

# THE CLOTHES PRESS

SPRING, 2011 NO. 101

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR BONNIE ELLIOTT

This issue of the newsletter that features stories of travel (past and recent) reaffirms the notion that members are willing to go a long distance for learning opportunities and to fulfill their curiosity in matters of dress.

Sally's story of her grandmother's valise perfectly evokes the past days of travel when porters were required to move vast amounts of steamer trunks and suitcases from ship to shore and train to platform. Her grandmother's view on the importance of a well packed 'survival' valise recalls to mind my visit to France and Italy last fall when I also traveled with just one case—a wheeled 'carry on' that kept me supplied for 10 days. A minimal philosophy takes over the planning and my best investment was a pair of Clark's *Wave* shoes that my arthritic knees appreciated.

Margot Walker and Karen Pinsent ventured to London and New York for a fan workshop and the Balenciaga exhibit, and 200 years ago the Marshes of Braintree uprooted their whole family and lifestyle for a new life in Nova Scotia. This story demonstrates how merchants in the days of early settlement were suppliers and important catalysts of fashion.

This year marks the 30 Anniversary of the Costume Society of Nova Scotia and looking at this issue we have many things to celebrate. Two projects which we hope to finalize this year; to find a suitable home for the remarkable Vicki Barton– Suttles and Seawinds Collection; and to find a sponsor for the Student's Essay Prize. Accomplishing these two things will surely make this year notable.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING-JUNE 4TH, 2011

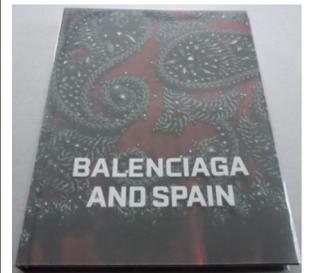
**New Venue!**  
**for 2011 AGM**  
**Admiralty Place**  
**1 Prince St., Dartmouth**  
**Directions:** (between Alderney and Portland Sts.) One block from the Dartmouth ferry terminus. Note: Parking on the street is free on weekends.

10:00 —11:30 a.m.  
Annual General Meeting  
  
Noon—1:30 p.m.  
Fabulous Pot Luck Lunch  
  
1:30—3:00 p.m.  
Afternoon Program with  
TAMMACHAT Natural  
Textiles

TAMMACHAT Natural Textiles is a Nova Scotia based social enterprise founded to provide rural women artisans in Thailand and Laos access to international markets, and to provide people in North America and Europe greater access to fairly traded, environmentally friendly products.

[www.tammachat.com](http://www.tammachat.com)

This Year's Book donation to the Halifax Public Library is *Balenciaga and Spain* by Hamish Bowles



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## FAN FARE *IN LONDON* BY MARGOT WALKER

In an inner suburb of London, England is a wonderful, little-known museum which should be on the must see list of everyone interested in costume. It is called The Fan Museum and is in Greenwich. The museum specializes in every aspect of fans and fan-making from the eleventh century to today. There is a permanent exhibition on the ground floor which covers the history of the fan, how they are made, and types of fans. Upstairs, there is a changing exhibit of fans. The theme varies every 4 months and the 100 or so fans displayed usually are part of the 3,500+ fans in the collection. Occasionally fans on loan from other museums are exhibited. A number of years ago I saw an awesome/brilliant/beautiful display of Imperial fans from the Hermitage Museum in Russia. I have never seen such gorgeous bejewelled fan sticks.

The museum is housed in two what we would call "townhouses", except that these were built in 1721. They have been beautifully restored and are worth seeing if you have any interest in domestic architecture. I took an English lace-making friend there and as we got close to the museum, she kept saying "Oh, my God; Oh, my God". Her boyfriend and his family lived in one of the houses in the 1960s. When we got to one of the second floor exhibit rooms, she said "Oh, I spent many a hot night here with my boyfriend!" But I digress...

