NELLY DON'S 1916 PINK GINGHAM APRON FROCK: AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE'S SHIFTING ROLE FROM PRODUCER TO CONSUMER

by

MIKYOUNG WHANG

M.A., California State University, Los Angeles, 1997

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Apparel, Textiles, and Interior Design
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

At the turn of the 20th century, dramatic changes in cultural, social, technological, and political climates had tremendous influence on American women's lives, roles, and their fashion. Previously, 19th century middle-class Americans viewed women as dependent, emotional beings who were expected to tend to domestic tasks and bear and raise children while men were thought of as rational people who found personal fulfillment in public life (Leach, 1984). By 1915, this expectation changed due to the technological transformation of the work place and households, and changing cultural and social trends accelerated by rapid industrialization, urbanization, modernization, and the progressive movement. While men continued to receive salaries in factories or in corporate structures, single and working class women entered new service oriented industries, hiring on for "pink collar" jobs, such as typists, telephone operators, secretaries, and salesclerks (Leach, 1984). Although increasing numbers of women were entering the workforce (7.5 million in 1910), most Americans still viewed women's place as in the home. However, even the married woman who saw her role as that of wife and mother was getting out of the house more often, and more than 1 million women joined clubs and participated in social reforms. Thus, women drove cars; worked outside the home in increasing numbers, participating in club work, volunteer services, and reform movements; engaged in a variety of active sports (Tortora & Eubank, 1998); and depended more and more on consuming than on producing (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). These lifestyle changes demanded changes in fashion, in particular from the unnaturally curved 'S' shaped figure that prevailed in the Edwardian Era (1900-1909) to a "modern fashion," which was simpler, more comfortable, and practical, and that catered to a more active lifestyle. Indeed, as women's independence began to evolve, it was reflected in changing fashion, which was itself a result of social change instigated by technology (Ewing, 2001).

World War I (WWI, 1914-1918) also had an impact on women's roles and fashion. Americans enjoyed in those years an economic benefit as they manufactured goods for the war. First, the subsequent economic boom fueled an increase in mass consumption. As women had to undertake various activities for the war effort, from volunteer work to full-time employment, filling vacancies left by men at war, they needed clothes that were not only affordable, but also

comfortable and functional. Narrow skirts and fitted bodices disappeared and skirt hemlines rose, and military effects such as big patch pockets, epaulets, caplets, and the lines of officers' tunics were adapted into the styles of the era (Hill, 2004; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). In addition, Oriental influences accelerated this unencumbered, comfortable mode of flowing lines and loosely-cut kimono style sleeves in garment designs of the time.

As a result of technology-driven industrialization, a major change in how Americans acquired commodities occurred during this period. Whereas pre-industrial era women produced most of the items that their families needed, industrial era housewives purchased these items due to the widespread availability of mass-produced commodities and ready-made products, from skin-care products and soaps, to preserved food, ready-made clothing, and accessories (Cowan, 1976; Connolly, 1994; Cross & Szostak, 1995). With these changes came new spending power with installment plans, such that the woman's role was transformed from that of producer to that of consumer. Thereby, America became a consumer-based society where leisure, pleasure, and desire were valued over the practical utilitarianism and self-denial that prevailed during the Victorian era (Leach, 1984; Lears, 1983). While consumerism, the belief that goods conferred meaning on individuals and their roles in society, manifested in daily experiences (Cross, 2002), the culture of consumption gradually "encompassed service and comfort as desirable goals, intermingling competition and cooperation and blurring the lines between work and leisure" (Leach, 1984, p. 320). Along with this, the home was solicited by mass circulation magazines, mail-order catalogs, newspapers, and other outlets for advertising domestic goods (Fox & Lears, 1983).

Mass media, particularly, ladies' magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal*, *The Delineator, Vogue,* and *Harper's Bazar* (spelling changed to *Harper's Bazaar* in1929) carried a good deal of fashion content, printing photographs and drawings of the socially well-known in their finery, informing readers of the current Paris and New York City fashions, as well as advertising ready-made dresses and dress patterns, all of which had an impact on shaping American women's fashion sensibility (Hill, 2004; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Waller-Zuckerman (1989) stated that mass-market magazine publishers expanded their operations based on technological and financial improvements between 1890 and 1916 whereupon mass-circulation magazines, particularly ladies' magazines, became an institution in the lives of most women, appealing especially to middle-class white American women.

In this transformative period, Nell Donnelly Reed (1889-1991), Kansas-born, middle class housewife, created tasteful housedresses for herself, her family, and her friends. Nell Donnelly believed that housedresses should be as pretty and attractive as street clothes, and indeed none of her friends could find such charming dresses as hers in any store (McMillen & Roberson, 2002). Thus, her friends urged Nell to make more that they could purchase and even suggested that she take samples to a store (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006). Nell took two housedress samples to *Peck's Dry Goods Company* in Kansas City in1916 (T. M. O'Malley, personal communication, June 20, 2009). One sample, the "pink gingham check apron frock" (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2), received an instant order for 18 dozen dresses, and all 216 pink gingham dresses sold the first morning (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Wilding, 1987) at $1 a piece, which is equitable to $19.55 in today's market place (The Inflation Calculator, n.d.). These early sales led to the *Donnelly Garment Company* (DGC) established in 1919 by Nell and her first husband, Paul Donnelly. Thus, the Nelly Don label was born. The company, eventually employing 1,000 people and making 5,000 dresses a day by 1929, became the largest women's ready-to-wear manufacturing company in the world by 1947 (O'Malley, 2006; White, 1984; Wilding, 1986). Nell adopted the persona of 'Nelly Don,' which was both a label of the company and her moniker; therefore, in this study, Nelly Don refers to Nell Donnelly Reed herself as well as to Nelly Don dresses. Since this study focused on her early years before the foundation of the DGC and her second marriage in 1932 to James A. Reed, former U.S. senator from Missouri, the name 'Nell Donnelly' also refers to Nelly Donnelly Reed.

Figure 1.1 Full scale reproduction of the 1916 pink gingham apron frock by Nelly Don, Ca. 1940[1]

[1] Courtesy of the *Jackson County Historical Society of Independence*, MO. Photograph by M. Day. Purchased by Mrs. Swope, a former employee of the DGC, for $2.98 at a sales event in the company.

Figure 1.2 Miniature of 1916 pink gingham apron frock, 1952[2]

Nelly Don researchers (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987) maintained that the only housedress available when Nell Donnelly created hers in 1916 was the Mother Hubbard, a shapeless, dull colored-dress available at the dry goods store for 69 cents. However, sewing patterns and a variety of ready-made housedresses were promoted in advertisements, fashion columns, and mail-order catalogs around 1916, indicating that housewives had options. Nonetheless, all 18 dozen Nelly Don pink gingham apron frocks sold

[2] Courtesy of Tinker Reed, fashion doll. Photograph by M. Day. The dress was made for a doll exhibit that Nelly Don sponsored at the Colonial Trust Co., Rockefeller Center, in New York in 1952. This historical exhibit included a colorful array of 24-inch dolls each clothed in the best-selling Nelly Don dress of every year since the creation of the first pink gingham apron frock in 1916.

out in one day, which invites an analysis as to why it was so popular. Thus, the overarching research question was: Why was Nelly Don's 1916 housedress so well-accepted?

American housewives in the early 20th century experienced significant social, cultural, and economic changes (Connolly, 1994), and fashion played an important role during this transitional period. Nelly Don, whose 1916 pink gingham apron frock represented the new era of mass production of ready-to-wear housedresses, was a contributor to social and fashion changes. Her pink gingham apron frock and the dresses that followed were so successful that by 1947, Nelly Don was running the largest ladies' ready-to-wear manufacturing company in the world at the time. Ultimately, the apron frock serves as a material culture example of the woman's shifting role from producer to consumer by offering a practical, affordable, yet attractive housedress with sensible incorporation of current design elements.

Research Questions and Thesis

Two overarching research questions guided the investigation. They are presented along with a brief summary of the thesis.

1. Why was Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock so well-accepted?

Socially, mass advertising, as well as fashion articles in ladies' magazines promoting fashion consciousness, prompted women to purchase an attractive, modern, yet affordable housedress. Another significant factor was Nelly Don's ability to integrate fashionable design elements into a functional housedress. The thesis is that these social and design aspects contributed to the success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock.

2. What role did the housedress play in the life of the middle-class American housewife?

The answer to this question is rooted in the modernization of the role of early 20th century women as their role changed from producer to consumer, and the notion that clothing—in particular, the housedress—was a visible reflection of this shift. At this time, women's fashion began to modernize following the contemporary cultural, social, and political surrounding shaped by women's more active and mobile lifestyle and World War I (1914-1919). Thus, fashion reflected social and cultural progress (Blanke, 2002), and Nelly Don's 1916 housedress reflected social and cultural changes of this transitional time period by offering a purchasing alternative in a practical, fashionable, affordable garment to a housewife eager to emulate images portrayed in the media. Hence, this study posits that the value and availability of Nelly Don's

apron frock provides a clear illustration of the middle-class white American housewife's shifting role from producer to consumer and of her role in the modernization of society.

Within this framework of research questions, the study examined the background information of Nelly Don, including biographical information, details of how she transformed into a designer/entrepreneur from a housewife, the characteristics of the pink gingham apron frock, descriptions and role of the housedress, and available housedress options (chapter 2). Chapter 3 provides the context for social and fashion trends of the time by summarizing cultural, social, and political environments in the early 20th century. Chapter 4 then traces how industrialization advanced the modernization of the household and society, by first examining how America became an industrial society, and how technological advancement and industrialization affected women's housework and roles. The next section in this chapter discusses how the role of the middle-class American housewife changed from that of producer to consumer. The brief discussion of the extent of home dressmaking acknowledges one of women's production roles at the time. Lastly, this chapter describes women evolving into purchasing agents toward the 1920s.

Next, chapter 5 discusses how modernization opened the door to consumerism and how consumerism changed the individual, the household, and society. A very different concept of society emerged as more people purchased and used mass-produced goods. The next section addresses how this mass-produced merchandise was disseminated to consumers. For instance, mail-order businesses and department stores were important as they were the main outlets to publicize merchandise and generate sales. In fact, historians claim that mail-order catalogs reflected how Americans dressed and were an essential outlet for middle- and working-class women who had no access to the stores selling ready-to-wear clothing (Olian, 1995). Following that, the chapter discusses the mass media that targeted middle-class white American housewives such as ladies' magazines since they played a key role in encouraging women to desire fashionable clothes by way of information and advertisements. Finally, the chapter focuses on advertising in the ladies' magazines, and offers examples of the ads in the ladies' magazines to show how they tried to influence consumers.

Chapter 6 provides evidence of the design and social aspects of why Nelly Don's housedress was widely accepted at the time. It revisits Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock to examine the reasons behind its success based on the context provided in the previous chapters.

More specific analysis of the fashion attributes that Nelly Don incorporated into her pink gingham apron frock, as well as examples of the housedress ads in the ladies' magazines are included to further explore the reasons for her success.

Specifically, the first section of the chapter examines the various garments with those fashionable design features that Nelly Don incorporated into her dress roughly from 1911 to 1916. This would provide the evidence of the popularity of those features, and in turn, could prove that Nelly Don incorporated the current design elements into her creation very deliberately. The research period under review coincides with Nelly Don staying at home for about six or seven years after her graduation from college but before she created the pink gingham apron frock when she was likely to have been influenced by fashion trends. The final section of the chapter explores the evidence supporting the claim that manufacturers and publishers were targeting middle-class white housewives with their garments by enticing women to want to look pretty even while at home and encouraged women to accept a more modern housedress such as Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock.

Lastly, Chapter 7 concludes by integrating all these findings and interpreting the evidence. Consequently, all this material combines to support the thesis that Nelly Don's housedress was very desirable and offered an attractive purchasing option to the housewife, thereby supporting the middle-class American housewife's shifting role from producer to consumer in the early 20th century in her cultural and social transition.

Justification

The importance of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock goes beyond being that of an affordable, quality housedress to middle-class housewives in the early 20th century. It was not just another housedress to wear, but serves as a material example of the modernized role of the middle-class American housewife. However, Nelly Don's contribution during this transitional period has been rarely studied. Previous historical studies often focused on high fashion trends and designers rather than apparel for average American housewives, and the records and documents related to mass produced apparel brands in the early 20th century are not widely available.

More specifically, the significance of Nelly Don's housedress in 1916 in this transitional period for women deserves systematic research rather than merely anecdotal evidence. Indeed,

efforts have been made recently to document and promote Nelly Don. For example, in 2006, Nell's great, great nephew T. M. O'Malley produced the documentary film and accompanying book, *Nelly Don: A stitch in time.* The film, along with an exhibition of artifacts, titled *The Extraordinary Life of Nelly Don*, was shown at the *Irish Museum & Cultural Center* in Kansas City, July through September 2007. Also, select pieces from the Kansas City exhibit combined with other Nelly Don dresses were showcased at the *Historic Costume and Textile Museum* (HCTM) at Kansas State University titled "*Nelly Don: Dresses that Worked for Women,*" October 9 through November 11, 2007. Furthermore, the HCTM has been building a Nelly Don archive in cooperation with T. M. O'Malley to preserve the records, designs, dresses, and stories of Nelly Don. Currently, the HCTM has about twenty-five Nelly Don dresses that were either donated by O'Malley or purchased from personal collections. When the HCTM exhibited Nelly Don dresses and documents related to Nelly Don, I became fascinated by the story of the humbly born woman designer and her great designs, and decided to research her for my dissertation.

Nelly Don: A gentle lady tycoon, written by J. B. Wilson in 1993 for the Women's Division, *The Kansas City Museum,* is a short biographical essay discussing Nelly Don's personal and business life. However, systematic research on Nelly Don has not been conducted until now.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative historical research method to gather and interpret data using primary and secondary sources. Historical research makes inquiries about past occurrences requiring systematic collection and evaluation of data to test hypotheses or answer research questions relating to trends associated with these events that may help explain present events and provide a basis for predicting the future (McDowell, 2002; Touliato & Compton, 1988). Touliato and Compton (1988) maintained that historical research depends mainly on a systematic collection of data, and the logical interpretation of this evidence. Thus, historical researchers integrate facts into meaningful generalizations rather than merely recounting plain facts so as to expand and clarify existing knowledge as well as discover new knowledge. McDowell (2002) stated that historical study encourages researchers and readers to develop a greater awareness and interest in the past, appreciate the forces that have brought about change, and provides a framework we can use to make sense of our experience and guide our actions.

Anchored in the historical method, this study employed an interpretive approach to integrate the evidence collected from research sources to formulate a generalized theory on the role of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock as an example of social change. As Hannel (2002) stated in her dissertation, an interpretive approach is appropriate for fashion history since the historical perspective is not merely facts, but rather an interpretation of those facts, and fashion history is intertwined with all human and social factors that construct human existence. Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) defined interpretive research as study that assumes that people create and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them; thus, interpretive researchers attempt to understand phenomena by getting at the meanings participants assign to them. In this study, the phenomenon investigated and explained was why Nelly Don's housedress was so popular and what role it played in women's lives by assessing how people interacted with and experienced the world around them during that time. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2004) noted that interpretive processes are marked by constant fluidity as the researchers often engage simultaneously in data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of research findings.

The qualitative historical method required both primary and secondary data sources. The primary sources included evidence through interviews and extant artifacts such as Nelly Don dresses and the Mother Hubbard style of housedresses. The replicated Nelly Don 1916 pink gingham apron frock, the focus of this study, was carefully examined by way of its design, materials, and construction, and by recording the measurements. Mother Hubbards, which were worn at the time Nelly Don's dress was introduced, were located at various museums (*Kansas City Museum*, *Missouri Historic Costume & Textile Collection*, *Historic Costume and Textile Museum* at Kansas State University, and *Jackson County Historical Society*) for comparison to Nelly Don's and more modern house dresses. Copies of photographs, business records and reports that were relevant to the time period were obtained from personal collections, museums and libraries to clarify the social and cultural environment of the era.

Due to the scarcity of primary sources and the limited extent of the information they offer, the study relies heavily on secondary sources to analyze women's lives, roles, and fashion in the early 20th century and their relation to Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock. Archives of various ladies' magazines including the leading publications such as the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Delineator, Good Housekeeping,* and *Harper's Bazaar* were examined at libraries as was the

university's archive website to identify relevant articles and advertisements. Mail-order catalogs, which emerged as a major communication medium with significant influence on housewives around the time the Nelly Don dress was introduced, also provided valuable information on the society, culture, and fashion of the time. The archives and republications of mail-order catalogs widely circulated at the time, including *Sears, Roebuck and Co,* and *Montgomery Ward Co.*, were located at museums and libraries.

In addition, republications of catalogs of department stores (i.e., *B. Altman & Co.* and *Gimbel Brothers*), small clothing manufacturers (i.e. *Perry, Dame & Co,* and *National Cloak and Suit Co*), and clothing pattern companies (i.e., *The Home Pattern Company,* and *The Standard Fashion Company*) were examined to assess fashion trends and women's fashions. The data gathered from the sources mentioned above were used to explore and analyze why Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham was so popular and what role it played.

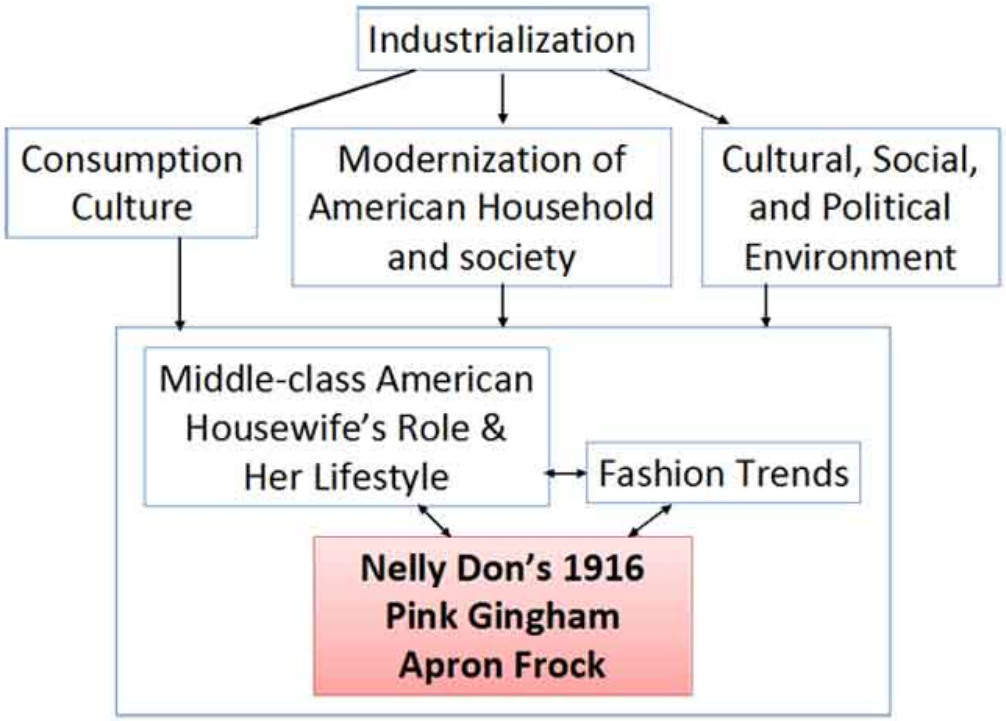
Magazines and catalogs, as noted above, from various time periods were surveyed in this study. First, the decade of 1910s was covered for the information on the overall fashion trends of the early 20th century. Next, the progression of the house dress style was examined from the information found between the late 19th century and 1916. Lastly, a more focused and in-depth survey was done from 1911 to 1916 to study the reasons behind the success of Nelly Don's pink frock. Past literature such as scholarly journals, dissertations and theses, biographical books on Nelly Don, and books about society, culture, women, and fashion history, as well as some relevant websites were also used to answer the research questions and support the thesis.

As McDowell (2002) stated, the method of gathering evidence through interviews has been developed within the social sciences and is often used in historical research to enhance our interpretation of written records as well as aid our understanding of those events that have not been written about. Thus, oral history can be a method for obtaining information on working-class history, history of the family and communities, social relationships, neighborhoods, the lives of ordinary people, and their attitudes, beliefs, motives, experiences, and actions. Accordingly, three individuals were interviewed: one former employee of the DGC, the director of *Jackson County Historical Society*, and Nelly Don's great, great nephew, to gather information on Nelly Don, pink gingham apron frock, and her company, the DGC.

As mentioned earlier, the information on Nelly Don and the life of the middle-class American housewife in the early 20th century is scarce. Therefore, an extensive manual search

for the information was necessary. The records found from the sources described above were categorized into the following topics: overall social trends during the early 20th century, Nelly Don and her pink gingham apron frock, other housedresses and fashion trends, modernization of American household and society, and the emergence of consumption culture and its outcomes. As stated, an interpretive approach was employed to integrate the information and connect it into a structure, which then served as a basis for formulating a generalized conceptual framework (see Figure 1.3). This framework postulates that industrialization influenced the cultural, social, and political environment, and in turn women's fashion as well as their lifestyle. Specifically, industrialization modernized the American households and society, generating a consumption culture. In this context, Nelly Don's apron frock reflected current cultural, social, and fashion trends in this transformative period. It also served as a material culture example illustrating the shifting role of the middle-class American housewife from producer to consumer.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework for interpretation of the success of the 1916 housedress created by Nelly Don



CHAPTER 2 - 1916 Pink Gingham Apron Frock and Housedress

Nelly Don and her Pink Gingham Apron Frock

This chapter presents background information on Nelly Don, including biographical information, the establishment of her ready-to-wear manufacturing business through the early and mid 20th century, and her business ethos. The 1916 pink gingham apron frock is analyzed, the housedress and its roles are defined, and housedress options of the time are presented. This background information provides a foundation to analyze and interpret the evidence as to why Nelly Don's house frock was so well-accepted and how it served as an example of the middle-class American housewife's shifting roles in the early 20th century.

Nelly Don

Born Ellen Quinlan on a farm in Parsons, Kansas, Nell Donnelly Reed (1889-1991) was the twelfth of thirteen children and the youngest of five daughters. Her father had emigrated from Ireland, hoping to find a better life in the United States. Nell received her education at a local Catholic convent and Parsons High School. While she attended Parsons Business College, she learned stenography. At age 16, she moved on her own to Kansas City and took a job as a stenographer. While living at a boarding house in Kansas City, she met fellow resident and stenographer, 23 year-old Paul Donnelly. They were married in 1906 when Nell was seventeen. Soon after their marriage, Nell continued her education at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri, graduating in 1909 and returning home so that Paul and she could resettle in Kansas City (O'Malley, 2006).

Nell learned to sew from her mother and her oldest sister, and she excelled at it, never needing to use a pattern. She not only remade the dresses handed down from her older sisters, but she also sewed original dresses for her dolls when she was young. When Nelly Don became a house wife, she created a wide variety of tasteful housedresses for herself and for her family. She believed that housedresses should be as pretty and attractive as street clothes. As none of her friends could find such charming dresses, they often asked Nell to make dresses that they could purchase. It was Nell's friends who encouraged her to sell her dresses to local retailers (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006).

Finally, Nelly Don took two samples to *Peck's Dry Goods Company* (*George B. Peck Dry Goods Company*), a leading Kansas City dry goods store, located at 1044 Main Street in 1916 (see Figure 2.1) (O'Malley, 2006). It was previously the *Doggett Store Co*., which opened in Kansas City in 1866. George B. Peck, son of an affluent merchant and Detroit banker, came to Kansas City in 1889, bought stock in the *Doggett Store*, and took an active role in the management as director and vice-president. He bought out Doggett's interest in 1898, and the store name was changed to the *George B. Peck Dry Goods Company* in 1901 (Ray, 1970). Nelly Don received an instant order for 18 dozen dresses to be delivered in two months, so she hired two neighbor women, set up a workshop in the attic, and went to work. When she delivered them, *Peck's* sold all 216 pink gingham dresses the first morning (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Wilding, 1987) at $1 a piece. (No information was found regarding the second dress sample presented at *Peck's Dry Goods Company*). Based on the success of her early sales, Nelly Don founded the *Donnelly Garment Company* (DGC) with her first husband in 1919. Thus, the Nelly Don label was born. The company, eventually employing 1,000 people and making 5,000 dresses a day by 1929, became the largest women's ready-to-wear manufacturing company in the world by 1947. The dress making business thrived until it was sold in 1956. The name of the company was changed to Nelly Don Inc., and it finally closed in 1978 (O'Malley, 2006; White, 1984; Wilding, 1986). Figure 2.2 shows her picture; O'Malley stated in his book that it was the most famous photograph of Nelly Don as a young woman in 1926.

Figure 2.1 A photo of *Peck's Dry Goods Company* located on Main Street in Kansas City, Ca. 1913[3]

Figure 2.2 Photograph of Nelly Don, 1926[4]

[3] From "*Nelly Don: A Stitch in time,*" by T. M. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 23.

[4] From "*Nelly Don: A Stitch in time,*" by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 48.

The local garment manufacturing industry in the Kansas City area began to emerge in the late 19th century because of the availability of labor, its central location, and railroad accessibility. Moreover, the cost of living was lower in the Kansas City area than in the East, and because the manufacturers could pay lower wages, they could buy better fabrics. Another significant contribution Kansas City made to the apparel industry was in how clothing was constructed. Due to lack of skilled tailors, manufacturers in Kansas City area employed a piecemeal (assembly line) technique so that one person could work exclusively on one part of the garment, for example, on pockets or collars (White, 1984).

According to Wilson (in press), there was little growth in the Kansas City apparel manufacturing industry until brothers Samuel and Alfred Woolf moved their shirt manufacturing company from Leavenworth, Kansas, to Kansas City in 1879, utilizing its growing population and better transportation. During the 1880s, two of the largest dry goods stores, *Burnham-Hannna-Munger Dry Goods Company* and the *W.B. Dry Goods Company* manufactured duck (a strong, plain weave of linen or cotton) and denim work clothing that they distributed throughout Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico. Through the 1910s, Kansas City transitioned from custom-sewing for a small customer base to ready-to-wear clothing for a broad market, and by 1919 there were 1,090 employees manufacturing men's clothing and 422 manufacturing women's clothing, much of it work clothing.

The *Donnelly Garment Company* was one of the women's garment manufacturing companies in the Kansas City area that thrived in the early 20th century for many reasons. First, Nell was a leader who revolutionized the manufacturing process by adopting the piecemeal technique to garment construction as Ford applied it to his car manufacturing. L. Sheerer (personal communication, April 3, 2008) who worked at the DGC for 20 years, said that she was one of two supervisors in one of the many departments or sections, which included collars, hems, pockets, belts, underarms, pressing, shoulder pads, and so forth. Each section had about 25 girls and two supervisors. Supervisors were in charge of providing girls with the correct materials and supplies for their work, and keeping track of overall productivity. The piecemeal garment assembly method allowed seamstresses to become the masters of one sewing area, so that they did not have to know the whole process of manufacturing an entire garment, which was the traditional method continued to be used by other designer houses at the time (White, 1984).

