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# Through the Lens of Fashion: an Analysis of the Clothing Styles of Women In Early Victorian Ontario

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THROUGH THE LENS OF FASHION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CLOTHING  
STYLES OF WOMEN IN EARLY VICTORIAN ONTARIO

by

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Hamilton, Ontario, 2012

A Thesis

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Fashion

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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## ABSTRACT

The stories of the women who lived in and contributed to the growth of early Victorian Canada have been largely untold. Often named only as an adjunct to male heads of households, women have been nearly invisible in the history of this nation. This research project is a study of the women and their dress from 1840 to 1860 as seen through daguerreotypes. It verifies that sitters showed a high level of consistency in their choice of style, fabric, and accessories, but exhibited individuality and personality within the confines of popular fashion. Using information gleaned from the photographs, this examination identifies signs and symbols that were part of the philosophy of early Victorian Canada. As a scholarly document, it provides a series of images that can be used to establish the timelines of Canadian dress and a firm base upon which to build a greater knowledge of Canadian fashion.

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## DEDICATION

For my mother, Marjorie B. MacKay

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## INTRODUCTION

The stories of the women who lived in and contributed to the growth of the burgeoning Canadian colony as it moved towards confederation in 1867 have been largely untold. Often named only as an adjunct to the male heads of households in nineteenth-century records, and overlooked by traditional historians who tend to be concerned with political and economic developments at the hands of great men, women have been nearly invisible in the history of this nation.<sup>1</sup> Yet they made up almost half of the population (Errington 1995 xi). They were daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, and neighbours. They shared common experiences: the trials and joys of life; the uncertainty of marriage, and the dangers of childbirth.

Starting in the 1840s, photographs were one way in which women's lives were documented. Photography is a rich medium that chronicles not only their physical appearance, but women's values, their sartorial tastes, their strata of society, and their family's relative wealth. As well as the physicality of the sitter, photographic images project how she constructed her appearance for the benefit of the viewer. The images also reflect the complex and gendered relationship between the usually male nineteenth-century photographer, who was often also an accomplished portrait artist, and his female subject.

This research project is a study of the photographic images of the women who lived in the geographical region of Southern Ontario, which was then known as Canada West (Noel 238). It gives a visual presence to some of the nineteenth-century Canadian women who have been

invisible. Specifically, the study looks at women and their dress in the era of the daguerreotype photograph, which coincides with the early Victorian era between 1840 and 1860. In addition, using the information gleaned from photographs, this study will identify signs and symbols that were part of the philosophy of early Victorian Canada. As a scholarly document, it provides a series of images that can be used to establish the timelines of Canadian dress.

Two great themes emerge from this analysis: the broader visual and sartorial language of the early nineteenth-century, and the multifaceted dress of the individual. A number of fashion theorists have recognized this duality of meaning when struggling to define fashion. In his classic 1904 essay “Fashion,” Georg Simmel introduces the concept of two social tendencies that are vital to the establishment of fashion. He terms these the need for ‘union,’ or that which adapts to society views, and the need for ‘isolation,’ or the departure from societal demands (Simmel in Barnard 184). Malcolm Barnard takes this notion further to propose that one’s identity, and therefore the image of one’s identity, is constructed by negotiating these two elements of similarity and difference within the same outfit (ibid). The simultaneous negotiation between concepts of oneness and the collective are literally mirrored in the reflective surfaces of the daguerreotypes in this study. While subsequent photographic processes succeeded in part due to their inherent capacity to produce multiple images, singularity was a fundamental characteristic of the daguerreotype as a medium. There is a strong correlation between photography and fashion in this context. Both the sitter and the image as an object are unique. At the same time, each is part of and contributes to a larger social and cultural structure. The daguerreotype is the conduit through which the dress and attitude of the individual becomes part of the larger societal dialogue of fashion. It is through compilation and analysis of singular, unique images that broad generalizations are possible. “Through the Lens of Fashion: An

Analysis of the Clothing Styles of Women in Early Victorian Ontario” investigates the expressions of individuality among the subjects in the study and identifies overall dress themes.

In her book, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America*, costume and dress historian Linda Baumgarten states that people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were acutely aware of life’s cycles, and that they shared each other’s joys and sorrows throughout each of life’s passages (140). She concludes that life experiences greatly affected people’s choice of clothing (ibid). The women represented by the daguerreotypes in the current study shared emotional, physical, and ideological aspects of life in pre-confederation Canada. It is probable that they also shared characteristics of dress. At the time, photography was still rare and the fact that the women were photographed at all is documentary evidence of an important moment within the full arch of their lives. Through in-depth study and analysis of the daguerreotypes, concrete ideas about dress and societal values in early Victorian Canada are developed.

Many of the daguerreotypes in this study portray women who held a high rank in society’s social structure. Skilled daguerreotypists achieved a level of notoriety, which attracted the elite families. A *Globe* report in 1858 singled out the work Eli J. Palmer: “[T]he plain and coloured photographs of Mr. Palmer (have) certainly distanced all competitors. Our country friends need not roam all over the city in order to obtain a view of Canadian celebrities. Let them look at these pictures, and they cannot fail to gain a good idea of the men they would wish to see” (Globe in Lansdale 13). Existing daguerreotypes are housed in local archives, museums, and libraries that tend to preserve the documents concerning influential families and the builders of the community rather than those of a more unexceptional economic position. One can speculate that the women in this study were from families that had secure financial resources and saw

value in preserving their image for future generations. Other photographs portray unnamed women and are identified as local inhabitants by way of the photographer. These divergent images add depth and breadth to the study. Most of the portraits are three-quarter length, showing a seated woman from head to her knees. The collection of nearly fifty daguerreotypes captures intergenerational images of women in all stages of their lives; from adolescent to young adult, through their married lives, the birth of children, as the heads of the domestic household, and as older women sometimes holding a grandchild embarking on the same life journey.

As a sartorial investigation, this study breaks new ground. There is shockingly little reference material available that focuses on Canadian dress of any period, from pre-Confederation dress to modern fashion. Currently, there are no university courses in Canada that examine modern or historic Canadian dress. Without adequate information, all of our perceptions of Canadian historic clothing are based upon our knowledge of British and American dress, which, on the contrary, is very well documented. Careful and accurate research is vital to the documentation of our Canadian fashion heritage. The massive gap in knowledge and published material is precisely the reason for the current line of inquiry.

The daguerreotype process was introduced to the world on 19 August 1839 by the President of France's Academy of Sciences (Garrett 1995 11). It was the result of years of scientific research and experimentation by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre and Joseph Nicéphore Niépce. With this announcement, the French government offered the secrets of the process "for the benefit of the entire world" (ibid). However, Daguerre had already applied for and received a patent in England and her colonies. This restriction may have severely impeded the growth of the industry in Canada in the early years. Despite this, over the next couple of decades, hundreds of

artists and entrepreneurs embraced the new technique, and brought the medium to inhabitants in large and small communities throughout Ontario (Garrett 2008).

The daguerreotype was a perfect marriage of the scientific and the artistic philosophy of the age. It captured an image from nature with the light of the sun, translated it to a chemically-treated and polished plate of silver, and, with a wash of water, preserved its image for the future. The first daguerreotypes required exposures in the bright sunlight for up to twenty minutes, and were impractical for portraiture. Subsequent improvements to the process and equipment greatly shortened the required exposure time. The “Wolcott” patented camera was introduced in 1840. “By this new process the time required for a person to sit for his portrait is reduced so that under the different circumstances of the intensity of light, &c., a likeness may be taken in from one to four minutes. At the same time the pain of sitting exposed to the direct rays of the sun is greatly diminished as the light is modified” (Newhall 1975 26). By 1850, this time was further reduced. In Toronto, Dr. L. M. Cyrus boasted that he had invented an accelerator chemical that shortened exposure for portraits to ten seconds or less. “By this process he is able to take children’s Likeness, of any age, as well as family groupes [sic], from the size of a small breast-pin, up to ten inches” (West 8). This length of time was long enough that an unnaturally artificial pose was difficult to sustain, but not long enough to result in a contorted expression. As a result, the sitter’s expressions are often surprisingly soft and natural. Further developments included reflective panels that directed and intensified the light of the sun so that indoor sittings were possible at all times of the year. Thus the process became tolerable if not pleasant.

There are many reasons why the daguerreotype was ubiquitously known by its contemporaries as the ‘mirror with a memory.’ These dealt with both its physical and metaphysical characteristics. The daguerreotype image is laterally reversed precisely as it is



when looking into a mirror. Because people were accustomed to seeing their features reversed in this manner, it was not thought of as problematic (Newhall 1964 26). Indeed, the image embodied the comfortable intimacy one feels when looking into a mirror. The photographic image is visible only when the case is held at a raked angle. If held at a slightly different angle, the image disappears and the plate becomes a reflective silver mirror. If rotated slightly, it reappears as its own negative as if it were a ghost of the image. Unlike modern photographic processes in which a negative image can be reproduced and manipulated multiple times, each daguerreotype portrait is a singular representation of the sitter and a unique object in itself. The image produced is arresting, its detail superb. It appears that the face of the portrait shines from within and has an almost three-dimensional quality, which has been likened to a hologram (Severa xvi). A skilled artist was sometimes hired by the photographer to give a portrait more life with an added whisper of colour to the lips or cheeks. “The portraits have a striking air of perfect truth about them which one rarely meets in likenesses taken by a less fallacious process” (Patriot in Greenhill and Birrell 26). This photographic truth may, in part, come from a connection in time and place with the sitter. Roland Barthes calls this ‘that-has-been’ element the *noeme* (1980 77). “[I]n Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past” (ibid 76).

Owing to the extremely delicate surface of the silver plate, the daguerreotype image was covered in glass and housed in a solid case. The cases were either of wood, an early plastic called gutta-percha, or a wood flour and shellac composition sometime known as the ‘Union’ case (Greenhill 1979 29). Perhaps because of a Victorian love for ornament, or possibly to envelop the object with respect, the cases were then covered in the finest materials with a variety of textures and colours. Tooled leather exteriors were hinged with fabric, and clasped with delicate

brass hooks and hasps. A brass or gilt mat framed the glass. Some of these mats were a simple geometric shape. Others were die-stamped in the shape of a crest, bringing a touch of Romanticism and historicism to the image. The interior facing was often soft pink, light-weight silk or embossed velvet. Some of the embossed designs featured in this study include geometric or foliate designs, scrolls, ornate lyres, and butterflies with wings outspread. The viewer's haptic experience was exaggerated by the fact that each case could only be held in one pair of hands. It stimulated an intimate relationship with the viewer, as only one person at a time could see and handle the image.

The characteristics of the daguerreotype make them an especially useful form of documentation for the dress historian. At the time, photography was still a rarity. Sitting for a daguerreotype was an event in itself. It often marked an occasion of great importance to the sitter who would take great care with their dress. Although some daguerreotypes are of poor quality and show only vague outlines, those that are clear show the minutest details of the garment, its fabric and construction. "[E]ach button, button-hole and every fold" is clearly discernible, albeit with the aid of a magnifying glass (Draper 223). A fashion plate shows the ideal shape of the period, which rarely has any association with reality. A portrait painter, in an attempt to please the client, may exaggerate the sitter's best features and minimize the less attractive ones. The daguerreotype shows the sitter exactly as she looked in life. An ill-fitting bodice or undisguised corset line is clear. Dress repairs that might have gone unnoticed in life are forever recorded. Because the daguerreotype has no negative, reproductions were impossible. While the black and white image could be hand-tinted with color, major retouching of the image was also impossible. That does not mean that the composition was free from manipulation. Each image is the result of the vision of the photographer and the desires of the sitter, and is therefore necessarily

constructed within the social discourse of the era. Each daguerreotype is imbued with coded social meaning that can be delineated through a deep and careful reading.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The central query of this project is whether the study of Canadian daguerreotypes, or daguerreotypes with a Canadian connection, can be used to inform the collective knowledge of early Victorian fashion and dress in Canada West. From this initial question, several nuanced ones take shape. What are the origins of Canadian fashion? Did dress in Canada reflect its conservative British roots, or was it more influenced by its American neighbours. What was the relationship between the daguerreotypist and his sitter? Most, though not all, of the daguerreotypists were male, so this dynamic was a gendered alliance. Was it akin to the relationship between the portrait artist and the sitter, or did the daguerreotypist take a less significant role? Are there enough photographic images in Canada to adequately investigate its fashion and to determine what commonalities extended to the greater number of citizens of the colony who were not photographed? How was the miraculous photographic process regarded by the early inhabitants? How did the images themselves reflect the values of early Canadians?

This literature review will help delineate these questions from information gleaned through published texts. The literature is grouped into four areas of interest. The first grouping contains works by dress historians. It establishes the current state of Canadian historic fashion and answers questions about the value of photography to the discipline. Some of these publications will provide the structure for the current project. The second grouping includes articles and books that examine historical photography in Canada. They contextualize the use of daguerreotypes within Canadian history and illustrate the extent to which it was a part of the fabric of Canadian society. The texts in the third grouping concentrate on the daguerreotype's technical peculiarities. These include limitations, such as the variables of exposure time and

light, which had a serious impact upon the sitters and challenged the daguerreotypists. The fourth and final literature grouping investigates the writings of nineteenth- and twentieth-century visual and cultural theorists. Comparing the interpretations of twentieth-century theorists like Roland Barthes, John Berger, and Walter Benjamin with the writings of early Victorian observers will contribute a greater sophistication to the application of social theory to the images. The collective group of literature will provide the pertinent guidelines to begin the process of analyzing the daguerreotype as an object and image.