The museum offers a half-day workshop on fan making on the first Sat. of every month. I have wanted to take it for years but was never in London on that day. This year, I landed in London on the first Fri. of Aug. and was determined to take the workshop, jet lag or not. The session lasts from 2:00 - 5:30, costs £20, and you have to bring some unfolded sheets of wrapping paper with you. It sounds like a lot of money for 3 1/2 hours, but the Canadian \$ is particularly strong this year, so the cost was not bad and the workshop is limited to six people. It was worth every penny.

First the teacher (who is also the curator of the museum) showed us different types of fans and explained why they changed over the years and how they were used. For those of us who were embroiderers and lace-makers, she also explained how to make a fixed fan. After a break for tea and biscuits, we got to work to make a Chinese and a Fontage fan. When we had finished, we were given templates and pleaters for both types of fans and told how to make our own for other shapes and sizes.

The workshop was very interesting and a lot of fun. Making a fan is a lot trickier than I expected, so I am really glad that I learnt the tricks of the trade!

The address of The Fan Museum is 12 Crooms Hil, Greenwich SE10 8ER. You can get there by train, Docklands Light Railway, bus or boat. It is open Tues. - Sat. from 11:00 - 5:00 and Sunday from 12:00 - 5:00. Admission for adults is £4.00; for Seniors £3.00. (Free for Seniors after 2:00 on Tues.) You can find more information here: [www.fan-museum.org](http://www.fan-museum.org)



This is a sample of the fan I made .

"AFTER A BREAK FOR TEA AND BISCUITS, WE GOT TO WORK TO MAKE A CHINESE AND A FONTAGE FAN."



Another fan I made.

## TIME TRAVEL TO 1761 CATHY VON KINTZEL

Playing dress-up definitely isn't just for children anymore. And, time travel really is possible. Just ask members of the Cobequid Planters 250 Society in Colchester County, N.S. who never miss an opportunity to shed their modern identities and don circa 1760s recreation clothing for all sorts of social and public functions.

The society, which is overseeing events to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Cobequid Planters from New England and Ireland beginning in 1761, received an \$8,500 grant from Canadian Heritage Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage. The money is being used to create a permanent clothing collection which can be borrowed and worn for years to come.

Since January, participants have been filling their tickle trunk with all sorts of garments and accessories. There have been several public workshops. And, while many garments are being made by a local artisan, some society members and friends are tackling projects on their own. It's been a labour of love, despite the often steep learning curve.

One of the season's highlights was May 7 when the Colchester Historical Society Museum in Truro hosted the official opening of its major exhibit entitled *New Beginners: Planters in Cobequid*.

It was an opportunity for the public to "Meet the Planters," as society members and supporters portrayed actual settlers.

Enter Heather Macumber as Jemima (Spear) Marsh, wife of Samuel and Heather's direct ancestor.

Jemima was baptized on Oct. 17, 1721 in Braintree, MA, and married Samuel on Dec.,

31, 1741. The Marshes of Braintree were a mercantile family involved in fishing. In the 1760s, they sailed on their 20-ton schooner *Charming Hannah* to begin a new life in Economy.

After establishing a fishing station, they traded fish and lumber for Boston products and used their schooner to transport passengers from Cobequid to and from Boston. Samuel Marsh's house was the only one shown on a 1767 map of Economy. In that year, Samuel Marsh reported a household of 12 people, which would have included employees; his son, Samuel Junior had a family of four, two other sons had a total of four children.

*Continued page 5*



# Meeting Balenciaga

by Karen Pinsent

This February in New York City, I met Christóbal Balenciaga through an exhibition of his work "Balenciaga, Spanish Master", presented by the Queen Sophia Spanish Institute in New York City, featuring his signature haute couture style and its pursuit of perfection.. Exquisitely curated by Hamish Bowles with Institute Chairman, Oscar de la Renta, a fellow Spaniard apprenticed at the House of Balenciaga, the exhibition was the first to consider the impact of Spanish culture, history and art on one of the greatest fashion designers of the twentieth century.

