

Your Loyalist Garments – 2019

Prepared for Kingston & District Branch UELAC
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- 1) **FIND THEM.** Do not immediately wash them unless you know what the fabrics were and the correct care. Don't throw wool into the washer and dryer. Modern wool may be able to withstand that, but wool from 20 or 30 years ago may not be able to.
- 2) **WILL YOU WEAR THEM?** Determine if you might or could use them again. (i.e. Do they fit at all? Would you like to use them? Perhaps ask the person who made them for you? Ask Anne?)
- 3) **SUITABLE?** Determine if they need 'updating' in terms of accuracy. (Question: Is there a visible zipper anywhere? Is there rick-rack or polyester lace? Answer: Yes? Then they could do with 'up-dating' to historical accuracy.) Determine if they still 'match' the social class of the character or impression that you wish to demonstrate.
- 4) **CONSULT?** Consider showing them to someone who could guide you through adjustments.
- 5) **ALTER?** Decide what can and cannot be done so you would be proud to wear them. And who can and will do these adjustments. And when? Is your deadline Heritage Fair, UE Flag Day and Conference 2019? Bath Parade on Canada Day? Or ??
- 6) **PASS THEM ON?** What if they are no longer of interest to you or your family? Have them assessed by someone who could tell if they are still of value possibly to someone else. If they are sufficiently historically accurate but you will never need them again, perhaps you can offer them or sell them to a branch or region member. If the garments are not sufficiently accurate for you to be proud while wearing them, perhaps a class set of small sized washable items could be adjusted and be donated to a teacher who may use them for Loyalist skits in their class.

It's not that they were 'slovenly' or had no taste, it's just that the working class had less means. Certainly they took pride in their 'Sunday-best', and did follow fashion. We just won't want to present ONLY the Sunday best, but a range of their regular life! And if you are representing new 1784 arrivals, SOME wore what they had escaped wearing and wore for weeks or months tromping through the woods.





- 1) What parts are “**sufficiently accurate**”? Look at closures. Consider removing any VISIBLE zippers and replacing them with appropriate closures. That may mean opening the item on a seam elsewhere, or making a front opening. A shawl can cover a back zipper.
- 2) **ELBOWS!!!** NO visible elbows, until 1812, & only at formal events! Especially female. **Men:** No short sleeved shirts. Roll to a cuff below the elbow. Women’s sleeves covered their elbows in the Loyalist era! In the Simcoe era, at formal balls, short sleeves were allowed. But not in daily life.
- 3) **Look at the length.** Consider shortening if the skirt goes below your ankle bone. Trousers may be convertible to breeches stopping below the knee, but NOT widely puff-ily gathered to a band puffy, especially for upper classes. Slight ease to an edge/band is ‘ok’ for lower classes, and children. Many middle class and working men wore pale cream canvas flat front trousers.
- 4) **Look at trims:** Is there polyester lace anywhere? Eyelet edging? Velvet ribbon? Wide ribbon? Long, lacy cuffs? Ruffles on the chemise? Are there bold ruffles on a dress would be more suitable for a UPPER class person? Tiers on the skirt or sleeves is a false pioneer look. Avoid

them at all costs! Coloured or polyester cords? Visible Bias Tape? All are too modern, or too luxurious for the average farmer Loyalist. A modest, ruffled, 1 to 1 ½ inch wide edge on bonnets and chemise would be the widest that it should be in most cases.

- 5) **Look at the Fabric & Fibre.** You may discover these unsuitable fabrics: Polyester, rayon, viscose, silk, satin, wide lace, corduroy, blends, twill, & modern print. Is the white an unnatural “blue-white”? Avoid those too-bright whites. Avoid SLUB-look fabrics. They were proud of their weaving work and would not wear lesser woven fabrics if at all possible. They did not make slub fabric intentionally, nor were they bad weavers. Nor were PLAID or CHECKERED fabrics usual.
- 6) **Colours:** Consider wearing colours of natural dyes for lower classes. Deep tones were less available to the middle and lower classes since the fabric manufacture was more time consuming. Tops and bottoms did not always match. Only upper classes had full dresses or matching Skirt and Jackets.
- 7) **Caps and Hats. Women always work a Cap, even indoors, and usually wore a shallow crown straw HAT over her cap when outdoors. No MOB / MOP caps. They are from the late 1800s.** If yours is like that, it can be altered, but in most cases starting again may be wise since it needs a piece of “brim/band before the ruffle”. Starting again may be warranted if it is poly cotton, and has visible machine stitching. The centre back 3 to 4 inches should NOT have a brim or ruffle, but may have a plain edging and / or a small adjustable cord casing to adjust the size.
- 8) **Look at the stitching.** Are there visible top stitching or hemming lines visible? Avoid these.
- 9) **Look at the bodice. Is there criss-crossed faux-lacing that could be removed?** Does the bodice fit snugly? Do the armpits come close to the body? Is the waist close to the natural waist of the wearer? Is there a suitably designed point at the centre bottom of the bodice, or is it actually a 1980s dropped and pointed waist line? Are there visible hooks? Tighten / tweak them so they are not visible, and not creating a gap. Are there “Princess seams”? Are they covered in ribbon or lace to draw attention to them? (YIKES! Remove the trim. Do the seams blend in with the print? If so, good. If not, oh dear. Add a large shawl in all weather.)
- 10) **Do you have a large handkerchief, fine shawl or Fichu?** Do you know how to wear it? Ask.
- 11) **Apron.** Unless this is a ball gown, a woman always had an apron over her dress, to keep the dress clean.
- 12) **Footwear:** Correct footwear is expensive. Please wear safe, low, plain, dark footwear, with unobtrusive lacing or other. For some, loafers may be good. Some of you may have correct footwear. If in doubt, check.
- 13) **Stockings:** Knee socks can be fine. For men wearing knee-pants, it can be hard to find long enough knee-socks that stay up. Check out the extra-large cotton full height tube socks that are for feet above size 12, perhaps from Walmart. Perhaps share a pack with others. Some people may have plain white, or other solid ‘good’ colour e.g. brown, tan, burgundy, black, soccer socks (but not bright colours).