

A BASIC WARDROBE FOR CIVILIAN LADIES

These are the basic requirements for women and teen girls (15 years and up) at reenactments and living history programs.

Daydress or workdress (a plain daydress worn while doing housework, gardening, etc)

Leather shoes

Cotton stockings (with garters)

Cotton underpinnings (chemise, petticoats, etc)

Corset or stays

Hoop, or corded petticoat

Bonnet (for ladies) or hat (for girls) or sunbonnet (for 'outdoor work')

Basket or carpetbag

Drinking cup or mug

Fan

The following are some useful 'extras'.

Apron

Shawl

Folding 'camp stool'

Sewing kit

Gloves

Jewelry / watch

Parasol

*** A plain colored, simple daydress is a wise investment. It can be worn for a wide variety of occasions. For camp cooking wear it with an apron and sleeves rolled up. With white linen collar and cuffs it is dressy enough for a tea party or church.

GETTING DRESSED

ITS EARLY MORNING ON A TYPICAL DAY IN THE 1860'S. YOU'RE JUST GETTING UP AND ARE READY TO GET DRESSED.

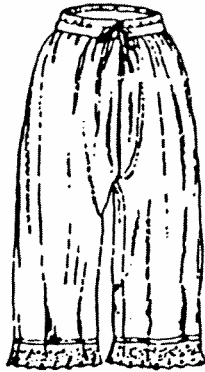
WHAT DO YOU PUT ON ?

YOU MAY HAVE SLEPT IN YOUR CHEMISE

NEXT YOU PUT ON



① DRAWERS (PANTALETS)



remember to tuck in your chemise!

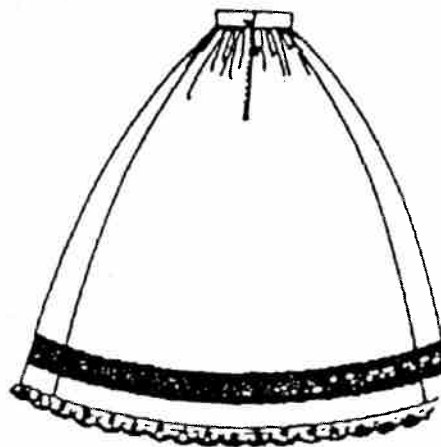
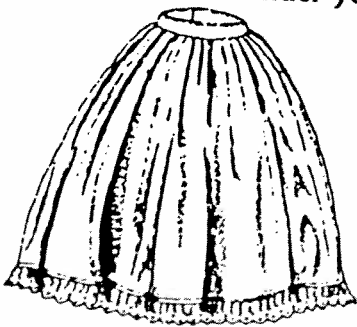


② CORSET or STAYS

CORSET COVER

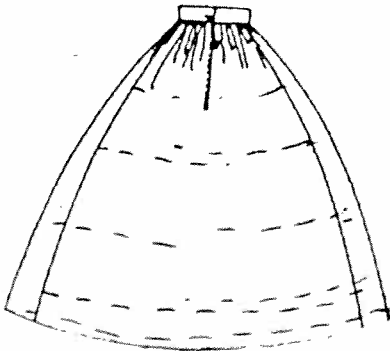
③ SHORT PETTICOAT

Under your hoops



⑤ LONG PETTICOAT

Over your hoops



④ HOOPS or CRINOLINE
OR CORDED PETTICOAT

STOCKINGS and garters



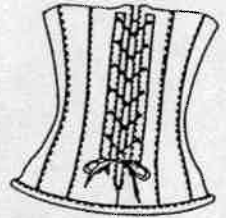
DRESS

SHOES

CORSETS or STAYS

Women of the 1860s wore either stays or corsets as an essential part of their everyday underwear. Going out without stays or a corset would make you a source of gossip, a 'loose woman'.

CORSETS ARE BONED (They used whalebone - we use thin strips of metal). THEY PROVIDE A SMOOTH SHAPE AND HELP YOUR DRESS 'LOOK RIGHT' BY GIVING YOU A FASHIONABLE SILHOUETTE. THEY ALSO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND KEEP THE WAISTBANDS OF ALL THOSE HOOPS AND PETTICOATS FROM CUTTING INTO YOUR WAIST.



