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# Exploring the Life of Edith Fetherston through her Clothing

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**EXPLORING THE LIFE OF EDITH FETHERSTON THROUGH HER  
CLOTHING**

by

**Breanna Eckley**

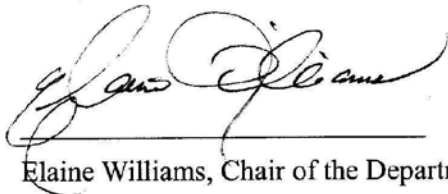
A Proposal Submitted to the Honors Council  
For Honors in Theater and Dance

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Elaine Williams, Chair of the Department of Theater and Dance

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is an examination of the life of Edith Fetherston through studying her clothing and comparing her clothes to fashion history. The authors of *Survey of Historic Costume*, Tortora and Eubank, state that: “Dress serves as a means of communication,” and that “historic dress provides readers with some context for the period in which costumes were worn”. Most importantly, they state that clothing is “a glimpse of attitudes and values as they were expressed by individuals of [a] period.” (4). Studying clothing history is a way to understand the attitudes of the times; it has a relationship with the attitudes of the society in which it is or was worn. Studying garments can identify personalities, as well as professions, and economic status. My research is based on the wardrobe of Edith Fetherston between the early twenties and late sixties. This thesis begins by examining Edith herself, then it examines each decade and its major characteristics, and finally my research examines at least two garments from each of the five decades.

## INTRODUCTION

Tortora and Eubank, the authors of *Survey of Historic Costume*, state that “Dress serves as a means of communication. Historic dress provides readers with some context for the period in which costumes were worn.” In most cultures, clothing serves an additional purpose beyond the protection of the body from the elements. Humans have an instinctual response to visual stimuli, especially human appearance. Dress and adornment create much of a human's appearance. People make associations with characteristics of garments. A person's clothing can indicate who a person was, and what they were doing while wearing the garment. Individuals wear garments to express their likes and dislikes. They wear certain garments to go to plays, and other garments to do housework.

Clothing is a tool with which an individual expresses social status, profession, and interests. Especially in the United States, individualism is expressed in a person's attire. Edith Fetherston, a Lewisburg socialite, expressed herself through her clothing and through her love of fashion. This thesis is based on my research of Edith Fetherston's wardrobe, which includes an examination of her life, of her wardrobe, and the relationship of both of them to fashion history.

I first became interested in studying Edith Fetherston's clothing at the end of the spring semester of my junior year. The Department of Theater and Dance has a collection of clothing which is used for its productions. After

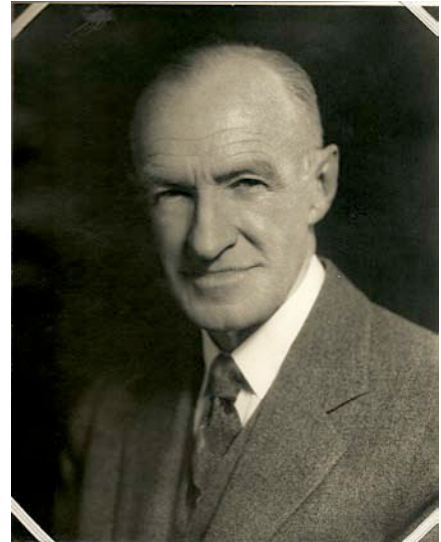


Figure 1.1 Edith's Husband John

countless trips to costume storage to pull garments for one show or another, I started to become interested in the history of the garments. Our costume shop manager, Pam Miller, must have heard me ask “which decade do you think this came from?” every time we were in that room together. After taking the Bucknell course THEA 250, A Survey of Costume and Fashion History. I decided I needed to learn more.

Theater majors are encouraged to do an individual project during their senior year. I decided that I would research costumes in the context of fashion history. Fortunately, Lewisburg has two museums, each with a collection of vintage garments. The Packwood House museum is on Market Street, just as you turn onto Water Street. The building consists of several houses, one of which is one of the first buildings in Lewisburg. Richard Sauers, director of the Packwood House Museum, explained that the museum was left by Edith Fetherston, and that throughout her life, she was known for her taste in clothing. There are hundreds of garments that belonged to Edith stored in the museum. Edith was described as having a captivating personality. As someone who is interested in costume design as well as costume history, I felt that studying Edith's wardrobe would be a perfect mesh of these two interests.

Edith (1885-1972) was born and raised in Lewisburg, and came from the Kelly family, a wealthy family in the area. She received her first undergraduate degree from Bucknell University in 1902, in French, German, and Spanish. She received a second bachelor's degree in 1905 in philosophy. Finally, she received a masters of the arts from Bucknell University in 1908. She also attended the University of Berlin, the Alliance Francaise, Columbia University, and the Carnegie Institute of Technology (The Daily Item). Edith's career consisted of teaching and professing English, Latin, German, Spanish, and French in various private elementary and secondary schools (The Daily



Item 18). She spent a good deal of her twenties and thirties in Baltimore and upstate New York (Packwood House 3). She was a teacher of several languages, including Latin, German, and French.

In 1917, she married John Fetherston. In 1936, John retired and the couple moved to Lewisburg into what is now the Packwood House. During her time in Lewisburg, Edith created a garden club and founded the Central Pennsylvania Artists Association. Her artwork was on display twice at Bucknell, once in 1949, and again in 1954 (Packwood House 3). Edith was a member of the Botanical Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Sullivant Moss Society, Artists Equity Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the American Association for University Women, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Pi Beta Phi sorority. Because she was an avid Gardener, Edith discovered a breed of water lilly: hydrocotyle vertcillatia var. Fetherstoniana. Between the 1930s and 1940s, Edith painted, and her artwork was on display in several galleries, including at Bucknell. She remained an active alumni of



Figure 1.2 Edith Fetherston painting

Bucknell, and created the Class of 1905 Art Prize.

Edith was an avid traveler, she even traveled the silk road in 1964, at the age of 80. Specifically to Lewisburg, Edith created a garden club and founded the Central Pennsylvania Artists Association.

Once Edith had moved to Lewisburg, she became a socialite. She was known for both her garden parties and her bridge parties. She was a huge fan of the arts, and attended the theater. In the

sixties, Edith had seen one play in which a former Bucknell Professor, Manuel Duque,

wore a distressed coat. Edith decided that he should have a new coat, so she introduced herself to him. A few days later, she gave Manuel Duque a coat that belonged to her husband (Duque). According to Richard Sauers, Edith would often attach herself to people for unknown reasons.

She and her husband were both frequenters of doctors. They would often go to several doctors in order to get the response they wanted. John had eye issues as he got older, which was a hinderance to his hobby of writing. Edith's hobbies were also hindered when she got older. She had issues with her hips, which stood in the way of her busybody demeanor, and also her love for fashion. She chose comfort over style, and when she had problems with hips she traded her heels in for tennis shoes. Since she wore her designer clothing with tennis shoes, she was nicknamed “tennis shoes” (Sauers).

Edith spent a good deal of her time in Lewisburg antique collecting. Her husband encouraged her to create a private museum with all of the artifacts that she owned. When John passed away, Edith began contacting the Smithsonian museum with the ambitions of creating a public museum of her collection of artifacts. In her will, she required that the Packwood House Museum be open to the public within five years of her death (Sauers).

