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# A Turn of the Century Lady

Grace Delahanty

Western Kentucky University, [grace.delahanty202@topper.wku.edu](mailto:grace.delahanty202@topper.wku.edu)

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A TURN OF THE CENTURY LADY

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Fine Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

Grace Delahanty

Western Kentucky University

2011

CE/T Committee:

Assistant Professor Shura Pollatsek, Advisor

Assistant Professor Sandy Staebell

Assistant Professor Kristi Branham

Approved by



Advisor

Department of Theatre and Dance

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this project is to explore the life of a turn of the century lady. In order to do so I first must examine the environment in which she would live, the social and historical framework that she lives within. This is a period of rapid social and political change especially in the lives of women. The “New Woman” emerges rapidly gaining more independence through her active lifestyle. Carrie Burnam Taylor is one of these women. As one of the first female business owners in the Bowling Green area, she overcame economic and geographical challenges in addition to gender boundaries by creating her own dressmaking company, the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company. I examined dresses produced by her company and made a detailed record of my examination. Based on the data I collected, along with supplemental research, I created all of the underpinnings (bloomers, camisole, corset and petticoat) and a day dress that Taylor’s clientele would have worn.

Keywords: Turn of the Century, Fashion History, Carrie Burnam Taylor, Mrs. A. H. Taylor, Women’s History, Performing Arts

Dedicated to Mary Beth Delahanty and David Harryman

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VITA

April 26, 1989 ..... Born – Louisville, Kentucky  
2007.....duPont Manual High School  
Youth Performing Arts School  
Louisville, Kentucky

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Performing Arts

Minor Field: History



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to Anny Latour, “Fashion is the outward and visible sign of a civilization, it is part of social history.”<sup>1</sup> I set out on this project in order to explore this concept. The interrelation of fashion and history is fascinating because there is such a strong correlation between politics and historical events and the way people dress themselves. As a costume historian, it is important to recognize as many aspects of the time in which a garment was created as possible and discover how the time is reflected in how the garment is designed and constructed. For this project I wanted to explore as many of these aspects as possible in order to better understand the life of a woman at a specific juncture in time and explore how she and the clothing she wore reflected that specific period. In order to do this, I decided that I would construct all of the underpinnings (bloomers, camisole, corset and petticoat) and an outfit. But, I could not start by making these garments- it would be effectively starting in the middle. So in addition to constructing these garments, I would have to explore the time in which this woman would have lived: what were her ideals, her upbringing, and her social status? I was fortunate to be able to use the resources of the Kentucky Museum to examine real garments constructed in the time period and survey them. I also was pleasantly surprised to learn about Carrie Burnam Taylor, a Bowling Green dressmaker, who not only made many of the garments I examined, but also embodied the type of woman that I chose to study. This is meant to be a culmination of all the skills I have acquired and improved

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<sup>1</sup> Anny Latour, *Kings of Fashion* (Aylesbury: Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd., 1958), xi.

here at Western, so I wanted to include my love of history and my skill as a costume technician.

The period that I chose to study is the first decade of the twentieth century. This is a pivotal time in United States history especially in the lives of women. Prior to this the Victorian ideals of decorum were coupled with deprivation for women. The strict moral code of Victorian society dictated what men and women could and could not do, and although it continued through the 1910s, it was in its height during the previous century. There is also the first instance of the breaking down of social spheres of a domestic life and the public realm- essentially a mixing of the sexes. This leads to radical changes in social norms, politics, and consequently fashion.

I really find this period interesting from a costumer's perspective because this is where all of the innovations of the industrial revolution begin to take effect. There is the exponential growth in manufacturing that enables fabric to be more affordable so more women take risks with their fashion sense, which leads to new variations on fashion. This facilitates the fastest changing silhouette up until that point with a major change in silhouette every five to ten years. I wanted to research this period of time because I had never conducted extensive research on this period and it is a time that is beneficial to be acquainted with in theatre because of the number of plays set during this time frame. The silhouette is an important aspect of the period but also the fabrics, finishings, details, and pattern shapes are challenging facets. I chose a silhouette that is very unique to its time, and therefore focuses my scope of research. The S-shaped silhouette that I modeled my ensemble after does not exist in any other period of time and it's a reflection on the sentiments of the period. There is also such a radical shift of ideas and technology during

this decade that there are plenty of quality research materials and primary resources to draw from because people recorded the quick-paced changes.

My first task is to inform myself about the time in which a woman would have lived and identify what type of woman I am making this garment for. What is her social and economic status? This is important because it sets the historical, social, and political context of the woman I am envisioning. As we say in theatre: it puts you in that world, or you must know the details of a person's life to know what she would wear. I've decided that the woman that I would like to represent is the type of girl that would idealize the Gibson Girl.

## CHAPTER 2

### TIME AND FASHION

The first decade of the twentieth century is one of change, ushered in by the Edwardian Era. “Edwardian” refers to the reign of Edward VII, King of England from 1901-1914 (to the first World War), who succeeded his mother, Queen Victoria, and although this classification seems to be referring to England exclusively, it is generally used to describe this period of time both in England and in the United States. This period can also be referred to as *la belle époque* or the beautiful era. It is a time that embodies a new and forward thinking outlook revitalizing people who were formerly seemingly repressed by the constructs of Victorian life. Victorian suppression is most commonly characterized by sexual negation as well as retention of strict social expectations by the social elite.

Queen Victoria was known for being very dedicated to her family and those values translated to her subjects and the general world outlook; one of which was the separation of sexes into spheres- domestic and public. Women were seen as a reflection of the success of a family; consequently, her sphere consisted of the domestic sphere. She was in charge of running the household, ensuring children got a good education, keeping the home sufficiently clean to reflect the successfulness of the family. The only time that a woman was allowed to leave the home was with a male escort and even then her demeanor and presence was a reflection of her family. Women were the bedrock on which society rested<sup>2</sup>, thus they were the moral compass for society; they were to remain pure physically and intellectually. Women were not encouraged to attend school because it would add an unnecessary burden to an already fragile creature. To reduce the chances of a woman becoming corrupted by an

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<sup>2</sup> Karen Manners Smith, *New Paths to Power: American Women 1890-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

evil society, a woman who could afford to stay home and had little to no interaction with men outside of her immediate family, creating a very homosocial society. When Queen Victoria died, so did some of the social policies that she emphasized. Her son Edward was a very different sort of ruler. He was known to have numerous affairs, and although he did not affect the political policies in America, he is a reflection of the change that occurred in society after the turn of the century and leading into the Progressive Era.

In the United States, great social change was manifesting itself during this period of time known as the Progressive Era (ca. 1890-1920), characterized by waves of immigrants docking every day, the expanding middle class, gender integration and the growth of leisure time. The advancements in machinery during the Industrial revolution: looms, sewing machines, photography, electricity, telegraphs, and other manufacturing advancements led to a mass shift of populations to urban areas. Particularly in large cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco the incoming immigrants were utilized as cheaper manual labor allowing the need for a “white collar” job force to emerge in the displaced American workers. This group of people did not have the skills of manual laborers, but usually some higher education than their immigrant counterparts<sup>3</sup>. Their main advantage was they were “purely American” – white, Anglo-Saxon protestants. The separation of white and blue collar workers is a characteristic of the modern workforce, which aims to increase efficiency by creating a niche for each worker. The white collar workers were paid more for their desk jobs because it was thought to be more intellectually strenuous, and therefore they had

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, 6.



excess income and time allowing them to expand their interests. Industrialization also caused even greater class and economic disparities among middle class and lower class workers.<sup>4</sup>

Women in this period had grown up with the rights and education to afford them certain liberties. Prior to this, women were not allowed to attend school past a certain point and were unable to rightfully own land and property, but now we see these standards gradually begin to lax and we see a “new woman.” During the transition into the twentieth century, we see the conflict between the traditional female role as a moral guardian and a beacon of sexual purity verses the reality of more independent women entering the work force. While it was still expected that 90% of women would get married, by 1909, men who were working in semi-skilled professions still did not make enough to sufficiently support their families.<sup>5</sup> Women therefore began to enter the work force. Evidence of the shifting family dynamic is seen in the rapid 50% decline in birthrate from 1800 to 1900 dropping from an average number of 7 to 3-4 children per household.<sup>6</sup> The divorce rate also spiked between 1900 and 1915 from 1 in 12 to 1 in 9.<sup>7</sup>

