

A HISTORY OF FASHION AND COSTUME

VOLUME 7

# The Nineteenth Century



Philip Steele



# **A History of Fashion and Costume The Nineteenth Century**

**Philip Steele**

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## The Nineteenth Century

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Project Manager: Roberta Bailey  
Editor: Alex Woolf  
Text Designer: Simon Borroughs  
Artwork: Dave Burroughs, Peter Dennis,  
Tony Morris  
Picture Research: Glass Onion Pictures  
Consultant: Tara Maginnis, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of the University of Alaska,  
Fairbanks, and creator of the website, The  
Costumer's Manifesto (<http://costumes.org/>).

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# Introduction

The nineteenth century was a time of great social change. The world was opening up, thanks to railroads, steamships, and new roads. Trade became global. New technology allowed huge, noisy cotton mills in cities such as Manchester, England, to turn out vast quantities of cloth, which could then be sold around the world. Factories and mills replaced cottages and small workshops.

In America, bustling new cities were swollen by an incoming tide of immigrants from Europe. Back in the Old World, the most powerful European nations built up overseas empires in Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Pacific islands. As a result, European dress, often most unsuitable for the local climate, could now be seen from Cape Town to Shanghai.

This book looks at developments in fashion and costume during the century, and how they were influenced by changes in people's lives, both at work and play.

In many places, costume did not change very much, and the local peoples still made and wore splendid regional costumes—furs, feathers, silks, or embroidered cottons—as their everyday clothing. This great diversity would soon change, however, as a result of mass-produced, machine-woven cloths and chemical dyes.

The nineteenth century is a comparatively recent period in history. In museums and exhibitions, the actual costumes people wore at that time can still be seen. Pictures of these costumes can be viewed in fashion plates from old magazines, and engravings or early photographs from every corner of the world.





# Chapter 1: In the New World

The population of the Americas in the nineteenth century was made up of very many ethnic and cultural groups. Each had its own traditions of clothing, and within these there were many variants defined by region, class, age, wealth, or profession.

This was a society on the move. Existing groups were constantly added to and enriched by immigration into the New World, mostly from Europe, including Italians, Germans, Poles, Swedes, Russians, Jews, and Irish people. In the course of the century, one could also find Chinese immigrants in California, Southeast Asians in Guyana (then British Guiana), and Asian Indians on Caribbean islands such as Trinidad.

## Native Americans

Indigenous peoples of the Americas, then referred to fairly universally as “Indians,” still inhabited the continent from the Arctic Ocean to the southern tip of South America, although few remained in those areas which had already been heavily settled by Europeans. In many areas, native peoples still wore magnificent traditional dress, made from skins, furs, feathers, and textiles of natural fibers.

European contact with Native Americans was characterized by violence and warfare, but also by trade. Western items of dress or decoration were often adopted, such as beads, coins, blankets, jackets, coats, or hats. Often native peoples were forced to wear European dress.

The Sioux chief Black Rock painted by George Catlin (1796–1872). Between 1832 and 1840 this Pennsylvania-born artist made 470 paintings recording the dress and customs of Native Americans.



## European Americans

Some European immigrants to American cities wore clothes or fashions unique to their nationality or religion. However, most new city dwellers wore the standard European fashions or working costumes of their day.

Throughout the century, the United States grew as an independent nation, acquiring vast new tracts of land by purchase, treaty, or invasion. Settlers moved west. In Canada, too, European farmers moved onto the prairies. In South America, new



“Uncle Sam,” personifying the United States, welcomes immigrants with open arms. This cartoon dating from 1880 shows Irish, Russians, and Italians in supposed national costume.

waves of migrants colonized remote regions such as Patagonia. Across the Americas, pioneers of European or mixed descent were building settlements and farms, mining, logging, and building railroads.

City clothing was rarely appropriate in these wide open spaces, where the only means of transport was horseback. Fur trappers, lumberjacks, cowboys, miners, and engineers all had to wear appropriate dress for a tough, active life. So, too, did sailors, who packed their few clothes and possessions into small sea chests. Tall-masted sailing ships rounded Cape Horn, bound for San Francisco, or sailed out of New England to hunt whales.