STAYS WERE WORN BY WOMEN WHO NEEDED SOMETHING MORE FLEXIBLE TO WEAR WHILE THEY DID PHYSICAL WORK - FARM WOMEN DOING CHORES, WORKING IN THE GARDEN, HEAVY CLEANING WORK, ETC. STAYS ARE NOT BONED - THEY ARE MADE OF LAYERS OF STIFF FABRIC. LIKE A CORSET THEY CREATE AN 1860s FIGURE. THEY ALSO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR PETTICOATS, AND SUPPORT FOR YOUR BACK.

AN OVERVIEW OF WOMENS CLOTHING - what you wore depended on your economic status, occupation, and even the time of day. Here is a brief summary of some of the variations in womens clothing of the Civil War era.

	<u>WORK</u>	<u>DAYTIME</u>	<u>EVENING</u>
<u>Chemise</u>	Linen / cotton Plain, or simple trims	Cotton / linen Some trim	Cotton / linen Delicate trim Shorter sleeve
<u>Corset</u>	Coarse cloth stays Few or no bones Shoulder straps sometimes used	More boning Tighter Sometimes colored	Firm corset Small waist Fancier trim
<u>Drawers</u>	Plain (Not always worn)	Trimmed	Fancier trim Fine fabric
<u>Underpetticoat</u>	Flannel / cotton Less trim Solid color or stripes	White cotton White / colored flannel Tucks / trim	Cotton Tucks / trim
<u>Hoop</u>	Corded or quilted petticoat Narrow	Cage crinoline Covered hoop Narrow or medium width	Cage or covered Wider style
<u>Overpetticoat</u>	Optional Colored or flannel Shorter	White Colored for 'walking'	White Embroidered Starched
<u>Dress</u>	Cotton / linen Linsey woolsey Homespun Plain style	Silk Fine cotton Wool Sometimes trim	Silk Fine cotton More trim / lace
<u>Collar</u>	Handkerchief Plain cotton or linen	Cotton / linen Embroidered Lace / tatting	Tucker Chemisette Net underbodice
<u>Cuffs</u>	not usually worn	Cotton/linen Undersleeves	Match collar Undersleeves

<u>Jewelry</u>	usually none	Broach Rings / Earrings	Bracelets Earrings Necklace
<u>Stockings</u>	Wool / cotton Home made	Cotton / silk White, black, brown, or striped	White silk or Cotton Embroidered
<u>Shoes</u>	Heavy leather Rubber overshoes Boots	Leather or cloth Thin soles Rubber overshoes	Satin boots Black or colored slippers Quilted overshoe
<u>Hairstyle</u>	Center part Plain style Confined	Center part Braided or plain Confined	Center part Elaborate Curls and loops Ribbons/ flowers
<u>Headcovering</u>	Slat bonnet Poke bonnet Work bonnet	Day cap (older women indoors) Bonnet with trim (Lace, flowers, feathers, etc)	Quilted hood Lace cover Headdress

'The Hairstyles and Facial Look of the mid 19th Century'

What do we need to do to duplicate 'the look' of the women of the 1860's? We've studied the Ladies Magazines and CDV's from the Civil War era. Here's what we've learned...

The desired face shape was an oval. Whether long or short, a woman's hair was parted in the middle and pulled to the sides. Even little girls and baby girls wore their hair parted in the middle.

Long hair was worn low on the neck in a bun, roll, or coiled braids. No ponytails, bangs, or french braids. Loose hair is appropriate on young girls only. Short hair, although not common, was sometimes worn by young girls, or women who had been ill (it was believed that cutting off long hair cured a fever). Short hair was parted in the middle and combed back behind the ears.

Hair was contained by pomades (today we use mousses and gels), hairnets, combs, caps, hats or bonnets. Hairnets were usually of fine netting and in the same color as the wearers hair. Colored nets are for young fashionable ladies (under 25) only or for evening wear if decorated with ribbon or beads.

A lady never went out in public bareheaded - a bonnet (or sunbonnet) is appropriate for a female of any age. Straw hats were worn only by fashionable young women (under 25) and girls, and had relatively narrow brims. Sunbonnets were common and could be made of fine cotton or silk for a dressy look.

Eye makeup, nail polish, and lipstick were not worn. Sometimes rice powder was used to whiten the complexion since a pale look was fashionable.

Eyeglasses were small, oval, wire rimmed and sat directly on the nose.



A BASIC WARDROBE FOR CIVILIAN MEN and BOYS

These are the basic requirements for men and boys (*school age*) at reenactments and living history programs.