### Historic Fashion

In *The Study of Dress History* (2002), dress historian Lou Taylor discusses the value of photographs as a source for historical dress information alongside the more traditional sources of paintings, fashion illustrations, and cartoons. She suggests that all media have value, but that caution is needed when using each source. Painted portraits can be the product of an artist's construct, or can show an elite society as they wish to be seen. Fashion illustrations often show idealized images that are a mixture of fact and fantasy, and may have a commercial bias. Cartoonists often record, analyze, and interpret clothing and, as such, provide invaluable testimony to the culture, manners, and vision of the times but can be politically and culturally biased. Taylor acknowledges that the use of photographs within the discipline of dress history has been fully accepted since the 1990s. She cautions, however, that within all created images are coded symbols that need to be deciphered in order to 'read' clothes from photographs. Taylor provides fundamental questions the researcher must ask of the photograph: "Why was the image taken, by whom, under what conditions, for what audience and for what use?" (2002 163) If at

all possible, the identification of the sitter's place in society should be assessed. "[O]therwise there is no basis upon which to try to construct social or cultural meaning" (2002 170).

The women studied in "Through the Lens of Fashion" are either named or linked to Canada West through a resident photographer. They tend to be amongst the middle or upper classes of the growing community. Lou Taylor is one of the central architects in developing the recent methodological trend in dress history. No longer is it acceptable to merely describe the bits of cloth that cover a body. Rather, it is the consequence of a series of complex relationships illuminated by embedded signs and symbols that give meaning to dress. Taylor's writing provides an overriding concept for the specific reading of the photographs in this study.

During her working life, Madeleine Ginsburg was an assistant curator in the Textile and Dress department of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, England. She authored eight books dealing with costume history, which include: *Four Hundred Years of Fashion*, *An Introduction to Fashion Illustration*, and *Wedding Dress 1740-1960*. Because she identified a gap in traditional costume history research methodology, she pioneered the development of closely reading photographs in *Victorian Dress in Photographs*, published in 1982. In her opening chapter, Ginsburg reviews the various photographic processes in use throughout the Victorian period. She notes that good daguerreotypes seem rare in England. Their range was limited and their cost was prohibitive (Ginsburg 1982 11). She also touches upon the societal views on appropriate dress. In quoting the Ladies Treasury in 1858, she notes that a conservative attitude in dress was deemed to be most respectable, "propriety must be studied before fashion," and "no fashion should be adopted until it becomes more singular not to adopt than to follow it (10)." Ginsburg suggests that this attitude resulted in a one- or two-year time lag of fashionable styles for the urban middle class and an even greater time differential for lower classes, or those

in remote areas (ibid). One might suspect that this lag affected the remote area of colonial Canada West; however, a brief investigation of the daguerreotypes in this study seems to refute this belief. In the body of the text, Ginsburg shows 253 shots by professional and amateur photographers from the United Kingdom. She describes each garment with details of fabric, accessories, and date, often noting the sitter's name and position in society.

With *Victorian Dress in Photographs*, Ginsburg set the standard for this method of costume history research and inspired similar British texts, including Avril Lansdell's *Fashion a La Carte, 1860-1900: A Study of Fashion Through Cartes De Visite*, published in 1985. These books are published in Britain and use photographs from the United Kingdom as their subject matter. Unfortunately, they suffer from poor quality of paper and brittle spines. The images are often small and unclear. These photographic sources are invaluable to the costume designer or technician working within the theatre or heritage sector in helping them recreate the exact silhouette of a ball gown, or the drape of a workman's jacket. However, they contribute little to the understanding of the more complex questions of dress history such as the relationships of identity, communication, the body, and image.

More recent scholarship by Joan Severa investigates multiple levels of meaning in historical images. While she was the costume curator at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and a visiting consultant to other institutions, she examined thousands of extant garments from both the high and low ends of the fashion spectrum. These inform her ability to both date a garment with great accuracy and to speculate upon the social station situation of the sitter, even for photographs where the sitter's identity is unknown. In 1995, Severa published her first book of American portraiture, *Dressed for the Photographer: Ordinary Americans and Fashion, 1840-1900*. In 2005, she followed up this book with *My Likeness Taken: Daguerreian Portraits in*

*America*. They are both beautiful publications with clear and detailed images on good quality paper. Severa prefaces her second book by saying: “The photographic portrait is a unique historical document. Besides being the truest glimpse possible of a moment of the past, it is also peek into the life and personality of a real person living in a time so different from our own” (2005 xv). Her first book is organized chronologically, with one chapter for each decade, from the 1840s through to the 1890s. Each chapter begins with a detailed description of the era with clothing descriptions, the status of home sewing, the sewing industry, diary quotes, comparative costs of items, and ends with large portraits, each with a comprehensive description. In her second book, Severa looks at daguerreotypes exclusively, noting that “[t]hey have a three-dimensional quality similar to a hologram, and when viewed properly they seem almost to breathe” (2005 xvi). Almost 300 images are printed on as many pages, each with a description of three or four paragraphs.

The great strength of these books, beyond the superb photographs, springs from Severa’s insightful readings. She does not stop at describing the clothing, but rather speculates on the method of sewing, the pattern, and whether or not the garment was altered to fit a second individual or style. The result is a description that is as much about the sitter as it is about the clothing. Thus, she elevates the study of the dress from an interesting display for the costume enthusiast to a discussion about the relationships between clothing and the body, the maker and the wearer, and production and consumption.

Linda Baumgarten is the curator of the textiles and costumes at the living history museum of Colonial Williamsburg. In *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America*, Baumgarten translates personal and historical stories that are imbedded in the fabric and construction of the museum’s dress collection. One chapter is of particular value to the



current study. “Cradle to Coffin, Life Passages Reflected in Clothing” recounts how life experiences affected people’s choice of clothing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Baumgarten 141). It provides a framework for the study of dress alongside shared experiences of inevitable stages within the life cycle.

Both the British and American schools of analyzing dress history through photographs have great value for this current project. It is significant that there are no equivalent Canadian photographic texts. Indeed, there are few books that examine the clothing worn by women in Canada. These include a handful of small paperback publications that drew their inspiration from the surge of interest in history ignited during the Canadian Centennial celebrations and the romantic revival of the early 1970s. Their authors are still highly respected and seen as pioneers in Canadian costume research.

Eileen Collard, working out of the Joseph Brant Museum in Burlington, Ontario, published a series of small books, including *Early Clothing in Southern Ontario*, *The Cut of Women's 19th Century Dress Part 3: Victorian Gothic, Circa 1840-'66*, and *Patterns of Fashions of the 1870's*. They all have brief descriptions of various styles of the period, which are illustrated with line drawings. Additional hand-drawn pattern pieces accompany each. The garment sources are either from the museum’s collection or from catalogues of the period.

Katherine B. Brett and Dorothy K. Burnham were curators in the textile department of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto. *Modesty to Mod: Dress and Underdress in Canada, 1780-1967* is a catalogue itemizing 100 garments shown in the exhibition of the same name on display between May, and September 1967. It was written by Katherine B. Brett, with beautiful scale pattern drawings by Dorothy K. Burnham. Another book published by the ROM is Burnham’s *Cut My Cote*, which is an essential reference guide for the simple, fabric-based

patterns of culturally-diverse traditional garments. Burnham looks at the patterns of garments in the ROM collection as divisions of loomed fabric. She provides insight as to why clothing developed along predictable style lines according to the width of looms available.

All of these early writings follow similar formats. They are small; more booklets than books. The references to actual garments in *Modesty to Mod* include the accession numbers, but the references in the other books are vague. With the exception of *Cut My Cote*, they all see fashion as a chronological development of style. They now seem amateurish and outdated. Despite the limitations of these books, they each contain insights into nineteenth-century Ontario fashion that cannot be found elsewhere.

Another group of books written twenty to thirty years later is more academic in nature. Caroline Routh was a design teacher in the Fashion Department of Seneca College in Toronto. Her book *In Style: 100 Years of Canadian Fashion*, looks at fashions outside of the time frame of this research proposal, but deserves some attention as it does look at Canadian fashion from an historic and industry standpoint. It chronicles fashions by the decade, starting in 1900, with an overview of the styles illustrated with black and white drawings. Routh has provided notes and an index, but no bibliography. Mary Holford published “Dress and Society in Upper Canada, 1791-1841” in *Costume, the Journal of the Costume Society*, in 1990. She scours the diaries and letters of the small and closely knit community of government officials, United Empire Loyalists, and gentlefolk for sartorial clues. Through these textual sources, and contemporary newspaper ads, she presents a contextualized view of the emotional worth of clothing in keeping up social traditions and standards of etiquette, and the relative monetary cost of obtaining the specific items in the young colony.

*Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Montreal Dress* written by Jacqueline Beaudoin-Ross, Curator Emeritus of Costume and Textiles at the McCord Museum, and published by the McCord Museum of Canadian History, draws from the museum's fine collection of historic clothing, William Notman photographs, and many period illustrations. It is an extended catalogue of the exhibition of the same title, displayed from 9 May 1992 to 15 February 1993, curated by Beaudoin-Ross and Cynthia Cooper. Photographs of fifteen dressed mannequins sporting garments, which range in date from 1810 to 1898, are accompanied by a thorough description of the garment and an image contextualizing the garment within the broader fashions of the period. Additional essays give the fashions an historical perspective.

Elizabeth MacNaughton was the Registrar and Researcher at Doon Heritage Crossroads in Kitchener, Ontario for many years. In her book *Transition and Tradition: A Guide to Clothing Styles in Waterloo County, 1907-1914*, she has written a comprehensive study of the clothing worn in this community. Photographs, newspaper records, and archival pieces were used in a largely textual analysis of the styles. This type of analytical research is rare in Canadian costume study. Its time frame places it outside of the parameters of this study, but it is a fine example of costume research focusing on a specific area.

Alexandra Palmer, Curator of the Textile and Dress Department at the ROM, has striven to advance academic knowledge of dress in Canada. In *Couture and Commerce: The Transatlantic Fashion Trade in the 1950s*, Palmer presents a detailed and extensive study of Canadian fashion and society in the 1950s. She compiled and edited the first academic text on historical Canadian fashion with *Fashion: A Canadian Perspective* published in 2004. It is by no means comprehensive but presents primarily research articles that have gone through a rigorous academic review process, and contains an extensive index and bibliography. My personal

contribution to this scholarly work is a chapter entitled “Three Thousand Stitches: The Development of the Clothing Industry in Nineteenth-Century Halifax.” In it, I chronicle the rise of one small tailoring firm as it developed into one of the largest clothing factories in the country, and bring to light the contributions of hundreds of young women who were the industry’s primary employees.

The final scholarly text in this grouping is the stunning exhibition catalogue, *Beyond the Silhouette: Fashion and the Women of Historic Kingston*. I curated the exhibit of some of the most impressive garments in the Agnes Etherington Art Centre collection, and wrote the catalogue as well as most of the exhibition text. As the title indicates, this is an examination of the lives and work of women of nineteenth-century Kingston, Ontario, and clothing they or their contemporaries wore, and how each influenced the other. “Through the Lens of Fashion” will be a continuation of my established brand of analysis of Canadian historic fashion, and an informative contribution to the academic study of Canadian dress history

### Canadian Photographic History

In order to understand the breadth of the daguerreotype industry in pre-Confederation Canada, it is important to review some general histories of photography. The respected authority on early Canadian photography is Ralph Greenhill. In 1965, he published his first book, *Early Photography in Canada*. It was revised and expanded in 1979 with the help of Andrew Birrell and published as *Canadian Photography 1839-1920*. However, the first chapters on the daguerreotype era are unaltered. Greenhill sets the scene through the earliest newspaper articles, which were, for the most part, reprinted directly from British newspapers. He continues the history with accounts of the activities of a handful of entrepreneurs who established semi-

permanent shops in Canada or advertised that they would travel to small communities with temporary daguerreotype studios. A number of itinerant daguerreotypists traveled between the Maritimes, Montreal, and major centres in the United States. Greenhill notes two prominent daguerreotypists who established permanent and prosperous businesses: Thomas Coffin Doane of Montreal and Eli J. Palmer of Toronto (Greenhill and Birrell 27). A number of Palmer's daguerreotypes will be prominent in this study. Greenhill suggests that Canada, with its less than hospitable climate, did not provide the optimal sunny conditions for the development of good quality daguerreotypes. "Most of the work done in Canada was poor" he says (Greenhill and Birrell 26). But the photography quality impressed the public even after the less costly ambrotype and tintype processes became popular.

Greenhill's history provides good basic information, but many questions arise from this account. Why are the portraits of such poor quality? Why did many Canadian daguerreotypists fail while their American counterparts flourished?

This early survey of Canadian photographic history provides the basis for a more in-depth article by the current authority on Canadian daguerreotypes, Graham Garrett. Garrett was a collector of antique maps before he began collecting data about daguerreotypes. He repeats and expands upon much of the information outlined by Greenhill in his journal article "The Mirror of Nature: Early Daguerreotype Photography in Canada," which was published in *Canada's History* in 1995. In this article, Garrett outlines the activities of individual daguerreotypists who worked in the Canadas, and those Canadian photographers who worked outside of the country. He also addresses the reasons why, when there were thousands of photographic offices in the United States, few photographers worked above the border. Chiefly, the conditions of patent forbidding the use of the technique in Britain extended to Canada as a British colony (Garrett 1995 11). This

is one of a scant handful of academic articles that concentrate specifically on daguerreotypes in Canada. The article is hampered by a lack of documentation, which is curious given the academic nature of the journal in which it is written.