A working woman was able to raise her social status through earning her own income and earning income was no longer exclusive to working domestically. Two-thirds of all working women were in industries centered on manufacturing and trade.<sup>8</sup> Women began to work outside of the home in factories and shops and in some cases own their own businesses. Despite women not being fully financially independent, they were less confined at least physically. Through employment women were able to become more politically active,

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<sup>4</sup> Henry C. Pitz, introduction to *The Gibson Girl & Her America; or Charles Dana Gibson, Delineator of an Age*, by Charles Dana Gibson (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2010), 144.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, 49.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, 48.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, 6.

athletic, and sexual.<sup>9</sup> Freud, for example, acknowledged that female sexuality, and the emergence of birth control allowed for women to be more free to express and act on sexual feelings freely and safely.<sup>10</sup> The concept of female sexuality not only changed the women's perceptions of themselves but also male perceptions of women's role in society. Obviously not all aspects of society changed during this period. There was no political or social equality, but an unprecedented number of women were finding avenues to express themselves.<sup>11</sup> Another one of these avenues was through consumerism.

Women became a huge consumer base for advertising based on their new earning power. Advancements in printing capabilities in the industrial revolution not only provided the means to cater to women as a target demographic, but also made it affordable.<sup>12</sup> Most magazines didn't have a varying cover design until the 1890s when they began to utilize art as a selling tool.<sup>13</sup> Companies used their cover art to establish an identity for their consumers creating an idealistic world that their magazine could somehow provide. By 1903, *The Ladies' Home Journal* had reached a circulation of one million.<sup>14</sup> Covers of women's magazines would portray women in and out of commercial settings<sup>15</sup>, therefore establishing a social norm of this emerging heterosocial landscape. Personalities among the artists drawing these covers began to emerge along with their stereotypical view of womanhood. According to Teresa Perkins, these illustrations established simple, recognizable "reference[s] to an assumed

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<sup>9</sup> Kathy Lee Peiss, *Cheap Amusements : Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina, 2001), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Kitch, 17.

<sup>13</sup> Kitch, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Kitch, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Kitch, 18.

consensus about an attribute or complex relationship.”<sup>16</sup> One of the first established of these artists was Alice Barber Stephens who was very conservative in her definition of womanhood confined within the Victorian ideal primarily placing the woman in the home as domestic bedrock.<sup>17</sup> Her concept was largely supported by the masculine factors that controlled the main world projection of the American woman. However, Stephens would be outshined by a far more impressive version of the American Woman drawn by Charles Dana Gibson known as the Gibson Girl.

The Gibson Girl is an idealized pen-and-ink creation of the artist Charles Dana Gibson, created in the mid 1890s. Modeled after Gibson’s wife, Irene Langhorne, she first appeared in the pages of *Collier’s Weekly* and *Life Magazines*<sup>18</sup> and was created to exemplify the modern American Woman; in fact she became the first uniquely American example of womanhood. Up to this point the ideal was based on European expectations of beauty and status. But this “New Woman” was young, vivacious and buxom- the perfect picture of Americanness, created by an American and projecting the capitalist nature that made America economically successful during the Beautiful Era. She embodied the new vitality of women entering the public sphere. Most often the Gibson Girl is pictured participating in sports or other leisure activities. When she is represented in formal settings, she is usually mocking the artificiality of the occasion or mocking the dour men around her. She did not, however, participate in any political arguments; she was independent but only in the most superficial of ways: “the Gibson Girl did nothing, she simply was.”<sup>19</sup> In effect, she was patriotic propaganda- representing Teddy Roosevelt’s concept of the reservation of the

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<sup>16</sup> Kitch, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Kitch, 18.

<sup>18</sup> Kitch, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Rebecca West, *1900* (New York: Crescent Books, 1982), 150.

white race. It was a predominant social concern during this period that the Anglo-Saxon race in the United States was becoming overly sedentary and complacent allowing for minorities to overtake the dominant white population. She was not only physically beautiful and fit but she was also modern and upwardly mobile.<sup>20</sup> This led to aspirations among young women to model themselves after her to be successful in love and life.

The Gibson Girl was a cultural phenomenon. Her image was associated with everything from glasses and posters to wallpaper meant to grace the walls of bachelor's apartments. Women made her rise to icon status by imitating her in gesture and style: wearing their hair like hers, acting like her, and engaging in all the idealized activities she did. The Gibson Girl of the twentieth century was characterized by her piled up hair, wasp-waist, heaving bosom, and ample hips. Between 1900 and 1908, there was a particular stance that the Gibson Girl, and consequently the women imitating her, achieved which was known as the "kangaroo stance" provided by the S-shaped corset.

The S-shaped corset (Specialite or Health corset) was invented by Mm. Gaches-Sarraute in an effort to improve the health of ladies<sup>21</sup>. Corsets for at least the preceding fifty years had been an hour-glass shape, a series of circles with the waist being the smallest circle. A life-long use of this corset beginning in childhood resulted in the distorting of ribcages and the moving of organs—the heart and lungs would move upward, the liver and stomach downward resulting in health complications. The purpose of the Health Corset was to straighten the front of the body to prevent the shifting of organs, lessen the pressure on the waist and diaphragm and improve lung capacity. This theory, although well intentioned resulted in the extreme distortion of the spine. The corset sat just above the bust-line causing

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<sup>20</sup> Kitch, 5.

<sup>21</sup> Beatrice Fontanel, *Support and Seduction: The History of Corsets and Bras* (New York: Abradale Press, 1992),79.

the breasts to be pushed upward; the front was boned heavily to keep it straight and ended at the top of the pelvic bone. Petals or petal shaped inserts were placed in the sides and backs to accentuate the curvature of the hips and cause the bottom to be pushed back creating an S-shape to the body.

The rest of a woman's ensemble was designed to accentuate this shape. The front of the blouse was light weight and added fullness to the bosom and came in at the waist. The skirt was fitted over the waist and hips then belled out towards the train. The waists were as small as possible to capture the allure of a woman's body, although for day wear women were often covered from neck to ankle. Hands would always be covered whilst outside of the home and a hat always worn. The hat, too, was an important accessory for a lady. She would consider the hat an extension of self, elaborately decorated with plumes and ribbon. Throughout the decade, hats became wider and more extravagant, sometimes having entire birds perched upon the brim atop a pile of hair.

The hair of a Gibson Girl is essential. Having short hair was not acceptable at this time and ideally it would be long and thick, able to support itself wholly. The norm was to have the hair ballooned away from the face and back into a large bun. The hair was wrapped around "rats" which were clumps of a lady's own hair from her brush and possibly wool the same color of her hair. Keeping current with styles and trends became increasingly important to the "new woman" of the twentieth century. Although she was more concerned with freedom, she was also very conscious of her appearance. Consequently, there became a higher demand for production of new garments and regional companies emerged attempting to meet this demand.

## CHAPTER 3

### CARRIE'S HOUSE

Carrie Burnam Taylor was one of these industrious women who emerged from this period. She rose from humble beginnings to become one of Bowling Green's most successful female entrepreneurs of the twentieth century. By her death her business was worth \$250,000<sup>22</sup> or approximately \$4.2 million today. She embodied and catered to the new woman of this period. Taylor was successful and proactive; she also managed to overcome numerous challenges such as gender discrimination, economic and geographical limitations in addition to also being a wife and mother.

Taylor was born in 1855, the daughter of a confederate officer. She attended Cedar Bluff College in Woodburn, Kentucky. After her graduation in 1877, she moved back to Bowling Green and began a small dress making business out of her family home. She found work by making all sorts of garments: dresses, blouses, suit dresses, petticoats and wedding dresses. She found her niche providing uniforms for students at Potter College for Young Ladies.<sup>23</sup> Expanding her business quickly, Taylor was able to move into a dedicated building at 824 and 826 State Street (1902)<sup>24</sup> in the heart of downtown Bowling Green. She named her business the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company.

