

THE
INTERNATIONAL
RENAISSANCE
FESTIVALS LTD.
PARTICIPANT
COSTUME
HANDBOOK

By
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Throughout history clothing has played an important role in defining the social classes. A person's station or position in life or one's occupation could be told in the style and fabric content of their wardrobe.

Everyone had the same basic items in their wardrobe. The differences being the content and quality of fabric, the use of trims, the closure of the garment, and jewelry.

The following Pages are a brief history and description of the types of clothes you should be wearing while participating here at International Renaissance Festivals Ltd.

When developing your costume first identify if you're a Courtier or a Villager and type of work you do then you may match your festival character to the suggestions in the manual. Also consider being able to adapt your costume, while keeping to the theme, for warmer, colder, and rainy weather over the nine weekends of the Festival.

THE RENAISSANCE WOMAN

The Chemise was an under garment all women wore. It was usually made of white or natural linen. It was a full garment, like a shift or modern day “peasant shirt”, gathered into a round or square neck band where it could be embroidered or finished with a frill. The sleeves were long and full, tied at the wrist, and ended in a ruffle.

The Kirtle was an underdress or under skirt which could be made of silks, brocades, tapestries, or other like fabrics. It was worn under a Ladies over gown and usually showed through the front opening. It contrasted or enhanced the colors and textures of the over gown.



A Ladies Over gown
with belled sleeves



A Ladies Kirtle

Women of the Village also wore a kirtle, but it was made of woven fabrics such as cotton or wool. They were worn primarily for modesty and to prolong the life of the overskirt.

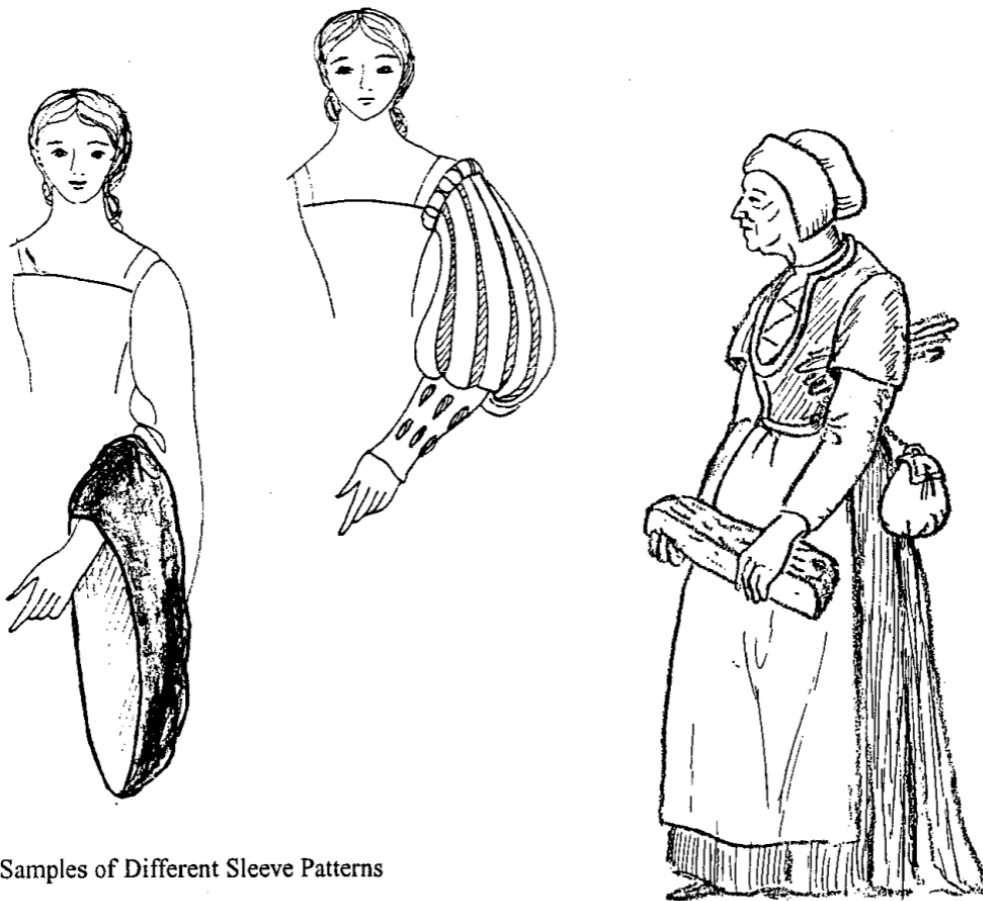
The overskirt is just that, an over skirt. It is worn over the kirtle and for women of position it could be connected to the bodice to make a one piece dress called an over dress or over gown.