Second, Nelly Don offered her customers quality, affordable clothes (O'Malley, 2006), striving to create a custom-made look at an ordinary price for the middle-class American woman. She never failed to know what women wanted or what would be popular. Nell's core concern was to offer her customers chic, good fitting, high quality, and affordable dresses. For instance, she offered dresses in various sizes to fit a wide range of women's figures (see Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 Nelly Don size chart for dresses[5]

Nelly Don Size Chart

Misses' Sizes

AVERAGE-TO-TALLER
LONGER WAISTED FIGURE

Size	Bust	Waist	Hips
8	34	24	35
10	35	25	36
12	36	26	37
14	37½	27½	38½
16	39	29	40
18	41	31	42
20	43	33	44

Donna Petites

SHORTER-TO-AVERAGE
TRIM WAISTED FIGURE

Size	Bust	Waist	Hips
8p	34½	24½	35½
10p	35½	25½	36½
12p	36½	26½	37½
14p	38	28	39
16p	39½	29½	40½
18p	41	31	42

Custom Half Sizes

SHORT WAISTED
FULL FIGURE

Size	Bust	Waist	Hips
10½	35	27	36
12½	36	28	37
14½	38	30	39
16½	40	32	41
18½	42	34	43
20½	44	36	45
22½	46	38	47
24½	48	40	49

Women's Sizes

TALL, LONG WAISTED
FULL FIGURE

Size	Bust	Waist	Hips
38	43	34	45
40	45	36	47
42	47	38	49
44	49	40	51

Nell constantly searched for fine fabric and fashionable styles, often purchasing artists' fabric prints that were then produced in bulk to ensure low garment costs (O'Malley, 2006). The fabrics Nelly Don used were tested for color fastness, quality, and durability (McMillen & Roberson, 2002). In addition to exclusive fabric prints, she offered her customers original dress designs. Nell kept pace with fashion change by studying new styles and getting ideas from Paris and Vienna (O'Malley, 2006).

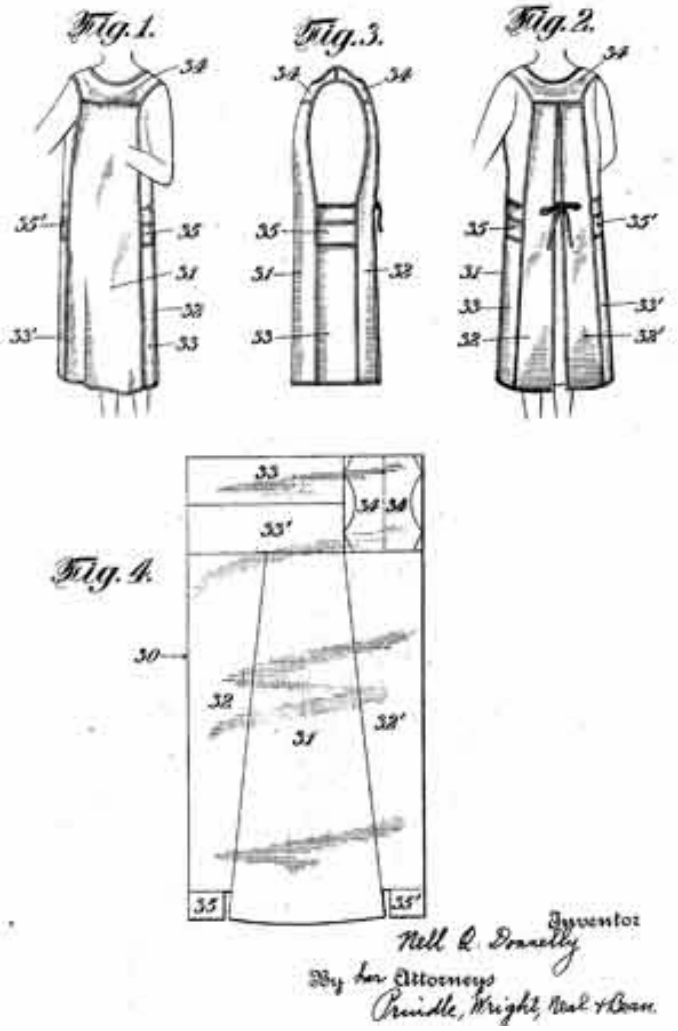
Third, she understood the power and necessity of marketing and used diverse media (i.e., a collection of circulars, radio, newspapers, pamphlets, miniature books, magazine articles, fashion dolls, and 16mm industrial films) for advertising Nelly Don dresses (O'Malley, 2006).

[5] From "*Nelly Don: A stitch in time,*" by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p.10.

Ultimately, Nelly Don believed that her success was due to her innovations as a factory planner, not to her ability in dress designing (Wilding, 1987).

Evidently, her entrepreneurial innovations paid off during the Depression. Nelly Don kept the factory open year round and employed many people thanks largely to her invention, the Handy Dandy Apron (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5). This domestic invention was designed to protect a woman's clothing in the kitchen and featured pockets that could hold utensils, oven mitts, and the like. But what set this design apart was its manufacturing because it was constructed without removing the garment from the machine during stitching, thus cutting down on production time and making it affordable. Consequently, millions of Handy Dandy Aprons were sold in floral prints, gingham checks, and stripes at a cost of $6.50 a dozen (O'Malley, 2006).

Figure 2.4 Handy Dandy Apron, patented Nov. 17, 1925[6]



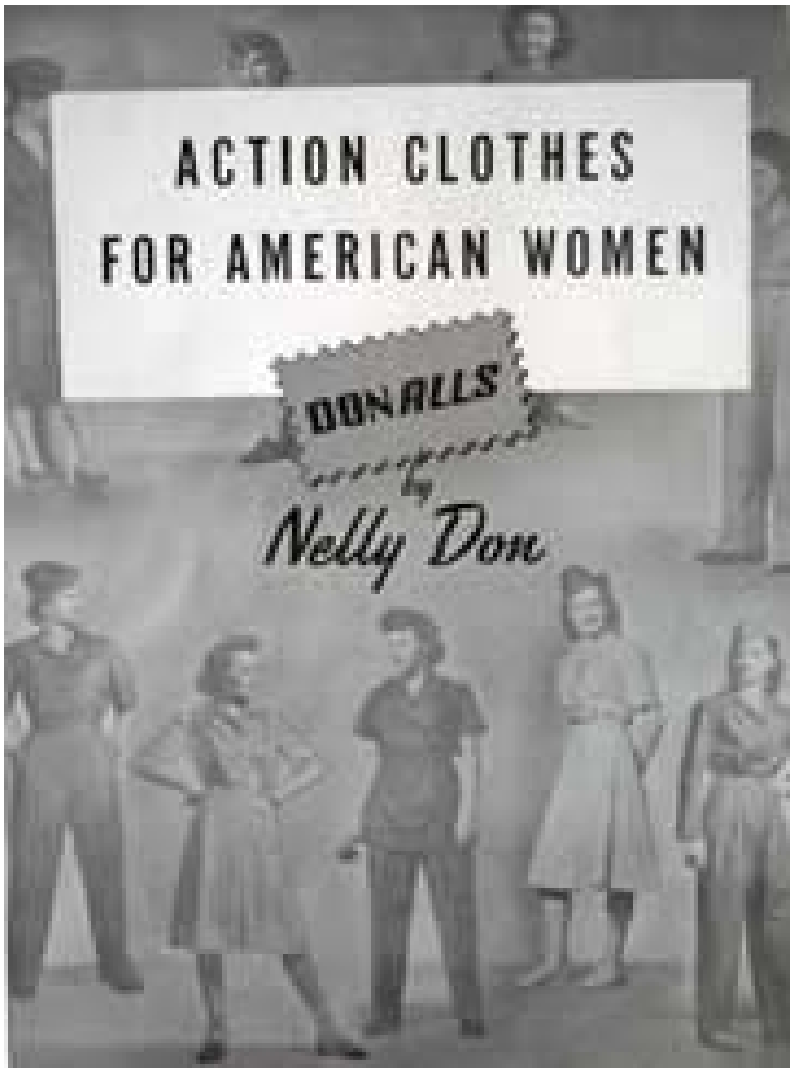
[6] Courtesy of *Historic Costume and Textile Museum* (HCTM) at Kansas State University.

Figure 2.5 Advertisement booklet advertising Handy Dandy Patented Apron[7]

Fourth, Nelly Don was responsive to the times as shown in the promotional press release written by B. Spilsbury, Nelly Don's director of public relations and fashion promotion. She wrote that Nelly Don received the army and navy "E" award in 1945 for "excellence in war production" for providing the army with comfortable and practical uniforms at economical prices for nurses and the army (B. Spilsbury, press release, January 3, 1952). Nelly Don's factory also produced functional uniforms for American service women and work uniforms for the women who replaced men in industrial jobs during WWII (see Figure 2.6) (O'Malley, 2006).

[7] From "*Nelly Don: A stitch in time,"* by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 48.

Figure 2.6 DonAlls by Nelly Don during WWII[8]



Finally, Nelly Don was considered to be both an altruistic and benevolent employer. She was among the first business leaders in any industry to provide (Wilding, 1987) good working conditions, competitive wages, employee medical services, and social and morale-building programs such as facilities for parties and entertainment, free coffee and donuts each morning, and free lemonade and snacks in the afternoon. Nelly Don also provided a grocery store and a cafeteria for a well-balanced and inexpensive diet (O'Malley, 2006; Wilding, 1987). She was the first in Kansas City to pay for group hospitalization benefits and life insurance, and she offered employees an unlimited number of tuition-paid night courses and scholarships for their children at local colleges (Snider, 1991).

[8] From "*Nelly Don: A Stitch in time,*" by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 71.

Pink Gingham Apron Frock

The pink gingham check apron frock (see Figure 1.1) examined in this study is in the custody of *Jackson County Historical Society* (JCHS), located in Independence, MO. M. Day (personal communication, January 4, 2011), curator at Kansas State University *Historic Costume and Textile Museum*, noted that the records from JCHS described it as "pink and white gingham Nelly Don frock, a representation of the original 1916 pattern that Nell Donnelly made her initial marketing debut to Peck's Department Store [Dry Goods Company] in downtown Kansas City, Missouri." Based on this description and other evidence to be presented in this section, the pink gingham apron frock was as close as possible to being a replica of the original dress pattern and its fabrics. In this study, the term 'pink gingham apron frock' is adopted to refer to the original housedress that Nell Donnelly created in 1916. This term was used for the exhibit "*Nelly Don: Dresses that worked for women*" at Kansas State University in 2007.

According to D. Jackson (personal communication, March 17, 2008), Director of Archives and Education at JCHS, the pink gingham apron frock was donated in 2002, by J. Flynn who died in 2007. The original owner of the dress was a woman by the name of Mrs. Swope. Flynn retrieved the dress from Mrs. Swope's basement after she died. Mrs. Swope was a former employee of the DGC, and it was assumed that she bought the pink gingham apron frock at a sales event offered only to the employees while she was working for the DGC. A paper tag stapled to the lower left inner sleeve of the dress contained the following hand-written notes: 1916, Nelly Don, $2.98 (see Figure 2.7). Presumably, the pink gingham check apron frock was reproduced to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary around 1940, and Mrs. Swope would have purchased it at the event.

Figure 2.7 Pink gingham apron frock, tag inside the sleeve[9]

The body of the frock is made of medium-weight pink-and-white gingham (see Figure 2.8) where the weave results in checked repeat, costing 6.5 cents a yard in 1916 (B. Spilsbury, press release, January 3, 1952). Watson (1907) defined gingham as yarn-dyed smooth, close cotton usually woven in checks or stripes. It was also woven of silk and cotton mixed or of silk and ramie. Historically, gingham was first manufactured in Gonghamp, France and known as Madras gingham. Elsewhere, seersucker gingham was originally a thin linen fabric made in the East Indies. Zephyr gingham, a soft fine variety of Scotch and French ginghams, is finer quality and heavier in weight. Picken (1999) also defined gingham as firm, light- or medium-weight, washable cotton fabric, yarn-dyed, in plain or fancy weave, which can be woven in solid colors, stripes, checks, or plaids. Due to gingham's practicality, it was used for house dresses, aprons, blouses, shirts, and children's clothes. Its use was well described in the ladies' magazines throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[9] Courtesy of *Jackson County Historical Society* (JCHS). Photograph by author on March 17, 2008.

Figure 2.8 Close-up image of pink gingham check apron frock[10]

In 1891, *Harper's Bazaar* printed a fashion column entitled "A gingham apron" featuring two gingham aprons for girls. The selection of gingham quality was noted: "The finer kinds of Scotch gingham that cost forty cents a yard are, of course, still more durable and handsomer, but we have mentioned the cheapest kind that is truly reliable. The fine checks, whether in the more or less expensive ginghams, are less likely to fade in washing than any others. The plain gingham without check or pattern is rarely a fast color below twenty-five cents a yard, but in as good quality as this has often a very beautiful surface" (p. 235).

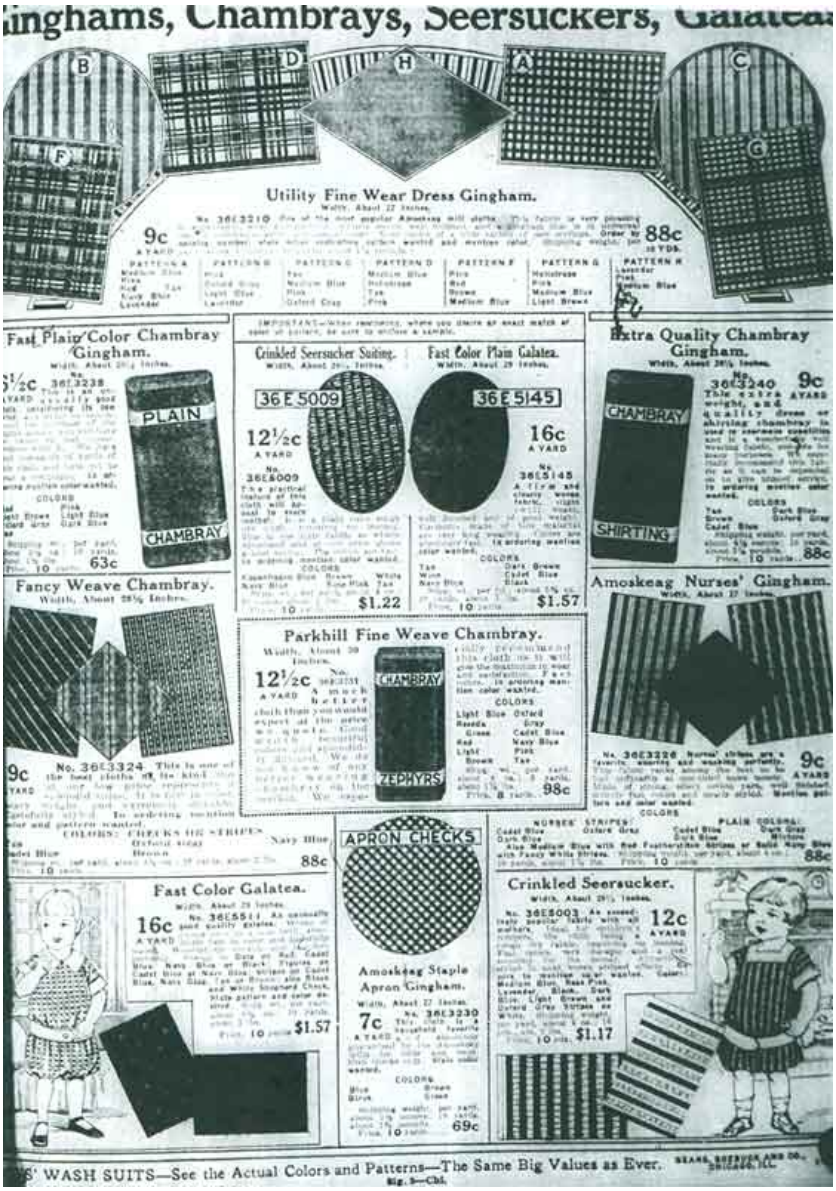
Two columns in a 1898 edition of *Harper's Bazaar* also described the quality and common use of gingham for women's informal wear, "Gingham aprons are invariably worn by a careful housekeeper when in the kitchen" ("Aprons," 1898, p. 294). "The new ginghams, beautiful in color, design, and texture, make charming house gowns, which are unlined and constructed in simple fashion so that they may be easily laundered" ("Dainty summer gowns," 1898, p. 295). Stan (1908) portrayed several dresses including afternoon costumes, evening gowns, corset cover, petticoat, children's dresses, as well as a house gown and studio apron in an article, "Our special patterns: Designed for good housekeeping." She recommended plaid gingham for an apron, and commented on the suitability of gingham fabric for a morning dress (house dress) by stating, "A light weight, striped percale, with white background, is pretty.

[10] Courtesy of JCHS. Photograph by author on March 17, 2008.

However, these soil easily, and darker goods such as ginghams will look well for a much longer time without laundering" (p. 72).

Mrs. Ralston (1912), designer of the dressmaking patterns in *Ladies' Home Journal* commented in a fashion article that "The practicality of the pink-and-white gingham dress shown below must appeal to the woman who does her own sewing and who must lessen the laundry work" (p. 30). Chambray, percale, or linen as well as gingham were recommended to make a house gown in an article "Practical costumes for the busy housewife" in *Good Housekeeping*, 1913. An ad for a misses' checked gingham dress advertised in *Sears* catalog in 1915 also noted the quality of gingham: "Material is excellent quality washable checked gingham" (Olian, 1995, p. 61). Figure 2.9 is an ad for a wide variety of fabrics including ginghams, chambrays, seersuckers, and galateas featured in *Sears*' 1915 fall/1916 spring catalog. There were five types of ginghams priced from 6.5 to 9 cents, including "Utility fine wear dress gingham" having eight varied patterns such as solid colors, stripes, checks, and plaids, "Fast plain color chambray gingham," "Extra quality chambray gingham," "Amoskeag Nurses' gingham," and "Amoskeag staple apron gingham" woven in a checked pattern (apron checks). Amoskeag was the textile mill in Manchester, N.H. that specialized in ginghams, cotton flannels, denims, sheeting, and ticking (Thompson, 1917). (The terms that are not described in the text are in the glossary, Appendix A.)

Figure 2.9 Yard goods offered in the *Sears* catalog, 1915 Fall/1916 Spring[11]



Based on the above information, we can assume that Nell Donnelly purchased a mid-quality, medium weight, cotton gingham fabric similar to "Amoskeag staple apron gingham" that was priced at 7 cents a yard or 69 cents per 10 yards. I was not allowed to extract a fiber from the pink gingham to analyze for content; however, fiber content for gingham in 1916 was presumed to be 100% cotton. Although Watson (1907) stated that ginghams can be woven of silk and cotton mixed or of silk and ramie, it is unlikely that gingham woven in these materials could be produced at as reasonable a price as 6.5 cents a yard.

[11] From *Sears* catalog, 1915 Fall/1916 Spring, #19, p. 35.

As shown in Figure 2.10, the 1916 pink gingham apron frock is an above ankle-length one-piece dress. Shaping was created through the waist yoke by controlling pleats in the bodice and skirt sections. The yoke is defined as the fitted portion of a garment, usually across the shoulders or on the waist, hips, collar, or necklines to which the rest of garment is sewn (Picken, 1999; Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003).

Figure 2.10 1916 pink gingham apron frock, modeled by Anna Ruth Donnelly, Paul Donnelly's sister, date unknown[12]

The dress has an empire waistline, kimono sleeves, and an asymmetrical front closure with five mother-of-pearl buttons. An empire waistline is defined as a high-waisted effect with a seam placed under bust, and was the predominant waistline placement from the late 18th century to the 1820s during the Empire and Directoire periods in France, and has been popular from time to time since then. The kimono sleeve has no armhole seams and is instead cut in one piece with the front and back bodices. The kimono sleeve originated with the Japanese traditional costume

[12] From "*Nelly Don: A stitch in time,"* by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 2.

kimono (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003). The asymmetrical front closure starts at the left shoulder and ends at the hip area allowing for ease of donning and doffing (see Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11 Asymmetrical front closure of pink gingham apron frock[13]

The ruffled trim, constructed from a woven fabric in a coordinating solid pale pink color, trims the neckline, sleeve bands, waist yoke, front closure, and the opening of the patch pocket. The ruffle (frill), a term used since the 16th century (Calasibetta and Tortora, 2003), is a strip of fabric, lace, or ribbon gathered along one edge and used to trim garment edges. The basic measurement of the pink gingham apron frock is as follows: bust, 33 inches; waist, 28 inches; sleeve length, 16.5 inches; and pocket, 3 inches by 5.5 inches. The hip measurement was full due to pleats at the waist yoke. The dress length, taken from the back nape of the neck to the hem, was approximately 46 inches, and the width of the waist yoke was about 1.65 inches.

There is no label except for the hand-written paper tag that was attached to the inside of the left sleeve as stated previously. There was extra ease, around 1 inch, at waist seams to let out by breaking the seams to allow for body size changes. The hem allowance is 2 inches, which is deeper than today's standard of a one-inch hem for ready-made dresses. Almost every seam allowance is bias-bound with a bias tape, in a pale pink color, and most likely cotton.

[13] Courtesy of JCHS. Photograph by author on March 17, 2008.

To summarize, the pink gingham apron frock was made from a cotton gingham check that was popular for house dresses and aprons in the early 20th century. In addition, style features included the empire waistline, waist yoke, kimono sleeve, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffled trim. These features will be analyzed and discussed further in Chapter 6 for their role in the success of the 1916 pink gingham apron frock. Meanwhile, the following sections define the house dress, discuss its role from work wear to informal wear, and present the available options around the time when Nelly Don created her 1916 pink gingham apron frock.

House Dress

Definition and Role of House Dress

Picken (1999) defined the house dress as suitable for morning wear at home, smartly made and trimmed, usually made of washable cotton fabric, and also called a "home" or "morning" dress; while Calasibetta and Tortora (2003) defined the house dress as an inexpensive dress made of washable fabric, worn while doing house work. S. Helvenston Gray (personal communication, January 6, 2011) stated that there were different definitions or versions for the house dress throughout history depending on the socio-economic class of women who wore them. The wealthy (upper-class) women who did not have to do house chores wore "morning dresses" that were very fancy, while middle-class women who had few or no domestic servants wore morning dresses that were washable and hid the dirt. She also noted that during the 19th century, house dresses were often called "wash dresses," referring to their ability to be washed, and at the turn of 19th century, the term "tub frocks" was used to refer to washability. The morning dress is also defined by Calasibetta and Tortora (2003) as, first, a formal daytime attire for men consisting of cutaway coat, ascot tie, and striped pants, and second, any dress suitable for wear in the morning for visiting, shopping, or at home as differentiated from a more formal afternoon dress in the 19th century, and third, a housedress of inexpensive fabric in the early 20th century.

The "Worth Basque house dress" (Figure 2.12) illustrated in 1871 *Harper's Bazaar* showed one option for a wealthy woman's house dress (morning dress). The dress comprised the "new Worth Basque" over-skirt and trained skirt trimmed with bows, flounces, and several tiers of ruffles. Two "winter house toilettes (formal attire)" shown in Figure 2.13 are further examples of fancy house dresses illustrated in 1889 *Harper's Bazaar*. The designs were quite elaborate with pleating, panels with bands of braid, wide ribbon bows, and borders of braid.

Figure 2.12 Worth Basque house dress trimmed with bows and ruffles, 1871[14]

[14] From *Harper's Bazaar*, January 7, 1871, *4* (1), p. 4.

Figure 2.13 Winter house toilettes ornamented with braids, bows, and pleats, 1889[15]

A house gown illustrated in 1903 *Good Housekeeping* (see Figure 2.14), is less elaborate than the house dresses representing the late 19th century (Figures 2.12 and 2.13), yet it would still be considered as a house dress worn by upper-or upper-middle class women due to its formal styling of the S-silhouette, floor length, and full bishop sleeves, as well as its fancy material use of veiling, matching laces, and coordinating chiffon scarf and belt.

[15] From *Harper's Bazaar*, January 5, 1889, *22* (1), p. 5.

Figure 2.14 House gown of pale gray veiling trimmed with lace dyed to match, 1903[16]

In this study, the house dress (or housedress, both terms used interchangeably) refers to an inexpensive work dress that was worn by middle-class women with few or no domestic servants when they did their house work. Dresses for house wear were also termed “house frock,” “house gowns,” “work apron,” “wrapper,” “porch dress,” or “bungalow apron” in magazines and catalogs of the time period. According to Calasibetta and Tortora (2003), the origin and usage of the term ‘frock’ is unclear, and it has at various times been applied to a woman’s undergarment, a priest’s gown, and a loose-fitting riding coat. In the 16th and 17th centuries, it was a general term for an informal gown; by the 19th century, it usually meant a

[16] From *Good Housekeeping*, February 1903, *36* (2), p. 187.

dress made of thin fabric; and in the 20th century, it generally referred to women's dresses as well as children's. According to O'Malley (2008), Nelly Don preferred to refer to her dresses as 'frocks;' for instance, the phrase "Nelly Don frocks worn by the ushers" was depicted in a newspaper ad in 1926 (p. 2), and "Nelly Don summer frocks [,] The Boston store" appeared in an advertising circular in 1929 (p. 4).

Typically, the "Mother Hubbard" was worn by the housewife (McMillan & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987) around the time Nelly Don created the 1916 pink gingham apron frock. Wilson and Newby (2004) and Calasibetta (1988) defined the Mother Hubbard as a loose-fitting, plain housedress or wrapper, usually fitted only at the square shoulder yoke, commonly worn by women doing heavy housework from the late 19th century through the 1910s. The term wrapper evolved from women's dressing gowns (worn in bed) to a house dress in the early 20th century (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003). Helvenston Gray (n.d.) stated that in the 1890s, the Mother Hubbard was multi-purpose: it was worn as a work dress or morning dress for relaxing at home, was suitable for aged women as well as for growing children, and served as a maternity dress due to its loose-fit. She noted that one of the first dictionary definitions of the Mother Hubbard describes it as a morning dress, which was synonymous with work dress for women who did not have help in running their households. The term "morning" was used since morning was the time when women completed their most demanding house works. She went on to note that by the 1890s, clothing catalogs and ladies' magazines like *The Delineator* illustrated Mother Hubbard dresses and other comfortable garments suitable for maternity wear.

