

18th century Clothing Standards

Men, Women and Children

c 1765

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INTRODUCTION

A picture is worth a thousand words, and in the following standards we have used period portraits and prints to help attendees prepare for the 1765 Stamp Act Event, sponsored by the Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island. The 1760's produced a wide variety of portraiture of prominent New Englanders and artists, like Paul Sandby and others, offer us a glimpse of the clothing of the lower and working classes.

You can incorporate many of the details found in the featured artwork to help make your impressions more date specific. We have written the standards as simply as possible, providing imagery to guide you in the development of your impression of Rhode Islanders in 1765. The standards are divided by class, upper, lower/middlin. Remember when trying to portray a specific date, you can go back, but you cannot go forward in time.

Hallie Larkin & Stephanie Smith

Larkin & Smith at the Sign of the Golden Scissors

MEN'S CLOTHING UPPER CLASS

Coat or frock coat, waistcoat, breeches and shirts are the main garments for upperclass men. Cocked hat, neckcloth or neck stock, sleeve ruffles, bosom ruffles, sleeve buttons, watch and toys, and walking sticks are appropriate accessories that add to the overall appearance and impression.

Visible seams should be hand-finished, fabrics should be of a quality that suits the level of society portrayed. Wool broadcloth, manchester velvet, silk taffeta, figured silks are good choices for the main garments of the upper classes as well as solid linen in shades of brown, blue, white and natural are acceptable choices for summer wear. An upper class gentleman would most likely wear a ditto suit (all pieces matching), or matching coat and breeches with an embroidered silk waistcoat, or plain silk satin waistcoat.

Details in individual garments should be based upon original artifacts whenever possible. Look for guidance on how to wear your clothing from period prints and portraits. In many prints of the 1760s, upper class men are wearing wigs or their own hair. Neckcloths are tied over the and around the collar, the end folded over and tucked into the waistcoat. Alternatively one can wear a neck stock worn with a bosom ruffle. Sleeve ruffles attached to the sleeve cuffs are typical. Small details such as those will add to the overall end product of portraying the upper classes in 1765 Newport, Rhode Island.

ACCESSORIES

Walking sticks are an appropriate accessory for a gentleman. Make use of your pockets for your personal items. Your servant would be carrying any larger items.

COATS AND JACKETS/WAISTCOATS

Coat or frock coat is required. Coats are collarless or with a slight rise. Frocks will have collars. Pocket flaps and cuffs are larger than in the Revolutionary War period and sport buttons and decorative buttonholes. Fabric should be suitable for your station and impression.

Waistcoats are mid-thigh length cut straight across either matching coat and breeches (ditto suit) or of silk, plain, embroidered or trimmed. Frequent use of death's head buttons or fabric covered buttons is seen.



*Samuel Cutts by Joseph Blackburn 1762
Portsmouth, NH, Wearing a ditto suit.*



*Thomas Wentworth by Joseph Blackburn 1761
Wearing a coat and trimmed waistcoat.*



*Joseph Browne by Joseph Blackburn 1760
A frock coat with trim.*



*Moses Gill by JS Copley 1764
Wearing a coat with cuffs and no collar and silk
satin waistcoat.*

SHIRTS

Long sleeved shirt with a two-button collar made of white linen fabric. Cuffs are narrow with full sleeves with sleeve ruffles.



Detail: Thomas Wenworth 1761
Shirt cuffs are narrow and extending past the sleeved waistcoat/jacket worn under a coat.
Notice the death's head buttons.



Detail: Samuel Cutts 1762
Shirt sleeves are extending past the coat cuffs with narrow cuffs and sleeve ruffles.
Note: Non-functioning buttonholes on pocket flap, cuff, and coat.

NECKWEAR

Linen neckcloths simply wrapped and tucked inside the coat or neck stock and bosom ruffle. Sometimes worn over the collar, sometimes covering the collar. Make note of the shape of the wigs in these portraits.



Woodbury Langdon by J.S. Copley 1767
Portsmouth, NH
Neckcloth under collar.



Colonel William Taylor by Joseph Blackburn 1760
Neck stock over collar with bosom ruffle.



Thomas Amory 1760 by Joseph



BREECHES

Breeches are not as close to the leg as later in the century and the falls are covered by the longer waistcoat. Breeches from the 1770s as well as the 1750s are accepted as the falls will be covered by the waistcoat. Leather breeches are encouraged if portraying an upper class hunting or “undress” impression. Breeches are buckled at the knee.

