

Pattern Reviews VII

Welcome to part seven of our Pattern Reviews. This month we are covering WRAPPERS (and other home wear) & RIDING HABITS.

For those of you who are new to my review articles, I am trying to give my honest opinion of patterns that are available to reenactors just starting out, so that YOU don't waste your hard earned money on bad patterns or ones that are too difficult to understand, like I did when I first started reenacting. I have enlisted the help of several close friends I call my "Secret Sewing Society" and together we sew the patterns, compile our opinions, and let you know what we thought. We even include photos of the finished product.

What specifically will the reviews tell you?

Pros & Cons: any detail we think you'd need to know before buying the pattern. Plus what you may need to alter to make the pattern work better for you.

Sewing Level: No sense buying a totally authentic pattern if you can't understand the directions. None of us are professional seamstresses, if we can't understand the directions we'll tell you about it. We'll categorize Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced.

Sizing: Are the size charts accurate by today's standards. I know size is a big issue with most women, so let me reassure you, I am no size 0 and all of the friends I have enlisted to help are over a size 10.

Documentation: Are the patterns based on original garments or would they be categorized as costumes.

Overall Satisfaction: We will rate each pattern

- ★ Not worth your time
- ★★ Not so great
- ★★★ Average
- ★★★★ Good
- ★★★★★ GREAT!

I have divided my series into several sections as Civil War Women have lots of layers. The categories are: Undergarments -- Part I & Part II, Work Dresses & Aprons, Day/Best Dresses -- Part I & Part II, Evening Dresses & Ball Gowns, Outerwear, Wrappers, Riding Habits, Corsets, New/Missed Patterns, and of course the "Best-Of-The-Best" Award Winners where we'll pick our top pattern choices from each category. PLUS thanks to my Secret Sewing Society we will have a special section on men's, children's, and accessory patterns.

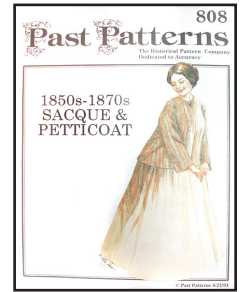
PAST PATTERNS 808 SACQUE COAT

Average Cost: \$ 15.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 7+



Pros: This pattern was easy to make & went together quickly.

Cons: This pattern had a tendency to ride up in the back because it's longer in the front than the back.

Documentation: Instructions include references to Godeys and Petersons'. The original sac fabric was a madder dyed cotton. An illustration of the original fabric is on the envelope.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★★

PAST PATTERNS 807 MID-19TH CENTURY WRAPPER

Average Cost: \$ 17.00

Sewing Level: Beg/Int

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 7+



Pros: This pattern's directions were easy to read. Back Waist is cut and gathered then fastened to the bodice near the waistband.

Cons: Read the instructions carefully BEFORE you cut. (so you don't have to piece). Or better yet make a muslin first to avoid any questions. There is one part where you are to cut the outer layer and not the lining. This was tricky. In the side section you kinda have to make a tuck otherwise there is no seam allowance. Pattern calls for this to be completely lined, which can make for a heavy and hot clothing choice.

Documentation: The original fabric and linings are plain weave printed cotton. Life size swatches are on the back of the color envelope.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★★

WHAT TO SEW continued . . .

KAY FIG

LADYS WRAPPER 1855-65

Average Cost: \$ 25.00

Sewing Level: Int/Adv

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 9



Description: Some wrappers were made from exactly the same fabrics as regular dresses, cut like a dress in the back and sides. With the help of a belt such wrappers could be made to look just like a regular dress. Others were made from paisleys and other "loud" fabrics, with a bold contrasting panel or trim in the front, or with a cut that was loose all the way around; these cannot be made to look like regular dresses. The original wrappers this pattern is based on were cut in the back as a regular dress and only the loose front panel mark them as wrappers. This kind of "wrapper dress" can be found in styles that date them from 1830-1900.

Pros: This pattern gives extensive details on how to tailor this pattern to fit your figure. And not just add/remove length here, it takes the time to tell you how to add darts for more room for us fuller busted ladies. Take the time to read them for a perfect fit on your wrapper. It also tell you to measure over your hoop so you may need to enlist the help of a friend. This pattern in addition to the front piece has a inside lining that will help prevent any "gaps". The pattern has a fitted back and front ties so the finished dress can be worn as a size-adjustable maternity dress as well. READ THE INSTRUCTIONS 2-3 times before even

starting, there are a lot of steps involved.