In the 1910s, the Mother Hubbard was viewed as out-dated and used in advertising to promote the new and more fashionable maternity dresses. The following magazine articles from *Good Housekeeping* show this trend well.

> A comfortable house-gown into which the expectant mother can slip as quickly and as easily as into the old-fashioned Mother Hubbard has plaits in the front under which the gown may be enlarged at waist or bust. The belt may or may not be added, and the collar may be high or low ("Making a fashion: Comfort and style for the young mother," 1915, p.90) (see Figure 2.15).

Figure 2.15 A comfortable house gown for the expectant mother illustrated in *Good Housekeeping*, 1915[17]

There are many times when a young mother desires a thoroughly comfort-giving dress into which she can slip quickly in the morning, but is not reminiscent of the Mother Hubbard. The skirt of this gown preferably in a striped cotton material may or may not have the bands at the bottom. Under the bands, however, tucks should be run which can be let out easily. The skirt joins the blouse with a heading under which is the elastic belt. The deep collar is good looking and at the same time conceals the figure. Price. $ 15.50" ("Maternity frocks," 1915, p.106). See Figure 2.16.

[17] Form *Good Housekeeping*, January 1915, *60* (1), p. 90.

Figure 2.16 A maternity frock portrayed in Good Housekeeping, 1915[18]

Following are two examples of Mother Hubbard dresses that I examined at two university museums. The Mother Hubbard in Figure 2.17 is a loose fitting long dress made of cotton print cloth with red maple leaf motifs on a black background, while the Mother Hubbard in Figure 2.18 is full-length with gathers falling from a square yoke and made of a blue cotton calico print. The calico (or calico print) is defined as plain weave, cotton fabric printed with small distinctive figures such as flower patterns on one side. Originally, calico was a fine, expensive fabric from

[18] From *Good Housekeeping*, July 1915, *61* (1), p. 106.

the 18th century through the Civil War (1861-1865) (Calasibetta, 1988; Picken, 1999); however, by the last quarter of the 19th century, it became one of the cheapest fabrics due to technological innovations in textile printing (Kidwell & Christman, 1974).

From observation and personal conversations with N. Johnston-Blatz, the former assistant curator of the *Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection*, and M. Day at the Kansas State University *Historic Costume and Textile Museum*, the Mother Hubbard dresses in Figures 2.17 and 2.18 were home-made, probably by housewives.

Figure 2.17 Mother Hubbard, red maple leaf motifs on black background print dress, Ca. 1890s[19]

[19] Courtesy of *Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection* (MHCTC), purchased from the Internet. Photograph by Y.Whang on May 29, 2009.

Figure 2.18 Mother Hubbard, blue calico print dress, Ca. 1900s[20]

Despite its multi-functional role, the Mother Hubbard was considered a drab and unattractive garment in the early 20th century. Moreover, Nelly Don researchers (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987) claimed that the Mother Hubbard was typically a loose, ugly housedress that women wore at home. Its lack of appeal was also expressed in print; for example, Austin (1906) asked rhetorically in her article in *Good Housekeeping* "How many women abhor the loose ugliness of the wrapper and the dressing sack for wear about the house and long for a little frock that will combine comfort with neatness—that will allow freedom for the thousand and one morning home duties and yet preserve a trimness suitable for the garden or the veranda" (p. 186).

[20] Courtesy of HCTM at Kansas State University, gift of Mrs. Ruth Sanderson. 83.15.12. Photograph by M. Day

The 1918 *Sears* catalog did advertise a "Women's standard style Mother Hubbard wrapper," (p. 106) shown in Figure 2.19. This wrapper appears to be a loose-fitting, ankle-length dress made of cotton flannelette printed with all-over small dots, which looks comfortable yet is not as stylish as the modern house dresses.

Figure 2.19 Mother Hubbard wrapper of cotton flannelette in *Sears* catalog, 1918[21]

While the Mother Hubbard was multipurpose, nevertheless, there was a clear distinction between the housedress and dresses for other occasions (i.e., afternoon, party, evening, dance, graduation, street, sports, walking, etc.) in terms of style, fabric, and price based on research of

[21] From "Everyday Fashion 1909-1920: As pictured in Sears Catalog," by J. Olin (Ed.), 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 106.

mail-order catalogs and ladies' magazines. As expected, the fabrics used for the housedresses were usually more practical and inexpensive than those for other occasion dresses. (The terms for other occasion dresses are described in the glossary, Appendix A.) The fabrics most often used for the housedress were calico, gingham (plain, check or plaid), chambray, percale, poplin, linen, cotton crêpe, and so forth. In terms of style, the housedress had less decoration, a looser silhouette, and much simpler design elements than other occasion dresses.

In sum, there were different types of house dresses throughout history. Upper class women who had domestic servants wore a very fancy, elaborate version of at-home attire; whereas middle-class housewives with limited or no domestic help wore house dresses that were more practical in design and made from inexpensive fabrics that could be laundered easily and that hid the dirt. In the 19th century, the Mother Hubbard was worn as the middle-class housewives' work or maternity dress for its loose-fitting comfortable nature. The wrapper, evolved from a bed gown, was also worn for house work due to its comfortable and practical one-piece dress feature. However, in the early 20th century, the Mother Hubbard and wrapper appeared less and less and were considered old-fashioned. For this study, the term house dress refers to an inexpensive dress that was worn by middle-class women when they did their house work. Other occasion dresses were worn for shopping, walking, sports activity, and formal events in public.

The next section of the chapter presents housedress options between 1911 and 1916 from the clothing and general mail-order catalogs, department store advertisements, dressmaking patterns from the ladies' magazines, and extant physical artifacts. Understanding what housedress options were available to the middle-class consumer provides a foundation to compare Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock.

Housedress Options

Several researchers and newspaper reporters (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987) maintained that the only housedress option available when Nelly Don created her housedress in 1916 was the Mother Hubbard, a shapeless, dull colored-dress that could be purchased at the dry goods store for 69 cents ($13.49 in today's market place, Inflator, n.d.). However, my research found a variety of housedresses available through mail-order catalogs (general and clothing specialty), department stores, and also through advertising in ladies' magazines such as *The Delineator*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Harper's Bazar*. These

housedresses rarely looked like the shapeless Mother Hubbard. Hence, there were available housedress options other than the Mother Hubbard style of dress when Nelly Don created her housedress in 1916. In fact, the design of the house dress (work, or wash dress) progressed from the loose-fitting silhouette of the Mother Hubbard to a more fitted and fashionable style. The "kitchen apron" in Figure 2.20 depicts the old style of loose and unfitted house wear.

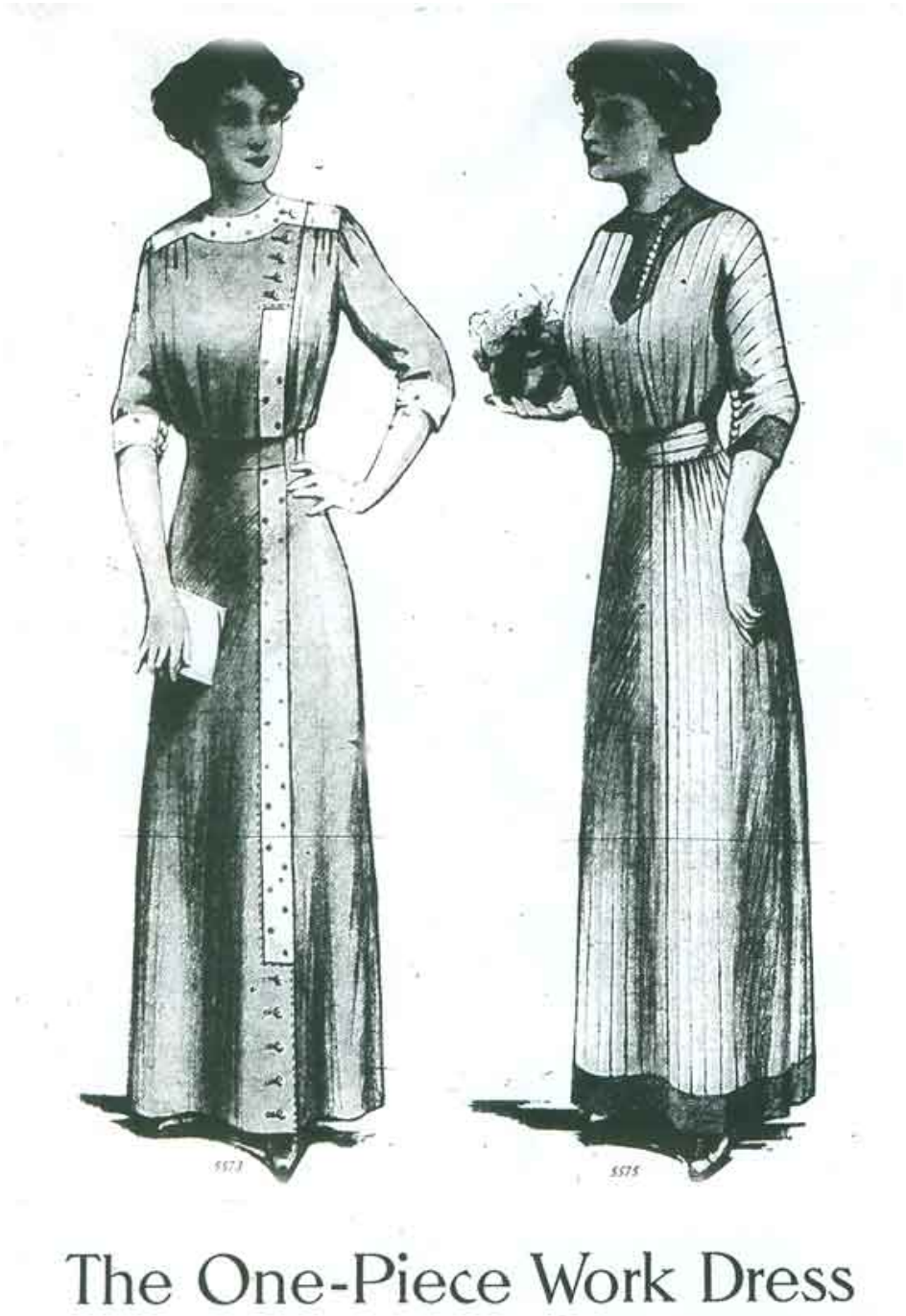
Figure 2.20 Kitchen apron sewing pattern with seamless round yoke in Good Housekeeping, 1908[22]

To create a more fitted style, the fullness of the housedress was controlled by darts, gathers, and plaits (pleats) stitched into a waist band or a waist seam. There were decorative elements of trims, buttons, and contrasting fabrics on the collars, cuffs, and faced openings. The

[22] From *Good Housekeeping*, October 1908, *47* (4), p. 427.

length of the housedress appears shorter, which probably followed the trend of the time. An article from *Ladies' Home Journal* depicted this progress well ("One-piece work dress," 1910). Mrs. Ralston, designer of the dressmaking patterns for this article, maintained that "a work dress for the housewife must first be comfortable, second, easy to get into, and there is no reason why it should not be pretty and becoming as well" (p.34). She also claimed that there was a steadily growing trend to replace loose, ugly wrappers that women had worn around their homes, with a neat dress. The illustrations in Figure 2.21 are for two home sewing patterns promoted in this article. Both dresses are shaped with gathers stitched into the waist band, and contrasting fabrics are used on the neckline yoke and cuffs of the sleeves. The dress on the left has Gibson shoulders (referring to leg-of-mutton sleeves and a wide shoulder) and an asymmetrical front closure, and the dress on the right is cut with kimono sleeve and also has an asymmetrical front closure.

Figure 2.21 Sewing patterns of “smartly shaped” housedresses, 1910[23]



The following two housedresses (see Figures 2.22 and 2.23) are home-sewn housedresses (made in the 1910s) that were examined and which have examples of the evolutionary design features (increased fit and decorative features). The dress in Figure 2.22 is a semi-fitted

[23] From *Ladies Home Journal*, September 15th 1910, p. 34.

housedress made in a brown and off-white calico print. The bodice has a buttoned center front closure that then extends at the waistband to create a wrapped skirt. Fullness is controlled with pleats at the shoulder seam and gathers at the waist band. The housedress in Figure 2.23 is also semi-fitted in a calico with beige prints on an off-white background. The fullness is controlled with pleats stitched into the waist yoke and the shoulder seam. The neckline and cuff edges are trimmed with rickrack.

Figure 2.22 A semi-fitted brown and off-white calico print housedress, Ca. 1910s[24]

[24] Courtesy of the *Kansas City Museum* in Kansas City, MO, gift of Marie Schremmer. 1979.25.4. Photograph by Y. Whang on June 20, 2009.

Figure 2.23 A semi-fitted beige and off-white calico print housedress, Ca. 1910s[25]

Sears catalog in 1914 advertised housedresses priced from 89 cents to $1.79 depending on the quality of fabric and complexity of design (see Figure 2.24). The housedresses were made from fabrics such as washable percale, cotton serge, chambray, or flannelette. All of the styles were fitted through the waist with gathers or pleats, and several appear to have a slightly higher waistline, with style No. 31T7040 described as "slightly high waisted." Decorative features included piping, rickrack braid, embroidered trim, pearl buttons, and contrasting fabrics. Fashionable style features included Gibson shoulders (style Nos. 31T7000 and 7005), "latest drop shoulder effect" (style Nos. 31T7010, 7020, and 7040), and a skirt with a "two-tier effect now so popular" (style No. 31T7020). Indeed, three of the housedresses were described as "suitable for street or house wear" (style Nos. 31T7000, 7020, and 7040).

[25] Courtesy of the MHCTC, 2006.11.16. Photograph by Y. Whang, on May 29, 2009.

Figure 2.24 Homestead Brand housedresses in the *Sears* catalog, 1914[26]

[26] From "*Everyday Fashions 1909-1920: As Pictured in Sears Catalogs,*" by J. Olian (Ed.), 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 36.

Figures 2.25and 2.26 are various dresses as advertised in the 1915 catalog pages of the *Gimbel* and *B. Altman & Co*. department stores, which also show available house dress options with increased fit and decorative elements. Three models in Figure 2.25 were styled with various collar designs having “the conventional notched on with revers” (style No. K-5701), “the smart little collar with points” (style No. K-5702), and “the pretty collar” trimmed with bands of embroidered self-material (style No. K-5703). All four dresses had short sleeves finished with cuffs and trimmed either with self-material with contrasting or matching colored fabrics. Fashionable style features including the “easily fitted waist, neatly gathered into the raised waistline of the skirt,” and the skirt of “the new flare” are applied to all four models advertised in this page.

The model K-5700 in Figure 2.25 was named a “morning dress of striped gingham” and described thus: “Though conventional in style, this smart little porch or morning dress is tailored according to the standard demanded by the Gimbel organization for its customers.” Decorative features for this dress included the following: "material outlining the neck and forming a wide band down the front in colored gingham to match the stripes, piped with contrasting color,” and “the large buttons that are used to close serve as a trimming.” Meanwhile, “fine chambray for home wear” (style No. K-5701) has decorative features including “a waved hair line” stripe pattern showing most effectively “in the shoulder yoke, in the smart tailored belt and on the pocket,” and “neatly bound and finished with fancy slip-knot tie.” Next, the “marketing frock of fine blue chambray” (style No. K-5702) was described as a “women’s dress of most practical design.” Considering the description of “marketing,” and the design features, this dress does not look fancier than other designs of house dresses examined, so I assume that this dress can be worn for street wear and shopping as well as for house wear. “Large pearl buttons” for the closing also “serve as a trimming,” and the “large housekeeper’s pocket” that is placed at one side is decorative as well as functional. The model K-5703, “linene [linen] porch dress with embroidered bands,” is described as a “woman’s house dress in solid color that is sure to be a great favorite.” These dresses were priced from $1 to $2.

Figure 2.25 *Gimbel*'s practical housedresses, 1915[27]

[27] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 57.

Most models advertised in the 1915 *B. Altman &Co* (see Figure 2.26) catalog page were named a “morning dress” (style Nos. 1603, 1604, 1605, and 1606) except two models called “maid’s dress” (style No. 1601), and “tea apron ” (style No. 1602). They were made from chambray, piqué, lawn, linen, striped madras, and ramie and priced from $1 (style No. 1602, tea apron) to $ $3.95 (style No. 1606, ramie morning dress). As the dresses show in Figure 2.25, each had the fitted waist, gathered into the raised waistline (empire waistline), a flared hip yoke, and varied collar designs; also, some were embroidered (style Nos. 1603 and 1604). Models 1604 and 1606 had contrasting trimmings of “black velvet ribbon belt and tie.” Due to the price range of five morning dresses (style Nos. 1601, 1603, 1604, 1605, and 1606, priced from $ 2.25 to 3.95), and their fashionable style feature of ribbon tie (especially, style Nos. 1604 and 1606), they might not be practical or economical for house work. However, these styles were included in this study as house dress options for the middle-class housewife since the design features were similar to those implemented into house dresses.

Figure 2.26 *Altman*'s Morning frock and Maids' dresses, 1915[28]

[28] From "*Altman's Spring and Summer fashions catalog, 1915*" by Dover Publication's republication of B. Altman & Co catalog., 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 18.

The 1916 *Montgomery Ward Co.* catalog also carried housedresses, which were priced similar to those in the *Sears* catalog, from 85 cents to $1.98 (see Figure 2.27). The ad emphasized the value of the house dresses as "the price we quote, seldom buys a house dress of such style and material," and clarified they were made from checked gingham "of splendid quality, that wears and washes beautifully;" (style No. 36D8541, priced for $1.25) also, the ad wrote of a "very attractive house dress. Made of serviceable checked gingham, a material that is noteworthy for its durability" (style No. 36D8561, priced for 85 cents), and as "a very reasonably priced house dress was made of excellent quality striped gingham" (style No. 36D8551, priced for 89 cents). Checked or striped gingham's serviceable qualities of washability and durability were clearly emphasized.

One model was described as a "lovely house dress which is really sufficiently elaborate for a porch or street wear," which was made of "good quality of chambray, a fabric that wears and launders splendidly" (style No. 36D8547). All seven models had the fitted waist, gathered into the slightly raised waistline like the styles advertised in *Gimbel* and *B. Altman & Co.* catalogs; five models had a waist yoke (style Nos. 36D8541, -8547, -8555, -8565, and -8569). Fashionable or decorative style features included gored skirt of ample fullness with lapped fold down center front (all models); deep collars either decorated with embroidery (style Nos. 36D8547, and 36D8565), a bias piping (style No. 36D8575), or piped with contrasted color fabrics (style Nos. 36D8541, 36D8551); "the coat effect" design (style No. 36D8569); and three-quarter length sleeves with cuffs of self-material or contrasting fabrics. Other decorative features included "white cord embroidery ornaments" applied to the waist and pocket area of the dress (style No. 36D8555), "white embroidered scallops" trimming the waist front of the dress (style No. 36D8561), and "the bias yoke" of striped pattern set on with solid piping in the chest area of the dress (style No. 36D8551).

Figure 2.27 Housedresses, *Montgomery Ward Co*., Spring/Summer 1916[29]

[29] *Montgomery Ward Co*. 1916 Spring/Summer catalog, p. 110.

Although it is not feasible to present all styles of house dresses available, the dresses illustrated are considered to be representative of the period examined. Despite some scholars' claim that the only available house dress option around 1916 was the 69-cent ugly, shapeless Mother Hubbard, there was consumer demand and supply of alternative ready-made housedresses. The old-fashioned Mother Hubbard and wrapper that evolved from the bed robe was not popular between 1911 and 1916, and styles of house dresses progressed from loose fitting styles to those with an increased fit at the waistline or waist yoke and fashionable style features. Clearly, catalog offerings, extant housedresses, and dressmaking patterns gave the American middle-class housewife a range of housedress options. The examples indicate that decorative and fashionable style features, regardless of whether they were reasonably-priced in cotton gingham or chambray, or better quality dresses in linen or ramie, were appearing in the housedress design. The fashionable and decorative style features included Gibson shoulders, fitted waist controlled by gathers, pleats, or yoke, waist yoke, gore skirt, flared skirt full at lower portion, lapped fold down the center front, three-quarter length sleeves with self-material or contrasting fabric cuffs, piping, pearl buttons, and so forth. Despite the availability of other options of house dresses at the time, Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock sold sensationally, which invites analysis as to why it was so popular.

The next chapter expands the inquiry by researching women's lives and fashion in the early 20th century, a dynamic period known for major changes for women and fashion. Such analysis provides a context for understanding how Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock served as a material culture example of women's shifting role of the time.

CHAPTER 3 - Women's Lives and Fashion Shaped by the Cultural, Social, and Political Environment of the Early 20th Century

Women's Lives and Values

America saw drastic changes in women's roles and lives influenced by cultural and social climate changes caused by the technology-driven industrialization of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rapid industrialization transformed the U.S.; a national railroad system was completed; agriculture was mechanized; the factory system developed; and cities expanded in size and numbers. Progressivism, a broadly based reform movement (in the period from roughly the 1890s to 1920) that reached its peak in the early 20th century, began in the cities and extended to state and national levels, and left as its legacy the development of the principles of government regulation of business. During this era, reformers were either government officials or dedicated men and women of middle-class background who advocated a wide range of political, economic, and social reforms. For example, Jane Addams in Chicago and Lillian Wald in New York City moved into the slums and founded settlement houses, hoping to improve slum life. Other reformers created non-partisan leagues to defeat corrupt municipal governments. Some reform mayors were elected to improve city services and tenement housing codes and defend municipal ownership of public utilities. For example, Robert La Follete, governor of Wisconsin (1901-6), won from the legislature an anti-lobbying law targeted at large corporations, a state banking control measure, and a direct primary law. Some progress was made to curtail trusts during Theodore Roosevelt's administration, and Woodrow Wilson supported many progressive measures including the reform of the currency system, the expansion of government regulation of big corporate, and the restriction of child labor ("Progressive Era in America," n.d.).

Hill (2002) maintained that most historians considered the conference of women held in 1848, in rural western New York State the catalyst for the feminist movement for equal opportunities in education and employment, marital and property rights, dress reform, voluntary motherhood, and equal political rights. The American women's movement, however, faced many criticisms, hostilities, and social resistance mostly from the conservative groups of religious leaders, educators, medical experts, and government officials, supporting the old ideas of women's places as wives, homemakers, and mothers. The movement did not, to a certain extent,

fulfill its objectives until women became mobilized in the 1890s. This was clarified in a statement by Hill (2002):

> Mobility was another way in which the bicycle afforded women their first steps toward independence. The Victorian woman who rarely strayed beyond the confines of the home except for treks to market and church now explored horizons far and wide. Afternoon bicycle excursions into the country could provide young women and their beaus time and distance from the supervision of parents. For married women, enjoying some leisure time out of the kitchen on a weekend bicycle outing broke the patterns of Victorian domesticity" (p. 168-169).

Hill (2002) went on to state that "Indeed, the American woman's independence would not begin to evolve from the efforts of feminist advocacy groups, or the federal courts, or governmental legislation, but rather through social change inaugurated by technology in transportation" (p. 168). She also pointed out that their restrictive clothing was modified for bicycling; skirts were shortened into the "rainy daisy" versions, and divided skirts (bloomers) were publicly worn for bicycling and walking exercises by the more daring and independent-minded women. Finally, Hill (2002) mentioned that as much as the bicycle brought women self-confidence and independence, the automobile made a significant contribution to women's independence in the pre-WWI years, consequently prompting the special clothing for "motoring."

Under these circumstances, women were avidly following the "New Woman" who was portrayed as the symbol of freedom, individuality, and modernity; women began to appear in the public sphere more often than in previous years; women were willing to use their spare time to participate in various outdoor activities and women's clubs either for self-enhancement or for social and political causes (Steele, 1985). Some women believed in progress, the sustained upward movement of human race, so they were stepping out of their homes to change the environment by fighting for legislation to punish evildoers, and prevent future wrongdoing including child labor and sweat shops. Club women and settlement workers believed that they could upgrade the quality of life by cleaning house in local, state, and federal entities or agencies; women workers turned to unions and the National Women's Trade Union League to fight for better wages and working conditions. Housewives also found their households

changing; they were less and less expected to produce, and more and more depended on to consume (Schneider & Schneider, 1993).

Thus, while the lives of middle-class women in the 19th century tended to revolve around home life, modern women ventured into jobs, politics, and culture outside the domestic sphere. Regardless of the opposition to women's new roles by conservative forces as described earlier, American women were stepping outside their home into club work and volunteer services, into reform movements, into new work for pay, into politics and the marketplace. No longer confined to the private sphere, they used their social consciences in the public domain in the early 20th century (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Examination of these shifting lives of American women was indispensable in this study since it was one of the main influences on fashion at the time, providing the context for the birth of "modern fashion." Thus, modern fashion in this study refers to simplified clothing that is created to fit the natural figure in contrast to the body constricting S-shaped structure of garments from the Edwardian Period (1900-1909) (Ewing, 2001). The following statement by Ewing (2001) describes the emergence of modern fashion:

> About 1908 a new look as riveting as anything in the whole story of fashion began to transform the scene. It could be called the start of modern fashion because the concept upon which it was built has, in various ways, been basic to fashion ever since that time. This concept was the natural figure. For the first time in fashion history, with the partial exception of the brief Regency period vogue for straight shifts among the young and the *avant garde*, women were to acquire and retain an upright, unshackled stance, based on the way nature made them, instead of assuming an unnatural shape dictated by fashion's artifices" (p. 62).

Through the knowledge of what women of the time underwent and how they reacted and adapted to a different environment, it becomes clear what Nell Donnelly and her consumers might have experienced, felt, and valued at the time, eventually revealing the reasons for her successful marketing debut.

The New Woman

The "Gibson Girl," first envisioned and personified by the illustrator Charles Dana Gibson in 1890, was portrayed in the ladies' magazines as a "New Woman." Figure 3.1 shows the images of the Gibson Girl illustrated in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1902. This New Woman sported a shirtwaist and long skirt, which better allowed her to engage in various sports activities

(Hill, 2004). According to Calasibetta and Tortora (2003), the term "blouse," clothing for the upper part of the body, usually softer and less tailored than a shirt, was originally applied to a type of a shirt worn by the armed forces of the U.S. (e.g., an Army blouse, Navy middy blouse), and its use in reference to women's fashion was expanded when women's shirtwaists were introduced in the 1890s. However, this type of garment was more likely to be called a "waist" until the 1920s. Miller (1999) maintained that it became the first garment for women to be mass-produced, and catalogs carried many pages of shirtwaist styles and by 1900, New York City had 462 shirtwaist factories.

