

1: Victorian Women's Fashion Photos CD-ROM and Book

This book and CD is chock full of usable and beautiful black and white illustrations to dress up your blog or web page. Ranging from full fashion views to individual items like corsets or shoes, the graphic designer in you is going to have a blast!

From Victorian Fashion plate: Clothing styles were dictated by propriety, and stylish garments were a sign of respectability. The copious amounts of fabric used in the creation of Victorian skirts usually meant that most women owned few outfits. Detachable collars and cuffs enabled a woman to change the look of a garment for a bit of variety. Of course, wealthier women owned more garments made of finer fabrics using more material and embellishments. In those days, women lived at the largess of men - first their fathers or guardians, then their husbands. Employment opportunities were limited to teaching young girls, being a governess, domestic servitude, and later to factory or mill work. Of course, rural women had plenty of work if they lived on a farm. Some women earned money from cottage industries but the the Industrial Revolution put an end to enterprises such as spinning yarn and making lace at home. The Industrial Revolution created new wealth for investors, industrialists, and merchants and introduced a new middle class who, proud of their status, displayed their wealth with great ostentation. Women wore their status in fabric and lots of it from the mid century hoop skirts to the later bustle in the beautiful dresses and styles of the Victorian period. The Industrial Revolution created a new urbanization as towns and cities filled with workers for the new mills and factories where women worked long hours in grim, dirty, and often dangerous conditions. Large Gignot sleeves suddenly slimmed and a seam line dropped the shoulder of dresses. A tight fitting bodice was boned and slanted to emphasize the waist. Cartridge pleats at the waist created volume in the skirt without adding bulk to the waist. Women of a higher social class were expected to be demure and indolent as reflected by the restrictive dropped shoulder lines and corsets. Dresses in soft colors could be refreshed with detachable white collars and cuffs. In the s, extra flounces were added to skirts and women wore a short over-skirt in day dressing. Skirts widened as the hourglass silhouette became the popular look, and women took to wearing layers of petticoats. Bodices took on a V shape and the shoulder dropped more. Evening wear exposed the shoulders and neckline and corsets lost their shoulder straps. Sleeves of ball gowns were usually short. Although women wore what we call dresses, many of these costumes were actually a separate bodice and skirt. Three quarter length sleeves lasted through most of the Victorian period and some sleeves began to sprout bell shaped ruffles. For most of the 19th century, bonnets were the headgear of choice, in styles that varied from plain to heavily ornamented. In the s, ringlets of curls hung on either side of the head. In the s, women drew up the side hair but let it hang in long, loose curls in back. Crimping became popular in the early s. Throughout the Victorian period, women wore false hair pieces and extensions as well as artificial flowers such as velvet pansies and roses, false leaves, and beaded butterflies often combined into intricate and beautiful headpieces. Make up was mostly worn by theater people. The look for women in Victorian days was very pale skin occasionally highlighted with a smidge of rouge on the cheeks. The Victorian Corset A corset is an undergarment set with strips of whalebone actually whale baleen , later replaced by steel. Though criticized as unhealthy, and certainly uncomfortable, corsets were a fashion staple throughout the 19th century granting women social status, respectability, and the idealized figure of youth. Critics, including some health professionals, believed that corsets caused cancer, anemia, birth defects, miscarriages, and damage to internal organs. The tight restriction of the body did deplete lung capacity and caused fainting. The popular concept of an obsession with a tiny waist is probably exaggerated. Late Victorian corset Source Ruffled skirts in Source Mid-Victorian Crinolines and Hoop Skirts In the s, the dome shaped skirt switched to tapered skirts that flared at the waist. The new hour glass figure grew to exaggerated proportions. Layers of petticoats were suddenly not enough and the crinoline was introduced to add volume to skirts. Crinoline was a heavy, stiff fabric made of woven horsehair that was expensive, and impossible to clean. In the s, a cage like affair replaced the multi-layered petticoats. Called hoop-skirts, cage crinolines, or cages, they were light weight, economical and more comfortable than the heavy crinolines. Cage crinolines which produced the huge, voluminous skirts so often associated with

mid-century Victorian fashion, were made of flexible sprung steel rings suspended from fabric tape. The look was so popular and economical that lower middle class women, maids, and factory girls sported the style. Cheaper hoop skirts included a dozen hoops while the high priced variety featured 20 - 40 hoops for a smoother line. The hoop industry grew large and two New York factories produced 3, to 4, hoop cages a day, employing thousands of workers. Early versions of hoop skirts reached the floor, but hemlines rose in the s. Sleeves were often tight at the top, opening at the bottom in a bell-like shape. Previously, clothing was hand sewn using natural dyes. Other new developments included the introduction of the sized paper pattern as well as machines that could slice several pattern pieces at once. Clothing could now be produced quickly and cheaply. Worth became so influential that he is known as the Father of Haute Couture high fashion. In , Worth introduced an over-skirt that was lifted and held back by buttons and tabs. By , the over-skirt was drawn back and looped, creating fullness and drapery at the rear. Meanwhile, certain fashion mavens felt that the over ornamentation had gone too far. The New Princess Line was a simple form of dress, cut in one piece of joined panels, fitted from shoulder to hem. The Gabriel Princess dress produced a slim silhouette in plain or muted colors with a small white collar and a full, though greatly diminished skirt. The Bloomer Costume, named after feminist Amelia Bloomer, featured a full, short skirt worn over wide trousers for ease of movement. The style did not go over and was often ridiculed in the press. Followers of the Aesthetic movement despised the Industrial Revolution, exaggerated fashions, and the use of the new synthetic dyes that produced sometimes lurid colors, and weird color combinations. These intellectuals, artists, and literary folk longed for a simpler life and the costumes that reflected the life-style. Garments were loose and unstructured, used soft colors created with natural dyes, embellished by hand embroidery featuring motifs drawn from nature. Used in the late s when swagged up skirts emphasized the rear of a costume, they eventually became the prime focus of fashion. By the later s, rear pads were called bustles. The ideal female form featured narrow, slope shoulders, wide hips, and a tiny waist. Held on with a buckled waistband, the bustle was a rectangular or crescent shaped pad made of horse hair or down filled woven wire mesh. In , ball gowns featured trains and by , trains showed up in day dresses. Trains were a short lived style, however, as they quickly became soiled dragging along city streets. The bustle came back in a big way in the s creating a huge, shelf like protrusion at the rear. But the ludicrous style fell out of favor and by , was greatly reduced in size. The s saw some fullness at the rear, but the bustle was on its way out. The stiff, corset like garment dipped down in front and back and eventually reached the upper thighs. Queen Victoria died in , but changes come gradually and the eras over-laped. Were hoops worn under skirts in ? Hoops and crinolines are worn to create an hourglass figure. The style has come and gone over the centuries from the Wheel Farthingale to the New Look of the late s to the early s. Edwardian dresses did not feature hoops.

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