## African-Americans

The first African-Americans were slaves brought to South America, the Caribbean islands, and the American South in the sixteenth century. They were cruelly treated, and forced to work on sugar or cotton plantations. Their freedom was finally gained in the nineteenth century. Slavery ended in the British Caribbean in 1838, in the United States in 1865, and in



Brazil in 1888. Even then it was generally replaced by a poverty-stricken existence as sharecroppers, laborers, or fishermen. In the United States, some African-Americans made it out west and worked as cowboys. African-American dress was essentially European, but some African traditions survived.

This painting of 1847 by George Caleb Bingham shows the broad-brimmed hats, loose shirts, working trousers, and boots worn by raftsmen.

## A Stitch in Time

The nineteenth century was an age of new technology. The first working sewing machine was patented in France in 1830, by Barthélemy Thimonnier, and used to make army uniforms in the 1840s. It was in the United States, however, that this invention really took off. It was developed by various inventors, including Allen B. Wilson, Walter Hunt, and Elias Howe. However, the man who came to dominate the United States and then the world market was New York-based Isaac Merritt Singer (1811–75). Singer sewing machines were soon to be found in every garment workshop and well-off home.

For most of the nineteenth century, the clothes to be seen on the streets of Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, or Washington did not look very different from those in London, Paris, or Berlin. A standard, international style of dress was beginning to appear.

## In the 1800s

Women's fashions of the 1800s were some of the most elegant – yet comfortable and natural looking – that the century would see. Straight-cut ankle-length dresses were made of fine embroidered muslin or of sturdier printed cottons. They were high waisted, with a ribbon below the bosom and short, puffed sleeves. Arm-length gloves might be worn for an elegant ball, and hands could

be kept warm inside a fur muff on cold winter afternoons. Shoes were flat, dainty leather slippers.

In this period, men stopped wearing knee-length breeches and stockings and began to wear long trousers. A gentleman would wear a high-collared shirt with a stock wound around the neck, sometimes tied with a bow. A colorful tailcoat might be worn, reaching the backs of the knees, but cut to waist level at the front. This might be worn open to display a vest. Men might wear knee-length boots or flat slippers, sometimes with gaiters.

## Mid-Century

In the 1820s and 1830s, women's skirts became increasingly full and decorated with floral trimmings and bows. By the 1850s, this style had developed into the full crinoline, whose wide, bell-like skirts were pushed out by hoops of steel and whalebone. Hair was worn pulled back from the face or curled into tight ringlets. A lady might carry a parasol.

Men's dress became more sober, favoring black jackets, although checkered or striped trousers were still quite common. Cravats and neckties worn in a loose bow were worn over white shirts with high collars. Hair was worn with sideburns, extensive whiskers, or full beards.

## From the 1870s

In the 1870s and 1880s, the skirts of women's dresses became narrower again. A "fishtail," or short train, was worn for a while and a pad or frame called a bustle was worn at the rear of a tight skirt to exaggerate the backside. The



American men's day wear of the 1850s is shown on the left, and formal evening wear on the right.



## Bonnets and Top Hats

Young ladies of the early 1800s wore straw hats or bonnets, often decorated with flowers and tied with a ribbon under the chin. Larger round bonnets, trimmed with lace and ribbons, were worn in mid-century. By the 1870s, hats were replacing bonnets for the most fashionable ladies—perhaps a pillbox tipped forward at a jaunty angle and topped with feathers or artificial cherries.

Out west, broad-brimmed hats provided shelter from the sun and wind, but in the cities, men wore hats with narrower brims and higher crowns. In the mid-century, the top hat, a tall black cylinder with a narrow brim was standard city wear. Rounded felt hats with a low crown were often worn by men from the 1860s onward. By the late 1880s, smart round hats with a narrow upturned brim, known as derbies, were popular with all classes.



narrow-waisted look was created with the help of laced whalebone corsets, often worn so tight that they gave the wearer medical problems. At the same time, short jackets and blouses began to be worn with long skirts. Buttoned boots became popular.

By the end of the century, men's everyday suits were beginning to resemble their modern form, with a jacket reaching below the waist, and trousers. Fancy gold or silver chains, often decorated with dangling coins and draped across the chest, were attached to a watch kept in the vest pocket.