Graham Garrett more than rectified this in 2008 with his publication of a CD-ROM entitled, *A Biographical Index of Daguerreotypists in Canada*. This work includes historic information, a biographical list of Daguerreotypists, finding aids, a chronological list of items about daguerreotypes in newspapers, and examples of significant Canadian daguerreotypes. It is a definitive collection of references, which is invaluable to the current study.

Another contemporary Canadian author who references Canadian daguerreotypes is Joan M. Schwartz. Schwartz approaches the daguerreotype as an object in material culture research in her chapter, “Un Beau Souvenir Du Canada: Object, Image, Symbolic Space,” which is found in *Photographs Objects Histories: on the Materiality of Images*, edited by Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart. Schwartz examines a daguerreotype showing a man and four boys wearing historic fancy dress, which was taken on St. Jean Baptiste day in Montreal, by the prominent daguerreotypist T. C. Doane. She looks at it with respect to its value as an object, its context, and its materiality and meaning. Her insightful analysis is informed by materialism, sociology, and ethnology. Adopting some of her methods of analysis will provide support to the current study.

### Daguerreotype Technical Process

The physical Daguerreotype is produced by a marriage of chemicals, light, and the skillful execution of the daguerreotypist. The result is magical, but technical knowledge is the sleight-of-hand that makes the sorcery possible. Therefore, some technical information is

necessary to fully understand the limitations of the process, and to better understand the relationship between the daguerreotypist and the subject.

Christina M. Johnson is the collections manager of the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising Museum in Los Angeles, California. She received her M.A. in Visual Culture: Costume Studies from New York University. In her journal article, “‘Each Button, Button-Hole, and Every Fold’: Dress in the American Daguerreotype Portrait,” published in *Dress* in 2004, Johnson compiles an impressive list of period sources that give advice on the composition of a daguerreian portrait, the most successful colours to wear for the sitting, and the appropriate type of dress to convey the sitter’s inner character. The original sources are, for the most part, easily retrieved; so, from this single resource, many period commentaries are unearthed. For example, in 1851, John William Draper, an famous early daguerreotypist, wrote: “The hands should never rest upon the chest, for the motion of respiration disturbs them so much, as to bring them out of a thick and clumsy appearance, destroying also the representation of the veins on the back, which, if they are held motionless, are copied with surprising beauty.”(Draper 224).

The renowned collectors and historians of photography, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, reprinted many speeches and essays by pre-eminent daguerreotypists in *L. J. M. Daguerre: The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, published in 1968. In this book, the technical, political, and contractual considerations of the new process are examined with comprehensive explanations by the authors. The original practitioners of the process are both articulate and expressive in their writing, which brings colour to a potentially pedantic subject of chemical reactions and exposure times. We are reminded that they were developing the artistic as well as scientific aspects of an inexact science.

## Visual/Cultural Theory

Alan Trachtenberg, the editor of *Classic Essays on Photography*, published in 1980, also draws on the writings of Daguerre's contemporaries. Trachtenberg was the Neil Gray Jr. Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at Yale University for thirty-five years. He has written or edited a number of books about the cultural and social history of America and looks specifically at the value of photographs in understanding history. *Classic Essays on Photography* contains essays penned by nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographers, theorists, and writers. Photography fundamentally changed the way people saw and thought, and essays by Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, L. J. M. Daguerre, William Talbot, and Edgar Allan Poe provide unique glimpses into how these technical miracles were viewed by thinkers in the nineteenth century. As time progressed, ideas about photography and its value developed. Essays by twentieth-century theorists Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, and John Berger were written at a time when photography had become a common part of visual culture. These authors reflect a growing understanding of the art and express their individual views about the impact of the daguerreotype upon society.

Photographic historian Richard Rudisill traces daguerreotype photography as a cultural phenomenon in his book, *Mirror Image: The Influence of the Daguerreotype on American Society* published in 1971. It is his contention that the daguerreotype had a huge role in developing American national pride. Although the photography industry expanded at an alarming pace with millions of images produced, each daguerreotype was unique and singular, and could be viewed by only one individual at a time. In chapters titled "The Climate of Need," "Naturalization into America," and "The Mirror of America," Rudisill investigates how the daguerreotype as a symbol helped America develop an awareness of itself as a nation made up of



individuals, each of whom saw their selves in a new way. This is a fascinating view of how a society is both manipulated by an industrial process and takes an active part in its development. If the daguerreotype had such an influence on the American psyche, then what effect, if any, did its relative absence have in Canada?

In *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Roland Barthes seeks to understand the hold that photography has over him, a hold made more poignant by the death of his beloved mother. Through this very personal journey, Barthes introduces the concepts of *studium* (the voice of banality) and *punctum* (the voice of singularity), which are present in tandem in each image and central to his philosophy of photography (26, 27). He explores the notion of *noeme*, or the ‘that has been’ status of photography, which exists because both subject and camera existed together at one precise moment in time (77). He also looks at memory and death as an expression of the photograph. He argues against the supposition that photographs help the memory. The photograph “does not call up the past” (82). Instead, the photograph actually separates the subject from memory. The photograph attests to the fact that the subject in the image did exist but no longer does so. When looking at old photographs, he is struck by the notion that there is always “a defeat of Time: that is dead and that is going to die” (96).

Barthes’ concept of ‘defeat of time’ has resonance with this study of historic dress. Fashion is fleeting. As the daguerreotype captured the current vogue and purported it to be at the height of fashion; we the audience are aware that its style has long since died.

Consideration of the thoughtful musings of visual and cultural theorists helps elevates this study beyond a simple survey of clothing to a more complete understanding of fashion and the phenomenon of photography in the daguerreian period. In particular, Barthes’ philosophy of the *punctum* and the *studium* has relevance with the dual focus of this study. The daguerreotype

photograph can be identified as the voice of singularity, or the *punctum*; all subsequent photographic processes, with their capacity for repetition, are the voice of banality, or the *studium*. The theory has resonance, also, with the framework of the two social propensities of fashion promoted by Georg Simmel. The *studium* can be seen to relate to the banality of *similar* fashion, while the *punctum* conveys the *individual* ways in which these fashions are transformed to reflect unique personalities. For example, many of the images in this study feature women wearing dark dresses with few distinguishing details. Their white collars, on the other hand, seem alive with character. Despite the size and apparent simplicity of this thin band of white fabric, it was a focal point and reflected the aesthetic taste of the wearer that their dark dress concealed. In a second example, a very common bodice style showed pleating from an extended shoulder toward the centre front waist. Within this style, the pleats could be closely or widely spaced, sharply pressed or draped in soft folds. Their arrangement was individualized and personalized by the woman who presumably sought to best compliment her figure and her distinct sense of fashion.

## Summary

All images are part of a complex social relationship that involves the sitter, the photographer, and the viewer. Each of these participants brings their own meanings to an image. It is through a greater understanding of these meanings, combined with denotative analysis of the subject, that a deep reading of the image can be achieved. This review has surveyed literature from the interdisciplinary groupings of dress history, historic and technical photography, and visual and cultural theorists to better understand the viewpoint of all of the participants. Each is necessary to illuminate specific aspects of the study.

Some of the questions opening this review have been addressed. Can the study of Canadian daguerreotypes, or daguerreotypes with a Canadian connection, be used to inform the collective knowledge of early Victorian fashion and dress in Canada West? The project is clearly possible. Many dress historians have successfully used the techniques of analyzing photographs for accurate fashion information. This is necessary if we are to understand our fashion heritage, as well as the social and sartorial norms and values that guided the social network of our nation builders. The comprehensive survey of the available literature will help organize the methodology of the research, and identify the essential questions to be asked of each image.

Are there enough photographic images in Canada to adequately investigate its fashion, and to determine what commonalities extended to the greater number of citizens of the colony who were not photographed? It could be thought of as unfortunate that there are not dozens of daguerreotype photographs from which to accumulate information. However, their exclusivity, and their singularity, endows each extant image with an elevated value and importance. This in-depth study is also unique, and the resulting information derived from it is significant.

What was the relationship between the daguerreotypist and his sitter? Is it akin to the relationship between the portrait artist and the sitter, or does the daguerreotypist take a less significant role? Through an understanding of the technical aspects of the daguerreotype, a deep reading of the images, and an understanding of nineteenth-century portraiture, the hand of the daguerreotypist in some cases – particularly that of Eli Palmer – indeed becomes visible.

How did the images themselves reflect the values of the early Canadians? Deep reading brings to light the ways in which early Canadians wished to be recorded, which, in turn, explains the values of the colony in terms of its visual identity and dress.

Other questions remain. Without a comprehensive study of the differences between American and British fashion, or an exhaustive reading of local diaries, it may be impossible to know whether or not the inhabitants followed either nations' fashion dictates. Also, while we have gauged the views of many of their intellectual contemporaries in the literature review, we do not yet have a strong conception of how photography was valued by Canadians. While its initial purpose is to determine the fashions of a specific location and period, "Through the Lens of Fashion" comments on the values of a society and recognizes skills of the daguerreotypist. It is, therefore, a study that would fit comfortably within any of the disciplines examined in this review.

## METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

There are two main purposes for this study. The first is to accumulate knowledge about the fashions worn by women in early Victorian Ontario. This task is accomplished through a detailed survey of information compiled from analyzing daguerreotypes with a local connection. The secondary purpose is to uncover aspects of social value and morality as exhibited by the women in the daguerreotypes. This is unearthed through a deep reading of a smaller grouping of daguerreotypes with respect to life stages and cycles of womanhood during the period. The research is both qualitative and quantitative in its approach.

According to Canadian photography historian Ralph Greenhill, daguerreotypes that were produced in Canada are not rare. Thousands have survived to the present day. Nonetheless, it would be optimistic to suggest that they are common. Greenhill also notes it is impossible to know whether many daguerreotype portraits of local individuals are Canadian- or American-made, since crossing the border to have portraits taken was common. For the purposes of this project, it is inconsequential whether the Canadian resident was photographed in the United States or in Canada since her choice of dress would be consistent regardless of the location. It is hoped that those studied will represent the dress choice of other inhabitants of the colony.

Finding a large enough sampling of suitable images for this survey is, indeed, a challenge. Most museums, archives, and libraries boast a few daguerreotypes, but one must be cautioned that many of these have been misidentified by well-meaning individuals who believe that any photograph in a hinged leather case is a daguerreotype. Some institutions have daguerreotypes that do not identify either the sitter or the photographer. Without these details of

the identities, it is impossible to say whether the image has a Canadian connection. Thus, many available images are necessarily eliminated from this study.

A number of daguerreotypes identify the name of the sitter through the documented provenance of the object. This is especially true in the case of members of prominent political families. Other images are deemed to be local owing to the known location of the daguerreotypist. While it was not common practice for Canadian daguerreotypists to affix their stamp onto the photographs, it is fortunate that there are two notable exceptions. In Montreal, Thomas Coffin Doane stamped the velvet interior facing of his daguerreotypes with a crown bracketed by shamrocks, roses, and thistles. More significant to our study is the stamp of Toronto daguerreotypist Eli Palmer. A number of the brass mattings that frame his daguerreotypes have the name 'E Palmer' stamped on the lower left corner, and 'Toronto' stamped on the lower right corner. Still more of Palmer's daguerreotypes are identified by the distinctive carved chair back that he was known to have used, and the distinctive blue colouring that he added to the cloth table covering, which he used as a prop. Palmer daguerreotypes are extremely collectable and are quickly acquired by collectors as soon as they come on the market. One in this study is from a private collection, and still others may be in existence but are hard to access. Another useful source of many daguerreotypes is *The Canadian Photographic Journal*. In an attempt to find more images within private collections, I contacted some individuals and put an advertisement in the *Canadian Photographic* magazine and the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada website.

Most of the images identified are in the collections of museums and archives. The following institutions have daguerreotypes which have been useful: the Dundas Museum; Whitehern Museum, the Archives of Ontario, the Toronto Reference Library; the Art Gallery of

Ontario; the Wellington County Museum; the Queen's University Library, the Library and Archives Canada; and the Royal Ontario Museum.

The analysis begins with a material culture documentation of the daguerreotype as an object. Details including the case size, the exterior and interior materials, decorative details, and even the types of hinges give an indication of the date of the production and the relative cost of the daguerreotype. The style of the portrait was also factored into the cost of the portrait. A bust or head and shoulder image was less costly than a three-quarter image or a full portrait.

(Ginsburg 11)

The daguerreotype process was available in Canada between 1840 and the first years of the 1860s (Greenhill and Birrell). This timeline guarantees that all of the garments documented in this study were worn within this time frame. Using Lou Taylor's guidance, fundamental questions will be asked of each photograph. "Why was the image taken, by whom, under what conditions, for what audience, and for what use?" (Taylor 2002 163) The photograph captures a single moment in the life of an individual. Many daguerreotypes were taken in commemoration of an event such as a marriage or betrothal. In all cases, they reflect a woman at a specific stage of her life. Therefore, grouping the images into recognizable life stages is a reasonable organizational approach, and highlights moments that the woman herself saw as crucial to her development as contributing member of society. The stages are youth or young adult, married, motherhood, old age, and death.

