

1840 - 1849

CLOTHING TRENDS

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1840-1849 FASHIONS, AMERICA AND EUROPE

NOTE: This e-book was originally a 3-volume Ph.D. Thesis by Dr. Carma de Jong Anderson featuring 1840s to 1870s clothing of early members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (nicknamed “Mormons” after an ancient book of scripture, *The Book of Mormon – Another Testament of Jesus Christ*).

Carma’s thesis used a large collection of images of Church members and their clothing during those 4 decades. This online volume has doubled in size, with more clothing of ALL decades of 1800s, and from ALL levels of society in America and greater Europe. She dictated the old term “LDS” to save space .

In each decade, images proceed from working-class to middle and upper-class.

**Below is modified from Wikipedia. Full article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1840s_in_Western_fashion
Many excellent images and illustrations with sources. Excerpts of article printed in each section below.**

1840s fashion in Europe and America was characterized by narrow, natural shoulder lines following the exaggerated, padded, and puffed sleeves of the 1830s. The narrower shoulder was accompanied by a lower and narrower waistline for both men and women.

MEN - n this period, men's fashion plates show the lowered waistline taking on a decided point at the front waist, which was accompanied by a full rounded chest (“Pigeon Breast”). Prince Albert (husband of Queen Victoria) had a high influence on male fashion, primarily because of his young age at the time of his wife's coronation, and his great attention to his appearance. Therefore, the clothing, particularly of upper-class gentleman, continued to follow the trend of earlier decades with full shoulders and chest and a tightly-cinched waist.

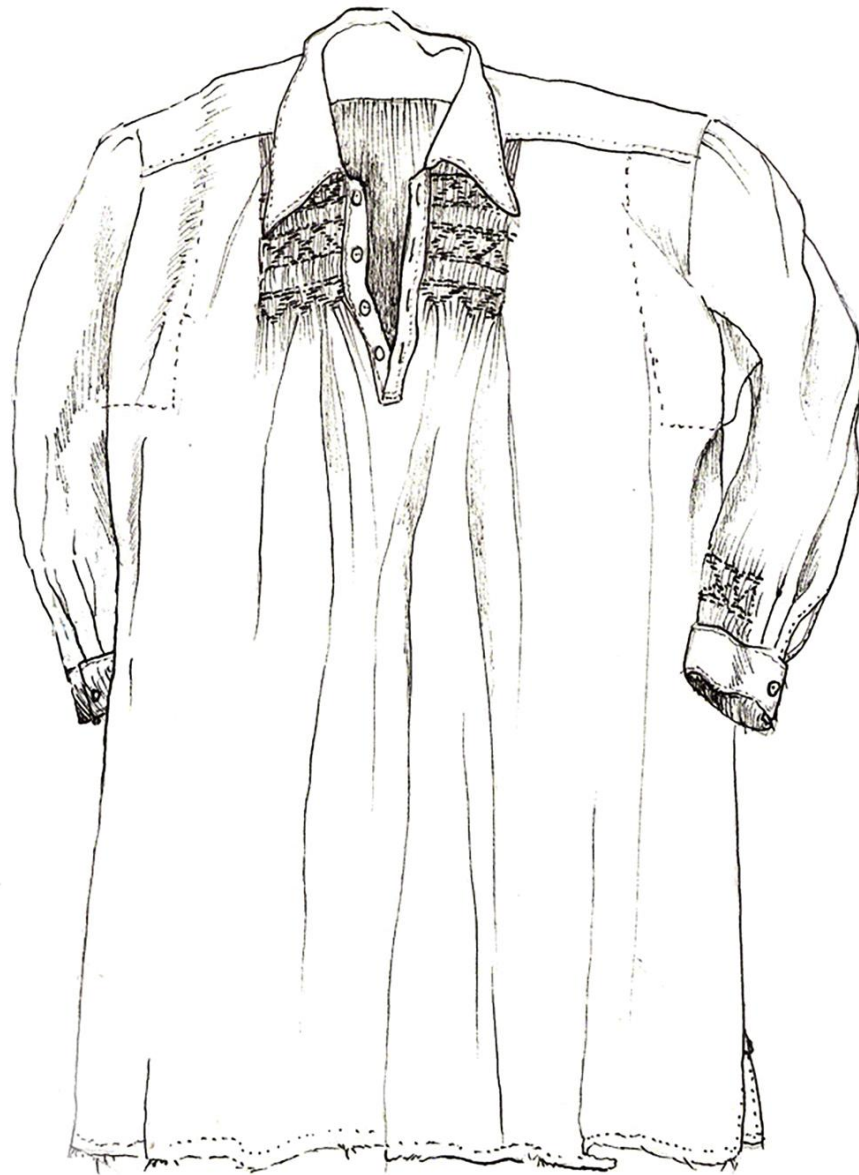
Shirts of linen or cotton featured lower standing collars, occasionally turned down, and were worn with wide cravats or neckties tied in several different ways: Frock coats were worn for informal daywear, were calf-length, and might be double-breasted. A cutaway morning coat was worn with light trousers for any formal daytime occasion; evening dress called for a dark tail coat and trousers. Full-length trousers had fly fronts. Breeches continued to be worn for horseback riding and other country pursuits, especially in Britain, with tall fitted boots.

