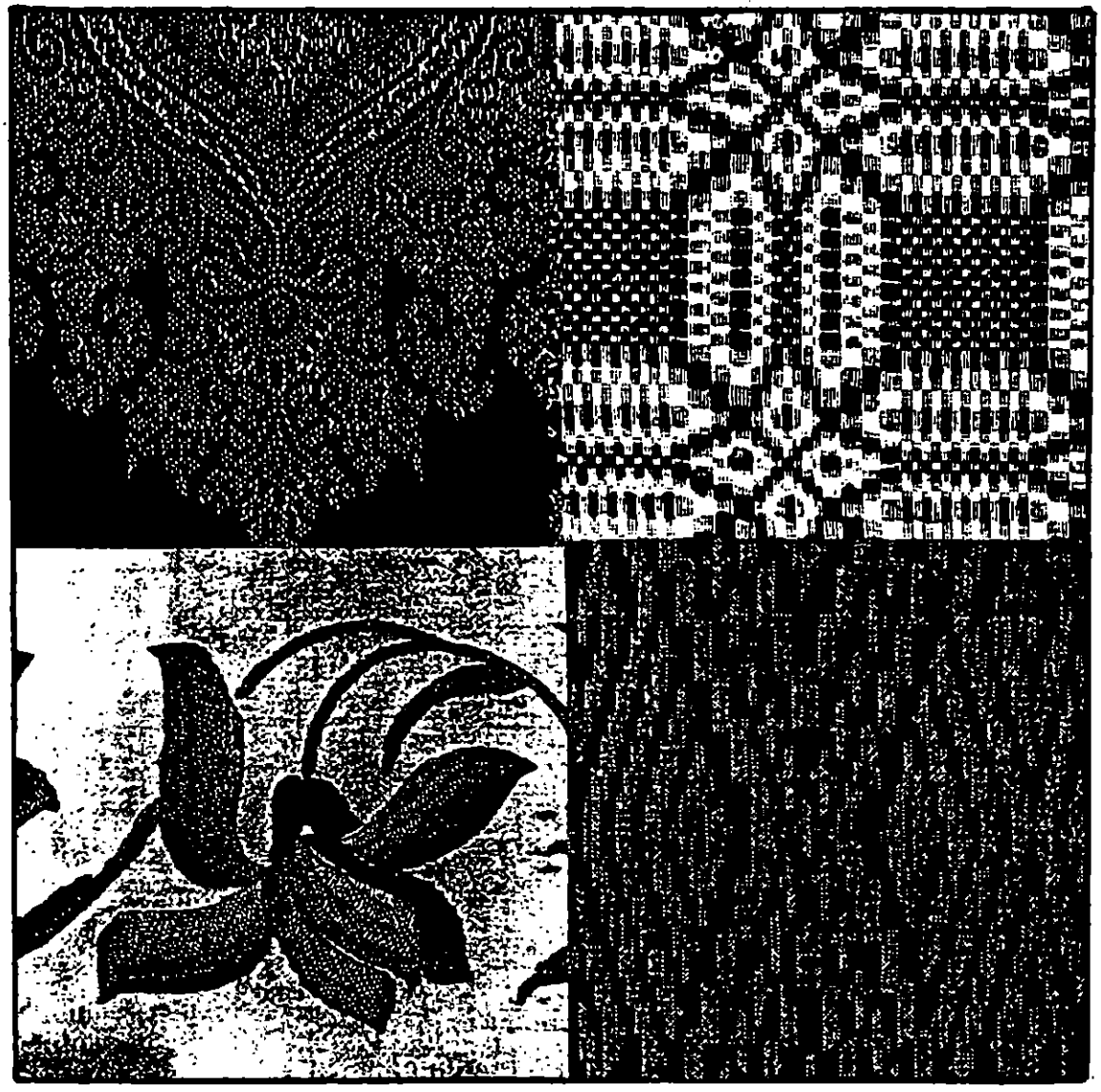
TCN

TEXTILE CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

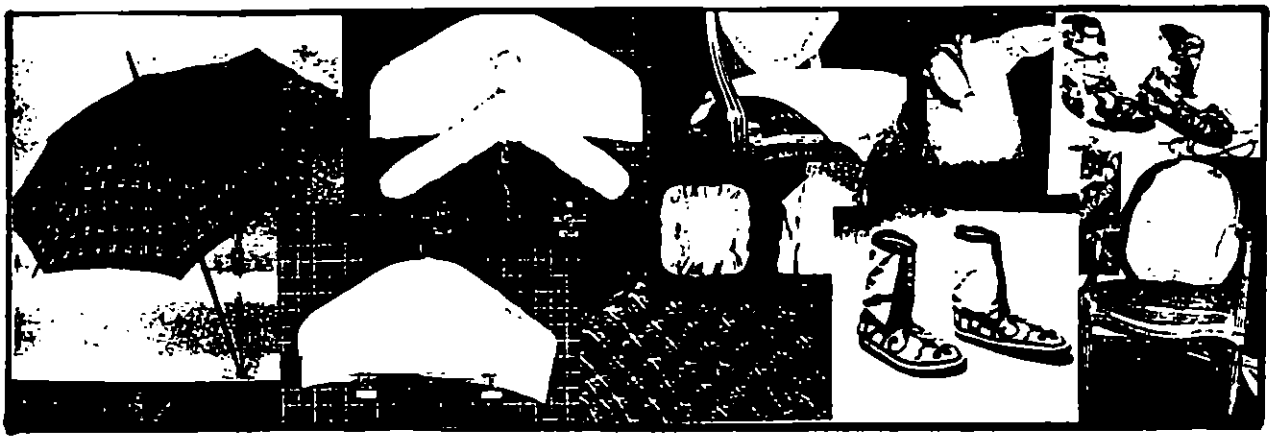


Number 26 *SPRING 1994*

Number 26

TEXTILE CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Spring



FROM THE EDITORS

CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS...

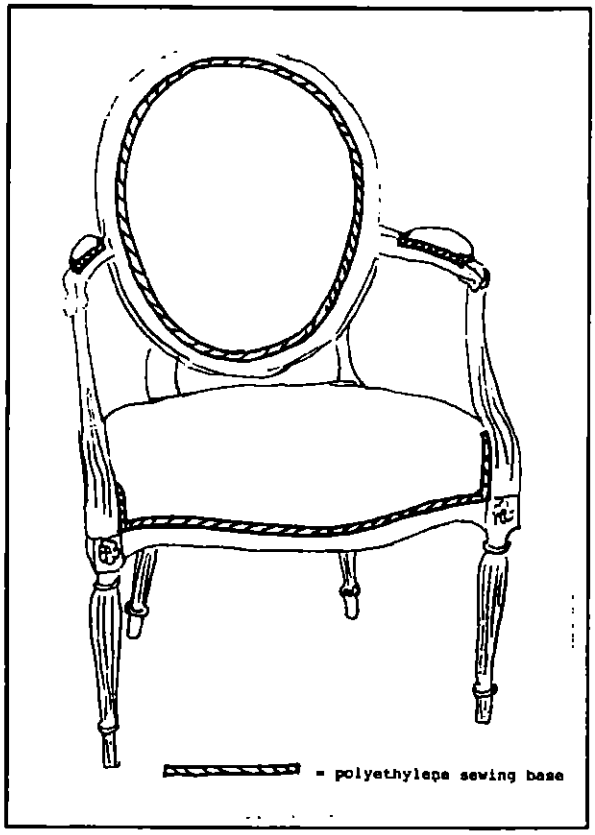
TCN Editors are forced to confront you, our readers, with a problem. The next issue of TCN will be our last. We desperately need a team of two or three people interested in assuming the tasks of gathering and editing articles, producing the newsletter, and managing subscriptions, to step forward and take over where we leave off. If by September we have not received any offers, we will prepare the Fall 1994 issue as the last of TCN. This is our final plea. **Without a new team of editors, TCN will not continue.**

