

A BRIEF
HISTORY
OF DRESS
REFORM

IN THE SDA CHURCH



THE AMERICAN COSTUME

A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

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a) Correct the prevailing ills of fashion

- i. Prevailing fashion of 1850s and 1860s included corsets, dragging skirts, and hoops. These dresses were unhealthful and impractical.



A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. “During the middle and late Victorian period, various reformers proposed, designed, and wore clothing supposedly more rational and comfortable than the fashions of the time. This was known as the dress reform or rational dress movement.”



A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

iii. “In 1851 a New England temperance activist named Elizabeth Smith Miller adopted what she considered a more rational costume: loose trousers gathered at the ankles, like the trousers worn by Middle Eastern and Central Asia women, topped by a short dress or skirt and vest. She displayed her new clothing to temperance activist and suffragette Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who found it sensible and becoming, and adopted it immediately. In this garb she visited yet another activist, Amelia Bloomer, the editor of the temperance magazine “The Lily.”

A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

b) Play a part in the women's liberation movement.

- i. "Dress reform was seen as essential in liberating women from the functional constraints imposed on their activities by conventions reinforcing a male dominated society. "Bloomers" were worn by leaders of the women's rights movement as an act of rebellion until the amount of attention the protest received in the popular press became a distraction from the movement."

A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. “In May 1851 Amelia Bloomer introduced Susan B. Anthony, a spiritualist, to Elizabeth Cady Stanton as depicted in these life-sized bronze figures. These ladies were all women's rights advocates.



A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

iii. “Women who wore the fashion were promptly dubbed “Bloomers.” The Bloomers put up a valiant fight for a few years, but were subjected to ridicule in the press and harassment on the street.”



A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

c) Encourage more masculine attire.

- i. When the first ladies put on the "*short*" dress over their bloomers, the dresses came approximately to the knee. Within a short while, the dresses got shorter, until finally some were about half way from the hips to the knee.

A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. **Mary Tillotson**, spiritualist, charter member of the National Dress Reform Association; c. 1866-1870. She first adopted a *short* dress [American Costume] in 1842, then shortened it 12 inches when she heard about Amelia Bloomer.



A) THE ADVENT OF THE AMERICAN COSTUME

iii. **Dr. Mary Walker** started out wearing the regular American Costume, but became increasingly masculine in her attire. She was proud that she was arrested several times for ‘impersonating a man’ – she had taken to fully wearing men's clothing, from the top hat, wing collar and bow tie to the pants and shoes.



B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

a) Too much like the dress of men.

- i. “I saw that God's order has been reversed, and His special directions disregarded, by those who adopt the American costume. I was referred to Deuteronomy 22:5... There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. 'In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety.'” 1 Timothy 2:9. (1T 457)

B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. “God designed that there should be a plain distinction between the dress of men and women, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion and great increase of crime.” (1T 460)



B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

iii. "We shall never imitate
Miss Dr. Austin or Mrs. Dr.
York. They dress very much
like men." (5MR 380)



B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

b) Associated with Spiritualists.

- i. “Spiritualists have, to quite an extent, adopted this singular mode of dress. Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in the restoration of the gifts, are often branded as spiritualists. Let them adopt this costume, and their influence is dead. The people would place them on a level with spiritualists and would refuse to listen to them.” (1T 457)

B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. “We are well aware that some of those who espoused the cause of Spiritualism, over the moral worth of whom a shade of uncertainty has been cast, by the extravagances and immoralities among them, have adopted the short dress, and that their zeal in so doing, under the peculiar circumstances, could but disgust the people against anything of the kind.” (HR, August 1, 1868)

B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

c) Influences One's Attitude.

- i. “Those who feel called out to join the movement in favor of woman's rights and the so-called dress reform might as well sever all connection with the third angel's message. The spirit which attends the one cannot be in harmony with the other.” (1T 457)



B) THE PROBLEMS WITH THE AMERICAN COSTUME

- ii. "With the so-called dress reform there goes a spirit of levity and boldness just in keeping with the dress. Modesty and reserve seem to depart from many as they adopt that style of dress." (1T 457)

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

a) The Adventist Alternative -
The Reform Dress.