If making a bigger size (18+) you may want to add another skirt panel to the back for more fullness.

This is a complicated pattern but the instructions are VERY thorough so if you go SLOW and take your time you'll be fine.

Cons: Does not have finished seams on the inside bodice. This pattern is pretty complicated. It takes a bit more time and patience than most beginners have the patience for, BUT do not let detract you from this pattern. As you can see from the pics, our secret sewers wrappers turned out beautiful! Take your time, the finished product will be well worth the effort in doing things right.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★★★★

*****EXPERT NOTE:** The CW era skirt of 180" circumference (4 skirt panels of 45") was reserved for fancy gowns - silk etc. So even though we suggest adding a panel for larger gals, it was not documented to do such. And like it or not - the inside seams were not usually completely finished.



<--- This secret sewer chose to make her wrapper appear just like a dress, but if you look closely you can see the tie in the front.



This secret sewer ---> chose to make her dress with a very bold contrasting panel on the front. There can be no mistaking that this garment is a wrapper.



This photo shows the detail of the inside waistband of the wrapper.

continued . . .

WHAT TO SEW continued . . .

First, let me admit, that I have NEVER sewn a RIDING HABIT. But I have turned to a secret sewer that has extensive knowledge in this area. And in turn will pass along HER knowledge to you.

The best FABRIC CHOICE for habits is a solid wool. Wool releases odors and will resist any dirt/mud you may encounter on the ride. Stick to a fairly light weight, but tightly woven wool in a solid color. Also don't forget to include some kind of a hem facing on the skirts. It is important that it can take the abuse of you boots etc. Our examples here are darker colors, but Godey's has featured riding habits in teal blue (they called it green) (May 1861 & June 1862) and one that was a "summer" habit with a buff nankeen skirt and a white pique jacket. (July 1861)

HEIDI MARSH LRH-4-PB PLAIN BASQUE (1865)

Average Cost: \$ 8.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 2+



Critique: Facing is too narrow to create jacket as pictured. Grain line is off on side back piece. Pattern is too narrow at hip to create the fullness needed to sit gracefully on a horse. Sleeve is too straight and too narrow at the elbow. Ignore suggestion to use plastic boning that is mentioned in the directions. (Like any of us would) Directions aren't that great.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★

HEIDI MARSH RIDING TROUSERS

Average Cost: \$ 7.25

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good



Critique: Could be made to work. Need to change back piece a bit. Should be higher in back more like men's pants. Curve outward on the back is good (need room for ...). I would personally rather draft a pattern from R.I. Davis's Men's garments 1830 – 1900. and modify it to the women's riding trousers in The Handbook of Practical Cutting on the Centre Point System (1866)

Overall Satisfaction: ★★

HEIDI MARSH LRH-3-CJ CORDED JACKET (1865)

Average Cost: \$ 8.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good



Critique: Grain line is off on side back piece. Not enough curve in sleeve. Sleeve pieces did not fit into arm hole. Needed to redraft. Directions aren't that great.

Documentation: Having had the opportunity to study the original pattern for this jacket, there are many things that were interpreted incorrectly. The jacket pattern has one piece paletot sleeves not two piece coat sleeves. Also, what looks to be a sleeve jockey and "tail" on the back of the jacket are in fact trim applied to the jacket. Please keep this in mind if you use this pattern.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★

Our Secret Sewer made this one out of wool for a very cold December day.



continued . . .

WHAT TO SEW continued . . .

PERIOD IMPRESSIONS RIDING JACKET

Average Cost: \$ 9.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Description: Basic button front riding jacket with or without velvet collar.

Critique: Having buttons on the sleeve is not typical of the period. Line drawing shows one dart (pattern has two) and buttoning lower. Darts need to be moved. Facing not wide enough. Directions aren't that great.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★



1860'S RIDING HABIT JACKET



PERIOD IMPRESSIONS HABIT SHIRT

Average Cost: \$ 5.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 2+

Critique: Usable. Make up in cheap fabric first to test fit. Directions aren't that great.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★



PERIOD IMPRESSIONS 180 RIDING SKIRT

Average Cost: \$ 11.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 7+

Description: All sizes in one envelope. Cut generously for use with side saddle either gored or straight yardage double inverted pleated onto waistband.

