

43rd Georgia Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Civilian Clothing Guidelines

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Psalms 119:105

As a new living historian (re-enactor) or a returning living historian, you may have some questions or need some reminders as to what was worn and used during the War Between the States Era (1850-1865). Any of our veteran historians will be glad to assist you in any way if you have questions or concerns about what to purchase and the "authenticity" of said item. Please don't hesitate to ask any of us. Don't be alarmed! This is a **long** and **detailed** list. However, it is merely a list to work toward – and NOT REQUIRED immediately as a newcomer to this hobby. **Please note that our purpose is to encourage authenticity, not to discourage participation.**

LADIES

First and foremost – worry about what is on the outside (what the spectators will see) to begin with. You can always work on the underpinnings and other accessories later (as time and money allows).

Dress: Mostly, we will be portraying working farming women, many of whom are refugees (forced from their homes) for one reason or another. To present an accurate portrayal, you will need to start with a basic work dress (natural color and fiber). A work dress can be used for working as well as "dressed up" with buttons or ribbon trimmings to go to an afternoon tea or receive visitors, etc., providing it is not too worn. The idea here is to start with something simple and relatively inexpensive, then add to it as needed.

A work dress (the key word here is "dress" - one piece) is the most desirable. However, work dresses are not readily available unless custom made (or made by you for those of you who sew). Many sutlers have skirts and blouses that are of the same material and that will work for a beginning. You can always wear your apron and no one will be the wiser.

Fabric type: Dresses should be made of 100% cotton (homespun or flannel) or wool. It looks more natural and is much cooler in summer and warmer in winter, respectively, as natural fibers "breathe" where synthetics do not.

Color: Colors should be natural to reflect the natural dyeing process. Brown is an excellent choice because many shades of brown could be obtained from dyeing with black walnuts which were readily available. However, this doesn't mean that your dress has to be drab brown. All other (basic) colors were used as well. Browns were just the easiest to "do it yourself".

Pattern: Solids, plaids, checks and small stripes are acceptable. Printed fabrics are discouraged as generally patterns (prints) commonly found today do not reflect the period. Please use caution or ask a veteran living historian when choosing prints.

Closures: Closures for your dress should be either buttons or hooks & eyes. All button holes should be hand-stitched. Machine made buttonholes may be modified by removing the stitching and hand-stitching the button holes. **REMEMBER— zippers or velcro had not been invented prior to the 1850's, therefore, should not be a part of your attire!**

Hems: Work dresses were generally hemmed shorter than other dresses to allow ease in moving about and working around the campfire. They could be hemmed to as much as 3 to 4 inches off the floor.

Hoops: As a general rule, hoops were not worn by women as they conducted their daily activities. However, a corded petticoat will give your skirt the support needed and keep your skirts away from your legs. This is a much more practical approach to activities such as washing and cooking around the fire. A hoop or cage would be worn to a tea, church, dances, etc. However, be advised, a hoop or cage will shorten the length of your dress - make allowances if you plan on wearing either.

Apron: A living historian might have one or more aprons for use around the camp. These should be cut full and shorter than the dress. **Wool aprons shield the legs from the heat of the campfire while cooking and are also flame retardant.**

Underpinnings: Start with a white cotton **chemise** which is a loose fitting short sleeve shift reaching below the knee. A chemise will provide a modesty barrier for open crotch drawers as well as a perspiration barrier for your dress. A chemise can also double as a short sleeve nightgown if you so desire. A **petticoat** made from white cotton. Quilted, wool or flannel petticoats can provide extra warmth in winter months. Petticoats should be 2-4 inches shorter than your skirt. If you want a fuller skirt, wear more petticoats. **Period drawers** had an open crotch for convenience in using the privy in the 1860's - this is optional - however it is still **very** convenient when you have on several layers of clothing. Cotton or wool **socks** or **stockings** and period correct **boots** or **shoes**. Women generally wore boots or shoes with leather soles, square toes and heels that were 1" or less.

Accessories: (all are optional) Brooch (cameos are good choices) at neckline, earrings with French wires, bracelets, a pocket watch (**no wrist watches**) and wedding ring. A reticule (pull string purse) or basket is a good idea for carrying other necessities. Avoid baskets of modern design.

Hair: Hair should be parted in the middle and pulled back at the hairline. Many folks are under the impression that EVERY woman wore her hair in a bun at the nape of her neck. NOT SO! You can braid it and have the braid wrapped around the back of your head at the nape, draped across the top of your head. Be creative - just not outlandish. Hair pieces are acceptable. Hairnets were used over fully dressed hair (such as for a special occasion). These "nets" were made of ribbon or crochet with beads, flowers, fringe, or bows as trim. **Nets sold by sutlers and referred to as "SNOODS" are incorrect for our impression.** Only if you are portraying a very young wealthy Northern woman visiting the area would a "snood" be appropriate.

Head Coverings: Sunbonnets, corded or slat bonnets are excellent choices for many impressions. Better bonnets might be a spoon, straw, or cottage bonnet. Ties on spoon or straw bonnets should be wide. In the period, if you could only afford one good bonnet it should be straw. Bonnets were generally not matched to any particular dress.