STOCKINGS

Over the knee stockings in silk, cotton or wool. Avoid horizontally striped stockings. White silk is most common for upper class impressions.

SHOES

Period style shoes with appropriate buckles.

HATS AND HEADWEAR

Cocked wool or fur felt hats.

WIGS

Wigs should be a non-military style in an earlier style such as a bob. They are not the typical queue with side curls as was the fashion in the 1770s.



Timothy Fitch 1760 by Joseph Blackburn



John Spooner by JS Copley 1763



Joseph Babcock 1761 by Joseph Blackburn



Colonel William Taylor 1760 by Joseph Blackburn

NOT ACCEPTABLE

Fashions of the Revolutionary War period as they are too fashion forward and didn't yet exist.
Muskets, cartridge boxes, haversacks.
Military uniforms.

UPPER CLASS WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Open front gown with robings and stomacher, in the English (en fourreau back) or French style (sacque). Gowns worn with stays are the primary choice for upper class impressions. A Brunswick, Joseph, Short Sacque, or Riding Habit would be an appropriate alternative.

Fabrics should be documentable to the 1750s or 60s, in silk, cotton or wool (damask, worsted, or calamanco). Fabrics are heavier than they are in the later part of the century. As a result the pleats of the gown skirts are relatively wide.

Silk Satins, Damasks, Brocaded silks are very common.

Cotton Prints were worn, but if you choose to wear one, you will need to document the print to 1765 or earlier.

The silhouette is longer, narrower, and flatter at the bosom than the 1770's and 80's. The rococo "S" curve is the height of fashion.

Modest hoops or hip pads can be worn for upper class impressions.

The hair is drawn back away from the face with little, if any, height. Caps of this time period are often the small wired, heart shaped variety. Portraits also depict women with bows or nosegays on the top of their heads.

Sleeve ruffles are large and are often made up of several layers, trimmed in lace. Gowns have sleeve flounces or large cuffs.



Sara Prince Gill 1764 by JS Copley



Mrs. Daniel Hubbard by JS Copley 1764



Sara Badger Noyes 1765



Mercy Otis Warren 1764 by J.S. Copley



1765 Sandby



Mrs Nathaniel Ellery 1766 J.S. Copley 1763



Martha Dox 1763 James Claypoole



Lady in a Blue Dress (Mercy Scollay) 1763 JS Copley

RIDING HABITS

Riding habits (non-military style). Flat silk covered hats trimmed with feathers are most typical. Accessories like walking sticks or riding crops may be carried.



A Lady in the Riding Dress of the Year 1763.

Museum of London, 1763



Mrs. Eppes Sargent 1764 by JS Copley
Shirt sleeves are extending past the coat cuffs with narrow cuffs and sleeve ruffles.

P E T T I C O A T S

Two petticoats, consisting of under petticoat and top petticoat are recommended. Petticoats should match or complement the gown fabric. Avoid wearing a printed gown with a striped petticoat of another fabric. Avoid drawstring waistbands, waistband should tie at the sides or in the back. Quilted petticoats were common.

S H I F T

Sleeves reach past the elbow in the 1760s. Neckline should be low and not around the neck on a drawstring. Sleeves are cuffed and also not on drawstrings. Sleeve ruffles are larger than those in the 1770's.

S T A Y S - J U M P S

Stays are required for wearing a gown, riding habit or other fitted garment.

A P R O N

The style and fabric of the apron should be appropriate for your impression. Upper class women should wear white fine muslin, linen or silk.

J E W E L R Y

Multi-strand necklaces or ruffles tied in the back with ribbon are frequently seen. Use period portraits for inspiration. A simple black silk ribbon is also appropriate.

S T O C K I N G S

Over the knee stockings in silk, cotton or wool. Avoid horizontally striped stockings.

S H O E S

Reproduction shoes with buckles are recommended.

C A P A N D H A I R

The hair is worn close to the head, caps are small, and worn framing the face. Lappet caps are also a good choice for women. Caps should be linen, fine muslin or silk gauze. Decorate with ribbons or hair ornaments suited for your impression. Upper class women often wore caps with heart-shaped wings.