A creative strength commanding aspects of sculptor, architect and tailor, Balenciaga relocated his atelier from civil war Spain to Avenue George V, Paris in 1937, where he worked in the golden age of haute couture until his retirement from fashion in 1968. The work was richly referenced in Spanish art, religion, flamenco, regional dress and the bullfight, creating new shapes with beautifully clean lines, precisely executed. He was a master at refining a line in cloth, often by his own hand. Collections evolved slowly, gradually, proving difficult for fashion writers to classify. Radically altered silhouettes were not provided season to season.

The creation of the dramatic 'chou' wrap, to the right arrived



Francisco de Goya, *La Duquesa de Alba*, 1797



Balenciaga black evening ensemble with "chou" wrap from 1967

through the years. Vogue editor, Bettina Bellard noted, "Goya, whether Balenciaga is aware of it or not, is always looking over his shoulder. He believes in lace and ribbon bows - never used in a fussy way but rather with true Spanish dignity."

Contemporaries revered his timeless work: "Fashion's Picasso" (Cecil Beaton); "The master of us all" (Christian Dior). Coco Chanel and Madeline Vionnet were devoted friends.

You are encouraged to learn more about the work of Christóbal Balenciaga. The Costume Society of Nova Scotia annual donation to the Halifax Regional Library Reference Library on Spring Garden Road will get you started:

## Bibliography:

Bowles, Hamish (2011). "Balenciaga: Spanish Master, New York: Skira Rizzoli.

Miller, Lesley Ellis (2007). "Balenciaga – The Couturiers' Couturier". London: V&A Publications.

Jouve, Marie Andrée (1997). "Balenciaga – Fashion Memoir". London: Thames and Hudson.

Walker, Myra (2006). "Balenciaga and his Legacy". New Haven: Yale University Press

# The Suttles & Seawinds Collection

by Wilma Stewart White and Karen Pinsent

A rare opportunity is presented - to exhibit and preserve an extraordinary textile collection. The work and accomplishments of the Suttles & Seawinds company and designer Vicki Lynn Bardon tells a remarkable Nova Scotian story. It is all at once the story of a cottage industry, a woman in business, a creator of fashion and home décor designs grown from traditional Nova Scotian craft. Designs were introduced to the world through Suttles & Seawinds shops across Canada and renowned North American retailers such as Bloomingdales, Simpsons, The Bay, Saks Fifth Avenue, Abercrombie and Fitch.

Suttles and Seawinds designs are represented in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum and the McCord Museum. Inspiration to find the means to exhibit and preserve the collective work of Vicki Lynn began in Mahone Bay, the home of Suttles and Seawinds. The curator of the Mahone Bay Settlers Museum and a board member approached Vicki Lynn with the idea, and she generously offered to donate her collection.

At our 2010 Costume Society annual general meeting, this idea received a warm welcome. Work continues and support for this endeavour is gathered throughout the province. This is a sizable undertaking, and care is required to see that the collection receives the treatment it is entitled. In the coming weeks, future direction will be discussed. Your interest and thoughts are invited.

Please contact: [kpinsent@eastlink.ca](mailto:kpinsent@eastlink.ca).



Heather Macumber wears her cape

## *Time Travel....*

Post-1768, the Marsh family dominated the economic and political life of Economy, building mills, developing the fishery, and trading up and down the shores of the Bay of Fundy.

As far as clothing is concerned, the sky was likely the limit. Jemima Marsh's clothing would have been made in Boston. Given her social and economic status, it is highly likely that she regarded herself as the leader of fashion in Cobequid. The list of passengers on her husband's schooner sounds like a who's who of the Cobequid Basin shore, from Fort Belcher to Fort Cumberland. Surely, Jemima would have taken advantage of continued access to the centre of New England fashion.

The Cobequid Planters 250 Society will continue to celebrate the lives and achievements of Planters who settled the Truro, Onslow and Londonderry townships throughout 2011. Upcoming events including a one-day conference on June 11, an 18<sup>th</sup> century lifestyle encampment on July 9 and 10, museum exhibit, concerts, marking of approximately 200 original Planter graves, and much more.