The Bodice was the upper part of a woman's attire. The word is derived from the earlier medieval garment which was in two parts and known as a pair of bodies. These were lined with leather or canvas and were boned. The two portions were then hooked or laced together at the front for the Villagers, or the back for those who could afford the servants it took to help them get dressed each morning.

The overdress is the garment worn by upper middle class women and the Ladies of the Court. It was constructed of velvets, silks, or tapestries. The basic silhouette did not differ much from dress to dress. It was the fabric choices and sleeve patterns that gave each dress its own originality.



An English Lady of The Court



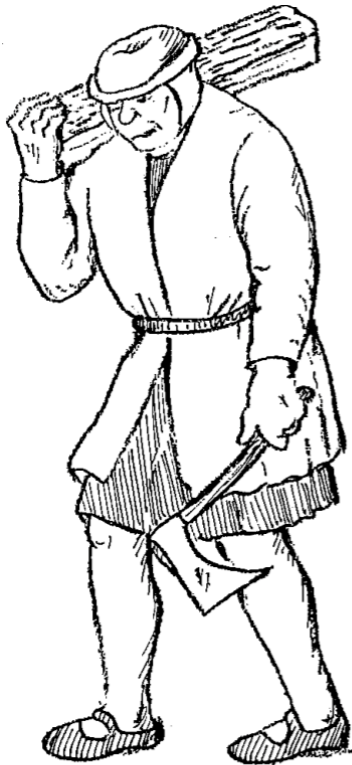
Samples of Different Sleeve Patterns

A Peasant Woman from The Great Book of Hours of Henry VIII

THE RENAISSANCE MAN

During the Middle Ages, and for much of the Sixteenth Century, Men covered their legs with “hose” made of cotton, linen, or wool. A looser form of “Breeches” was sometimes to be seen. The period description of breeches was, “A masculine outer garment covering the hips and legs as far as the knee.” In other words knee pants. We can use either long pants (to the ankle), or knee pants for most Villager men. .

A Charmarre, (chemise), was a loose fitted gown that opened in front at the collar and sleeves which were very full.



A 16 th Century Peasant
most likely a farmer



King Henry VIII

The chemise worn by the men in court were generally of fine linen and were decorated with blackwork embroidery or trims. Chamarre is a French word which means to bedeck or decorate gaudily.

The Villager men wore a chemise cut in the same style but were usually constructed of less fine cotton or linen.

The doublet was worn by men between the Fourteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. It was usually fastened up the center front most often by a row of buttons. The doublets of the Villager men could also lace up.

From about 1490 - 1530 the pourpoint, or doublet, worn by the men in the court had a square neckline and was worn with a knee length skirted jerkin. Most men also wore a sash or waist belt.



16 th Century Merchant

Doublets in all periods could be either sleeved or sleeveless, skirted or not. The sleeveless types, worn by merchant or middle class as well as farmers and peasants, ended at the shoulder sometimes with an epaulet and the full chemise sleeves visible.



Edward VI

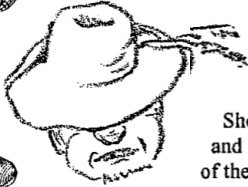


The Velvet and Jeweled Hat of King Henry VIII

Shoes and hats were universal in the Sixteenth Century. Everyone had and wore both.



A Kennel



Shoes and Hats of the Period



The Typical early Sixteenth Century Courtiers hat was constructed of velvet, brocades or tapestries and had a small, stiff brim with a soft crown that was gathered into a decorative band of cord or jewels. A gentleman of the Courts hat was often bejeweled and decorated with one or more ostrich plumes. The Villager man wore basically the same style only made from coarser fabrics. They also wore hats woven from straw.