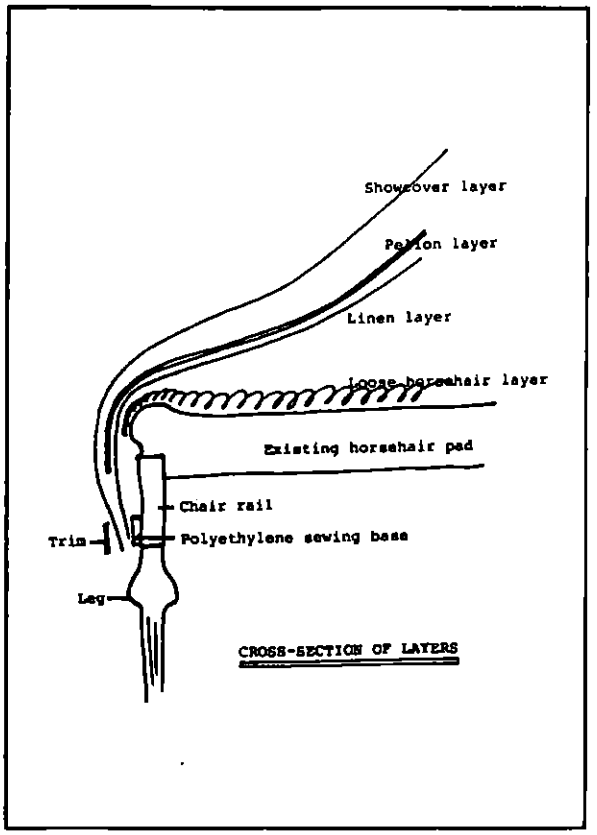
The range of information in this season's issue of TCN is a reflection of the wide spectrum of challenges which come the way of textile conservators. Case studies of treatments for upholstery, parasol covers, needlework sample books, and military coats are featured in this issue. Storage solutions for military uniforms and moccasins are also presented.

A supplement by Irene Karsten, McCord Textile Conservation Intern, deals with her research and recommendations in preparing the costume exhibition "Form and Fashion" for travel, and will be welcomed by those who are considering a similar endeavor.

In the past months TCN has also heard from conservators whose problems transcend the type mentioned above. Special pleas for information have been received from war-torn Croatia and a developing but severely underfunded conservation program in Turkey. TCN is pleased to do its part for these special causes by offering a free set of back issues to each of these requestors. We ask our readers for their assistance in the Croatia cause; more about it can be read on page 22.

ELEGANCE RESTORED



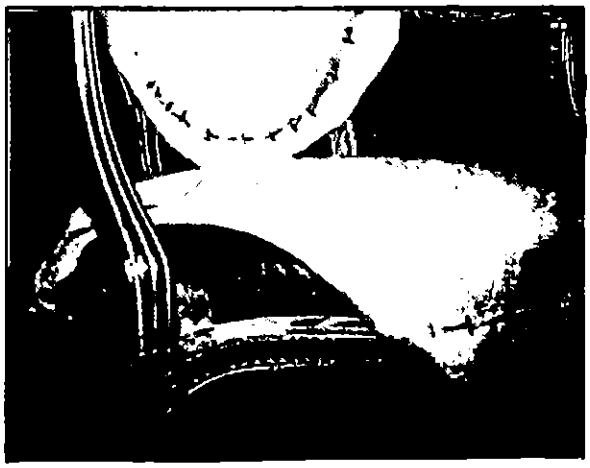


The furniture collection of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal includes a carved armchair, believed to have once belonged to the Duke of Kent and used by him in Halifax from 1794 to 1800. Purchased by David Ross McCord, the chair will be displayed in The McCord Family, A Passionate Vision. The Chair is a George III form in the French manner whose gilded surface and delicate wooden structure have suffered over the years because of changing tastes in fashion and repeated upholsterings. The current 20th-century blue painted surface and matching velvet covering required a reinterpretation before the chair could again be displayed in the museum. Robert Little, Curator of Decorative Art at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts was consulted regarding more appropriate finishes and fabrics.

The first phase of treatment was the removal of overpaint in a small inconspicuous area which revealed traces of original water gilding. This patch was left for future reference. The rest of the overpaint was then removed and the chair professionally regilded to replicate this

treatment which had all but disappeared over the years. To reupholster the chair in the traditional manner would have resulted in further damage to the badly degraded seat rails and tacking edges.

The staff of the McCord called upon the specialized upholstery skills of the Furniture Conservation lab of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston, to complete the treatment. The SPNEA Conservation Center is .a regional conservation laboratory which focuses on architectural and furniture conservation, and serves museums, dealers and collectors across the United States. Upholstery conservation is offered as an important component of furniture treatments and is a service unavailable to the public through any other organization.



The upholstery phase of the project was headed by Anne Battram, a Canadian who was a practicing traditional upholsterer before training as a conservator. Anne finds her profession challenging and considers her job to be twofold. First, clients must be educated about the destructive effects that long-standing traditional upholstery techniques have on wooden furniture frames. Equally tragic is the loss of historic information which occurs when a chair is stripped of all previous upholstery materials to make way for the new. Few written records exist that document the development of upholstery techniques and use of materials. Therefore, the chair frame itself becomes the historic document and it is important to retain early evidence. Successive reupholsterings can strip away the tiny remnants from the past and destroy subtle clues left on the frame. The second challenge is the development of an appropriate upholstery treatment which is tailored to the demands of both the individual piece of furniture and of its owner. Furniture may be used only for display purposes in a museum setting or may be required to withstand the rigors of daily use within a domestic setting. In either situation, the treatment must meet numerous criteria such as stability, reversibility and historic accuracy while also being aesthetically pleasing.

The upholstery treatment began by covering the existing horsehair and underupholstery with a layer of prewashed linen. Linen fabric was used as a barrier layer between the existing materials and the replacement fabrics because of its stability and strength. It was washed before use to remove the starch finish which is applied during manufacturing. Pellon, a non-woven polyester fabric, was layered over the linen to

prevent the stiff ends of the horsehair padding from poking through the showcover fabric. The final layer was the replacement showcover fabric. This new gold-coloured Damask complimented the gilding while subtly suggesting the effect of the original showcover, probably a silk damask. All the fabric layers were handsewn with a curved needle to narrow strips of polyethylene which had been covered with linen and stapled sparingly with Monel staples along the tacking edges. Staples have been tested and proven to have more holding power than traditional tacks and are never used directly on original wood without a layer of polyethylene. The use of this buffer reduces damage to the chair frame when staples need to be removed and the small holes left by staples cannot be confused with holes left by traditional tacks. The trim, yet to be chosen for the chair, will be attached along the fabric edges using a reversible adhesive or may be handsewn to the showcover fabric depending on the preference of the textile conservator. The chair will look stunning as it takes its place among the other treasures on display from the collection.

Treatment of the McCord chair could not have proceeded without the valuable assistance of Eva Burnham, the museum's senior textile conservator and Irene Karsten, the multitalented conservation intern. They gathered the required materials and were involved in all stages of the treatment. Ms. Battram thoroughly enjoyed her return to Canada to work with the helpful staff at the McCord and she looks forward to similar opportunities to spread the word about upholstery conservation.