- i. "God would now have His people adopt the reform dress [SDA Reform Dress], not only to distinguish them from the world as His "peculiar people," but because a reform in dress is essential to physical and mental health." (1T 524)



C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. Very little of the pants-like undergarment was visible, so that the dress was the main feature, not the pants. Its advantage over the prevailing fashion of the very long dress is that it didn't drag in the dirt, it was looser at the waist, hanging from the shoulders, and it was plain. Thus, it was in full harmony with the 4 basic principles of dress reform that Ellen White advocated: Modesty, Simplicity, Femininity and Healthfulness.

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

b) The Alternative Rejected and Removed.

i. "The Lord has not moved upon any of our sisters [after 1881] to adopt the [SDA] reform dress. The difficulties that we once had to meet are not to be brought in again. There was so much resistance among our own people that it was removed from them. It would then have proved a blessing." (5MR 405) 1885

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

- ii. "As our sisters would not generally accept the SDA Reform Dress as it should be worn, another, less objectionable style is now presented. It is free from needless trimmings, free from the looped-up, tied back overskirts. It consists of a plain sack or loose-fitting basque, [bodice] and skirt, the latter short enough to avoid the mud and filth of the streets. The material should be free from large plaids and figures, and plain in color. The same attention should be given to the clothing of the limbs as with the short dress [SDA Reform Dress]." (4T 640)

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

c) The Principles That Remain.

- i. “The dress of our people should be made most simple.... Some have supposed that the very pattern given was the pattern that all were to adopt. This is not so. But something as simple as this would be the best we could adopt under the circumstances. No one precise style has been given me as the exact rule to guide all in their dress.” (3SM 254)

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

ii. “But three companies of females passed before me, with their dresses as follows with respect to length: The first were of fashionable length, burdening the limbs, impeding the step, and sweeping the street and gathering its filth; the evil results of which I have fully stated. This class, who were slaves to fashion, appeared feeble and languid.



Mode Artistique

1888: 3

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

“The dress of the second class which passed before me was in many respects as it should be. The limbs were well clad. They were free from the burdens which the tyrant, Fashion, had imposed upon the first class; but had gone to that extreme in the short dress as to disgust and prejudice good people, and destroy in a great measure their own influence. This is the style and influence of the "American Costume," taught and worn by many at "Our Home," Dansville, N.Y. It does not reach to the knee. I need not say that this style of dress was shown me to be too short.”

C) THE SOLUTION FOR AMERICAN COSTUME

“A third class passed before me with cheerful countenances, and free, elastic step. Their dress was the length I have described as proper, modest, and healthful. It cleared the filth of the street and sidewalk a few inches under all circumstances, such as ascending and descending steps, et cetera.” (3SM 278)