Figure 3.1 Depiction of the Gibson Girl. Illustrated by C.D. Gibson in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1902[30]

The New Woman, a type unique to the U.S., strengthened the body and her self-confidence by swimming, horseback riding, golf, and tennis. The bicycle liberated her from her corset, shortened her skirts, or clad her in bloomers (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Thus, she

[30] From "*As seen in Vogue*," by D. Hill, 2004, Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, p. 23.

abandoned her figure-altering heavy corsets, bustles, hoops, and petticoats, giving herself freedom to pursue public roles, express autonomy and individuality, and promoting a tendency to reject old-fashioned norms (Hill, 2004; "Clash of cultures in the 1910s and 1920s," n.d.).

She was contrasted with the "True Woman" of the 19th century about whom American males supposedly dreamed: innocent, helpless, morally strong but physically weak, and sacrificial (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Instead, the new woman became the role model of the times, and women strived to imitate her appearance and internalize her spirit (Hill, 2004; "Clash of cultures in the 1910s and 1920s," n.d.). Although the role of the full-fledged New Woman was reserved for a relatively few privileged women, the symbol of the New Woman reflected and generated new modes of conduct in society. Suburban housewives claimed their freedom to roam the countryside after the purchase of the family car; conservative clubwomen shared social concerns; factory girls demanded a measure of the New Woman's freedom in their spare time; and immigrant women from Eastern Europe participated in unions and woman suffrage (Schneider & Schneider, 1993).

In addition, the socially well-known women publicized in the mass media often acted as trendsetters of the era, which had an influence on American women's fashion sensibility (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). According to Brockman (1965), for instance, the trend toward functionalism in dress was provoked by Irene Castle (1893-1969) who was a ballroom dancer. Irene, married to her dancing partner, Vernon Castle, started many fashion fads including earlobe-length hair brushed off the forehead in loose waves, slashed hobble skirts, dancing shoes with ballet lace, and the Dutch cap (also called "Dutch bonnet") (Calasibetta, 1988) (see Figure 3.2). She endorsed fashion designs and sewing patterns through the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Butterick Pattern* ("Vernon and Irene Castle," n.d.), and also served as "style authority" for *Philipsborn*, a Chicago-based clothing mail-order house (Olian, 1995).

Figure 3.2 Irene Castle with her husband, Vernon Castle in 1915[31]

Change of Women's Lifestyle and Roles

As women's education improved, their role in the community became more respected, and as they entered into a variety of careers with subsequent independence and new ways of living, they demanded affordable and practical ready-to-wear clothing (Miller, 1999; Ewing, 2001). For instance, by 1920, more than 8 million women had joined the work force, many in new positions such as typists, telephone operators, or salesclerks; meanwhile, thousands of women went to college, one of them Nelly Don, and untold numbers participated in sports. Another million joined clubs; some clubs were simply social, but others campaigned for causes

[31] From "*The theory of fashion design,"* by H.L. Brockman, 1965, New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

of the period such as women's suffrage and fairer child labor laws (Kidwell & Christman, 1974; Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

According to Blanke (2002), Margaret Sanger hoped to free all women from the chains of reproduction that had limited female independence in generations past by providing birth control to working women, particularly the working poor. Additionally, the many committed women activists including Jane Adams, Florence Kelley, and Alice Paul, who worked in the settlement houses (a social and human service agency), expanded social reforms to child care, urban pollution, global peace, and consumer protection. Another instance of the New Woman's role in American society was the women's suffrage movement (a political effort to earn women's right to vote), directed by the National American Women's Suffrage Association and the National Women's Party, which created a growing awareness in American women of their unique situations. Jane Addams (1910) wrote an article, "Why women should vote" in the January issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, maintaining that women should be permitted to vote because their votes were needed concerning the many social and educational issues (p. 21).

Cross and Szostak (1995), and Cowan (1983) maintained that technology did not simply free women from household drudgery or open up new opportunities in the labor market. Labor-saving devices had not cut down the working hours of housewives, even if they changed how housewives spent their time on housekeeping. Equally, new machinery in factory and office did not simply balance the slight advantage of the male in physical strength and thus failed to provide women with equal opportunities for jobs. Sex-role stereotypes, to a certain extent, kept women's employment opportunities limited to a narrow range such as clerical work and retail sales jobs.

According to Cross and Szostak (1995), in the late 19th-century some working-class married women worked at textile mills; they sometimes worked in the carding rooms, for example, with their young children. Others, especially in large cities, could earn money by taking in laundry, or piece work such as assembling toys. And rural women often followed lives similar to those of pre-industrial housewives, not quite influenced by the industrial and consumer revolutions. While 50% of single American women in 1910 were in the labor force, only around 10% of married American women reported employment.

These lifestyle changes resulted in a demand for more casual, functional, and modern ready-to-wear clothing; the baroque opulence of shape and decoration of the Edwardian styles

was replaced with simpler, straighter, more columnar lines with much less decoration. The revival of the tubular, high waist silhouettes of the Directoire era (c. 1795-99) appeared as the empire line, which was suited to the new narrow lines (Ewing, 2001; Hill, 2004). Empire styles, favored by Empress Josephine during the French Empire period (1804-14), are marked by a high waistline, straight, loose skirt, tiny puff sleeves and low neckline (décolleté) (Picken, 1999; Calasibetta, 1988).

Meanwhile, contemporary fashion reports in the mass media, such as ladies' magazines, informed readers of the current Paris and New York City fashions, as well as advertised ready-to-wear garments. Advertising in the mass-media performed several roles, instilling in consumers a desire for fashion and modernity, promoting nationwide product availability, and serving as style guides for what to wear and how (Hill, 2004; Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Thus, American women became fashion sensitive. Behling (1979) noted that ostensibly women's fashions changed significantly during the first quarter of the 20th century, and just what kind of fashion emerged is addressed in the next section.

Women's Fashion

The connection between societal and fashion changes was most noticeable in the early 20th century (Ewing, 2001) when all fashions reflected the new spirit of the New Woman, and became more comfortable and practical, suitable for her more active participation in outdoor activities. These sports activities, such as bicycling, croquet, archery, swimming, canoeing, horseback riding, golf, and tennis, developed new styles of specialty costumes (Livoni, 1996). For instance, ladies' magazines frequently published fashion articles illustrating the new features of "motoring" costumes and instructing readers how to make them with materials appropriate for motoring.

American fashion styles also changed rapidly in this time period due to influence from Paris, which was the central source for fashion news and inspiration. As a result, American fashion frequently reflected the designs of the leading French designers, and the "copy of a Paris model" or "Paris model" was prevalent (Ewing, 2001). WWI (1914-1918) also made an impact on American fashion styles as much as did women's lifestyle changes and Paris fashion. Fashion in war time not only became simpler and more comfortable, catering to women who participated in all sorts of war effort or filled the vacant jobs left by men at war, but also showed a military influence in the cut and decoration of garments.

As Cunningham (2003) maintained, Americans in the early 20th century frequently sought to distinguish themselves by revealing their beliefs in liberty and democracy through their clothing. Americans' desire for decent clothing for everyone was realized through mass production, and manufacturers became good at producing large quantities of fabrics such as calico and denim to make functional clothes for the country's growing population (Kidwell & Christman, 1974).

Fashion Influenced by Life Style Change

Ads soon appeared addressing the fact that women drove cars and engaged in a variety of active sports such as horseback riding, bicycling, swimming, tennis, golf, hiking, mountain climbing, bobsledding, and such vigorous, competitive sports demanded changes in clothing fashion (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Figure 3.3, for example, advertised ready-to-wear sports suits in *Altman's* 1915 spring and summer catalog. All styles comprised a waist and a skirt made from cotton ratine, beach cloth, velvet corduroy, or handkerchief linen. The sports attires shown on this page look simple and casual, properly designed for active movement, yet feminine with decorative and fashionable features including pleats, big pockets, a skirt yoke, tucks, and a neck band trimmed with contrasting fabric.

Figure 3.3 Women's sports waists and skirts in *Altman*'s 1915 Spring/Summer catalog[32]

WOMEN'S WAISTS AND TAILORED COTTON SPORTS SKIRTS

Waist sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42 and 44 inches, bust measurement

Skirt sizes as follows: Waistbands, 28, 30 and 32 inches; lengths, 38 and 40 inches, with 4-inch basted hems

1221 Skirt, of striped beach cloth (cotton mixture), in tan shade; trimmed with pearl buttons, one tailored pocket, bias band round bottom of skirt $5.75

1221A Same model, in white cotton velvet corduroy 5.75

1222 Skirt, of white cotton cordelais; pointed yoke front, four-inch straight yoke back, pearl buttons at top . . 2.75

1223 Skirt, of beach cloth (cotton mixture), in tan color; finished in front with buttons, yoke from sides and back with tucks below 5.75

1223A Same model, in white ramie linen 5.75

1224 Skirt, of white cotton cordelais; finished with pocket, pearl buttons top and bottom of skirt 2.75

1224A Same model, in white ratine (cotton fabric) 4.75

1225 Tan Beach Cloth (cotton mixture), opened all way down front; fancy tab finished belt in back, finished with pearl buttons and two pockets $5.75

1301 Blouse, of handkerchief linen, in highly favored stripes, with convenient convertible collar; colors, blue and white, tan and white or pink and white 3.00

1302 Handkerchief Linen Blouse, with soft collar and cuffs of piqué and finished with a side pocket in white only 3.00

1303 Blouse, of fancy voile; convertible collar finished with military loops and buttons 3.50

1304 Smart Sports Blouse, of white linen, with convertible collar, featuring the new suspender effect 2.45

1305 Interesting Voile Model, in white or pale pink with the new half raglan sleeves; tucks afford front and back trimming, the high collar being finished at neck with a moiré bow 3.75

[32] From "*Altman's Spring and Summer fashions catalog, 1915,*" by Dover Publication's republication of B. Altman & Co catalog, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 10.

Women could also sew the new sportswear fashions as indicated in the dressmaking patterns for two sports dresses portrayed in the 1916 article, "In these twenty-six designs the new autumn clothes are depicted—all can be made at home" in *Ladies' Home Journal* (p. 88). They were one-piece styles that had a mid-calf length flared skirt and three-quarter length sleeves for easy movement. Fashionable features of contrasting solid or stripe fabric on the collar, cuffs, waist bands, and pocket, and an asymmetrical front closure are evident in these sports dresses.

Figure 3.4 Dressmaking patterns for sports dresses, 1916[33]

[33] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1916, p. 88.

A major invention in technology in the 1900's also prompted changes to clothing. Initially, the auto was a toy for the wealthy and used for auto racing as it was not affordable at a retail price of over $3,000 when the average weekly wage was $12 (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). However, in 1908, Henry Ford made the first Model T, which retailed for $850, a modest price for an automobile, but when mass production lowered the cost of Ford cars to $600 by 1912, middle-class Americans and the higher-paid working class were able to purchase them (Blake, 2002). An automobile costume (motoring clothes) was soon borne out of the need to protect automobile drivers and their passengers from the weather and dust from the unpaved roads. Dusters, goggles, and specially designed head gear such as the motor bonnet, a cap with a visor and face veil that could be tied around the fashionable hats of the day and adjusted to cover the head were within this category of costume (Russell, 1983; Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

An article entitled, "The handy summer dust-coat" by C. Perry in *Ladies' Home Journal* for June 1911 showed this trend well (p. 45). It portrayed several dressmaking patterns for dust-coats to be made of material such as taffeta, which sheds the dust well (Figure 3.5). The one on the left in Figure 3.5 looks quite fashionable with two layers of cape attached to the princess line of the double-breasted tailored coat.

Figure 3.5 Dust-coat dressmaking patterns, 1911[34]

Figure 3.6 shows an extant example of the duster (dust-coat) from 1915 made of either cotton or linen. Motoring accessories shown included a scarf, brim hat, goggles, and gloves. The coat was piped with contrasting solid fabric in the design lines, on the cuffs, and collar.

[34] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1911, p. 45.

Figure 3.6 Automobile costume, duster, Ca.1915[35]

The article titled, "When you go motoring" in *Ladies' Home Journal* for 1915 also illustrated dressmaking patterns recommended for motoring dresses and coats (p. 88). The fashion editors urged readers to wear proper motoring clothes that were tasteful as well as

[35] From "Survey *of Historic Costume*," by P. Tortora and K. Eubank, 1998, New York: Fairchild Publications, Figure 37 in the color plates.

functional. The article described what kinds of clothes were suitable, what kind of fabrics were the most appropriate for motoring togs if they were to be made, and what kinds of headgear would be suitable and still look chic. The article recommended non-crushable materials for the dresses including silk crepe, crepe de chine or silk and cotton blend in crepe, and non-crushable linen, or pongee, which they claimed, could stand pretty hard usage. For a topcoat, materials that were waterproof were strongly recommended. The standard for the modern car-driving woman actually appeared a decade or so prior to that article, foreshadowing the changing roles of women in magazines as early as the 1890s.

Fashion Influenced by Far-Eastern Cultures

Far-Eastern (Oriental) influences were acknowledged as one of the reasons for the style changes that were observed in women's clothing in the first two decades of the 20th century (Russell, 1983; Ewing, 2001). As described by Mears (2005), the Orient has been a source of inspiration for fashion designers since the 17th century, when the products of China, India, and Turkey were broadly seen in Western Europe. This trend reached a peak in the early 20th century, and the sources for "all things Oriental" ranged from sentimentalism for the legends of Persia and Arabia to the Paris debut of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1909 (p. 18).

This Russian dance company had a strong influence on the decorative and fine arts and on fashion with their revolutionary choreography, music, costume, and set designs by the Russian artist/costume designer Léon Bakst (1866-1924) (Behling, 1979). French couturiers, such as Paul Poiret (1879-1944) and Jeanne Paquin (1869-1936) were inspired directly by the Ballets Russes' performances, incorporating the vibrant color palette of Fauve artists such as Henri Matisse, as well as fantastic costume shapes and opulent decorative elements of Diaghilev's ballets (Mears, 2005). Figure 3.7 was a costume that Léon Bakst designed for the renowned male dancer Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950) to be worn for his role in *La Péri*. This piece showed Bakst's dramatic use of color and Oriental design lines (Behling, 1979; Mears, 2005), which probably inspired the creativity of French fashion designers.

Figure 3.7 Costume design for male dancer Nijinsky in *La Péri* by Léon Bakst, 1911[36]

The modern French designers' embracing of the construction components in East Asian garments was another phenomenon in 20th-century fashion design. The flowing Japanese kimono was one main source that was exported and adapted to the Western society after 1854 (Mears, 2005). Kimono styles became popular for leisurely, at-home wear and even for high fashion (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). For example, Paul Poiret, famous for his creation of a line that was quite revolutionary, banished the elaborately corseted and unnaturally curved 'S'-shaped figure, which prevailed during the Edwardian period (Ewing, 2001; Tortora & Eubank, 1998), integrating Oriental images including Japanese styles into his creations in a free and

[36] From"*Orientalism and opulence*" by P. Mears, 2005. In G. Buxbaum (Ed.), Icons of fashion: The 20th century (pp.18-19). Munich, Berlin, London, and New York: Prestel, p. 19.

artistic manner (Wolter, 2005). The "Sorbet" gown (Figure 3.8), created by Paul Poiret in 1913, is just one of many inventions that portrayed his design inclination very well: a slender, youthful oriental look. The dress is said to be the first couture dress designed for an uncorseted figure ("Poiret design," n.d.). As shown in the figure, the gown had kimono sleeves and an overskirt wired to give a "lampshade effect," ornamented with a contrasting pink sash for the waist. The "hobble skirt," narrower at the bottom than at the knee, as shown in this gown, was first introduced by Parisian designers in 1908, but popularized later (around 1912, 1913) by Paul Poiret (Hill, 2002).

Figure 3.8 "Sorbet" gown made of black and white silk satin with glass bead embroidery, designed by Paul Poiret, 1913[37]

[37] Courtesy of *Chicago History Museum*. From http://www.flickr.com/photos/chicagohistory/2522519157/in/set-72157605179637461O

Paul Poiret was an influential couturier of the time, and his Oriental inspired look including the kimono style and hobble skirt as seen in Figure 3.9, was a prevailing fashion trend in America in the 1910s (Picken, 1985). Marie Callot Gerber (1895-1937), French couturier, also created evening dresses and opera coats that were inspired by the drapery-like quality and loosely-cut sleeves of kimonos for the House of Callot Soeurs (Reeder, 2005). As American fashion was influenced by French designers and Paris fashion, it is not surprising that the Oriental trends appeared in American fashion. The following Alice Long (1914) article entitled, "what I see on the Fifth Avenue that I can make myself" demonstrated this trend well. She stated that "Paris says everything shall be in one piece, skirts, blouses and wraps; and what Paris says is as the laws of the Medes and Persians to the New York mondaine [sic]. So on Fifth Avenue one cannot walk a block without seeing some adaptation of this style… Really this season we are borrowing from almost every Oriental country and the effect is most picturesque: we adapted the Persian lampshade tunic and headdress, the Chinese colors and embroideries, kimono effects and collars from Japan and burnoose draperies from Arabia" (p. 24). She went on to mention that those styles from Paris could be copied easily and inexpensively, and portrayed some of the most effective models of this adaptation in her article. Examples of dressmaking patterns with the Oriental look are shown in Figures 3.9 and 3.10. Two dressmaking patterns in Figure 3.9 were from Alice Long's article mentioned above; the model on the left has a wrap loosely cut in the kimono style with a hobble skirt, and was described to be cut all in one piece; the other one on the right has a ruffled net pannier dancing frock cut with empire waistline, kimono sleeves, and a hobble skirt. The garment on the left in Figure 3.10 was described as a kimono blouse tunic style of dress top or tea jacket. This tea jacket was cut with an empire waistline trimmed with ruffles on the collar, waistline, and sleeves. The garment on the right is a simple A-line jacket with kimono sleeves, with the bottoms of the sleeves and bodice perhaps embroidered in scallops.

Figure 3.9 A wrap and a dancing frock for dressmaking patterns with a strong influence of the Oriental look, 1914[38]

[38] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1914, p. 24.

Figure 3.10 Illustrations of two Oriental inspired dressmaking patterns, 1915[39]

The following article presented in 1914 *Ladies' Home Journal* also manifested this fashion trend very well. Mrs. Ralston (1914), who was one of the fashion editors who wrote an article discussing fashion news, sewing patterns, and "Make-over" clothes for *Ladies' Home Journal*, wrote about the Oriental influence and portrayed some sewing patterns that reflected this influence in an article entitled, "Some new fashions that Paris promises for the summer." She pointed out the quality of the Eastern fashions, the clear Eastern influence on Paris fashion, and the reflection of this new influence on the clothes:

> The East and the Orient have undoubtedly had strong influence on the artist designers for some time past, and it is a noteworthy fact that most of the definite changes which have been introduced into the fashions have sprung from commonsense ideas representative of the Eastern fashions, and not from any mistaken exotic interpretation appealing only to

[39] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1915, p. 96.

> the creative imagination. The real merit of the fashions from the East lies in two fundamental points: their wonderful flowing quality of color and their undoubted comfort and freedom… The color of the East has dominated our fashions for the last two seasons, and this season Paris has found some clever new points in the freedom and solid comfort of the Eastern clothes which have been added to the new fashions. Tailored suits, gowns, blouses, in fact clothes for every purpose, have revealed this new influence in looseness of cut and in a glance undeniably Eastern in origin" (p. 38).

Fashion Influenced by War

World War I (1914-1918) accelerated this trend towards much more comfortable and practical garments as well. America enjoyed, for the moment, the economic benefit of manufacturing goods for the war, and the subsequent economic boom created an increase in mass consumption, and the casual clothing ready-to-wear industry in America expanded (Tortora & Eubank, 1998).

As women undertook all sorts of activities for the war effort, from volunteer work to full-time employment, filling vacancies left by men at war, they needed clothes that were not only affordable, but also comfortable and functional for work. Narrow skirts and fitted bodices disappeared, the hemlines got shorter, and military effects such as the jacket silhouette, big patch pockets, epaulets, military braid, and metallic buttons were incorporated into the new styles (Hill, 2004) (see Figure 3.11). The slightly raised waistline and a waist yoke (or band) was noticed in military style coats.

Figure 3.11 Women's suits of 1915 showing military influence in the cut of the jacket, epaulets, and patch pockets, 1915[40]

The *Home Pattern Company*'s 1914 catalog introduced the following styles with military effects in both long and short coats (see Figure 3.12). The coat on the left in Figure 3.12 had a military collar and silhouette, and the suit coat on the right was trimmed with military braid and the Directoire collar.

[40] From "Survey *of Historic Costume*," by P. Tortora and K. Eubank, 1998, New York: Fairchild Publications, p. 371.

Figure 3.12 Coats for dressmaking patterns showing military influence in the cut of coats and the trim of military braid, 1914[41]

Outfits having the military effects were portrayed in *Harper's Bazaar* for February 1915 (see Figure 3.13). The coat suit on the left designed by "Miss Philadelphia," P.N. Degerberg, was trimmed with military braid, and had a flared skirt peplum. On the right was a coat suit designed by Mrs. John C. Norris, which was described as built on the military line.

[41] From "*The Home Pattern Company 1914 fashions catalog*" by Home Pattern Company, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., p. 13.

Figure 3.13 Society women wearing a coat suit with military effects, 1915[42]

[42] Form *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1915, p. 35.

In sum, women's roles and lifestyle altered due to radical changes in the cultural, social, and political surroundings in the early 20th century, and women, whether they were working class, middle-class, or well-off, felt the rapid change. Progressivism, one of the outcomes of rapid industrialization, began in this era, and reformers who believed in equal rights, humanity, and democracy strived to eradicate the problems (caused by rapid industrialization) that occurred in urban areas, and furthermore fought for the overall improvement in the quality of life. Under these circumstances, the free-spirited New Woman who emerged in about the 1890s was symbolized as an independent, self-confident, individual human being. Women idolized the New Woman, and attempted to imitate her appearance and internalize her spirit. As a result, regardless of the opposition to women's new roles by conservative forces, women's lifestyle changed; women received more education, participated in sports and club activities, and claimed more freedom, which contrasted with the old-fashioned norm of women expected to be innocent, self-sacrificing, and fully engaged in housekeeping, child rearing, and helping their husbands. Housewives, eventually, focused on being consumers rather than producers as the result of mass production of ready-made goods and clothing. Nell Donnelly, a middle-class housewife who left home at age 16, worked as a stenographer, married, and went to college in 1906, surely epitomized the New Woman who utilized her sewing and designing talents to become one of the most successful woman entrepreneurs in the early 20th century.

The changes in women's lifestyle and roles brought about the emergence of modern fashion, which dispensed with the body-constricting S-figure and overly extravagant and giddy decorations and replaced them with casual attire such as sports and motoring costumes to cater to women who required more comfortable and practical clothing. Fashion style also was affected by the Oriental influence, and kimono styles became popular for both at-home and high fashion. Moreover, American fashion in general admired Paris fashion, and adopted the style of Paul Poiret who embraced the color, construction components, and design lines of East Asian traditional costumes. Another factor for style change in this era was WWI, which had tremendous influence on fashion. The skirt length became shorter, the circumference of the skirt hem wider, and the fit of the bodice looser. Fashion manufacturers soon provided comfortable clothing for women who participated in all sorts of war activities. Some civilian garments also showed the military influence with the military cut and big patch pocket, caplets, epaulets and metallic buttons.

The rise of an active and mobile women's lifestyle and WWI did more to shape the fashion industry than any intrinsic influence. Indeed, American women's fashion in the early 20th century began to transform into a modern form, reflecting contemporary cultural, social, and political context. Thus, inasmuch as fashion could be a tacit indication of social and cultural progress (Blanke, 2002), the housedress was an important marker serving to illustrate modernization; and in this study Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock provides a specific example. Notably, social and cultural changes in women's lifestyle did not happen by themselves but rather manifested a much broader change in society in general, one that has its roots in the modernization of the household, which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4 - Modernization of the Household and Society in the Early 20th Century

During the Progressive Era (1900-1920), women gradually became consumers as production of clothing and many foods moved out of the home (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). This transformation was realized as industrialized technology made a wide range of mass-produced goods accessible to the household. Wilhelm (2004) defined the term modern as "a society that is characterized by industrialization, democracy, capitalism, higher standard of living, and consumerism," and modernization as "… the process by which things become modern" (p. 1). Hence, the transformation of women's shifting roles in this era can be described as modernization. Berman (1988) described modernization in a broader sense: "To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promised us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are… it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish" (p. 15). He offered this extended definition:

> The maelstrom of modern life has been fed from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences;… the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new environments and destroys old one, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle;… systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies;… mass social movements of people, and peoples, challenging their political and economic rulers, striving to gain some control over their lives; finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market. In the twentieth century, the social processes that bring this maelstrom into being, and keep it in a state of perpetual becoming, have come to be called "modernization" (p. 16).

Women in the early 20th century went through this maelstrom of modern life borne by the full swing of industrialization; many women moved from farms or small towns to cities for jobs, with their husbands or alone; middle-and upper-class women moved from the single-family

houses of their youth into apartments equipped with balconies, porches, or other amenities; immigrant and working-class women and their families moved into the old, crowded, unsanitary tenements near the center of a city or around factories. Although the cities attracted Americans by the millions (the number of Americans in cities grew from 10 million to 54 million from 1870 to 1920, "Urbanization of America," n.d.), many of them went to suburban areas not only to avoid the crime and disease of the city streets, but also to have privacy, exclusivity, and quietness, without sacrificing city services and entertainments, which remained accessible by automobile, railroads, and trolleys (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Most wealthy merchants, lawyers, and manufacturers lived in nice townhouses within walking distance of the office, courts, warehouses, and shops in the center of the city; meanwhile, the poor lived in back alleys of the central city or in the suburbs, farther away from the economic and governmental centers, and the middle classes lived a little father from the center until the middle of the 19th century. However, in the early 20th century, industrialization transformed urban life such that city dwellers were no longer the wealthy, but the poor. Thus, society became urbanized, suburbanized, industrialized, and in a sense, modernized.

This chapter, in short, assesses how American households and society became modernized from roughly the middle of the 18th century to the early part of the 20th century, and how women's role was transformed from that of producers to consumers. Specifically, the focus is about how "domestic science," the new housekeeping movement, helped the middle-class housewife efficiently manage her housework, to what extent she engaged in her producing role in home dressmaking, and how her role was transformed into that of a purchasing agent by 1920. Hence, this chapter provides the context for a bridge to the subsequent chapters delving into the culture of consumption, the outlets of mass-produced goods, and evidence about how advertisement and fashion articles might have influenced the middle-class American housewife's fashion sensibility, predisposing her to purchase Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock. Although this study focuses on the period around the time Nelly Don's 1916 dress was created, it also overlaps that time by a decade or so since modernization did not occur at once, but developed gradually.