Trousers and vest (waistcoat)
Sackcoat or frockcoat
Cotton shirt
Suspenders
Leather shoes or boots
Cotton or wool socks
Cotton or flannel drawers (long underwear)
Hat or cap
Drinking cup or mug

The following are some useful 'extras'.

Folding 'camp stool'
Gloves
Jewelry / watch
Pipe / tobacco pouch (for the adult men only!)
Cane or walking stick
Carpet bag or valise
Necktie or cravat
Handkerchief

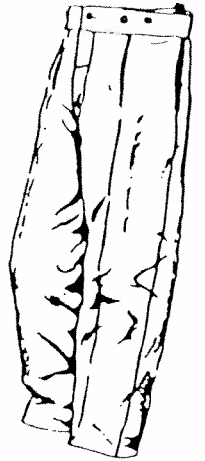
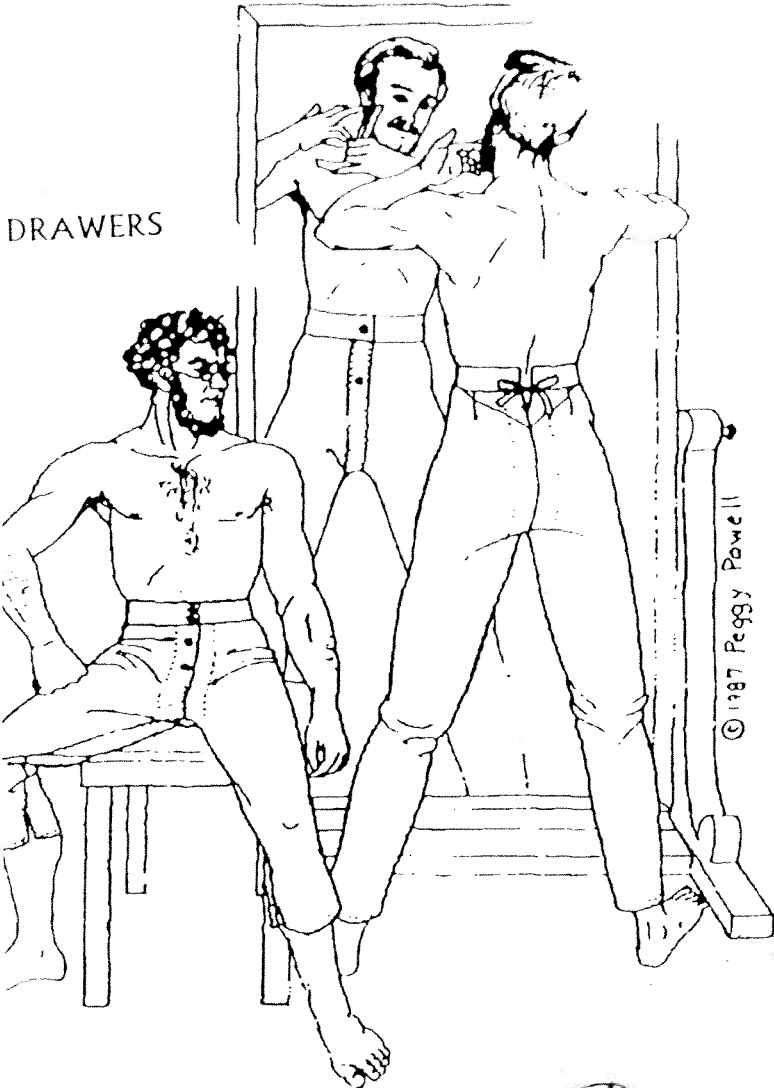
*** A plain dark colored, 'three piece suit' is a wise investment. It can be worn for a wide variety of occasions. For chores around camp take off the jacket (and if hot, the vest) and roll up your sleeves. With a cravat, pocket watch, and gloves you're ready for church or a political meeting.

GETTING DRESSED

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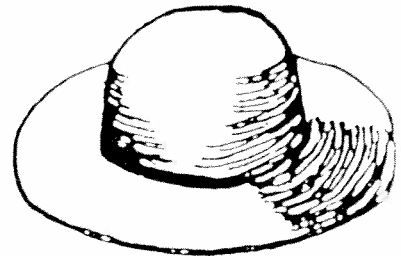
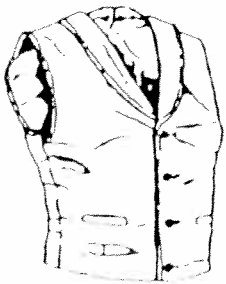
WHAT DO YOU PUT ON ?