Anne Battram
Upholstery Conservator
Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities,
185 Lyman Street,
Waltham, Massachusetts, 02154
(617) 891-1985

Further reading:

Cooke, Edward S., ed., Upholstery in America & Europe from the Seventeenth Century to World War I, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, NY, 1987.

Williams, Marc A., ed., Upholstery Conservation, Preprints of a Symposium held at Colonial Williamsburg, February 1990, American Conservation Consortium, Ltd., east Kingston, NH.

Materials Sources:

Linen fabric
Hamilton Adams, Secaucus, NJ

Monel staples
House of Staples, Ottawa, Ont.

Pellon, non-woven polyester fabric
Shapelon, New York, NY

Polyethylene sheeting
Allied Resinous Products, Inc., Conneaut, OH

Showcover fabric & trim
Brunswick & Fils
New York, NY

TREATMENT OF A MILITARY COAT AT THE CANADIAN CONSERVATION INSTITUTE

The Textile Laboratory of the Canadian Conservation Institute routinely treats military coats. The coats typically have the same type of degradation and require similar conservation treatments. Conservation is currently underway on three military coats from museum collections across Canada. One approach to treatment can be illustrated by a coat that was recently conserved at CCI.

The coat in this example dates from the 1760s, and is reputed to be the oldest military coat in a Canadian collection. It is part of the collection of the Niagara Historical Society and Museum, Niagara-on-the Lake, Ontario. According to the Historical Society the owner of the coat was Daniel Servos, who was an officer of the British Indian Department, one of the first settlers in the region, and a prominent citizen of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The military coat is made of a red wool outer coat and a beige wool lining. It has a green wool collar and dark brown cotton cuffs. There are self fabric lapels secured at the collar with buttons. The coat has a center front hook-and-eye closure with a row of gold-plated buttons adorning the lapels. Buttons also trim the pocket flaps, cuffs, shoulder straps and back coat vents. Dark green wool borders the lapels, cuffs, pocket flaps and shoulder straps. Green hearts decorate the corners of the coat hem.

The military coat was in fair condition when it was received at CCI. As is so often found with military coats, there was extensive insect damage. The red wool outer coat and the wool lining of the coat had numerous holes. The brown cotton cuffs were significantly degraded. Fifty percent of both

the left and right cuffs were missing. The gold-plated buttons were corroded in a number of spots and several buttons were missing.

The military coat was mechanically surface cleaned. The red wool outer coat and the wool lining were vacuumed, front and back, using a nylon screen and a low level of suction.

There were some permanent stains scattered throughout the red wool outer coat. Overall, however, it did not appear dirty. Preliminary tests were then undertaken to determine if the coat required further cleaning. Spot tests were carried out on the outer coat and lining to determine the degree of dirt that remained after the initial surface cleaning. Because the coat is lined, the tests were first performed using the dry-cleaning solvent Perchloroethylene. There was found to be no significant transfer of dirt onto the blotting paper in the areas tested. Spot tests were then carried out using water and a 0.5% v/v solution of the anionic detergent CAN PAC 645. Once again, there was no significant transfer of dirt onto the blotting paper. Based on these results, the coat was not considered dirty enough to warrant additional cleaning, especially considering that it might degrade further in the dry or wet cleaning process.

The lining of the military coat was stiff and harsh. Both the lining and the red wool of the outer coat were steamed to soften them. Both benefitted and were found to be softer after the steaming process.

Treatment of the numerous holes in the red wool outer coat then began. Holes were backed with a fabric that matched the original coat in both colour and weight. The support fabric chosen has a fibre content of 90% wool and 10% polyamid. If it is necessary for a support fabric to be top-dyed in order to obtain a colour match, a fibre content similar to this fabric is preferred because it dyes unevenly, giving it a mottled appearance. This look is highly desirable because it gives a better match to the original worn and weathered fabric in military coats. When needed, the nap of the support fabric was "shaved," using a blade, to more closely match the abraded areas of the coat. The holes in the coat were secured to the support fabric with a whip stitch using matching hair silk.

Most of the brown cotton of the cuffs of the coat was degraded and missing. It was decided to infill the missing areas of the cuffs with a matching fabric so that they would appear complete. The fabric chosen was slightly darker in colour than the original so that, upon inspection, the original area of the cuff would be easily discernible. The completed cuffs were covered with dark brown silk crepeline and the original cuff fragments were secured.

Numerous holes and tears were scattered throughout the wool lining. Fabric was custom dyed in-house in an attempt to match the uneven colour and weave of the lining. Pre-metallized Ciba Geigy Irgalan dyes were used to produce a variety of samples of dyed twill weave fabrics. A Viyella twill weave fabric composed of 55% wool and 45% cotton was selected for the treatment. Due to the fibre content of Viyella, dyeing produces an uneven appearance which is, once again, desirable when treating military coats. The dyed Viyella support fabric was cut to the shape of

the lining panels and was inserted through holes and unstitched seams wherever possible. It was then aligned and held in place with parallel rows of running stitches. A whip stitch and hair silk were used to secure the holes and tears in the lining to the support fabric.

The dark green wool collar of the coat was originally covered with the same brown cotton of the cuffs. The majority of the cotton was missing; only fragments remained. During treatment, the coat collar was overlaid with dark brown silk crepeline to secure the remaining brown cotton fragments to the green wool.

Military coat buttons were made from a variety of materials, so a comprehensive knowledge of their content is necessary in order to treat them appropriately. Colleagues in the Ethnology Laboratory of CCI were consulted regarding the conservation of the buttons. It was found that the buttons on this coat were gold-plated and bone-backed. They were worn and corroded in some areas, and a number of buttons were missing. The buttons were mechanically surface cleaned to remove areas of corrosion, using wooden sticks sharpened to a point at both ends. Mylar protectors were cut and were placed around each button to protect the coat during treatment. Benzotriazole in Renaissance wax was applied to the areas on the buttons where the corrosion had been removed.

The conservation carried out on the military coat outlines a typical treatment of a military uniform at CCI. However, the historical significance of this military coat to the heritage of Canada makes this conservation treatment particularly noteworthy.

Janet L. Wagner
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Canadian Conservation Institute
Department of Canadian Heritage
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STABILIZING NEEDLEWORK SAMPLE BOOKS

In preparation for an upcoming exhibition of embroidered samplers we were faced with the unusual conservation problem of needlework sample books. These date from the 1850s, and 60s, and were made in convent schools in Quebec.

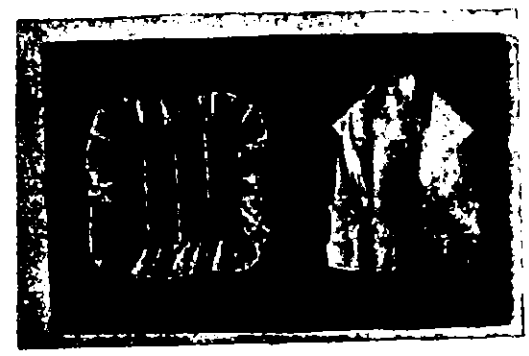
As in Europe, sewing, knitting and embroidery skills were an integral part of the education curricula of young girls, and needlework and plain sewing was found in convent schools throughout Quebec. The most popular exercise took the form of a book presenting page after page of perfect, albeit, miniature garments, and techniques such as hemming, buttonholes, pleating, gathering, darts, etc. Although the workbooks in the McCord's collection are from different schools and cities it is interesting to note that the same lessons were being taught in each.

These miniature exercises vary in size and difficulty, and include a perfectly constructed handstitched shirt (17x21cm), a tiny sock that must have been knitted on extremely fine knitting needles as it only measures 9x3cm, and even a tiny alphabet sampler (14x18cm).