The northeast was the most urbanized part of the United States in the nineteenth century. It was a center of industry, business—and of fashion. The women of New York City wore the most elaborate finery, admiring illustrations of bonnets, bows, and the latest Paris fashions in magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book* (founded in 1830).

All classes aspired to be smart, and the less wealthy repaired and altered secondhand clothes to keep up with fashion. It was increasingly difficult to tell people's class or trade from their style of dress alone, although the quality of the clothing generally revealed the truth.

## The Garment Industry

The northeast was a center of the textile trade. Ready-made clothing became an important industry from the 1830s onward, starting with the production of men's trousers and jackets and women's

cloaks. Standardized sizes appeared in the 1860s.

The manufacture of textiles and garments provided jobs for women and provided a major source of employment for immigrant labor. However, the fashions that clothed nineteenth-century America were produced at great social cost. In the 1830s, women at the Lowell cotton mills in Massachusetts worked an eighty-one-hour week for three dollars, out of which they had to pay the company for their board and lodging.

In the New York City garment trade, sweatshops, child labor, and unequal pay for women were common practice. As a result, women tailors, shoemakers, laundry workers, and umbrella-makers formed some of the first labor unions in the United States. A major protest by New York City garment workers on March 8th, 1857 was broken up by police. Since

The original bloomers represented the first attempt by American feminists to introduce practical clothing. Even this modest reform caused outrage.



## Bloomers

Amelia Jenks was born at Harper, New York, in 1818. In 1849, at Seneca Falls, she founded a feminist magazine called *The Lily*. One of her collaborators was Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was irritated by the impractical nature of women's fashion. Stanton, the actress Fanny Kemble, and others began to wear a shorter bell-shaped dress over baggy "pantalettes" gathered at the ankle. This outraged conservative opinion. Amelia rushed to defend clothing reform in her magazine. Soon her articles became notorious and the pantalettes were nicknamed "bloomers," Bloomer being Amelia's married name. Irritated by the controversy, the women gave up wearing bloomers. However, dress reform for women was now on the agenda, and became an increasingly important issue after Amelia's death in 1894.



An east coast beauty promenades at the seaside in about 1870, carrying a parasol. Her dress echoes both waves and seashells.

1910, March 8th has been commemorated around the world as International Women's Day.

### **Plain and Simple**

The fashionable frippery of the big cities had stern critics. Many of the religious groups which had settled in regions such as Pennsylvania since the 1600s continued to dress modestly. The Quakers and the Shakers admired simplicity and plain colors in clothing, and frowned on corsetry and gaudy clothes. Another sect, the Amish, observed a strict dress code. The austere, practical costumes they wear to this day include homemade

ankle-length dresses, aprons, shawls, capes, and bonnets for women and girls, and black vests and jackets over plain shirts for men and boys.

### **Needles and Pins**

Outside the cities, most people owned few clothes beyond their practical working outfits and their Sunday best. People were thrifty, and clothes would be repeatedly repaired and mended. Young girls practiced needlework from an early age, trying out stitches and embroidery skills on samplers. Housewives made beautiful quilts, household linens, shawls, shirts, and dresses by hand.

# The American South

In the early 1800s, the frontiers of the United States were expanding rapidly. Backwoodsmen, wearing buckskins and furs, were settling in the southern Appalachian mountains. With the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, France sold the vast territories of the Mississippi valley to the United States. Spain ceded Florida in 1819. Texas was annexed from the Mexicans in 1845.

While the northeastern United States was soon to undergo rapid industrial development in much the same way as northern Europe, the American South remained largely rural. Southern cotton plantations, which used slave labor, supplied the textile mills of the world. This led to economic rivalry with the north and a clash of ideals, culminating in the



The Seminole leader Osceola (Rising Sun) wears a knee-length tunic. Seminole fabrics in the nineteenth century included buckskin and cotton. Adornments included turkey and egret feathers, woolen tassels, and beadwork patterned like rattlesnake skin.

bloody Civil War of 1861-65, which ended slavery, but not racial discrimination.

## On the Plantations

The wealthy slave owners lived in style, in splendid colonial mansions. They dressed in long tailcoats, trousers, and top hats, as seen in northern cities. The ladies wore the latest bonnets, lace, and crinolines and were famed as “southern belles.” The plantation overseers might wear short jackets, vests, and low-crowned hats with broad brims.