After determining an approximate age of the sitter, each image is to be systematically categorized according to her garment, her position and posture, and the direction of her gaze. All of the details of her garments, including the type of fibre, its texture, and decorative print are noted. True colour is impossible to determine in a black and white medium, and the

daguerreotype process often incorrectly interpreted a colour. However, the tone will be recorded, as will the stylistic details and any decorative trim. Hair styles are useful indicators of date, and express individuality. Accessories such as bonnets, shawls, and jewelry are also telling clues to a woman's personality. With the garment analysis completed, the setting, furnishings and props are noted. Societal clues that may be embedded in gestures, posture, the direction of gaze, or staging are also to be investigated. Most of the images studied are of women. However, because the body language as well as socially-constructed and gendered discourse between couples in photographs is necessarily distinct, the gentlemen in group portraits will also be observed.

Most of the people photographed are from the middle or upper classes. Madeline Ginsburg claims that there is a predictable time lag in the fashions of people in remote areas, which might easily describe Canada West during the time before Confederation. However, I suggest that the wealthy and stylish women of Canada West were as concerned with the current fashion as their counterparts in major European or American cities, and I believe that this study will confirm this hypothesis.

The most popular styles will become evident and the findings may cause one to speculate on reasons for their popularity. In addition to questions of style, this study opens a discussion about the garment industry in Canada West. It highlights professionally constructed garments and those made by amateur needleworkers. The findings indicate the beginnings of a clothing industry in Canada, and uncover the availability of specific fabrics, trims, and accessories in the area. In addition, it reveals details of cut, fit, and construction, and questions the reasons behind particular stylistic choices. For example, were pleated bodices popular because they were easily altered? Was the cool Canadian climate reflected in the choice of garment worn for the photograph?



This study is the first of its kind, and closely examines a specific period in Canadian dress that has been largely overlooked. Therefore, the results are far-reaching and significant. It is hoped that, in addition to revealing the period aesthetic and aspects of the clothing worn in early Victorian Canada West, this study uncovers aspects of social value and morality as exhibited by the women in the daguerreotypes.

## DATA

Forty-six daguerreotype images were identified as having a Canadian connection and these form the basis of the study. An additional few images have a tenuous connection and are therefore used as confirmation of the findings. The outer parameters of date are the daguerreian period from 1840 to 1860. More realistically, the study begins a few years later, when portraiture became practical and daguerreotypists traveled to communities in Canada West with greater frequency. In his comprehensive *A Biographical Index of Daguerreotypists in Canada 1839-1871*, Graham W. Garrett documents only eleven daguerreotypists who were active in Canada West in 1843 (Garrett 2008). These individuals often worked in various communities from one or two months to a few years, and then moved on to other centres in the Canadas or the United States. They operated in the communities along the established shipping ports of Kingston, Cobourg, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Niagara Falls. By 1851, this number had grown to approximately thirty-six individuals (Garrett 2008). By that time, the range of travel had extended to include such communities as Hamilton, London, Brantford, Bytown, Grimsby, Guelph, and St. Thomas. The closing date of the survey coincides with the growing popularity of other photographic processes such as ambrotypes and tintypes. By 1860, the daguerreotype was all but obsolete (Greenhill 1979 29).

This early Victorian period was a time of rapid technological change in image technology as well as the mechanical production of sewing, which is revealed through the dress of the day. The sewing machine was invented by Elias Howe in 1846, although its usage was largely limited to manufacturers of men's shirts and collars until early in the 1860s (Levitt 13). Nevertheless, the influence of mechanical advances in lacemaking, textile manufacture, and printing techniques all

contributed to the development of fashionable styles. A number of experimental underskirts with unusual stiffening agents such as inflatable tubes, whalebones, and cane were used to support an expanding skirt until the spring-steel crinoline was patented in Britain in 1856 by C. Amet (Johnston 128). In the coming years, the crinoline would be manufactured in local factories in Ontario (Internet Archive 297-8).<sup>2</sup> Its construction altered the fashionable silhouette for the next decade. Even the development of the daguerreotype and other photographic processes had an influence on the clothing. New graphic stripes and bold patterned prints added dimension for a more interesting and successful photograph. Women who shared geographic and economic reality also shared aspects of style, the availability of fabric, and accessories made possible by the new industrialization.

#### Cut and silhouette

Most of the daguerreotypes in the study are bust or three-quarter length portraits that show the upper portion of the body, from the neck to the thigh area. Five variations of bodice design were popularly worn by the women of Canada West. Thirty-nine percent of the visible bodices are fan shaped. This was accomplished by one of two methods. In some cases, a single layer of the fashion fabric was pleated into the shoulder seam, brought over the fitted bodice, and secured onto the cotton backing from the waist seam to about five inches above the waist. In other cases, the bodice fabric itself was pleated from the shoulder to the waist, and secured to the backing fabric as in the first method. It was not uncommon to see a dozen pleats per side folded to face the centre front, each measuring a depth of one half inch at the waist. Sarah Macaulay's lavender silk dress is an example of this style (see Fig. 1). Sometimes the fullness was controlled with shirring at the centre front. The depth and number of pleats was the choice of the individual.

The younger woman in this Dundas, Ontario image chose to have her pleats broadly distributed (see Fig. 2). The pleats could be arranged in a haphazard manner, or neatly pressed. Indeed, within this basic shape were as many variations as there were women who wore it. This indicates that each bodice was created for the individual, either at home or by the professional seamstress. It was a very practical shape, as it fit each woman according to her needs and preference. It remained popular throughout the defined period. In one variation of the fan shape, controlled pleats at the front waist radiated towards the shoulder with the corsage area opening in a deep ‘V’ neckline (see Fig. 3). This opening was filled with a sleeveless underbodice known as a chemisette. The chemisette was usually white, but in at least one of the daguerreotypes it was black, suggesting that the gown was a mourning dress.

The next most popular bodice shape was seen in ten of the thirty-three visible bodices. It was a darted bodice that was made to fit smoothly over the corset without any fullness (see Fig. 4). During the late 1840s, this style tended to be very tight and often resulted in stress lines, as seen in this photograph of Mrs. Eberts. Examples were seen throughout the period; however, the tight straining became more relaxed in the images from the 1850s. Ultimately, the darted style became the dominant bodice treatment in the middle Victorian period.

Only three of the women are shown wearing a triangular-shaped tabard with bretelles. Joan Severa defines the bretelles as a “[b]odice trim consisting of bands of fabric tapered from greatest width at shoulder to nothing at waist and generally meeting at waist center front and back” (Severa 1995 542). All three of these women are in their late teens, so this style may have been limited to the young. Perhaps it was chosen for its fashionability rather than its practicality. This striking image of a young woman was taken by the well-known daguerreotypist Eli J. Palmer (see Fig. 5). The photograph was probably taken at Palmer’s studio in Toronto, which

opened in June of 1849, “opposite the burned Cathedral [at the] Corner of King & Church streets” (West 7). In addition to the tabard bodice, the three-quarter length capped sleeves that flare out toward the wrists, a slightly elongated and pointed waist, and a knife pleated skirt are all indicators of the date. This image will receive a deeper investigation in a later section.

The final bodice shape seen in our collection is a Basque style (see Fig. 6), which, according to Joan Severa, “had become the universal favorite for every stylish woman by the mid-1850s” (Severa 1995 153). It is a two-piece garment with a jacket top joined at tapered waist to a short flared skirt. This style is represented in only four and one half percent of the images in our collection. Those women who sport this style, however, are clearly at the height of fashion.

Skirt shapes and waistlines followed the chronological development of Canadian fashions. The fashionable look in the 1840s was a cartridge-pleated, or gauged, skirt attached to a piped waistline. These tiny tubular pleats controlled the fullness of the straight length of fabric, and distributed it evenly around the body. They became less popular in the late 1840s, and were replaced initially with flat knife pleats and, later, with wide box pleats. The earliest images in the survey display deeply pointed waistlines. As the years progressed, the point became shallow and rounded. Technological progress was mirrored in the great expanse of the skirts in the mid-1850s. Despite the existence of the sewing machine, its use was limited. The extant garments, which were examined to support the survey’s findings, were made entirely by hand. Regardless of their construction, the volume of fabric was necessary to accommodate a greatly expanding skirt width and the wire crinoline.

Sleeves also show the development of fashion throughout the period. Jane MacKay is neatly dressed in the fashion of the mid-1840s (see Fig. 7). The width of her sleeves, from the dropped shoulder to the wrist, is very snug. A decorative bow on the biceps and a small white

ruffle at the wrist are the only decorative details. During the late 1840s, the sleeve became shorter and started to flare below the elbow as is evident in Mrs. Eberts' dress. The *engageantes*, or undersleeves, follow the shape of the sleeve bottom with some gathered fullness. Joan Severa describes the engageante, which was worn throughout the period, as the white cotton undersleeves attached to the underside of the dress sleeve (Severa 1995 543). An average measurement for the width of this flare is approximately seventeen and one half inches to twenty inches. Throughout the 1850s, this width expanded to balance off the width of the skirt, and the undersleeve became more like a gathered sleeve shape with a cuff. These pagoda sleeves reached approximately forty-six inches in width, and often had more than one tier. If the sleeve was not belled, it tended to be full and gathered into the wrist with a white cuff. Details of cut and silhouette are indicators of the date when the garment was worn. A look at the fabric and accessory choices made provide an indication of the variety of choice and a glimpse into the personality of the wearer.

## Fabric

It is always difficult to determine the colours of fabric in daguerreotypes. J. W. Draper explains why the tone in the daguerreotype could be quite different from the original in the *London, Edinburgh, and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science* in 1840. He notes:

Now the retina receives an impression with equal facility from each of the different rays, the yellow light acting as quickly upon it as the red or the blue. Vision is therefore performed independently of time, the eye catching all the colours of the spectrum with equal facility and with equal speed. But it is not so with these photogenic preparations. In the action of light upon them, time enters as an element; the blue ray may have effected its full change, whilst the red is yet only beginning slowly to act; and the red may have completed its change before the yellow has made any sensible impression" (220)

S.D. Humphrey and M. Finley recommended certain fabric choices in “A System of Photography” in 1849:

Black silk for ladies is preferable to any other kind of goods, on account of its fine luster. Satin gives a very rich drapery, but, with strong light the luster is apt to be rather too sharp. There is a class of worsted goods, almost destitute of gloss, which it is very difficult to bring out in drapery; especially with a light complexion. . . . A very light complexion should be accompanied by a lightish dress, in order not to afford too strong contrast (Humphrey and Finley in Johnson 27).

Despite being unable to be definitive about the colours of dress, we can compare some of the fabrics in the images with those in extant garments. One Eli J. Palmer daguerreotype, from the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario, shows an unnamed woman wearing a beautiful two-tone silk jacquard that is very similar to dresses from the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum (see Fig. 8). *Changeable silk* was a term used in the nineteenth-century to refer to ‘shot silk,’ a fabric woven with one colour in the warp and a different colour in the weft. As the fabric moved, or when light shone upon the shadows of its folds, the colouration altered from the dominant warp to the dominant weft colour. This was more pronounced when the fabric was woven with a jacquard loom (see Fig. 8). The striped fabric in the dress worn by Sarah Macaulay bears a close resemblance to another ROM dress (see Fig. 9). These two examples exhibit the broad spectrum of fabrics that were used during the period of the survey. The first is delicate and feminine. The second is bold and graphic, and was possibly chosen for its photographic interest. Many of the fabrics in the survey are dark and show little detail. One daguerreotype, from the Toronto Reference Library, in contrast, shows a spectacular layered dress fabric (see Fig. 10). The top transparent layer has an all-over floral design. The underlayer has a strong lattice print. Together, the effect is like a garden of flowers winding themselves around a trellis. It is difficult to fully appreciate the quality of nineteenth-century fabrics. However, by observing a large number of

daguerreotypes and examining exceptional extant garments, suppositions can be made about the fabrics worn by the women in these images.

### Collars and Accessories

Analyzing clothing from photographs, fashion illustrations, or paintings is often speculative and hard to record with complete accuracy for the previously stated reasons. Accessories are often much more revealing, not because they are presented exactly as worn in reality, but because they are worn in a manner that reveals how the sitter believes they should be worn. As a result, they can expose the personality of the sitter.

White embroidered collars, which were universally worn across all levels of society and all ages in the mid nineteenth-century, are well represented in this survey. It is unknown whether the sitters heeded the advice of daguerreotypists S. D. Humphrey and M. Finley. As they suggested: “Lace and muslin collars, borders, &c. should be narrow and open as possible, or they reflect light on the features, and destroy the outline. Linen, muslin &c. take better, if done up without starch, or ironed on the underside, as it obviates reflection” (Johnson 27).

Of those images where the base of the neck area is visible, only one sitter, Jane McKay (nee Duff), chose to wear a white triangular neckerchief instead of a collar. Most of the collars fit high rounded neck openings with a small fall. Their widths vary greatly within the period; and, while they can be used to suggest the period’s progression, one must recognise that the width is by no means a definitive indicator of date. Images from the earlier years show collars that tend to be small, approximately one and one half inches in width. Towards the end of the 1840s and into the 1850s, collars became much wider, with some equaling up to four inches in depth with straight ends that ran perpendicular to the shoulder line. Some daguerreotypes in this study show



a popular look referred to in the fashion magazine, *Peterson's*, in June 1848. "For dresses high in the neck, the little straight collar called the Jennie Lind, made of edging and inserting, or narrow ruffling, is very fashionable" (Severa 1995 12). As well as size, their shape varied greatly. A woman might wear them as an expression of individuality, or to spruce up an older or plain dress as previously suggested. Some of the collars are in harmony with the dress, while others seem to conflict with the fabric or design of the bodice. Dagging and deep scallops were very popular, and brought a touch of Gothic historicism to the dress.