Before Conservation

The workbooks appear to be exercise books that must have been specially printed. Students would have been unable to omit a lesson as some books appear to have been printed with designated exercises defined by labels, with numbered pages.

Our task was to prepare the books for display. They were to be presented in their original format as books. All samples in the book were originally spot glued to the pages. On most pages the samples had come loose, making the dark brown glue staining on the samples and the books clearly visible. Some of the samples appear to be missing or possibly were never finished. In the early 1970's a volunteer at the museum had re-attached the samples with a small cross-stitch in each corner, and also interleaved the pages with acid free tissue paper, which is a good short term solution.



After Conservation

Samples mounted on Mylar and hinged to pages, interleaved with Cerex.

Overall the exercise books were worn, particularly around the edges of the cover and pages, and the covers were warped.

The condition of the samples varied. For example the miniature silk dress exercise appeared to be in perfectly good condition, while the wool exercises had suffered insect infestations, but were otherwise not discolored due to the acid environment. All the white cotton samples were very yellowed due to the inherent acidity of the paper.

As is often the case we were working under deadlines to make the books presentable for the exhibition, however we did not want to treat just the two pages in each book that were going to be shown. The

idea of separating the objects permanently from the pages did not appeal, since there is always a danger that some components will get lost. We decided to remove the samples from the books for wet cleaning and to mount them on acid free material. We also had a problem that we could not increase the thickness of the book by adding extra acid free paper pages. Looking at different conservation materials available, Mylar seemed to be the best solution , but we found it too slippery and stiff to interleave the pages. However, we wished to use Mylar to support the exercise samples but found it too shiny, as it showed through the thinner or open weave fabrics. Unfortunately a matte Mylar is not available. This gave us the idea of giving the Mylar a matte surface by sanding it. It was not a difficult task to sand a piece of approximately 60x50cm, and then trace carefully around each sample with a pencil, cut the shape, and attach it with a cross stitch in each corner. Meanwhile the pages of the book were dry cleaned with Scum-X, an eraser powder, and afterwards vacuumed.

The reverse side of the Mylar was then attached to the pages by means of hinges of Japanese tissue paper. Double sided tape attached half of the hinge to the Mylar, while the other half of the hinge is adhered to the book pages with rice starch paste. To interleave the pages we used Cerex (a non woven polyester) because it is soft and should conform more easily to the unusual shapes of the objects. We found that these methods worked out very well: The only problem was keeping track of the miniatures as so many colleagues kept entering the lab to wonder at their size and detail.

After the exhibition closes the sample books will be kept in special custom made storage boxes.

The exhibition Quebec Samplers: ABCs of Embroidery will be on display at the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal, Quebec from June 1 1994 to December 4 1994.

Eva Burnham
Conservator Costume and Textiles
McCord Museum of Canadian History
Montreal, Quebec

PARASOLS - THE COVER STORY

Illustration 1

Parasol, c. 1840, Parks Canada

The purpose of this article is to describe how to accurately take a pattern from a parasol cover and to present some of the considerations in making a new cover, support or lining.

The procedure for taking a pattern from an original parasol is based on the pattern-taking techniques used by the costume curators and designers at Parks Canada.

In its simplest form, the basic principle for taking a pattern from an original garment is that of identifying the straight of grain - both lengthwise and widthwise - and measuring the interior measurements of each pattern piece to establish their outer limits. As a rule, seam allowances are not included in the measurements unless they form an integral part of a pattern piece such as an opening, pleat, or trimming. Such cases can be noted on the pattern drawing.

Five simple terms need clarification for pattern-taking:

BASELINE -- a line usually along the longest straight of grain of a pattern piece, used as a reference point from which perpendicular measurements are taken.

EXTERNAL MEASUREMENTS (of a pattern piece) -- those measurements taken on all outside edges of a pattern piece, along seams, folds, darts and hems: those measurements that define the boundaries of a pattern piece.

GRAIN -- the direction in which the warp and weft run: straight of grain follows a warp or weft thread: lengthwise grain (warp) runs parallel to the selvage and crosswise or widthwise grain (weft) runs at right angles to the selvage or lengthwise grain.

INTERNAL MEASUREMENTS (of a pattern piece) -- those measurements taken on the straight of grain through the length or width of any part of a particular pattern piece: those measurements that determine the proper angle and shape of the seamlines.

NATURAL REFERENCE POINT -- an existing point such as the intersection of two seams or location of trimmings that can be used as a measurement reference.

The parasol that I chose to pattern dates to the 1840s. (Illustration 1) It is a charmingly simple and yet poorly constructed cotton plaid parasol with a folding stick. I chose the center of each panel as the location of the baseline. After examining the parasol cover, I discovered that the selvage ran from rib to rib along the outer edge, the selvage being used on all but one panel where a narrow hem was present. There was also a seam across the width of one of the panels.

Because the parasol was constructed less than perfectly, it is safe to suspect that it could have been cut as inaccurately as well.

(All the measuring is done with the parasol down, that is without any stress on the parasol cover.)

Two main methods for determining the pattern measurements are:

Method 1. Find a baseline down the center of the panel and, at even intervals down the baseline (eg. 2"), measure out from each side along the straight of grain. Plot these points on graph paper in partial or full scale (a personal choice) and join up the plotted points to establish the outside edges of the pattern piece. (Illustration 2)

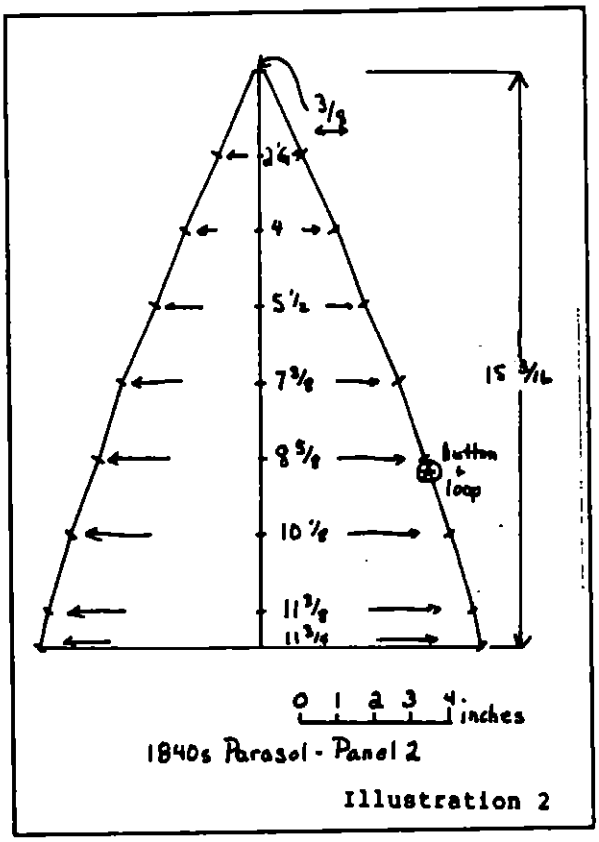


Illustration 2

Method 2. Find a baseline down the center of the panel and at even intervals down the baseline, measure the full width of the panel along the straight of grain. Evenly divide the measurement on each side of the baseline and plot these points on your paper. Join up the plotted points to establish the outside edges of the pattern piece. (Illustration 3)