Some slaves worked as servants indoors, while others toiled in the cotton fields. The former obtained better-quality clothing. Dress might consist of short jackets, loose shirts, and white cotton trousers for the men, with broad-brimmed straw hats. Women might wear cotton dresses or full skirts—white or brightly colored—and head scarves, often wrapped around the head as a turban. Many slaves wore cast-off clothes. In the later nineteenth century, the many poverty-stricken African-Americans who left to seek work in the northern cities wore standard city dress.

## The Trail of Tears

Native Americans had managed to survive in the South, despite the loss of land and centuries of attack by settlers. Their people included the Catawba, Caddo, Choctaw, Yuchi, Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 authorized the enforced removal of



The dress of both slave-owners and slaves is shown in this painting of 1852.



Frills decorate the dress of this “southern belle.” She carries the first Confederate (southern) flag, known as the “Stars and Bars.”

Native Americans to regions west of the Missouri River, a tragic and brutal expulsion that became known to the Cherokee nation as the Trail of Tears.

In these troubled times, many Native Americans from the South wore European dress, but regional costume traditions also continued. For example, Seminole men might wear loose cotton shirts with appliquéd colored strips, beadwork belts, and buckskin leggings. A cloth was tied around the head, turban-style. Seminole women of the late nineteenth century wore full skirts in colored strips of cotton, and multi-stranded bead necklaces.

## Masquerades and Mardi Gras

New Orleans in the nineteenth century was a lively city. French and English were spoken and it was home to riverboat men, businessmen, gamblers, drinkers, and prostitutes. Each year, the city celebrated Mardi Gras, or “Fat Tuesday,” the high point of the old carnival held in Catholic Europe. At Mardi Gras, the citizens of New Orleans dressed up in spectacular costumes for parades and masked balls.

Black people were at first excluded from the festivities by white racists, but masquerades were also an old West African tradition. By the end of the nineteenth century, New Orleans was beginning to pulse with the sounds of black “jazz” musicians and the chanting and dancing of African-Americans calling themselves “Indians,” dressed in elaborate feathered and beaded costumes.

# Plains and Mountains

In the mid-nineteenth century, nearly a quarter of a million Native Americans lived on the Great Plains, which stretched westward to the Rocky Mountains. Some lived by farming, but most were buffalo hunters.

## Feathers and Moccasins

Dress detail defined the separate identity of each plains tribe, but they



All thirty-two native peoples of the Great Plains wore leather moccasins. Many, like this pair made by the Sioux, were beautifully decorated with beadwork, dye, or tassels.

had common elements. Men wore fringed shirts and buckskin leggings, while women wore long dresses. Both sexes wore slippers called moccasins. Intricate quillwork and beadwork decorated clothes and possessions, and both men and women wore their hair long, often in braids.

A short breechclout (loincloth) might be all that was worn by warriors in battle, when the face and body might be painted with clay, charcoal, dye from berries, or buffalo blood. Rank and battle honors were indicated by feathers of crow, eagle, or buzzard worn in the hair. Chiefs wore magnificent feather headdresses or war bonnets, sometimes adorned with buffalo horns or decorated with horsehair, fur, or porcupine quills. Breastplates of bone, beads, and porcupine quills were worn on the chest.

## Chaps and Cowboy Boots

In the 1870s, huge herds of cattle needed to be driven out from Texas, and across the Great Plains to the new railheads, for transportation to the stockyards of Chicago. This was the age of the cowboy. It lasted for just twenty years, but became part of American legend.

Cowboy clothes were based on those of the Mexican equivalent, the *vaquero* (a word which became buckaroo in English). Tough trousers would be covered with leather “chaps” (from *chaparreros*) as a protection against thorny bushes. Pointed boots with a high heel were designed to stay in the stirrup. A loose shirt was worn beneath a knotted neckerchief, which could be tied over the mouth or face as protection against dust. Cowboy hats were a shorter-brimmed version of the broad Mexican sombrero. Manufacturer J. B. Stetson designed the first Western hat bearing his name in 1863. The cowboy’s standard equipment included a gun belt and holster, and a rope, or “lariat,” tied to the saddle.