The new headquarters would act as the model for others that followed Taylor. The operation was highly impressive. From the moment that a clientele opened the double doors they would be welcomed in the reception area where they could browse fabric samples and

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<sup>22</sup> Janice Faye Walker Centers, *"A Kentucky Dressmaker, Mrs. A.H. (Carrie) Taylor: An Examination of her Role in Fashion at the Turn of the Century"* (M.S. diss., Western Kentucky University, 1977), 25.

<sup>23</sup> Centers, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Centers, 24.

consult with the designer. Taylor designed all of the dresses that were produced at the company until business grew so quickly that she occasionally hired free-lance designers.

Taylor took great care in her work. She went to great lengths to make sure her designs were in vogue. She traveled to Europe every two to three years to survey the latest fashion and purchase fabric from the top distributors.<sup>25</sup> Some clientele chose to bring in their own fabric and, while allowed, this was not a favorable option for Taylor. She was renowned for her particular attitude toward her work, employees, and her clientele. Although she was not always recalled as a particularly pleasant employer, she was pioneering the new and difficult terrain as a female business owner.

Efficiency was of course key to the operation of a business. Carrie was, of course, popular in Bowling Green and the surrounding area as a dress maker and as one of the largest and most well-respected companies in the area. The Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company began by catering to Potter College clientele and quickly gained popularity with the most affluent families and those families fostered a relationship with her and continue to patronize the company until its closing. Popularity grew in large part due to the quadrennial publication of *Styles and Thegistofit* (1904)<sup>26</sup>, harnessing the recent innovations in the production and distribution of printed materials. This utilization of printed materials increased the mail-order clientele and by 1914 she had 24,000 customers reaching far across the region.<sup>27</sup> To supply this enormous clientele, Taylor employed a very particular work force based on a European model of specialization. Each worker was specialized in their respective tasks and their work was heavily monitored and regimented. The layout of the work room was arranged for maximum efficiency.

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<sup>25</sup> Centers, 30.

<sup>26</sup> Centers, 24.

<sup>27</sup> Centers, 34.

The first floor was the primary work area. Like theatrical costume shops today, there were tables dedicated to specific functions: cutting, prepping, etc. Any dying was done in the alley adjacent to the building. Dying involves high levels of heat and chemicals that in an unventilated area can cause health problems, so this was taken under consideration and done outside. The primary sewing stations were in the middle of the room with as many as sixteen table machines facing each other.<sup>28</sup> Senior stitchers would get first priority when selecting a machine and those machines were used exclusively by one person. These machines can still be found around Bowling Green as family heirlooms. There was a stove in the corner to provide heat and hot water for various uses. Supplies for the workers such as scissors, pins, and needles were provided by Taylor.

The second floor was only half the size of the first containing the fitting room, a button making machine, and a landing from which Taylor would oversee the workers.<sup>29</sup> Taylor was an imposing woman and it took a lot of gusto to run a business so she also provided herself with a luxurious office. The office was described by a worker to be a bright and sunny room with a day bed and a desk. Numerous pictures decorated the walls and tables, a luxury that her employees were never given. The employees were not afforded the privilege of having personal items at their work stations; likewise, the walls were undecorated.

The employees were very specialized in their tasks and were dependant on a hierarchal system. Mr. Taylor was the floor manager, proving a reliable source of reference for his wife, and their son was the accountant. She provided work for others around the community by having partnerships with merchants around town for particular dying and

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<sup>28</sup> Centers, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Centers, 31.



millinery assistance. Taylor herself employed primarily unmarried women which helped them support their families although she was also partial to hiring married women who needed to be the primary income in their homes. The fact she did primarily employ these women is a testament to the cooperation she must have felt with the women in her community and the increasing camaraderie between working class females banding together during this period right before women's suffrage was granted. School-aged girls were also recruited as errand girls but Taylor was highly selective, employing only girls who showed promise. They would be in charge of deliveries and shopping for food around town for employees and came in before and after school and on Saturdays. Taylor was very much in favor of helping the community and building relationships within it. There was a comradeship, not only between Taylor and her employees, but among the workers themselves.

Supervisors were designated to each work table and they were not allowed to fraternize with employees so they could maintain an exclusively business relationship. Clerks were designated to the reception area and were in charge of catering to the customers. Fitters did just that, were in charge of fitting clients into their garments and taking accurate measurements of new clients. Dyers were only allowed to work on dyeing projects, absolutely no sewing was to be done, and they dyed linings and trim to match fabrics over an open fire. The Sample and Fashion Department was in charge of mail-orders, delivery and receiving fabrics, and sending out the publicity materials.

Taylor was generally known as a friendly, sweet, pleasant woman, although she was also known to have a temper. She was prized for her work ethic, so she held her employees up to the same standard of work and accepted no less. Her husband was known for being her foil in these flare ups and was always able to settle her down and play the role of buffer

between her and the employees. When she was not in, employees noted that there would be teasing, talking and pranks among the staff, something that would not be able to happen under her watchful eye. Despite her mercurial temper she was known to provide wedding dresses, at cost, to young brides whose mothers were friends and had died.

At the height of her business, Taylor employed three hundred people ten hours per day, six days per week. The work day began at a very strict 6:55 AM and lasted until 5:00 PM<sup>30</sup>, with a half an hour lunch at noon, Monday thru Saturday which equated to a sixty hour work week. Pay varied from \$1.25 to \$15 per week; with \$5.78 being the average wage within the company (\$5.95 was average Kentucky woman's working wage at this point)<sup>31</sup>. The employees were given one month off during the year, although it is unclear whether this was paid or unpaid. Taylor did give her employees bonuses at Christmas and held an elaborate party including Secret Santa.

The process of the Mrs. A. H. Taylor Company was rigidly adhered to. First, the client would be taken into the fitting room and measured (or the measurements would be sent in through the mail.) An employee would pad the form to the customer's measurements. The pattern would be draped from the form and then the stitchers would construct the mock-up. The mock-up would then be fit on the customer, or in case of a mail order it would be refit on the form, or even be fit on an employee of a similar size and shape. Changes to the pattern were made based on the first fitting; they would then build the garment out of the actual fabric, followed by a final fitting. There was an average of three fittings for one built garment. Finishing would be applied, trims, bias, facings, etc. This

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<sup>30</sup> Centers, 27.

<sup>31</sup> Centers, 30.

process would normally take about three weeks, but rush orders could be accomplished in one week.

The demise of the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company began with the advent of World War I. Taylor received a government commission to make men's pants for the war effort and just as the process was underway, Taylor died.<sup>32</sup> Upon her death in 1917, the company was worth a quarter of a million dollars. After her death, her husband took over but shortly after, in 1920, their son died. Devastated by these events, Mr. Taylor had difficulties maintaining the business on his own especially with the advent of the ready- to-wear dress of the 1920s. Mass quantities of simpler garments could be made and the craftsmanship and tailoring that was necessary for the previous silhouette was no longer necessary. Mass production was easier, faster, and cheaper and businesses like the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company could no longer survive.

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<sup>32</sup> Centers, 25.

Figure 1

	<p>Carrie (Burnam) Taylor, est. date 1882-92, SC 2206; Kentucky Library &amp; Museum.</p>		<p>Carrie (Burnam) Taylor, est. date 1882-92, SC 2206; Kentucky Library &amp; Museum.</p>
	<p>Mrs. A. H. Taylor's Periodical <i>Styles &amp; The Gistofit</i> Centers, 51.</p>		<p>Work room at the A. H. Taylor Company 2010.198.38; Kentucky Library &amp; Museum</p>

## CHAPTER 4

### MUSEUM RESEARCH

The following is a compilation of research done at the Kentucky Museum in the spring and fall semesters of 2010. The layout of the compiled research is based on the format of *Costume in Detail* by Nancy Bradfield. In order to better record some of the trims and finishings I observed I have included pictures as well as verbal descriptions as much as possible. Most were constructed by the Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company; however, one was constructed by the Sumpter Sisters (Lillie and Mattie), who were initially Carrie's employees and later her competition in the Bowling Green area for some time.