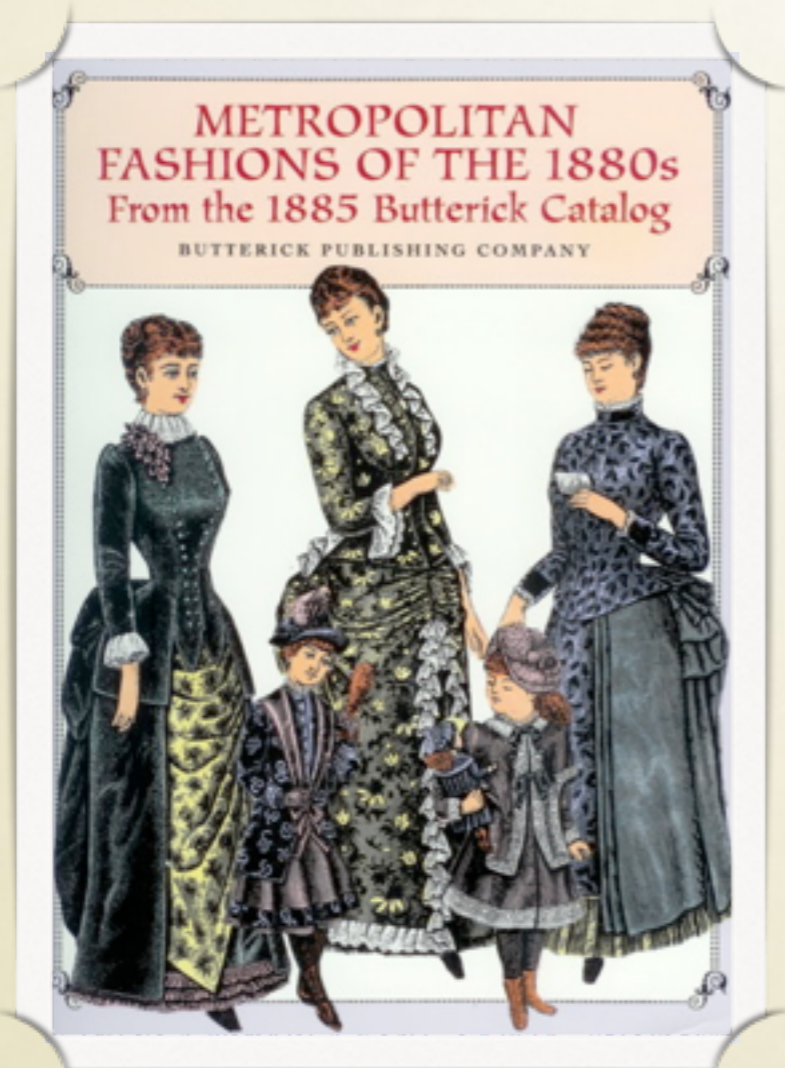
**FROM THEN TO
NOW**

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY

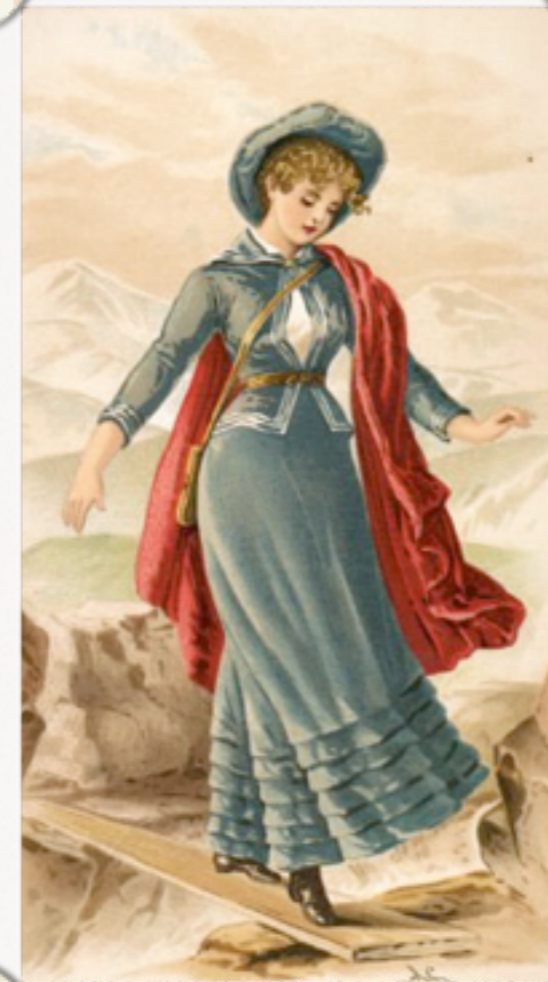
1870s



THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1880s



1890s

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1900s



1910s

“In the one-piece dresses now in vogue the weight is borne from the shoulders, and the hips are relieved by reducing the skirts in weight, length, and number. The skirt no longer trails upon the street. The women who, for conscientious reasons, refused to squeeze their waists, and in consequence suffered the scorn of their sex, now find themselves on the fashionable side. A thirty two-inch waist is regarded as permissible, where formerly a twenty-inch waist was thought proper. A fashionably gowned woman of the present day can stoop to pick up a pin at her feet.”--New York Independent, Oct. 23, 1913