## Rolling West

Between the 1840s and 1890s, the United States relentlessly extended its territory westward, annexing Native American lands through warfare and settlement. By the 1860s, some 400,000 whites had settled on the Great Plains. Covered wagons hauled by oxen crossed the prairie grasslands and beyond, following established routes such as the trail from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon. By 1867, a railroad linked the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The newcomers were farmers, prospectors, miners, hunters, trappers, railroad engineers, traders, and outlaws. They were mostly from poor backgrounds, used to lives of hardship. They owned simple clothes of wool, linen, or cotton. Women

wore ankle-length dresses or full skirts, aprons, shawls, cloaks, and large cloth bonnets. Men wore shirts, jackets and coats, trousers, leather boots, and broad-brimmed felt hats.

The trappers in remote mountain regions, or professional buffalo hunters on the Plains, sometimes adopted items of Native American dress, wearing fringed buckskin jackets, furs, feathers, or beaded belts. So too did individuals within the United States Cavalry, when fighting during the Indian Wars in the 1860s and 1870s. Their regular uniform consisted of a dark blue jacket or coat, light blue trousers, gauntlets, boots and spurs, a leather sword belt, and a gun belt. Irregular outfits included straw hats, buckskin jackets, civilian shirts, and beaded knife sheaths.

A wagon train halts for the night. Desert sand, rain, mud, thorn, and saddle all took their toll on the clothing of the migrants.



# West to the Pacific

## Northwestern Culture

The gold miners of California wore tough, working clothes to scramble through canyons and pan for gold in mountain streams.

Peoples south of the Canadian border included the Southern Coast Salish and the Makah, who lived by whaling and fishing. They used cedar wood, not only for building their villages, but to make conical hats

against rain and sea spray. The pliable bark of the cedar was stripped, beaten, soaked, made into yarn, and woven on upright looms into fringed skirts and blankets, worn as cloaks. Here too, white settlement saw the introduction of traded cloth, and Western dress was widespread by 1900.

## California

California, originally colonized by Spanish ranchers, was ceded to the United States by Mexico in 1848. The Native Americans of California, such as the Karok, Miwok, Hupa, and Pomo, belonged to another culture. Men wore buckskin kilts and feathered headdresses. Important women of the Miwok wore cloaks of goose feathers and shell earrings. As white settlement of California increased, those peoples that survived adopted the dress of the newcomers.

## The Forty-Niners

In 1845, San Francisco was a town of about four hundred people. By 1860 it was home to fifty thousand. This



## Clothes for the Working Man

Today, jeans are worn as casual wear by men and women around the world. However, they were originally made as working clothes in California in 1850, during the Gold Rush.

Their maker was a Jewish immigrant from Bavaria called Levi Strauss. Back east in New York City, Strauss decided that he was far more likely to make his fortune by supplying the miners than by prospecting for gold himself. He therefore brought bales of heavy-duty cotton cloth to California, intending to make tents and coverings for wagons. Unable to gain a foothold in this market, he turned instead to manufacturing trousers out of the cloth. In 1874, he and Jacob Davis patented the idea of strengthening the trousers with metal rivets. These true jeans were called waist-overalls and sold at thirteen dollars and fifty cents for a dozen pairs.





Mexican, European, and Chinese dress could all be seen in a San Francisco saloon during the Gold Rush of 1849.

rapid growth was due to gold, discovered in California in 1848.

Within a year, prospectors and miners, known as forty-niners for the year 1849, were pouring in from all over the world in the desperate hope of making a fortune. Most failed. They led a rough, tough life and their clothes were often worn out, tattered, and unwashed. They wore broad-brimmed felt hats, knee-length leather boots, and overcoats.

The port of San Francisco was soon home to bankers, laborers, storekeepers, sailors, sea captains, saloon bars, and showgirls. They wore all kinds of dress, depending on their trade and ethnic origin. There were European immigrants, East Coast Americans and Southerners, African-Americans, and Chinese immigrants. Many of the latter continued to wear the costumes of their homeland, such as long cotton tunics and slippers, with the men's hair bound into a long pigtail down the back. Some moved south to Los Angeles, a town which grew rapidly after the railroad arrived in the 1880s.

