Guide to the Nineteenth-Century Fashion Plates Collection, 1807-1876

Processed by Diana Bustamante; machine-readable finding aid created by James Lake
Sanoian Special Collections Library
California State University, Fresno
5200 North Barton Avenue M/S ML 34
Fresno, California 93740-8014
Phone: (559) 278-2595
Fax: (559) 278-6952
Email: specialc@listserv.csufresno.edu
URL: http://www.lib.csufresno.edu/SubjectResources/SpecialCollections
© 1998
California State University, Fresno. All rights reserved.
Guide to the Nineteenth-Century Fashion Plates Collection, 1807-1876

Sanoian Special Collections Library

Henry Madden Library
Fresno, California

Contact Information:
Sanoian Special Collections Library
California State University, Fresno
5200 North Barton Avenue M/S ML 34
Fresno, California 93740-8014
Phone: (559) 278-2595
Fax: (559) 278-6952
Email: specialc@listserv.csufresno.edu
URL: http://www.lib.csufresno.edu/SubjectResources/SpecialCollections

Processed by:
Diana Bustamante
Date Completed:
1998
Encoded by:
James Lake

© 1998 California State University, Fresno. All rights reserved.

Descriptive Summary

Title: Nineteenth-Century Fashion Plates Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1807-1876
Extent: 2 linear inches (68 plates)
Repository: Henry Madden Library (California State University, Fresno).
Sanoian Special Collections Library.
Fresno, California
Language: English.

Acquisition
The plates were donated by Henry Miller Madden.

Access Restrictions
The collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Nineteenth-Century Fashion Plates Collection, Sanoian Special Collections Library, California State University, Fresno.

History
Engraved, hand-colored fashion plates were introduced in the beginning of the 1800s to promote the clothing style of the times. Each era was dominated by a particular style, commonly featured in women's magazines such as English Woman's Domestic Magazine and The Queen.

The Empire period lasted from 1803 to 1815. Emperor Napoleon I and Empress Josephine were integral in setting the fashion for the period. Napoleon himself hired Leroy, a fashion designer to dress the royal court. The Leroy gown was mandatory in Napoleon's court. The basic design for dresses in this period were small puffed sleeves and bust-length bodices. The neckline of the dress was cut low, often revealing the upper half of the breasts. The skirt was long and usually plain in the front with some fullness in the back.

Although Leroy continued to be the leading fashion designer early in the period, the Romantic period (1816-1870) did away with the bust-high waistline, bringing it back to the natural waistline. The straight boyish figure during the Empire period
gave way to the more fully rounded figure of the Romantic period. The Romantic period reverted to the time of Marie Antoinette (1770) who made famous the exaggerated skirts that protruded greatly at the hips. During the early part of the period the skirts were not as wide as during the time of Marie Antoinette, but they became wider and wider towards the end of the period.

In the Edwardian era (1870-1901) the style became contoured to the body. Unlike earlier fashions, the goal was no longer to hide the figure of the body under layers of cloth but rather to give women a more defined hour-glass shape. The dresses were extremely tight around the hip area which caused difficulty in walking, sitting and other daily activities. The corsets at the time were designed to cinch the waist and increase the bust.

Scope and Content

The fashion plates measure 2 inches and date from 1807 to 1876. The collection is arranged in three series: Empire Period, Romantic Period and Edwardian Era. The fashion plates are individually hand-tinted. Many of the fashion plates originated from the *Modes de Paris*, a fashion magazine.

The **Empire period** series contains one fashion plate (1807) showing a man and a woman. The woman is wearing the traditional chemise gown and is adorned with a crown. The man is dressed in military style clothing. The clothes were probably exclusively for use at Napoleon's court.

The **Romantic period** plates (1836-1861) feature clothing adorned with intricate detail and very full skirts. This craze for fullness first began with just the back of the dress then gradually encompassing the entire waist.

The significant change in men's fashion during this period was from breeches (knee-length pants) to full-length trousers. By the 1830s trousers became more tight fitting and narrow. Men's suits were designed to emphasize the width of the shoulders and accent the waistline. Popular accessories were the cane and top hat.

The **Edwardian era** style of dress was radically different from that of the Romantic period. Two fashion plates picture wedding dresses designed in typical Edwardian fashion. There is an absence of fashion for men in this era. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons but one explanation is that men's fashion changed very little from the Romantic period over the next hundred years.

---

### Empire period

Box 1

- Man and woman, 1807

### Romantic period

Box 1

- Men, 1839-1845
- Men and women, 1842 and undated
- Women, 1836-1842, and undated
- Women and children, 1861 and undated

### Edwardian era

Box 1

- Wedding, undated
- Women, 1876 and undated
- Women and children, undated