When the Packwood House Museum opened its doors in 1976, little was known about the garments they owned. The Packwood House, being of such a small size, did not have the resources readily available to do anything with these garments. Needless to say, the Packwood House continued to have little information about these garments by the time I had been introduced to Richard Sauers.

Like with any research, I encountered challenges. The first was that her wardrobe was so large, it became difficult to decide on a representative number of garments to study given the time limitations. A large portion of my initial research time was spent

exploring, categorizing, and organizing the volume of garments.. I decided that given my time limit, a number of garments between ten and twelve would be feasible.

While there were garments in storage that were produced during earlier decades, Edith began to collect artifacts and clothing in the twenties. I therefore decided that it would be appropriate to study garments which were produced between 1920, when she was in her mid-thirties, and 1970, which was at end of her life. By choosing two to three garments from each decade between these fifty years, I was able to reasonably explore a span of twentieth century fashion history.

In order to select representative garments to use, I referred to images and text in fashion history textbooks. As I looked throughout the books, I kept Edith's clothing in mind. I was interested in which garments best reflected the attitudes of each decade. In choosing each garment, I kept several stipulations in mind: Would it fit into the styles of the decade? Was there something significant about the garment's construction or purchase place that I could research? Did it have aesthetic appeal? And was it durable, i.e. could I physically handle it, or would it fall apart when I touched it?

This thesis is divided into five chapters, one for each decade. Each chapter is set up into two sections. The first section is about my research on the decade, explaining what was going on during the decade in relation to the fashions of the time. The second section gives a short overview of what Edith was doing during the decade, and explains selected individual garments of Edith's which fit the style of the decade. At the end of this thesis, I have included a glossary; I encourage the reader to refer to it if he or she is unfamiliar with any of the technical terms within the thesis.

While writing this thesis I kept several questions in mind: Who was Edith? What was her personality? Where did she get these clothes? What was she doing in her life

during the time that she bought them? What purpose would these clothes have served? And finally, how was each garment constructed, including the material, and whether it was *ready made* or custom made?

**1920s**

*America's present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration; not surgery but serenity.*

Warren G. Harding 1920 (qtd in Gordon and Gordon 101)

During the 1920s, there was a significant change in the style of women's clothing. World War I, ironically referred to as the “War to End All Wars” ended in 1918. The war left the world in shambles, but also with the prospect of hope. Once the war was over, the economy was able to boom. 1920 marked the first American presidential election in which women were permitted to vote. This new found freedom was reflected in women's clothing. Women were closer in equality to men than ever before. Women, for the first time, cut their hair short. A popular hairstyle of the time was the “bob,” where the hair was cut just below the ears. Hats that fit tightly to the head became popular, encouraging even women who wished to keep their long hair to chop it off, as there was no room for all that hair underneath the tight fitting hats (Rothstein 84). Another contributing factor to women's liberation was the increased knowledge of birth control. Margaret Sanger began to campaign to teach American women about various forms of birth control in 1920 (Gordon and Gordon 108).

In the beginning of the twenties, America was still dealing with a shortage of materials left over from the war (Rothstein 48). This lack of materials, however, quickly changed. America in the twenties experienced a growth in advertising (Gordon and Gordon 108). The workforce had also expanded. Women took the place of men in the workplace during the war. Thanks to the bill which allowed women over 30 to keep their earnings, many women decided not to go back to the traditional roles as mothers and

housewives after soldiers returned to the states (Mulvagh 49). America experienced a great boom in its economy thanks to technological advancements of communication, the airplane, the automobile, the cinema, and the phonograph (Gordon and Gordon 97).

The 18<sup>th</sup> amendment was added to the constitution in 1920, causing a decade long prohibition of alcohol. Despite the fact that it was illegal, alcohol flowed in places such as the “speakeasies” (Mulvagh 87) where people socialized, drank, and listened to jazz music. Dancing to jazz was high energy, and required clothing which allowed a range of motion. “Flappers,” named for the way the *hems* of the dresses moved about as women danced in them, became a common term in the twenties. Flappers not only referred to the dresses, but also a kind of woman who would wear a flapper dress. These flapper women were free from the former societal restrictions that dictated that women weren't supposed to drink, smoke, see men unchaperoned, or kiss a man she was not going to marry (Tortora and Eubank 388).

There was a boom in Hollywood as well, and the silver screen became a favorite American pastime (Tortora and Eubank 390). In 1926, pictures with sound were introduced to audiences. Cinema offered viewers a glimpse of a foreign lands and exotic lifestyles. These Hollywood films encouraged an interest in the exotic (Mulvagh 54). Stars seen on the screen became the role models for fashion. Women strived to have similar bodies, styles, and faces to Bebe Daniels, Gloria Swanson, and Joan Crawford.

The ideal look of the twenties was a boyish figure. Dresses fell from the shoulders to the knees, with few distinguishable curves between. The style of the twenties and the need to exercise went hand in hand. At the same time, women needed clothing which would allow for easy movement so that these women could maintain an athletic figure. Few women wore corsets at this point, but if a woman was curvaceous, she would wear a

corset of elastic which was similar to a girdle. The corsets in the twenties would reduce the appearance of curves. Dresses looked like a rectangle, falling from the neck, and the only tight place on the body was on the hips. On coats, the fastenings were often at hip level, although many of these buttons did little to keep the coats closed (Rothstein 84).

Artificial silk, now known as rayon, was created in the early twenties (Mulvagh 53). Since luxurious materials were more affordable, fashion for the first time became a thing the middle class could afford. Chanel, the most popular designer of the time, designed clothing which was comfortable, and she made it acceptable to wear costume jewelry. Chanel was known for her long pearl necklaces which were all the rage in the twenties (Mulvagh 50). Evening gowns which hid the curves of a woman's waist were elaborate. New methods of decoration, ribbons, self-fabric piping, fringe, and cutouts were added to make lavish gowns (Mulvagh 58). For daywear, garments were draped, and *hems* were raised dramatically off of the ground. In 1925, the decade's peak, *hems* of dresses and skirts rose as far as 18 inches off of the ground (Tortora and Eubank, 80). Cloche hats, tight fitting hats worn at eye level, were worn along with these short, knee length, dresses (Rothstein 84). Also, as an expression of women's equality with men, it was became more commonplace to see trousers on women. No matter the type, the fashion of the twenties accentuated legs. Short skirts, flesh colored stockings, trousers, and high heels were all designed to accentuate the new erotic zone, the legs (Tortora and Eubank 389).

Edith married John Fetherston and converted to the Catholic religion in 1917. She was wealthy before the union, but marriage to John meant that she no longer had to work. So to occupy her time, Edith became an avid gardener. During the twenties, Edith was joined the Garden Club of America. In 1926, she discovered a new species of water

lily that was named *hydrocotyle verticillata* var. *Fetherstoniana* in honor of its discoverer. In 1929, she traveled with the garden club to England, where she was fortunate enough to view the original Packwood House, for which her museum was named. Much of Edith Fetherston's look throughout her life is based on the fashion of this decade. Long pearls and loose fitting dresses are staples of Edith's wardrobe.

The two garments in this chapter are both made of black fabric. Both garments show elements of the twenties style. They both have shapes that reduce the appearance of curves of a woman's body, while allowing for movement. The coat is made of velvet and bears similar decoration to my visual research. The dress is very similar in style to the flapper dresses of the twenties.