Figure 2

Bridesmaid's Dress- Sumpter Sisters, ca. 1906 (Kentucky Museum 4113)

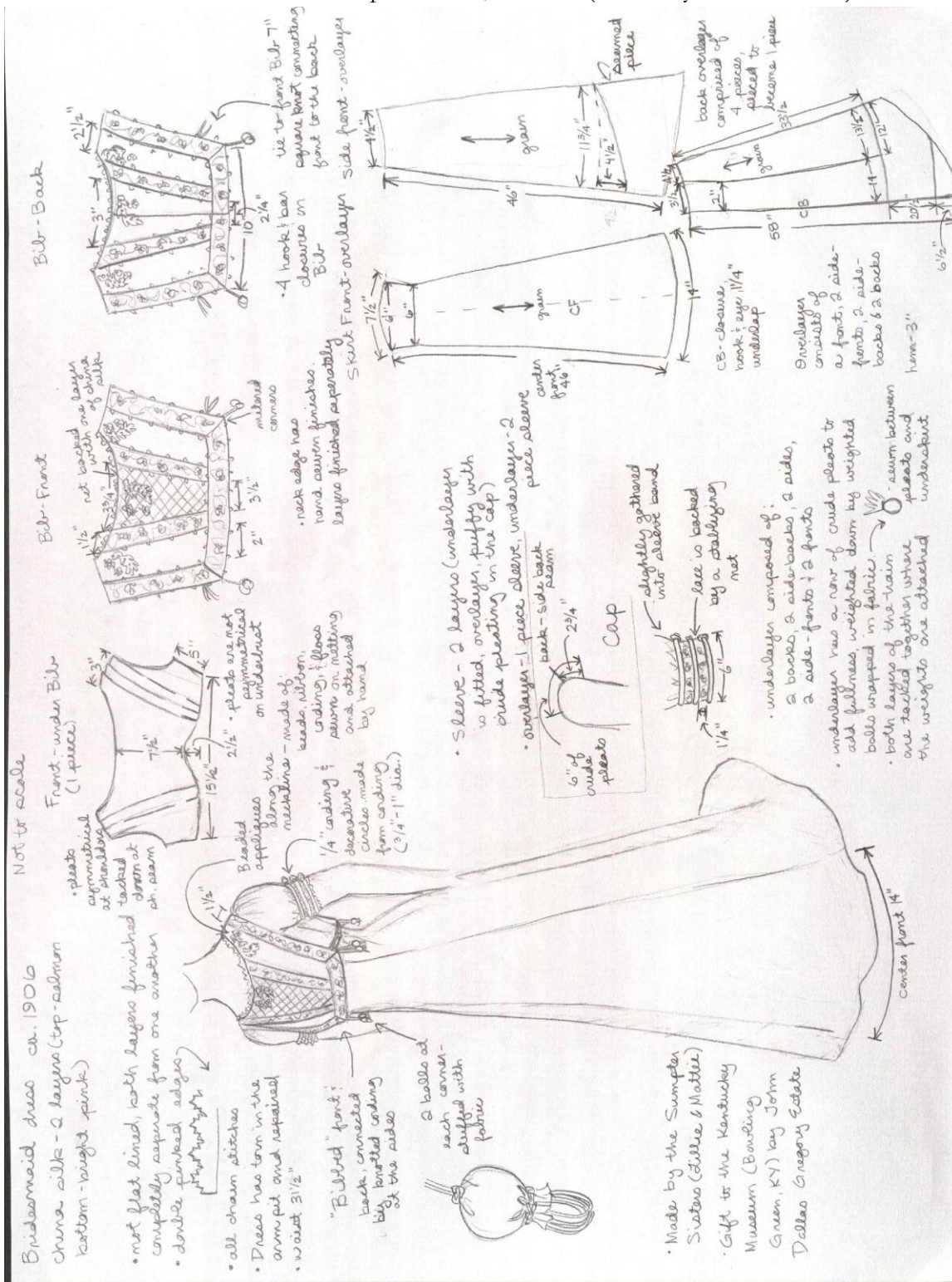


Figure 3

	<p>back of the dress laying flat</p>		<p>detail of the back of the dress</p>
	<p>detail of sleeve</p>		<p>detail of the front underneath bib</p>

Figure 4

 <p>A close-up photograph of the interior of a garment, showing a pink fabric with a ruffled edge and a row of small, dark, rectangular closures or fasteners along the top edge.</p>	<p>detail of inside finishing closures seen</p>	 <p>A close-up photograph of a pink fabric showing a curved seam with a double-line stitching pattern.</p>	<p>detail of stitching work</p>
 <p>A close-up photograph of a pink fabric hem featuring a series of vertical pleats.</p>	<p>detail of pleating at the hem</p>	 <p>A close-up photograph of a sleeve cuff featuring a wide band of intricate, cream-colored lace with red floral patterns, bordered by pink piping.</p>	<p>detail of lace work and piping on the sleeve</p>



Figure 5

	 <p data-bbox="813 457 846 856">ribbon work and lace on the bib front</p>  <p data-bbox="1382 491 1414 827">tassels on the corners of the bib</p>
<p data-bbox="1382 1087 1414 1835">Bridesmaid's Dress- Sumpter Sisters, ca. 1906 (Kentucky Museum 4113)</p>	

Figure 6  
 Carrie Burnam Taylor- Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company, ca. 1906 (Kentucky Museum 4882)

