, on the left as you go up the hill. Her last place of business, which she owned, became the American Legion Hall.

"My mother told me that her mother was written up in more than one national magazine. I have a copy of a substantial article about her published in The Daily Kentucky, 11-30-47. I also have one of her 1907 account books, which records wage payments of about \$6 a week, probably for a 10 hour, six-day week.

"I think the chief economic reason for the decline of my grandmother's business was the growing use of the automobile. She catered primarily to very well-to-do women in small towns who could not find stylish dressmakers in their home towns and could not find expensive ready-made dresses in local stores. As soon as these women were able to travel quickly and easily by car to fashionable dressmakers and clothing stores in much larger towns and cities they naturally ceased to order expensive custom-made dresses by mail.

"If you wish any further information, do not hesitate to write me or phone me. My phone number is 415 324 0342. You can call me after six, your time, when the rates are low. I am up until 10 p.m. and rarely out or busy.

"Sincerely,

"Burnham P. Beckwith, Ph.D."

Burnham P. Beckwith, personal letter.

Letter 9

"9-14-76

"Dear Ms. Centers,

"I am enclosing the best photograph of my grandmother, Carrie Burnam Taylor, wearing a necklace which my moter(an unreliable source) said cost \$20,000. I do not know the exact year of the picture, but I would place it between 1900 and 19010. I think the picture reveals alert eyes and suggest a keen mind.

"I also have a near full-length picture of her taken about 10 years later, wearing a \$3,000 (?) sealskin coat and fur (?) hat with long white ostrich feathers. I will send it to you later, after return of the first picture, if you wish it.

"I cannot find the small account book I mentioned. It merely listed wage payments of \$4 to \$6 a week for individual workers in 1907 (?).

"I am glad to learn that you have located Ms. Jesse Franklin. I probably met her on one of my visits to the business premises.

"The county court hous should have a copy of my grandmother's will and records of tax payments over a period of years.

"My mother said her mother had been written up twice in national magazines. I believe one of these articles was entitled 'The Most Successful Business Women in America,' or something like that, but I have never tried to look it up. It probably appeared between 1900 and 1914.

"Incidentally, all prominent business men and women were listed annually in published credit-rating books (Dun and Bradstreets?) Also you might be able to obtain a copy of a report made to the Census Bureau in 1900, 1910, or in a special census of manufacturers.

I remember my grandmother as a small (90 lb.) thin, nervous, soft-spoken woman who never quarrelled with anyone in my presense. She suffered from asthma most of her life.

I enclose a collection of colored photos of Bowling Green in 1918. Please return it.

"I also enclose a copy of an article which appeared in the Daily Kentucky, 11-30-47. I fear it contains some of my mothers exaggerations. I do not believe my grandmother ever employed 'several hundred women.' An estimate of 50 to 100 seems reasonable. Mailing ads from Paris was a clever new idea then. The estimate of \$50,000 for annual sales is conservative. You need not return the article."

Burnam P. Beckwith, personal letter.

"October 13, 1976

"Dear Miss Centers,

"The enclosed payroll book covers several years of operation, about 70 years ago of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Co. Each unit of the three columns for each week covers the number of days and the total pay for the week. The left hand column on each page show the daily rate. The number of employees seemed to vary over quite a range, I suppose because of the sales. The pay range seems to between 4 and 7 dollars per day except for a few, sometimes in one family, who must have been beginners, and for 3 or 4 in the 12 to 20 dollar class who were supervisors. I personally remember Miss Baldy, but not Miss Bacher.

"I am also enclosing a copy of an undated letter from my grandfather to my mother, apparently near my grandmother's death. I am glad that she seemed to be enjoying herself.

"Most sincerely,

"Sterling Beckwith"

Sterling Beckwith, personal letter.

Letter 12

December 22, 1976

"Dear Miss Centers,

"I am pleased and proud to know that Dr. Sallye Russell and yourself are working on a project about the A. H. Taylor Company.