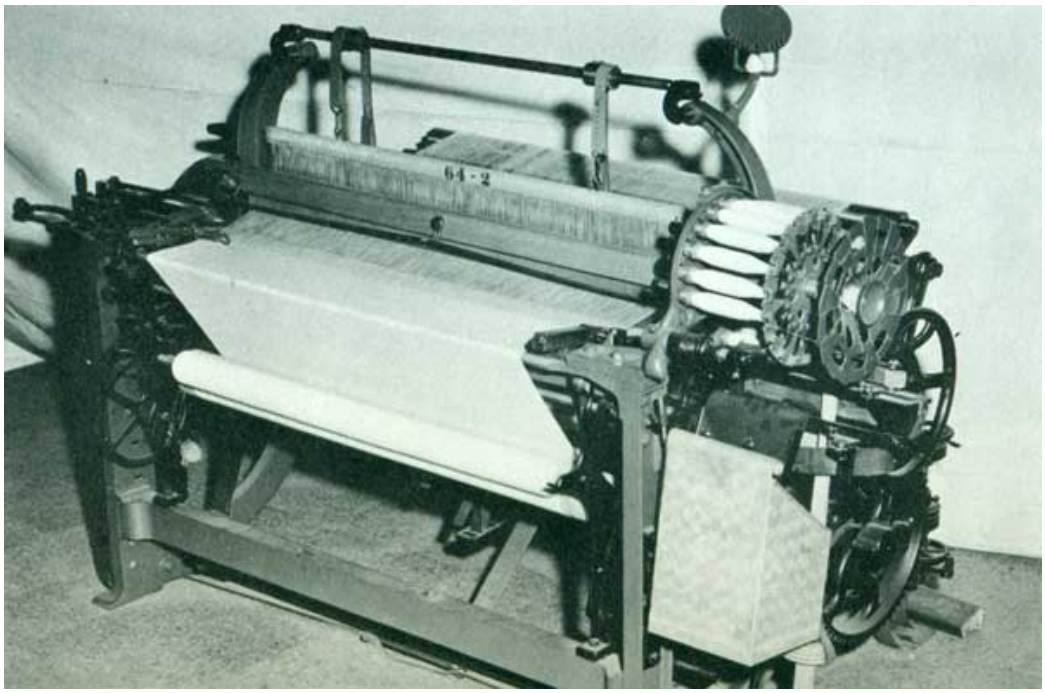
Emergence of an Industrial Society

As Callan (2006) described it, the industrial revolution began in Great Britain in the 18th century with three main discoveries. First, British scientists and engineers found a way to use

coal to produce iron from iron ore, which was used to build railroads, resulting in great improvement to transportation and commerce. The second discovery was the invention of the steam engine. The third discovery came in the textile business whereby with the invention of weaving and spinning machines, fabric could be produced at an incredible speed and in large quantities. The beginning of industrialization in the U.S. came in the late 18th century when American industries began to use British inventions. One of the first was the spinning jenny, invented by Englishman James Hargreaves around 1764. The machine boosted textile production by allowing workers to spin many different cotton threads at once.

Kidwell and Christman (1974) noted that there were 1,240 cotton mills and 1,420 woolen mills in the U.S. in 1840. One of the woolen companies, Middlesex Woolen Company at Lowell, MA, manufactured 135,000 yards of cashmere and 30,000 yards of cassinette (i.e., cotton warp and wool weft fabric). Consequently, Boston tailors were able to advertise that they carried not only a fashionable assortment of European goods, but that they also had arrangements with the Middlesex Woolen Company to be constantly provided with a variety of goods, all of which were equal in color to any imports, and would be sold at 20% less than imported goods of the same quality. Initially, the power loom had to be stopped every time the shuttle bobbins needed refilling until the 1890s, but with the invention of a mechanism that pushed a fresh bobbin into the shuttle when its weft was lowered, the fabric was produced faster; one weaver could then manage sixty or eighty plain looms and produce three or four hundred yards of fabric within an hour. In addition, the automatic filled bobbin charger, invented in 1891 by Englishman John Northrop, who had come to Massachusetts in 1880, was considered the single best achievement in textile machinery in its day; his mechanism automatically ejected the empty bobbin from the shuttle and replaced it with a full bobbin (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Northrop's automatic Bobbin-changing loom[43]



With these inventions, fabric was produced more rapidly. Woolens were also available in a great variety of patterns and in great quantities, and cottons were even more plentiful and variegated. Kidwell and Christman (1974) also noted that when women's ready-to-wear wrappers and housedresses were first accessible, the printing process had been accelerated to the point where calicos were produced with unprecedented speed and rolled off by the thousands of yards. Thus, what was one of the most extraordinary and expensive fabrics of the 18th century had become one of the cheapest by the last quarter of the 19th century.

Another important production process in the industrialization of the American economy was the assembly line, which was linked with the broad movement of scientific management. Cross and Szostak (1995) noted that although Henry Ford did not invent the assembly line, he took the principle of serial production and employed it in his Highland Park auto plant to produce Model Ts on a mass scale so that he could reduce the cost. Nelly Don also employed the assembly production principles to produce her ready-to-wear dresses more efficiently (O'Malley, 2006).

[43] From "*Suiting everyone: The democratization of clothing in America,*" by C.B. Kidwell and M.C. Christman, 1974, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, p. 69.

By 1900, America's population was about 76 million, and almost one-third of the population was either immigrants or children of immigrants. The U.S. enjoyed a rapidly growing population for an industrializing economy with annual immigration reaching peaks of around 800,000 in the early 1880s and in the1910s (Norris, 1990); immigrants in the early 19th century came to the US from England, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia, and were encouraged to settle in less populated areas by the U.S. government with land grants and sales. In the mid-19th century, immigration from China increased because of the availability of many jobs for building the western railroads and the gold rush in California in 1848 (Callan, 2006). Then, in the early 20th century, Italians, Jews, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans immigrated to the US, and many thousands of them headed for the big cities such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia where factory jobs were available, entered the needle trades, and provided man- and womanpower for the expanding clothing industry (Kidwell & Christman, 1974). Therefore, America's booming population fueled by mass immigration created a large work force for the new industries and a huge market for the new manufactured goods at the turn of the century. By 1860, the U.S. had more than half the railroad tracks in the world, and the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869. Thus, the US was becoming an industrial society (Callan, 2006) due to industrialization, urbanization, and immigration.

Domestic Science

To understand how industrialization affected housekeeping in the middle-class household requires discussion of the "domestic science" movement, which was one of the outcomes of industrialization. New housekeeping information about sanitation, medicine, nutrition, health, proper clothing, and many other areas affecting the well-being of families was prolific (Ogden, 1986). Frederick (1918) noted that specialists and experts in efficient housekeeping employed by magazines informed women about how to care for babies, prepare foods, economize, make clothing, and so forth. Brochures such as *Farmers' Bulletins* issued by the Department of Agriculture as well as advertisements disseminated information on the new housekeeping movement.

As Ogden (1986) described, pioneering women of the new century saw how new information, technology, science, efficiency, and new ways of thinking could be applied in the home in the same way men applied scientific methods to increase productivity at business and in

the factory. The result was new scientific approaches to domestic topics including cooking and cleaning, which resulted in a new kind of housewife—the domestic scientist.

The first educator to perceive the relevance of scientific principles to homemaking was Ellen Swallow Richards (1842-1911), the first female graduate and faculty member of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a founder of Home Economics in the U.S. who saw the need for scientific innovations to improve human well-being. In 1884, she was appointed instructor of sanitary chemistry at MIT, and she held the position for 27 years until her death in 1911. Although she did not earn her Ph.D., her rigorous research in food and water analysis placed her as a forerunner of the emerging public health movement. Richards believed that a housewife with scientific knowledge could defeat the dreariness of housekeeping, and she would control her work rather than be controlled by it. Scientific housekeeping developed by Richards was an outcome of the practical method combined with an inquiring attitude; she ran her own home as a laboratory for experimentation in plumbing, heating, and efficiency methods. In 1899, Richards initiated the first Home Economics conference in New York at Lake Placid. The overall idea of the conference—and of the new domestic science movement in general—was to free housewives from onerous housework so they might participate in significant activities with regard to social reform. Like Richards, Martha Bensley Bruére (1879-1953) lectured and wrote to influence modern educated American housewives to save time on housework by employing efficient scientific methods deriving from the new technology on housework and to find outlets for their energies in social causes such as good health, good schools, construction of good roads, and so forth in the community (Ogden, 1986).

Bruére (1914) stated that the new approach to housekeeping was a part of the larger feminist movement and insisted that “the demand to free [women] from housework is a battle in the great war of women for spiritual freedom” (p. 392). She maintained in her article titled “Twentieth century housekeeping” in *Good Housekeeping* that the good modern housekeeper of the time should see that housework was approached however it could be done to the best advantage. She also said that the modern housekeeper should try to use new scientific methods to serve modern demands, not outdated approaches, and that the home should not be a place where the housekeeper was only to serve, but where a human invention to serve her and her people. She made an example of Mrs. Trevor, a school teacher and an exemplary modern housekeeper. Mrs. Trevor hired a chambermaid, an employee of the apartment-house where she lived, for house-

cleaning and washing dishes, a tailor for making and mending clothes, and a representative of a house-cleaning company for cleaning the windows once a week. Bruére visited the Trevors, saw this system in operation and witnessed its effectiveness. She concluded that Mrs. Trevor was an extremely good housekeeper. Although she didn't cook, wash, mend, sew, sweep, scrub, dust, and mince meat, she ran her little home as effectively as a business. Another example of a good housekeeper whom Bruére introduced in the article was Mrs. Frazier, a farmer's wife and a trained nurse before she married, who devoted much time to the school system. Bruére wondered how she managed her housework and so visited her home. She found out that Mrs. Frazier could generate much free time by using proper devices wisely such as the dumb-waiter, double-boiler, alcohol stove, and fireless cooker. For example, she installed the dumb-waiter and pulled it up from the cellar through the cupboard door to take the ingredients for cooking, and used the alcohol-stove for short meals. She washed a dish only once a day, never made bread, cookies, cakes, and pies, except for a few hot biscuits; instead they were delivered from the village three times a week. All the washing was sent down to the village laundry. Most of the family clothing was purchased through mail-order houses, and the rest was made in the village. Thus, there was enough time left for Mrs. Frazier to work for the school system.

Bruére (1914) pointed out that these two exemplary housekeepers made an effort to save time not by getting servants to do the work for them, but by being able to turn the work over to business organizations. She also stated that housework could be reduced with simplification, elimination, and suitable use of labor-saving devices. The following foreword that she wrote for this article echoed her philosophy on the new modern housekeeping well:

> We housewives must subordinate the work of keeping house to the business of living. We leave all of Commerce and Manufacture, Business and Agriculture for our servants—why not put our housework into their hands? It is time we stopped making housework an excuse for hiding in the house—time we came out into the open and did the grown women's job of seeing that all the race is well born, well fed, well trained, and happy. To do this we must learn to work together to socialize housekeeping, as men are learning to work together to socialize business, and it will be a great shame to us if we let love of ease, or ignorance, or needless work keep us from standing shoulder to shoulder with our men in their fight to create the world anew (Bruére, 1914, p. 387).

Mrs. Christine Frederick (1883-1974), a domestic scientist, was also one of the forerunners who encouraged housewives to apply scientific methods to housekeeping. However, although Bruére and Frederick advocated efficiency principles with equal passion, they differed in their motivation. Bruére wanted women to work efficiently in the home so they could get out and work for society, but Frederick's idea was that most housekeepers, especially middle-class housewives, were too busy to do all the housework and too poor to hire help. Therefore, housewives should employ scientific approaches to get their housework done efficiently in order to have time for themselves (Ogden, 1986). According to Frederick (1918), only one family in ten employed regular household help, and the quality of such help was a subject for constant complaint, particularly among those middle-class housewives who could only afford to employ the inexperienced.

Initially, Frederick (1918) became acquainted with several men through her husband's work with industrial efficiency, and learned what the new science of work was accomplishing for the office, the shop, and the factory. Then she realized that methods that applied to organized industries could also apply to home. Consequently, Frederick (1918) stated that housewives should do housework the same way men undertook work with zest in the business and industrial world. Although she was discouraged at first, due to the distractions caused by small children and daily schedules, she began to see definite results of developing an attitude of efficiency and later of prioritizing household problems.

When new service oriented jobs and jobs at factories became available at the time, it was almost impossible for middle-class women to hire domestic servants since working class women were much more eager to work at a "public job" than work in an isolated home. This trend was well discussed in the article titled "Suppose our servants didn't live with us" written by Frederick (1914, p. 102). She stated that various investigators summarized why girls did not like domestic service: other jobs had more standardized work; housework was hard and lonely; workers could be better dressed in other jobs; workers had little chance for promotion; workers had no motivation to do work better; they had no freedom in the evenings and on Sundays; and they suffered unsuitable rooms and food. Mrs. Frederick addressed the objections by recommending that mistresses make their homes more standardized, organized, and offer commuting so that employees could work regular hours like a factory worker, telephone girl, or shop girl.

Frederick (1918) broke down all segments of housework into specific tasks, analyzed them in terms of efficiency, and standardized them. She urged women not only to apply standard practice and proper motions to household tasks, but also to plan a daily and a weekly schedule for such household tasks as dishwashing, ironing, cleaning, laundering, special seasonal work like canning, and so forth to reduce time and energy, and thus to improve efficiency. For instance, she recommended the efficient placement of the kitchen sink and of kitchen tools, and the proper height of the sink and ironing board for a woman's height. Under her direction, the white-enamel kitchen became a control station in which the household engineer, wearing white clothes in keeping with the symbolism of cleanliness, guided her undertaking (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Mrs. Frederick at the Preparing Table in the kitchen of the Applecroft Experiment Station[44]

Through her attention to detail, she gained credit throughout the nation for elevating housework from the status of labor to that of management. She seemed to have solved the problem that had afflicted housewives through the ages: how to eliminate the toil of housework. Those in the domestic-science movement applied techniques and systems from industry and business to the management of the home. They hoped to reorganize housework, and thus put housewives in control of their sphere of interest as a business manager would be (Ogden, 1986).

[44] From "*The new housekeeping: Efficiency studies in home management,*" by C. Frederick, 1918, New York: Doubleday, Page, Co.

One can assume that Nelly Don was aware of what was going on in society and the new homemaking trends at the time. She would have had access to information for organizing her home in a proficient manner by utilizing service industries and labor-saving devices, thus enabling her to spend time making pretty clothes for herself, her family, relatives, and neighbors prior to the establishment of the DGC. She did not have a child at the time, so she could have spent most of her energy on housekeeping and dressmaking. She perhaps noticed with her fashion sensibility, excellent management skills, and pioneering mind that it was the right time for her to expand her dressmaking skills to clothe average women in her affordable, functional, yet attractive dresses.

With industrialization in full swing and the development of domestic science, not only did women's role in housekeeping change, but so did their role in society. As mentioned previously, since modernization is dynamic, it is considered a process rather than a state. An example is the general procedure by which the traditional agrarian society transformed into an industrial society based on trade and industry, and the unrelenting continuity of this progression (Carlton & Andras, 2003). Through this progression, a fundamental change in how the family operated took place in households consisting of more than simply making housekeeping more efficient.

Women's Role Change from Producer to Consumer

Cross and Szostak (1995) maintain that industrialization had a huge effect on women at work both in the home and in the work force. Before industrialization, the family was the core social unit. Most American families were rural, large, and self-sustaining; they produced and processed almost everything that was needed for their own support and for bartering in the marketplace. In these pre-industrial households, women spent a great deal of their time on household tasks such as spinning and weaving cloth, tending garden and poultry, and making clothes, whereas, industrial housewives could purchase these items as a result of the widespread availability of mass-produced commodities and ready-made garments (Cowan, 1983; Connolly, 1994; Cross & Szostak, 1995). During industrialization, production of necessities moved out of the household, and families became smaller and more urban than rural; Americans moved from countryside to cities for factory or office jobs (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). Five percent of Americans lived in urban areas before industrialization (mostly in small villages, and only Philadelphia, New York, and Boston had more than 15,000 inhabitants), but by 1890,

industrialization had produced sizeable growth in cities, and 35% of Americans lived in urban areas, mostly in the northern half of the U.S ("Urbanization of America," n.d.). Their households no longer were centers of production but rather of consumption and nurturing. This change permitted the transformation of a housewife's role from that of production agent to that of consumption agent in the early 20th century.

However, it is also likely that rural women continued to make, rather than buy their clothing longer than did their urban sisters (Connolly, 1994), since rural women were more likely to sew clothing due to the distance to the store, the availability of ready-made garments, and probably the tradition of performing such tasks in rural areas (Vanek, 1973). According to Fernandez (1987) and Gordon (2004), while men's and boy's garments were available ready-made in the mid-19th century (at least in urban areas), women's and girls' ready-to-wear clothing was not available in quantities until the late 19th century. Therefore, a 19th century woman had to make all or most of her own clothes, her children's garments, including underclothing, and at least some garments for her husband such as shirts, nightwear and underwear until the sales of ready-made clothes were prevalent, although doing so depended on her socioeconomic status. Conversely, affluent and upper middle or middle-class women had help from their live-in domestic servants, professional dressmakers, or part-time seamstresses. In any case, the story of sewing is inevitably linked with the history of housework. It was just one of the many tasks that defined a woman's role as a producer of goods and services for her household; each woman had to make some of the clothing that her family wore.

Although the task of making clothes was being gradually replaced by the new task of buying clothes, middle-class housewives still sewed for various reasons in the early 20th century. For the women of working-class families, however, this change often meant that women followed the spinning machine out of the home and into the factory. For them, the separation of home and paid work raised significant challenges. It became nearly impossible for them to tend to their children and housework duties, and they worked outside the home only when their husbands could not provide the family with sufficient income (Connolly, 1994). Since this study focuses on the pink gingham apron frock that represented women's shifting role from that of producer to that of consumer, it is meaningful to examine briefly how home dressmaking, one of women's primary production roles, evolved and was influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors.

Home Dressmaking

From the 1890s through the 1920s, sewing fulfilled middle-class ideals of domesticity, and provided wage-earning women a way to dress respectably. However, as mass-produced ready-made clothing became accessible and desirable, fewer women sewed out of necessity (Gordon, 2004). Nonetheless, sewing continued to resonate with feminine work, economic need, women's roles, cultural traditions, and artistic enjoyment and satisfaction (Helvenston & Bubolz, 1999). According to Severa (1995), the factors that influenced whether women and their families decided to buy instead of make clothing were their socioeconomic status, and whether a woman worked for wages, had access to shops, had enough spare time, could sew well, and had a flair for it.

Gordon (2004) claimed that home sewing often moved beyond its functional role as housework and became a way to convey personal tastes and expression, and challenged assumptions about femininity, class, and race. She stated that sewing reinforced middle-class values of feminine thrift and offered a way for women to influence the household budget without earning a salary. Also, many who entered the growing pink collar workforce (i.e., secretaries, sales clerks, telephone operators, or typists) needed to sew in order to dress in keeping with professional standards. Their wages were not enough to keep up with dress requirements; for instance, a female typist might earn $12 a week in 1911 when one department store sold women's suits starting from $5 up to $14.50. Therefore, they needed to sew clothes suitable for work.

Gordon (2004) also noted that in the early decades of the 20th century, women's magazines emphasized the pleasure and self-fulfillment of sewing to entice women to sew since sewing-related advertisements (e.g., fabrics, dress forms) were one of their revenue sources, and they were fighting a battle with ready-made clothing. The magazines created fashion and sewing-related editorials with creativity and options in mind, and they tried to deliver the message that they valued their readers' tastes and skills. The fashion articles always explained the main style features of garment designs, suggested various fabrics and trims that could be used for making them, and specified the yardages of fabrics required for construction. Some patterns offered varieties of design options such as cuffs, sleeves or collars to create alternative looks. Gordon claimed that this freedom to choose how to make up a garment encouraged creativity as well as pleasure.

Affordable patterns (selling for about 10 to 25 cents in the 1910s) and fabrics, sewing machines, and many articles related to dressmaking in the magazines all helped women make clothes at home. Women's magazines also sold their own patterns; *The Delineator* published by *Butterick Co*. promoted and sold *Butterick* patterns, and *Ladies' Home Journal* advertised dress patterns that were published by *Home Pattern Company*. Thus, each company rigorously promoted its patterns by forecasting fashion trends and by instructing readers about what clothes to make and how to make them with the materials suggested.

Fashion articles with illustrations of suggested dress patterns often dealt with new styles, materials, or colors, fashion revivals, popular fashion styles in Paris and New York City, fashion for special seasons or occasions, and economy and ease of dressmaking. I believe that these fashion editorials and illustrations drew the attention of home dressmakers and at the same time, influenced the middle-class housewife's fashion sensibility and desire for a new look. For instance, an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* illustrated the editors' choice of dressmaking patterns, colors, and fabrics for dresses and suits and presented the marked change in style for autumn ("New autumn dresses selected by the fashion editors," 1914). The writers in this column offered that "the best types of the new frock allow for a white collar and vest, always a happy arrangement from the standpoint of beauty and becomingness as well as that of economy… Autumn colors and fabrics for women's clothes are equally as attractive as the new lines, for their somberness is most refreshing after the riot of color in vogue during the last season or two. Blue—that rich pure purple, becoming to so many women—is a prime favorite, one of the most pleasing shades being known as midnight blue, and quite as dark as its name implies" (p. 76). They also addressed the ease of dressmaking; "These new dresses are easy to make; the inexperienced seamstress will encounter no difficult problems, nor need she fear that dreaded, home-made, appearance if she uses the pattern intelligently and is wise in the selection of color and fabric" (p. 76). The article also described how all the skirts have greater width at the foot than in the previous year. I assume that the circumference of the skirt in 1913 was the narrowest of all time due to the "hobble" dress or skirt popularized by French couturier Paul Poiret, namely a woman's skirt rounded over hips and tapered to ankle so narrowly that walking is virtually prohibited (Calasibetta & Tortora, 2003).

Multi-purpose was the theme of an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* entitled "The girl who makes her own clothes" (Koues, 1910). Koues stated that a wise girl made her clothes at

home using their suggested pattern for several purposes to make a house dress, office wear, school dress, or an afternoon dress depending on the fabric choice, alteration of neckline, sleeve design and length, or by adding embellishments like a band of lace or braid.

Ladies' Home Journal heralded articles telling women to remodel garments from their old clothes or left-over fabrics. "Make-Over Economies by Mrs. Ralston" in 1916 *Ladies' Home Journal* informed readers of various ideas for making over a dress, a shirt waist, and a skirt using old garments by widening a skirt or changing the length of the tunic, or using different materials to change the look of the garment (p.81). In addition to restyling garments, thrift was promoted by the *Ladies' Home Journal* by presenting dressmaking patterns with designs that could easily be made at little cost. All of this, I assume, targeted middle-class home dressmakers who valued time as well as thrift and creativity.

Another tactic to promote sewing was a dress contest held by *Ladies' Home Journal* ("Summer dress contest," 1916). The magazine advertised that the participant should make a dress costing less than, but not more than two dollars. They offered $25 for first place, $20 for second, $15 for third, $10 for fourth, and $5 for each of fifth and sixth places. All of these enticements indicate magazine fashion editors' attempts to not only inform readers of fashion trends, sewing advice, and ideas, but also to encourage them to sew by encouraging creativity and personal pleasure.

Connolly (1994) noted that when the sewing machine was introduced to the American public in the 1850s, sewing became a huge, time-consuming task for almost every woman since ironically, women ended up sewing more with this time-saving device. However, most women no longer had to spin yarns and weave their own cloth, except perhaps those in isolated areas, as factory-produced yard goods became available in unprecedented quantities by the last quarter of the 19th century. Nonetheless, the task of sewing appeared larger than ever in the lives of housewives, since fabric was cheap enough to buy, yet expensive enough to deter waste. Consequently, American women spent a great deal of time and labor in constructing, mending, and re-making garments and household linens before the consumption culture was fully developed.

Ultimately, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most women used a combination of home-made and ready-made clothing for their clothing needs. Cowan (1983) stated that the shift to buying many more articles of clothing came during the 1910s and 1920s

with housewives becoming more consumers than producers. Nelly Don's pink frock is an example of this shift.

Purchasing Agent

According to Frederick (1918), the "food factory" had taken the place of home canning and food preparation; meat-curing was in the hands of the packers; and the manufacturing of ready-made clothing was expanding. Even the milk and egg supply was handled by scientific dairies and the commission man. With these changes in the economic handling of the needs of the home had come an immense change in standards of living.

Cowan (1976) noted that it appeared that women's duties on housekeeping were reduced due to the widespread availability of mass-produced home gadgets and ready-to-wear clothing; however, a closer examination of the facts revealed that the modern housewife had been forced by these industrial and economic changes into an even more responsible position, that of consumer: she had become the purchasing agent of the home. It had taken manual labor and skill to supply the needs of her family with her own hands fifty years previously; but now even more thought and intelligence was necessary to purchase goods wisely for her family. Vanek (1974) also noted that while the new household technology had eased some chores such as food and clothing production, managerial tasks including shopping had become more time-consuming. Modern conveniences raised standards of cleanliness and order, thus taking up any time gained by convenient gadgets and commodities. Moreover, Cowan noted that the significant change in the structure of the household labor force was the disappearance of paid and unpaid servants (unmarried daughters, maiden aunts, and grandparents fell in the latter category). Working class women were much more eager to work at a "public job" than work in an isolated home as a domestic servant.

Early 20th century housewives, it was argued, had been reared by mothers who did not ordinarily shop for items like clothing, bed linens, or towels; consequently, the new generation of housewives did not know how to shop and would have to be taught not just to be consumers, but to be informed consumers. Hence, home economists, the editors of women's magazines, and manufacturers tried to teach housewives to spend their money wisely by creating home shopping guides and gadget buying services to teach them how to be educated buyers (Cowan, 1976). For example, Frederick (1929) considered purchasing a science, and like any other science, it is based on knowledge. In becoming the purchasing agent for her family, the modern housewife

had to know the values that guided her family's life and what standards she wished her family to maintain. Frederick said that false standards of living, with extravagance in dress, food, and shelter often led to debt in order to maintain such a lifestyle. It rested with the homemaker to decide upon a simple standard of living. Then, with this standard fixed in mind, she could spend wisely for her family's needs. Indeed, Boydston (1990) and Matthews (1987) claimed that when a woman provided such goods and services as meals and home comforts, along with careful budgeting and bargain-hunting, she stretched the buying power of her husband's wages.