DRAWERS



SHIRT (maybe two if the weathers cold)

TROUSERS with suspenders



VEST (a mans shirt was considered underwear and was worn covered by a vest or coat)

SACK COAT or FROCK COAT

TIE HAT SOCKS SHOES or BOOTS

A Note On Authenticity

As members of the 140th New York Volunteer Infantry, we take great pride in our level of authenticity and attention to detail. As living history interpreters of the Civil War era, we hope to educate people about the integral part soldiers and civilians played in the war effort. Our ultimate objective is to remind people of the sacrifices our ancestors made to make America what it is today. Through our appearances at reenactments and living history programs we hope to provide the public with an understanding of the lives and times of the people of the 1860s.

To best portray the citizens of the 1860s we need to be as authentic as possible in our appearance and actions. In order for the public (and other reenactors, historians, the media, etc.) to take us seriously, we need to take our work seriously. Researching, sharing new information, and constantly upgrading our clothing and impressions are just a few of the ways we strive to honor the men and women of the Civil War era.

To help those of you who are new to our group get off to a good start, we offer the following;

Ladies - The first thing people notice is your face. In order to achieve the correct look you need to keep your hair away from your face (center part, no bangs), NO makeup, and if you need glasses - wear contacts or period correct frames - NO modern plastic or wire frames.

Ladies did not smoke or swear in public!!!

Men - Hair was worn slightly longer than now, parted on the side, and 'greased' (use a modern hair treatment). If you need glasses invest in a period correct pair - NO modern eyewear. Cigarette smoking was not popular, so consider switching to a pipe or cigar.

Everyone - PLEASE, no velcro fasteners, zippers, plastic buttons, wristwatches, sneakers, obvious synthetic fabrics, or modern jewelry. If you need to carry a beverage with you pour it into a mug, cup, or glass bottle with a cork - NO modern pop cans or styrofoam cups! Keep your camera hidden.

Or, how not to make a spectacle of yourself

by Thomas McEvoy

Tom McEvoy has researched period eyewear over a number of years. This article was originally published in The Company Front of the Mudsills organization. Tom has the correct frames for sale and will also grind lenses for them. For more information you may contact Tom at 708/668-5281. —ED.

Spectacles came into common use in England around 1750. These contained the regulation front section held in position by temples or bows. The long temples or bows were called “telescopic sides or turnpins,” according to the mechanisms by which they varied the length to fit the wearer. It was not until this time that what we now know to be the prototype or today’s spectacles became popular. Frames were fabricated from such materials as wood, horn, bone, paper mache, and, during the early 18th and 19th centuries, metals, which were followed by real tortoise shell at the beginning of the 20th century.

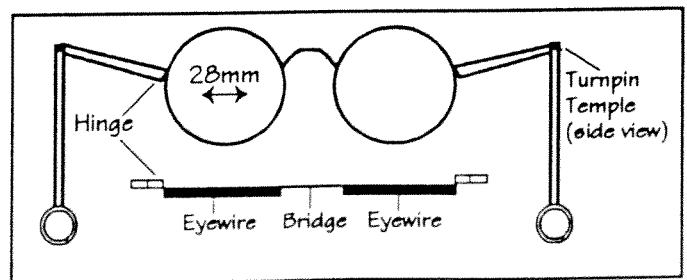
Until 1826, very nearly all American spectacles were imported from Europe, a practice which continued until the Civil War. In 1830, only 25 to 30 men were known to be engaged in making spectacle frames in this country. Most of these frames were made from gold or silver with a few being made from steel. These men would manufacture the frames and insert lenses which they had imported from Europe.

Spectacles can be easily identified by specific changes in construction, mechanisms, and appearance. The following categories are related to historical periods and will help assist you in dating and choosing spectacles which will better fit your impression.

The frames that I suggest people get are those of the Pre-Civil War period. These will have either the straight, stud-slit, or sliding temple with looped ends. The frame will have the straight bridge extension and the gauge of the eyewire will be somewhat thick. This type of frame is still easily found at most flea markets or antique shows. When choosing a frame, one should make sure that it contains all parts and that the hinge which closes the eyewires is held closed by a screw. Frames which have a press-fit hinge are too hard to insert lenses into and are usually the type of frame that was mass-produced for shooting glasses around 1897. Frames of the Post-Civil War period are very popular in

that they are easy to find and, because the eyewire sizes are larger, they afford the wearer a better field of vision. Cosmetically, they do have the Civil War style except for the comfort cable temples.

