

CHEQUAQUET LOG

The Newsletter of the **CENTERVILLE**
HISTORICAL MUSEUM www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

THE GREEN THING

Checking out at the grocery store, the young cashier suggested to the older lady that she should bring her own bags. Plastic bags were not environmentally good. The woman apologized to the girl and explained, “We did not have this ‘green thing’ back in our day.” The young clerk responded, “That’s our problem today. Your generation didn’t care enough to save the environment for future generations.”

“This is what we did,” the older lady said. “Back then we returned milk, soda and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed, sterilized and refilled. So, they were recycled.”

“We didn’t have that ‘green thing’ back in our day. Grocery stores bagged our groceries in brown paper bags that we reused for such things as garbage bags. We repurposed brown paper bags as schoolbook covers. That way public property was not defaced by our scribbles. We then personalized our paper book covers.”

“Too bad we didn’t do the ‘green thing’ back then. We walked up stairs because we didn’t have an escalator in so many stores and office buildings. We walked to the grocery store and didn’t climb into a 300 horsepower machine every time we had to go two blocks. You are right. We didn’t have the ‘green thing’ in our day.”

“Back then we washed babies’ diapers. There were no throwaway kinds. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine. Wind and solar power dried our clothes. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters and children did not always brand-new clothing. But you, young lady, are right, we didn’t have the ‘green thing’ in our day.”

“We had one TV or radio in the house—not in every room. The TV had a small screen size, not a screen the size of Montana. In the kitchen we blended and stirred by hand because we didn’t have electric machines to do everything for us.”

“When we packaged a fragile item to send by mail, we used wadded up newspaper, not styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. We didn’t fire up the gasoline engine to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by working so we didn’t need a health club to run on electric run treadmills. Nope, we didn’t have the ‘green thing.’”

“We drank from water fountains instead of plastic cups or bottles. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying new, and we replaced dull razor blades, not the whole razor. People rode streetcars or buses and kids rode bikes or walked to school instead of turning their moms into a 24 hour taxi service. Families had one car, not one for each person. There was one electrical outlet per room and we didn’t get phone signals from space to find a fast food place.”

The older lady paid for her groceries to a younger generation that thought her generation was wasteful. The cashier had to have the cash register tell her how much the change amount was.



THEY DID!

NEW TO THE COLLECTION

A DRESS THAT MAY HAVE HELPED DEFINE FASHION'S NEW WOMAN

Recently, the museum acquired an elegant evening dress. Only a guess can be made as to the specific date of the dress (but was made circa 1905-1915), its origin or its owner. The dress itself is stylish and has the requisites to categorize it as an example of what the Dress Reform Movement, begun in the 1850's and lasting until the outbreak of World War I, intended; less constriction.

Women's fashions for centuries had numerous heavy health-threatening undergarments such as unwieldy corsets, layers of bodice covers, petticoats, hoops and stockings held up by tied ribbons that threatened to cut off circulation. Reformists countered tight women's styles with freer and lighter clothing demands. Slowly, slowly, the pleas to make clothing more comfortable gained momentum. By the 20th century the unnatural S-shaped and encased Gibson Girl was in a fashion battle with the looser head to toe styles of the New Woman, with the appearance of outfits with a more relaxed inner and outer construction.

The museum's new acquisition is an excellent example of where the future of women's fashion was headed. It is made of the finest lawn, a type of material favored by women in summertime for being thin in texture and lightweight. Lawn cloth was first manufactured in the French city of Laon with the original pronunciation of the word "laon" later anglicized to "lawn." Batiste cotton, handkerchief linen, a soft tulle or silk qualified. The cloth's threads were combed and a high thread count's weave gave it a slight luster called "nainsook." Lawn is still in use today.

The Dress Reform Movement's call for less restrictive clothing, with the reason being that less is more and much healthier to the female body, allowed for looser tubular-like half or full-length undergarments and more modern bust coverings. Our early 20th century dress is the perfect piece to show what the movement stood for, even though there is no information as to what the owner of the dress chose for undergarments.