Mary Crosswell 1763 by Joseph Badger



Mary Trusler 1763 by Jeremiah Theus



Mrs. George Oliver 1765 J.S. Copley



Anne Fairchild Bowler 1763 by J.S. Copley

HATS

Low crown hats of straw or silk covered straw. Flowers on hats were not yet in vogue. Hat decorations should be of self fabric or ribbon. The front and/or back can be gently tipped up.



Ms. Nathaniel Allen 1763 by J.S. Copley



Lady Clayton by Sandy 1763



Countess Howe 1763 Gainsborough



A Young Lady by Sanby c 1760

CLOAKS AND HOODS

Silk or wool short cloaks with small closer to the head hoods. Fabrics should be in line with your impression.

HANDKERCHIEFS

White of sheer linen or fine muslin. Handkerchiefs are frequently trimmed with lace.

GIRLS CLOTHING

BABIES



Gown and cap are the minimal requirements. Petticoat and under caps are optional. Small hats with feathers for toddlers or pudding caps are other suggestions.

YOUNG LADIES



*Young Woman in a Landscape,
1760*

Back lacing gowns with bib aprons, cap and petticoat are required. Neck ribbons and hats are optional. Gowns with leading strings are acceptable in the 1760s.

Period shoes and stockings are encouraged.



YOUNG GENTLEMEN



Three Sons of John, 3rd Earl of Bute, 1763-4

Coat, waistcoat, shirt, and breeches for young men. Hats are optional.

Period shoes and stockings are encouraged.

Shirt collars are frequently in the “round robin” style with a black ribbon around the neck, tied in the front with a bow.

MEN'S CLOTHING LOWER AND MIDDLE CLASS

Colonial Newport was a bustling seaport in the 1760s, ships, trade, merchant, fertile farmland and a temperate climate gave the Plantations on Aquidneck Island plentiful harvests. The local populace had close and immediate access to London goods as well as skilled tailors. Much of the tailor's trade was in repair and maintenance of garments. Linings were replaced, breeches were re-seated, clothing remade and reused whenever possible. Styles changed slowly in the decade following the French and Indian War.

The following are guidelines to adapt what you have and to provide visual aides for putting together your impression of a working class man such as a farmer, dock worker or a craftsman such as a cobbler. Sailor portrayals are something you would expect to see in such a busy port.

Coat or frock coat, workman's jacket, sailor's jacket, waistcoat, sleeved waistcoat, slops, trousers, breeches and shirts are the main garments worn by working class men. Hat, knitted cap, workman's cap, apron, handkerchief, neckcloth are appropriate accessories that add to the overall appearance and impression. These additions provide individuality as well as historical accuracy. Paying attention to the tie of a kerchief or cock of a hat, can make a difference in overall appearance.

Visible seams should be hand-finished, ideally the entire garment should be handsewn, but machine stitching is acceptable. Fabrics should be of a quality that suits the level of society portrayed. Kersey, linsey woolsey, broadcloth, worsteds and serge are good choices for the main garments of the lower classes as well as solid linens in shades of brown, blue, white and natural as well as woven linen with colored stripes and checks.

Details in individual garments should be based upon original artifacts whenever possible. Look for guidance on how to wear your clothing from period prints and portraits. Because the lower classes could not afford to have their portraits painted, the details about working class clothing are adapted from the British print culture, c.1759-1765.

Since this time period lands in the time between the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War, many reenactors do not have date specific apparel for 1765. Wearing clothing in the older style from the French and Indian War time period is acceptable. Clothing from the Rev War period will need to be retrofitted or adapted. For working class men a new short jacket or sleeved waistcoat would be the easiest addition. Making an apron and portraying a tradesman would hide the bottom of the 1770s waistcoat, for example. Adding larger cuffs to an existing coat would help create an "older" look to a later garment.

COATS AND JACKETS

Coat, frock coat or a jacket is required. Coats are collarless or with a slight rise. Frocks will have collars. In general, coats are fuller, sleeves are roomier and pocket flaps and cuffs larger than Revolutionary War period. Fabric should be suitable for station and impression. Shades of brown, red and blue were very popular.



The Citizens Fete, 1765
**Lower class man wearing a jacket, neck
handkerchief shirt and breeches.**



Muffin Man, 1759, Paul Sandby

SHIRTS

Long sleeved shirt with a collar. White linen or colored linen check fabric. Cuffs are narrow with full sleeves.



