

THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

THE CLOTHES PRESS

CSNS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2007, NO. 89

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR:

Many thanks to everyone who attended the Annual General Meeting in April – it was a really good start to the year! Welcome to the 2007-08 board and to our new Board member and vice chair, Bonnie Elliott.

A special thanks to our AGM speakers, Ginny Bell and Anne Pickard. Each brought a passion to their subjects that shone through.

In addition to our connection through the newsletter, Yahoo group and programming, we will explore avenues of professional development and education for the public.

Karen Pinsent

UPCOMING PROGRAMS:

JULY 9 PIRATES

KELLY GRANT OF THE MARITIME MUSEUM OF THE ATLANTIC

730PM AT MMA

SEPTEMBER 10 NEW "LACE" TECHNIQUES

ANNE PICKARD, NSCAD

730PM AT MMA

**SEPTEMBER 22 SATURDAY DISCUSSION:
ACADIAN COSTUME**

10AM-2PM AT MMA

ALL MEETINGS TAKE PLACE AT THE
MARITIME MUSEUM OF THE ATLANTIC

BOOK DONATION:

The Costume Society of Nova Scotia donated two costume reference books to the Halifax Regional Library, Spring Garden Road Branch in April. These books are now part of the excellent reference section at the library, and available to the public. They will not circulate in order to ensure their continued availability. Many thanks to Bonnie Elliot, of Wolfville, for taking care of this donation.

Book titles are:

Fashion, The Collection of the Kyoto Costume Institute, by Fukai, Akiko

What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America, by Linda Baumgarten

Dressed for Thrills: 100 Years of Halloween Costumes and Masquerade, by Phyllis Galembo

The book plate inside the front cover provides a dedication to the memory of Anne Copeland, long time member of CSNS, who passed away in December 2006



Bonnie Elliot, on behalf of CSNS, and Reference Librarian. Maureen Collin.

IN THE NEWS:

RARE CREE COSTUME TO BE DONATED TO CANADIAN MUSEUM

CBC Arts

Donald Ellis, a southern Ontario art dealer who has appeared as an appraiser on *Antiques Roadshow*, has bought a rare Canadian Cree costume at auction in New York on Friday.

Ellis paid \$510,000 US for the Woodland Cree leggings, mittens and coat sold by Sotheby's auction house.

Ellis says he will donate the garment to a Canadian museum.

The costume, which includes a coat cut like an English frock coat, has a beaded design of crosses, circles, squares and triangles traditional to the Cree.

Made of elk hide, it is elaborately decorated with red, green and black quills and glass beads in a geometric pattern.

"It's one of a handful that exists of this type, and it's arguably the most important example extant of this type," Ellis said, estimating there are only 14 such costumes in existence.

PHOTO CREDIT OMISSION:

Last issue, we included a photo of Sheila and Sylvia Yeoman that was taken in period costume at Sherbrooke Village Historic Site. We neglected to give credit where it was due. The photo was taken by Suzette Jordan, Head Photographer.

The process is Ambrotype, a wet-plate developed on glass. As far as they know, the studio may be the only commercially operating Ambrotype studio in North America (hard to find out, but they don't know of any other).

"It has all of its accoutrements, it's in remarkable condition and state of preservation, and it has a collection history back to Canada in the early 19th century. So it's a pretty important piece of Canadian cultural history."

The costume is a "fascinating fusion of cultures," said David Roche, Sotheby's specialist in American Indian art.

The coat incorporates European design, in the use of epaulets and brass buttons, but has decorations traditional to the Cree, Sotheby's said.

A British army officer, Maj. Edward Barwick, bought the costume from some First Nations allies after fighting in the War of 1812 and helping create the peace treaties after the war.

"This was a coat that was made for a very important person," Roche said, adding that it is hard to know whether it was commissioned for a European or was made for an Indian.