Eyewear: Modern eyeglasses should be replaced as soon as possible with something as close to period as possible (many sutlers sell these) or contact lenses may be worn. Sunglasses were typically not worn.

Buttons: China, calico, wooden, india rubber, jet, black glass, pearl, bone, shell, cut glass, mother-of-pearl, etc. were available.

Makeup: Please do not wear makeup or nail polish.

Additional Information: At many events, you will see ladies wearing a white blouse and skirt. However, a white blouse should not be worn with a skirt without a vest or jacket and **only teens or young women would have worn such an outfit**. A white blouse was considered underwear and not worn alone.

GENTLEMEN

Male civilians are a most welcome part of the 43rd Georgia. **As with the women, first and foremost – worry about what is on the outside (what the spectators will see) to begin with.** You can always work on underwear and other accessories later (as time and money allows). **REMEMBER– zippers or velcro had not been invented prior to the 1850's, therefore, should NOT be part of your attire!**

Fabric type: Cotton (homespun or flannel), linen or a cotton/wool blend fabric are recommended. These fabrics look more natural and is much cooler in summer and warmer in winter, respectively, as natural fibers "breathe" where synthetics do not.

Coats: A frock coat or sack coat may be worn depending on personal preference. A frock coat may be double or single breasted, solid or tweed fabric. Appropriate colors include black, brown, gray, or dark blue. A frock coat may have a velvet collar. The lining should be of muslin, or polished cotton. The skirt of the frock coat is long and square with a split up the back. For a dressy look, a vest of a more elaborate fabric might be worn with the frock coat. A sack coat might have more variance as to pattern of fabric. Length was generally mid-thigh. A sack coat should fit loosely and have no obvious waist seam. Coats had shoulder seams dropped from the natural shoulder line. A sack coat may be dressed up as well with a vest.

Vests: Vests should be worn as part of a gentleman's dress as Victorians generally considered it inappropriate to venture outdoors or be in the presence of a lady without a vest and/or coat. Fabric might be wool, cotton, or linen and might match either the pants or the coat. Acceptable fabric for a vest might also include silk, brocade, tweed, and might be plaid or striped. Vests are usually lined in 100% muslin or polished cotton, and the vest back might be black, brown, a print, or white polished cotton or muslin. Vests should be **square** across the bottom. They may buckle or tie in back. Button holes should be hand stitched. Buttons should be bone, wood, brass or mother of pearl.

Pants: Pants or Trousers - need to have a button fly closure (**no zipper**) and made of wool, cotton, linen, or wool/cotton jeans fabric. The waistband is split in back and held together with ties or a period buckle. Legs are straight and are not creased or cuffed. Pants are worn with

braces (suspenders) normally constructed of cotton material which might be white or patterned or crocheted. The pants fabric could either match or be in contrast to that of the coat. Remember, in choosing fabrics, black was often used for formal occasions. Period pants generally have a higher waist and the band is 1 - 1 1/2" wide. Buttons should be tin back, bone, mother of pearl or wood. Penny buttons can be used on fly. All button holes should be hand stitched. Pants should have mule ear pockets or straight pockets and no rear pockets. Pants may also have watch pockets. No outlandish plaids please.

Shirts: Period square cut shirts are best. Shirts might be white or any number of prints with the homespun look being extremely popular for a Southern impression. Shirts may be made of cotton (homespun or flannel), linen or wool. Colors would be similar to those worn by ladies and it would be very appropriate for a lady's dress to match that of a man's shirt since homespun was used for many purposes. Milk glass, mother of pearl, wooden or bone buttons would be appropriate. Button holes should be hand stitched. Shirts should have dropped shoulder seams. Solids, plaids, checks and small stripes are acceptable. Generally patterns (prints) commonly found today do not reflect the period so please use caution or ask a veteran living historian when choosing prints.

Footwear: Brogans are the most common choice and easiest to find. Toes should be square and the shoe should not taper to the toes. Colors were usually black or brown, but sometimes gray was worn. No pointed toe shoes or boots please. **Socks:** Wool or cotton. Hand spun and hand-knit are best. Many sutlers have a wool/cotton blend that will work.

Hats: Hats may vary according to personal preference. A cap, broad brim, bowler, derby, stovepipe, top hat or straw hat (Amish style) would be appropriate. Hats may vary in color with brown and black perhaps being the most popular.

Drawers: Cotton, drawstrings at the waist and at the ankles if preferred. For cold weather events drawers might be made of natural colored flannel.

Accessories: A **tie** or **cravat** or might be worn for a dressier look. A gentleman's **handkerchief** would be larger than modern ones and measure approximately 18 inches square. Cotton would be the fabric of choice and it might be white or print. A gentleman should obtain a reproduction period **pocket watch** at some point. **No wrist watches.** **Buttons** can be of wood, horn, bone, china, or perhaps pewter would be acceptable. Persimmon seeds on a homespun shirt would be proper for a Southern impression. Button holes must be hand-stitched. A gentleman will also want whatever tools, (books, pens, or other items) necessary for his impression.