The crowns of tall hats were straighter than in the previous period and grew taller on the way to the stovepipe shape of the 1850s. They were essential for formal occasions and in cities. Wide-brimmed hats were worn outdoors in sunny climates. Curled hair and sideburns remained fashionable along with mustaches.

Upper-class men set the fashion but insisted on high-quality fabrics and exquisite tailors. Middle-class men followed them, but with lesser fabrics and tailoring, perhaps off-the-rack with alterations. Lower class men, while not in working garb, tried for the fashions, but with 2nd or 3rd hand clothes from used clothing stores or street carts.

1840 – 1849, MEN, WORKING - CLASS CLOTHING.

(Working smocks and breeches continue from 1700 through 1900, but legwar switched to trousers in this decade. Below are duplicate entries from 1800 – 1930 for your convenience.



American Work Smock with less smocking than European styles and no additional embroidery. 1700 – 1900 on. Much used by farmers.

DESCRIPTION: Smocks were the most common working man's clothing of the 1700s & 1800s in both the old world and the new. This is a linen smock from America with smocking in front and a placket of four buttons. There is a little smocking at the collar line in the center back. (It is not a "round smock," which would have a placket on the back neck as well, to allow wearing it reversed.

On the shoulders are double layers of linen that cover all raw edges, and are called the "straps," for reinforcing the smock. Sometimes, a strongly made smock could be used for future generations. Nothing went to waste or was thrown away if there was still some use in it.

American smock fronts have varied smocking designs, with only two inches of smocking on the cuff-lines of the sleeves. Note that the smocking does not go all the way around the cuffs, but is centered, and is there simply for beauty's sake. Other pleats in the sleeve fabric attach to the side of the cuff opening. (continued ▼)

Under the rectangular arm sections are the usual seven-inch squares sewn into the sleeves and body as folded, triangular gussets. On the shoulders, the long "straps," and

(continued from above ▲)