For information: [colchesterhistoreum.ca/planters250](http://colchesterhistoreum.ca/planters250).

## ***WHAT'S ON THIS SUMMER***

### **Quebec**

#### THE McCORD MUSEUM UNWRAPS ITS TREASURES

90 Treasures, 90 Stories, 90 Years

From March 18 to September 11, 2011

To celebrate its 90th anniversary, the McCord museum presents 90 treasures, 90 stories, 90 years, an exhibition that brings together a wide range of fascinating artefacts, photos, costumes and ethnological objects. <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/>

### **Ontario**

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

#### RIOTOUS COLOUR, DARING PATTERNS: FASHIONS + TEXTILES 18TH TO 21ST CENTURIES

Until October 16, 2011

This dazzling display features over 120 items from around the world drawn from the ROM's extensive textile and costume collection, many of which are on display for the first time. <http://www.rom.on.ca/>

The Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto

All About Shoes: Footwear Through the Ages ; BEAUTY, IDENTITY, PRIDE:Native North American Footwear; ART IN SHOES ~ SHOES IN ART ; THE ROARING TWENTIES:Heels, Hemlines and High Spirits. // [www.batashoemuseum.ca/index.html](http://www.batashoemuseum.ca/index.html)

### **New Brunswick**

New Brunswick Museum

\*NEW\* Somewhere Over the Rainbow...Bloomers Fly?

Until 29 May 2011

Get your knickers in a knot with an exhibition of heritage underwear and undergarments! The items on display, selected from Queens County Heritage's permanent collection, show the broad range of materials, techniques, styles and patterns used from the 1850s to the 1930s. [www.nbm-mnb.ca/](http://www.nbm-mnb.ca/)

### **Nova Scotia**

Randall House Museum

259 Main Street, Wolfville

<http://wolfvillehs.ednet.ns.ca>

## *Gallery of Fashion*

Wolfville Dress 1850-1900:

A display of Men's and Women's attire  
from the permanent collection

June 1 – September 15, 2011



## “TAKE ONE VALISE” BY SALLY ERSKINE DOUCETTE

Whether you travel around the world or down the street, you need one bag that has all your essentials: the clothes that bring you comfort, warmth, and make you feel at home, when you're not. If you have that one bag, what else do you really need?

The one valise idea came to mind recently when a friend moved. After two days of removing belongings from her house, a shopping trip was required to buy socks and underwear, in spite of near exhaustion, because she didn't have a clean set for the actual 'move-out-for-good-and-leave-town' day. At the other end of the process, her husband arrived at the new house and couldn't find the tv remote – a major problem for him. So he proceeded to open boxes randomly, which created much unwanted chaos.

This scenario got me thinking because I knew I would be moving soon, and prefer to plan ahead for organization. Could the concept of 'take one valise,' (sage advice in any circumstances), provide all the comforts of home during the journey ahead? My list of essentials is rather long: a change of clothes, pj's and slippers, tea bags and favourite cup, important documents, extra keys, alarm clock, radio, camera, laptop, cell phone, remotes and rechargers, a sweater and large scarf, a hat, gloves, long johns, in case the house sale takes a year; and of course a sewing kit, yarn and crochet hooks; paper, envelopes, pens and postage stamps. You get the picture: a very big, personal bag.

It just happens that I have such a bag, one which belonged to my great-grandmother. She traveled a good deal in Europe as a companion to a wealthy woman in early 20thc. (Sometimes it pays to be charming.) Granny wrote a poem based on her traveling experiences called 'Take one valise.' In the poem, several reasons are given to support the virtues of traveling light. She says that the porters will love you, not to mention that you can carry it yourself, and that you will be forced to seriously edit your wardrobe for simple living.