THANK YOU TO OUR AGM DOOR PRIZE SPONSORS:

Fabricville, Bayers Road Shopping Centre, Halifax, NS www.fabricville.com

Timmel Fabrics, Halifax, NS www.timmelfabrics.com

Amos Pewter, Mahone Bay, NS www.amospewter.com

Congratulations! to the door prize winners

Melissa Allen Estelle Lalonde

Anita Campbell Sheila Strong

Laura Legère Margot Walker

BOOKS:**The Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion**

Contributed by Tina Bates

The Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion will explore, in ten volumes and 650 articles, the dressed and adorned body across cultures throughout history, with an emphasis on developments in the nineteenth century to the present. The proposed scope is vast, and the approach is cross-cultural and multidisciplinary in order to provide readers with an appreciation of the richness and complexity of dress around the world.

Reflecting the fact that dress studies have become vital across a range of disciplines, a wide range of interpretations will be included to help readers develop a critical understanding of cultural practices. The publication is scheduled for 2010.

Tina Bates, curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, has been invited to write a chapter for the volume on North America. Her chapter, "The Study of Canadian Dress: A Review and Resources (working title)," will outline the history and current trends in Canadian scholarship on dress and fashion; and will describe the major resources for research in Canada, including museums, university collections, organizations (including the Costume Society of Nova Scotia!), and archival collections.



2007 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Attendees with presenter Anne Pickard of NSCAD (in striped sweater)

2006 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Attendees and presenter Dr. Carolyn Thomas (back row, second from right) model their Easter bonnets made during the AGM workshop. Dr. Thomas presented a lecture entitled 'Hatitude'.



A group of women in shirtwaists and hats. Mahone Bay, c. 1910, Mahone Bay Settlers Museum

VINTAGE CLOTHES POLICY: YAHOO GROUP DISCUSSION

With permission from Sally Erskine Doucette, Sheila Strong, Meg Wilcox and Clary Croft

Sally wrote:

Over the past few years, there were various conversations about vintage fashion shows and there are strong opinions about which clothes "should" be strictly conserved and never worn, and those that "should" be worn in fashion shows etc. I am VERY interested to know your governing guidelines, and those you think the Costume Society should be recommending.

Sheila S. wrote:

I recall that some time ago the CSNS adopted a position on private collections that could be summarized as follows: we recommend that the owners of collections preserve and store items appropriately and are prepared to assist as we can, but we recognize that the owner of a private collection has the right to treat his or her own property as he or she sees fit.

Clary wrote:

Yes, Sheila is correct regarding the CSNS policy on wearing and using artifacts. It is always an individual choice. My own preference is to display artifacts on mannequins and use good reproductions for cat walk type displays. Two points to this argument: Less damage to the original and no perception of inappropriately using an item that has been donated to a repository for care [such as a museum or costume archives]. This would not apply to artifacts relegated to the "study" category. Once a museum is

seen as "selling off" donated items they are unlikely to receive further donations.

Meg wrote:

Such a hot topic this has been over the years.

Personally, I understand the (sometimes horrifying) historical truth - people wear the neat old stuff they find in their closets and trunks, for "fancy dress", or they take them apart to make into other things, or give them to the kids to play with, and otherwise treat them as though they are "just clothes". And they're right! Clothes have a "living" quality that people strongly identify with. When you realize how many 19th century costume parties were based on "historical" themes, with the actual historical garments worn (and altered!) for the occasion, well, EEEEEKKK! (Don't think about the ones made into cushions and other decorative things, or used to wipe up after the dog.)

Think of Carl Kohler's book, and others of that ilk - all kinds of artifacts being worn by "modern" people in the photos. I have a modern "vintage collector's guide" at work, where most of the garments are from a single private collection, being worn by people who believe they should be worn. We learn something from how historical garments were treated when a book was published. Like why the correct body-shaping practices need to have

been followed by the wearer, just how carefully some garments were meant to fit, how much the authors understand about what shape the garment is supposed to have, what was considered valuable for study, etc.