The garment in figure 2.1 is the only coat I discuss in this thesis. The body consists of light pink silk covered by a sheer black silk with metallic embroidery. The sheer black over the pink creates the appearance of a plum color. The collar, lower hem, cuffs, and center front opening are trimmed with heavy black velvet. The coat is lined with pink velvet.



Fig. 2.1 Black Velvet Coat with Pink Velvet Lining

The only closure is at the hip: one two inch black velvet button with a black velvet loop. Considering the weight of the garment, this coat was likely worn during the winter months. This is the sort of coat that would have been held together by Edith's gloved hands.



The coat was hand-stitched with one exception. The sheer black fabric is flatlined to the and pink fabric underneath by machine (stitched together to prevent movement of the fabric as one sews). Where the black velvet is attached to the sheer fabric, it is rolled and and tacked with a *whip stitch*. The bottom of the coat was cut in mountain and “v” angular patterns, similar to the lines of the art deco period. The cuffs of this garment are six inches wide, with an additional two inches hand-stitched into the lining.

The collar is over twelve inches wide, and stands above the shoulders. There is a *stand* attached to the back of the collar to help it remain rigid. This *stand* consists of a strip of fabric roughly four inches wide and eighteen inches long attached to the back of the neck. Concealed within are four pieces of *boning*. The part of the body which includes the sheer metallic fabric was cut from one piece of fabric, with a single seam under the arms on each side.

Several alterations have been made to this garment. The entire sleeve was tacked up two inches around the elbow, presumably because the sleeve was originally too long. It is tacked to itself at the location of the button on left, and two inches below the button on the right of the coat. None of these alterations, however, were to repair the coat. There are no signs of wear or tear on the garment. Mrs. Featherston likely saved this garment for special occasions, and thus did not wear it often.

Too formal for everyday wear, Mrs. Fetherston likely wore this coat to travel to an evening party or elegant reception. The quality of the stitches and the richness of the fabric suggests that Mrs. Fetherston purchased the coat as a custom made garment. She likely bought this coat in New York City.

The black “dress” in figure 2.2 actually exists in seven separate pieces, which consists of six identical layers of mesh dresses along with a slip. They are so sheer that

several layers of this garment must be worn in order for it to be appropriate for public wear. Four of the separate dresses have panels of fabric tacked to them. The panels are each twenty-four inch squares of the fabric, and are stitched to the bottom of the top four dresses. The panels are spaced roughly five inches apart, assembled in two rows. This garment was stitched by machine. The machine stitching is very small. There are also some imperfections in the stitching. The seam allowance is larger than in others. This suggests that this garment



Figure 2.2 Black mesh multilayered dress

was not factory made. To prevent fraying, all of the inside seams were *whip stitched* by hand. The bottom dress is made from a fabric with a smaller mesh than the rest of the garment. Instead of turning each *hem* under, the edges were cut with pinking shears. The armholes and neckline were *whip stitched*. The *whip stitching* was wrapped around a thicker thread.

The slip is black and is likely made of silk or rayon. The fabric is of high quality and has a slightly muted sheen. Attached to the bottom of the slip there is an eight inch piece of sheer silk. The slip is cut on the straight of grain, which became uncommon later in the twenties. The *hem* is stitched by machine with two rows of stitching. A seam runs down the center in the back. The front part of the bottom of this slip has two layers. The

top layer is stitched to the back piece at the left and the front layer is stitched to the back piece on the right. This allows for the slip to look very long and box shaped while still allowing for movement. At the small of the back there are two *darts*. The top of the back falls at the natural waist line, dipping severely low, with a center seam. It is interesting that in the back, the center seam of the bodice is slightly to the right of the center seam of the skirt.

There is a seam down the right side, with closures on the left side. Interestingly, it has two types of closures, both hooks and hand stitched eyes, and snaps. They run in this order from bottom to top: snap, snap, hook, snap, hook, snap, hook. The random arrangement of the different varieties of closures is most likely from a repair. At one point, there might have been one kind of closure, for example all snaps. At some point, however, snaps which fell off were likely replaced by hooks and eyes.

The top section of the slip has a horizontal seam at the four inch hip across the front. There are bust *darts* at the side of the slip and there are *darts* which start at the bust and run down the front to the waist. The neckline is faced and machine stitched down, then the edges were hand stitched to prevent fraying. There is a defined waist in the slip, but it is easily erased by the several layers on top of it. The straps are made of the same sheer silk material that the *hem* is made of, but in a flesh tone.

The condition of the slip suggests that it was worn by Edith many times, It has creases near the stomach, suggesting she wore it to events where she would have been moving in it, as well as to events where she sat for hours. There are also parallel creases in the dress which suggests that the slip was folded and stored on a shelf, in a drawer, or in a box at some point.

The context of where Edith would have worn this ensemble is a mystery. While

the slip shows signs of energetic movement, the panels on the dress are too delicate to handle that sort of movement, as they are attached to the dress with only two passes of thread. She likely wore this garment in social settings, likely to cocktail parties.

The twenties were a period of recovery after the war, and American people adopted a “devil may care” attitude about life. The relaxed attitude of the twenties was reflected in clothing. Women wore clothes which they could easily move in, and rid themselves of corsets. Edith's clothing from the twenties is luxurious, made of silks and velvets. The clothes reflected Edith's attitudes of having a new and comfortable life.

**1930s**

*While the crash only took place six months ago, I am convinced we have now passed the worst and with continued unity of effort we shall rapidly recover. There is one certainty of the future of a people of the resources, intelligence and character of the people of the United States - that is, prosperity.*

President Hoover, 1930 (qtd in Gordon and Gordon 191)

Economic times of the thirties were hard, people were losing their jobs by the thousands (Gordon and Gordon 191). America's natural resources suffered as well as the economic suffering of Wall Street. Dust storms, floods, and mudslides destroyed major crops in the west. Making a profit during the beginning of the decade was difficult. President Roosevelt offered the New Deal, which created jobs in the hopes of fixing the economy (Gordon and Gordon 191).

During the later thirties, the political takeovers in Europe caused unrest in the worldwide economy. While America vowed to remain neutral, news of Italy's ruling of Ethiopia, Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhine, and Japan's invasion of China struck fear into American hearts (Gordon and Gordon 193). As Paris lost some of its economic power, the fashion industries in London and New York now had the opportunity to shine (Rothstein 115).

A favorite pastime during the thirties was attending cinema; sound became commonplace in movies (Gordon and Gordon 192). Mae West, Jean Harlow, Greta Garbo, and Bette Davis were film stars of this decade that set the standards for fashion (Gordon and Gordon 192). Surrealism was an art movement of the thirties which highly

influenced the fashion industry. Photography became popular; specifically, fashion photography (Rothstein 123). Fashion models in flowing gowns looked similar to the lines and shadows seen in surrealist art.

While the economy during the thirties was a hardship, the style of the decade represented glamour. Women who had money made a distinct choice to show that they did. A fashionable dress on a woman in the thirties would have been stitched to look long and drapey. The dress would have accentuated her broad shoulders, pronounced bust, a thin waist, virtually no hips (achieved by wearing a girdle), and would flare below the knees (Worsley 234). Thanks to the designs by Brenda Frazier in the early thirties, the strapless gown became a common evening look (Tortora and Eubank 390). Evening wear also changed with hats, as it became appropriate in the thirties for women to wear hats to formal events. As the decade progressed, more emphasis was put on the shoulders by using gathers, several layers of fabric, and by the end of the decade, shoulder pads (Rothstein 141).