Critique: Usable. Most of the pictures I've studied have the extra length coming around from the back of the skirt not at the side. Just need to rotate length to back and put opening on the new left side seam. Note: Although it is not period correct, if you are going to ride a horse in this skirt you should consider (and I STRONGLY recommend) running Velcro down the left side as a safety measure. Another suggestion would to be hand basting the seam from the opening down with very long stitch and cheap thread. That way the skirt will (hopefully) come away if there is an incident.

Overall Satisfaction: ★★



PERIOD IMPRESSIONS 452 GYMNASTICS COSTUME

Average Cost: \$ 12.00

Sewing Level: Beginner

Sizing: Good

Avg Fabric Yds needed: 3+

Critique: Only made Turkish trousers from the pattern. Super simple. Test fit first!

Overall Satisfaction: ★★

PATTERNS for **452**
Period Impressions
Gymnastic Costume



continued . . .

WHERE TO FIND THESE PATTERNS

Butterick, McCall's, & Simplicity can all be found in the BIG NAME STORES, but here is where you can find some of the other patterns we mention in our reviews.

Elizabeth Stewart Clark's Free Online Patterns
www.ElizabethStewartClark.com

Fig Leaf Patterns www.Originals-By-Kay.com

Galla Rock www.GallaRock.com

Harriets www.Harriets.com
www.VictorianTreasuresByMary.com

Heidi Marsh Patterns www.fcsutler.com
www.JamesCountry.com

HomeSpun Patterns www.JamesCountry.com

Laughing Moon Patterns www.lafnmoon.com

Old World Patterns www.JamesCountry.com

Past Patterns www.PastPatterns.com
www.Originals-By-Kay.com

Peachtree Patterns www.Originals-By-Kay.com

Period Impressions www.abrahamslady.com
www.JamesCountry.com

Truly Victorian www.trulyvictorian.com
www.VictorianTreasuresByMary.com

In the next article I will feature BALL GOWNS & EVENING DRESSES -- Part 1 of 2.

This new series of patterns will not only give fabric/color suggestions, it will also give suggestions for age appropriateness. This was a request from our Secret Sewing Society. We will give you the secrets to how to make your gowns age appropriate. You may be surprised to see the differences for teens & mature/married ladies.

My Secret Sewing Society and I will continue to keep sewing, and look forward to filling our closets with new stuff!

Each new review might include new season stuff as well, as the major name brands have new patterns due out in Spring/Fall seasons. So if you see a pattern # and cannot find it in stores check EBAY. If a new pattern comes out midseason and we've passed that layer, one of my last articles will cover "missed patterns".

If for any reason you miss one of the reviews, don't

fret. The last article in my series will highlight our top picks from every category.

Please feel free to contact me if you know of a pattern line we are missing. I love new patterns! And if you happen to see me out & about stop by to chat, I'd love to hear your opinions on dress patterns too! I listen to it all: the good, the bad, and the ugly.

And for those of you who need a little more guidance in choosing fabric, I suggest a book called "Textile Designs" by Meller / Elffers that's available on amazon and barnes and noble.

Something I've just discovered to help new sewers "know what to look for" is on www.timelytresses.com. Not to openly plug the site, but they have assembled fashion plate books with over 100 pictures in each book. I know when I first started out everyone kept telling me to look at fashion plates to model my wardrobe after, but I didn't know where to find them, and I didn't have the \$\$\$ to buy the original Godey's. This is the solution. They have assembled these book and they make EXCELLENT resources guides. Check out the website and see for yourself.

MEET CHERI FRY

She lives in a small ranch style house in Jacksonville, IL.

Her new home is much closer to work, and has a fully functional sewing room that is completely filled with fabrics and trims.

Cheri lives with two male cats that she has rescued. They are always near her feet as she sews.

They love playing with any trims or ribbons that may happen to fall off the table.

Cheri has been Civil War reenacting since June 2004. Her main interest is women's clothing. Cheri does both a middle-upper class & working class impression.

Cheri's real life job is as a Graphic Arts Specialist for Bound to Stay Bound Books in Jacksonville, IL. BTBSB specializes in binding quality children's books for schools and libraries. www.btsb.com

Cheri is a driving force behind Veterans Remembered, which honors veterans from all wars. She is also on the General Grierson Days committee. More information can be found on these committees on a web site she designed www.griersonsociety.org

