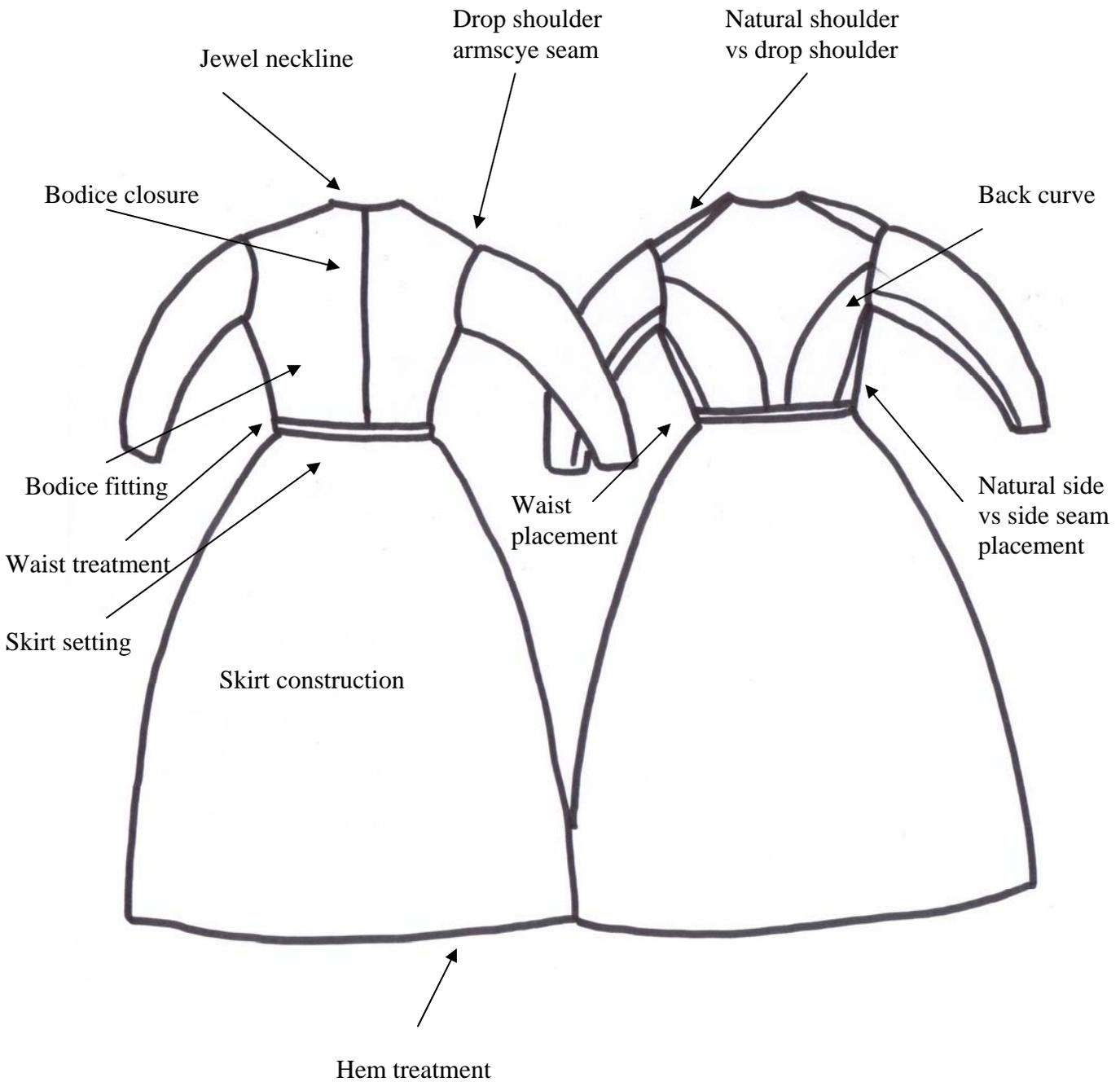


# Anatomy of a Dress

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# Anatomy of a Dress

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The dress is custom fit to the wearer to achieve the silhouette and fashions of the era.. Seam placement and dress construction work together to make the shoulders appear wider and the waist narrower.

- Jewel neckline – The jewel neckline lengthens the shoulder by extending the visual line from the shoulder to the neck. The V neckline of the 1850s also maintains the visual length of the shoulder while emphasizing the V lines of the bodice.



- Dropped shoulder armscye – The shoulder point of the armscye extends beyond the natural shoulder point. This dropped shoulder extends the line of the shoulder to appear wider.



- Dropped shoulder seam – The should seam drops below, to the back, of the natural shoulder line. This seam will run from under the ear-lobe, angling to below the natural shoulder at the armscye. This may be as little as a half inch to as much as an inch.