The slender physique of a 1930s woman was achieved by many styles of sports. Among the popular were hiking, swimming, and tennis. Because the average woman wanted to stay fit and active, clothing for sports were often worn as casual wear. It is this idea which inspired the term sportswear (Tortora and Eubank 391). Sportswear, however, was nowhere near appropriate at night. By the mid thirties, different fashions were appropriate for different times of the day (Rothstein 122). Standardized sizing came about in the thirties in America, and quickly caught on in Europe (Rothstein 124).

The two designing stars of the thirties were Madame Vionnet and Elsa Schiaparelli. Vionnet designed dresses that were cut on the *armscye* (Tortora and Eubank 393). Her clothing rarely had decoration; the beauty of her garments lay in her mastery

of the cut (Ewing 105). Schiaparelli designed bizarre sweaters, *Couture* zippers, matching gowns and jackets and coined the term “shocking pink” (Tortora and Eubank 393). While she was a master couturier, her fame came from the sense of humor seen in some of her designs, such as a dress that references the lobster. She often worked with famed surrealist artist Salvador Dali to design textiles (Ewing 121).

The Fetherstons were fortunate, and their livelihood was not affected by the economic collapse. In 1930, the couple moved to a “ritzy” area of Pittsburgh. While she considered it a beautiful city, Edith did not enjoy living in Pittsburgh. To deal with her unrest with living in a city she did not enjoy, she began to paint. In 1932, John received the position of Vice President of the Filtration Equipment Corporation, and the couple moved to the Big Apple. In May of 1932, Edith's paintings were put on display in Ferargil Gallery. Despite the economic hard times of the thirties, Lewisburg was proud to announce that none of its banks went out of business (Duque). When John retired in 1936, he and Edith moved back to the prosperous Lewisburg, where they would spend their remaining years.

As Edith grew into retirement with her husband, she began to shop more frequently. As clothing was among her favorite items to purchase, Edith's closet expanded greatly in the thirties. Of the many dresses in Edith's collection, I have chosen the three dresses in this chapter as they are in the best condition, and she had collected the most aesthetically interesting garments in the thirties.

Edith purchased the dress in figure 3.1 in three different colors, peach, cream, and grass green. It is from the very early thirties, as it has elements of the flapper style dress in it. Each dress has a matching slip which is identical in construction to the slip from the flapper dress in the twenties. Each dress has three jackets which would have been worn

so that they were layered on top of each other.

The dress, made of sheer silk has a square neckline with a low dip V shape in the back. It is sleeveless, although it would always be worn with the jackets. The stitches are in more than one colored thread, suggesting it was sewn by more than one person. The shoulders have lingerie loops with snaps on them which would be used to tack the straps to the shoulders of the jacket.. The bodice has an interesting *dart* which extends from waist to bust. Unlike many dresses from the thirties, this dress was cut on the *straight grain*, and not on the *armscye*.



Figure 3.1 Paneled Early Thirties Dress and Jackets

There are three flap style panels attached to the dress. The closer the flaps are to the bottom of the dress, the larger the panel is. The edges are turned under twice with two lines of stitches. On the bottom of the garment are two large panels cut on the *armscye* which make the bottom look really full while having a sleek look on top.

The three identical jackets worn on top of each other are not meant to be closed. These jackets create the look of another layer of panels. There is a *dart* which extends from waist to bust. There is a strip of fabric that creates the appearance of another panel at the bottom. The sleeve comes to a point at the neck, and has a *dart* at the elbow. The cuff has a square panel of fabric, which also creates the illusion of a ruffle. The panel ties



the style of the jacket to the *hem* of the dress.

This dress has been altered, as suggested by the differences in *hem* and also the different thread color. The fact that the dress had been altered and that it had been purchased in three different colors tells me that this garment was *ready made*.

This garment could have been worn outside, perhaps during one of her garden parties. She would have worn it with a pair of matching heels, pearls, and a matching hat.

The dress in figure 3.2 is made of sheer black silk fabric with red, pink, and yellow flowers. The fabric is embroidered with gold metallic thread. This dress was cut on the *armscye*, which makes the garment cling to the body. The right side of the bodice laps over the left. Two *darts*, as well as a vent at center back, create a tight fitting bodice while allowing movement of the shoulder blades. Attached to the



Fig 3.2 Gold Embroidered Wrap Dress

top of the neck is a long strip of fabric which functions ties to into a bow. The dress buttons from the waist to the hips on the left side. The edges of the *hems* are rolled up and whipped into place with a thicker piece of string to allow for strength.

The shoulder seam follows the *armscye*, and has a gusset in the armpit. A gusset

allows a person to have full movement of the arm, while maintaining a sleek, tight to the body, appearance. There is a *dart* at the elbow of the sleeve. There are self covered buttons on the cuffs of the sleeves.

The skirt of this dress also crosses over itself. The seams on this skirt are in the center back, and on each side. At the waist there is a waistband with hooks, bars, and snaps as a closure. The skirt has a hidden waistband made out of *grosgrain* ribbon with hooks and bars as a closure. This hidden waistband closes on the opposite side as the button closure. Attached to the bottom, on an angular seam, is a wider piece of the fabric, which allows fullness in the bottom. The *hem* of the skirt was cross-stitched.

While this garment could have been worn during the day, it would only have been worn to special occasions. The fabric is too fragile for casual occasions. The garment must have a slip underneath it, as it is too sheer to be worn on its own. It also would have been worn with a pair of gold or black earrings, and black shoes.

The sheer silk black dress with gold embroidery on its waistband in figure 3.3 is one of a kind. This garment must be worn with a slip. The slip it was stored with is made of taffeta, possibly silk. Because of the taffeta's age, however, the slip is very brittle. The slip has spaghetti straps, with ends turned under and topstitched. The *hem* of this slip has four triangular pieces at the bottom which makes



Fig. 3.3. Black Dress with Gold Embroidered Waistband

concave and convex “V” shapes.

The dress uses self covered buttons as closures in the center of the back. The buttons close with button loops. There is a gap from the mid-back to the shoulders. The nape of the neck has a hook and bar. The dress is cut on the *armscye*, which was typical of the thirties. The dress has a center front seam and also a center back seam, but no side seams. The bodice is gathered and stitched into a crown shaped waistband with gold embroidery. The front of the bodice is folded left over right by one inch.

The sleeve is one of the distinctive aspects of this dress. There is a large poof, attached at the *armscye*. Unlike sleeves of today, however, the fullness of this sleeve comes from gathers which follow the stitch line. The sleeve has several rows of gathering stitches, both on the top of the sleeve and on the bottom. The ends of the sleeves are folded over twice and stitched to a ribbon.

Like the other black dress of the thirties, this dress would have been worn to special occasions. It could be worn with an elegant necklace, and Edith would certainly have worn it with her signature strand of pearls. It might have even been worn with black shoes, black gloves, and a pearl bracelet.

The economic times of the thirties were hard, but those who could afford it dressed glamorously. They wore flowing dresses cut on the *armscye*. Edith Fetherston, a woman known for style, fit into the mold of the thirties glamorous woman. Her clothing from this decade is elaborate yet classy, and the woman who wore the garments went about her day in style.