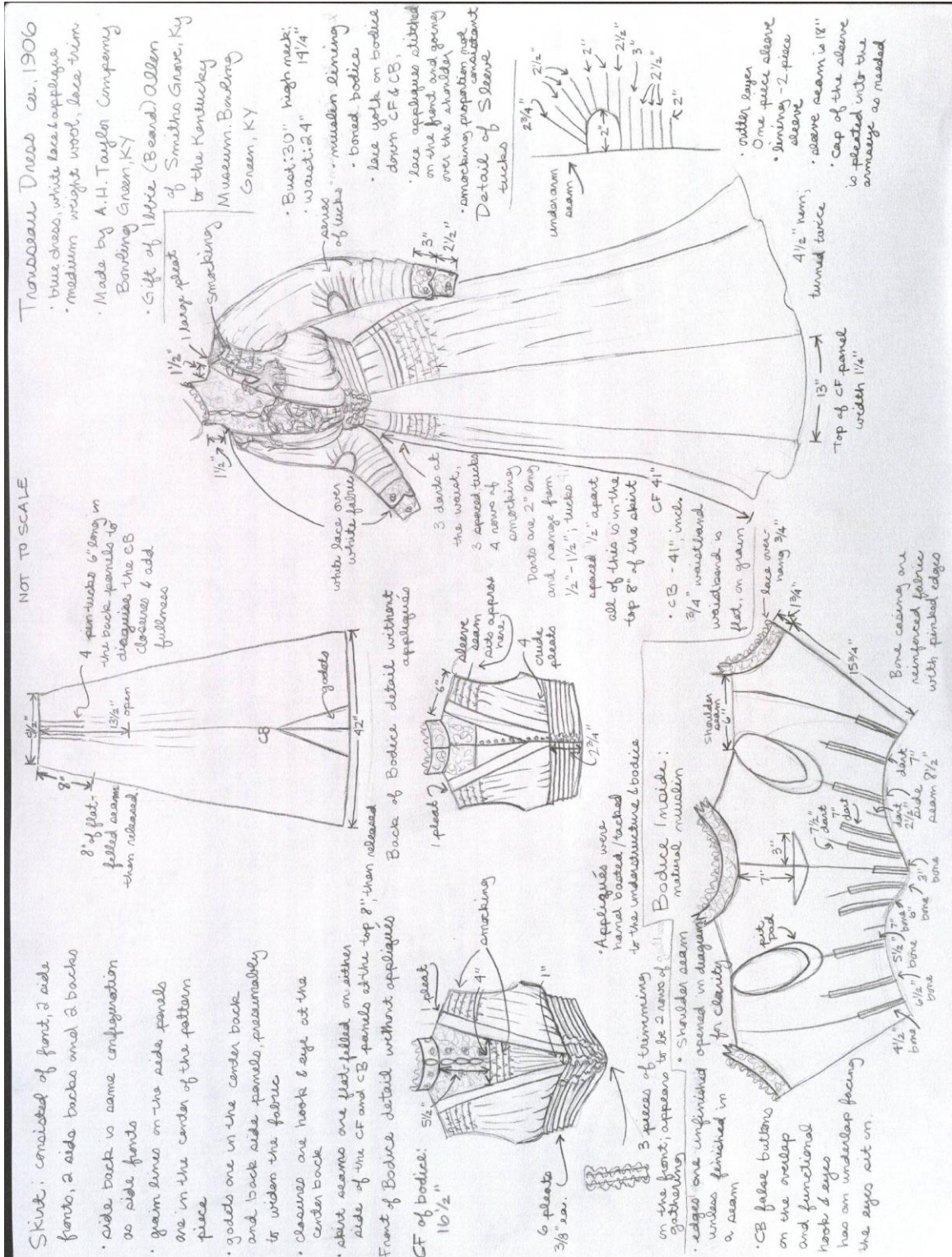


Figure 7

 <p>A photograph showing the front view of a blue bodice. The bodice features a gathered waistband and is adorned with intricate lace appliqué in shades of pink and purple. The lace is applied to the bodice, creating a decorative border around the waist and extending upwards.</p>	<p>front of the bodice</p>	 <p>A close-up photograph of the shirring detail on the bodice. The shirring is a gathered elastic waistband, and the lace appliqué is visible on the fabric above it.</p>	<p>detail of shirring on the back and front of the bodice</p>
 <p>A close-up photograph of the lace appliqué on the front of the bodice. The lace is a light beige color and features a large, intricate floral design with a central flower and surrounding leaves and smaller flowers.</p>	<p>appliquéd work on the front of the bodice</p>	 <p>A close-up photograph of the lace work on the center front of the bodice. The lace is a light beige color and features a repeating floral pattern with small flowers and leaves.</p>	<p>Lace work on the center front of bodice</p>



Figure 8

	<p>Entire back of the bodice</p>		<p>detail of back with one side opened</p>
	<p>detail of a bone casing from the inside</p>		<p>closures in the center back</p>

Figure 9

	<p>detail of the upper sleeve</p>		<p>detail of the lower sleeve lace work</p>
	<p>back of the skirt laid flat</p>		<p>detail of hip on skirt</p>

Figure 10

	 <p data-bbox="813 369 846 947">fabric piecing on the hem indicates original fabric width</p>  <p data-bbox="1377 527 1409 789">detail of sticking on skirt</p>
<p>Carrie Burnam Taylor- Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company, ca. 1906 (Kentucky Museum 4882)</p>	

**Figure 11**

Carrie Burnam Taylor- Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company, ca. 1903 (Kentucky Museum 4886)

	<p>front of the bodice</p>		<p>back of the bodice</p>
	<p>bodice closures (back)</p>		<p>detail of area between the lining and exterior fabric</p>

Figure 12

 <p>A photograph showing the interior of a blue fabric bodice. Several long, yellow, rectangular strips, identified as bone casings, are pinned across the bodice. The fabric appears to be a sturdy, slightly textured material.</p>	<p>inside the bodice including the bone casings</p>	 <p>A close-up photograph of the lace sleeve ends of a garment. The lace is a light beige or cream color with a complex, floral pattern. It is attached to a dark blue fabric sleeve.</p>	<p>detail of lace sleeve ends</p>
 <p>A photograph of the front of a light blue skirt. The skirt features a gathered waistband and a central panel with a vertical seam. The fabric has a subtle texture and some creasing.</p>	<p>front of the skirt</p>	 <p>A photograph of the back of a light blue skirt, showing the closure mechanism. The skirt has a gathered waistband and a central panel with a vertical seam. The fabric has a subtle texture and some creasing.</p>	<p>back closures</p>



Figure 13

	 <p data-bbox="797 499 824 814">detail of the inside of the skirt</p>  <p data-bbox="1349 548 1377 768">detail of the stitching</p>
<p data-bbox="1349 1094 1414 1829">Carrie Burnam Taylor- Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company, ca. 1903 (Kentucky Museum 4886)</p>	

Figure 14

Carrie Burnam Taylor - Mrs. A.H. Taylor Company; ca. 1905 (Kentucky Museum 1999.37.3)

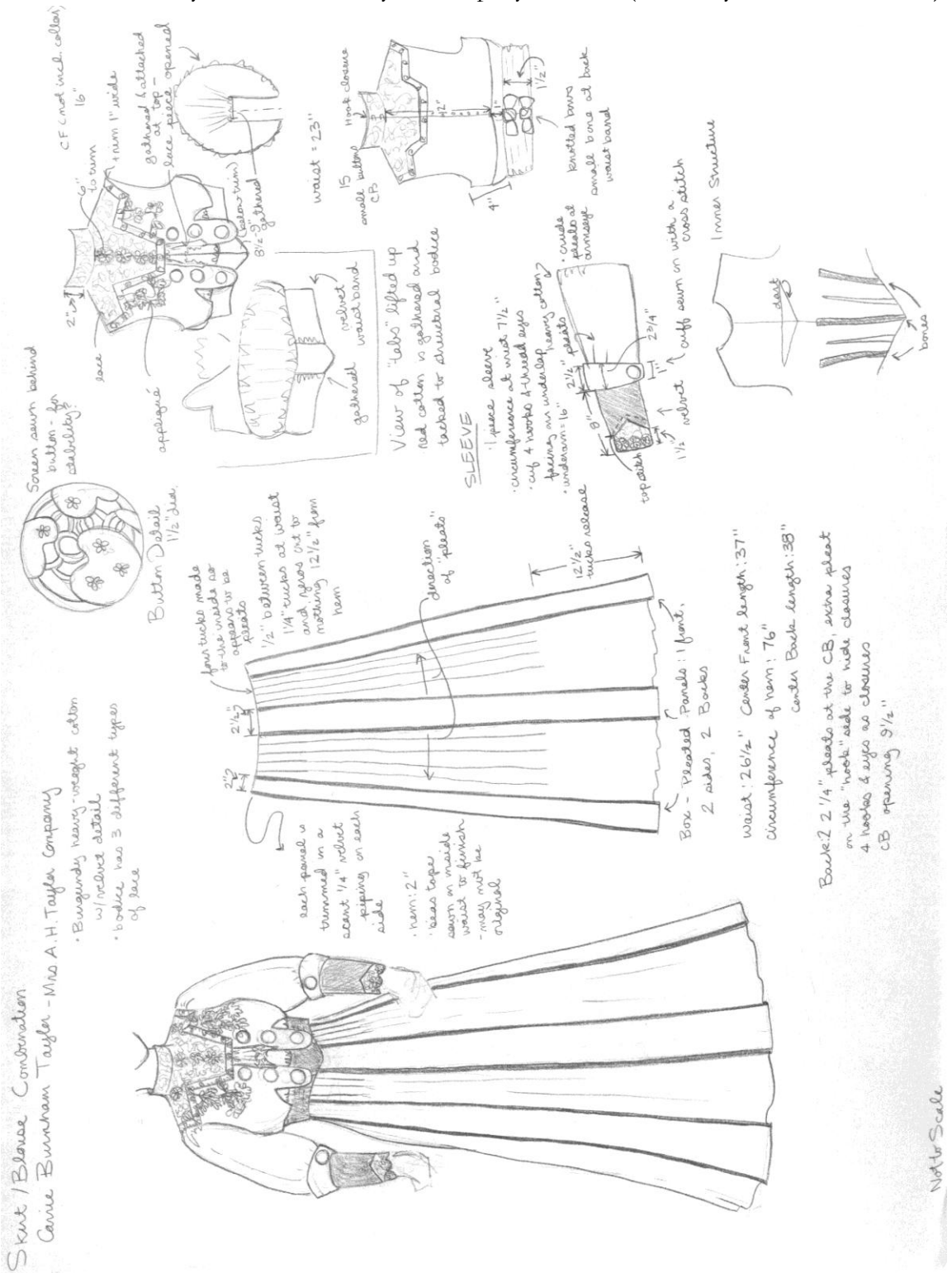


Figure 15

	<p>front of the bodice</p>		<p>lace work in the center front of the bodice</p>
	<p>detail of lace work on center front</p>		<p>detail of trim on the center front</p>

Figure 16



Figure 17



## CHAPTER 5

### CONSTRUCTED GARMENTS

This section begins the actual construction portion of my project. The format is such that I first name to the garment that I constructed followed by a basic definition of the garment, similar characteristics of the period, and a description of the characteristics I included in the construction. The research images follow the description along with finished photos of the piece.