## Southwestern Peoples

The deserts and pueblos (mud-built villages) of New Mexico and Arizona were home to Southwestern peoples, such as the Apache, Navajo, and Hopi. Typical southwestern dress included headbands and bandanas, breechclouts, woven or knitted woolen dresses, squirrel-skin shirts, and sandals or calf-length moccasins. Using an upright loom, Navajo women produced fine tapestry-woven blankets.

These armed Apache scouts, employed by the United States Cavalry in Arizona in 1880, have adopted European dress, but wear their hair long in the Native American style.



# Across the North

Northern North America saw many of the same contrasts between the traditional cultures and costumes of its native peoples and those of European newcomers.

The vast lands of Canada formed a part of the British Empire until 1867, when it became self-governing. Greenland was a Danish colony. Alaska was a Russian-owned territory in the early nineteenth century, with its capital at Sitka. The Russians had come looking for furs, so beavers, seals, and sea otters were killed in huge numbers for the hat and clothing trade. Russia sold the territory to the United States in 1867.



In the 1870s, this Canadian sergeant in the Northwest Mounted Police wears a pillbox, rather than the wide-brimmed hat for which the force later became famous.

## Scarlet Jackets

One of the most famous uniforms worn in North America in the late nineteenth century was that of the Northwest Mounted Police (forerunner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). The “Mounties” brought peace to remote, lawless regions of Canada. They wore a simple “Norfolk” (belted) jacket in scarlet, to distinguish themselves—in border regions—from the United States Cavalry. Breeches were of gray cloth, or sometimes of fawn corduroy. The hat was a blue pillbox, with a yellow or gold band and a chinstrap. In the saddle, many officers adopted a broad-brimmed felt hat, but this did not become standard issue until 1901.

## Arctic Furs

Arctic peoples dressed to survive bitterly cold winter temperatures and freezing sea water. The Aleuts, natives of the Aleutian Islands, were hunters, fishers, and whalers. They wore sealskin, furs, and hooded waterproof suits made of animal intestines, with high leather boots. Peaked caps or eyeshades were made of wood.

Arctic shores from northern Alaska, across Canada to Greenland, were peopled by various groups of the Eskimo language group, including Inuit, Yupik, and Inupiaq. They made shirts of bird skins and trousers from the fur of polar bears or arctic foxes. Hooded jackets (*kooletah*) were of caribou fur. Women wore thigh-length boots (*kamiks*) of sealskin, while men’s boots were often knee high. Socks were of soft hare skin or woven grass. Necklaces were of bone, and some men wore labrets (lip plugs).

## Seashore, Forest, and Lake

The Northwestern culture wore similar costumes to those on the Pacific coast of Canada and southern Alaska. Cedar bark was twined or woven into blankets and skirts. Dog hair, mountain goat wool, beaver fur, caribou skin, sealskin, and traded cloth were also used. Tlingit men wore large nose rings and beautifully patterned ceremonial blankets.

Across the rest of Canada, eastward to Labrador, were the peoples of the forests and lakes, such as the Slavey, Beaver, and Cree, and northernmost



representatives of America's Northeastern and Plains Indian cultures. Tunics and fringed trousers were made of caribou skin, moose fur, and beaver pelts. Clothes might be beaded or painted with decorative patterns. Snowshoes of interlaced rawhide were widely used in winter.

## European Canada

European settlers, principally of English, Scottish, or French descent, lived in the far south of Canada, where the climate was less severe. In cities such as Montreal, Quebec, and Ontario, or in the farms of the Saint Lawrence valley, the fashions were the same as one might see in Britain, France, or the United States. The dress of the 1850s is today recreated at the oldest house in Kitchener, Ontario, which once belonged to German-born Joseph Schneider, a member of

the Mennonites (a sect similar to the Amish). Here one can see the long dresses, pinafores, aprons, lace caps and bonnets of the day, alongside the domestic spinning wheel.

In more remote regions, there were fur trappers, many of them of mixed French and native descent, known as Métis. They wore fur caps, buckskins, and heavy coats. Broad-brimmed hats and boots, the standard nineteenth century dress of the pioneer, were worn by railroad workers and the prairie settlers of the 1880s, many from eastern and central Europe.

The Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 attracted a million fortune hunters to remote Yukon territory. Some of them were old-timers, but others arrived in city clothing, woefully unprepared for the snowy mountain passes.

