

Garments

Eighteenth-century women of European descent, generally wore the same basic garments. Fashion and regional tastes influenced their look. The women of New France wanted to dress as fashionably as they could, especially on Sundays. The latest European fashions – even silk gowns – reached the furthest frontier regions. Catholic priests often decried women's wearing of immodest and expensive clothing in styles beyond their status. Many observers also commented on the short skirts (mid-calf) and jackets (rather than gowns) that *Habitant* women wore.



Re-enactor modeling undergarments

Articles of Dress

Women wore a simple chemise (shift), usually made of linen as an undergarment and a nightgown. Over it, they wore at least two *jupon* (petticoats) tied about the waist. Whalebone stays provided the foundation for the gown or jacket, gave the rounded fashionable shape, and provided an erect posture. While at home in a state of *déshabillé* (less formal dress) a woman might wear a quilted vest or jumps rather than the stays. Pockets were tied about the waist rather than sewn into women's clothing – usually under the top petticoat, which had slits to allow access to the pockets. A jacket or gown went over the stays. Around the shoulders women wore a *fichu* (neckerchief) tucked into the front of her gown.



Needlework pockets



Quilted petticoat

Caps and Hats

A coiffe (cap) covered a woman's hair at all times unless her hair was elaborately styled.



When outdoors, a wide-brimmed hat kept the sun from women's faces.



18th century cross from Fort St. Joseph

Adornment

Women of both France and New France wore fingerings, medallions, and crosses or crucifixes on ribbons around their necks, all of which have been recovered from Fort St. Joseph.



Inexpensive finger rings from Fort St. Joseph

Shoes

In the cities or on Sundays women wore fine leather or brocade shoes over thigh-high stockings. *Habitant* women often wore moccasins and/or sabots (wooden shoes) while working. In the summer they often went barefoot.



Stylish 18th century women's shoes