Never fear, the dress is exquisite. A slender young woman of average height surely wore this gown to an evening soiree of some sort. It is of an off-white or ecru shade. The scalloped sleeves are short and highly embroidered in a blooming rose pattern with a thin vine-like design for added depth. The bodice's front and back bibs are similarly embroidered as is a large swath of material at the knee of the garment. The embroidery is woven into soft tulle, which is the base fabric of the dress. The tulle is double layered with a tabard beginning at the bustline and below the shoulder blade that falls to just below the knee. Tabard is a term for a front and back matching layer of material that is not sewn together at the sides. It comes from the sleeveless and split sided linen outer coverings worn by knights over their armor. Embroidery edges all sides of the dress's tabard. Hooks and eyes cleverly close the dress's back.

The dress is partially hand sewn as well as machine stitched. It falls to the ankle with the bottom portion of the dress embellished with tiny crocheted balls, two sewn folds, eyelets and a stitched line pattern. Frankly, this evening dress, stunning with its full-length straight lines, makes the wearer and her newly fashionable style a thing of beauty.



C O N S E R V A T I O N P R O J E C T

‘TIS A PUZZLEMENT BUT RESTORATION MAY HELP SOLVE IT’

Fran Lautenberger has vast experience working with costume design, historical clothing and the capacity to critique an antique piece when it has been altered. As a volunteer sewist involved with the museum’s clothing collection, one dress, though modest in style and plain looking at first glance, has caused Fran to make it her mission to lessen the damage from alterations.

Made of cotton print with squares and diamonds filled with flower buds, the handmade frock dates to circa 1835-45. Each stitch in the dress’s original form is tiny and perfect, emphasizing the maker’s skill. The dress has a scoop neck, sloped shoulders that drop partway down the upper arm, puffy sleeves, a gathered waist and a full skirt. An everyday dress; well, perhaps not. That neck has exquisitely piped edging, as do the dropped shoulders, as does the waist. Why spend time adding delicate ornamentation to a workaday, ordinary house gown?

No wear or stains are seen at the dress’s bottom edge, so it was probably worn inside. The hem is narrow, which is rare, since clothing was shared or handed down and extra

material might be needed to lengthen a garment. Instead, the waist has a double fold of cloth sewn into it, possibly there in case of lengthening or needed patchwork. The waist itself has been abundantly gathered. However, at some point, the gathers at the front of the waist were loosened and remade into two separate flat panels. These added to the length of the dress’s front opening.

Simple hand forged hooks and eyes close the garment’s front. The alteration of the gathers makes little sense or was this modest creation with its fuller waist remade as a maternity dress?



Other curious oddities exist. The design of the dropped shoulder made raising the arms quite difficult. The dress itself is lined with a typical, for the time, brushed cotton in a brown shade though one area is lined with another material. Why? Was there not enough brushed cotton for the lining? Or in the alteration of this dress, was whatever was on hand at the time used? “I’ve got to figure this whole thing out,” says Fran. “I can’t make this one hundred percent perfect, but I love the hand sewing that went into this dress.”

Restoration specialists all agree it is preferable to keep as much of the original material as possible. To adhere to these standards, Fran is putting a fresh lining over top the old one which has damage. She will attach the lining in a way that if new methods of restoration are found, the original lining will still be there. Sadly, at some point in the dress’s history machine stitching was used for the questionable alterations. That has caused damage to the dress. Last but not least, Fran is using some of the extra waist cloth to back loss of material caused by perspiration.



This dress’s past puzzle may not be fully solved but with Fran’s talented work, more of the dress will be restored. With an unknown wearer and no history connected to it, the hidden story of its making may be mysterious. Knowledge, ability and determination will return this silent yet telling museum piece to a state as close to the original as it can be.

I N T E R E S T I N G H I S T O R Y

PAPER WAS SUPPOSED TO DISAPPEAR WHEN COMPUTERS APPEARED - IT DID NOT

When computers became available to the public, the sales pitch claimed the invention was so useful that paper would no longer be needed. One had only to type everything into these new miracle machines and paper would become redundant. Technology was king. Funny thing, though: there is that saying that when something happens there can be an opposite reaction; paper is still here and it has remained as indispensable as ever.