In sum, by 1920, the middle-class American household had been modernized through its transformation from a rural and agricultural unit to an urban and modern unit due to widespread availability of mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing, labor-saving devices and gadgets, resulting from industrialization and urbanization. Although some working-class, rural, and middle-class women still sewed at home for various reasons, they started to become consumers of ready-to-wear clothing during the 1910s and 1920s (Cowan, 1983), and by 1920, women bought 80% of the goods for their families (Scanlon, 1995), which reflected the transformation of the housewives' role to that of household administrator and purchasing agent for the family**.**

Nell Donnelly's 1916 pink gingham apron frock provides a material example of this shift from industrialization to modernization, from producing clothing at home to consuming ready-to-wear clothing. The housedress sample shown to the owner of Peck's Dry Goods Company was a home-sewn dress. Having to supply 18 dozen dresses led to Nelly Don's establishment of the DGC in 1919, to employment in 1929 of 1,000 people, to production of 5,000 dresses a day through assembly production techniques, and finally to the largest ladies' ready-to-wear manufacturing company in the world by 1947.

The following chapter analyzes the consumption culture developed by social progress and modernization. Clearly, the emergence of a consumption culture contributed to the success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock, but at the same time, it was a major phenomenon created by the social change and modernization discussed earlier.

CHAPTER 5 - Consumption Culture

With both cultural and social changes as well as modernization of the household, the agriculture-based society of the 19th century went through a major shift to mass consumption at the turn of the 20th century. It was partially driven by the mass-produced goods, which gave birth to outlets to sell and advertise the goods to increase profits. Therefore, this chapter discusses how consumerism reached individuals, households, and society, and thus covers the outcomes of the consumption culture such as mail-order firms, department stores, and ladies' magazines. Several examples of garment advertising from mail-order catalogs and department stores around 1916 are presented to demonstrate how they convinced consumers that they could get value and quality with a purchase of ready-to-wear clothing. Some examples of ads also present evidence of retailers' and manufacturers' strategies to entice consumers to desire their goods and more fashionable clothing. Therefore, these examples perhaps prove that the sheer proliferation of clothing options, prices, and the various outlets for promoting and selling those clothes accelerated desire by overwhelming browsers with so much availability. Such availability and access led to the desire to buy, which in turn fueled consumerism. This preliminary information establishes how those outlets and mass media influenced middle-class American women's consumer behavior and fashion sensibility, thus preparing them to accept and purchase Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock.

The Birth of Consumption Culture

Fox and Lears (1983) claimed that factory goods were produced in abundance, packaged and marketed by manufacturers and advertisers with persuasive skills, and eagerly purchased on the installment plan by middle- and working-class Americans. Cross (2002) noted that new spending power helped Americans adapt to this dramatic social change. Whereas 19th century Americans had tried to define themselves through possession of land, job skills, and businesses, those self-worth indicators had declined rapidly by 1900, replaced by a consumption culture shaped by people's purchase of mass-produced goods**.** Cross (2002) wrote, "Consumerism, the belief that goods give meaning to individuals and their roles in society, was victorious even though it had no formal philosophy, no parties, and no obvious leaders" (p. 1), and it was

realized “in daily experiences, always changing, improving, and being redefined to meet the needs of individual Americans” (p. 3). As a result, the home was conquered by the market with mass circulation magazines, mail-order catalogs, newspapers, and other outlets for advertising domestic goods (Fox & Lears, 1983).

Nelly Don’s emergence as a mass producer of women’s clothing coincided with the trend of consumerism in America. Kathy Peiss (1986) noted that America, by 1920, had embraced the new culture, and Americans had defined their material environment and themselves by the purchase of mass-produced goods in greater quantities than ever before. Shopping for clothing, similar to shopping for many other consumer products, became associated with the guarantee of fulfillment and pleasure promoted by the advertisements. The principle of consumption reached its peak in the 1920s paralleling the burgeoning success of Nelly Don’s Donnelly Garment Company that by 1929 employed 1000 people and produced 5000 dresses a day.

America in the 20th century and the culture of consumption had become so closely interlaced that it was difficult for Americans to see consumerism objectively as an ideology. The society of goods was not merely the fated result of mass production or the manipulation of merchandisers; it was also the consumers' choice to have pleasure, comfort, and material-well-being through the possession of goods. Moreover, the giants of industry were intent on making sure that the trend of consumerism accelerated (Cross, 2002). For instance, to encourage consumption, Henry Ford provided more leisure time to wage-earners by introducing the five-day work week and higher industrial wages (Cross, 2002). Cross also maintained that consumer goods gave people ways to establish new identities, and “allowed Americans to free themselves from their old, relatively secure but closed communities and enter the expressive individualism of a dynamic ‘mass’ society” (p. 2).

According to Leach (1993), democratizing personal desire was perhaps one of the new culture’s most prominent contributions to modern society; it acted as a stimulus to effort, encouraging people to compete and train themselves. Desire, he argued, was thrust into almost every facet of American lives. In the past, people had derived their values from their religious beliefs and traditional ideals, but now they were attaining them from the marketplace and consumption, which had not prevailed in earlier days when America was mostly agrarian.

As a corollary to this, Leach (1993) stated that by the turn of the century, the mass retail businesses such as huge department stores that appeared everywhere surpassed the retail dry

goods stores of the past, and became enormously competitive. He also maintained that the department stores, representing the essence of consumer revolution, sold a vast range of goods under one roof to earn consumers' dollars. Such fierce competition resulted in new ways of merchandising to entice consumers to consume: display, decoration, advertising, and service.

With this consumption culture in full swing, manufacturers needed outlets to disseminate their mass-produced goods in quantity. Some of them established mail-order firms while others founded department stores; however, they all used mass media to promote their merchandise, which played an important role in accelerating these changes. In particular, ladies' magazines played a significant role in promoting merchandise. Waller-Zuckerman (1989) noted that this was feasible since, in the early 20th century, the circulation of ladies' magazines was soaring, so consumers could be reached through this medium, and at the same time, magazines needed advertising dollars to maintain their high-end image.

Benson (1986) maintained that the ladies' magazines had much in common with the department stores, which also thrived during this period. Although the department store appeared to be a more sales-oriented vehicle of culture, and the magazine a more service-oriented medium, ladies' magazines as well as department stores aimed to influence women to spend money and encouraged them to develop more fully as consumers. According to Waller-Zuckerman (1989), ladies' magazines (e.g., *Ladies' Home Journal, The Delineator*) enjoyed higher circulations than other general-interest magazines (e.g., *Harper's, Munsey's*). In 1891, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Delineator* had circulations of 600,000, and 393,000 respectively, whereas *Munsey's*, cited as evidence of the "magazine revolution," had only 35,000, and *Harper'*s, one of the most successful of the reputable journals, had a circulation of only 175,000. By 1912, the circulation of *Ladies' Home Journal* had increased to 1,538,360, and that of *The Delineator* rose to 930,600. Accordingly, as advertisers sought ladies' magazine's pages, their advertising revenues increased steadily. Consequently, Benson (1986) stated, ladies' magazines enticed women to look, dream, and purchase as department stores did. In other words, the emergence of mass consumption culture driven by mass communication brought the whole country together as a relatively homogeneous market where more women had access to up-to-date information on style and fashion.

Nelly Don's success in 1916 likely fits within this framework of consumption culture. Women had choices of clothes (i.e., via catalog, department store, or local dry goods stores)

perhaps reminding them that others had what they wanted and accelerated their desire to have the same, which doubtless stimulated participation in consumerism. Moreover, the women who bought Nelly's Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock the morning it was first displayed undoubtedly had access to advertised images of pretty women dressed in pretty clothes or fashion articles telling women to make or wear housedresses that were becoming and fresh, urging them to look dainty even while at home engaging in housework. As indicated earlier, most women, even in rural areas, felt the effects of the consumption culture; they were exposed to a myriad of beautifully illustrated images of women, in attractive looking ready-made dresses or dressmaking patterns. In such ways, manufacturers and retailers enticed consumers to shop at their department store or with their mail-order catalog. To more effectively reach consumers, manufacturers and retailers began to advertise their mass-produced ready-to-wear in ladies' magazines, and the publishers of home dressmaking patterns wrote a variety of fashion-related articles about the latest trends and methods to make clothes in order to sell their patterns. All of these approaches perhaps influenced the consumers who purchased the 1916 Nelly Don pink gingham apron frock, as well as Nell Donnelly herself to create an attractive, modern house dress to satisfy the middle-class housewife.

Outlets for Mass-Produced Goods

Mail-Order Catalogs and Department Stores

Mail-Order Catalogs

Mail-order catalogs were one of the main outlets to publicize ready-made clothes to consumers since they offered the same merchandise as that being sold in urban areas to rural dwellers who lacked access to competitive retail outlets (Perry, Dame & Co., 1992). Some postulate that middle-class American housewives nationwide almost certainly purchased some of their needed garments through mail-order giants such as *Sears* and *Montgomery Ward* since clothing could be made and shipped in quantity anywhere in the country (Olian, 1995; L. Wilson, 2009, personal communication, October 6 and 7, 2009). Blum (1981) and Cherry (2008) stated that mail-order catalogs reflected how we lived; they revealed how we dressed; and they showed how our ideals of beauty changed over time. Therefore, examination of these sources is essential

to know what the mode of the time was, what contemporary women wore, and what options were available. Moreover, such availability and access demonstrates the manifestation of consumerism.

Mail-order existed in its elementary form as early as the 1830s, yet it was *Montgomery Ward*, with its mail-order business of 1872, that developed the industry (Perry, Dame & Co., 1992). According to Olian (1995), during the early part of the 20th century, innumerable firms joined the mail-marketing business, and the volume of sales was beyond compare. By the end of WWI (1914-1918), buying through mail had grown into a firmly established American institution. In 1892, Richards Sears and Alvah Roebuck founded *Sears, Roebuck and Company*, and published their first mail-order catalog including products ranging from clothing to houses. Helped by the establishment of Rural Free Delivery in 1902 and Parcel Post in 1913, mail-order volume increased dramatically. People who lived in rural areas had little choice but to buy what they needed from the local retail stores that lacked variety yet exercised monopoly. Fortunately, the extension of the railroad lowered the cost of transportation and thereby increased sales volumes; refrigerated railroad cars made it possible to deliver unpreserved goods across the country, and standardized clothing sizes—developed during the Civil War for soldiers' uniforms—made it viable to mass produce ready-made garments in bulk for nationwide delivery (Cherry, 2008).

The farsighted merchant John Wanamaker, Post Master General from 1889 to 1893, continued to urge Congress for postal reform even after he left office, testifying that it would force construction of roads for mail deliveries, encourage settlement of sparsely populated areas and instigate greater distribution of goods indispensable for economic growth. Because of such transportation and due to the mail-order houses such as *Sears* and *Montgomery Ward*, American women who lived outside of the city or in rural areas were aware of the latest clothing (Olian, 1995).

As stated by Blum (1981), people living in isolated areas or in the less-affluent sections of cities awaited each new catalog with excited anticipation. Even those too poor to purchase ready-made garments in the catalog could, through the purchase of some thread and a length of yard goods, be assured of receiving the next catalog and the latest fashion news. As seen in Figure 2.9 in chapter 2, *Sears'*s 1915 fall/1916 spring catalog presented a wide variety of fabrics to purchase from 6.5 to 16 cents a yard. Thereby, women with less means could somehow copy ready-made clothes in the fashion pages at home by purchasing yard goods. According to Olian

(1995), anyone interested in knowing how the majority of Americans dressed during the period could feel reasonably confident that what was illustrated was pretty much what was generally worn.

While general mail-order firms such as *Montgomery Ward* and *Sears* sold a wide variety of goods from clothes, accessories, yard goods, and books to sporting goods, farm equipment, kitchen appliances, and toilet supplies (Perry, Dame & Co., 1992), others, such as *Bellas Hess & Co*. *The Bedell Company*, *Perry, Dame & Co*., *Philipsborn*, *National Cloak & Suit Co*, *Allen, Brock & Smith*, and *Simpson Crawford Co*., and *Philipsborn*, limited their offerings to fashion items. Some of the mail-order companies had retail stores, agents, or dealers along with mail-order catalogs (they called their catalog a "Fashion book," "Fashion catalog," or "Style Book"), but most such companies just took orders only through mail. Based on the relatively high frequency of their advertisements in the fashion catalogs in the popular ladies' magazines from 1911 to 1916, it can be assumed that they were the leading fashion mail-order houses at the time. Among these companies, *The Bedell Company* sold their merchandise in stores as well as mail-order in New York, Brooklyn, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. Department stores such as *B. Altman & Co*. and *Gimbel Brothers* also took advantage of the emerging trend of promoting sales through mail-order catalogs, reaching out to customers who could not get access to their stores.

According to Cherry (2008), *Sears*' shipping operation was so well organized that Henry Ford studied it before setting up his car manufacturing assembly line in Detroit. Cross (2002) stated that what Ford did for manufacturing affordable cars, Richard Sears did for retailing with reasonably-priced merchandise. *Sears* appealed to the ordinary farmer and wage earner, gaining customers by offering low prices. The dresses shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are some examples that were illustrated in *Sears* catalog in 1915 demonstrating *Sears*' catering to ordinary women with reasonable price points and fashion-forward styles. These examples manifest how mail-order firms enticed women to desire looking good wearing their affordable, value-added garments. Four of the five dresses in Figure 5.1 were made from "excellent" or "good quality" washable percale (style No. 31V8955, $1.09), checked gingham (style No. 31V8960, $1.29), cotton suiting (style No. 31V8965, $1.79), or cotton crepe (style No. 31V8975, 2.89), and one was a "stylish dress made of genuine linen" that "looks good and washes well" (style No. 31V8970, $2.89). The emphasis on the practicality of the material's washability along with

stylish features, targets the middle- and working-class values of practicality while promoting the fashionable features.

When comparing prices of dresses women might wear for an “outing” between *Sears* and *Gimbel*; department store (discussed in the next section), *Sears* is always lower. One such example is *Sears* dresses Nos. 31V8970 and 8975 (priced, each $ 2.48, 2.89) in Figure 5.1, which were less expensive than those relatively reasonably-priced *Gimbel* dresses shown in Figures 5.7 and 5.9 (priced from $3.95 to $5.95). In addition, the two *Sears* dresses in Figure 5.1 had attractive, fashionable style features including a pretty combination of “laydown collar, turnback cuffs and girdle, with long sash, of percale in dark green color” with “bow tie” for neck (style No. 31V8970) and “waist made in vestee effect with wide lapels trimmed with velvet loops and novelty glass buttons” with “wide yoke girdle” (style No. 31V8975). Vestee is defined as an imitation vest or blouse-front worn with a dress or jacket (Picken, 1999).

Figure 5.1 Misses' dresses in the *Sears* catalog, 1915[45]

[45] From "*Everyday Fashions 1909-1920: As Pictured in Sears Catalogs,*" by J. Olian (Ed.), 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 61.

The women's dresses illustrated in Figure 5.2 appear fancier than the misses' dresses shown in Figure 5.1. The occasion for wear was not identified, yet judging by the hat and jacket layering, they most likely were worn for special occasions such as an afternoon tea party or evening event. Indeed, they were more expensive than the advertised day dresses and made of quality materials such as plisse crepe (style No. 31V9060, $3.98), embroidered voile (style No. 31V9065 ½, $ 5.95), fancy crepe (style No. 31V9075), sateen foulard (style No. 31V9080, $3.69), and linen (style No. 31V9070, &3.69). Three styles were described as made from "washable" cotton crepe or voile, which also indicated a focus on practicality. Furthermore, prices were still much lower when compared with those for the department store *Altman*'s afternoon and evening dresses in Figure 5.4 (priced from $22.50 to $25 to $32) , and *Gimbel*'s afternoon dresses in Figure 5.10 (priced from $10 to $15). The most expensive dress in Figure 5.2 is style No. 31V9065 ½ ($5.95), which was made of "excellent quality washable cotton voile, embroidered in an odd and handsome design," having the fashionable style features of "the new loose hanging jacket, trimmed with dainty lace edging and tassels," "extra wide silk messaline crushed girdle," and "yoke top skirt trimmed around yoke and at bottom with rows of narrow of lace insertion." Style No. 31V9075 boasted of its new features: "Made in new vest effect with points extending over skirt, giving the fashionable high waisted appearance." Though the dresses shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 could not represent all the merchandise advertised in *Sears* or other catalogs that targeted the middle- and working-class women, it is apparent that mail-order firms tried to allure consumers to look pretty with their practical, reasonable, yet fashionable, updated quality garments. According to Olian (1995), by 1900, nearly 1,200 catalogs brought variety and fashion to the most isolated towns in the U.S. *Sears* led the way by distributing 3.8 million catalogs in 1908. Thus, products of all kinds became available to most Americans and were seen by practically everyone, which doubtless spurred participation in consumerism.

Figure 5.2 Women's dresses in the *Sears* catalog, 1915[46]

[46] From "*Everyday Fashions 1909-1920: As Pictured in Sears Catalogs,*" by J. Olian (Ed.), 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 59.

Department Stores

Leach (1984) noted that the new consumption culture was exemplified by and thrived on the department stores along with mail-order houses. Before the 1880s, retail institutions like department stores did not exist; what existed were neighborhood dealers, small dry goods stores, and large wholesalers that developed through distributing outlets into cities, towns, and villages. However, substantial middle-class department stores were constructed in small towns as well as in many cities at a rate that outpaced anything comparable going on elsewhere in the world such that department stores dominated merchandising after 1895.

Leach (1993) also maintained that the department store, as it evolved in the second half of the 19th century, combined the appeal of goods with the promise of extravagance, happiness, and good taste. Window displays, granite walls, marble columns and floors, and services like child care, concerts, and personalized tailoring made customers feel special and excited. The turn-of-the-century department store and its stylish and fanciful displays democratized desire, encouraging a taste for extravagance and enticing all sorts of consumers to buy better-quality goods.

Some department stores such as *Gimbel Brothers* (1894) and *B. Altman & Co*. (1864) grew out of dry goods stores, but a few had their start as specialty clothing houses. Chicago's *Marshall Field's* (1852) and *Carson Pirie Scott & Co*. (1854), New York City's *A.T. Stewart's* (1861), and Philadelphia's *John Wanamaker* (1862) represented some of the early establishments (Kidwell & Christman, 1974). As a result, the department store was one of the most important sources of fashion for urban consumers in the 1910s (Blanke, 2002). According to Kidwell and Christman (1974), the department stores strived to provide their customers the most extravagant surroundings to entice them to buy. For instance, *Marshall Field's* in Chicago was constructed as a 6,000-square-feet Tiffany mosaic dome in 1910, and *Wanamaker* entertained 30,000 guests in the great court and on the open galleries rising seven floors with the largest organ in the world at the opening of their new store in 1911. Piles of clothing of all kinds and at all prices for the entire family were shown in an extensive series of salesrooms and display areas.

B. Altman & Co., founded in New York City in 1864, one of the well-known department stores, had grown out of a small dry goods shop on Third Avenue near Tenth Street in New York City. The company opened a department store unmatched in New York City in 1906, possibly in the world. It was a block-long structure on Fifth Avenue running north from 34th to 35th Streets,

later expanded to include Madison Avenue. The store prided itself on carrying fashion forward and quality styles (*B. Altman & Co*, 1995). *Altman'*s first floor, which was the most public space of the building, housed silk and velvet goods, laces, embroideries, notions, women's neckwear, gloves, shoes, millinery, jewelry, handkerchiefs, and so forth. On the upper floors, *Altman* reserved space for ready-made clothing, attire for children and infants, outfits for maids and nurses, coats, furs, shoes, undergarments, and specialty sports or active wear. Naturally, the grandiose atmosphere of the department store and the activity on each floor excited consumers (Blanke, 2002).

In the 1910s in the Kansas City area, before the full-scale department store was established, there only existed dry goods retailers such as *Peck's Dry Goods Company* where Nelly Don took her house dress to sell, *Burnham-Hanna-Munger Dry Goods Company* that manufactured duck and denim work clothing (as stated in chapter 2, Wilson, in press), *The Poyser-Mudge Dry Goods Company* (Landis, 1986), *Swofford Brothers Dry Goods Store*, *Smith-McCord-Townsend Dry Goods Company*, and *Maxwell-McCure-Fitts Dry Goods Company* ("Sanborn Map," n.d.). Dry goods stores sold ready-to-wear clothing such as ladies' coats, suits, skirts, waists, and children's and men's clothing, hosiery, gloves, underwear, and work clothes ("*Linhoff Dry Goods Co*.," 1916), as well as dress goods (e.g., ginghams, calicos, percale, lawns, batiste, sateen, bleached and unbleached muslin, and Indian linen), ribbons, buttons, handkerchiefs, "fancy work" supplies (e.g., a piece of embroidery, embroidery patterns, floss and hoops, crochet thread and needles, yarn, and knitting needles), tea towels, and various notions like pins, needles, and snaps (Landis, 1986). Kansas City women probably shopped at these dry goods stores to purchase some of their clothes or yard goods for making garments. One can assume that displays in the dry goods stores likely were not as intriguing as at the well-established department stores, but they perhaps displayed or advertised their merchandises conscientiously to entice consumers to purchase them. For example, the following *Linhoff Dry Goods Company* ad printed in *The Democrat-Tribune* newspaper in 1916 shows this strategy well: "On the second floor at our new location, and take a glimpse at the many New Garments which we are showing this season. The new styles are all practical and serviceable, and best of all, you can find a good variety of styles so moderately priced that if the garment appeals to you, the price surely will" ("*Linhoff Dry Goods Co*.," 1916, p. 1). Apparently, women in the Kansas

City area had options to get their clothes either from mail-order catalogs or local dry goods stores unless they hire professional dressmakers or sewed themselves.

As mentioned earlier in the mail-order catalog section, prominent department stores such as *Altman* and *Gimbel* issued fashion mail-order catalogs so that their merchandise could reach women who could not otherwise get access. It is worth revisiting the mail-order catalog operation of department stores because the product assortment in the catalogs represents the kind of clothes sold at department stores. They are good resources to determine what kind of merchandise they carried at the time. Pages from such catalogs suggest *Altman* seemed to cater to an upper middle-and upper-class patron. Its prices ranged around $20 for misses' and juniors' apparel (see Figure 5.3), from $25 to $32 for afternoon dresses made of taffeta or charmeuse and evening gowns made of taffeta trimmed with fancy lace and a corsage bouquet (see Figure 5.4), and up to $75 for a plaid coat lined with silk (see Figure 5.5). Also, Figure 2.18 in chapter 2 shows *Altman's* morning frock and maids' dresses priced from $3 to $3.95, which was more expensive than similar dresses offered by other retailers (usually priced from 85 cents to $ 1.50).

Misses' and juniors' apparel shown in Figure 5.3 advertised the "every-day dress" made of "natural pongee, with contrasting collar and cuffs of faille silk" (style No. 1735, $ 19.50), a "tailor-made dress, of fine quality worsted, trimmed with ivory ball buttons" with "white faille silk collar" (style No. 173, $9.75), "the new three-piece dress, with coatee and skirt of golf cord and washable white voile waist" (style No. 1737, $22.50), "the new three-piece dress, with separated silk crepe waist finished with hemstitched organdie collar and cuffs" with the separate "coatee or bolero" and skirt with "a yoke model with two pockets" (style No. 1738, $22.50), and, finally, the "tailor-made semi-fancy dress, of fine twill serge, with embroidered collar, crossover belt and pointed tabs at back of waist" with "entirely new model skirt, fashioned on Empire line" (style No. 1739). Next, the "corded braid trimming" ornamented on body and skirt with asymmetrical front closure line (style No. 1735) was clearly an Oriental inspired look. One of the most popular style features of the time, the empire line, was well incorporated in style No. 1739. Two "new three-piece" dresses (style Nos. 1737 and 1738) were noticeable in that the coatee or bolero, waist, and skirt were separately designed and then coordinated, which looked very modern.

Figure 5.3 *Altman*'s misses' and juniors' apparel, 1915[47]

[47] From "*Altman's Spring and Summer fashions catalog, 1915,*" by Dover Publication's republication of B. Altman & Co catalog, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 24.

The dresses shown in Figure 5.4 were two afternoon dresses, one evening gown, and one dress not categorized, which were made from extravagant fabrics including taffeta (style Nos. 1105 and 1107), charmeuse (style No. 1106), crepe meteor (style Nos. 1104 and 1104A), coordinated or trimmed with white dotted net (style No. 1106), fancy lace (style No. 1107), flesh color chiffon (style No. 1104) or black striped silk (style No. 1105). Notably, the skirt width of dresses was fuller than that of the misses' dresses in Figure 5.3, and they were all cut with empire waistlines; also, two models (style Nos. 1104 and 1105) were featured with the vestee, and attached to the one-piece dress in these models. The 1915 *Altman* coats advertised in *Harper's Bazaar* illustrated in Figure 5.5 looked elegant and modern with fashionable style features including a shoulder or waist yoke, slightly raised waistline, and the belt at back. They were made from white whipcord (model far left), tan-and-green block plaid (second on the left), tan ribbed covert cloth (second on the right), and white-and-green or white-and-black gabardine (far right), which were "lined throughout" with silk to match except for one model's, which was half lined (model second on the left). They all look very stylish for the time.

Department store mail-order catalogs possibly played a role in spreading high fashion with a different emphasis on their merchandising from general mail-order catalogs such as *Sears*. They perhaps promoted desire in consumers to look as fashionable and graceful as those women in the ad or catalog, and to own such high-quality fashionable garments. If consumers could not afford the dresses in the catalog, they at least could get an idea what the leading fashions were; thus, they could emulate the look of high fashion clothes either by making them or by purchasing the "knocked-down" garments with a similar look in less fancy materials, less complicated fashionable style features, and thus more economical pricing.

Figure 5.4 *Altman*'s fancy afternoon and evening dresses, 1915[48]

[48] From "*Altman's Spring and Summer fashions catalog, 1915,*" by Dover Publication's republication of B. Altman & Co catalog, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, p. 6.

Figure 5.5 *Altman*'s advertisement for coats in *Harper's Bazar*, April 1915[49]

[49] From *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1915, p. 7.

Another prominent department store in the early 20th century was *Gimbel Brothers* (*Gimbel*), which also issued a mail-order catalog. Adam Gimbel, a peddler who opened a dry-goods store in Vincennes, Indiana, in 1842, eventually grew the business to include large stores in Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and New York, and bought establishments in London, Paris, Lyons, and Berlin. The company's buyers in London and Paris purchased French and London couture models to "knock off" and reproduce for the American market. Although French couturiers, such as Paul Poiret, opposed such a practice, these purchases elevated business, and resulted in the formation of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne, which organized the collections that continue today (Gimbel Brother's, 1994).