## 1940s

*In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world grounded upon four essential freedoms:*

*...Speech...worship...freedom from want [and]...fear”*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1941 (qtd in Gordon and Gordon 298)

Despite FDR's promise that American men would not be sent to war, the idea of war loomed in the minds of Americans. The infamous attacks on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 forced America out of neutrality. By the new year, American troops were set up in Europe and Japan (Gordon and Gordon 298). Ironically, the war was the boost the economy needed to end the depression of the thirties. With men headed overseas to fight, women took the place of men in the workforce (Tortora and Eubank 408).

The mood of the early forties was one of support for the troops. Americans were encouraged to purchase war bonds and to reduce the amount of supplies that they used. Eventually, the government rationed items that were in short supply or vital to the war. Metals, gasoline, silk, wool, and most foods were among the items that were restricted during the war. The U.S. was more fortunate than most nations in Europe because the war was not on its soil (Clancy 10). WWII was the first time clothing was rationed among all U.S. citizens, the wealthy as well as the poor (Ewing 139).

The war caused both inspiration for and restrictions on fashion. Women's clothing mimicked soldiers' uniforms. Dresses appeared utilitarian and strong. The basic dress of the wartime American woman was wide in the shoulders, with a cinched waist, a flared skirt, but not be fuller than a yard, and would end at the knee (Ewing 142). Coupons were

enforced to make sure that consumers were careful about what they purchased. Being wasteful was unpatriotic. The American Office of Civilian Defense recommended that “It's smart to be mended...Conservation is a war weapon in the hands of every man, woman, and child.” (quoted in Gordon and Gordon 307).

Shortages of material meant that adjustments had to be made in fashion. Because leather was used for many uniforms and boots, women's shoes needed an alternative material. Heels began to be made of wood and cork (Ewing 144). Silk was also in short supply, as Japan and other nations in the Orient were blockaded from trade. Because of the shortage of silk, stockings were hard to come by. Women painted their legs and drew a line up the back of their legs with eyeliner to mimic stockings (Tortora and Eubank 408). Sales of women's trousers, which could be worn without stockings, were fivefold in 1942 than what they were in 1941 (Bondi 175).

While movie-going remained a favored pastime in the forties, the industry was suffering criticism. There were some officials who believed the Hollywood monopoly needed to be eradicated (Mulvagh 186). It was also during the forties that television came into existence, which created competition for the Hollywood industry (Bondi 40). Despite the controversy about film, silver screen stars were still the icons of fashion. Betty Grable's curves, Rita Hayworth's glamour, and Veronica Lake's hair were some of the looks for which women strived in this decade (Gordon and Gordon 286). Broadway was also a popular form of entertainment. Rogers and Hammerstein were the biggest names in composing, and the theater inspired much of the fashions of the forties (Bondi 41).

Some European artists moved to the U.S. to avoid the cruelties of war (Bondi 47). These “artists in exile” contributed to America's place as a rising center for the arts.

Fashion designers, along with painters, sculptors, actors, poets, and playwrights came to the U.S. in the early forties. Mainbocher, a well known designer from Paris, had come to the states during war time but decided to stay even after the fighting had ended. Paris as a fashion center was closed off to the world with the fall of France to Germany in 1940 (Ewing 139). American and English designers now had the chance to shine. New York became, for a short time, the center of fashion to the world.

While Europe and Japan were working to rebuild their economy after the war, America's economy was doing well. With the surge of the population from post war the baby boomers, America emphasized family values. Women left the factories and returned to their roles as wives and mothers in the home. The economy of the Soviet Union also flourished soon after the war ended. The USSR's growing power, along with communism, seemed a threat to the lifestyles of some Americans (Bondi 40).

In 1947, Dior created what is known as “The New Look”. He claimed that his “dream is to save women from nature” (Mulvagh 194). The New Look expressed an elegant woman, as opposed to the utilitarian dresses women wore during the war. It consisted of rounded shoulders, a high, cinched waist, accentuated round hips followed by a billowing bell shaped skirt, and a pair of tiny heels which elongated the leg (Steele 11). The full skirt in this look required up to 15 yards of fabric. After having to adhere to guidelines restricting certain types of clothing, some people welcomed The New Look with open arms. Others felt the look was wasteful. English critics even called it unpatriotic. (Payne, Winakor, and Farrell-Beck 603).

The Fetherstons spent the war times building upon the estate that they already owned. They purchased the neighboring home, and turned it into an apartment. John had converted part of the house into a private museum, which Edith was quick to fill with

American artifacts. The latest date on a painting in the Packwood House Museum is 1945. As John never allowed his wife to sell her paintings, it is likely that this is her last painting (Sauers).

The two dresses discussed in this chapter show examples of garments which existed directly before and after the war. The first dress is similar to dresses from the thirties in the length of the skirt and sleeves, but matches the style of the forties in the bodice. The second dress resembles dresses that were made right after the restrictions on fabric were removed, and women could once again purchase garments made with greater amounts of fabric.

The plum silk dress and matching belt in figure 4.1 is dazzling with beading on the upper bust. It has shoulder pads, long sleeves, and a long skirt. Because of its length and the quality of the fabric, it is likely that this garment was created in the early forties, before the U.S. involvement in the war.

The bodice has two beaded designs *chain-stitched* into the bust. There is a seam at the top of the beaded design. The waist in both the front



Fig. 4.1. Plum Dress with Beading

and the back is gathered into the waistband. There is a center front seam that was folded under at the neckline. The seam allowance at the center is two inches. Therefore, the seam allowance was *whip stitched* to the neckline. The back of the bodice has two *darts*

above each shoulder blade. The bodice also has *darts* at the waist on the princess line. From the waist to high hip there is a decorative panel. There is a zipper on the left side seam at the waist. The rest of the seam allowance on the bodice is one-half inch. The edges of the seam allowances are cut with pinking shears. This dress has long sleeves, which are sewn into the *armscye*. At the cuffs, there are four lines of gathering stitches. The edges of the cuff were stay stitched and then *whip stitched* to *hem* them.

The skirt of the dress is in four panels. Each seam on the skirt is one inch wide. At the princess line, the skirt is gathered across for two inches and attached to the waistband. There are seams at the center front, each side, and the center back. The *hem* of the dress was first stay stitched and then *cross stitched* up. The waist has a piece of *grosgrain* ribbon hand tacked to the waistband with a hook and eye closure behind the zipper. The *hem* was stay stitched and then hand whipped to dress.

This dress shows no sign of being worn. The skirt of the dress is several inches longer than most of the full length dresses in Edith's collection. This dress would have been worn to a semi formal event, perhaps to the theater. It would have been worn with black shoes, a clutch purse, and a hat. The beading at the bust is very decorative, and thus, Edith's long necklaces would have been inappropriate with this gown.

The cream colored dress in figure 4.2 is remarkable because of its gathers. It falls to the calf, with short sleeves and a "V" neckline. The wide "V" neckline creates a feeling of strong, wide shoulders. There are two pieces which are gathered into the neckline and come diagonally over the breasts. At the point of the neckline there is a nonfunctioning bow. The bodice of this dress, but not the skirt, is lined with a sheer fabric. The fabric over the abdomen is gathered horizontally. The skirt is gathered vertically into the waistband.