- Side seams – The side seam angles further behind the natural side. By moving this seam back out, bulk is removed from the side area narrowing the waist area. It will start at the armpit and angle back, landing a half inch to an inch beyond the side at the waist.



- Curved back seams – The curved back seams control the fit of the back and further create the appearance of a narrowed waist by controlling the way the eye looks at the back. These seams can be true construction points using a three piece back or mocked with a single piece using top stitches. Single piece backs without the curved seams are used for some dresses.

- Front fitting – The method of fitting the front of the bodice varies according to dress type and fabric. Most cotton and sheer dress including cotton, wool and silk, have the fabric controlled by gathering of pleating the excess at the waist below the bust. These techniques can be used to create a round or V appearance to the bodice. Silk and wool dresses are more often fitted with sets of darts.

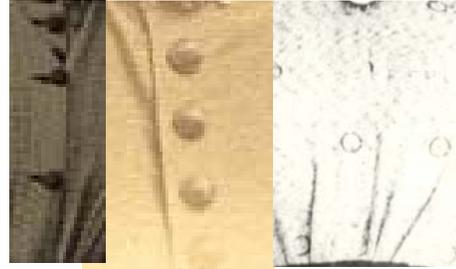


- Piping – Piping, narrower than 1/8<sup>th</sup> of an inch set in self fabric, can be found in armscyees, waistlines, some shoulders seams, some sleeve seams and some necklines for added strength and stability.

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- Bodice closure – Bodices can be closed using buttons or hooks and eyes. Hooks and eyes can be set in a variety of methods. They can be openly stitched to the inside of the bodice plackets, sandwiched between the lining and fashion fabric, or worked through the fabric showing only the functional parts of the hook and eye. Buttons can be functional or decorative.



- Sleeve styles – A variety of sleeve styles exist, ranging in fissionability. Most sleeves have a smooth curve at the armscye setting easily into the bodice. The coat sleeve and the bishop sleeve can be found on most dresses. The coat sleeve is made of one or two pieces shaped slightly to the arm. The bishop sleeve is fitted at the shoulder and gathered into a band at the wrist. The fashionable pagoda or open sleeve is found on fashionable dresses of silk, fine wool or sheer dresses rather than cotton dresses. Pagoda should be accompanied by fashionably done white under-sleeves.



- Skirt construction – Skirts are constructed with multiple panels with the warp running vertically. Period fabrics were narrower than modern fabric. This effects how the skirt is constructed; either fewer panels are used or fabric panels are narrowed to mimic period widths. Selvages remain to strengthen the vertical skirt seams. Pockets can be set in the seams.



- Skirt settings – Skirt waist treatments can be pleated or gauged. Silk, wool and sheer dresses are more often pleated with knife or box pleats. Less fashionable cotton dresses are more often gauged and attached to a waistband or bodice. In either case, the top edge of the fabric is turned under to control the length of the skirt. Gathering, confined in a waistband, is normally seen in petticoats rather than skirts.



- Waist settings – Skirts can be set enclosed in one or two piece waistbands, set on a waistband, set on a tape or set directly on a bodice. The dress waist sits at or up to an inch above the natural waist, the narrowest point of the

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torso. This allows the petticoats and skirt support to sit at the waist while the dress waist sits above the underpinning bulk.

- Skirt closure – Skirt closures or plackets can be either straight (at center) or dogleg (off center). Either closure can use hooks and eyes or hooks with thread loops.
- Hems – Hems can be turned, faced or bound. Turned hems are more common in petticoats and sheer skirts. Faced hems are very common for almost all dresses including washable cotton dresses and fine silk, wool or sheer dresses. Hem facings can be most any period cotton fabric, scrap, plain, polished, etc. Bound hems use woven wool tape wrapped around the lower edge to protect the fabric. This can be replaced as it wears. Binding can also be used on faced hems.



## *Your Personal Dress Linens*

Your dress's linens, cuffs, collars and sleeves, are essential to keep your dress clean and extend its life. These linens protect the dress from body soiling. These are made of white cotton or linen, simply made or with embellishment.

- Collars – The collar protects the neckline of the dress from neck perspirations. A basic collar follows the neckline shape of the dress. They are generally an inch to two inches wide with either square or rounded fronts. The inside edge has a wide bias strip which is used to baste the collar to the inside of the dress. The bias strip is on the inside of the neckline. Collars from the 1850s tend to have more horizontal fronts, while 1860s collars tend to meet at a 90 degree angle.
- Cuffs and sleeves – Cuffs and sleeves are used to protect the sleeve cuff of the dress. The cuff, used with coat and bishop sleeves, encloses the dress sleeve cuff with a portion covering the inside wrist area and a portion finishing the outside of the sleeve. Under-sleeves are used with wide coat sleeves and open pagoda sleeves. There is a wide variety of styles. The upper portion can be fastened with elastic or a buttoned band. They can also be basted into a dress sleeve.