Embedded in this seemingly modest accessory are several layers of meaning for the nineteenth-century woman. The popular conception amongst costume historians is that practicality was the most widely accepted reason for the prevalence of removable white collars. The collar was washable, and interchangeable, and meant to be changed daily to protect the dress from the residue of body oils and dirt (Severa 1995 12). On a physical and spiritual level, the collar represented cleanliness, which, to nineteenth-century society, was believed to be next to godliness. "[N]ext to the devil, dirt was about the most formidable enemy. . . . Drink and dirt are the devil's foremen; he pays them liberally" (Brown 41). Cleanliness was seen to be the responsibility of every woman. "[E]very true-hearted woman will take pleasure and pride – not in finery, which is almost always filthy, but in perfect cleanliness" (Brown 47). A freshly pressed collar was the visual representation of a woman's commitment to cleanliness.

On a more profound level, the collar represented a metaphor of femininity in the nineteenth-century. Plain sewing was one of the first skills mothers taught their daughters (Errington 2006 15). Fourteen-year-old Hamilton resident Sophia MacNab recorded her daily activities during the first half of 1846, and frequently referred to sewing and mending dresses or adorning bonnets with ribbons. "I am very busy preparing to go to Nahant and as I have holidays

now of course I sew a great deal. I still do my practicing. I made two collars and one side of a bonnet today” (Tuesday, 7 July 1846) (Carter and Bailey 67). Even those women who could afford the services of a seamstress spent hours mending and refurbishing clothing and household textiles (Errington 1995 15). “No talent has been so useful or given me so much unmixed satisfaction as the rapidity of my needle now does” (Errington 1995 295n75). Regardless of whether the collars were constructed at home using one of the many patterns that were available through popular magazines, the product of a cottage industry of professional embroiderers, or one of the new machine-made variety that started to take precedence in the 1850s, they all celebrated the hand-stitching that was equated with woman’s work. As such, sewing and fine needlework were recognized as icons of femininity and feminine industry (Beaudry 169).

Most of the women depicted in the daguerreotypes wore additional accessories in sometimes incongruous combinations. A favourite choice was a gold watch, pencil, or ‘quizzer’ that was attached to the end a long gold chain or cord, which hung from the around the neck (Severa 1995 17). A quizzer was a small, ornate silver-framed magnifying glass (Davidson 9). These items must have had symbolic and personal value beyond their monetary value as few are visible. They are usually tucked away in small pockets in the waist seam of the dress, and the chain and its slide are the only evidence of the item. Equally popular were ribbon bows and brooches at the neck. The brooches were usually oval and were placed horizontally between the points of the collar, but square-shaped ones were also worn. Other jewelry included bracelets, rings, and earrings. Gloves were moderately popular. Five of the women wore black fingerless mittens, and two wore leather gloves. Flowers, ribbons, and lacy caps often adorned women’s artfully arranged hair.

## Canadian Observations

It is beyond the objective of this study to distinguish Canadian dress from either American or British dress. However, some observations deserve note. Of the close to fifty women documented in this survey, ten are draped in a shawl or wear complete outerwear outfits. This may be a practical choice resulting from the cold Canadian climate. However, none of the men who were photographed with the women wear outer garments. It may be a uniquely Canadian trend that the women may have enjoyed being photographed in expensive shawls and flowered bonnets. Another commonality extends to all of the images where the necklines are visible. All of the women in this survey have chosen to wear bodices with high necklines regardless of the bodice shape. This is significant because fashion illustrations, and dress historians, note that small 'V' necklines were a popular choice in the period. Even a casual look through Joan Severa's books show American women in evening dresses or even day dresses with low necklines. Only adolescent girls wore open necklines in this Canadian survey. Again, this may be necessary at a time when many of the photographs were taken out of doors in a cooler Canadian climate. It may also be a comment about the universally conservative nature of the women in Canada West. Yet the openness of necklines may have been determined by time and place. Cynthia Cooper, curator at the McCord Museum, suggests: "In the 19th century, in the context of formal occasions like balls and theatre, women who normally concealed their upper bodies from neck to wrist were allowed to bare a great expanse of skin without embarrassment. The revealing, low-necked style of evening gowns worn on these occasions was ironically known as 'full dress'" (Cooper n.p.). Finally, most of the women photographed are wearing high quality silk with fine wool as a second choice. Only the very young wear cotton. Almost all of these fabrics are a solid colour rather than a print. This may be a reflection of the social standing

of those photographed, and a broad statement about the style choice of Canadian women is speculative. However, since the majority of women in Joan Severa's books wear cotton dresses with bold prints, the selection of plain coloured fabrics for this important occasion gives these daguerreotypes a distinctly *Canadian* look.

### Life Stages

An early Victorian woman's progress through life was strictly governed by a society in which it was assumed that all young girls would take on the roles of wife and mother. Ninety percent of English Canadian women married at least once, usually between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two years (Errington 1995 28). The wedding itself was a public rite of passage during which a girl became an adult, and a number of the daguerreotypes in this survey commemorated this key event. Because it was central to her life, her marriage also defined the other stages; adolescence; or the time that a young girl prepares for marriage; motherhood, which quickly followed marriage as an inevitable consequence; the years of service to the family and society; and old age, when the child-bearing years were over. These stages are each delineated with distinctive dress (Baumgarten 140). Therefore, there were specifically constructed styles of dress appropriate to each stage of the full arch of a woman's life.

As a visual sign, dress is a means of expressing and reinforcing shared values and beliefs, and is used as a public symbol of one's changing identity within society (Lynch n. p.). Annette Lynch, who has written about the role of dress in rites of passage, notes that a characteristic of moving to a new stage of life is the removal of the dress of the current social identity (Lynch n.p.). While Lynch writes about specific cultural groups in modern society, her model is applicable to the current study. This chapter groups the images according to the various stages of

womanhood in early Ontario. Its goal is to discover whether the women of early Ontario made choices that reflected their social position and expressed their individual personality, whether they discarded elements of dress from their previous stations, and if they assembled their new image for the daguerreotype portrait.

## Young Women

The first of the life-stages investigated in this chapter is that of the teenage woman in the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. As previously noted, Georg Simmel identified two key aspects of fashion that govern an individual's sartorial choices; that of associating with the larger group by wearing similar garments; and that of expressing separation from that group with unique elements of dress. Three select portraits show elements of conformity in terms of fabric choice, but are very different in terms of clothing style, and the sitter's personal involvement in their costume.

The first image is a portrait of a young couple (see Fig. 11). The girl is wearing a light-weight cotton dress with a fan-shaped bodice. A separate panel of fabric is pleated from the shoulder to the waist and attached to the fitted bodice from the midriff to the waist. Its colour is white or a pastel with a printed pattern of small dots. The neck is open and broad; the sleeves are short and cuffed. This open neck styling, which is very typical in a child's dress seen in figure 12, was worn by women only in a ball gown. This girl has not yet completed her transition from childhood to young adult, which brings some confusion to the portrait. Despite dressing as a child, her face is that of a teenager, and her hair is worn up with a roll-over the ears in an adult style. The dress she wears in this portrait will likely be her last dress of this type. Her portrait partner, on the other hand, looks like he is playing dress-up as an adult. His waistcoat is too

large. Its lapel peaks roll inward, suggesting that the waistcoat is not new and belongs to a larger man, possibly his father.

What is the significance of this photo? As a couple, they adopt an adult, formal, yet intimate pose with his hand resting on her shoulder. Their heads tilt towards one another, and each is comfortable with the closeness and touch of the other. The couple could be brother and sister, but there is no family resemblance. Their hands are prominently positioned and they appear, in a twist of jest, to have exchanged their rings. The girl's ring is on the boy's baby finger, and his ring is on her index finger. Their gaze into the camera is direct and confident; and, in the case of the boy, slightly impish. It is possible that this is a portrait to document a betrothal. Courtship was a commitment that varied in duration, and which could last years during which the couple would be supervised by family, neighbours, friends, and even employers (Ward 66, 84). This exchange of rings brings a youthful lightness to the usual formality of the betrothal portrait.

The second image in this grouping shows a woman flanked by two male friends, one of whom is an artist and the daguerreotypist of this portrait (see Fig.13). His identity is established by his holding a maulstick, which was a long stick used by an artist to steady the hand holding the brush (Hanks 952). This was not a photo for a client. The artist may have taken it as a test of composition. Their arms are wrapped around each other, giving the portrait an air of easy camaraderie. The woman's clothing is casual, but indicates a studied knowledge of the latest fashions. Her dress is plain weave wool and is probably not her 'best' dress. The front-buttoning closure dates it to the early 1850s. The skirt is either gathered or knife pleated from a naturally placed waist though its folds have not been draped for the best display. Her small white collar is in the popular Jennie Lind style. She wears a homemade knitted sweater, the pattern for which was published in Godey's Lady's Book in December of 1848 as a "knitted sac" (see Fig.14). A

similar pattern for a crochet jacket, referred to as a polka dress, was published in the *Ladies Needlework Penny Magazine* in 1849, which suggests that this was a trendy style for the home knitter, although it is not represented in period fashion illustrations (Hope n.p.). Richard Harris & Sons was a knitting manufacturer in Leicester, England that produced similar knitted jackets from 1849 through the 1850s (Levitt 121). It has a tight bodice and wide skirt that was characteristic of the silhouette of the period. It is skillfully knitted according to the pattern complete with a tasseled rope tied at the front waist. This rope, no doubt, was threaded through the sweater waist to hold the knitted garment close to the corseted body. She deviates from the Godey's pattern slightly with a variegated striped edging of her own design. This is proof that she had not only read about the latest trends, she followed and elaborated upon them.

The last image in this grouping is a formal portrait of a young woman with bottle-curved hair by Toronto daguerreotypist, Eli J. Palmer (see Fig. 5). Her dress is beautifully made of soft wool. Its crisp knife pleats, the rounded pointed waist, and the gently flared sleeves date it to the late 1840s. It is not new, however; and despite careful mending, a tear on the bodice is clearly visible.

The most interesting aspect of this image is the degree to which the sitter has curated her costume. She too has a Jennie Lind collar, but has dressed it up with a pinked-edged bow and a locket at her throat. The decorative front trim is an obviously home-made addition to the bodice, which simulates a trend noted in the March issue of Godey's *Lady's*, 1845 "bodices open to the waist with laced or diamond-shaped openings" (Severa 2005 111). It appears that this braid may be covering an earlier decorative detail. At the joining of each diamond, she has applied a decorative acorn-shaped button to mimic a centre front opening, a style which was becoming extremely fashionable (Severa 1995 75). Acorns were highly emblematic of the Victorian virtues

of patience and perseverance, and symbolic of strength and fertility, all of which is implied in the idiom ‘Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.’ From the way the light bounces off of them these appear to be gilt or metal. As buttons were just beginning to be popular, their availability may have been limited. These ones have the size and general shape of veil buttons which were sewn onto the edges of veils to keep them in place and prevent them from blowing away (Chambers n.p.). This young woman may have adapted veil buttons for her bodice, which placed her at the forefront of fashion innovation. She accessorizes her look with the more traditional rings, a bracelet, and a long gold watch chain that disappears into a small pocket at the waistline.

She holds a daguerreotype. The inclusion of another person’s image in the setting was a relatively common practice. Four of the women in this survey hold daguerreotypes. The cases were closed: the identity of the person photographed is unknown. This indicates an intimate, completely personal connection to an individual whose identity is forever hidden to all but the sitter.

All three of these women wear fabric that symbolizes utility and practicality, and are appropriate for the young women’s age and station in life. The first daguerreotype shows a young woman who is still under the sartorial control of her mother, and as a result reveals little of her personality (see Fig. 11). The next two introduce strong women who appear to be accomplished in the gentle arts of sewing and knitting (see Figs, 5 and 13). It is probable that the women themselves were responsible for the fashioning and re-fashioning of their garments, indicating ingenuity and an advanced ability to express themselves within the confines of Victorian femininity and fashion dictates. Each of the women looks directly toward the camera with their heads held high. They have a clear sense of who they are, what their positions are, and



are ready to take on the responsibilities of life. However, they are still not adults and would not be thought of adults until their marriage.<sup>3</sup>

## Marriage

Marriage was a civic duty, and a defining moment in a woman's life. It determined who a woman was, where she lived, her social and economic status, and the direction of her life's work (Errington xvi 26). The wedding itself was a public celebration of the union of a couple and a complex interweaving of societal relationships and values. The daguerreotypes that celebrated these unions are, predictably, the most calculated and composed images within this survey. They are ripe with coded symbolism of personal triumph and delight, social propriety, and familial hierarchy. Wedding dresses mark the most important day of a young woman's life as she passes from childhood to adulthood. Only one of the brides photographed in this survey wears what is probably a white satin wedding dress. Few Victorian brides could afford a dress for a single event (Baumgarten 142). Instead, many early Victorian brides chose a good quality, coloured fabric made up in the most popular design of the day which could be worn throughout the next coming months to religious and social gatherings (MacKay 2007 32).