John Ross, a British naval captain, wears full dress uniform to meet a band of Polar Eskimos in 1818. They are dressed in hooded jackets, breeches, and boots made of furs and skins.

In Central and South America, fashions worn by those of European and mixed descent were broadly similar to those of the United States and Europe. However, specific Spanish and Portuguese influences were still to be seen in many cities of Latin America, such as Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, or Buenos Aires in Argentina. For example, women might wear veils of black silk, or lace mantillas secured by high, ornamental tortoiseshell combs. As the nations of the region became independent, and new waves of European immigrants arrived, more workaday clothing styles became common.

Right:  
A fashionable woman of Buenos Aires in the 1830s, wearing a Spanish-style gown and silk veil or mantilla.

Brazil's African slaves, often treated with great cruelty, wore little more than cotton shifts, trousers or skirts, and head cloths. After liberation in 1888, many left the plantations and headed for the cities.

## Sombreros and Bandanas

Mexican ranch owners and vaqueros wore leather boots and often a wide-



brimmed felt sombrero. Peasants might dress in a shirt and loose trousers of white cotton, with rope sandals. Their sombreros had extremely wide brims and were generally of straw.

In Ecuador, high-quality sombreros were made by plaiting the tough leaves of the toquilla palm, creating a fine, smooth, white finish. In 1855 an example of this type of hat was shown at the Paris Exhibition. Its popularity grew and the hat was issued to United States troops during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Later worn by engineers constructing the Panama Canal, it became known as the panama hat.

## Indigenous Costume

The finest-quality clothing in Central and South America was made by indigenous peoples. Mayan women of Guatemala wove on backstrap looms (tensioned around the waist),

## The Gauchos

The nineteenth century was the heyday of the gaucho, the cowboy of Argentina's Pampas grasslands. Gauchos were famous for physical toughness, a wild, swaggering lifestyle, and a strict code of honor. Many were mestizos (of mixed European and indigenous descent). The first gauchos wore their hair and mustaches long. Some wore caps or bandanas, while others wore hats with brims. White shirts and ponchos or scarlet cloaks were worn above wide pants. Leather boots with spurs and belts with heavy silver buckles completed the outfit.



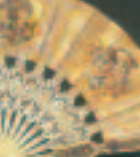
producing colorful striped skirts, patterned belts, sashes, headgear, shawls, and square-cut blouses called *huipils*. The weavers of the Andes, such as the Aymara, wove fine ponchos and shawls (also used to carry babies) from camelid yarns such as alpaca.

In Chile, the Araucanian people wore long tunics and cloaks, while the natives of Patagonia wore blankets and skins. In the Amazon rainforest, many indigenous peoples wore no clothes at all, but patterned their bodies with vegetable dyes and pastes. Some wore clothes made of leaves or palm fronds, sometimes woven. Brilliant tropical feathers of the toucan or macaw were worn in headdresses.



The valleys of Patagonia are often cold and windswept. The native peoples, depicted in 1827, wear long, patterned blankets as warm cloaks.

In the 1850s, tunics and patterned poncho-style cloaks were being worn by the native Araucanian peoples of Chile, in the southern Andes.



## Chapter 2: Europe: Nations and Costumes

Nineteenth-century Europe was a continent of great contrasts. Northern and western Europe, including Great Britain, France, and Germany, were at the center of an industrial revolution, with growing cities, new railroads, and factories. This was a time of rapid advances in technology and there was constant talk of progress. Southern and eastern Europe, however, remained largely rural. As a result, there was a yawning gap between the very rich and the very poor in Europe, which led to political strife and struggle.

Much of Europe was still a patchwork of small states, which nationalists were trying to forge into larger unions. Germany did not unite until 1871, the same year that modern Italy came into being. National rivalries within Europe created conflicts and wars throughout much of the century.

### Class and Nation

All of these factors affected everyday costume. In cities such as Vienna, Berlin, London, Paris, and Rome, the rich would change clothes several times a day, parading in ball gowns or starched shirts and tailcoats, fashions which were admired and copied around the world. Dress was an indicator of subtle differences in social class—much more so than in the new cities of the United States. In Europe, a middle-class woman could not adopt the high fashions of the aristocracy without eyebrows being raised, while in New York City the wife of a successful merchant could dress pretty much as she pleased.