#### BLOOMERS:

Bloomers are baggy knickers, worn under skirts, usually made out of white light weight cotton and sometimes silk (but this is less common) used to preserve modesty without hindering the wearer. They are fastened at the waist and can have an open or closed crotch seam. Historically, they would be either fully open or have button closures for added modesty. They first began to be worn under crinolines in the 1850s for modesty and for warmth and were most in vogue during the turn of the century until the mid 1910s; however, they were worn through the twenties and after. Lace and ribbon were also used to embellish these simply-shaped garments. Typical details on bloomers are lace insertion or trim, ribbon, and tucks. In my research, I have found both open and closed crotch seams as well as a variety of openings- side, back and fall front.

The pair of bloomers I have constructed are cylindrical bloomers, with pin tucking and lace insertion at the knee. The waist is gathered to the waistband and has fall front opening with shell buttons at both side seams. All the raw edges are enclosed as if this were a historical garment. I constructed the bloomers based on Folkwear pattern 203, with some slight modifications.



Constructed Garment

Figure 19





## CORSET:

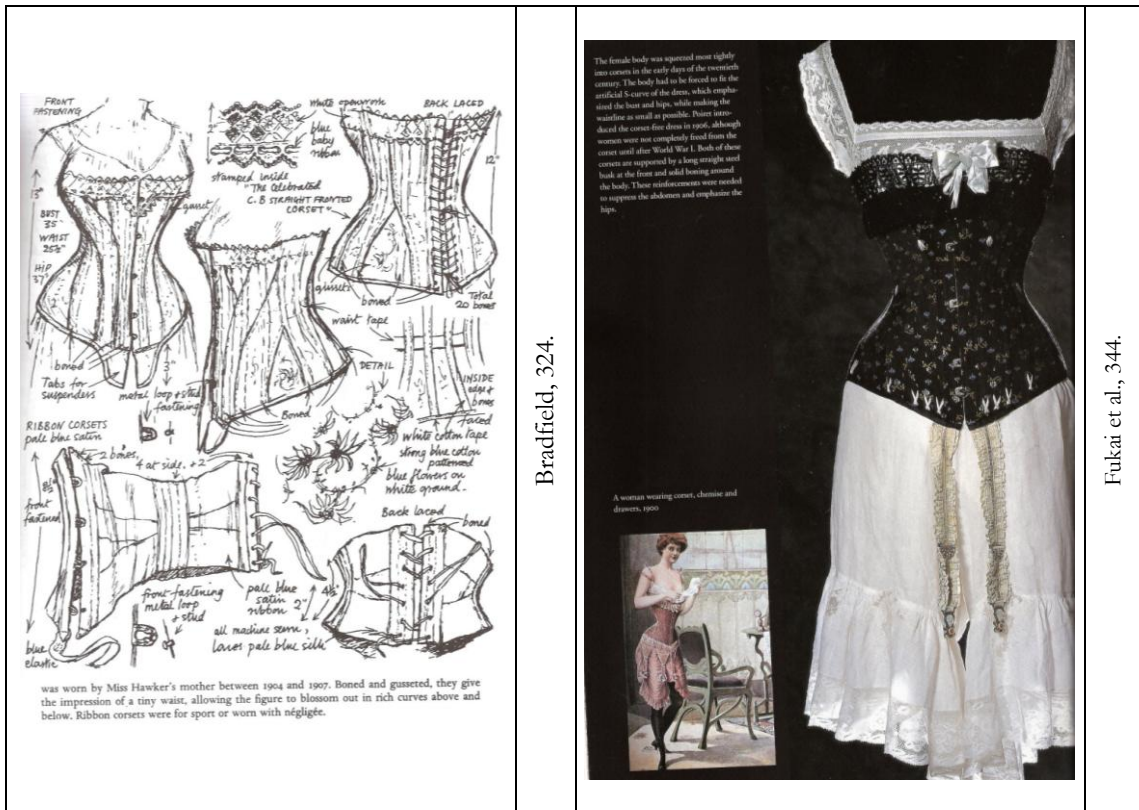
Corsets are foundation garments worn to mold the body into an aesthetically pleasing shape. The desired shape changes from time period to time period. They are laced closed to cinch and accentuate certain aspects of the body. They were worn by people from all walks of life and social classes, but primarily women. Children and men were also known to have worn corsets in different variations. The history of the corset is rumored to have begun in the mid-sixteenth century with the proclamation made by Catherine de Medici requiring a corset to be worn by all respectable women. The Corset's existence and its popularity continued until after WWI. At that point the war effort and the need for steel led to the demise of the corset. It continued in tubular fashion in the 1920s, but was not as popular at this time. By the 1930s they had been completely replaced by other, less restrictive foundation garments.

Many corsets are made of coutil or like fabric that isn't prone to stretching. It's often covered in a more decorative fabric and embellished with techniques such as embroidery, cording and lace. The decorative fabric can be any variety of colors and types but is a lighter weight than the coutil. Whale boning used to be used as a stiffener, but has since changed to steel spiral or straight boning. The corset that I made is from the turn of the twentieth century from about 1898-1908. This is a straight front corset (also known as a "Specialite", Health or an S-curve corset). The typical features seen in the research I've collected is a straight front with a busk at center front and lacing at the center back. The top of the corset sits at the apex and the bottom goes over the hips to the top of the pelvic bone. The petals at the hips accentuate the cinched waist and make the hips appear bigger. Embellishments

are around the top of the corset and/or along the busk. Suspend tabs are also consistent in my research which sit at center front and the back so garters can be attached to stockings.

The techniques required to make a corset: grommet, boning, inserting a busk, etc. The corset is a double-layer corset with a decorative fabric on the right side. I have done some decorative techniques such as finishing the top and bottom of the corset with cording, and feather stitching at the top and bottom of the bones to secure them and adding lace. I used and adapted a pattern from *Corsets and Crinolines* (p. 84) to fit my model.

Figure 20



Bradfield, 324.

Fukzai et al., 344.

Figure 21

 <p>43 Black coutil straight-fronted corset. The complicated boning of the front has not been given in the pattern but can be seen in the sketch of the corset. The two tabs at the bottom of the front busks are for suspenders (c. 1901)</p> <p>84</p>	<p>Norah Waugh, <i>Corsets and Crinolines</i> (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1970), 84.</p>		<p>Waugh, 85.</p>
 <p>FIG. 97. SILK TRICOT CORSET. LONDON CORSET CO., 1904</p>	<p>C. Willett and Phillis Cunningham, <i>The History of Underclothes</i> (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1992), 213.</p>	 <p>is small is from: c. 1870-80.</p> <p>head part on at top.</p>	<p>Fukai et al., 345.</p>