"I am afraid I have little to add to any information you already have about it. My mother took us to visit Bowling Green about every year when I was very small. I remember a large room with sewing machines running down each side where I was set to work picking up pins from the floor for one cent for each ten pins, and a room outside with bolts and bolts of materials. I remember a fancy dress party my grandmother gave and that every child in Bowling Green was invited. I also remember the monthly box of clothes my grandmother sent us, in which every dress for me was hand sewn by her. And I remember how every one use to exclaim over my beautiful dress. I remember one dress with braid work, lace inserts that everyone admired. Also remember a black traveling dress which I hated. My mother was considered the best dressed woman in Pasadina. I know my grandmother made yearly trips to Paris and could sketch from memory all the dresses that were memory all the dresses that were shown in the dress shows she attended. My grandfather used to sit in an outer office very dressed up and greet the customers. He was a very impressive host. I've kept a clipping from a B.G. paper after her death which said she made more yearly in money than any other Kentucky woman.

"Am sorry I have so little to add to your research.

"Sincerely,

"Louise B. Morris

Mrs. Robert Lee Morris, personal letter.

Letter 13

"April 21, 1977

"Dear Miss Centers,

"In regard to Mrs. Taylor, the tailor, I have had several conversations with my mother who attended Dr. Potter's College in Bowling Green for several years before 1910, which is the year I think she graduated.

"She and my grandmother, Mrs. Gurdon Avery Taft, of Houston, Texas had coats, suits, daytime dresses, afternoon dresses, evening dresses, and opera cloaks made by Mrs. Taylor and in fact a great many dresses, etc. in my mother's trousseau in 1910 came from Mrs. Taylor's shop.

"I remember an evening dress of my mother's which was of the Gibson Girl era, pink satin overlaid with net gathered in various places with rosebuds. I am sorry to say we used to play 'grownups' with it and I fear it was damaged and probably disposed of. I remember a very pretty blue velvet opera cloak trimmed with sable and lined in a beautiful brocade with a silver bag made in the same brocade to go with the coat.

"My mother said she could always spot a 'Taylor-made' costume and never hesitated to speak to the lady wearing it when on her travels. My grandfather used to say he thought my grandmother sent 'Bessie' to Dr. Potter's College so that she could have frequent excursions to Mrs. Taylor's shop.

"I think the girls at Dr. Potter's also had their clothes or uniforms made by Mrs. Taylor and I am sorry that my mother, who is now ninety years old, cannot remember more about it but in a recent conversation she said that after she married she wrote Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Taylor having had her precise measurements made her several very nice dresses. One was a navy blue taffeta with matching coat and another was a pale lavender silk and this also with a complimentary coat, making it a very special afternoon costume.

"I have also been told that Mrs. Taylor made two trips yearly to Europe buying tweeds and woolens in Scotland and England, fine silks and velvets and suitable trimmings in France and going to Germany for unusual buttons and trimmings.

"I hope this will be of some help to you. Good luck
in your research and with kind regards,

"Sincerely,

"Mrs. L. K. Miller"

Mrs. L. K. Miller, personal letter.

Letter 14

"February 28, 1977

"Dear Mrs. Centers,

"In reply to your letter received last week concerning the Taylor Dressmaking (?) place will try to ell you the little I know which isn't much. My aunt, Mrs. (Johnny) Kitty West worked there for many years. Her husband was a conductor or worked in the L & N office there in Bowling Green, and was killed by a train, leaving her with four small children, three sons and one daughter, that she raised and educated there. . .I remember my Aunt Kitty and Sarah visiting in this community in my early years, and the elegant way they were dressed."

Mrs. C.R. Daugherty, personal letter.

Letter 15

"March 2, 1977

"Dear Mrs. Centers,

"I have your letter regarding any information I have on Carrie Taylor. Really, I don't have anything of any significance. When Dr. Russell mentioned Carrie Taylor it did excite me, being a native of Bowling Green. I just remember going there (Carrie Taylor's establishment) with Mother during World War I. My mother was a dressmaker. She got material there or the skirts already cut out and made them. I also went in there and bought supplies for Mother years later.

"I am sorry I can't give you more information, but I can't. If only my mother were living, she could help you.

"Sincerely,

"Elizabeth Vithtoro"

Mrs. Elizabeth Vithtoro, personal letter.

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