Old Darby and Joan, 1759

Shirt cuffs are narrow and extending past the sleeved waistcoat/jacket worn under the great coat.



Poor Man Loaded with Mischief, 1760

Shirt sleeves are extending past the coat cuffs. Waistcoat is square cut in front and reaching the upper thighs.

NECKWEAR

Small knotted handkerchiefs worn outside the upper garment are commonly seen on sailors and working class men. White linen neckcloths simply wrapped and tucked inside the coat or jacket are also common in period prints.



The Times, 1762



Citizens Fete, 1765

WAISTCOAT-SLEEVED WAISTCOAT

Waistcoats should land at the upper thigh or lower. The fronts are square cut, not on an angle. Lengths of the waistcoats vary but are generally longer than the Revolutionary War period.



Proclamation of Proclamations, 1765



Game of Put, 1764

Collarless sleeved waistcoats are often seen as the outer garment on working men. It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the terms sleeved waistcoat, jacket and underjacket. But we can see that shorter upper garments were adopted by the lower classes.



Mirth and Friendship, 1765



The Humors of the Fleet, 1763

BREECHES AND TROUSERS

Breeches are not as close to the leg as later in the century. Breeches from the 1770s as well as the 1750s are acceptable as the falls will be covered by the waistcoat. Leather breeches are encouraged for the working and middlin' classes. Breeches can be buttoned or tied at the knee.



Old Darby and Joan, 1759



Fishmonger, 1759, Paul Sandby

STOCKINGS

Over the knee stockings in cotton or wool. Avoid horizontally striped stockings. Be prepared to document your choice of an unusual stocking color. White, mixed, blue, clouded, grey, natural and black are frequently mentioned colors in advertisements.

HATS AND HEADWEAR

Flat or cocked wool or fur felt hats. Knitted caps in period patterns and workman's caps (not quartered) are appropriate.



The Times, 1762



Old Darby and Joan, 1759

SAILORS

Jacket, shirt and breeches, with optional slops and waistcoats. Breeches must be worn underneath slops. Blue wool pea coats, shorter waistcoats are typical emblems of sailor attire.



Humors of an Irish Wake, 1765

Seated sailor with short jacket, handkerchief and slops.

Sailors wearing short blue jackets, colored neckcloth/handkerchief, cocked hats and slops.



Proclamation of Proclamations, 1765

This is an especially good image, showing not only the short jacket, but also the short waistcoat and the location of the pocket flaps.



The Times, 1762

S H O E S

Period style shoes with appropriate buckles or two hole laced style.

W I G S

Wigs should be non-military style in an earlier style such as a bob. Avoid wearing single curl Revolutionary War wigs. Working men are frequently depicted with long hair hanging down to chin length or longer, not in a queue or wearing a wig.

N O T A C C E P T A B L E :

Caped hunting shirts and leather coats/jackets.

Sleeveless waistcoat with no outer garment.

Revolutionary war uniform coats and waistcoats.

17th and early 18th century Pirate impressions.

Revolutionary War wigs.

W O M E N ' S C L O T H I N G

L O W E R A N D M I D D L I N ' C L A S S

During the 1760s open front gowns with robings and stomacher are the primary outer garments for working women. The other option would be a bedgown. There are rarely jackets depicted among the English lower classes at this time. Jackets should be avoided unless you can provide documentation for New England in the mid 1760s.

Fabrics should reflect the lower level of society being portrayed, plain, striped or printed linen for gowns. Plain linen in shades of brown, blue, white, and natural. Striped linens with other colors in the stripe and natural or white grounds. Worsted, linsey woolsey, and wool in solid colors or stripes.

Visible seams should be hand-finished, ideally the entire garment should be handsewn, but subtle machine stitching is allowed.

Since this time period lands in the middle of the two main re-enacting time frames: French and Indian War and Revolutionary War, many reenactors do not have date specific apparel for 1765. Wearing clothing in the older style from the French and Indian time period is acceptable. Clothing from the Rev War period will need to be retrofitted.

Front closing gowns can be temporarily converted to open front gowns, by turning in the bodice and placing robings over the turn in. Add matching larger cuffs and a handkerchief to cover the back of the neck. Use matching fabric if you can, but robings and cuffs can be a contrasting fabric. Bedgowns from the Rev War period are acceptable.

A new cap or an existing lappet cap will add a great deal to bring your clothing to 1765 as well as temporarily tiling the hat brim forward or forward and back. Mitts in natural or white linen are also a nice addition.

