

Contact Information

*Beginner Reenacting
Guidelines for Women*

What Do I Wear?

Your initial wardrobe should include foundation garments, underclothing, and a basic dress plus a few accessories.

Foundation garments:

Corset – Your corset will need to be custom fitted for the best fit. You can also make your own corset. This garment is essential for providing you support and giving your dress the right shape. Consider Originals by Kay, Farthingales for sources

Cage Crinoline – A cage crinoline or a covered cage will land between your ankle and calf in length. The circumference will be between 90” and 120” with a round or elliptical bell shape, not a cone. Consider Originals by Kay or Needle & Thread for sources

Under Garments:

Drawers – Your drawers serve as your underwear. These are split and attached at the waist to a waistband. See

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/FP/PDF/Drawers.pdf> for free directions to making your own.

Chemise – Your chemise is your upper undergarment. It protects you from your corset and your corset from you. See

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/FP/PDF/Chemise.pdf> for free directions for making your own.

Modesty Petticoat – This petticoat is worn under your crinoline. The length will land around your lower calf.

Petticoats – You will want multiple petticoats. You will want two to go over your crinoline which are a couple inches longer than your crinoline. You will want one or two to wear with any dress not worn with a crinoline. These will be slightly longer than the modesty petticoat. See

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/FP/PDF/Basic%20Petticoat.pdf> or *Skirting the Issue* for directions for making petticoats.

Basic dress:

One Piece Dress. – You will want a one piece dress. If you choose a cotton print dress, look for one with a gathered bodice, gauged skirt, and long bishop or coat sleeves. To better understand each of these components read *The Dressmaker's Guide to Fit & Fashion* and *Who Wore What*.

Accessories:

Boots/shoes – Accurately made boots and shoes will be an expensive investment initially. You will want a boot with a low ½ inch heel and a square toe which uses eyelets to lace up the front or side.

Stockings – Solid color cotton, wool, or silk stockings are acceptable.

Head Covering – You will need a bonnet for sun protection or social situations. Please read “Types of Bonnets” and “Anatomy of a Bonnet”

Outerwear – You will want at least a shawl. You may want a coat depending on the weather.

Resources for Further Information

Clothing

Demode original clothing database - <http://www.demodecouture.com/>

Dressmaking for Fit & Fashion by Elizabeth Stewart Clark

The Sewing Academy - <http://thesewingacademy.org/>

Skirting the Issue by Elizabeth Stewart Clark

Who Wore What By Juanita Leisch

Society and Culture

American Memory – LOC - <http://memory.loc.gov/amhome.html>

Documenting the American South - <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

There are many books worth reading on Google Books.

Making of America – Cornell - <http://library5.library.cornell.edu/moa/>

Making of America – Michigan - <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>

Many museum allow access to their digital collections online. Try

www.mfa.org, www.osv.org, and <http://www.vam.ac.uk/>.

Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection -

<http://dlxs.library.cornell.edu/m/mayantislavery/index.html>

Vicki Betts' Newspaper Database - <http://www.uttyler.edu/vbetts/>

How To of Reenacting

Authentic Campaigner – <http://authentic-campaigner.com/>

The Citizens' Companion - Civilian Living History Magazine

The Civil War Historian – Living History Magazine

Civil War Reenactors - <http://www.cwreenactors.com/forums.htm>

The Ragged Soldier Sutlery - <http://www.raggedsoldier.com/>

The Watchdog – Living History Magazine

Sewing Supplies

Farthingales – <http://www.farthingales.on.ca/> <http://www.farthingalesla.com/>

Originals By Kay – www.originalsbykay.com

Wooded Hamlet/Needle & Thread – <http://woodedhamlet.com/>

What Do I Do at an Event?

The best thing you can do as a new person at an event is **talk with people**. This is a great way to learn and make contacts. Some events will require you to stay in first person while others allow you to be yourself. Either way, talk, ask questions, learn.

Stay hydrated and eat small meals. The excitement of an event combined with often hot weather conditions can take a toll on your body. It is very important to stay well hydrated. If you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated. You will also find it easier to eat small meals. Heavy food can make some stomachs ill in the heat or wearing clothing you are not accustomed to.

Attend informational sessions if they are available. Some events have **lectures or presentations** for you to attend. Bring a small pad of paper and a pencil to write down questions, points you want to double check, and references.

If the event is located on a historic location or at a museum, take the time to see their **collections** and what resources they have. It would be a shame to miss them.

At events where you will find yourself at your “home base”, whether that is a tent, house, or porch, be sure to bring something to do. This can be a small piece of needlework, knitting, a piece of sewing, or a book to read. Visitors are likely to ask questions. Tell them what you know and be comfortable saying “I don’t know” when you don’t.

Many new reenactors enjoy seeing what is available at an event, including sutler row. If you feel you really must go shopping please read “The Shopping Itch” first.

Give yourself some down-time to let everything sink in. Some find keeping a journal or writing a letter helpful.

Elizabeth Clark has written several articles concerning hygiene, event safety, and improving your experience:

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/LS/PDF/Nineteenth%20Scenery.pdf>

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/LS/PDF/Event%20Safety.pdf>

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/LS/PDF/Value-Added%20Events.pdf>

Who am I? And What do I need to bring?

These two questions depend greatly on the “impression” you develop. This means creating a character or persona you will portray at an event. At most events you will be free to pick any person who fits into the event. At some events you will have a person assigned to you that fits the research for that event.