At this point, I think a few words about spectacle lenses might also be helpful. At the time of the Civil War, prescriptions for near-sightedness were almost non-existent with glasses being mainly used for reading. When deciding on whether to use a glass or plastic lens you should consider a couple of things. Cosmetically, both glass and plastic look the same. Glass has the advantage of not scratching as easily, but plastic, while scratching easier, is much lighter in weight. For those of you who have strong prescriptions, plastic is probably your best bet. The difference in weight of the lenses will be quite noticeable and, since the frame rests directly on the nose, plastic will be a definite advantage. For those of you considering a tinted lens, the most popular shades were light green, blue, and smoke gray. While there are examples today of tinted lenses, most frames would have had clear lenses. Most Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, or Opticians should be able to have your prescription put into the frame you have found but will probably do it under the understanding that if the frame breaks, they cannot be held responsible. Most of the frames are very individual and parts are not readily available for them.



Pre-Revolutionary (1620-1738)

This period encompassed the most insignificant alterations to the frame. The distinguishing feature, however, consisted of temple lengths of approximately four inches which folded vertically on a turn-pin arrangement, ending in a large loop. The eyerim diameter is 28mm and round in shape. Toward the end of this period, the temples were changed to fold horizontally on a hinge type construction with the temple loops being somewhat reduced.

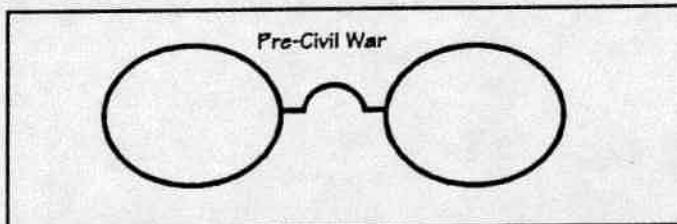


Revolutionary Era

The temples were changed to a sliding type. The method was that of a stud on one part of the temple which moved into a slit on the other part of the temple. The ring loops at the end of the temples were slightly reduced in size. Eyerims are more oval than round and the construction of the frame is less crude and thinner in gauge of material than those of the Pre-Revolutionary period.

War of 1812 (1812-1820)

The temples were changed to a new sliding method with elongated loops affording much easier manipulation with the wig. The frames were still somewhat heavy and bulky. The most common shapes were oval and rectangular.

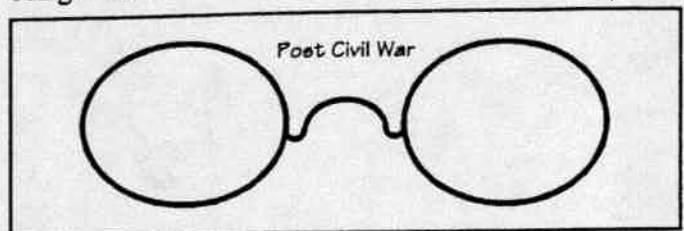


Pre-Civil War

Frame construction was considerably lighter in weight and gauge of material with temple loops much smaller. The large loops of the Pre-Revolutionary period and the stud-slit temple mechanisms were found to be less functional and were eliminated. A change in construction, allowing for alteration in the bridge, was added. This addition was a straight extension placed on both sides of the bridge between the bridge and the eyewire. Frames could be found in shapes of ovals, rectangles, hexagons, and octagons. These were manufactured from gold, silver, brass, plated brass and steel.

Civil War

Temples were solid with no loops. The purely round frames were non-existent at the time. All shapes are the same as Pre-Civil War, with frame construction being much more refined and with the gauge of material used being thinner.



Post Civil War (1866-1900)

These frames are thinner in the gauge of metal used for eyewires. The eyewire sizes are larger with the most common shape being oval. The frame construction is very refined with the bridge extension being more rounded and, in some cases, being placed behind the eyewires. The temples are either straight or the curved "comfort cable."

I hope this will clear up some misconceptions about Civil War spectacles and has given you a better understanding when choosing a spectacle frame better suited to your impression. 🐾

References:

Ophthalmic Dispensing: Russell L. Stimpson, Second edition, Charles C. Thomas.