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1920s



1930s

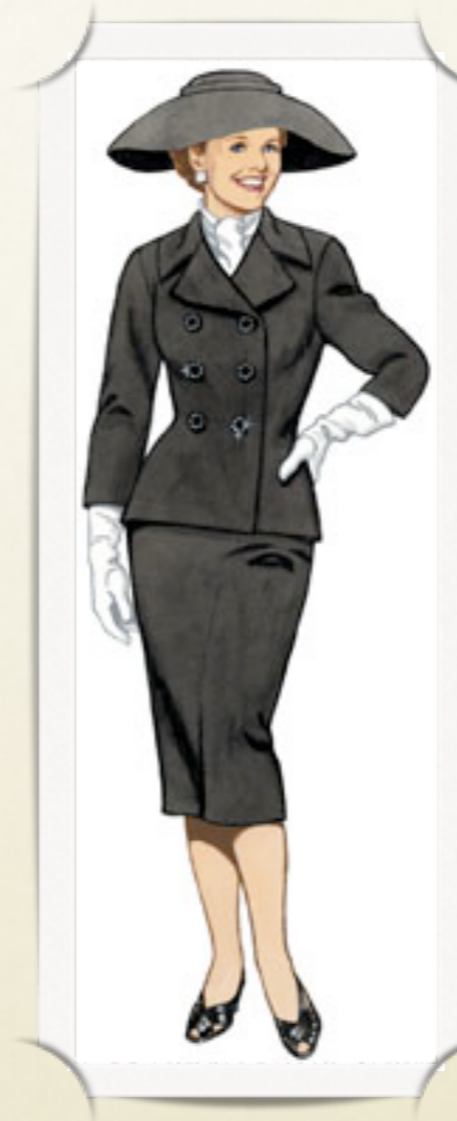
"If the world introduce a modest, convenient, and healthful mode of dress, which is in accord with the Bible, it will not change our relation to God or to the world to adopt such a style of dress."

CG 414

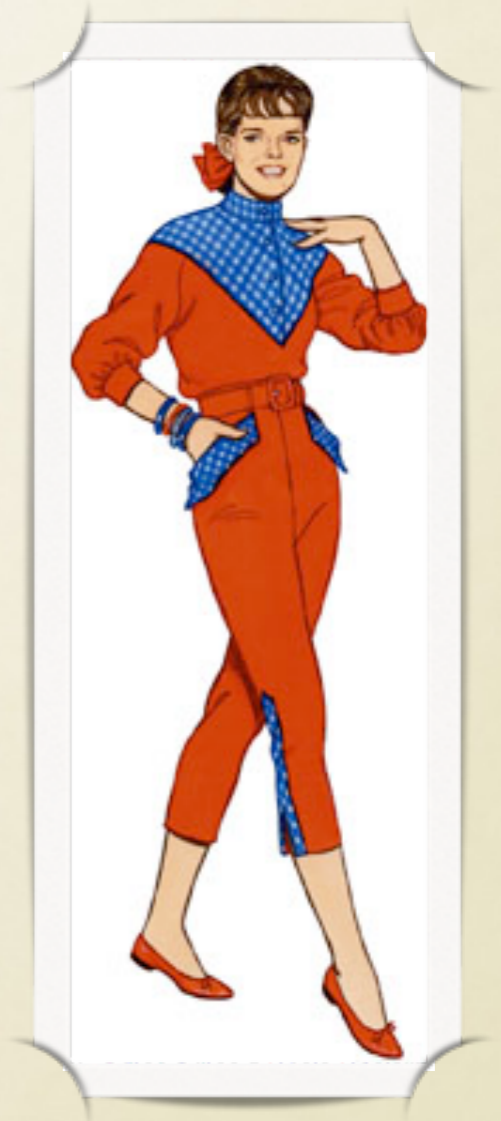
THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1940s



1950s



THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1960s



1970s

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



1980s



1990s

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



Unisex Style Jeans in the 1970s

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." Deuteronomy 22:5

THE PROGRESSION OF FASHION FROM 1870 TO OUR CURRENT DAY



"There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination." (1T 457)

HAVE WE GONE
TOO FAR?