Granny's bag is sturdy and sizable, although not especially good looking. It has her initials stenciled on the top (F. M. R. for Frances Mildred Rickman), beside a well-worn red 'CUNARD' sticker. It's a plain case, made of hard board of some kind, and about 12" deep. On either side of the front handle, there are two clasps which press into a slot, making that very satisfying 'thunk,' and they still work. I keep the bag's elegant miniature skeleton key on my everyday key chain, to avoid losing it.

When we did move last fall, whenever we needed something, I knew where it was – even clean linens to 'dress' the house before a showing. It was always in the bag. The one valise: the bag that holds your essentials. Where ever you go, it goes too. Packed and ready for the next trip.

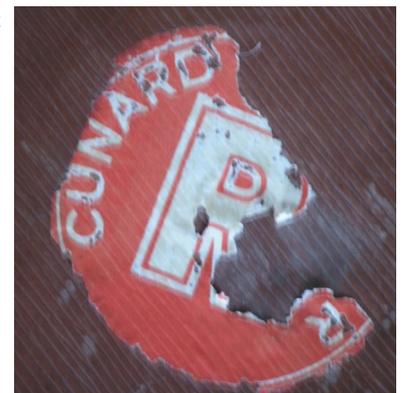
(My dog, Boo, has her own bag: a royal blue Mountain Equipment Co-op knapsack. Besides the essential food and water, it holds her red wool winter coat and 'muttluck' boots to protect her feet from harsh road salt; and a yellow rain coat with detachable hood. Can you believe that?!)

At the moment, our daily essentials are unpacked, but I think the one valise makes a great 'grab and go bag' for emergency stuff – important documents, first aid, light in the dark: candles and matches, head lamp, water bottle and energy bars, rain gear, an extra set of clothes and long johns, a travel pillow, a warm cozy sweater to wrap yourself in for the mobile comfort of home, when you're away from home; all the things that you want with you at all times, especially when you have to travel, or evacuate suddenly.

At times like these, when we are away from home, 'travelling,' for whatever reason, business, pleasure or an emergency, take my great-grandmother's advice: take one valise.



“GRANNY’S BAG IS STURDY AND SIZABLE, ALTHOUGH NOT ESPECIALLY GOOD LOOKING. IT HAS HER INITIALS STENCILED ON THE TOP (F. M. R. FOR FRANCES MILDRED RICKMAN), BESIDE A WELL-WORN RED ‘CUNARD’ STICKER”



## The Costume Society of Nova Scotia

c/o Association of Nova Scotia Museums  
1113 Marginal Road, Halifax NS  
B3H 4P7  
costumesociety@ednet.ns.ca  
www.costumesociety.ednet.ns.ca

### The Costume Society of Nova Scotia

The Society encourages interest in the history, development and conservation of Nova Scotian costume and personal adornment, and offers learning opportunities through workshops and hands-on programs. The Society's membership is diverse, including collectors, museum professionals, designers, costumers, reenactors, researchers, historians, and students.

CSNS was founded in 1981 and is a member of the Costume Society of America, the Association of Nova Scotia Museums, and the Dartmouth Heritage Museum.

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### *Library Resources*

The Costume Society of Nova Scotia donated its library collection to the Costume Studies Program at Dalhousie University. This costume reference library is available to members of CSNS by contacting Dianne Kristoffe @ 494-2178 [Dianne.kristoffe@dal.ca](mailto:Dianne.kristoffe@dal.ca). The library collection is housed within the Costume Studies accommodations at 1515 Dresden Row, Suite 202 in the City Centre Atlantic. Please allow time for scheduling visits as the room is used for classes also.

Also check out the Spring Garden branch of the Halifax Public Library. There is a growing costume collection in the Reference section on the second floor.

### *The Clothes Press*

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The Clothes Press encourages content from its readers. Send articles, reviews, and letters to the Editorial Committee. The Clothes Press is published quarterly by the Costume Society of Nova Scotia. Views expressed in The Clothes Press are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent CSNS or its supporters.