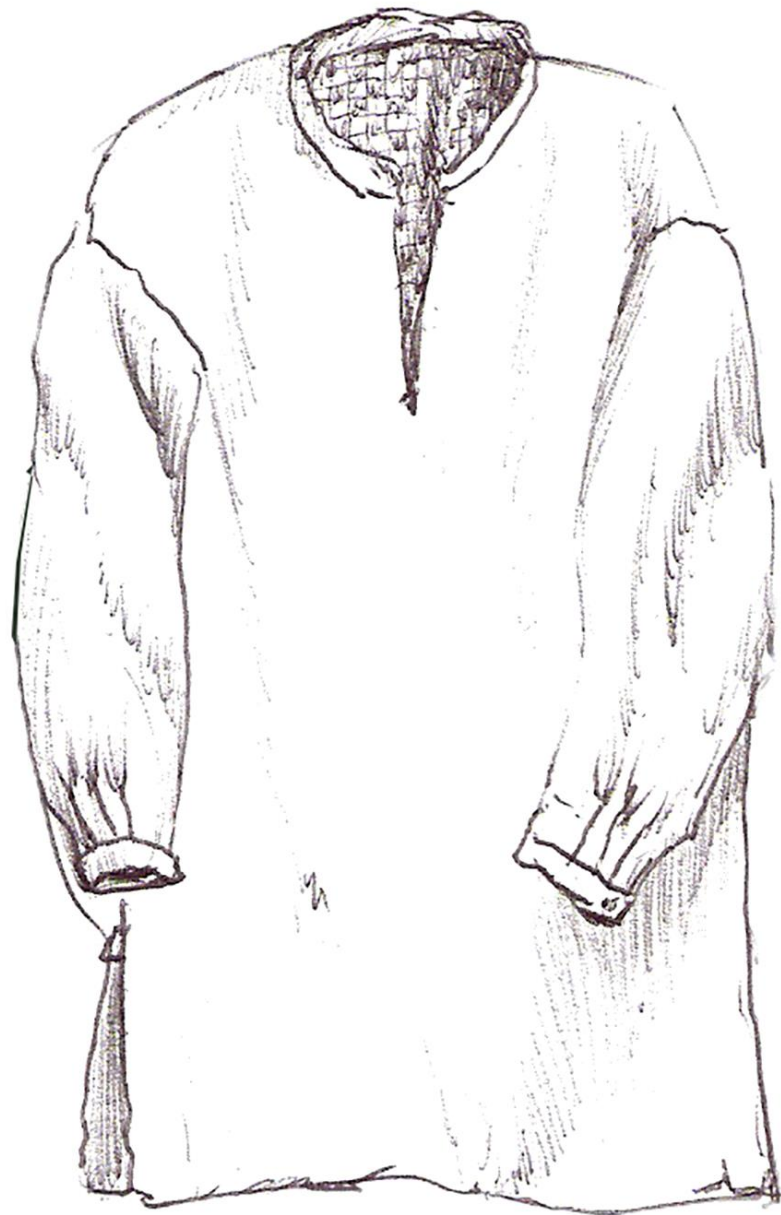
the facings inside the smock, cover the raw seams of sleeve insertions and are pressed inward toward the neckline. This completely covers the raw edges of the sleeves and straps.

All raw edges of the fabric are turned under with small, hand whip-stitching that is hardly seen on the outside of the smock, This adds strength to the garment. Such construction will survive generations of work and washing.

At the bottom of the side seam (French-seamed) is a tiny gusset at the top of the side slit to prevent side-seam tearing. There is plenty of room within this smock for a farmer to comfortably lift hay, drive a team, etc. The smock could be any neutral color of linen or dyed to a dark navy blue or brown for little boys' smocks. In New England, Nova Scotia or Canada smocks could even be wool, subtly striped, and much longer. Wool would protect men better than linen from cold, rain, snow, and dirt.

SOURCE: Drawn by Carma from a smock made by a Nauvoo missionary's wife using Carma's measurements and sewing tutelage. Free use.