Things to consider while you develop your persona include:

Event time and place – Each event is usually based on a specific town or battle location. Some locations were agriculturally based while others were more merchant or industrially based. This will give a context for your impression.

Economic classes were divided into poor, working class, upper working/merchant class, leisure class.

Employment - Financial status for women almost always depended on the employment of their husband, father, or son. A few women were employed as well. As the war progressed, a woman may have been increasingly affected by the state of her providers employment.

Leisure activities can be important for an impression. Activities such as sewing, knitting, embroidery can be depicted at events.

Social interaction can say a great deal about a woman’s impression. If financially able she may participate in a social movement, religious activity, or charitable acts.

Once you’ve developed who your character or persona is, you will need to decide what you accouterments you will bring reflecting that impression.

Eating utensils – You will need some thing to eat with. The dishes and utensils you choose can depict your social and financial status. Consider china or iron stone dishes.

Seating – Some choose to bring their own seating. If you are a poor or poorer working class person, you will not want to bring a fancy chair. Vice-versa, if you are well off, you likely will not have a rude bench on your porch.

Accessories and Miscellaneous– Fashionable or comfortable women are more likely to have accessories such as a parasol or fashion bonnet. A working class woman may be shopping in town carrying a large market basket.

What do I Need?

Please pack your files in **Medical form** in a location where it will be carried with you at all times.

What do I pack everything in?

Depending on the type of event you may need to pack everything you need in period appropriate boxes or luggage or you will be able to unpack your things from modern containers which remain in the car. For period containers and luggage consider these options:

Carpet bags – There were a variety of carpet bags and other handbags during the mid-century. Some were manufactured while other were handmade. These are easy to pack soft goods in such as clothing. They are easy to carry.

Trunks – Trunks vary in size and shape. Original pre-war trunks should be reproduced for use as most originals are delicate and valuable. Trunks are good for transporting most materials and give some protection against moisture. Large or heavy trunks can be difficult to transport.

Wooden packing Boxes – small to medium size reproduced boxes can be good for packing a variety of items and can protect against moisture.

Depending on the wood and what is packed inside they can be heavy and difficult to carry. Construction should use period techniques.

Pasteboard boxes – Pasteboard boxes are nice for storing and transporting smaller items or those you want protected like a bonnet. These can be made with a base box, period wallpaper and interior paper. These are sensitive to moisture.

Cloth Sacks – Simple sacks or even pillowcases can be an easy way to carry soft goods. These are especially appropriate for a poorer impression

What do I need to sleep in?

You may choose to sleep on the ground, on a pallet, or on a cot. In either case you will want bedding appropriate for the weather. Items you may want to consider using:

Gum blanket or painted cloth – If you are sleeping directly on the ground, you will need a waterproof layer to keep the rest of your bedding from getting moist.

Bed ticking or feather bed – Whether you are sleeping on the ground or a cot, a bed ticking or feather bed will soften where you sleep. This item can be bulky to pack. A straw ticking can include insects and be a fire hazard.

Sheets – In variable to hot weather, sheet are comforting.

Wool blankets – Wool, layered under the bedding will reduce moisture.

Quilts – Be sure to choose period fabrics and piecing. A strip quilt is one of the easiest to make. The inside batting can be wool or cotton. A wool batted quilt as the top layer on a bed will also help with moisture.

Where to I stay?

At most events in this area you will stay in a tent if you stay on site. There are several options for a tent. (Some events will require all civilian tents to blend in with military tents. This will limit your tent choices to correctly made military wedge tents.) When choosing a tent to purchase consider how many people will stay in the tent, how much room you will need, how you will transport your tent, and how you will be able to set up a tent. Ridge poles can be cut in half with a center connector to enable them to fit in vehicles better.

Wedge tents – These are shaped like an “A”. These vary in height, width and length. They require two vertical poles and a ridge pole. They provide ample floor space with a reduced amount of standing space. Doors can be placed in the front or both the front and the back. Wedge tents are generally easy to set up with one or two people.

Wall tents – These tents have sides with walls ranging from 12” to 3 feet. These also vary in height, width, and length. Taller items can be placed along the walls and you will be able to stand in the entire tent. Wall tents require two vertical poles, a ridge pole, shorter side poles, and numerous ropes. It takes a minimum of three people to set this tent up.

Ground cloth – Tents come without floors. A ground cloth is cut the size of the interior of your tent. This can serve as your floor with minimal protection from moisture and dirt. Some choose to use carpeting instead.

Flies – Flies were originally used over top of the tent to shield it from the sun and rain or as a separate shelter. Many civilians choose to use as a sitting area in front of their tent. Depending on the set-up, a fly will need 2- 12 vertical poles, a ridge pole, and numerous ropes.

What do I eat?

It is easier to bring period appropriate foods in period appropriate containers. This way you do not have to worry about hiding inaccuracies. Foods can include in season fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, dried vegetables, dried meats, breads, hard cheeses, dried beans, and period cookies. To store your food consider:

Tin works well for dry goods.

Crocks can keep things a bit cooler. Some have lids.

Fabric bags can carry fruit, vegetables, cookies, etc..

Parchment paper is good for wrapping cheese and meat.

For more ideas on bringing food that does not require a cooler along with a couple recipes, read “No Refrigeration Required”

<http://www.elizabethstewartclark.com/GAMC/LS/PDF/No%20Refrigeration.pdf>

For recipes visit:

http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/browse_date.html#1854