It doesn't pay to let our knees jerk when we see people wearing "vintage" - at least the clothes still live. If you knew what I've seen in theatres (artifact corsets with whalebone, for instance), you would be grateful to the collectors who don't just give stuff to the theatre! (Although what many of them have in their "wardrobes" constitute historically-valuable collections in their own right.) Many private collectors preserve things that museums won't take, anyway.

I agree that the CSNS policy should be clearly delineated, and as Sheila S. pointed out, it has been. We could get more detailed, and give some guidelines for knowing whether what you have is historically significant or not, how to preserve costumes for wearing, and other helpful, non-judgmental advice. We can only encourage people to learn the value of what they have, and try to loosen the minds of those who say "NEVER WEAR IT!"

P.S. Sherbrooke Village wardrobe has a small "hands-on" collection of 19th and early 20th century garments with no provenance - I let people try on the sturdier pieces because they learn so much from the experience.

HATS FROM THE YARMOUTH COUNTRY MUSEUM

*Contributed by Nadine Gates,
Curator Yarmouth Country Museum*



This 1920's cloche-style hat of gold metallic fabrics trimmed with brown velvet. It was made by a Yarmouth milliner, and donated to the museum by Elizabeth Landers of Sandford, Yarmouth. Co.



This child's straw hat was found in the roof soffit of the Cook family home, which dates from the late 19th century. The Cook family established Cook's Dairy in Yarmouth. The hat's crown is lined with paper, and marked with an 8.

DRESS NOVA SCOTIA:

ONE OF A KIND VINTGE CLOTHES PARADE, MOUNT ST. VINCENT UNIVERSITY RUNWAY

By Sally Erskine Doucette

Vintage dresses sometimes sneak onto celebrity red carpets these days, appreciated for their 'novelty' textiles and unique look. This appeal of wearing something a little bit different came home to a packed room at Mount Saint Vincent University recently. Students in the Family Studies and Gerontology & Applied Human Nutrition Departments (most recent evolution of home economics) hosted an 80th Anniversary Vintage Fashion Show to commemorate the former Home Economics Department. The event was a huge success, raising \$7000 for a bursary program.

At first, it was the intention to auction many pieces on ebay. However, with bids clustered around \$50, it was soon realized that the pieces are more valuable as a collection that can be used again for future fundraising purposes. The Gala event was priced at \$50 per ticket and the room was full that night.

Clothes were arranged by decade, starting with the '20s and ending with the '70s. One group of all male models wore military uniforms and formal dinner wear from many periods. The '60s were stunning and stole the show - think deep purple ultra mini swing dress, accessorized with shiny white knee-high lace-up boots; pink chunky wool overcoat with pink fox fur collar and 3/4 length dolman sleeves (later a "Schiaparelli" label was found in this coat).



Then began a walk down memory lane, with Prom dresses, a little black dress section, and the wedding dresses. One of the black evening dresses was fabulous. Strapless, floor length taffeta and full skirt with a wide shocking pink pleat at the back. In fact, it was so fetching show organizers decided to auction it off the runway. The impromptu selling price was \$400, all for a good cause.

The fashion show was an overwhelming experience on many levels. The clothes were beautiful, as were the young people who wore them so well. It was a fast paced history lesson through a century of dramatic change for women, when you could identify the period by the length of the hem.

I was struck by the impact of being surrounded by so many women, full of powerful energy, alumni and students from a program designed for and dominated by early professional women.



The students were clearly elated to wear these clothes, so different from our own, and to take us on a walk down memory lane. At times, during the parade of prom dresses down the runway, and also during the graceful march of wedding dresses, there wasn't a dry eye in the room. Many of these dresses were sewn by or worn by women in the audience at significant moments in their lives and the emotion was evident on their faces. Let's just say many of us could relate.