Women covered their heads with caps. The Ladies of the court crowning theirs with a French Hood or a Gable. Villager women also wore hats woven from straw.

From around 1520 onward shoes were noted by their excessively wide toes which, for some years, were square ended or horned. Such shoes, for fashionable wear, were low cut in front fastened by a strap across the top of the foot. Like other items of clothing at the time, shoes were often decorated by slashes or embroidery and were made of leather, satin, or velvet in all colors.

Only men of high rank, such as Knights and Squires who worked with or rode horses, wore boots. The armies of foot under King Henry VIII wore low cut shoes and wool hose. Even the King himself only wore boots while riding.

Good shoes will be your most important investment while working here at the Maryland Renaissance Festival. It would be wise to have a second pair for rain days so there is always a dry pair for you to change into. A pair of good insoles can help also.



A Squire

The apron is a garment with a long history and was worn for four chief purposes: as protection for the clothes beneath, as a decorative feature, as a traditional or regional dress, and to indicate a particular status. Protective aprons were worn by both men and women and the color, design, and material often varied according to the occupation of the wearer.

For example, leather aprons were worn by blacksmiths, stone masons wore white aprons to hide the white stone dust, green baize (a thick, felt-like woolen fabric) aprons by butlers, English barbers were known as "checkered apron men", blue and white striped aprons were worn by butchers, blue was commonly worn by weavers, spinners, and gardeners. Stonemasons wore white aprons as protection against the dust of their trade.

Women's working aprons, both in town and the country were long and full, gathered closely into a waistband and tied at the back. Some had a bib or upper part to protect the bodice of the dress. They were chiefly made of white linen or cotton.



An English Country Woman

A FEW COMMON SENSE TIPS TO KNOW

We want you to have fun while working here but you must remember, this is like any other job, there are certain do's and don'ts that must be followed.

1. **Everyone must be in clothing of the period.** These have been described for you in the previous pages.
 - a. You **MUST** wear shoes at **ALL TIMES**. They should resemble shoes of the period as closely as possible but they must also be comfortable. Shoes are your most important investment.
 - b. Drinking and eating vessels should be made of materials found in this time period such as wood, pottery, or pewter. We prefer that you use these sorts of utensils because eating from the paper and plastic served at the food booths does spoil the illusion we are trying to create.
2. **Clothing not of this period will be unacceptable.** Unacceptable clothing will include but is not limited to;
 - a. Leather bikinis
 - b. See-through shirts
 - c. Body Piercing. You may wear earrings but there will be no eyebrow, lip, or nose rings or studs allowed.
 - d. Hair of Colors Not Found in Nature. If you dye your hair fashion colors, ie; purple or orange etc. while in costume and working you must keep it **FULLY** covered at all times.
 - e. No smoking on site while in costume.
 - f. While you may wear Crosses or the Star of David, **NO** political jewelry, buttons, symbols etc are allowed at all. .

The Management Staff of the Maryland Renaissance Festival have no issue with your personal beliefs. It is simply not appropriate to wear Modern, SciFi, Horror or Fantasy clothing not of this period. We are trying to create an illusion for the patrons. This is a 16th Century village and we want all who work here representing Revel Grove to portray 16th Century Courtiers and Villagers as closely as possible in all aspects, including clothing and mannerisms.

There are many more good sources for information on clothing of the Sixteenth Century. Just a few are listed below. If you need advice, these books are recommended.

Christoph Weiditz, *Authentic Everyday Dress of the Renaissance: All 154 Plates from the "Trachtenbuch"*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1927, Dover Publications Inc. New York, 1994

John Peacock, *Costume 1066 - 1990's: A Complete Guide to English Costume Design and History*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London 1986 and 1994

Motley, *Designing and Making Stage Costumes*, The Herbert Press Ltd, London 1964 and 1992

Shirley Dearing, *Elegantly Frugal Costumes*, Meriwether Publishing Ltd, Colorado, First Edition 1931

Braun & Schneider, *Historic Costume in Pictures*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York 1975

Lynn Schnurnberger, *Let There Be Clothes: 40,000 Years of Fashion*, Workman Publishing, New York 1991

Also a quick Google Image search of portraits of the 16th Century can help.