Early American Specs: Dr. L.D. Bronson, Occidental Publishing Co., Glendale, CA.

CIVIL WAR ETIQUETTE

For our 19th century forbearers, correctly followed social etiquette, frequently referred to as "correct social intercourse", was highly sought after by both ladies and gentlemen of all social and economic levels. Unlike England where the barriers of aristocracy and nobility existed, one could always improve one's station in life in America. Following these rules of etiquette while in the public eye and in first person can greatly enhance your impression.

GENTLEMEN:

1. A gentlemen never smokes in the presence of ladies.
2. While escorting a female on the street, the lady always has the wall, allowing the gentleman to shelter her from splashing, dust and traffic from the street.
3. When you meet a lady who is only a slight acquaintance in the street or park, you must wait first for her acknowledging bow - then you may tip your hat to her, which is done using the hand that is farthest away from her. You must not speak to her or any other lady unless she speaks to you first.
4. If you meet a lady in the street whom you know well enough to speak to, do not stop her, but walk with her in which ever direction she is going. When you are finished speaking to her you may take your leave.
5. In going up a flight of stairs, you precede the lady, in going down, you follow.
6. A gentleman is always introduced to a lady, never the other way around. It is presumed to be an honor for the gentleman to meet her.
7. In walking with a lady, take charge of any small parcel, parasol, or book with which she may be encumbered.
8. To nod or merely touch the brim of the hat is far from courteous; the hat should be lifted from the head.
9. On meeting a friend with whom you are likely to shake hands, remove the hat with your left hand in order to leave the right hand free.
10. When introduced to a lady, never offer your hand. When introduced persons limit their recognition of each other to a bow.

LADIES:

1. If unmarried and under thirty, a lady is never to be in the company of a man unchaperoned. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man or a servant.
2. Under no circumstances may a lady call on a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that man on a professional or business matter.
3. A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner.
4. A lady is allowed to "cut" someone - that is to fail to acknowledge their presence when encountered socially - only under extreme circumstances. An example would be a man who persists on bowing when not properly introduced.
5. A lady may only be introduced to a gentleman by her father, brother, or parents' close friends.

6. A lady should never demand that a seat be given to her, whether it be in a theater, at the table or on a train, but should wait for it to be offered to her.

GENERAL RULES:

1. Adults should be addressed and introduced by their surname preceded by "Mr.", "Miss", or "Mrs.". Children may be addressed by their Christian name preceded by "Miss" or "Master".
2. It is considered rude to stand out in a crowd, either through dress or manner. Persons of good breeding, though unique, know how to blend in and not draw undue attention to themselves.
3. Try to remember to say "Good Morning, Afternoon, or Evening" rather than "Hi" or "Hello". You may also use "How do you do?". Try to refrain from the use of twentieth century slang.
4. Never stand with your backside to the fire, thereby robbing others of it's heat.

Remember "A good manner is the best letter of recommendation."

References:

1. *Rudeness & Civility* , John F. Kasson, Hill and Wang Publishing, 1990.
2. *Etiquette for Every Occasion*, Joy Melcher, Laser Writers Publishing, 1995.

'STREET ETIQUETTE AND TRAVEL ETIQUETTE'

'Street Etiquette' dealt with proper behavior in public, including the theater, lectures, church, and musical performances. "Travel Etiquette" provided guidelines for behavior on trains, coaches, hotels, etc. Both are applicable to our behavior at reenactments and living history events since we often portray men and women who are away from home, or in the public eye.

BASIC RULES FOR LADIES AND GIRLS

Do not scratch, pick your nose, yawn, or laugh loudly in public.

Do not offer to shake hands with a man in public.

When walking on a street avoid eye contact with men you do not know. If a strange man should approach you avoid conversation or impertinent remarks. If a man offers his arm to assist you across the street or up a step, or offers to carry your packages, this is acceptable. Say thank you afterwards, but there is no commitment to further conversation or the acquaintance.

When crossing a muddy street a lady should lift her skirt by gathering it into her right hand, but never higher than her ankles.

If you need directions you may approach a gentleman for information. Keep the conversation brief and to the point, and thank him afterwards. Decline any further advancements.

If a man tips his hat to you, you should respond with a nod or bow only. It is not polite to speak unless you already know one another.