The first wedding portrait in this survey commemorates the marriage in 1850 of Rev. and Mrs. William S. Blackstock (nee Mary Hodge Gibbs) (see Fig. 3). It shows her as young woman of twenty-four years sitting with her right elbow resting comfortably on a cloth-covered table. Her dress is professionally constructed and expertly fitted in the most up-to-date fashion. The details of cut confirm the date of the dress to be within the first years of the decade of the 1850s. These details include an almost naturally placed waist line, and a deep 'V' shaped front opening with a lace chemisette. The skirt fullness is controlled with double box pleats instead of cartridge

pleating which had been popular throughout the 1840s. The fabric is a good quality silk with a rich luster, and a soft hand. The bodice and sleeves are decorated with a compound trim consisting of ribbon edged with a double row of a darker colour soutach, and deep van Dyke pointing along one edge. The costly machine made-lace in the wide scalloped collar, the deep corsage, and the open sleeve ruffle is a signifier of nineteenth-century femininity. Mary accessorizes the look with machine-made mittens with shafts that reach the first knuckle. They were more properly for evening wear, and their use here certainly suggests a momentous occasion. When the image is highly magnified, a wedding ring is just visible under the lace mittens, which suggests that this was a wedding photograph. The shape, texture, and decorative details of Mrs. Blackstock's costume are all signifiers which connote wealth, celebration, and access to the latest styles.

It is impossible to be sure of the colour of this dress, in part, because of the grey scale of the image. The determination of colour is complicated by the fact that in the daguerreian process, different colours required different exposure times. A light coloured garment could appear dark, and vice versa. Noted American daguerreotypist Albert S. Southworth cautioned: "Remember that positive red, orange, yellow, or green, are the same as black, or nearly so; and violet, purple and blue are nearly the same as white" (Johnson 27).

While she is not a conventionally handsome woman, Mary Hodge Blackstock's face has an animation and agency which is unexpected in a photograph from this period. It projects a warmth and vitality that expresses her youth, and sense of anticipation for her future. Her gaze is bold and is directed into the camera and to the audience beyond. Mary's body position is open and inviting. Her hands rest on her lap and are lightly clasped which brings a sense of completion to the photograph.

The woman in the next image expresses delight in her wedding with a rare, open lipped smile (see Fig.15). When twenty-five year old Susanna Yarwood married William Willcocks Baldwin on 16 October 1856, she joined a prominent and wealthy political family. Her father-in-law was Robert Baldwin who had been instrumental in the unification of Upper and Lower Canada and became one of its joint premiers in 1842 (Noel 218). Other family members included Robert Baldwin Sullivan, the second mayor of Toronto, and Anglican Bishop Maurice Scollard Baldwin.

The wealth of the family is reflected in this daguerreotype. It is a double wedding portrait, with a separate daguerreotype of the husband and wife set beside each other in one bluish black leather case. The colour tinting of Susanna's photograph is of an especially high quality. Her face is delicate and natural. Her dress is tinted a soft pink, which probably reflects the actual colour of the dress. Even the back of the chair and the cloth table covering are tinted by an artist in the Eli J. Palmer photographic studio. The expensive fabrics in Susanna's wedding ensemble also symbolize wealth.

Suzanna is photographed in outer wear which obscures the cut of her bodice. However, one can speculate that she wears a Basque-style jacket, which was fashionably worn over a tiered skirt. On her head she, wears a bonnet with a gathered lace facing and a veil-like hood. It is not clear, but the circlet of flowers framing her face possibly contains hand-made wax orange blossoms, which were the ubiquitous decoration in Victorian weddings (MacKay 46). Wide silk ribbons form a decorative bow which has been neatly arranged by the photographer. Her shoulders are wrapped in a luxurious cape. It has a soft sheen which indicates that it was made of very fine silk, or silk and wool blend. This is trimmed with beaver and lined with lustrous high gloss silk. She holds a down filled muff, which is also beaver and lined with silk. The border of

the cape is edged with seven rows of machine-sewn tucks. This is a clear indication of the growing industrialization of the garment industry. Her skirt is crisp silk taffeta, which is woven with a fashionable graphic play of stripes. Its two-tiered cut and construction contributed to a very fashionable wide silhouette. It is quite possible that her skirt was supported by a cage-like crinoline made of whalebone or the newly introduced spring-steel which had been patented in May of 1856 (Johnston 128).

It is unclear whether Susanna's choice of outer wear was due to late autumn coolness or because the number of accessories and many textures added interest to the image. It seems likely that Susanna's choice of dress for this daguerreotype stemmed, at least in part, from conversations with her daguerreotypist, Eli J. Palmer. At the time, Palmer was working out of his second storey studio at 80 King Street, Toronto. This studio roof had rows of skylights that ensured that sufficient light filtered into the studio for reasonably timed exposures, as well as a providing comfortable indoor setting for the sitter. This composition of conflicting material textures and visual graphics clearly supported Palmer's reputation for creating photographs with a painterly touch.<sup>4</sup>

The unusual choice of a handbag as a prop on the blue tinted table is a strong social comment that was, in part, orchestrated by Palmer. Table props were usually either floral arrangements or books. This pocketbook symbolized a direct connection with the sitter. At the time, coin purses were long cloth bags called *reticules*. This type of hinged metal frame leather purse became popular in the mid-1850s, and was meant for carrying calling cards rather than money (Foster 56). Its use here foretells of Suzanna's new social responsibilities as a married woman. Women in higher classes were expected to devote a great deal of their time to visiting other society women, and receiving them into their homes for tea and conversation. Codes of

conduct dictated the time and duration of calls, the order in which to greet guests, visits of condolence, and keeping account of other's calling cards (MacKay 15). Susanna's purse rests casually on the table as though she had just placed it there while stepping out from the cold. However, in actuality, it would have been very difficult for her to wrangle the handbag, cape, and muff had she actually carried all of these elements at the same time. It is, therefore a symbol of her duties and her elevated position within society. In addition to visiting and receiving guests, her duties would include entertaining, attending public events, and doing good works (Errington 2006 26). Inherent in all of these activities was the necessity of dressing well. The rules of etiquette and social decorum for Victorian wives were clear: "No sensible wife will betray that total indifference for her husband which is implied in the neglect of her appearance, and she will remember that to dress consistently and tastefully is one of the duties which she owes to society" (Young in MacKay 200715).

Not all the wedding daguerreotypes in this survey share the preoccupation with wealth and societal position that the Baldwin images depict. The final wedding portrait in this review illustrates how familial hierarchy is established through marriage. Captain and Mrs. Walter Eberts are listed in the 1852 census as a couple with no children living in the small community of Chatham, Ontario. He was thirty-nine and she was twenty-two years of age. Since there are no children by this time, it is reasonable to conclude that their wedding took place in late 1850 or 1851.

Mary Eberts, in Figure 4, wears a dress which shows fashion elements of the late 1840s and the early 1850s. This may reflect an awareness of fashionable trends as well as a more conservative styling of a smaller urban location. The cut and fit of her bodice, with an exceptionally high armhole, is typical of the late 1840s. The bodice has a tightly fitted midriff

with two long and tapering darts on either side of the centre-front. The top edge of her corset is just visible under the fine ribbed silk fabric which is woven with an ombre stripe. A flat centre-front panel, which may be a ribbon, is decorated with drop buttons. This indicates a knowledge, on her part, that the look of a centre front opening is both fashionable and desirable, despite the fact that a centre back closure was more customary. As a transitional style, it is possible that this dress had a grommited centre-back closure which would have made tight lacing possible. Mary's three-quarter length sleeves are cut on the bias. They are snug at the shoulder and bicep, and flare to the wrist ending with a gathered trim of self-fabric. Folds of the skirt indicate that the fabric is knife pleated into the waist. Mary wears a collar of the popular Jennie Lind type, with a stand and fall of *broderie anglaise* lace. She accessorizes with a large oval brooch at her throat, oval hoop earrings, and a long watch chain. Her hair softly sweeps over her ears with ringlet curls falling from the back of her head. She clutches a handkerchief which may signify some sentimental attachment which is lost on the viewer. This dress is made a good quality silk, and is likely the best dress she could afford to purchase, or to make for this momentous event. It would be appropriate to wear during visits, and to church over the next number of months. It is, however, simple in design. A lack of expensive decorative elements such as lace and braided trim supports the conclusion that while Mrs. Eberts may have married into a prominent family within the community, this family is not of the same financial standing as either the Blackstocks or Baldwins.

This portrait is the most artificially posed image in the survey, and echoes the symbolic hierarchical structure of the family. The wide range in age between Walter and Mary Eberts was not common in mid-nineteenth-century marriages. However, period statistics confirm that as men aged, they were more likely to take a younger wife (Ward 58). Some historians have argued

that great disparities of age indicated marriages of practicality, while small ones signified marriage for love (Ward 58). The image seems to support this theory. While Mary stands with her head tilted to her husband and with her hand lightly resting on his shoulder there does not appear to be an affectionate connection. Walter is seated as is appropriate for the head of the family. His hand reaches awkwardly for her shoulder in a hand-gesture of paternal guidance rather than affection. Neither party looks toward the other and, while the scene is not unpleasant, it does not hold the warmth and anticipation for the future that is evident in the two previous wedding photographs.

### Motherhood and Mourning

Marriage, as a rite of passage, was quickly followed by the transformation of a woman to the next phase of life, that of motherhood. Her age, at the time of her marriage, was the most important determinant of future family size and the length of time which she would spend raising her children (Gagan 86). Women who were just beginning this phase of their lives in the late 1840s and early 1850s spent an average of eighteen years between their first conception and the birth of their last child (ibid). A woman could expect an average of seven live births, with a new child every thirty months (ibid 87). To the Victorians, pregnancy was an extremely private and precarious time that was not openly discussed (Hoffman and Taylor 40). Nevertheless, they were not secluded, and continued to take part in active social and work lives until near to the end of their term (Baumgarten 148). John Macaulay and his wife Helen were living in York in 1840. John wrote to his mother explaining that Helen, who was at least five months pregnant, “cannot at present think of every amusement, but must take care of herself” (Errington 2006 26). Despite her condition, the couple continued to interact socially within the community. In the previous

few weeks, they had hosted at least two formal dinners and received a number of John's colleagues (ibid 27). Virtually all of the women in the community had the task of adapting their fashionable wardrobes to accommodate their condition throughout their pregnancy.

Given the frequency of pregnancies it may be surprising that there are relatively few images of women in this condition. Baumgarten suggests that, given the genuine danger of childbirth, the real life passage to be celebrated was not the pregnancy but the successful birth (Baumgarten 152). There are two images in this survey of women who appear to be pregnant. In the first, Sarah Macaulay has cloaked her condition in secrecy (see Fig. 16). The second shows an unnamed woman in the middle trimester of pregnancy (see Fig. 17). The final daguerreotype exemplifying motherhood is discussed below as a detailed investigation of the harshest consequence of motherhood in the nineteenth-century, and the connection that photography had with mortality.

From 1841 to 1844, Kingston was the capital of the newly unified Upper and Lower Canadas. It was founded on a military outpost, and was a powerful United Empire Loyalist stronghold. When John Macaulay married his second wife Sarah in 1853, he had given up a strong political career, and was devoting his time to his law and business interests. Sarah was thirty-five years of age at the time. She was the daughter of Colonel Flomer Young. Sarah and John had one child, Charlotte Jane.

There are two stunning daguerreotypes of Sarah Macaulay housed in the Queens archives. Twelve to fifteen daguerreotypists operated in Kingston during the years that Sarah was in the public eye, including Thomas Coffin Doan. Although there is no indication of the daguerreotypist of this image, it was shot by a photographer with an artistic touch (see Fig 16).



There is strong lighting on Sarah's face and corsage. The copper mat is the most elaborate one seen in this study. It features two decorative stampings, which may indicate an extra expense.

Sarah's figure is wrapped in a silk shawl. Shawls were popular throughout the period, to cover an ever expanding skirt. "The passion for India shawls still continues, and, in fact, is greater than ever. The daily prints advertise them in all manner of attractiveness; and one scarcely meets an acquaintance without an India scarf spread over her shoulders" (*Godey's* February 1860 in Worden 8). This one appears to be silk, with a central motif and a decorative floral border showing influenced by English or French design. Shawl historian John Irwin is critical of the naturalistic floral motifs. "It can be argued," he writes, "that this treatment represented an advance on French design: more often than not the naturalism was vulgar and sentimental, reminiscent of the worst of early Victorian decorative art" (Irwin 35). Sarah's dress is a ribbed silk with a strong graphic play of vertical and horizontal stripes. This was typical of popular fabrics in the mid-1850s (see Fig. 9). Her collar is embroidered and shaped with sharp points of a Van Dyke style. She accessorizes with a gold filigree love knot brooch at her throat, and a long gold chain. She holds a long ivory fan that is just visible as the shawl folds in to her hands (Alexander 22).

Although much of the bodice is hidden from view by the massive shawl, the area that is visible shows the most interesting detail of this image. It is a fan-shaped bodice with deep pleating from the shoulder. One would expect the pleats to be controlled from the bust to the waist. In this case, however, the pleats are controlled directly below the bust and then splay out over an un-corseted shape. On 21 September 1855, Sarah's only child, Charlotte Jane was born. It is probable that Sarah was pregnant with Charlotte Jane in this image. If this is so, it is highly significant. Photographs of expectant mothers were not common in Victorian Canada, and this

one indicates the ingenuity of converting an existing garment to accommodate a growing abdomen. It is possible that one reason for the popularity of the pleated fan bodice was that it provided ample fabric to cover the pregnancy, and was easily altered to fit a corseted shape after the birth.