The 18th century shoes and stockings you already have will do, as well as existing pockets and petticoats.

Because there are fewer British Satires featuring women, the following are taken from British prints c 1752-1767. Style for lower classes is slow to change.

GOWN AND BEDGOWN

Open front gown with robings, optional stomacher and cuffs in the English style, referred to as “en fourreau”. Gowns closing at center front and bumrolls are not appropriate. Hoops should only be worn for upper class impressions. Multiple petticoats give shaping to the gowns of the lower classes. Aprons are worn with gowns and bedgowns.



Kitchen at Sandpit Gate, 1752

This working woman's bedgown has wider sleeves than the later 1770s versions. Her sleeves are turned up as cuffs, and the bedgown almost reaches her knees. She is wearing two aprons.



Two Women Holding a Basket, 1759

A small cap, white handkerchief and blue apron give color and personality to a simple bedgown.



London Cries:Black Heart Cherries, 1759
Her gown skirts are pulled to the back and pinned. Her pocket is on top of the petticoat since she is in the process of selling cherries. A striped petticoat and blue apron are good style points to copy. Notice the placement of the hair ribbon tying her cap.



A Seated Maidservant, c1760
Very plain gown with old fashioned winged cuffs. Her handkerchief and apron are simple white linen. Notice there are no sleeve ruffles on her gown.

SHIFTS

Sleeves reach past the elbow in the 1760s. Neckline should be low in front and not up around the neck or gathered tightly on a drawstring. Sleeves are cuffed. Avoid lace ruffles of polyester. Small fine linen ruffles at the edge of the cuff are an option. A 1750s or 1770s shift is acceptable, as long as it meets the above requirements.

Shifts with drawstring necklines can be easily converted by loosening the drawstrings and allowing the material to create a more open neckline. The bosom will then be covered with a handkerchief. Sleeves that are too long can be shortened to below the elbow and a small narrow cuff added.



Knowing one, 1760
The shift has full sleeves and a narrow cuff.



Tythe Pig, 1760
In this version the cuff has a small ruffle attached.

STAYS - JUMPS

Stays are necessary when wearing a gown. Jumps or an adequate sports bra are acceptable under a bedgown only. Stays can also take the place of a stomacher in an open front gown. There was a fashion in the 1760s of applying faux criss cross lacing to the front of the stays, which then took the place of a stomacher. That is a very easy adaptation to change the look of your gown.



The Author and His Family, 1760



Tythe Pig, 1760

P E T T I C O A T

Two petticoats, consisting of under-petticoat and top petticoat are recommended. Petticoats do not have to match the gown fabric. Avoid wearing floral petticoats unless they match the gown fabric. Avoid drawstring waistbands. Hems can be ferreted with tape or left plain.



Kitchen at Sandpit Gate, 1752

You can clearly see the top petticoat, which appears to be lined, and the striped bottom or under petticoat. Both petticoats are ferreted with tape around the hem. The upper petticoat appears to be pinned in place.



Kitchen at Sandpit Gate, 1752

In this scene the gown skirts are tucked into the pocket slits, exposing the petticoat. Also clearly seen are the apron ties around the back of the gown.

A P R O N

Linen in white, natural or colored check linen fabric are appropriate, blue and white check is the most common color combination. A varied selection of check styles are found in aprons. Aprons are worn with gowns and bedgowns.



Way to Preferment, 1758



Kitchen at Sandpit Gate, 1752

STOCKINGS



Over the knee stockings in silk, cotton or wool. Avoid horizontally striped stockings.

The knee stockings are held up with a woven garter or ribbon, tied under the knee. The loose stocking tops extend over the knee.

SHOES

18th century shoes with appropriate buckles or two hole laced style.

CAP AND HAIR

The hair is worn close to the head, or shorn. There are numerous prints of women with short hair in the mid 1760s. Caps are smaller, and worn framing the face. Lappet caps tied under the chin and also left open are worn by both the young and old. Caps should be linen. Ruffles on caps should be of a finer linen than the body of the cap. Even the poorest of women are depicted wearing a ribbon of some sort on their caps.