The new museum display of 19th century paper records of school, business, social and political items, portrays how important paper was. Item by item, paper was written on by pencil, pen and ink or printed on by a printing press. Historically, paper adds to how generations recorded their business and personal lives. Handwriting is paramount until the typewriter adds to the mix, with the word processor and computer advancing printed communication.

Today, paper continues to play a huge part in our daily lives. Paper itself is an amazing essential writing tool. Just think of writing paper, Post It notes, corrugated boxes, packaging, books and a thousand other uses paper has. Recycling has always been a term used in the paper business and is even more so today. Bark from trees, hemp, rags and straw, have all been used to make paper for thousands of years. The Chinese made the first paper using cloth sheets. The Arabs, after capturing a Chinese papermill, advanced paper making by adding wood and straw. Sheep, calf and goat skins, known as parchment and ancient Egypt's papyrus, made from reeds, were used exclusively by government and ecclesiastical groups for their authoritative works to preserve their longevity. Europe advanced paper making in the 15th and 16th centuries by adding hemp and linen and seeds, giving strength to the paper sheet so that the new printing press could print on it.

The first paper mill in America was built by William Rittenhouse in Philadelphia in 1690. He added linen rags made from flax to his product in what can be called our country's first recycled paper. America, whose abundance of water, forests and rags from recycled cloth was easily available, became the world's largest paper manufacturer by 1880. Holyoke, MA, was the fine, writing and book printing paper producer from the middle of the 1800's. Names like Crane, International Paper and Kimberly Clark are still among recognizable paper makers currently. Individual artists and crafters make their own signature papers, either as a single sheet or in small batches. These papers, of both new and old materials, are of amazingly beautiful design.

Paper and paperboard are the most recycled materials in the USA today, accounting for two thirds of all recycling. Every scrap, bit, kind of paper, no matter what its origin, can be reused.

An 18th century Philadelphia poem, probably written or printed on paper, says it all.

So that the flax which springs first from the land
First flax, then yarn
To weave the same they took pains to spin
Then of the Rags the paper is made,
Which in the process of time doth waste and fade;
So what comes from the earth, appeareth plain,
The same in Time, returns again.



Rittenhouse Mill

A C T I V I T I E S



Osterville Garden Club returns and replants

Special thanks goes to the Osterville Garden Club for flower plantings around the museum sign, walk way urns and kiosk. This season the plants will flower in a red, white and blue theme.

Should be ready for July 4th.



Centerville Historical Museum BUSINESS Supporters

**We wish to acknowledge our current business members and business sponsors
and ask you, our members, to support these businesses that support us.**

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SUSTAINING SUPPORTER: How you can help us!

Please consider becoming a Sustaining Supporter. Someone who sustains is one who stands, endures and nourishes another. Our museum needs more people who will do just that and stand with us as we preserve and interpret our shared history. Become a Sustaining Supporter of the museum for as little as \$20 per month. Relying on predictable monthly support will enable us to plan with much greater certainty how to provide a place where the past and present meet the future.

We encourage you to make monthly contributions as a Sustaining Supporter. Please use the donor cut-out below. As a Sustaining Supporter you receive all the benefits of Sponsor membership and more.

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PLEASE PUT THE CENTERVILLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM IN YOUR WILL

After providing for their families and loved ones, museum members and others may want to put the Centerville Historical Museum in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this museum. Such bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government. You can give needed support for the Centerville Historical Museum by simply including the following words in your will: *"I give, devise and bequeath to The Centerville Historical Museum, 513 Main Street, Centerville MA 02632 (insert amount being given) to be used to support the programs of the Museum."*

It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will. For other bequeathing options, call us and we will send our brochure that covers all the various options available. Thank you.

NOT A MEMBER - please join, ALREADY A MEMBER - how about giving a gift membership*

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Check One - all memberships are annually

INDIVIDUAL (\$35.00) _____ DUAL/FAMILY (\$45.00) _____ PATRON (\$80.00) _____
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Please charge membership to: (circle one) VISA MASTERCARD AMEX

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