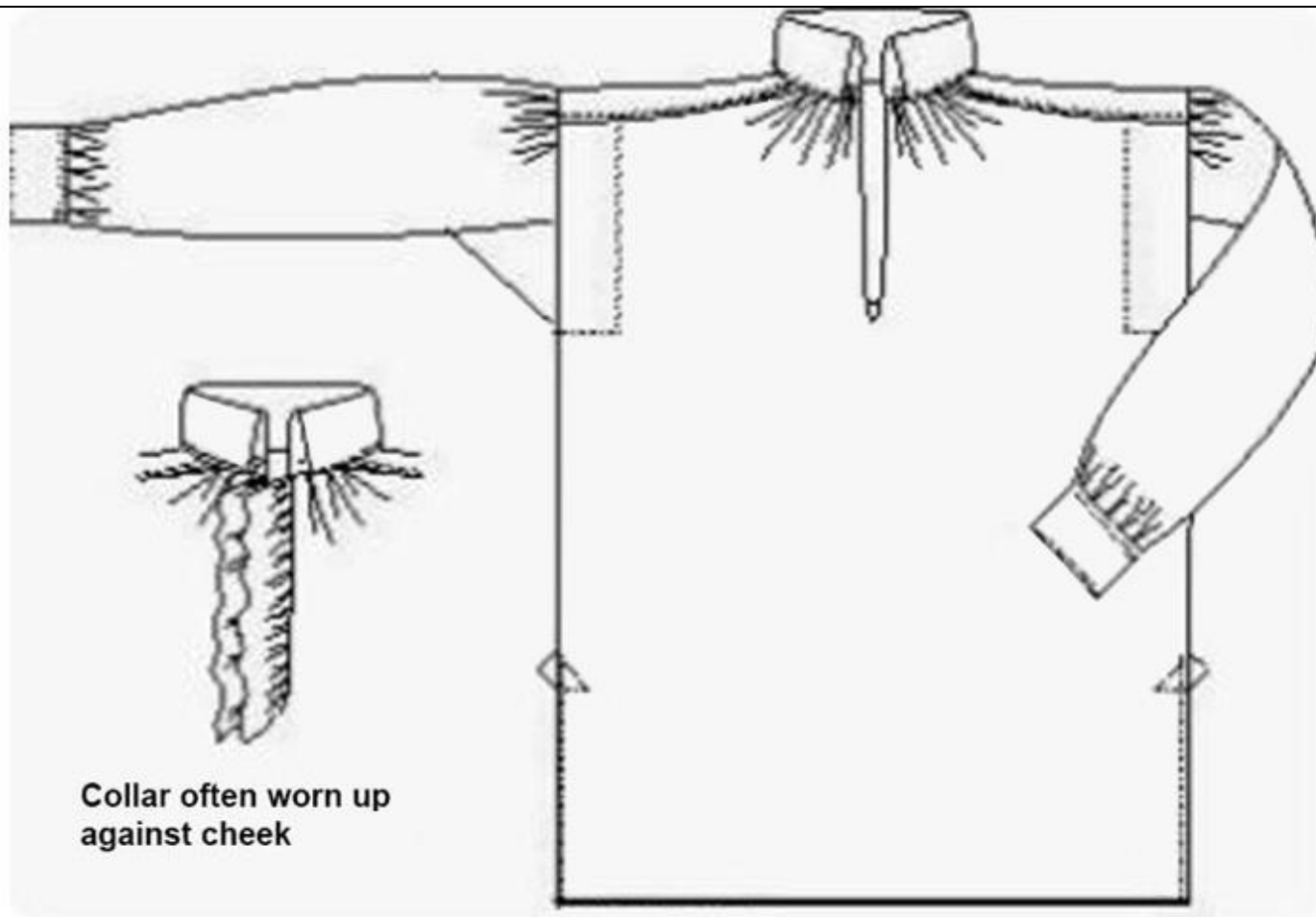
SMOCK PATTERN IN APPENDIX. (Many commercial pattern companies have a ready-made smock pattern listed under *Historic Costumes*.)



A very simple man's woolen work smock is fully lined. 1700s to 1870s

DESCRIPTION: This drab-colored woolen smock has no fancy stitching on it, but is a straight, hanging tunic with broad shoulders. It is fully lined with yellow and brown plaid fabric for warmth. Its sleeves have small sleeve pleats at the *narrow*, sewn-on cuffs. A simple 1 inch binding at the neck is of the same tunic fabric. This over-smock was used as an additional two layers of fabric that could be conveniently pulled on over the head for cold farm work.