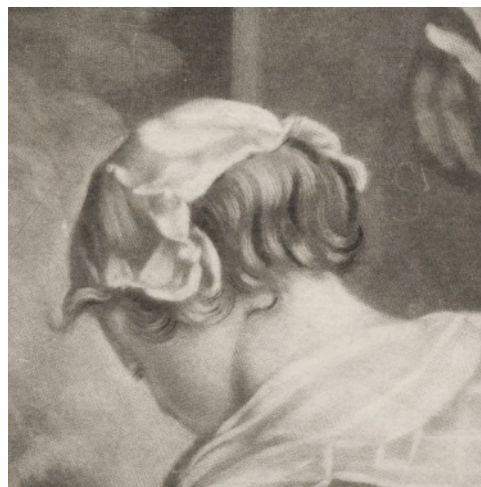
Knowing One, 1760



Lady Carrying a Kettle, Paul Sandby



A Lady Seated by a Window, 1760



Winter, 1762

H A T

Low crown hat of straw. Flowers on hats were not yet in vogue. Feathers should be reserved for children and riding hats. Hat decorations should be of ribbons in small puffs, or ribbons and bows. Shaping of hats by tilting up the front and/or the back is frequently found in the period prints and artwork. Changing the brim of the hat is a quick adaptation that will make your hat much more 1760s. Bonnets were worn, but the shaping is different from the 1770s.



All of these hats are from the same print but are shown in different styles. Tipped up in front, flat to the head, tipped up front and back. The Citizens Fete, 1765.

C L O A K S

Silk or wool short cloaks with small close to the head hoods. Fabrics should be in line with your impression. Cloth or linen hoods are an alternative to caps.



London Cries, Paul Sandby, 1760



In Somerset House Gardens, 1750-60

HANDKERCHIEFS

Check or simple white handkerchiefs for women appear to be more common at this time than printed handkerchiefs.



Kitchen at Sandpit, 1752

Colorful crossed barred handkerchief. She is working indoors in her stays and shift sleeves.



Tythe Pig, 1760

She is wearing her plain handkerchief tucked under the strings of her lacing.



The Prudent Mother, 1760s



Cries of London, 1760

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

BABIES

Cap and gown are the minimal requirements for babies. Undercaps, petticoats, mitts and stockings are nice additions but not a requirement. Children's clothing was often made from existing adult worn out garments so a wide variety of options are available for gown fabrics. Caps should be white linen.



The wife of Bob Nunn, 1755



William Adam and His Nurse, 1752

BOYS



Boys need breeches, jacket or coat, shirt, stockings and shoes. Jackets can be worn without waistcoats. Period shoes if possible.

A hat or cap is optional. It is also an optional to dress young boys in gown and petticoats.

G I R L S

Girls should be wearing back lacing gowns, aprons, shift, stockings, shoes and a cap. Leading strings are often seen. Older girls can also wear a bedgown, shift and petticoat combination.



Woman and Child Holding a Doll, Paul Sandby, 1760



Two Girls Holding a Basket, Paul Sandby

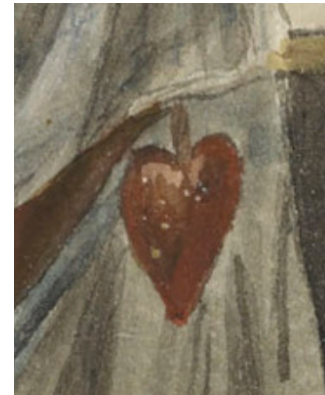
OPTIONAL WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES



Harlot's Progress, 1732



Tythe Pig, 1760



Sandpit Gate, 1752

Hanging scissors and/or a pincushion from the waist are practical accessories for the working class. Avoid hanging "chatelaines" or equipages. Unless you are actively involved in an impression that involves cutting, such as an oyster seller, avoid hanging a knife.

BASKETS



Two Girls Holding a Basket, Paul Sandby



London Cries: Muffin Man 1759

NOT ACCEPTABLE
French or English "sleeveless bodice".
Revolutionary War Gowns.
Modern eyeglasses.
Heavy modern makeup.
One piece shower cap style cap.

RESOURCES FOR FABRIC SELECTION

[Anders Berch Collection](#)

[Richelieu Papers](#)

[Textiles in America, Florence Montgomery](#)

[Wintertur](#)

[Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

[Barbara Johnson Album, Victoria and Albert Museum](#)

ADDITIONAL ONLINE SOURCES
[18th Century Material Culture](#)

[Yale Center for British Art](#)

[Lewis Walpole Library](#)

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