There are one inch seam allowances on this garment. The closure for this dress is a zipper on the left side. The edges of the fabric were cut with pinking sheers to prevent fraying. While the body of the dress has gathers to fit over curves, the lining has *darts*. There are *darts* from the side seam at the waist to the side of the bust. There is also a tuck between the bustpoints within the lining, creating a



Fig. 4.2. Pleated Cream Dress

square shape in the lining over the stomach. The gathers were hand tacked to the lining. Along with the gathers in the actual fabric, the neckline has a few strategically placed tucks to match the gathered look of the rest of the dress. The back of the lining as well as the body of the back of the bodice have *darts* on princess lines. The lining in the back was not attached entirely to the body of the dress, and hangs loosely around the *armscye*.

The back and the sleeve are cut in one piece of fabric. In the front, the sleeves were stitched in a sort of raglan style. The sleeves are not lined. They have one inch seam allowances and are gathered on both the upper and lower seam. The lower seam, however, is more gathered than the upper seam. There is a ribbon tacked to the gather stitch to aid in its strength. The edges of the sleeve were stitched once to prevent fraying, then turned up one-half inch and *cross stitched*.

The skirt of this dress is gathered and attached to the bodice. On the inside, there

is *grosgrain* ribbon hand tacked to the seam. There is a hook and eye to allow for closure at the same side as the zipper. There are three seams on the skirt: on the left side, on the princess line on the right rear, and on the princess line on the right hip. The odd placement of the seams is likely because the skirt is gathered, and presumably, the seams would not be noticed. After putting the dress on the dress form, however, the seams are now visible from the outside, likely because of shifting of fabric as Edith wore the dress.

The dress in figure 4.2, from the later forties, was worn by Edith often. At the *armscye* there is discoloration as well as small snags in the knitting which could only come from wearing a garment. This dress could have been worn as Edith went antique shopping for her personal museum. While the tag has been ripped out, Edith most likely purchased this garment in New York City, as she often visited the apartment there during this decade (Sauers). This garment would have been worn with a simple bracelet, her infamous pearls, and white shoes.

The beginning of the forties was a time of war, and the fashion of the time reflected patriotism. Women wore clothes which made them appear more masculine. After the war, the fashion reflected the desires to return to traditional family roles. Women dressed in clothing which cinched their waist, accentuated their busts, and accentuated feminine curves. While the fashion of the forties reflected current situations, Edith spent this decade becoming a collector of past artifacts. Her clothing on the other hand, was purchased in the style of the time. The garments from this chapter come from the years directly before and after the war. The dresses show the transition from the calm before the storm to the aftermath.

**1950s**

*The politics of the 50s were the politics of fatigue [and student] apathy probably unexampled in history [we chose] to invest not in people but in things.”*

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr, 1960 (qtd in Gordon and Gordon 477)

The fifties, a decade of significant change in the American style of living. The war in Europe ended shortly after Truman took office. Since there was the “baby-boom” after the war, family values were in the forefront (Layman 85). Unlike most European countries, America’s economy was thriving. Because of their post war financial struggles, countries in Eastern Europe were susceptible to the Soviet Union and its economic power. The growing power of the Soviet Union (including its Communist principles) was seen as a challenge to American principles. It was this fear which launched America and the Soviet Union into the Cold War. Consequently, America became involved in the Korean War. People who spoke up against conformity were often persecuted (Tortora and Eubank 429-435). As a result, thinking and looking differently was chastised by society (Steele 41).

There was a growth in travel in the fifties, the highway system in America improved, and commercial airplane flights were becoming affordable for the average income (Tortora and Eubank 430). America in this time, became a consumerist society. During this decade, the population increased by 19% (Layman VII), the number of automobiles doubled, and women owned more clothing now than ever before (Tortora and Eubank 428)

Fashion of this time coincided with the American ideal to return to the traditional

lifestyle (Mulvagh 181). The truly fashionable woman dressed to impress her husband. When he came home from work, a husband should see his wife in heels and her fine dress, with dinner on the table (Steele 29). Curves were “in” during the fifties. Marilyn Monroe, Grace Kelly, Bridget Bardot, and Elizabeth Taylor maintained the curvaceous and glamorous look of the fifties (Steel 48). The first modern fashion doll emerged in 1955, and the fashion icon doll Barbie was released in 1959 (Steele 39).

Most of the fashions from the fifties were highly influenced by Dior's New Look. The New Look consisted of rounded shoulders, a high, cinched waist, accentuated round hips followed by a billowing bell shaped skirt, and a pair of tiny heels which elongated the leg. If a woman was to leave the house, she would be wearing white gloves, stockings, a crinoline skirt underneath her garment, pearls, and of course a hat (Ewing, 157). Garments in this shape required support, both within and underneath the fabric. Most of the dresses had *boning* stitched into them, and women often wore waist cinchers to mimic the curves they saw on these women.

Chanel, who had retired during World War II, came out of retirement to rebuke the styles which were emerging during the early fifties. In response to The New Look, she said “What is the point of going back to the rigidity of a corset?” (Mulvagh 189) After all she had done in the design world to free women of the restrictive tightness that women had suffered through in fashion; she determined to offer women a more comfortable look.

Edith's hobbies and circumstances during the fifties were very similar to the forties. She was out antiquing and collecting things for her private museum while her husband stayed at home writing. At this point, Edith had realized that her time would be much better spent collecting artifacts than painting. By the end of the fifties, John's health was deteriorating.

Hattie Carnegie, a *Couture* and *ready to wear* designer, moved from Vienna to New York City in the twenties. Late in the 1940s, Hattie Carnegie established the Blue Room. She established the Blue Room as a specialty store which sold some of her less expensive *ready to wear* clothing. Hattie Carnegie is a name seen on the tags of many garments in Edith's closet. Both of the garments in this chapter are created by the Hattie

Carnegie designer, based

in New York City.



Fig. 5.1. Olivine Green Hattie Carnegie Dress

The mid-1950s dress in figure 5.1 is the closest to “The New Look” that exists in Edith's closet. It is silk brocade lined with sheer silk. This dress would have been worn at an evening event; as the

style dictated, “brocade should not go out before 6 pm” (Steele 34). This garment was machine sewn, but many of the details are hand-stitched. For example, the bodice is attached to the skirt with a cross-stitch. This green, called “Olivine Green” on the tag, is a minty green. Interestingly, this dress Edith also owned the same dress in a yellow type fabric which looks on the outside to be identical to this dress. On the inside, however, the yellow dress is assembled in a different way.

This dress has a tulip shaped neckline which lies on top of the body. The shape is created by two pieces. The left piece is gathered over top of the right, and was stitched

together as the waist *dart*. At the side seam, there is a bow. In the back there are seams at each princess line. The entire bodice has *boning* in it. The spaghetti straps are cut long enough to cover the *boning* that lies on the princess line, they were cross-stitched on top of the *boning*.

Both the bodice and skirt of this garment have side seams. On the left side, there is a zipper which extends to the top of the dress. There is a hook and bar at the top of the



Fig 5.2. Plum Flowers Hattie Carnegie Dress

zipper. The skirt is box pleated into the waistband in the front, and there are two *darts* at the princess seams in the back. Because the skirt is less full than the typical New Look, this dress was likely purchased in the late fifties. The dress has a three inch *hem*, which was turned over, stitched, and finally blind *hem* stitched by machine. On the *hem* there is also a plastic strip which was hand basted to the dress. It is

likely that this was meant to keep

the shape of the dress while it was in the store, and then removed once it was purchased.