Figure 22  
Finished Garment



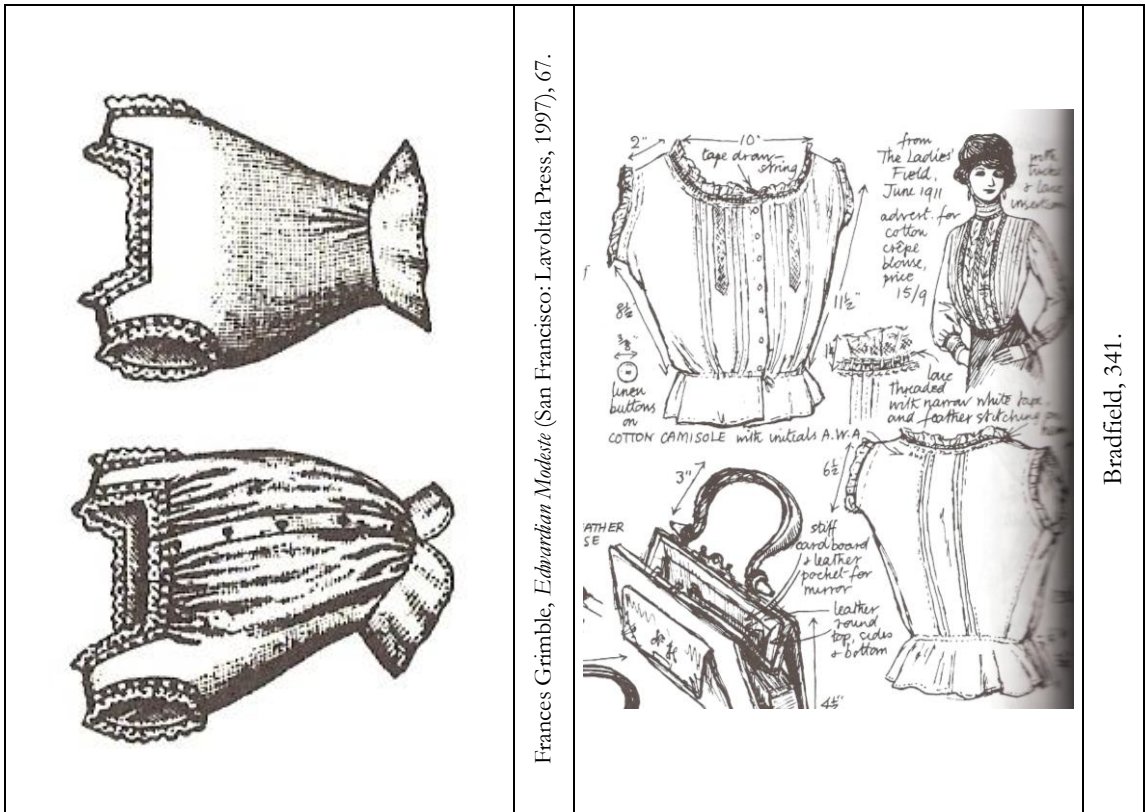
## CAMISOLE:

Camisoles are under-bodices that end at the waist which acts as a barrier between the skin and the corset. The camisole was primarily worn in the 1870-1920s but it's still worn today in a slightly different form. They are characterized by a lowered neckline, and little (cap) or no sleeves. Underpinnings that were worn under the corset were commonly worn by all women to collect excess moisture so washing of the corset was prevented (so it wouldn't rust). But, the use of the shortened camisole became more popular in the mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to the camisole, the corset cover was worn over the corset to prevent damage to the over garment from rubbing against the corset and to smooth lines and ridges made by the corset.

Camisoles are made of lightweight cotton or silk. *The History of Underclothes* states that toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (when camisoles were most popular) camisoles became thinner and thinner. Lace and ribbon trims were very common. Ribbon drawstrings were popular because they allow easy adjustability and are soft against the skin (as opposed to a cord which might cause discomfort under the corset).

Typical features in my research are no sleeves, front buttoned closure, drawstring or ribboned lace trim at the neck line, fitted waist, and most contain a variation on tucks. I have made a camisole that is from turn of the century from a Folkwear pattern 203. It has a front button closure, trim at the neckline and armseye, and graded tucking and lace insertion above the bust. The design includes a drawstring at the waist with a peplum under and a ribboned trim at the neckline.

Figure 23





Willett and Cunningham , 210.

Grimble, 167.

Figure 24

## Finished Garment





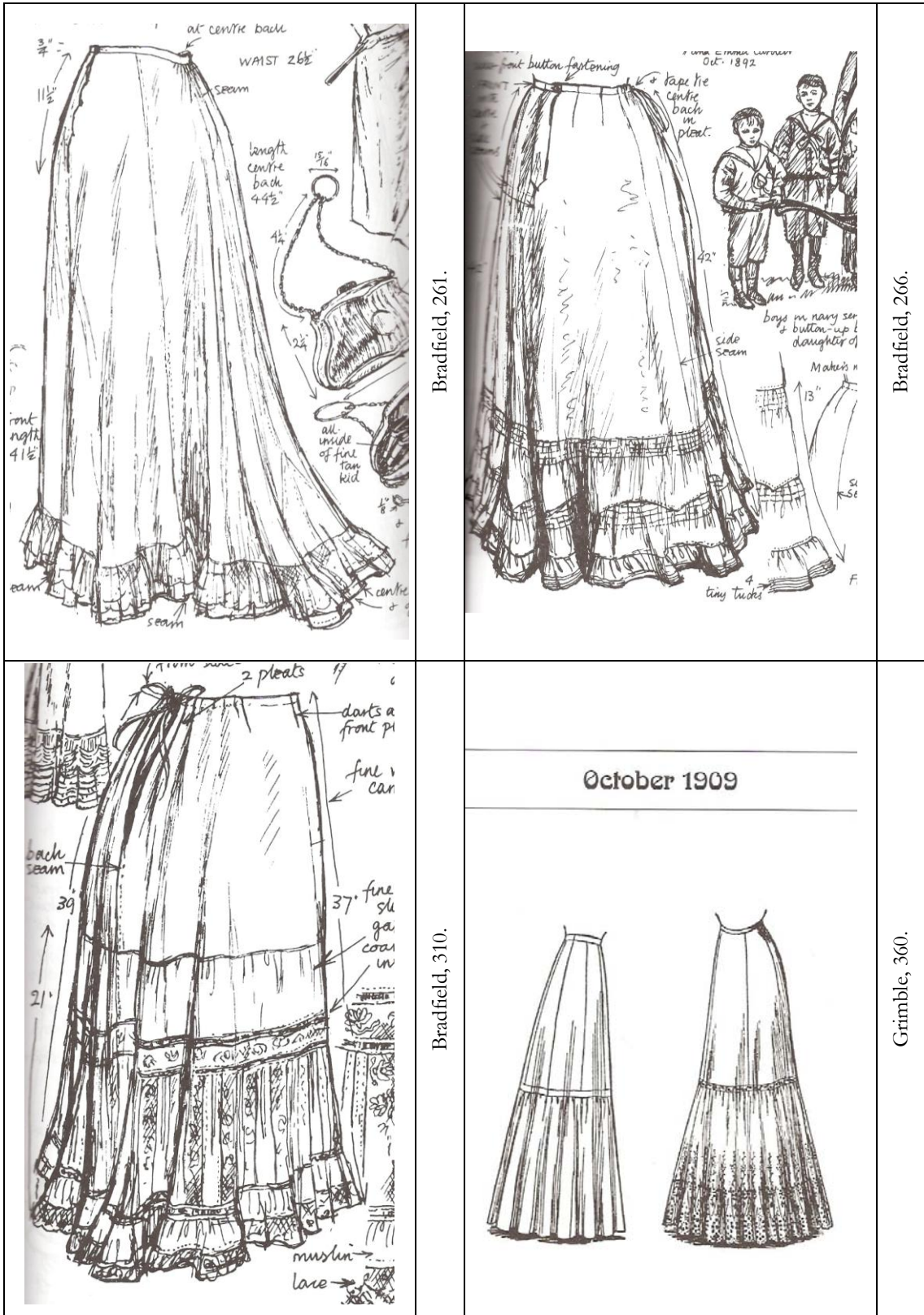
## PETTICOAT:

A petticoat traditionally is used to describe an underskirt attached at the waist, which extends at least below the knee and adds fullness to a silhouette. It was used as a barrier against the cold, to soften the shape of the understructures (hoops, bustles, etc.) and to add desired volume to the shape of an over-garment. Originally, only the wealthy could afford this extraneous use of fabric, although as time passed it became more and more affordable for the everyday woman. Once everyone achieved this “high” level of fashion it was not uncommon to layer petticoats to create more exaggerated silhouettes, and it was also a way to display wealth.