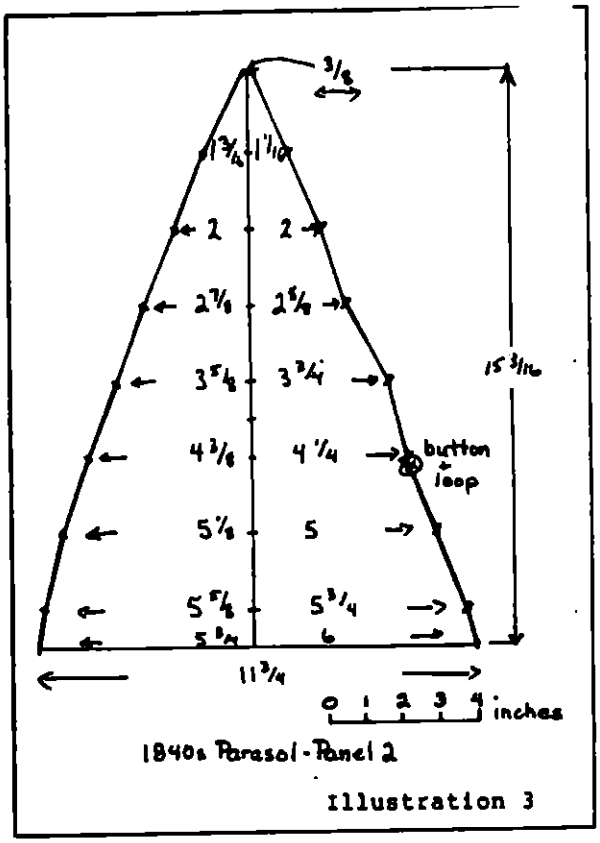


Illustration 3

If these two methods are done on the same panel, you can examine the accuracy of cut of the panel. Compare the results. As you can see in Illustration 2, the seams are not cut in a smooth curve according to the grain of the fabric. This can be caused by poor cutting, poor sewing or by fabric that was off grain before the parasol panels were cut out.

It is wise to measure at least one other panel to compare its cut to that of the first panel. Illustration 4 shows the shape of Panel 2 using Method 2. Panel 2 can then be compared to Panel 1 in Illustration 3.

To have the most accurate pattern of the parasol cover, each piece must be measured individually using Method 1. The identification of natural reference points such

as the button and loop placement, anchor points (locations where the cover is sewn to the frame) and flaws in the fabric, is very helpful. The use of the fabric's characteristics - in this case, that of it being a woven plaid - can be extremely helpful in speeding up the process without sacrificing accuracy. Measuring all of the panels is very time consuming but it can be very useful if a precise liner or support is required for a historic parasol cover.

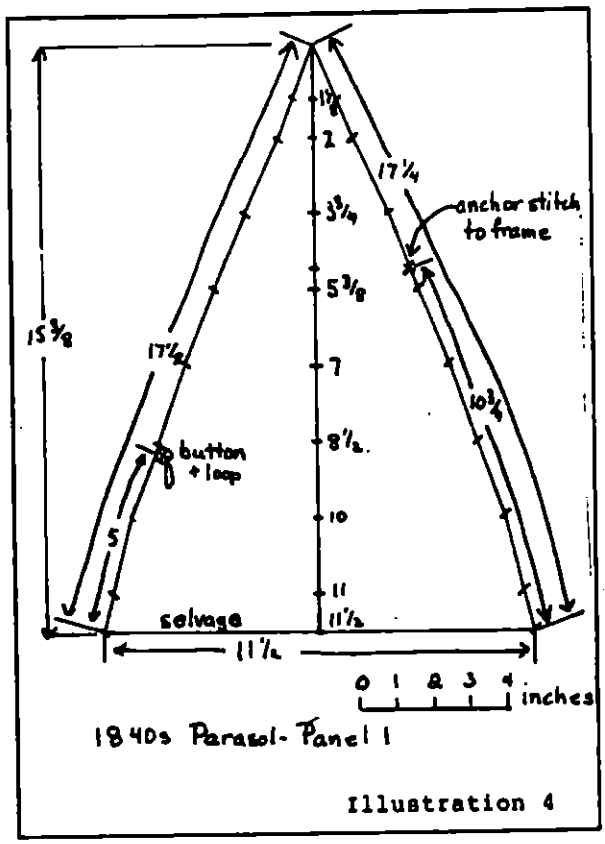


Illustration 4

Record the exterior measurements of each panel. Because the nature of a parasol is that of stretching the off-grain, curved seams to a high degree of tension, the accurate recording of the external measurements of each panel cannot be taken from the cover when it is not under stress. Instead, measure the length of the ribs which supports each seam, measuring only the portion of the rib that is actually covered by the parasol cover. (This is the extent to which the new fabric must be allowed to stretch.)

When making a new cover, it is important to remember a few things along the way:

Each type of fabric acts differently. A mock-up made of factory cotton will stretch more than silk taffeta, for example.

The lengthwise grain generally runs around the parasol's circumference, putting the greatest strain on the strongest direction of the fabric.

Each panel must be cut precisely to give an even shape. The slightest deviation from the accurate angle of the seams is multiplied by eight seams in the cover, each one of which will need to be evenly adjusted to correct the error.

The seams must be stretched while sewn, but not be stretched to distortion. Basting the seams together and pinning the cover to the frame will help determine the stretch required.

The shape of the dome of the parasol can be altered somewhat by reshaping the shaped seams and increasing or decreasing the distance between the ends of the ribs.

Be prepared to completely recut your cover to refine your pattern. Having extra fabric on hand is always wise.

The shape of the lining (if present) is usually the same shape as the outer layer.

Using the identical pattern ensures the lining will fit perfectly in place along the circumference as well as throughout the shape. The seams are anchored to the hinged joint attached to the top of the slider.

The principles of taking a pattern from an original parasol outlined here are very simple. Being accurate is the hard part and that comes with practice and perseverance. The production of a well-fitted parasol cover requires precision in measuring, cutting, fitting, and sewing as well as trial and error.

Ruth K. Mills
Period Costume Designer
Interpretation Branch
National Historic Sites Directorate
Parks Canada
Department of Canadian Heritage
Ottawa

WINTERTHUR OPENS NEW BUILDING AND EXHIBITION GALLERY

In October 1992, Winterthur Museum celebrated the opening of the ground floor of our new exhibition building and our first permanent exhibition Perspectives on the Decorative Arts in Early America. All types of objects from the collection are used together to illustrate a number of themes that concern the various ways that one can look at an object, hence the title. These themes are illustrated in three main gallery spaces that cover the design, production and use of decorative art objects in America.

The first gallery shows differences in design styles which can vary depending on both when and where they were made. For example, an English sampler is compared to an American one from the same period. Another section of this gallery shows changes over time, with groupings of objects dating from 1640 to 1860, the period covered by the collecting policy of the museum. This section includes a number of valances and printed textiles, but from a textile point of view the highlight is the opportunity to compare a beautiful late 17th century Indian palampore with a very important printed coverlet made by John Hewson, an 18th century textile printer from Philadelphia. Both are visually stunning, but the differences in sophistication of both design and technology is fascinating.

The second gallery covers the production and distribution of decorative art objects. The first section, called Technique and Technology, describes different ways of making and decorating objects, including

examples of different weave structures. An attempt was made in this section to find objects of different materials that would fit into defined categories. It was not difficult to choose textiles that illustrate printed, painted or applied decoration, but it was more of a problem when it came to carved, inlaid, or molded. One of the dominant textiles here is a copperplate print on cotton designed by Francis Nixon (active 1752-1765) with a very three dimensional design of fruit and flowers. The second section within this area covers Maker and Marketplace, with examples of makers marks illustrated by our Bedwell and Walters printed linen, and trade illustrated by a silk brocade imported into America in the 18th century.