If traveling with other ladies, sew a pocket in your petticoat for your money. Carry a small sum in your dress pocket, and change in your reticule. If traveling with a male escort give him your money and have him do your transactions for you. If traveling alone, hire a man at the hotel, depot or station to carry your luggage for you, and pay him well. Avoid carpetbaggers, loafers, and other unsavory characters.

Avoid unnecessary conversations with strangers. It is acceptable behavior to enter into a polite conversation with a fellow traveler, but when the journey is over the acquaintance does not need to continue.

A lady should wear a traveling veil and gloves when on a journey. Traveling veils were usually dark sheer fabric (silk or tulle) and were detachable. They protected the wearer from dust and soot. Keeping the veil down indicated that the lady did not wish to converse with her fellow travelers.

BASIC RULES FOR GENTLEMEN AND BOYS

Avoid spitting. Do not pick your nose or teeth in public. Never smoke in the presence of a lady.

Do not loiter around street corners or in front of businesses, or gaze impertinently at passersby, this will earn you the label of 'a loafer'.

When walking with a lady, keep between her and the street to protect her from the dust and danger of traffic on the road. If she is carrying a parcel insist on carrying it for her.

If you see a lady on the street that you know, wait for her to greet you with a nod or bow, then return the greeting with a tip of your hat and a kind word, If the lady does not greet you first it is considered rude for you to speak to her. If a lady stops you for directions tip your hat while answering.

Never walk away from someone without saying 'Excuse me' or 'I beg your pardon' first.

If a lady is traveling alone, offer your services to conduct her through the street, onto a train, and to purchase tickets, refreshments, etc. As the world is full of loafers, carpetbaggers, and Jonahs it is a gentleman's duty to protect the fairer sex.

When traveling by rail or coach always give way to ladies and people older than yourself. Offer your seat and assist with any packages or bundles. When getting off a train or coach always step down first (saying 'excuse me', or 'may I?' first) and assist any unescorted ladies down the steps. It is always appropriate to help a lady or group of ladies who are in need of assistance, but never assume that you have the right to carry on an acquaintance with someone after helping them. It is up to the lady to decide if she wishes to speak to you again.

Always walk ahead of a lady when going down stairs (again saying 'excuse me' first). This will allow you to assist her (or to break her fall should she trip) and prevents you from stepping on the back of her dress. When entering a crowded room or restaurant, walk ahead and clear the way for her, and assist her with her chair.

Thanks to Karen Rae Mehaffey and 'Citizens Companion' for this information.

CREATING A FIRST PERSON IMPRESSION FOR THE 1860'S

Being 'in first person' means speaking and acting as if you really are living in the 1860's. Some reenactors choose to portray a specific person from that time period such as a famous historical individual (Clara Barton, Abraham Lincoln) by doing extensive research on that person. Others choose to portray one of their own ancestors using information from family archives. Most reenactors find it easier and more interesting to create their own 'person'.

Local historical societies and libraries are excellent sources of information on what life was like in your area in the 1860's. Census records and city directories list names, ages, and occupations of local residents. Local newspapers provide a good insight into daily life; local news (including murder and scandal), politics, business ads, births, deaths, marriages, theater presentations, jokes, school board meetings, etc. During the war most local papers would reprint local soldiers letters, and devote a column or two to the news of the war. Some 'national' newspapers like Harpers Weekly would devote a page each week to the latest works of fiction, in serialized form, by popular authors such as Charles Dickens. Find out what the popular books were that were being read during the war. Learn some popular songs, dances, and games. Historical societies often have diaries and family histories available for studying that open a window into daily life.

Once you've begun your research on life in your area in the 1860's, put yourself back into that time period. Who are you? In what year were you born? Where? How much education do you have? Do you have a job? What is your family like? Are you considered rich, poor, or 'middle-class'? Are your parents / brothers and sisters / children still alive? Do you live in the city, a village, or the country. What are the neighbors like? Is there a church nearby that you attend (or an Opera house, or racetrack)? What newspapers do you read? How far do you have to go to pick up your mail / buy groceries / buy shoes / see a doctor or lawyer? How do you travel (on foot, horse and buggy, stage coach, rail, canal)? What's the farthest you've ever been from home before the war? Do you belong to any social or religious groups? What books / music do you enjoy? What is your favorite meal? Do you have a family member or friend in the army? How has the war changed your life? How do you feel about slavery, secession, and womens rights?