This garment would have been worn to a more formal event, possibly one of Edith's bridge parties. It would have been worn with a pair of white gloves, a shawl perhaps, heels, a clutch-like purse, a necklace, and a matching hat.

The tag on the dress in figure 5.2 says "Hattie Carnegie" with "Blue Room" in

blue thread stitched on top of the Hattie Carnegie logo. There is a ruffled collar, which is then tacked down by a flower made of piping folded into a swirl. At the neckline there is also piping made of the same fabric as the dress. There are *darts* in the back at the shoulders, two *darts* in the front at the waist, two *darts* at the bust, and two *darts* in the back at the waist. One can tell that this dress was altered because there are two rows of stitching at the *darts* in the waist. Many of the edges were *whip stitched*, something that adds to the quality of the garment.

The dress was constructed with side seams, and there is at least one inch of seam allowance on each side seam. The dress closes with a 22 inch zipper in the center back. The bodice is gathered into the waistband. There is also a *grosgrain* ribbon basted to the inside of the dress at the waist. It attaches with a hook and bar. There are pockets in the front of the skirt at the hips. The skirt is slightly longer in the back. Finally, the *hem* of this dress was stitched to the lining, with a ribbon basted on top of the two to keep the *hem* down.

The jacket is made of matching material to the dress, and has three-quarter-length sleeves. The cuffs are fashioned identically to the collar, with ruffles, piping, and the spiral type flower. The front and arm of this jacket were all cut from one piece of fabric. There is a gusset in each armpit. The shoulder has a four-inch seam, but not the entire way down the arm; the sleeve is made of one piece of fabric. There are two added pieces of fabric under the sleeves, possibly by alterations, as they are also in the lining. There is a side seam as well as a seam in the center back. At the openings of the jacket, there is the self covered piping.

This dress could be worn for day wear. It is slightly dressy, but because of the length of the sleeves, the dress is not appropriate for evening wear. This dress would be

appropriate for Edith to wear when she and John attended church. The outfit would be complete with white shoes, gloves, a bracelet, and a matching pillbox hat.

The fifties were a time when society put an emphasis on conformity. Clothing reflected the desire to maintain traditional family roles, by defining the feminine curves of the body. Edith Fetherston spent her time during the fifties as a wife to John, while she continued to collect artifacts for her personal museum. The garments in this chapter represent the later part of the fifties, as well as a favored designer of Edith.



## 1960s

*We need a new generation of leadership-new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities.*

John F. Kennedy, 1960 (qtd in Gordon and Gordon 477)

While the values of the fifties embodied conformity, the values of the sixties embodied independence. Segregation was outlawed in 1954, and African Americans continued to fight hard for their rights during the sixties. The economy of many Asian countries expanded, fostering a worldwide interest in Eastern aesthetics and philosophy. The war in Vietnam caused unrest among many Americans, and protesters marched the streets. In San Francisco in 1967, there was a “be in,” a gathering of people who met to protest and converse about issues such as LSD, the war in Vietnam, and free love (Gordon and Gordon 546). After the “be ins”, hippies became a prominent counterculture (Tortora and Eubank 459).

American government was still fighting against communism, and the American people were fighting for other social causes. African American leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X fought for racial equality. Female leaders including Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem who fought for women's rights. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, a book about the harmful effects of DDT, encouraged Americans to fight for the environment.

The style of the sixties reflected the individualistic ideals of the sixties American society. While there were mainstream styles, much of the intention of fashion during the sixties was to look different and street styles began to emerge at this time (Steele 58). Jackie Kennedy, known as America's most stylish First Lady in history, epitomized the

sixties mainstream style. She wore a pillbox hat, a tight fitted dress with a cinched waist, a matching jacket and belt, and short strand of pearls (Mulvagh 269). Mary Quant, the British designer known for the mini skirt, encouraged individualism and creativity in fashion. Twiggy wore the look styled by Mary Quant; dresses laid on Twiggy's thin body, cut short to show off her long, thin legs (Steele 52). Hippies were also an inspiration to many designers during the sixties; clothing by designers in the sixties included peasant blouses, bell bottom jeans, leather fringe, and tie dye which hung loosely over the body. The interest in Eastern philosophy was also reflected in the style of the sixties. Kimono cuts and Asian decoration was seen on much of the clothing (Tortora and Eubank 465).

It is ironic that the end of Edith's life was during the sixties, for the central ideals of the decade were what Edith's personality embodied. Despite her recent hip surgery, Edith traveled in 1964 to Japan and also to explore the Silk Road. The journey took her through Japan, as well as Siberia, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Iran, Syria, and Jordan. The exploration was two months long (Hobart 6). During this entire trip, Edith collected more things to go into her museum. Also during this decade, Edith was repeatedly in correspondence with the Smithsonian so that when she died, her private museum could be left to a trust. During this decade, she finally decided to leave her home and antiques as a museum after she had passed.

Edith continued to remain fashionable even in the last full decade of her life. She continued to shop in the Lewisburg area as well as in cities including Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and New York. The first dress in this chapter is representative of her interest in the Orient. The second dress in this chapter is representative of her day to day clothing.

The black and white crinkled silk dress and matching belt in figure 6.1 were likely

purchased after Edith's trip to the Orient. Although it looks Asian, the label on the garment reads *Nieman Marcus styled by Dorian*. The dress is cut in two parts, with long sleeves. The print of the silk is in a wave pattern which is similar to the patterns seen on oriental porcelain.



Fig. 6.1. Dress inspired by Japanese decoration

The neckline is wide, with a rounded piece of fabric on the inside, and a layer of horsehair underneath to keep the neckline stiff. There is a zipper at center back. The one inch seam allowance in center back is cut with the selvage. There are two side seams, which were cut with pinking shears and stitched at a one half inch seam allowance. The sleeves have a six inch *hem* which was first machine stitched with black thread and then hand stitched up with white thread. There are two pockets

in the side seam at the hip, which were cut with pinking shears and machine stitched with black thread. The *hem* is three inches, and it was attached in a similar fashion to the sleeves.

Edith likely would have worn this dress for her bridge parties, or to talk about her trip to the Orient. She loved to tell people about her trip. Because of her travels, Mrs. Fetherston was interviewed by several newspapers, including the *Bucknellian*. This

garment is highly decorative as it is, so if it included any accessories, they would have been simple, possibly black shoes, and some plain black or white earrings.

When Chanel returned to the fashion world in 1954, she brought with her the Cardigan Suit. The suit consisted of the tweed she was so well known for during the twenties. The suit had a straight cut, knee length skirt, a pretty blouse, sometimes a vest, and a jacket that had two pockets on each side. Many women adopted this look as their everyday look (De La Haye, 105). Edith was one of those women.

While the label on the garment in figure 6.2 says “Leonetti Philadelphia,” it matches the description of Chanel's “Cardigan Suit” exactly. This suit became Edith's uniform in the fifties and sixties. There are many photos of Edith wearing this type of suit. Unless the occasion called for something formal, one could see Edith wearing this or

a similar garment.