The final major area of the exhibition has sections on Ritual and Custom, and Messages and Symbols. The textile highlights here include a Baltimore Album quilt and one of our large collection of mourning pictures.

Two thirds of the second floor of the new building opened in the fall of 1993, with a furniture connoisseurship gallery. Most textillians (a wonderful new word coined by Joy Gardiner's husband and which I hope is self explanatory) feel that entirely too much attention is given to furniture in this museum, a sorry situation which we are working actively to overcome.

The final section of the new building will open in September 1994, with the first of Winterthur's temporary exhibitions. This will be named Eye for Excellence, and gives us the opportunity to show some of the finest individual objects from the collection. Textile highlights will include a set of needlework easy chair covers (for which a reproduction chair has been made), one of our fine bed rugs, and many pieces of embroidery and printed furnishing fabrics. Unfortunately, space limitations have meant that some wonderful pieces will not be included, such as a huge but wonderful 18th century Axminster rug.

The new building is particularly exciting as it is the first time that Winterthur Museum has been able to display its collection outside of the traditional period room settings. Visitors are able to see the exhibition on their own; whereas in the rest of the museum they have to be taken on guided tours in small groups and may not always have the opportunity to see parts of the collection that particularly interest them. We hope to be able to use this new space to show more of the textile collection in the future. We are starting to plan for a show in 1999 of our collection of quilts and coverlets.

New buildings pose many challenges (this is, of course, a euphemism for headaches). In our case one of the main practical problems was that the doors and elevators were not made large enough for large mounted textiles. No one could believe that textiles could be larger than furniture, despite Joy's attempts to persuade them otherwise. In the end, the large mounts had to be constructed in the galleries, which is going to pose problems for rotation schedules in the future.

A book about the Perspectives Gallery has been published called Seeing Things Differently by Philip D. Zimmerman. A catalogue (for which we are frantically attempting to meet photographic deadlines) will be published for the Eye for Excellence exhibition this fall. Our scientist, Jan Carlson, is speaking at a Scottish Society for

Conservation & Restoration conference on Exhibitions and Conservation in April on 'Preparations for the NEB: Winterthur's Experience with Materials, Passive Scavengers and Monitor's, which will be published.

Linda Eaton
Textile Conservator
The Henry Francis du pont Winterthur Museum
Winterthur, Delaware

MARSIL MUSEUM, ST. LAMBERT, QUE: MUSEUM OF COSTUME, TEXTILES AND FIBER

Since its inception in 1979, the Marsil Museum has endeavored to enrich the cultural life of its own community and the Greater Montreal region through a varied program of exhibitions and related educational activities. As a multidisciplinary institution, the museum has organized and presented numerous exhibitions in the fields of history, the visual arts, and the natural sciences. Its collection, however, has always consisted of historic costume and textiles.

The Museum has recently redefined its orientation to focus on the fields of fiber, dress, and textiles, in an effort to better integrate its permanent collection of costume and textiles with its varied exhibition programming. Recognized for the diversity and originality of its exhibitions, the museum will maintain a multidisciplinary approach, and will explore the subject matter of textiles and dress in historical, cross-cultural and contemporary contexts.

The objective of the new mandate is to heighten the understanding and appreciation of costume, textiles, and fiber as significant examples of material culture and important means of artistic expression. Through a variety of exhibitions, past, present and future will be explored to reveal the historic, aesthetic, ethnographic, technological, economic and political significance of clothing and textiles. Subjects such as contemporary and historic fashion, handwoven and industrially produced textiles, contemporary fiber art, and clothing from various cultures will be explored.

The museum's transition to its new mandate will take place gradually. Within the next five years, the museum's programming will be entirely devoted to this subject area. Topics of upcoming exhibitions for this year include a history of fashion footwear, Inuit eider skin dress, a retrospective of Quebecois couturier Michel Robichaud, and Chinese embroidery.

In the summer of 1993 the museum relocated its collection to an off-site museum quality storage space, which will permit better collections management and care, and allow greater room for growth. The collection consists primarily of costume and

accessories from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its scope has recently broadened to include non-Western dress.

The Museum is located in an eighteenth-century stone farmhouse, owned by the City of St. Lambert. In 1977, work began to transform the building into a museum. Pratt & Whitney Canada sponsored all of the costs associated with the renovation of the house and the construction of an annex. In addition, 500 employees, from the President to the hourly-paid workers, donated over 3500 hours of their time to the project.

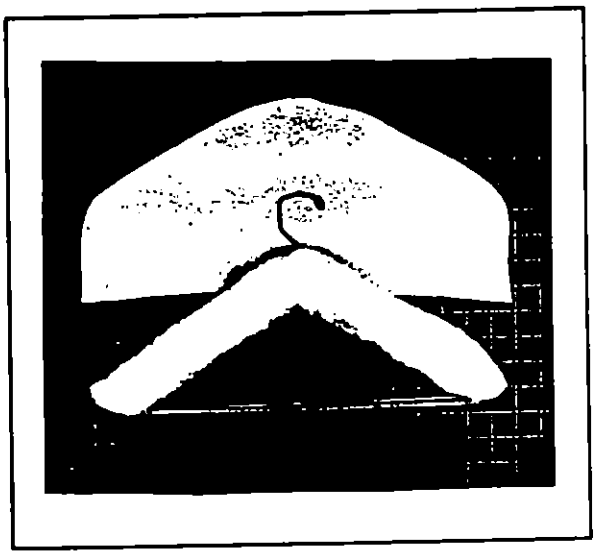
Because the building had to meet the requirements of a modern museum, with stringent climate control and security systems, it was renovated rather than restored. Careful attention was made to retain the original structure and character of the building, however. The Museum is operated by a private foundation, though, the city of St. Lambert continues to maintain the property. Pratt & Whitney has retained its interest in the museum and still provides immeasurable and much appreciated assistance. The Museum has been accredited by the Ministère de la Culture since 1987.

Cynthia Cooper
Curator of Costume
Marsil Museum
St. Lambert, Que.

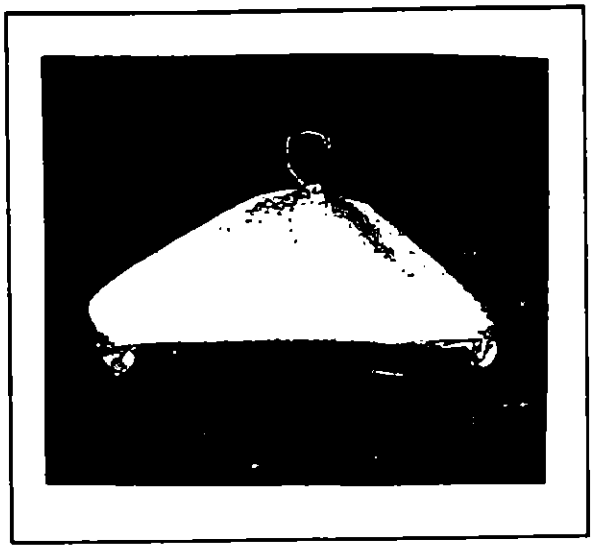
More hangers

Isn't it amazing how a subject as mundane as hangers attracts so much attention? Perhaps it's the relationship to available space (and lack there-of), shrinking budgets and conservators' preservation instincts coupled with an unwillingness to admit defeat, that generates so much creativity in this area.

The Canadian War Museum has a large number of relatively recent (post 1900) complete uniforms, both male and female, in its textile collection. In order to store these items together and to conserve space, we have developed "trouser/jacket" hangers.