The growing middle class dressed conservatively and modestly. Europe's industrial workers wore plain working clothes and wooden-soled clogs. The men often wore flat caps. Many of the urban poor from the slums wore rags and their children went barefoot.

Country people were also often desperately poor. However, traditional costumes, with their embroidery, lace, or ribbons, were often still worn as everyday wear, as well as for festivals or special events. There was already a growing tendency among the middle and upper classes to consider these as “quaint” or “picturesque,” or as romantic symbols of nationalism. The tartan plaid of the Scottish Highlanders was adopted by the British royal family at a time when the actual Highlanders were being evicted from their homes and leaving for a new life in Canada.

Nationalism was also behind the startling array of military costumes that soldiers wore on the battlefield.



In the 1850s, French fashion and manners were imitated by high society across Europe.

Uniforms in bright scarlet, white, or blue, were adorned with braids, epaulettes and brass buttons. Khaki, the dull brown now used universally by soldiers, first appeared in the 1850s, but was not common until the 1890s.

## New Technologies

New technologies in the textile industry were the driving forces behind the Industrial Revolution in

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Wool was no longer carded by hand but by giant wire-toothed cylinders. Water and then steam were used to power vast spinning machines called mules. In the cotton-weaving sheds, steam power drove clacking machine looms and great rollers. New chemical dyes such as mauveine and alizarin were produced in England and Germany.



This woman and man from Brittany in northern France wear national dress featuring a variety of fabrics – silk, satin, wool, velvet, and cotton.

An umbrella seller, a flower girl, a textile worker, and a bellows vendor illustrate working dress of the 1800s.

## Paper Patterns

Making, sewing, and repairing clothes was standard work for housewives and maidservants. Paper dressmaking patterns, which were at first used only by professionals, were soon being distributed by women's magazines for amateur dressmakers. One of the first was *Dressmaking for Ladies – Universal Pattern Journal*, published in Dresden in 1844. By the 1880s and 1890s, paper patterns were highly popular and would remain so for another sixty years.

# Western Europe

## French Fashion

Paris had dominated European fashion since the Middle Ages. Even the French revolutionaries of 1789 had hired designers to promote politically correct fashions featuring red, white, and blue, the colors that symbolized the new republic. In the 1790s and 1800s, French city fashions became increasingly exaggerated among the dandies or *incroyables* (incredibles). They wore shaggy haircuts and top hats, which were often pushed out of shape, a high stock wound around the neck right up to the chin, frock coats with extremely broad lapels, striped vests, and mid-calf boots with pointed toes.

Napoleon I, who became emperor in 1804, was determined to modernize the French textile industry. He imported new looms for mills at Sedan and Louviers and banned English textile imports. The northern

French town of Valenciennes was famous for its lace and a fine satin called tulle. St. Quentin mills produced muslin and linen.

Napoleon I also sought the advice of the best tailors and fashion designers. An aristocratic French gentleman at this time might wear evening dress made up of a swallowtail coat, high-collared shirt and bow tie, and a silk-lined cape, with a top hat and cane.

Women were not allowed to present themselves at court wearing the same dress twice. Fashions such as the high-waisted chemise of the 1800s, known as the empire line, and the wide, bell-shaped crinoline of the 1850s, which were imitated all over the Western world, had their origins at the French court.

Charles Frederick Worth was an English fashion designer, born in Lincolnshire in 1825. At the age of twenty-one he moved to Paris and found work at Gagelin's fashion shop. He soon became a leader of taste and founded an establishment in the Rue de la Paix, that catered to the likes of Elizabeth, Empress of Austria, and Empress Eugénie de Montijo, the Spanish-born wife of Napoleon III of France. Eugénie was famed for her love of ribbons, frills, and lace.

Paris fashions of the later nineteenth century, such as the bustle and fishtail, were popular across Europe. In the 1890s, Paris became famous for its cafés, bars, and dance halls. Spangles and frills were worn by



Formal evening dress is worn by all at this late-nineteenth-century social gathering.

Fashions of the early 1800s are shown in this picture of a milliner's (hat-maker's) workshop. Note the "empire line" dress.





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