The second image showing a woman in the middle trimester of pregnancy confirms that pregnant women were not necessarily hidden from view (see Fig. 17). This unnamed young woman seems to be of modest means. The dress has many details fashionable from the early to the middle years of the 1850s. It has a button, centre-front opening with velvet ribbon trim. The wide sleeve is controlled with a box pleat at the shoulder and cuffed at the wrist. The use of buttons as a decorative detail is repeated on the sleeve. The skirt joins the waist with box pleats. Her accessories include a *broderie anglaise* lace collar, and a long cord around her neck. It is unclear what is held at the end of this cord, although it could hold a magnifying glass. She holds a daguerreotype ensuring the presence of a loved one within this portrait. It is possible that this is the woman's wedding dress. At the time wedding dresses were worn as a 'best' dress for the months following the wedding. However, it appears that the centre front trim extends well below the waistline. This suggests that the dress may have been made specifically for the woman's pregnancy. Dresses of this type are quite rare in museum collections. Those that have survived have draw-strings on the waist to accommodate a growing abdomen, and a deep hem which was adjusted to increase the front length. One dress in the collection at Black Creek Pioneer Village, a living history museum in Toronto, Ontario, demonstrates the way in which some women accommodated the first part of their pregnancy (see Fig. 18). It is a shapely, two-piece Basque-style dress made of pink and off-white striped silk taffeta circa 1856. It was a wedding dress that was worn well after the wedding date as is evidenced by discolouration and wear. The owner, or

a clever seamstress, added a wide panel of left-over skirt fabric to the centre front of the bodice. This would have carried the wearer to the last trimester of her pregnancy. The waist of the skirt extant skirt is approximately thirty-two inches and could have rested above the woman's natural waist. These alterations show ingenuity and construction skill, and are indicative of a group of women who did not sequester themselves away during this time of life, contrary to the oft-voiced belief of modern amateur theorists.

Women of the nineteenth century knew the dangers that accompanied childbirth. It could be fatal for the mother, and high infant mortality meant that many women experienced the loss of a child. Death was never far from the minds of Victorians in the Canadas. Life expectancies were short, and illness and disease could wipe out entire families within a few short weeks. Diaries and correspondences are full of references to death and dying. This preoccupation with death encouraged the establishment of a number of major businesses that dealt with death, including the textile and clothing trade. In 1863, Montreal business Gagnon Watson and Company advertised an "extensive & recherché" supply of ready-made clothing and fabric (Lavell in Bradbury 213). The ad continued: "MOURNING GOODS . . . Bombainze [sic], Crape, Crape Collars," and also listed other mourning items (ibid). These items would become part of a woman's wardrobe and are illustrated in the daguerreotype of Mrs. Rev. Blackstock holding a child (see Fig. 19).

The photographic industry also participated in the industry of death. It is impossible to overstate the dramatic effect that the introduction of photography had on early Victorian society. For the first time the image of a loved one was documented as an embodied object, which could stir a memory, be mourned over, or bequeathed to a following generation. In our current age, which is defined by a constant bombardment of decontextualized visual images, it may be

difficult to stop and imagine the sense of wonder that must have accompanied the first photographs. It may be even more difficult to imagine what it must have meant to hold the image of a loved one, with its implied sense of immortality, in the palm of one's hand. It is not surprising that daguerreotypes were endowed with mystical qualities, and associated with the holding of memories. The noted author and amateur photographer Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1861, that photography surpassed human memory. "Our own eyes lose the images pictured on them. Parents sometimes forget the faces of their own children in a separation of a year or two. But the unfading artificial retina . . . retains their impress . . . , How these shadows last, and how their originals fade away" (Marien 77).

Mary Hodge Gibbs was twenty-four years old when she married Rev. William S. Blackstock in Toronto in 1850. During their married life they set up residence in a dozen communities throughout Upper and Lower Canada until William's retirement took them back to Toronto in 1881. They had five children who lived to maturity. According to the 1871 census, the first, Thomas, was born the year after they were married. Amelia and George were born in 1855 and 1856, respectively. Caroline, or Lizzie as she was known, was born in 1862. Their last child, Mary, was born in 1863. (Library Archives Canada) Not included in the 1871 census was William Mercien. William was born in Brighton on 14 June 1858. Soon after his birth, the family moved to Hamilton, where he was baptized on 13 September 1858 (Reed). While there has been no death certificate found to date, it is believed that he died in the winter of late 1859 or early 1860. There are a number of family photographs in the Blackstock, Gibb, and Gooderham family fonds located in the Archives of Ontario. One in particular stands out. It shows Mrs. Rev. Blackstock balancing an unnamed child on her lap. Through a deep reading of this image, and

exploring the differences between this and Mrs. Blackstock's earlier image, this investigation will conclude that this child is her deceased son, William Mercien.

In this photograph, Mrs. Rev. Blackstock's clothing reflects her position in society (see Fig. 19). Although she might not have needed the advice that periodicals and etiquette books directed toward women in the nineteenth-century, the connection between dress and duty are clearly articulated. "The importance of dress can scarcely be overrated. . . . It is with the world the outward sign of both character and condition . . . . In any assemblage, the most plainly dressed woman is sure to be the most lady-like and attractive. Neatness is better than richness, and plainness better than display" (Johnson 29). It is appropriate that her dress is simple and without undue embellishment. Her clothing is also reflective of a woman in mourning.

The dress is a simple corseted shape constructed of what appears to be a dull silk or cotton, or a blend of both in a dark colour. The bodice is devoid of decoration except for a row of buttons along the centre front closure, and a dark ribbon band on the sleeve cuff. The only accessory she wears is the deeply scalloped and heavily starched collar. It is always difficult to determine the colouring of clothing in daguerreotypes; however, with magnification of this collar, there is evidence of solarization, or a blue haze, which indicates a high contrast of dark and light (Draper 224). This suggests that the dress was black and the collar was white. Mary is wrapped in the comfort of a shawl which implies that the photograph was taken in the winter months. This tends to support the hypothesis that the child died in late 1859 or early 1860. These signifiers of fabric choice, colour, texture, and trim point to the vestimentary signs of a respectable woman who is neat in appearance and committed to a life of duty.

To completely understand the image it is important to review the Victorian sartorial codes of mourning. In her book *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History*, Lou Taylor

clearly lays out the requirements of dress expected to honour the death of a child. For the first stage of mourning, which lasted three months, black bombazine was acceptable with white accessories. Bombazine is described as “a fabric with a silk warp and worsted weft with a twill finish, with worsted on the face side to give the fabric the dull finish required for mourning” (Taylor 1983 303, 290). Cotton or wool could also be used in a less expensive version. Mrs. Rev. Blackstock’s garment was indeed a garment of mourning. The black velvet ribbon on the sleeve cuff is an added indication of mourning as is her lack of any jewelry.

The child in the photograph appears to be between one and two years old. He wears a white dress of dotted cotton or silk trimmed with white rick-rack trim. A lacy hat is held in place with rick rack. The lips and cheeks are painted with light pink pigment, giving the child the semblance of life.

This photograph was taken ten years after her marriage. She had given birth to four children and had lived in five locations. Her face appears drawn, and looks much older than her actual thirty-four years. This could be a result of tooth loss, the hardship of her life, postpartum depression, shock, or grief. The body language of the older Mrs. Rev. Blackstock sharply contrasts with that of the younger woman, and is the most telling aspect of the photograph. Her body inclines slightly to the right. Rather than being open, her body is enveloped in a shawl. Her ringless left hand lies empty on her lap without connection with the child. The right barely touches the child. Neither of her hands has a tension which would be expected, and even necessary, if the child were living.

Theorist Roland Barthes refers to an element of photography “which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me” as the *punctum*. “A photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me. Is poignant to me)” (Barthes 27). The *punctum* is

always personal and is particular to each individual viewer. For this researcher, the visual gaze of the older Mrs. Rev. Blackstock is the *punctum*. It is unfocussed, and ends at some point in the space between her and the camera. This emphasizes the expression of pain and isolation on the woman's face. It is significant that in the photograph her focus is not on the child. Presumably over time the child will be all she focusses on when she herself views the image. The embossed velvet facing of this daguerreotype is quite faint, indicating that it may have been handled, stroked, or touched more frequently than the first. It is just possible to make out its floral design with a butterfly on top. To the Victorians, the brief life-span of the butterfly represented a fleeting earthly existence. It signified the transformation from the earthly body to the heavenly spirit and was parallel to Christ's resurrection (Foutch 12). The inclusion of this element adjacent to the daguerreotype indicates that the subject photographed has moved from this life to a heavenly one.

The practice of post-mortem photography may seem grotesque to modern viewers, but it was common in the nineteenth-century. Post mortem photography was seen as "a reasonable response to life's most unreasonable situation" (Marien 76). Photographers played on these fears through advertisements. While a young daguerreotypist Eli Palmer was working in Detroit, he cautioned that "DELAYS ARE DANGEROUS! as procrastination is the thief of time. How suddenly DEATH'S messenger enters the family circle and snatches a beloved one from the fond embrace, and hurries it to the world of spirits. Then how consoling it would be to the surviving friends to have a perfect Likeness of the departed" (West 7) Photographers viewed post-mortem photography as part of their services. They positioned the body in a life-like manner and coloured the corpses' lips and cheeks to give the appearance of life.

## Old Age

Most women who reached the status of old age had experienced death a number of times throughout their lives. Linda Baumgarten contends that reaching menopause ushered in better times for most women (Baumgarten 76). She quotes an American diarist who writes “I have often thought that women who live to get over the time of Child-baring, if other things are favourable to them, experience more comfort and satisfaction than at any other period of their lives” (Drinker in Baumgarten 76).

This final stage of life, old age, is not defined by their number of years, but by the uniformity of dress which distinguished women who were past the child-bearing phase of life. The style of dress differs with each of the older women in this study, but the components are always the same. The unifying features are a dark dress with a flat, unreflective texture, and a white linen day cap. Given the statistics that one in five women did not survive the full childbearing cycle, and that another one in five was widowed while still the mother of young, dependent children, it is reasonable to assume that most elderly women spent much of their later years in mourning (Gagan 89). Mourning wear was considered an essential part of a woman’s wardrobe (Taylor 122). It may have been preferable to continue to wear mourning clothing as a uniform into the end of life. White day caps were worn by women of all ages in the early 1840s; but by the end of the decade, when photography was becoming more common, they were worn only by older women (Severa 10). This day cap may be a form of what Baumgarten refers to as “fossilized fashion,” or fashion that retains design features long after they have gone out of style (Baumgarten 31).

Mrs. Henry Cassidy (nee Mary Elija Rogers) was in her mid to late forties when this photograph was taken (see Fig. 20). It is unknown whether or not she is in mourning, but her



dress seems to indicate that she is. Despite its achromatic colouring this dress is very complex. She wears a fan-shaped, boned bodice with a “V” front opening and a black chemisette. The shoulder pleats are pressed sharply, and are controlled from the deeply pointed front waist to the midriff. The outer pleat is trimmed with a dark braid. Her collar, too, is black. Since black collars were reserved for ‘first mourning,’ this daguerreotype was probably taken during the first year of Mrs. Cassidy’s widowhood (Severa 1995 117). The under sleeves are tight to the wrist, and are topped with a cap. The sleeve cap is trimmed with black braid. The skirt is cartridge pleated onto a piped waist. Mrs. Cassidy wears a day cap of extremely fine, sheer linen with double accordion frills at her cheeks. It is crisply starched and pressed with the aid of a goffering iron. The long ties on this cap are tied tightly under her chin in a style that Joan Severa tells us was worn only by older women (1995 83). In the next image, Mrs. Joseph Eberts (nee Ann Baker) wears a similar day cap with a double row of gathered ruffles at her cheek (see Fig 21). She ties it under the chin with a coloured ribbon, rather than the long ties. The woman in Figure 22 is not in mourning. She wears her fan-shaped bodice with a white chemisette. The pleats in her bodice are not pressed, but rather take on the look of soft gathers over her bust. She wears a finely woven paisley shawl around her shoulders. This woman’s day cap is similar in shape to the one worn by Mary Rogers; but, instead of gathered ruffles at her cheeks, she wears a spray of tiny flowers and ribbons. The cap is tied under the chin with a small string that holds the cap close to the head, and allows the wide ribbon with a pinked edge to be arranged neatly without distortion. Of the three women photographed, this woman is the oldest and yet still strives to appear feminine and fashionable.

The fact that most of the older women in this survey tend to follow the prescribed fashion of dark dress and white cap may be due to a firmly established social construct. Daguerreotypist

H. J. Rogers wrote that “t seems superfluous almost to tell the reader that in selecting the colors and fashion o dress, careful attention and artistic regard should be paid to age, character, social position . . . . A lady perhaps middle aged, or past the meridian of life, of a reserved deportment and sedate cast of mind, would not desire to array herself like a girl of sixteen” (Johnson 29) In other words, it was common sense that an older woman would dress in styles appropriate to her age groups as defined by society. Body and health issues brought about by age may also have caused the older woman to dress in a distinctive manner (Baumgarten 140) She dressed in a way to distinguish herself as part of a group, and as separate from the younger women of the community.

## CONCLUSION

The main focus of *Through the Lens of Fashion: An Analysis of the Clothing of Women in Early Victorian Ontario* was to determine whether the study of daguerreotypes of women living in Ontario could be used to inform the collective knowledge of the dress of a specific period in the development of Canada. Close to fifty images were analysed with respect to the approximate age of the sitter, the details of cut and construction of her garment, and her accessories. Daguerreotypes were also scrutinized for signs and symbols that conveyed philosophical truths for the early Victorians, and were intrinsically part of their dialogue of fashion. These signs were sometimes evident in the contribution of the daguerreotypist and were included the staging of the sitter, and props. At other times, the clothing itself represented elements of Victorian morality.

