**Working Class and Poor Women’s Clothing**

By Sally Bennett

**Undergarments:**

*Chemise/shift*- should be natural colored linen

*Stay*- most likely second hand or none- but posture and deportment was everything-

Wearing on one is important.

*Under-Petticoat*- natural colored linen and high waist – usually fabric with straps. Should

Be above the ankle.

*Stockings* – plain.

*Garters* – plain, woven tape.

*Pocket* – no embroidery. Except initials may be marked (cross stiched.)

*Neckerchief*- no chest or exposure of bosom acceptable. Americans were more modest than Europeans.

*Apron*- helps to protect clothing- maybe patched up. Linen – plain, checked, striped. Wool for those who work around fires like washerwomen or cooks.

**Outer garments:**

*High Waist outer petticoat*- Linen solid color or stripe. No prints. Homespun check (or plaid) or strips. Fabric on straps. Should be above ankle and narrow, not full. Ties on sides or in back.

*Short gown*: High waist jacket/blouse-like garment which should not be confused with a spencer. Not tailored at all. Just fabric folded over and cut to shape with drawstring at waist- just under the bust. Plain fabric like linen, cotton, fustian, and wool. Sleeves can be long and folded back or ¾, depending on fabric width. Stripes, checks and prints as well as solids.

*Dress*- Front opening in simple fabric and plain, like linen, cotton, fustian (blend of linen and cotton), woo, and plain or with only one color pattern. Front opening. Length should be above ankle. Example: May have a good second hand bought dress that has more colors, but it is second hand and has wear.

**Over garments:**

*Cast-off military coats* of spouse (since soldiers were issued new military jackets/coats) the wife refashioned the old coat for herself or children. The soldier owned his military clothes.

*Coats*- A second hand redingote or great coat.

*Shawls-* Wool shawls made by self- wood fabric cut – 36” to 42” square folded over.

*Cloak*- red was a popular color from before the American Revolution through the war of 1812. But other colors could be green or dark blue.

**Shoes:**

*Low quarter straight last shoes*. Second hand.

*Slippers*.

*Jefferson Bootees*. Second hand.

***Accessories/accoutrements***:

Workbag- plain may contain knitting children’s clothing.

Huswife- to help her in her occupation as a washerwoman or hospital matron.