SOURCE: Drawn by Carma when this American smock was a recent acquisition at Old Sturbridge Historic Village in Sturbridge, New York. Free use.



Collar often worn up against cheek

Men's Basic Shirt, 1800-1840.

The shirt body was one length of cloth, folded in half at the shoulder, and a little wider than his body width. The sleeve was sewn onto the shoulder fold with reinforcements, and a gusset added at the armpit. That's why the shoulder seam draped down onto the upper arm.

The collar was either sewn on permanently or else buttoned on so it could be removed, washed, and changed often. Collars could be worn standing or folded.

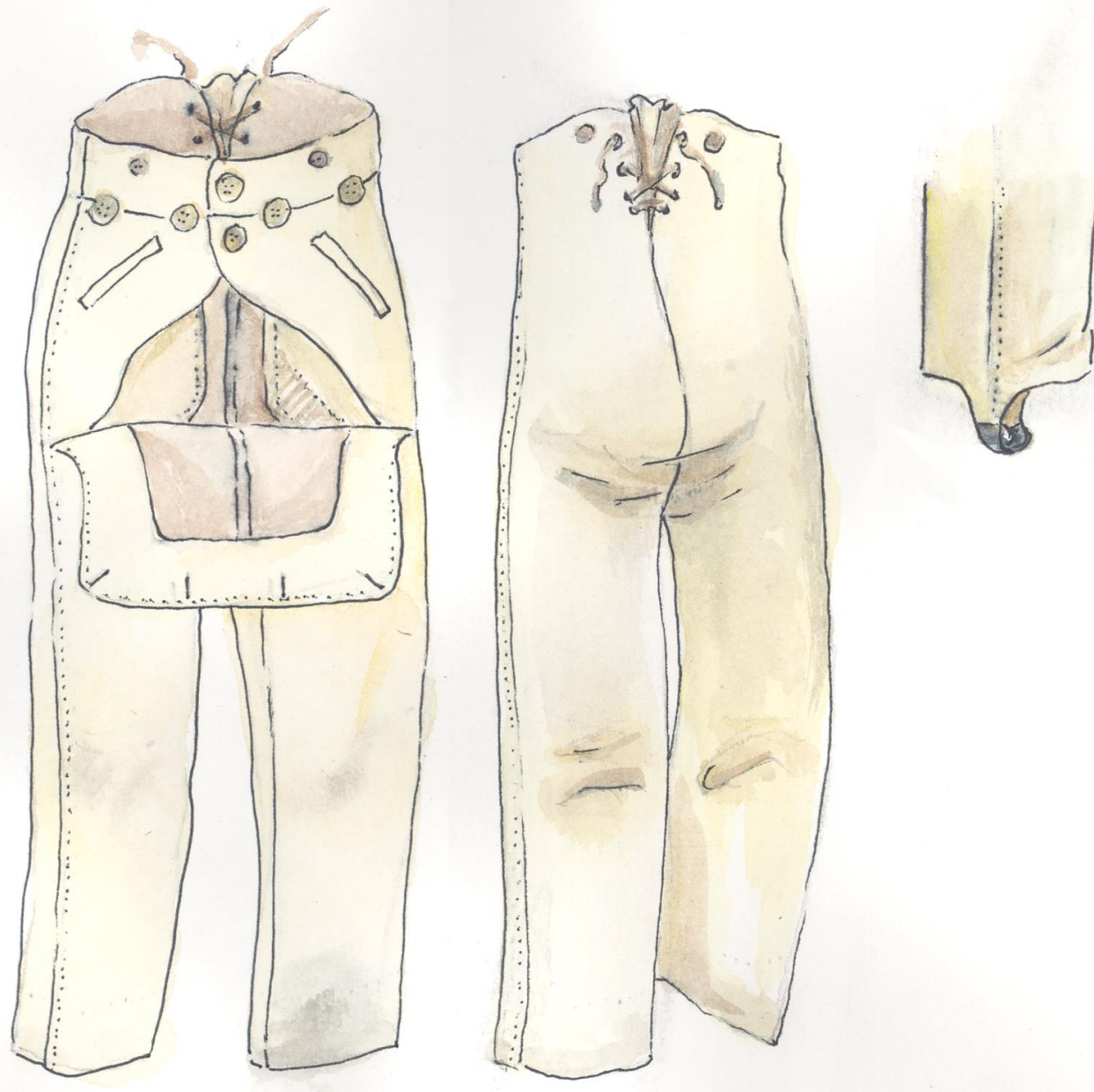
From the early to mid-1800s a cheek-high standing