The men's suit hanger starts as a standard wooden hanger with a dropped bar. The bar is dropped by 3cm. The shoulder portion is padded with polyester batting and the bar is covered with polyethylene pipe insulation. The pipe insulation has a 1.2cm interior diameter hole and a 2cm thick wall

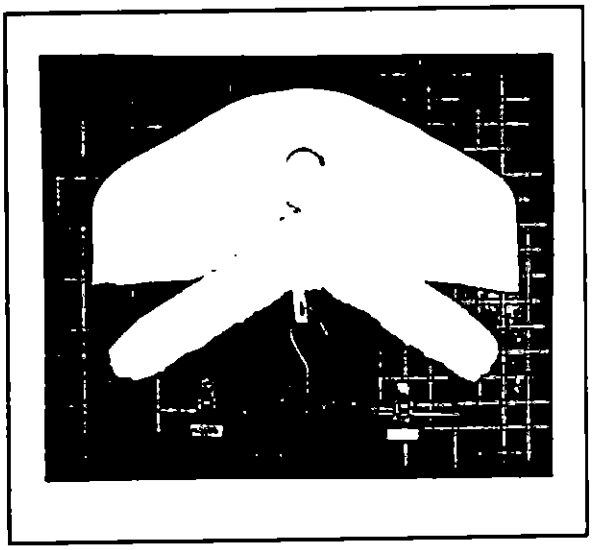


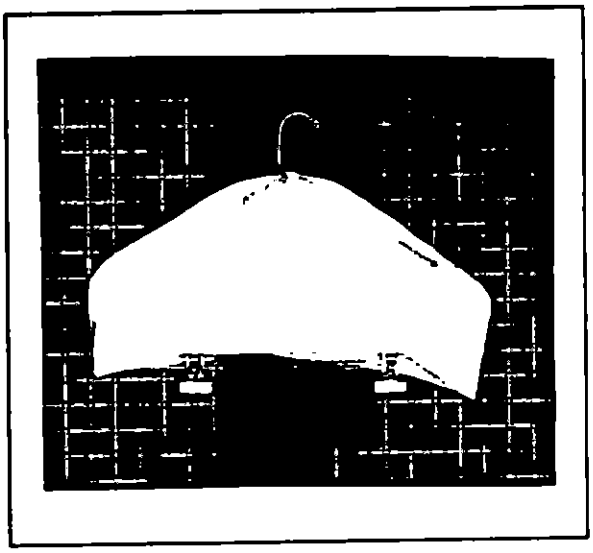
and fits snugly enough to the bar that further securing is unnecessary.

The women's suit hangers start as a clear plastic hanger A clear plastic 14cm long "Droploop Connector" is slipped over the hook and the hanger is padded with polyester batting. A "Tenderclip" skirt hanger is slotted through the bottom of the connector. The "Tenderclip" hanger was developed specifically for lingerie and the clips are padded with a grey, gridded foam. Small pieces of thin Ethafoam are used between the clips and the textile to avoid any transfer of grid marks, and the tension is weak enough to hold a skirt without causing stress.

Both types of hangers are covered with a loose fitting unbleached cotton cover.

All the hangers and connectors were obtained from a commercial display and storage outlet in Ottawa and are probably readily available through other similar businesses throughout the country. The pipe insulation was purchased from a building supplier and I caution you to specify polyethylene as there are different types on the market, some of which could pose a problem such as Insul-Tube which is made from nitral dibutydiene rubber and PVC.





Many of our uniforms entered our collection complete with all accessories. Future storage plans include storing all the accessory items (shirt, tie, handbag etc.) to a particular uniform in boxes placed in the cabinet in which the uniform is stored. The

idea is to be able to retrieve a complete (down to the last shirt stud) uniform "as worn" with a minimum of fuss.

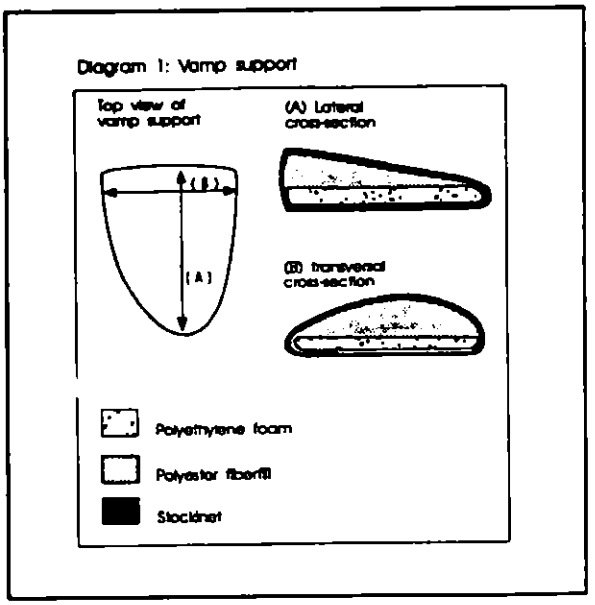
Helen Holt
Textile Conservator
Canadian War Museum
Ottawa, Ontario

INNER SUPPORTS FOR MOCCASINS: AN INGENIOUS SOLUTION

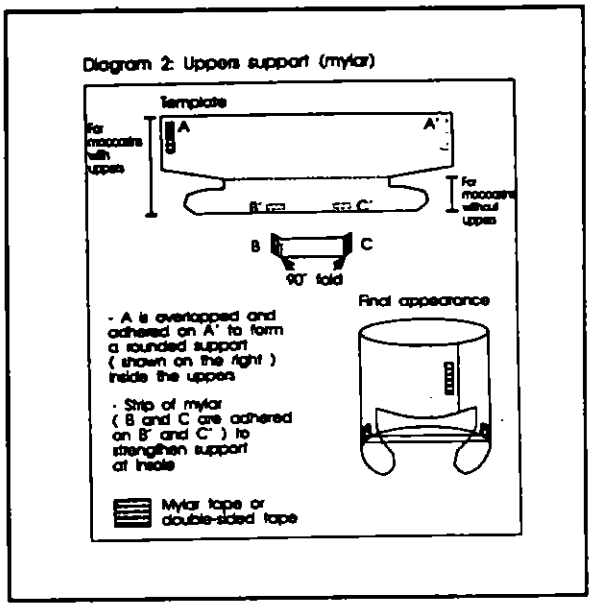
The extensive ethnographic collections of the McCord Museum of Canadian History include a variety of moccasins from Native groups from across Canada. Most are made of a combination of hide, leather or textiles with various adornments, quillwork, beads, etc. In the past, for storage most of the moccasins were properly padded with acid-free tissue. Although this is an adequate method as a temporary inner support, the tissue does prevent examination of the interior of the moccasins, settles with time and gives the moccasins a rounded shape, which is definitely not adequate for exhibition and interpretation.

Over the years, we have come to develop a method of supporting the moccasins that is quite simple, uses materials readily available in most museums and adequately fulfills its role for both storage and exhibition purposes. The supports are also custom-made to fit any size of moccasin and are adequate for those with either high or low uppers.

The inner supports are made in two separate parts and easily can be inserted without any undue stress to the seams or materials in the moccasins. The first part consists of a polyethylene foam/polyester fibrefill inner padding covered with Stockinet, which is made to fit into and conform to the toe section, and support the vamp. The polyethylene foam at the bottom is important as it will give the moccasins a flat lower surface, which lets them stand up on their own for exhibition and storage.