Petticoats originated in the sixteenth century and were used in various forms until the early twentieth century. Colors were generally neutrals, although some were in bright colors to accentuate the colors of the dresses/skirts. Fabrics they were constructed out of include silk and more often cottons and linen. Typical features in all of my research from the period in which I am focused have a fitted waist band and gored panels fitted over the hips and flared at the skirt bottom. They also have additional fullness in the bottom of the skirt including pleats or gathered panels. The petticoat that I created falls within the style that existed from 1895-1909.

To construct the petticoat I adapted a pattern from *Period Costume for Stage and Screen* (pg. 158). All of the vertical seams are finished with a flat-felled seam to ensure maximum durability. A panel of inverted box pleats was added at the bottom to add fullness and ribbon trim for decoration. The placket opens at the back and closes with shell buttons.

Figure 25



Bradfield, 261.

Bradfield, 266.

Bradfield, 310.

Grimble, 360.

October 1909

Figure 26  
Finished Garment



## Dress Construction

The dress I constructed is a compilation of different elements that I gathered from the dresses that I observed from the Kentucky Museum and elements from Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion 2*. Many of the details that I choose to include in the construction of the dress were seen in several of the garments. Tucks were a very dominant feature as well as shirring. Both were consistently present in much of my research. Most of the garments I examined are shirtwaists or bodice and skirt combinations that were meant to be an outfit.

There is a consistent juxtaposition of male and female characteristics in dress for women of this period, mixing the suit-like feel of the shirtwaist with the light weight of the fabrics. I knew that in order to achieve the look of the period I had to pick appropriate fabrics that would evoke the essence of the time. I chose a crepe de chine for the mock blouse and a wool gabardine for the rest of the suit. They are both light weight and drape nicely the way I was envisioning. The color was chosen based more on my aesthetic more than anything; I didn't want the outfit to be dreary especially with the underpinnings being so cheerful. The mauve complements my model's hair and skin tone nicely and paired with the white is on a happier note than it would have been on its own.

The pattern pieces are based on schematics from Arnold's book. I was able to modify them in such a way to construct a dress that was challenging and unique. I made sure that the finishing techniques that I utilized were appropriate to the technology and the time in which it would have been produced. I used techniques that encased most of my raw edges so that it would be less prone to shredding with continual use. The inside is completely finished with a shaping understructure that serves as a lining as well. I used shell buttons on all of the garments I constructed not only for aesthetic purposes but it also would have been a

material that would have been used for buttons during the period. Keeping in mind all of the data I collected from garments in the museum I was able to construct a garment that is consistent with period construction. This would have been a garment that an upper middle class woman would have worn as a day dress. A financially stable woman like this would have been able to afford embellished underpinnings such as these as well as fine quality wool. The S-shaped corset was not conducive to a working class lifestyle, so this woman would not have had to work outside the home. The mere fact that the skirt and petticoat have a train would be indicative that she would not be very physically active. The following is my sketch of the dress I originally designed followed by pictures of the finished garment.

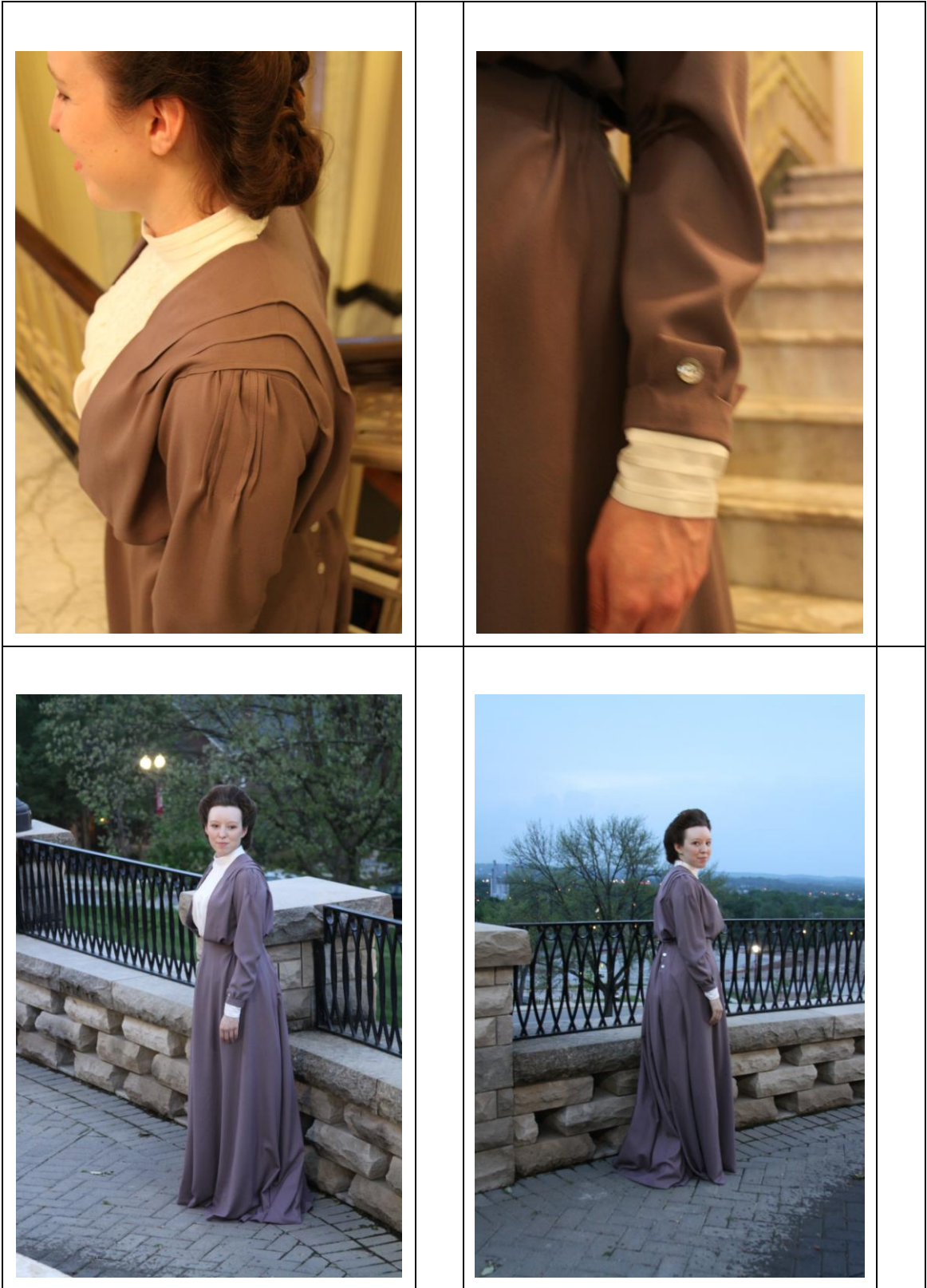
Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29





## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

As challenging as this project was I feel as if I have accomplished what I set out to do- make beautiful garments, but more than that I was able to reflect on the meaning of these garments. In theatre, you cannot accomplish a well thought out design without first considering the source. This is one of the key factors in design, so I was essentially doing hands-on research to facilitate that process. I was able to observe the clothing that Carrie Burnam Taylor created a century ago and preserve the information that it holds. It's invigorating to learn about a woman who was essentially one of the first feminists in the Bowling Green area who embodied the spirit of change and progress during her lifetime. I am very fortunate to see the products of her work in the garments I observed, and given the deteriorating state of some of the fabric, I'm incredibly happy that I was able to see it before it was lost. If they don't last for much longer, I will at least have recorded some of the detailed information for future observation. More than that, I am able to appreciate what life was like for a woman from the dawn of the twentieth century in all aspects of her life and not just what she wore.

From this project, I have learned what is and what is not important to me with regard to my career. When I came to Western I had originally intended on becoming a costume curator and historian. And I although I do love reading and discussing history, I have discovered where my true passion stands and that is theatre. This project was a learning experience. I was able to extend beyond my comfort zone and in the process make some amazing discoveries about historical garments, costume construction and understand the life and times of a turn of the century lady.

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