Practice the etiquette of the time period. At a reenactment remember to refer to people as Mr. or Mrs, or Miss. Who are the other people in your group, and why are you with them? Have a 'reason' for being there (are you an agent for the Christian Commission, parents looking for a missing son, a refugee,???) . Even if you don't feel comfortable in first person (some of us never do) try to do the best you can. That's what 'living history' is all about.

ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO EAT THAT???

(Adventures in dealing with the public)

“Aren’t you hot in all those clothes? Are you a camp follower? Do you really sleep there? (*pointing at your tent*) Are you really going to eat that? Why are you doing that?”

The way we answer these, and other, questions from the public, or deal with the silent questioning stares, can make the difference between having the satisfaction of providing an interesting and educational experience for our visitors, or feeling awkward and uncomfortable.

Depending upon the situation, we can either be in first person or third person. At most reenactments we stay in first person, acting and speaking as if we really were living in the 1860's. Depending upon the experience and expectations of the visiting public we can interact with them as if they were people from that time period too. Third person, speaking as a modern person describing the past, is often used at presentations and classes, although these can be very effective when done in first person.

To help visitors interact with you in your first person persona it always helps to ask them a leading question that also provides them with some information about what you are trying to portray. Something along the lines of “It looks like you’ve just arrived here in our refugee camp; did the rebels chase you off your farm too?”, or “I see you’ve just arrived in the area, did you see any signs of the union army?” let the visitor know you are in ‘first person’ and give them a starting point for conversing with you. By putting them in ‘first person’ also, it makes them feel part of what’s going on and helps them get a better understanding of what it might have been like to live at that time in that situation. Describing what you’re doing; ‘I’m cooking pies with dried apples because we ran out of the fresh apples from last fall’s harvest’ or “I’m sewing these shirts to send to the army hospital” explains what you’re doing and why, and can lead to further conversation. By initiating the conversation you take control of the situation and have the opportunity to ‘teach’ about the situation you are portraying. By engaging the visitors in conversation it gives the visitors less time to think of questions like; ‘Aren’t you hot’, and ‘Are you a carpetbagger?’ If you do get a good question that you can’t answer, don’t hesitate to refer the visitor to someone else.

Sometimes visitors just ‘don’t get it’, or don’t feel comfortable dealing with reenactors in first person. Stepping aside and speaking to them in third person may be the best way to deal with some people; sometimes you may need to switch back and forth. A brief ‘introduction’ in third person might be all a group of students needs in order for them to participate in the rest of a first person scenario.

To feel comfortable in first person you will need to do some preparation work including a basic knowledge of ‘where you are’ (for example - Gettysburg), ‘when’ (say July 3, 1863), ‘who’ you are (maybe an ‘average’ housewife), ‘what’ you’re doing there (handing out food to soldiers), and ‘why’ (so they will go away and leave us alone). You don’t need to create an elaborate situation. Be yourself in the context of a different time and place. Confidence in your role, either first or third person, comes with practice, and will make your interactions with the public easier every time.

MISTAKES WE'VE MADE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO.....

1) Choosing a pretty calico print fabric at the fabric store for the dress we're going to make..

Modern calico prints aren't always the same colors and designs as the ones that were popular in the 1860's. If you look at photos from the time you'll see most women wearing solid colors. If you want to wear a print, or plaid, try to find modern fabrics that have similar color combinations and designs to the ones worn in the 1860's.

2) Impulse shopping at the sutlers...

One of the big attractions at a reenactment is shopping for items to complete your wardrobe or your camp set up. Keep in mind that 'just because the sutlers sell it doesn't mean its right'. If you're not sure of what kind of bonnet, gloves, candle lantern, or coffee pot to buy, take a more experience member of the group to advise you. There's no point in paying too much for something that you can't use because it's not correct for the time period.

3) Being unprepared for the weather..

You're dressed just right, your hair is in an appropriate style, and you're remembering your 1860's manners but you're not comfortable. It's summer and it's hot. ALWAYS bring an authentic looking water bottle and glass or plain mug for drinking. An authentic parasol, or sunbonnet, for the ladies is a big help on sunny days. For cooler weather have a shawl (both men and women wore shawls) or jacket handy. Find out how people in the 1860's kept comfortable and do the same.

4) Being embarrassed to ask question..

Please ask! No question is too 'silly' or 'stupid'. It's the only way you'll learn.