Later, Sheila Yeoman, Anita Campbell and I joined professors Deborah Norris, Chair of Family Studies and Gerontology, and Linda Mann, Chair of Applied Nutrition Science, in the classroom where the vintage clothes were to be gently layered with acid free paper and re-packed into huge acid free boxes. Someone from the Home Economics Department went to a great deal of effort and expense to pack the collection over ten years ago. Drs. Norris and Mann have practically "chained themselves to the door" of the room where this collection is stored in order to maintain it through an era of budget cuts and scarce space.

Sheila worked to select the oldest and most significant pieces, setting aside anything with potential for the Nova Scotia Museum collection. Anita and I organized the rest of the clothes by period and sometimes by colour or type, along the lines the fashion show was organized. I learned to pack the heaviest clothes on the bottom, and to pack like colours together. Establishing which period each piece came from was a terrific education.

All in all, working with MSVU to sort the collection was a rare privilege which CSNS members don't indulge in very often these days. We thank Dr. Norris and Dr. Mann for allowing us to participate. We look forward to watching this runway parade again in five years or so.

UPCOMING EXHIBITS AND EVENTS:

THE PERFECT HAT A HISTORY OF LOCAL HEADWEAR

Randall House Museum, Wolfville NS

June 15-Sept 15, 2007

Monday-Saturday 10 am– 5 pm, Sunday 1:30—5 pm

Admittance \$2.00



CONSERVATION SUPPLIES

The CSNS maintains a small inventory of conservation supplies suited to textile care. These are available for purchase by CSNS members .

SHERBROOKE VILLAGE WEEKEND

JULY 20—22, 2007

Preliminary Program

Friday evening, welcome, workshop orientation, light refreshment

Saturday, workshop 'What Old clothes Tell Us', examining artifact garments, determining textile types, technical details, condition, etc.

Saturday evening, fun stuff like a weenie roast, ice-cream making, movie or game

Sunday, workshop continues til 3:pm

Cost for weekend including meals and accommodations \$120.00 CSNS member

\$150 non member Meg needs a minimum of six paid registrants to go ahead so don't wait to book. Do it now!

MAKING MANNEQUINS FOR YOUR PERIOD COSTUMES

FULTZ HOUSE MUSEUM, SACKVILLE, NS JUNE 29, 2007

Susan Charles, Executive Director of FNSH will be guiding participants through the hands-on process of making a mannequin. This full-day workshop is very much a hands-on workshop that will result in a fully usable mannequin for your site. Contact FNSH for more info.

NEOCRAFT CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 23-25, 2007, HALIFAX, NS.

This conference has been designed with the objective of further developing critical thinking, theory and history in relation to the crafts. Please direct any queries to Dr. Sandra Alföldy, NSCAD University, salfoldy@nscad.ca or salfol@yahoo.com

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 or 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. Books, journals and videos of Costume Studies fashion shows are available.



Sheila Yeoman examines a hat at MSV



Hat with Halifax millinery label from the MSV collection

THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

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THE COSTUME SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA

The Society is a registered charity that supports learning opportunities in the history, development and conservation of Nova Scotian costume and personal adornment, through illustrated lectures, workshops and hands-on programming. The Society's membership is diverse, including collectors, museum professionals, designers, costumers, reenactors, researchers, historians, and students.

CSNS was founded in 1981 and celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2006. CSNS is a member of the Costume Society of America, the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage, and the Dartmouth Heritage Museum.

The Costume Society meets @ 730pm on the second Monday of each month at the *Maritime Museum of the Atlantic* on Lower Water Street in Halifax. A heart-felt Thank You goes out to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for generously providing us with a place to call "Home"!



Presenter Ginny Bell displays an item from her extensive lace collection during her presentation on lace at the 2007 AGM.

CSNS Board of Directors:

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Submissions

The Clothes Press encourages content from its readers. Send articles, reviews, and letters to the Editor, costumesociety@ednet.ns.ca or Costume Society of Nova Scotia, c/o Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage, 1113 Marginal Road, Halifax, NS B3H 4P7. The Clothes Press is published quarterly by the Costume Society of Nova Scotia, a registered charitable organization. Views expressed in The Clothes Press are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent CSNS or its supporters.