The second part of the inner support consists of Mylar only so as to allow for complete visual examination of the part of the moccasin that is otherwise visible, and also to create an invisible support for exhibition. Although the Mylar must be cut according to the size of each moccasin, we have found that the general model given below can be used as a pattern in basically all cases. The larger upper section is overlapped and adhered with either archival Mylar tape or double-sided tape to form the support for the uppers. The two tongues on each side are held in place by the padded vamp support and the moccasin. To guarantee a complete support all around the inner sole and the heel often it is a good idea to add a strip of mylar against the inner sole and across the centre of the heel to give extra strength to the support. The upper edge of the Mylar support is trimmed to fit accurately just a few centimeters below the edge of the uppers. The thongs present can then be wrapped around the uppers as though the moccasins were being worn.



This system is extremely versatile and can be adapted in several ways to fit any special needs. For example, we recently machine sewed a strip of cotton ribbon along the upper edge of the Mylar support for moccasins with cotton and wool uppers. The uppers were in turn stitched to this ribbon to

hold them in place since the thongs which would have been originally used no longer exist. Although we find that the 0.5mm thick Mylar is most useful, different thicknesses can also be used to adapt to moccasins made of either light or heavy materials, stiff or quite supple. Small mylar cut-outs can easily be added to support the tongue, should it tend to fall inside

Many people have directly contributed over the years to the development of this support method. In particular I would like to mention the contribution of Eva Burnham, Costume and Textiles Conservator at the McCord Museum and Rosalie Scott, Conservator, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, NWT.

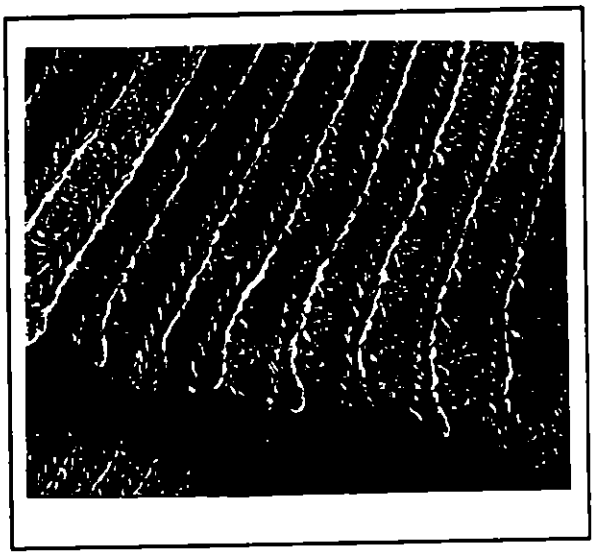
Bruno Pouliot
Conservator, Ethnology & Decorative Arts
McCord Museum of Canadian History
Montreal, Québec

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

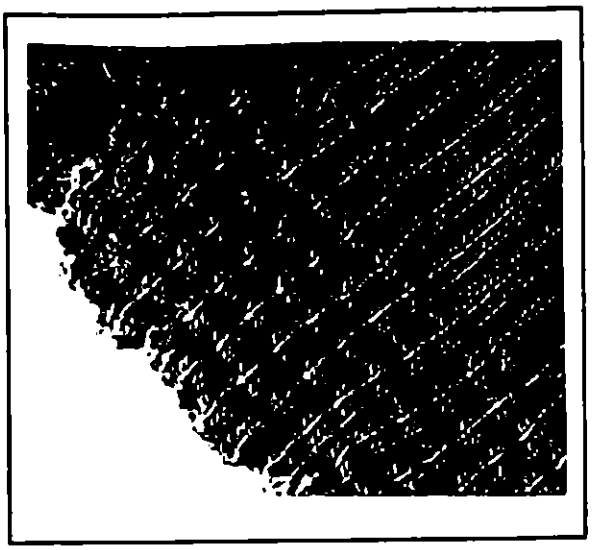
AN 18TH CENTURY STITCH - CAN YOU UNRAVEL ITS MYSTERY?

Janice Brodie, Textile Conservation Technician at Parks Canada in Ottawa, is asking TCN's readers to help her confirm the identification of a knitting stitch in an 18th century sock found on the wreck of the Machault which sank in the mouth of the Restigouche River in 1760.

The stocking is made of black or dark brown cotton yarn: the pattern is a "knit 2, purl 1" rib with a variation of this pattern at the top, which is the pattern in question. The gauge is 8 stitches per cm and 9 rows per cm.



The visual effect of the stitch variation is that of an additional thread that has been darned or woven through the already knitted ribbing. On the outside, a



horizontal thread appears across the purl wale, disappearing into the knit wale. On the inside, the thread appears at the edge of the knit wale and seems to go up, on an angle, two rows (across the back of the knit wale) and over one thread; then it goes down two rows (at an angle) and disappears into the purl wale. This sequence is repeated along the round. This row is repeated six times, every four rows.

The thread is pulled distorting the existing stitches which gives an effect similar to a flat popcorn stitch. This circular "motif" appears on the outside of the knit wale.

Several attempts, by Janice and myself, at reproducing this effect were less than satisfactory until the darning technique was tried. If anyone knows of a stitch similar to that described here and shown in Illustrations 1 and 2, Janice would very much appreciate hearing from you.

Please contact:
Janice Brodie
Textile Conservation Technician
Historic Resource Conservation
National Historic Sites Directorate
Parks Canada
1550 Liverpool Court
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0M5
phone (613) 993-2125
fax (613) 993-9796

Submitted by Ruth K. Mills
Period Costume Designer
Interpretation Branch
National Historic Sites Directorate
Parks Canada
K1A 0H3

ASSISTANCE TO COLLEAGUES IN CROATIA

TCN recently received a communication from Barbara O. Roberts, who has just returned from an ICOM Mission to Croatia to review the condition of moveable cultural property, to assess damage, the condition of collections, and the practical assistance that ICOM and its membership can provide in the present circumstances. A portion of her request to TCN and its readership is reproduced here:

"Essentially there is one textile lab in the country, a department of the Croation Restoration Center. The lab is extremely short of supplies of all sorts. They would very much like published information on textile conservation.

The quality of the textile collections in the country is very high. Many include extraordinary ecclesiastical objects and fine costume. A good deal of both has been destroyed as a result of the war. It makes what remains all the more important.

If any of your readers have spare copies of useful publications, articles, information on materials that they use on a daily basis, could they please send them to the Museum Documentation Center (see address below) for distribution?"

Conservation Materials Ltd. (see address below) is currently working with the Museum Documentation Center to set up and coordinate an account to assist Croatian museums. Colleagues who wish to make a donation to the fund could do so in US $, pounds sterling, and Japanese yen. (They have no foreign exchange at present but hope this situation would change fairly soon.) Croatian museums and professional conservators could then draw upon this fund for ordering materials they so desperately need.

Spare publications and documentation may be sent to:

Museum Documentation Center
Director, Branka Sulc
Mesnicka 5
41000 Zagreb, Croatia

For more information on the assistance fund:

Conservation Materials Ltd.
Sparks, Nevada, U.S.A.
(702) 331-0582

Croation Restauration Centre:

Restauratorski Zavod Hrvatske
Zagreb
Nika Grskovica 23
Croatia
Tel. 011 385 41 273 366

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Please send all submissions in typed form or if possible produced on IBM compatible Wordperfect 4.2, 5.0, or 5.1, on 5 1/4" or 3 1/2" disk. Submissions sent by electronic mail (FAX) are welcome. Illustrations sent by FAX will not reproduce well, and so should be sent by mail or courier if time is running out. For the best production of illustrations and clear black and white photographs, copy-ready artwork is required. Your disks will be returned but we cannot return artwork. Articles can be as short as 1 page and as long as 6 or 7. Anything longer than that will be considered for publication as a supplement.

Editors : Eva Burnham
Cynthia Cooper
Ruth K. Mills
Subscriptions: Eva Burnham
Treasurer: Cynthia Cooper

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