In terms of dress history, this project has made substantial headway into developing a foundation of knowledge about the prevalent fashion in the area. The sitters showed a high level of consistency in their choice of style, colour, cloth, and accessories. The reasons for this may be both social and geographic. The subjects tended to be members of higher strata of society who had knowledge of the latest styles and access to good quality fabric. As part of an affluent group, they identified with each other in the form of their sartorial choice. The results show a tendency toward a distinctly Canadian style that differed from that of the Americans displayed in Joan Severa's books. Canadian women preferred to keep their necklines high and never showed skin in the neck area. They also chose plain coloured silks or woven design fabric over the printed cottons, which were popular with American women. These distinctions seem to suggest that Canadians practiced conservatism in dress. They may also be an indication of the difference in

climates in the two countries. Further study is needed to determine if the continuity uncovered in this study was seen throughout all the levels of society. Subsequent studies may include analysis of ambrotype and tintype photographs. Since these were less expensive photographic processes, their inclusion might expand the range of societal levels.

The secondary goal was to give a face to the women of the area at specific stages of their lives. A large portion of the survey was an in-depth examination of twelve daguerreotypes, which represented women in the various stage of life; young adult, wife and mother, and old age. These provided the most edifying information. They revealed societal responsibilities and duties that were expected of the women at each stage of their development as they related to dress codes and practices. The youngest ones had no adult responsibilities, and dressed much more casually and frugally than their more mature sisters. The elderly no longer showed the need to dress in a manner which was necessary to attend functions and impress other society matrons. An outcome of this study is a renewed visibility of these women. It has given agency to twelve women who lived over one hundred and sixty years ago: they were wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Their very presence was vital to their family, the community, and by extension to the nation they helped create. They were also complete individuals with personalities, which belonged only to themselves. The 'mirror with the memory' reflected their personalities, their aspirations, their loves, and their pain. More relevant to this study, the daguerreotype captured their individual and shared aesthetic values as reflected in their dress. The daguerreotype, and "Through the Lens of Fashion," provides a snap-shot of the fashions of Ontario at a specific moment of its history. In discovering the historic dress in this study, we find the roots of Canadian fashion that provides a firm base upon which to build a greater knowledge of Canadian fashion.



## APPENDIX

### Figures



**Figure 1.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. John (Sarah) Macaulay, Daguerreotype. ca. 1850-53, 5 ½ x 4 ½ inches, Queen's University Archives, V-23 P-7.1.





**Figure 2.** Photographer unknown, Sitters unknown, Daguerreotype, ca. 1853-5, 3 ¼ x 2 ¾ inches, Dundas Museum, 83-94.



**Figure 3.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. Rev, W.S. (Mary Hodge) Blackstock, Daguerreotype, ca. 1850, Archives of Ontario, F 4362-1-0-21.





**Figure 4.** Photographer unknown, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Eberts, Daguerreotype, ca. 1851, Archives of Ontario, 1-003-0368.





**Figure 5.** Eli Palmer, Sitter unknown, Daguerreotype, ca. 1850, private collection of Mike Robinson.



**Figure 6.** Wm. Notman, Sitter unknown, Daguerreotype, ca. 1855, 3 ¼ x 4 ¼ inches, Library and Archives Canada, FA-157.



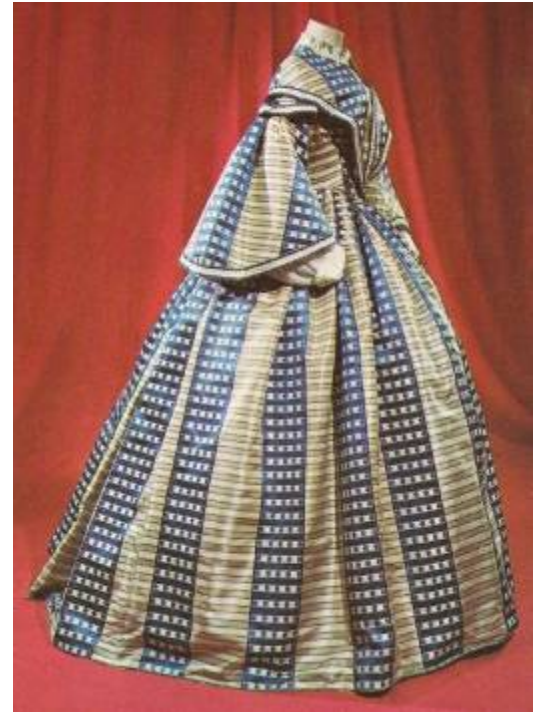


**Figure 7.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. Duncan (Jane) McKay. Daguerreotype, ca. 1852, Royal Ontario Museum, 978.16.3.



**Figure 8.** Right: Eli Palmer, Sitter unknown, Daguerreotype, ca. 1855-57, 3 ¼ x 2 ¾ inches, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1006/300. Left: Dress detail, Silk, ca. 1840-50, Royal Ontario Museum, 929.24.5.





**Figure 9.** Right: Photographer unknown, Mrs. John (Sarah) Macaulay, Daguerreotype, ca. 1855, 5 ½ x 4 ¼ inches, Queen's University Archives, V-23 P-7. Left: Dress, Silk, ca. 1859, Royal Ontario Museum, 965.47.5.A.



**Figure 10.** Photographer unknown, Sitter unknown, Daguerreotype, ca. 1852, 3 ¼ x 2 ½ inches, Toronto Reference Library, 989-11-96.



**Figure 11.** Photographer unknown, sitters unknown. Daguerreotype, ca. 1850-53, Archives of Ontario, C-179-0-0-0-1.





**Figure 12.** Photographer unknown, Jane and Ellen Crooks, Daguerreotype, ca. 1850-60, 7 ½ x 4 ½ inches, Dundas Museum, P-2979.



**Figure 13.** George S. Smith, Self-portrait with friends, Daguerreotype, ca. 1851; Graham W. Garrett, *A Biographical Index of Daguerreotypists in Canada, 1839-1871*, CD-ROM. Manotick: Archive CD Books Canada, 2008. 397.





**Figure 14.** Left: New York Public: Library, NYPL Digital Gallery, image I.D. 86295, knitted sac, knitted Parisian Spencer (1848), original source Godey's Lady's Book. Right: Knit and crochet patterns; Hope, G. Curling, ed. "Tales and Poetry: A Melange of Instruction and Amusement for the Work-Table." *Ladies' Needlework Penny Magazine*. London: Aylott and Jones, 2012.



**Figure 15.** Eli Palmer, Mrs. William (Susanna Mary) Baldwin, Daguerreotype, ca. 1856, 3 x 2 ½ inches, Toronto Reference Library, X 74-5.





**Figure 16.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. John (Sarah) Macaulay, Daguerreotype. ca. 1855, 5 ½ x 4 ½ inches, Queen's University Archives, V-23 P-7.





**Figure 17.** Photographer unknown, sitters unknown. Daguerreotype, ca. 1855-59, Archives of Ontario, C-167-1-0-0-94.



**Figure 18.** Left: Dress, silk, ca. 1856, collection of Black Creek Pioneer Village, not accessed, unaltered closure. Right: Dress, silk, ca. 1856, collection of Black Creek Pioneer Village, not accessed, closure altered.



**Figure 19.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. Rev, W.S. (Mary Hodge) Blackstock. Daguerreotype, ca. 1859, Archives of Ontario, F 4362-1-0-28.



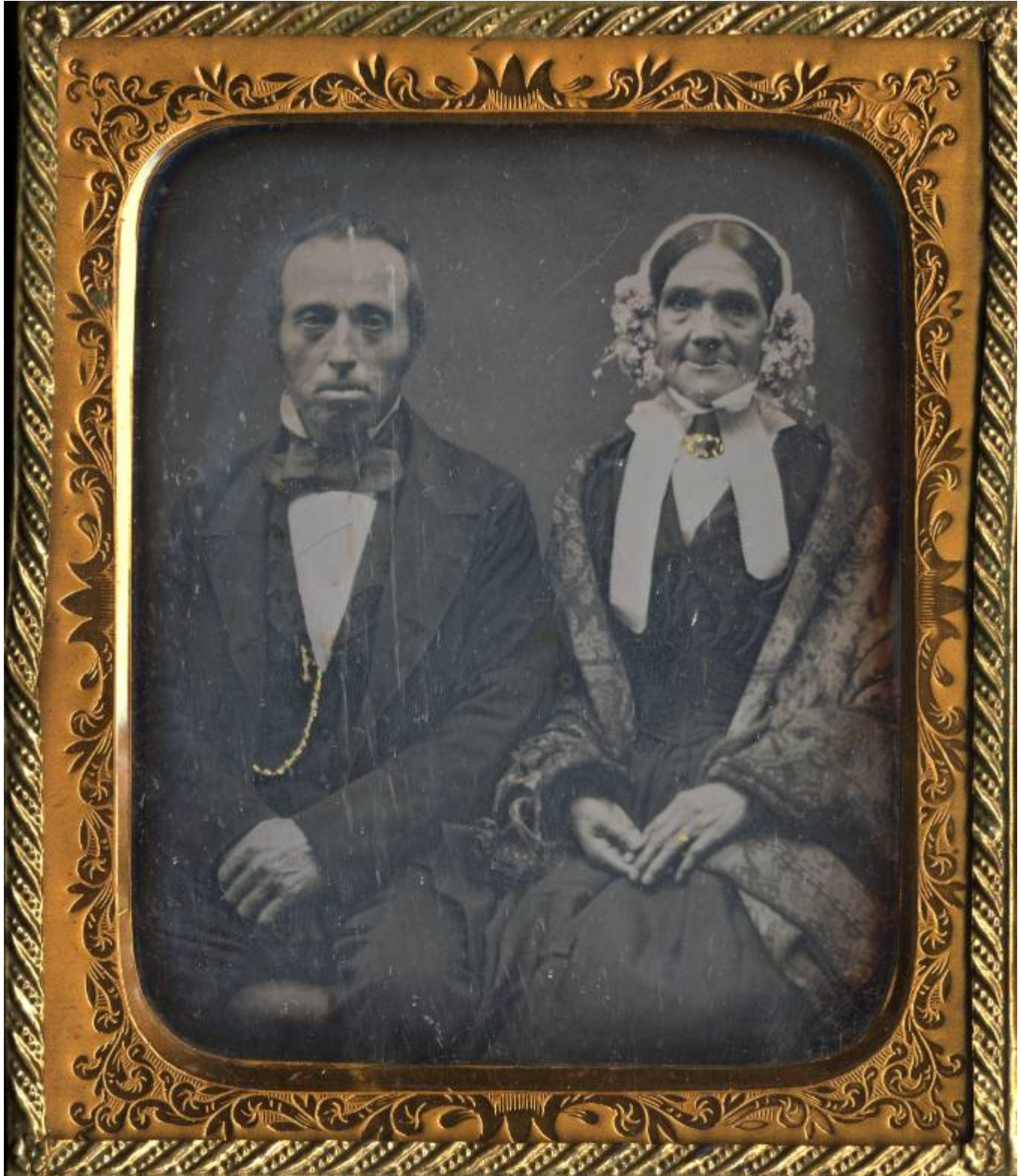


**Figure 20.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. Henry (Mary Eliza) Cassidy. Daguerreotype, ca. 1850, Archives of Ontario, 100-303-71.



**Figure 21.** Photographer unknown, Mrs. Joseph (Ann) Eberts (?), ca. 1849, Archives of Ontario 100-303-73.





**Figure 22.** Photographer unknown, sitters unknown. Daguerreotype, ca. 1848-55, Archives of Ontario, C-167-1-00-95.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion about the visibility of women in nineteenth-century Canada, see Errington 1995.

<sup>2</sup> ““Sutherland's City of Hamilton,”” offers a compelling description of the factory production of crinoline hoops:

Messrs. G-. D. Hawkins & Co., have been established in Hamilton since 1862. Twenty-five hands are kept employed, chiefly women. There are a variety of processes necessary to convert the rough unpolished wire into the graceful and elastic hoop-skirt: the round wire is first drawn through polished steel rollers by which it is flattened out; it is then passed through a furnace of molten lead into oil, and, thus hardened, it is again drawn through molten lead, which reduces it to the temper or elasticity required to make it fit for covering. The braidiers for covering are of the most ingenious character. Sixteen spools revolve round the wire, passing and winding about it in the most curious manner, with extraordinary rapidity, and with perfect harmony. One of the small machines will cover about three hundred and fifty yards daily; but as each lady's skirt contains from fifty to one hundred yards of steel, it takes a large number of these machines to carry on a business. The steel, when covered, is then passed through a composition . . . like paint, on to cylinders heated by steam, which gives it a fine gloss, after which it is taken in hand by the shirt-maker, who weaves it through tapes fitted to forms for the purpose, and after passing through about half a dozen hands in the various processes of finishing, it is ready for sale. (Internet Archive 297-8)

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion about marriage as a rite of passage when young girls became adults, see Errington 1995 28.

<sup>4</sup> West (1213) notes that, by 1850, Palmer was listed as one of the fifty most prominent men in Toronto. He presented his work at the Upper Canada Provincial Exhibition in 1850 and 1852, and was awarded a prize in 1850. West quotes *Rowsell's City of Toronto and County of York Directory, for 1850-51*, which states that the 1852 display “was comprised of several dozen well-known individuals of Toronto.” This indicates that Palmer had a clientele of prominent Torontonians. He also received a special mention for his work in the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1855.

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