Fig. 6.2. Edith's Uniform

The garment is a yellow tweed pattern made of cotton, consisting of a knee length skirt, a vest, and a jacket. The jacket has a lapel collar, and is lined with white silk. There are pockets at the waist and pockets at the bust. Instead of a flap which covers the pocket, these flaps are part of the pocket fabric which are then folded over. The sleeves extend to the nape of the neck, and have a seam in the shoulder as well as under the arm.

There are seams on the side of the body

as well as in the center back. The seam allowance in the lining is pressed to the back. There are *darts* to the bust from the shoulders. The buttons are brown and in a rounded square shape. In the front of the jacket are two straps made out of the lining fabric. They are there so that the jacket could be worn over the shoulders, and the hands could rest within the straps.

The vest of this garment has *darts* from the shoulder and in the waist on both the front and the back. The lining of the vest was hand stitched into place. There are pockets at the bust of the vest. The buttons on the vest match the buttons of the jacket.

The skirt is straight cut, and was taken in at some point, as there are two lines of stitching down the side seam. The closure is on the left side, with a *placket* and a brown ribbon to reinforce the *placket*, and seven snaps to the waist, where there is also a hook and bar. There is a two inch wide piece of *grosgrain* ribbon on the waist to reinforce the band. The skirt has a lining, but it only extends to just below the hip. There are two *darts* on each side in the back. The *hem* was stitched to an orange ribbon and then taken up six inches and hand whipped up.

Edith would have worn this “uniform” with her basic staples. The suit would have been seen with her infamous tennis shoes, a few strands of pearls, gloves, and a hat.

The mood of the sixties celebrated individuality. The sixties were a time of hippies, protesters, and freedom. American people branched off into counter cultures, and so did the fashions they wore. The final full decade of Edith's life was an eventful one, including her trip to the Orient, as well as her decision to turn her home into a public museum. The garments from this decade embody the free spirited attitudes of the time and represent Edith's travels and what she wore from day to day.

## CONCLUSION

My intention in doing this research was to learn more about the styles and construction techniques in clothing styles from the the twenties and to the sixties. I found, however, that I was learning more about the woman who wore these clothes. While Paula Davis was instrumental in my research of fashion history and the individual garments that I researched, I found myself becoming just as interested in the interviews with Richard Sauers and Manual Duque.

My favorite phrase about Edith was that she “tiptoed on the line between genius and insanity.” (Sauers). She was known throughout Lewisburg as “tennis shoes,” as she had ankle and hip problems and would wear tennis shoes with her fine clothes. Edith was a social woman, who frequented the theater, threw bridge parties, welcomed international students into her home, and remained an active alumna of Bucknell University.

She and her husband were also frequenters of doctor's offices. Because she visited the dentist so often, she eventually had a dentist's chair put in her home. When she became older, her doctors advised her to sleep at a higher elevation. Her interpretation was to move her bedroom from the second floor to the third floor of her home. She quickly ordered an elevator to be installed in her home, and from then on kept a box of Purity candy and a chamber pot within it, in case the elevator should ever break down.

Edith also shopped on a regular basis. Her husband John, who kept records of everything, would occasionally write “ANGRY” in his journal. When you compare the date when he wrote that word to that date in his spending book, you knew that it was because his wife had purchased more clothing or antiques. As mentioned in the body of this thesis, Edith was an avid antique collector, which eventually inspired the Fetherstons to convert their home into a museum. Her will states that her house was not to be

changed once she had passed; even a lamp must stay in its place.

I had the chance to meet with Manual Duque, a former professor at Bucknell University over lunch. He knew Edith during the sixties, when she introduced herself to him after he had performed in a play. His character wore a ripped up coat, so Edith felt that he needed one of John's old coats. According to Richard Sauers, Edith's random acts of kindness were commonplace. She would emotionally connect with some people, and these people rarely knew why.

When I asked Mr. Duque about Edith's wardrobe, he replied “they say

someone has a look or doesn't have a look, Edith had THE look.” After studying photographs of Edith, I could see why he said that. In group photographs, Edith stands out in the crowd. She wore pearls and fancy hats, and of course, those tennis shoes. Interestingly, there were very few garments with labels in the collection. Most people who talk about Edith Fetherston mention the brand name clothes that she wore. Even when I first contacted Richard Sauers, I was informed that there were labels on almost all of the clothing. Words such as “Paris” and “*Couture*” are used when talking about her Edith's apparel. I however, found that these were erroneous statements. While some of the garments show signs of removed labels, the garments more frequently did not have



Figure 7.1 Edith Later in Life

labels in them. The most frequent designer name in the collection was Hattie Carnegie, a designer from New York who did *Couture* and ready-to-wear garments.

Edith's will states that she wanted to have garments made from her textile collection that would never go out of style. While this seems rather impossible, Edith's clothing demonstrates a taste in clothing that was relatively timeless. Amanda Kline, the photographer of these images mentioned how elaborate most of the garments are, and how one could possibly even wear them today.

By studying these garments, I was able to learn more about fashion history. I had to really think about the style of each garment compared to styles which were in my fashion history textbooks. By trying to guess the date that the garment was made, my eyes were trained to pick up subtle differences between decades, and between different areas in the decade. As mentioned earlier, I was interested in researching construction techniques through these decades. It was interesting to see the techniques evolve from handstitching in the early twenties to more factory machine made techniques used in the later decades.

In order to use my research, there will be a temporary exhibition in the Packwood House Museum which will rotate every six months. The display will consist of one of each of the garments discussed in this thesis, along with appropriate accessories. In February, I was able to install the first exhibition. I chose to use the Hattie Carnegie dress, as there were two versions of that dress, and I would be able to revisit the duplicate if I needed. I found that the experience of setting up a display was essential to writing my thesis. The display process put each garment into a context, which then allowed me to use this thesis to put her garments into a context.

This research was a unique opportunity. While many small towns have museums



with clothing collections, this museum had clothing that was worn by one specific person. What was really great was that while I learned about fashion history through studying these garments, I was able to think about the woman who wore them. The Packwood House had information about the woman, and I was able to apply this to my critical thinking about the garments and the context they were put into. Working on this thesis reminded me that a person wore these clothes; it reminded me that she had an appreciation of the clothing. This process gave me a deeper appreciation of the metamorphosis of the styles and their applicable uses through five decades that saw huge changes in culture, economics, productions, and attitudes.

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## GLOSSARY

Armhole-the circumference of the arm at the point where the arm meets the torso

Bias-In fabric there is a weave, threads go length wise and width wise, the bias is on the diagonal

Boning-rigid material made of plastic, metal, or whale bone which is stitched into the inside of a garment to add rigidity

Couture- A high end style of clothing which involves hand-stitching techniques

Chain stitch-A machine sewn running stitch that crosses over itself

Cross stitch-a type of hand-stitch which creates an x shape with the thread

Dart- a tapered tuck in a garment which allows for the fullness of the body while remaining fit to the body

Straight grain-the weave of the fabric that follows the length when taken off of a bolt of fabric

Grosgrain-a heavy ribbed ribbon

Hem- the edge of a garment, generally at the sleeves or bottom of the garment

Placket-an intentional opening in a seam

Ready-Made or Ready to Wear-a standardized article of clothing stitched prior to knowing who would wear it

Stand -A piece of fabric, usually with *boning* stitched to it, which is attached to a collar to create a stiff rigid shape

Whip stitch-a form of stitching in which the needle is stitched in a circular motion