collar could be buttoned to the shirt's neck and fastened in back (seen here) ► A wide cravat could be wrapped and tied around it.

Ruffles could be sewn onto the shirt front opening, as above left. The opening was fastened closed with hooks or buttons, or with decorative studs.

Men's shirts were all pull-overs such as this until after the mid-century. Full-length front openings were not common until later in the 1800s.





“Broadfall” trousers with a strapped-under variation on the hem. 1800-1860.

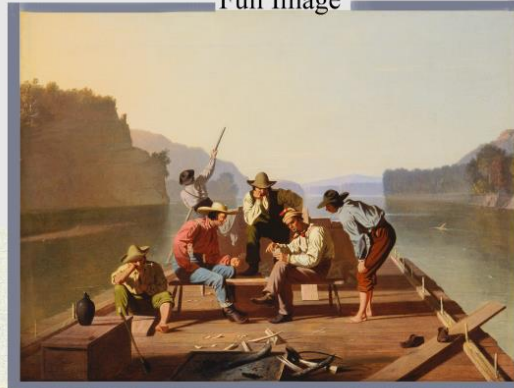
DESCRIPTION: Broadfall trousers were usually loose in the seat. Most men wanted extra room to sit comfortably despite looking a little baggy in back, even in the best clothing. The strapped-under hem has black elastic under the shoe.

By the 1840s, breeches were rarely worn except for very formal occasions, usually in Europe.

SOURCE: Watercolor illustrations by Carma; free use.

Pattern in Appendix.

Full Image



Closeup Detail



Common hats and shirts on “Raftsmen Playing Cards” as they travel the Missouri River in 1847.

This close-up detail shows man seated on floor and the man standing in the middle wearing large straw hats with curled brims and rounded crowns. The man in the red shirt has a fine, wide, curled brim on a beige felt with a squared crown; the man poling behind him wears a small felt hat, rather squashed. Two other men in front have a knitted cap and a battered, black, broad-brim with a rounded crown, purposely dented on the sides.

Their shirts and pants are common and worn, but in many colors, some with suspenders. One pair of pants seems to be an early “Levi jean” rolled up at the cuff. Only one man wears a vest, proving these men to be very common and

casual.

SOURCE: The artist, George Caleb Bingham, lived on the river since childhood and painted much of its shifting emphasis on the history of the nation, He reveled in the mixture of various ethnicities found along this gigantic feature of America’s cultural geography. George Caleb Bingham, American, 1811-1879, *Raftsmen Playing Cards*, 1847, oil on canvas; 28 1/16 x 38 1/16 inches, Saint Louis Art Museum, Bequest of Ezra H. Linley by exchange 50:1934. Found frequently online.



The Farrier who puts shoes on horses was a much needed man in the 1800s and for many centuries before.

A blacksmith who shapes and attaches horseshoes must wear a leather apron to protect from the heat and sparks of his forge and hammering. Usually the apron ties around both waist and neck, but this man's neck strap seems to have broken. Cleverly, he hooks one of the strap holes onto a vest button until he has time to repair it. His shirtsleeves are rolled up, but he still wears a proper vest and neck kerchief. Going without a vest and neckwear was tantamount to working in one's underwear since the shirt was often a nightgown as well. In a hot forge, he could do without a hat.

SOURCE: W. H. Pyne, "*Microcosm*." Free use.