

OHIO ARTS COUNCIL'S RIFFE GALLERY
PRESENTS



FASHION *on the* OHIO FRONTIER: 1790-1840



NOVEMBER 9, 2006 - JANUARY 7, 2007

Curated by Anne Bissonette, Ph.D.
Kent State University Museum

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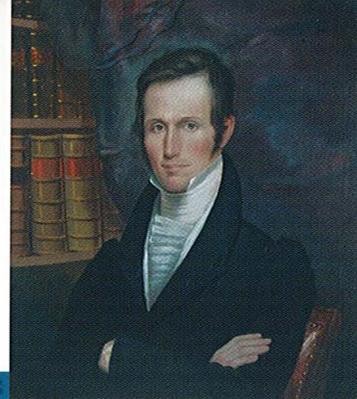
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The Euro-American population of the Ohio territory grew from approximately 3,000 in 1790 to 1,519,467 by 1840. Within that time, Ohio became a major political force and a key player in the country's economy as it ranked first in wheat production and third in corn production nationwide. This focus on agriculture greatly affects people's perception of settlers to the point that it erases from public consciousness the existence of most other inhabitants.

While written and oral histories may focus on the agricultural aspects of early Ohio, a study of surviving garments and portraits found in museums and historical societies can help to expand our vision of settlers during this period.

Fashionable garments found in Ohio collections and presented alongside significant pieces from outside the state serve to remind us that the wide economic spectrum found on the East Coast perpetuated itself in Ohio's social structure. Most settlers sought to establish a societal structure similar to what they knew. This extended to the adoption and retention of clothing styles followed by their peers, which were mostly adapted from European fashion. Through these garments, they could differentiate themselves from others around them and confirm their place in the social order. As such, it is not surprising to find surviving fashionable garments or portraits of men, women and children wearing fashionable clothing even in the earliest days of settlement.

The existence and survival of these artifacts, particularly in the period from 1790 to 1825, is remarkable for several reasons: it serves to indicate the presence of a type of refined social behavior among individuals who immigrated to the territory; it helps shatter the myth of the settler that is firmly anchored in popular culture and consists of the ruffian-farmer dressed in homespun clothing or the trapper in buckskin and it brings a certain balance to Ohio's early settlement history by incorporating women's history into the equation.



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Artifacts that have survived the passage of time are a tangible means of relating to, questioning and interpreting history. The goal of this exhibition is to seek, find and present artifacts unknown to most Ohio historians and to draw from them a meaning that could shed light on the diversity of settling experiences that occurred within the state.

The research for this exhibition was object-based and focused on fashionable garments because they make up the majority of the clothing items that survived and were collected. As a result, this exhibition does not claim to illustrate clothing adopted by all Ohioans since not everyone could afford such goods.

As the Ohio Bicentennial was celebrated in 2003, the people who shaped the land and helped define its character were remembered. In an effort to embrace a wider variety of experiences, it is important to make use of all the tools available to the historian to help understand and interpret the past. Bringing to the forefront artifacts that may help scholars and the public interpret history is a worthy endeavor that can help us understand the intricacies of the past, their roots in the present and their ability to shape the future.

ANNE BISSONNETTE, PH.D.
Kent State University Museum



- 1 Red and ivory leather slip-on shoes with cut-out vamps. ca. 1790s. belonged to Elizabeth "Betsey" Putnam, worn in the Northwest Territory. collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH
- 2 Portrait of John Fox by Robert Hanna, ca. 1825. oil on canvas, city of Columbiana. Columbiana County, OH. collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH
- 3 Portrait of Colonel Robert Harper by Abel Buel Moore, 1831 or 1832. oil on canvas, made in Ashtabula County, OH. collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH
- 4 Portrait of Elizabeth Buchanan Woodbridge by Chester Harding, summer 1821. oil on panel, Chillicothe, OH. signed and dated. collection of the Ross County Historical Society, Chillicothe, OH
- 5 LEFT: Blue cotton plaid morning coat, ca. 1820-1825. The Bruce and Susan Greene Collection, New York
MIDDLE: Gray linen morning coat, ca. 1820s-1830s, collection of The Ohio State University Historic Costume & Textiles Collection, Columbus, OH
RIGHT: Blue and white houndstooth cotton morning coat, made by Ann Tetrick, 1836, collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH; white linen ruffled shirt, ca. 1800-1830; white linen trousers, belonged to Charles W. Palfrey, ca. 1830s, collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH
- 6 White sprigged muslin gown, ca. 1802-1807, collection of the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH



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RIFFE GALLERY EVENTS

All events are free and open to the public.

OPENING RECEPTION

Thursday, November 9

5 - 6 p.m. Exhibition tour with Curator Anne Bissonnette

6 - 8 p.m. Reception with hors d'oeuvres and cash bar

EXHIBITION TOUR

Friday, November 17, noon - 1 p.m.

Join Curator Anne Bissonnette for a free guided tour of the exhibition.

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GALLERY HOURS:

Tu 10 - 4 Sat 12 - 8
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FREE ADMISSION

SPECIAL HOURS:

First Night Columbus, Sun, Dec. 31, 6 - 9

Closed the following dates:

Nov. 10, 23, Dec. 24, 25 & Jan. 1

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Ohio Arts Council

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- Cornell Textile and Costume Collection
- The Bruce and Susan Greene Collection
- Kent State University Museum
- Massillon Museum
- The National Society of Colonial Dames
- Ohio Historical Society and the Ohio Historical Society's Campus Martius Museum, Marietta
- The Ohio State University Historic Costume & Textiles Collection
- Ontario County Historical Society
- Pioneer and Historical Society of Muskingum County
- Ross County Historical Society
- Salem Historical Society and Museum
- Summit County Historical Society
- The Warren County Historical Society
- Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio

FRONT IMAGE: Portrait of Franklin Henry Reed and his dog, ca. 1837-1841, oil on canvas, collection of the Massillon Museum, Massillon, OH

BACK IMAGE: Ivory silk taffeta gown, 1817, worn by Anne Catherine Spurck of Chillicothe, OH, for her marriage to Peter Dittoe of Somerset, OH, on July 4, 1817; ivory figured silk bonnet, ca. 1800-1820, collection of the Ohio Historical Society; Columbus, OH; ivory kid slip-on shoes with yellow silk tassels, ca. 1800-1820, collection of The Ohio State University Historic Costume & Textiles Collection, Columbus, OH