Gimbel seemed to cater to middle- and upper middle-class consumers, yet some of its garments were reasonably priced, and others were as expensive as those at *Altman*'s, focusing on high fashion and value. The company's merchandising strategy and ethos were clearly represented in its ad in *Harper's Bazar* in 1915 for "The newest of modes of Paris reproduced by Gimbels" and "The Paris of America" (see Figure 5.6). The prices of the garments in this ad were similar to those in *Altman*'s, ranging from $3.95 for a blouse (style A and B, each made of crepe de chine and handkerchief linen) to $25 for a plaid silk frock (style C, combined with georgette crepe sleeve, and contrasting color satin on collar and cuffs) to $35 for a dancing frock (style E, made of "Gros de Londres silk" trimmed with "silk hand-made flowers in pastel colors").

Figure 5.6 *Gimbel Brothers* ad in *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1915[50]

[50] From *Harper's Bazaar*, April 1915, p. 7.

The following dresses shown in Figures 5.7 through 5.10 were illustrated in *Gimbel*'s 1915 fashion catalog. "Outing and Afternoon-Wear Frocks," illustrated in Figure 5.7, were priced very reasonably for their style features including attached vest-like piece to the bodice and loose hanging overskirt in front with a belt (style No. K-200, $3.95), tiered skirt with a yoke and a wide contrasting fabric-gathered belt (style No. K-201, $5.50), and a surplice effect on the bodice and circular gore skirt with a front panel yoke with decorative buttons (style No. K-202, $5.95).

Figure 5.7 *Gimbel Brother*'s outing and afternoon dresses, 1915[51]

[51] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 2.

A caption from the *Gimbel*'s catalog in Figure 5.8 clearly emphasized its marketing strategy focusing on value by stating that, "This charming morning frock is a splendid example of Gimbel style in the famous Gimbel quality and at a money-saving price that is characteristic of Gimbels." It went on to explain that "this cleverly designed dress is intended for morning or general wear. It is suitable for neighborly visiting and is one of the daintiest models." It also described the fashionable and decorative style features such as the "new standing ruche collar," "soft net lace frill" finished on the sleeves and the collar trimmed with bands of velvet ribbon, "a gathered yoke effect" on the skirt, and "an exceptionally wide flaring hem," and "smart flat girdle" that is "outlined with velvet and finished with tailored bows."

Another example of *Gimbel*'s marketing strategy focusing on value, quality, and style is described well on the catalog page in Figure 5.9: "In creating Gimbel style and maintaining Gimbel value, we do so at a tremendous effort. The various departments represented in this book are each doing their share to give in every item the utmost value so that no transaction can possibly lead to anything but the utmost satisfaction. Satisfying the customer is the foundation of the Gimbel success and has resulted in the world-renowned merchandising organization that is exclusively our own." The catalog also claimed that they delivered to consumers better values than did any other organization in the U.S. with extensive foreign affiliations working hard to obtain "everything of merit and interest as well as the tremendous quantities of staple and every-day merchandise." Further supporting this perspective, the dress in Figure 5.9 was categorized as an "ideal outing frock," and titled as a "country club dress," which is "intended for general outing wear." This page claimed that the dress had such decorative and fashionable style features as "the blousy waist" with "numerous buttons," "the shaped Empire girdle that holds the fullness of the blouse," "the empire waist line," and "an exceedingly wide umbrella flare," which was also the latest development in modish models. *Gimbel* clearly demonstrated their efforts to offer their target consumers up-to-date style features, quality, and value through reasonably-priced garments.

Figure 5.8 *Gimbel*'s morning frock, 1915[52]

Fashions Are Nothing Less Than Delightful This Season

Every innovation has been maintained and frocks are easy-fitting, with soft, graceful lines, yet to all the clinging effects have been added the smart, trig, military lines that are shown in the square shoulder effects, in the charming strapped and braided trimmings, and in the most practical and rational flare that characterizes the hems of skirts as well as the hems of coats and jackets. This is the last touch that was necessary to make the prevailing fashions of the past few seasons absolutely sensible. There is no skimping of materials, lines are full and free, and sensationally lovely silhouettes are shown in a large variety of entirely "different" models.
Gimbel gowns are "different," each with a touch of style that distinguishes it at once as having been created, not merely cut and sewn up after the manner of the careless factory or indifferent dressmaker, and that makes even the most inexpensive of Gimbel frocks a note of gladness and, as the poets say, "A joy forever."

This charming Morning Frock Is A Splendid Example Of Gimbel Style in the famous Gimbel quality and at a money-saving price that is characteristic of Gimbels

K—800. This cleverly designed dress is intended for morning or general wear. It is suitable for neighborly visiting and is one of the daintiest models that our various experts have been fortunate enough to develop so successfully. The dainty broken stripes give excellent long lines and the slightly draped blouse overlays a filmy net lace vestee with soft flying frill edged with velvet. The new standing ruche collar falls in soft raised ripple and has a firm military underband to hold it high and snug about the neck. Same soft net lace frill finishes the sleeve and both are trimmed with bands of velvet ribbon. The graceful skirt has a slightly gathered yoke effect, below which the skirt hangs in rippled fulness and has an exceptionally wide flaring hem. The front of the skirt is laid in wide panel effect, further carrying out the long lines of this charming costume. Smart flat girdle is outlined with velvet and finished with tailored bows. There is a charm about this model that will appeal to the woman of taste. It is entirely suitable for both young and older women and is a delightful summery costume. In a superior quality of broken striped voile, in white with stripes in black, blue or rose. Sizes 34 to 44. **Note the price—but $5.00.**

K-800
$5.00

New York — Gimbel Brothers — Philadelphia

[52] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 8.

Figure 5.9 *Gimbel*'s Country Club Dress, 1915[53]

The Style-Value of Gimbel Quality Attire

At prices that can safely be your guide throughout this book

In creating Gimbel style and maintaining Gimbel value, we do so at a tremendous effort. The various departments represented in this book are each doing their share to give in every item the utmost value so that no transaction can possibly lead to anything but the utmost satisfaction. Satisfying the customer is the foundation of the Gimbel success and has resulted in the world-renowned merchandising organization that is exclusively our own. The Gimbel catalogue is our message to you and is our greeting of good-will, and, furthermore, of the most exacting economy. We consider the economy to you on our part of buying by mail through this book a fine achievement.

We are not overestimating our ability to give you better values than any other organization without duly considering the fact that we can do this chiefly because our organization is, in fact, better than that of any other organization in the U. S. A., as evidenced by our European houses and our tremendous stores in New York, Philadelphia and Milwaukee. Our entire foreign affiliations are busily engaged all the year round in obtaining everything of merit and interest as well as the tremendous quantities of staple and every-day merchandise.

Country Club Dress of High Quality Ramie Linen

K-1000. There is a particularly modish swing to this snappy man tailored dress that distinguishes it as an ideal outing frock, and in its outline portrays the very highest expression of style desired in a garment intended for general outing wear. Made of a superb quality of roughly finished ramie linen, it is much more practical than French linen and will not muss as easily. The blousy waist has prettily rounded lines, closing in side effect, with numerous buttons that also serve as a trimming. The sleeves are set into deep arm eyes and the neck and sleeves are finished with wide, shapely collar and cuffs of white linen, hemstitched with deep, firm hem. The shaped Empire girdle that holds the fulness of the blouse forms slight bodice effect and holds the Empire waist line. The flaring skirt is also the latest development in modish models, fitting smoothly over the hips in straight line fashion and coming to an exceedingly wide umbrella flare. You will thoroughly enjoy this graceful and becoming frock. In fine quality ramie linen in rose, tan, navy blue or white. Sizes 34 to 44. **A truly splendid bargain at $5.00.**

K-1000
$5.00

New York — Gimbel Brothers — Philadelphia

[53] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 10.

Figure 5.10 *Gimbel*'s afternoon and outing dresses, 1915[54]

[54] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 20.

In short, the changes in cultural, social, and political milieu, and modernization caused by industrialized technology opened the door to a culture of consumption during the early 20th century. These changes prompted urbanization since people moved into cities where many factories and businesses started to manufacture a wide array of ready-made goods and clothes. Consequently, the wealthy, who used to live in cities moved into the suburbs for a quieter and safer life, were still able to access many city services and market places thanks to transportation systems and automobiles. Under these conditions, manufacturers and retailers developed department stores and mail-order catalogs to disseminate their products. Moreover, mail-order catalogs, issued by either general mail-order firms, specialty clothing manufacturers and distributors, provided rural dwellers with fashion news and trends, as well as a variety of yard goods and ready-made clothes at a reasonable price and good quality. If readers could not afford ready-made clothes, they could at least copy them from the fashion pages.

The department stores also flourished as one of the main outlets for mass-produced merchandises. Some, such as *Gimbel* and *Altman,* published a mail-order catalog to reach consumers who lived far away. They often targeted the wealthy, but they stressed their ready-made garments had value, quality, and style. Indeed, some garments were reasonably priced so that even low middle-class or working class women might have afforded them. Even those who could not afford a stylish, high-end garment advertised in the catalog pages or window displays could be aware of the current modes of the time from intriguing presentations. Furthermore, both mail-order firms and department stores played a key role in the emerging consumption culture by enticing consumers to purchase their value-added garment (i.e., a stylish morning frock that could be washed and worn for multipurpose) and that was as stylish and modern as the one worn by the attractive looking ladies in the catalog pages or window displays. Women who were exposed to such fashionable styles were likely to purchase them and to continue to do so. The middle-class housewife who had had to sew at home did not have to anymore with available, affordable, dainty, ready-made clothes, all of which perhaps hastened her transformation into consumer. Indeed, the sheer proliferation of clothing options and prices from the various outlets listed earlier promoted desire and led to the need to buy, which in turn fueled consumerism.

Manufacturers and retailers also used advertising to promote their merchandise more efficiently. Although many types of publications carried the ads of ready-made clothes, only ladies' magazines were examined in this study since their circulation was soaring at that time

(Waller-Zuckerman, 1989; Scanlon, 1995). Thus, the next section examines how advertisers in ladies' magazines strived to get the consumer's attention to increase sales, benefiting the magazine publishers, and the manufacturers and retailers and ultimately influencing women's fashion consciousness while promoting a consumer society and culture.

Mass Culture

Mass Media: Ladies' Magazines and Advertising in Ladies' Magazines

Mass Media: Ladies' Magazines

As a woman's role changed from producer to consumer, reading and learning about the new products in the market place became more important, aided by women's magazines, which underwent many changes between 1890 and 1916. They began to offer the following: improved print quality and more diversified contents covering fashion, sewing, home management, cooking, and child care; social and political issues such as women's higher education and work; and participation in social causes and political arenas such as the suffrage movement, municipal housekeeping movement (which viewed the city as a woman's home), child rescue (adopting and foster care), and many more, with each magazine adopting its own style for presenting content (Waller-Zuckerman, 1989).

According to Ogden (1986), ladies' magazines originated from what were called "family weeklies," periodicals such as *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the 1820s, when it became clear women and men had separate interests, publishers began to target a new and distinct market on the premise that if women had different interests from those of men, they needed their own culture. Before that focus, one of the early woman's magazines was the *Lady's Magazine* in 1792. Sarah Joseph Hale, the first editor of the *Ladies' Magazine*, and later of *Godey's Lady's Book*, created a vital character, bringing a woman's voice to the industry (Scanlon, 1995). Rose (1981) stated that Hale hoped she could help educate women as an editor. However, to her, women were moral beings who could influence, not press, the men around them to improve society; thus, women's sphere was influence, not power. Scanlon (1995) maintained that although historians had clearly tried to move beyond a strict private/public, female/male dichotomy in looking at real women's lives during the 19th century, Hale keenly retained her perspective and encouraged women to live in a private sphere separated from men, in the

household, reinforcing prevailing notions about domesticity and womanhood in 19th-century literature if not in life (Scanlon, 1995).

According to Waller-Zuckerman (1989), many publications catering to women started to emerge after The Civil War (1861-1865), but they differed from earlier women's journals such as *Godey's Lady's Book* in terms of the size and class of audience, and in financial sources and technological sophistication. The editors of these new women's magazines strived to differentiate their journals from the competition by increasing departments, articles, and editorial columns; thus, despite their similarities, by 1912, the new magazines had their own style and voice. Accordingly, editors sought to project their personalities through the pages to distinguish their magazines in readers' minds and foster an air of intimacy. Edward Bok, the editor of *Ladies' Home Journal*, was the first to initiate these strategies.

Six women's magazines, known as the "Big Six," became leaders in the magazine industry in the last decades of the 19th century, topping circulation lists and attracting advertising dollars. The Big Six were *Ladies' Home Journal* (1883-present), *The Delineator* (1873-1939), *McCall's* (1873-present), *Woman's Home Companion* (1874-1956), *Pictorial Review* (1899-1939), and *Good Housekeeping* (1885-present). Among these, *Good Housekeeping* was to focus strongly on housekeeping topics, while *Pictorial Review* focused more on "fashion, society, and sophistication" (p. 728). In between, *Woman's Home Companion*, then *Ladies' Home Journal* came next to *Good Housekeeping*, both focusing on wide-ranging topics as well as housekeeping. *McCall's* and *The Delineator* were more like *Pictorial Review* in their style focusing more on fashions and patterns, yet *The Delineator* also carried a wide range of articles about society, women, and politics (Waller-Zuckerman, 1989).

By the 1890s, publishing companies such as *Curtis (*publisher of *Ladies' Home Journal), Butterick Publishing Company (The Delineator),* and *McCall's* (*McCall's*) had already mastered manufacturing and distribution techniques of mass circulation; thus, they were able to attract a wider audience through various marketing strategies including promotion and product differentiation tactics and cultivation of customers. Among the Big Six, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Delineator,* despite their different styles, carried a good deal of fashion and clothing information, home management topics, fiction, and a broad range of articles on politics, social reform activities, women's suffrage, women's presence in the work force, and higher education, targeting mainly intelligent, modern, and socially-conscious middle-class white housewives

(Waller-Zuckerman, 1989). Waller-Zuckerman noted that no other group of magazines increased as consistently in both circulation and advertising revenues as women's magazines. For example, the circulation of *Ladies Home Journal* increased from 715,000 in 1895 to 1,253,000 in 1910 and to 1,607, 629 in 1912, and *The Delineator* from 550,000 in 1895 to 763,000 in 1910 and to 830,000 in 1912. Together, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Delineator* had the highest circulation rates among the Big Six, making them ideal for this research.

Ladies' Home Journal was associated with the leading name in popular periodicals, Cyrus Curtis. His publications, including the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*, earned a large readership through low annual subscription prices. Known as the "monthly Bible of the American home," the *Journal*'s circulation reached one million by January of 1904 (Cross, 2002; Waller-Zuckerman, 1989). Initially, when Curtis launched an entire magazine dedicated to women, he had great expectations for the publication, appointing his wife, Louisa Knapp Curtis, as its first editor. He declared he would make it a household necessity such that "a young couple will no more think of going to housekeeping without it than without a cook stove" (p. 3). In September of 1889, with the *Ladies' Home Journal* already the best-selling magazine in the nation, Louisa Knapp Curtis resigned as editor of the *Journal* due to her household and family responsibilities (Steinberg, 1974). Cyrus Curtis hired Edward Bok, then a twenty-five-year-old writer of a syndicated column, the "Bok Page," to take over as the editor. Edward Bok worked from 1889 to 1919, exerting a profound influence on middle-class American values, believing that the ideal woman was essentially a domestic creature who could lead a simple life and best improve society by influencing her husband and children in the home (David, 1984).

However, Steinberg (1974) noted that Edward Bok also firmly believed in the modern demand for goods and in women's expanding role as consumers, viewing his magazine as an aid to help women resolve conflicts in this new way of life. Thus, the *Journal* presented an odd combination of morality, ethics, and consumerism by covering such topics as infant and child care, sewing, fashion, cooking, religion, and civic beautification, short stories, social essays, and political discussion; however, the approach worked, and the *Journal* became a household word. When Cyrus Curtis selected Edward Bok to produce the *Journal*, he chose a man who could balance the delivery of service and advertising very well. Bok directed the *Journal* to aid women in homemaking and lifestyle, as well as to instruct. He also believed his magazine could fashion its readers into more tender wives and mothers, more skillful homemakers, and

purposefully more skillful consumers. Thus, he had the *Journal* carry articles on housekeeping, discussions of the new appliances, and information on how to use packaged products.

Scanlon (1995) stated that the target audience for the *Journal* was white, native-born, middle-class women whose husbands earned annual incomes were from $1,200 to $2,500. This "average" woman had certain characteristics; she was usually married, having resigned her job or career first, she purchased the latest appliances, served her family canned foods, and participated in leisure activities. The magazine offered clear and limited cultural definitions of womanhood, but it also recognized and gave voice to women's own concerns, and in doing so, the *Journal* helped sow the seeds for women's later demands for independence and self-realization. Scanlon also noted that the *Journal*'s "domestic ideology essentially urged its readership to expand their role as consumers rather than producers, to accept the corporate capitalist model and their home-based role in it. It did this by presenting fragments of opinion— in this case fiction, advertisements, and editorial matter—and then organizing those fragments into a whole that could be called the 'consensus' view" (p. 7). By offering several elements and various perspectives, the magazine promoted the idea that there were many alternatives for women to choose from, but that the average woman, the middle-class white woman with desires, was represented by the consensus view. With this formula, *Ladies' Home Journal* remained the top-selling ladies' magazine through the 1950s.

Another main source examined for this study was *The Delineator*, established by the *Butterick Publishing Company* in 1873 to promote Ebenezer Butterick's new sewing patterns to a broader audience across the U.S until 1937, when it merged with its rival William Randolph *Hearst*'s *Pictorial Review*. In January 1939, *The Delineator* went defunct when *Hearst* decided to kill *Pictorial Review* (Endres & Lueck, 1995). However, Bland (2009) maintained that it played a critical role in shaping "the life of the New Woman" with the "crusades" *The Delineator* undertook: all the social or political campaigns (i.e., for women's higher education and improved social or political status, and social reforms), promotions on culture (i.e., featuring literature, opera, and fine arts), and advice on fashion (i.e., featuring fashion plates, fashion information, and sewing patterns) (p. 184). He argued that those crusades altered perceptions of women and motherhood, and, in turn, many women's lives.

According to Bland (2009), *The Delineator* succeeded since it emphasized the incursion of women into colleges, clubs and organizations, the professions, and municipal reform during

the Progressive Era in the early the 20th century. It also helped middle-class women supervise child welfare and Americanize the millions of new immigrants who might jeopardize "old-stock" America (p. 165). By the end of 1910, *The Delineator*'s English-language edition was also circulated in England and Canada, and at the same time, four foreign offices governed its foreign-language editions in France, Spain, and Germany.

The Delineator' s style was modern and elegant and considered representative of "American Fashion," but was also known for its political commentary, serialized novels, short stories, and housekeeping articles (Endres & Lueck, 1995, p. 59); nonetheless, it carried a higher percentage of articles on fashions, sewing patterns, and clothing than any other magazine (Waller-Zuckerman, 1989). As a fashion magazine, *The Delineator* focused on home sewing for the middle-class woman, featuring clothing for women, girls, children, and occasionally men, and discussing how to make and wear it. It also featured photographs and line drawings on embroidery and needlework, home decorating, and even new house plans. The stylish clothing designs that *The Delineator* created for sewing patterns were usually practical, geared toward the middle class, not the leisure class for whose members professional dressmakers would be entailed (Endres & Lueck, 1995). The following quote that Endres & Lueck drew from Helen Woodward's comments on the patterns from her book, "The lady persuaders," shows its philosophy:

> The paper patterns have had an incalculable influence in pushing forward equality among women. The patterns naturally made their clothes more alike, greatly decreas[ing] the sharp difference between the clothes of women [of] different social circles. Paper patterns also gave them more leisure and that increased their power (p. 59).

Ladies' magazines also played a critical role in selling goods in this emerging consumer society through their skillful marketing strategies and mutually beneficial relationship with the advertising industry. Their high circulation rate made this possible, and the revenue from advertising became a huge part of their prosperity; advertising in turn profited the manufacturers and retailers.

Advertising in Ladies' Magazines

In the early 20th century, the American market was expanding because of the rise in population and the increase in discretionary income, for instance from $192 per capita in 1890 to

$373 in 1915 (Norris, 1990); therefore, manufacturers had to compete for consumer attention to sell their products, relying on advertising to achieve this goal, especially in the growing number of national magazines. The manufacturers and retailers used the magazines to encourage women to consume as well as to influence the middle-class American housewife's fashion consciousness (Callan, 2006).

By 1917, advertising agencies handled 95% of the national advertising that appeared in magazines. While 56% of the magazine's revenues came from sales and subscriptions in 1879, nearly two-thirds of all magazine revenues came from advertising by 1919 (Pope, 1983). Due to its financial importance alone, advertising would secure a more prominent role in magazine policy-making than would the editorial advice, articles, or fiction (Scanlon, 1995). One reason for the expanding size and number of women's magazines was, no doubt, the increase in potential profits from available advertisers (i.e., manufactures and retailers) (Cowan, 1976; Waller-Zuckerman, 1989). According to Scanlon (1995), magazines depended upon advertisers to support their efforts financially, and advertisers relied on magazines to tap into the growing national audience. Symbiotically, the two industries promoted themselves as part of the growth of the nation. Women's magazines played a particularly important role in this growth, recognizing the consumer purchasing power exerted by the nation's households.

Given the close association between advertising and the mass market, advertisers believed that ads created economic demand to take up the increased supply of manufactured goods. The advertiser's job went beyond announcing products and prices; they had to persuade consumers of the nutritional value of a particular canned soup and the hygienic merits of tooth brushing with a specific kind of toothpaste (Scanlon, 1995). For instance, an ad for Dr. Lyon's perfect Tooth Powder or Dental Cream that appeared in the *Ladies' Home Journal* claimed that if consumers used these products, they could keep their teeth in "refreshing cleanliness" until their next visit to the dentist, and urged consumers to request a generous trial package of those products ("Now I'll keep them like that," 1916, p. 66).

Meanwhile, advertisers accomplished their objective of attracting customers by creating memorable ads using mottos to lodge the product in the mind of consumers and endorsing a public figure. An ad for a "Mary Garden Face Powder" in *Ladies Home Journal* is one example of this advertising tactic. The ad states "If Mary Garden herself told you the secret of her beauty—and suggested that you use the powder that makes her completion so dazzlingly

beautiful—Would you hurry to get a box?" ("Mary Garden," 1916, p. 62). Mary Garden was a famous American opera singer/actress with a substantial career in Paris and America in the first third of the 20th century (Pennino, 1989). Another tactic was placement of product advertisements near related articles (Scanlon, 1995). For instance, an ad for cotton cloth was placed near an article entitled "New Embroideries" in *The Delineator* (Harris, 1914). This article encouraged women to embroider their clothes while conveniently, through ad placement, promoting the sales of related products. Ads for textiles and dress forms were also placed near home dressmaking articles again in an attempt to further sales.

Marchand (1985) stated that advertising professionals in the early 20th century began to champion the new culture against the old to promote products. Advertisers hoped that such appeals to modernity would cajole potential customers into buying their products to keep up with everybody else. He also noted that ads were more than manipulations of consumers' minds; advertising was a mixture of purposeful principles that portrayed the pursuit of the dream. For instance, advertisers of ready-to-wear garments strived to encourage women to pursue the latest and most fashionable styles seen in New York, Paris, or London fashion. In addition to sensationalizing the latest fashion trends, the ads appealed to the consumers' sense of value through variety, service, and bargains.

An ad for *Bellas Hess & Co*., a New York City based mail-order house, in 1914 *Ladies' Home Journal* (see Figure 5.11) claimed that "if you wish your summer to be in the latest style, don't fail to send for our Fashion Catalogue. It contains 257 pages of beautiful illustrations showing all the changes in style that have taken place, and it will give you a perfect idea of just what fashionable New York women are wearing" (p. 46). The ad highlighted "some summer bargains," and illustrated one dress, priced at $1.75, and a coat and a dress set, priced $9.95 (the dress was priced $5.98 if it sold separately) with extensive descriptions of the two designs. It urged readers to "ask for our FREE Fashion Catalogue No.62L, and we will send it to you FREE by return mail. Remember we pay all mail or express charges on anything you order from us, and we guarantee to satisfy you or immediately refund your money."

Figure 5.11 *Bellas Hess & Co*. ad for their Style Book in *Ladies Home Journal*, 1914[55]

[55] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1914, p. 46.

An ad for the *Bedell Company* in 1914 *Ladies Home Journal* (see Figure 5.12) also showed this trend very well with catchphrases, “New York Fall Fashions,” “direct from New York at lowest New York prices,” “why pay more,” “More than ever does this book show you New York’s last word in fashion,” and descriptions that “it brings to you the richness of selection—the same satisfying variety which enables New York women to lead the world in style—with the full economies of New York shopping, whether you spend $1 or $100” (p. 60). The ad featured the “smart frock” of the “Russian long tunic dress of beautiful all-wool serge” for $5.98 with illustration and detailed fashionable and decorative style features.

Figure 5.12 The ad for *Bedell Company*'s Fashion Catalog in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1914[56]

[56] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1914, p. 60.

These ads surely enticed women to pursue the dream to look like New York women by purchasing similar styles. The ads also sent the message that women could be modern and up-dated by purchasing styles reflective of up-to-date New York, Paris, or London fashion.

Some companies also adopted nostalgic themes and colorful personalities to promote a friendly image: Wrinkled grandmothers sold coffee or shortening, and cute Kewpie figures, small, mischievous, kindhearted little human baby figures with a tuft of pointy hair, created by Rose O'Neill, illustrator and originator, and first drawn in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1909, ("Kewpie Dolls," n.d.), promoted Jell-O desserts.

In addition, much advertising was one-sided, selling goods with refined and manipulative appeals. But ads also gave meaning to consumption, showing how products could be used to shape personal identity, enhance social roles, and offer convenience (Cross, 2002). For instance, an ad for a 1916 Buick Coupé in *Ladies' Home Journal* emphasized "independence," claiming Buick Coupé consumers could be independent of weather, of street conditions, of chauffeur or escort, and they could go and come safely, surely, because of its fine new enclosed feature. The models in this ad were a mother with her daughter, perhaps suggesting that advertisers knew the readers were women with possible influence to purchase the car (see Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13 Ad of 1916 Buick Coupe in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1916[57]

In sum, at the turn of the century, modernization of the household, characterized by industrialization, mechanization, urbanization, and the shift in women's role from producer to consumer, was in progress. Mass-produced, factory-made merchandise instigated by industrialization needed an outlet to be disseminated to the consumers. Thus, manufacturers and retailers developed new modes of marketing strategies: mail-order selling, a larger scale of retail through department stores, and advertising. Advertising and mass media, particularly ladies' magazines, were indispensable drivers of the consumption culture as they promoted the mass-produced merchandise. In terms of fashion, advertising in the ladies magazines and mail-order

[57] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1916, cover page.

catalogs played a key role in influencing the middle-class consumers' minds by appealing to their sense of value, need for the latest fashion and bargains, and by informing them of current news and trends. Thus, women purchased more and more with their increasing discretionary income, and produced less and less, which perhaps promoted consumerism, and in turn their transformation into consumers.

Nell Donnelly was one such contributor, by offering middle-class women a practical, attractive, modern housedress to purchase. She created a value-added, ready-made garment that had not only practicality (it was made of washable, durable, yarn-dyed checked gingham fabric, and was easy to put on and take off with a front closure), affordability (it sold at $1 apiece), and quality workmanship, but it also had popular decorative and fashionable style features such as the empire waistline, kimono sleeves, waist yoke, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffle trimmings. In brief, Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock clearly satisfied consumer desire prompted by consumerism with the proliferation of clothing options and intriguing ads, which was gradually transforming women into the primary purchasers of consumer goods.

The next chapter analyzes the design attributes of Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock and examines further the influence of mass media, especially housedress advertising from the ladies' magazines to further develop the reasons behind the success of the 1916 house dress.

CHAPTER 6 - Reasons behind the Success of the Pink Gingham Apron Frock

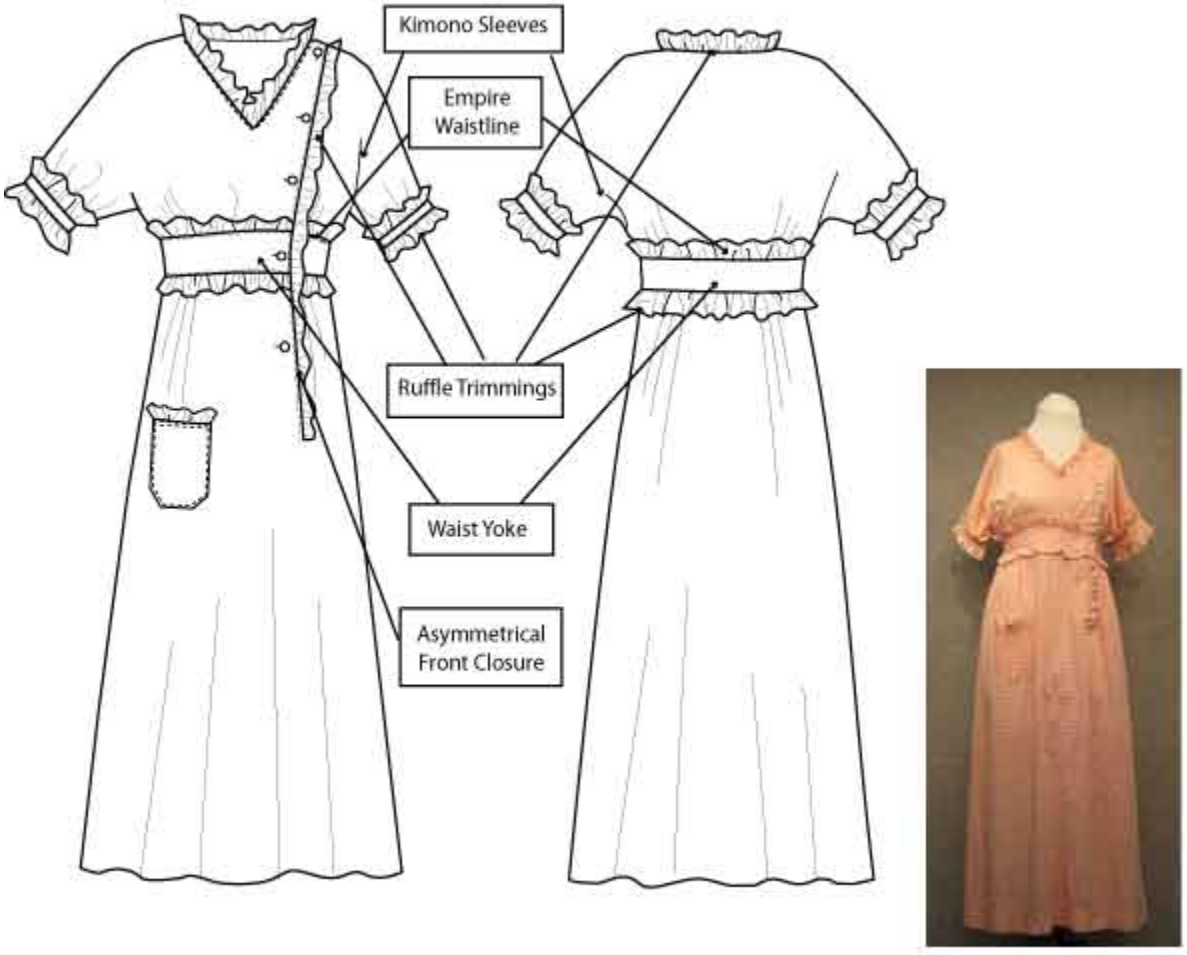
Previous chapters addressed the cultural, social, and political environment which served as the framework to clarify the role of the housedress, in particular Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock, as an example of representing the woman's shifting role from producer to consumer. In terms of women's lives, industrialization and urbanization altered their roles permanently in both private and public spheres through technological advancement and mechanization, and in turn social progress. As noted by Ewing (2001), the connection between social and fashion change was most noticeable in this period; as society modernized, so did fashion. Clothing, in particular the housedress, was a visible reflection of this shift, progressing from the Mother Hubbard style to that with popular fashionable and decorative features, one of which was the 1916 pink gingham apron frock. Thus, using the context established in previous chapters, this chapter explores why the pink gingham apron frock was widely accepted, focusing on two particular reasons: stylish design features and the influence of the consumption culture on society.

The thesis is that the pink gingham apron frock was stylish and modern due to the sensible incorporation of fashionable and yet practical features, which assured successful sales. Analysis of garment designs presented in magazines and catalogs and extant garments from the period support this point, especially how Nelly Don incorporated contemporary design elements into her creation effectively. The final section of the chapter examines the social appeal of its success, bolstered by house dress ads in ladies' magazines that urged women to look pretty even at home by wearing the latest style, which surely instilled a desire for staying current and modern (Hill, 2004). This section further determines how these ads might have predisposed and prepared consumers to believe Nell Donnelly's housedress would allow them to look pretty even while engaging in housework.

Design Appeal: Incorporation of Popular Design Elements into the Pink Gingham Apron Frock

Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock is well-designed as evidenced by popular design features of the time: kimono sleeves, empire waist, waist yoke, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffle trimmings. Figure 6.1 is a flat drawing of the pink gingham apron frock showing these features and the photo of full front view of the dress.

Figure 6.1 A detailed flat drawing of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock, and the photo of full front view of the dress[58]



These design elements were often present in the fashion garments and dressmaking patterns in magazines and catalogs in the 1910s. Various examples from 1911 to 1916 follow

[58] A detailed flat drawing of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock, illustrated by the researcher using Adobe Illustrator, and the photo of full front view of the dress presented in Figure 1.1 in chapter 1.

showing use of kimono sleeves, empire waistline, waist yoke, ruffle (frill) trim and asymmetrical front closure. The examples are from fashion articles, garment illustrations of sewing patterns and ads from the ladies' magazines and catalogs, and actual garments from the time period. Some design elements are grouped together for easier examination since popular design features were often incorporated throughout one garment.

Kimono Sleeves, Empire Waistline, and Waist Yoke

As shown in Figure 6.1 (and Figures 1.1, 1.2, 2.7 and 2.9), the pink gingham apron frock has kimono style sleeves, a raised waistline or empire waist, and a waist shaped with a yoke (waist yoke). The kimono sleeve was very popular due to the strong Oriental influence in the early 20th century and appeared in at-home wear as well as high fashion (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). An Oriental trend in fashion of the time (and in several examples presented in chapter 3) was the hobble skirt, but not in the 1916 housedress, perhaps because of its limited functionality in a housedress. The empire waistline, mentioned in Chapter 2 concerning the pink gingham apron frock, was the predominant waistline from the late 18th century to the 1820s during the Empire and Directoire periods in France, and has been periodically popular throughout fashion history (Picken, 1999). Numerous garments from about 1911 to 1916 were designed with the empire waistline, which manifested its popularity. A waist yoke, the fitted portion of a garment to which the bodice and skirt is sewed, was also popular during this time period.

Two one-piece dressmaking patterns for lingerie gowns that Mrs. Ralston presented in an article, "Some new fashions that Paris promises for the summer," in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1914, include the trends of flowing lines and loose cut of the kimono sleeves, a slightly raised waistline, and hobble skirt along with ruffle trimmings (to be discussed later) (see Figure 6.2). The term "lingerie," borrowed from French language by Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, is defined originally as women's underwear, usually meaning dainty silk and lace-trimmed (light, soft fabric) garments (Picken, 1999).

Figure 6.2 The patterns for lingerie gowns with the integration of the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and ruffle design 1914[59]

Designers often incorporated popular features in one garment, as Figure 6.2 shows. A popular combination was the kimono sleeve style with an empire waist and/or a yoke design. Figures 6.3 through 6.16 illustrate these design features in dresses and coats from a range of retailers and in dressmaking patterns indicating trends represented across market groups.

[59] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1914, p. 38.

The *Bellas Hess & Co* ready-made dresses (see Figure 6.3) advertised as "the latest New York style" in the 1911 *Ladies' Home Journal* showed this trend well. Two advertised dresses were style No. 35L31 (dress on the left) made of "finest quality imported striped gingham" and style No. 35L32 (dress on the right) made of "finest quality washable mercerized batiste." The ad claimed that the "charming one-piece washable dress" (No. 35L31) had "the short kimono sleeves" with "a fold of striped gingham", and its "high girdle forms a slight Empire effect and is outlined by solid color gingham." Meanwhile, the "beautiful white lingerie dress" (No. 35L32) also had "short kimono sleeves" and "slightly raised waistline, giving [the] empire effect, formed by fold of colored batiste." Compared to former years, the lines of these two dresses appear softer; however, the effect of the Gibson girl look (i.e., a more tailored, less Oriental look) lingered. I believe that the flowing lines of Oriental-inspired fashion were beginning to appear while the full chest look remained a year or two longer.

Figure 6.3 The latest New York style of ready-to-wear dresses with the kimono sleeves and empire waist, 1911[60]

The kimono style sleeve and empire waist features were also evident in dressmaking patterns and their related fashion articles. For example, Figure 6.4 was presented in the fashion article, "The prettiest dresses that the actresses wear" from 1911 *Ladies' Home Journal*.

[60] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1911, p. 59.

Graduation dresses selected by the fashion editors in *Ladies' Home Journal* of April 1913 (see Figure 6.5) also incorporated kimono sleeves, an empire waist, and a yoke. Ruffle trim is also evident on the second dress from the right in Figure 6.5 and on the dress in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 One-piece dressmaking pattern with kimono sleeves, empire waist, and ruffle trim, 1911[61]

[61] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 15th 1911 , p. 30.

Figure 6.5 The patterns of graduation dresses with kimono sleeves, empire cut, and a yoke design, 1913[62]

The kimono sleeve on a "tunic dress" (dress with overskirt) with a "hobble" skirt was a popular Oriental-inspired ensemble of the 1910s. A dressmaking pattern with these design features (see Figure 6.6) was presented by Mrs. Ralston in her November 1913 article, "About the new ideas in clothes one sees in Paris" in *Ladies' Home Journal*.

[62] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1913, p. 39.

Figure 6.6 The tunic dressmaking pattern with the kimono sleeves and empire waist, 1913[63]

The fashion editors of *Ladies' Home Journal* wrote about coats and coat suits for spring 1914, mentioning that the intricate finishes of the strictly tailored garments (i.e., padding, canvas, and interlining) were replaced with loose-fitting kimono or raglan models, lined with soft silk. The coat suit in Figure 6.7 was an illustration from the article showing the kimono sleeves and empire waist. Another example of less tailored dressmaking patterns for coats and dresses with these features was illustrated in *The Delineator,* March 1914 (see Figure 6.8, green coat on right).

[63] From *Ladies' Home Journal,* November 1913, p. 32.

These design features, along with a waist yoke, were also used in the pink dress illustrated in Figure 6.8.

Figure 6.7 Kimono sleeves and an empire waist integrated into the coat suit dressmaking pattern, 1914[64]

[64] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1914, p. 95.

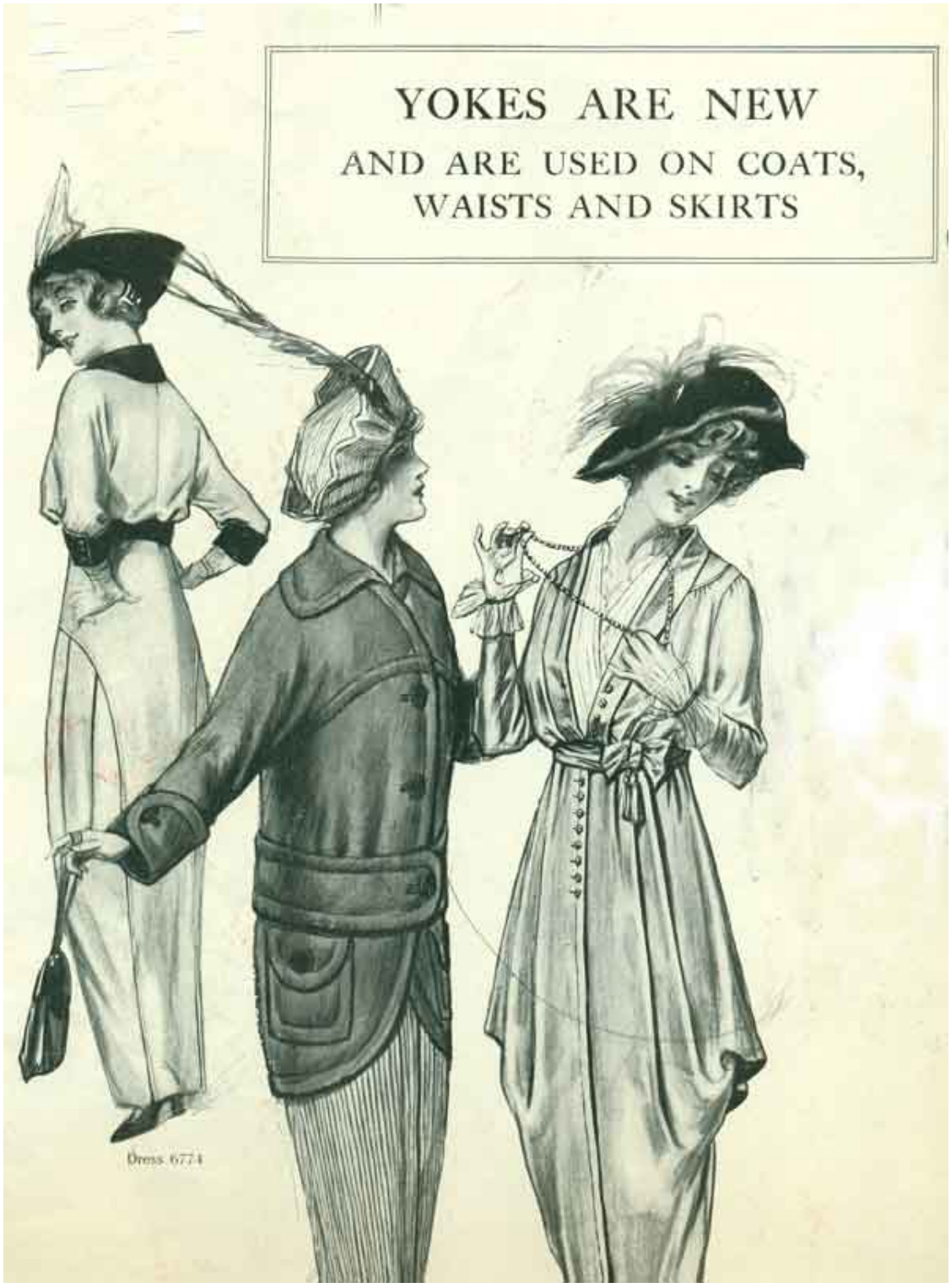
Figure 6.8 Dressmaking patterns for coats and dresses with the design elements of the kimono sleeves, empire waist, or yoke design, 1914[65]

As depicted in this chapter, the fashion articles in ladies' magazines often included illustrations of suggested dressmaking patterns and informed the consumer of new styles or materials, revival of a fashion, styles in Paris and New York City, and fashion for special seasons or occasions. The fashion article and illustration in *The Delineator,* 1914, is an example of

[65] From *The Delineator*, March 1914, p. 24.

promoting the New York style through the caption, “Yokes are new and used on coats, waists and skirts” (see Figure 6.9). Moreover, the editor emphasized that the coat design had many features including a yoke sleeve, a broad belt, a cutaway outline, and patch pockets, which marked it as being very up-to-date and practical. Two months later, the editors of *The Delineator* promoted the yoke as a revival of fashion in an article, “Revival of the 1830 yoke.” The accompanying illustrations showed the yoke used across the shoulders (see Figure 6.10). Another example of the yoke design is shown in *Gimbel*’s 1915 ready-to-wear country club dress, which claimed to be the latest modish model with a waist yoke and empire waistline (see Figure 5.9). *Gimbel’s* 1915 ready-to-wear afternoon and outing dresses in Figure 5.10 also had a waist yoke and empire waistline.

Figure 6.9 Dressmaking patterns promoting the yoke design, 1914[66]



[66] From *The Delineator*, March 1914, p. 26.

Figure 6.10 Shoulder yoke designs incorporated into dressmaking patterns, 1914[67]

[67] From *The Delineator*, May 1914, p. 27.

Lady Duff-Gordon ("Lucile," known for her couture house as well as her professional name) had designed frocks for the queens of Europe, the wives of millionaires, and for stage stars such as Irene Castle. She also tried to reach ordinary women through a contract with *Sears* to design garments for those who could not afford expensive clothes for the season of 1916-1917. The quote in a column, "Lady Duff-Gordon's message to the women of America," described her attempt: "I am going to design clothes for all the Women of America who love pretty frocks, instead of designing only for the limited few, who can afford to pay for exclusive models. And, that I may reach the largest number, I have selected *Sears, Roebuck and Co.* to help me carry out my plans" (p. 72). Indeed, she was involved in the design process, selecting all materials, trimmings, and accessories, and creating "afternoon frocks, tailored suits, dancing frocks, house garments, and a variety of models all ready-to-wear ranging from $20 to $45" (p. 73).

Lady Duff-Gordon (1863-1935) also worked as a fashion columnist for *Harper's Bazaar* from 1912 to 1922 (Lucy Duff Gordon, n.d.), introducing her designs there in February 1915. Lucile's fashionable couture designs included the empire waist, waist yoke, and kimono sleeves (see Figure 6.11). Additional examples showing the trends under discussion were seen in the 1915 ready-to-wear tea gowns from *Harper's Bazaar* (see Figure 6.12) and sold for $18.50. Four 1915 *Gimbel Brothers* morning dresses in Figure 6.13 had the empire waist and hip yoke, and one dress at left had a folded waist yoke; the dresses were priced from $2 to $4.50.

Figure 6.11 Couture garments designed by Lucile with the kimono sleeves and empire waist design elements, 1915[68]

[68] From *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1915, p. 42.

Figure 6.12 Ready-to-wear tea gowns with kimono sleeves and an empire waist design features, 1915[69]

[69] From *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1915, p. 60.

Figure 6.13 Ready-to-wear dresses for morning wear from *Gimbel Brothers* cut on empire waist with hip yokes, 1915[70]

[70] From "*Gimbel's illustrated 1915 fashion catalog,*" by Dover Publication's republication of 1915 Gimbel Brothers' catalog, 1994, New York: Dover Publication, p. 56.

Examples of the integration of these popular design features into garments are virtually endless. Although the silhouette, skirt width and skirt length fluctuated, the slightly raised empire waistline and loose-cut of the kimono sleeves in the designs persisted roughly from 1911 to 1916. However, from 1916 through 1917, the narrow skirt style disappeared, the skirt becoming shorter and wider in 1916 than in previous years, and Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock reflected this trend.

Skirt Width and Length in 1916

Figure 6.14 illustrates the new trend of wider and shorter hemlines in two embroidered ready-made dresses in the ad of *Schweizer & Co.*, mail-order embroidery house in New York, in 1916 *Ladies Home Journal. Schweizer & Co.* claimed that they were the largest mail-order embroidery house in all Europe, able to offer customers more variety than any other such company. They sold "Schweizer costumes", which were ready-made clothes from their embroidered fabric. Figure 6.14 shows two embroidered robes with kimono sleeves and empire waistlines, and the typical 1916 dress silhouette of shorter and wider skirt. Since they seem to be special occasion dresses, the skirt width is wider than for an everyday dress or housedress.

Figure 6.14 Ready-made embroidered robes with wider and shorter hemlines, kimono sleeves and empire waist design features, 1916[71]

The overall dress silhouettes in Figures 6.15 and 6.16 are further examples of the fashion trend of a shorter length and wider width of the skirt. First, the blouse and skirt patterns shown in Figure 6.15 were in the article "The way of the mode as I see it" in the March 1916 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (p. 101). This fashion article noted "the sporting clothes of the season, for even the women who prefer the restfulness and ease of a country club or hotel porch claim equal rights with the more active women in the matter of wearing smart sport attire." These

[71] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1916, p. 112.

dressmaking patterns included the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and waist yoke. In addition, there is frill trimming at the side gores of the skirt, which is similar to the trimming Nell used at the opening of her pink gingham apron frock.

Figure 6.15 Dressmaking pattern for a sport blouse and skirt that features the full skirt and shorter hemline of the time as well as kimono sleeves, empire waist, yoke design, and ruffled trim, 1916[72]

[72] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1916, p. 101.

Second, the afternoon or party dresses of the dressmaking patterns shown in Figure 6.16, targeted girls from 14 to 20 years old, also reflected the fashion trends of the time, integrating the wider and shorter hemline, kimono sleeves, empire waist, and waist yoke, as well as ruffles trimming the waist, pocket, skirt, sleeves, or neckline. Ruffle trimming was a popular design attribute in many garments during this time and will be the focus of the next section.

Figure 6.16 Party dress patterns with the design features of the wider and shorter hemline, kimono sleeves, empire waist, waist yoke, and ruffle trimmings, 1916[73]

[73] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1916, p. 103.

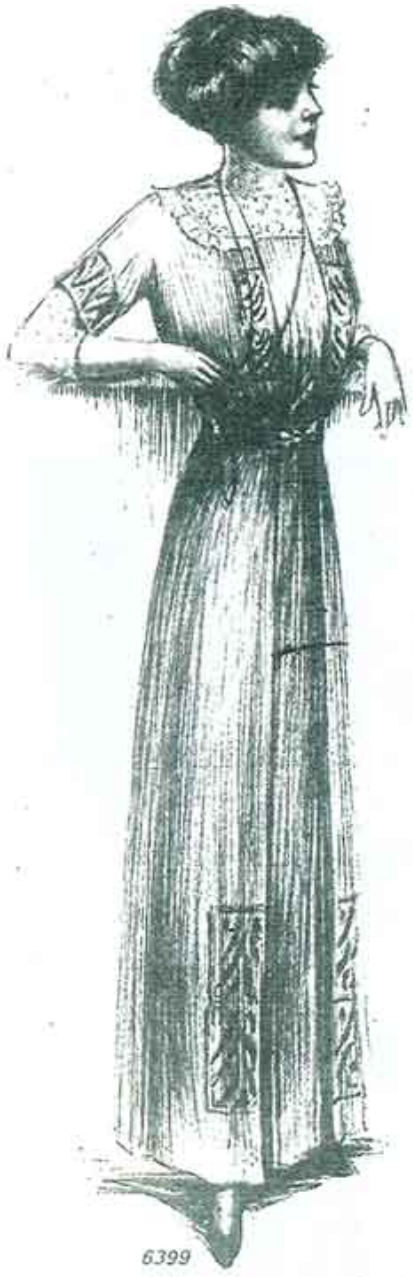
In short, from 1911 through 1916, many clothing examples integrated kimono sleeves, empire waist, and yoke design into a range of garments including lingerie, morning, day, graduation, and special occasion dresses, sport clothes, and coats. Apparently, the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and/or yoke design were very popular, and both ready-to-wear and couture designers utilized them from about 1911 to 1916, which argues for the design elements cutting across garment type and socioeconomic status. In addition, there was a distinct change in 1916 to wider and shorter skirt hemlines. As Nelly Don incorporated the kimono sleeve, empire waistline, waist yoke, and raised hemline, likely, she kept up with fashion trends by reading ladies' magazines and fashion catalogs. Given that she knew what was in and out of fashion, she would have created the up-to-date pink gingham apron frock by knowledgeably employing contemporary trends.

Ruffle Trimmings

Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock is trimmed with ruffles at the neckline, on the sleeve bands, on all the edges of the waist yoke and the side front closure, and on the opening of the patch pocket (see Figure 6.1), echoing the many garment designs trimmed with ruffles in this time period. Some dresses and blouses (see Figures 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.10, 6.12, and 6.16) presented in the previous section had ruffles, and more examples will be presented to show how fashion designers incorporated ruffles from 1911 through 1916. Examples include various dressmaking patterns for New York style dresses, blouses, party dresses, and summer frocks (see Figures 6.17 through 6.23), two ready-to-wear special occasion dresses (see Figures 6.24 and 6.25), and two hand-made dresses (see Figures 6.26 and 6.27).

Mrs. Ralston introduced several dressmaking patterns in an article, "The handy one-piece dress" in the October 1911 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (p. 104), one of which was a one-piece dress with ruffles trimming the front neck yoke (see Figure 6.17).

Figure 6.17 An one-piece dress pattern trimmed with ruffles on the edge of the neck yoke, 1911[74]



The subsequent article written by Blanche G. Merritt entitled, "What I see in New York" from the January 1912 issue of Ladies' *Home Journal*, described the "new" popular element of ruffles very well. Merritt mentioned that this page was designed to assist the reader who wanted a new dress, something different with "a touch of newness or prettiness or of the unexpected" for the upcoming spring season (p. 33). Her focus was three dressmaking patterns trimmed with

[74] Form *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1911, p. 104.

ruffles. Merritt pointed out that "all the newest models I have seen in New York have the dainty frill at the wrists and side front," and that "wrist ruffles, which you will see are used on two of the models on this page, are so new and popular that they are put wherever lace or frills are used about the neck of the dress." The "lingerie waist" in Figure 6.18 was one of the features on this page trimmed with ruffles at the wrists and side front.

Figure 6.18 The lingerie waist dressmaking pattern trimmed with ruffles at the wrists and side front, 1912[75]

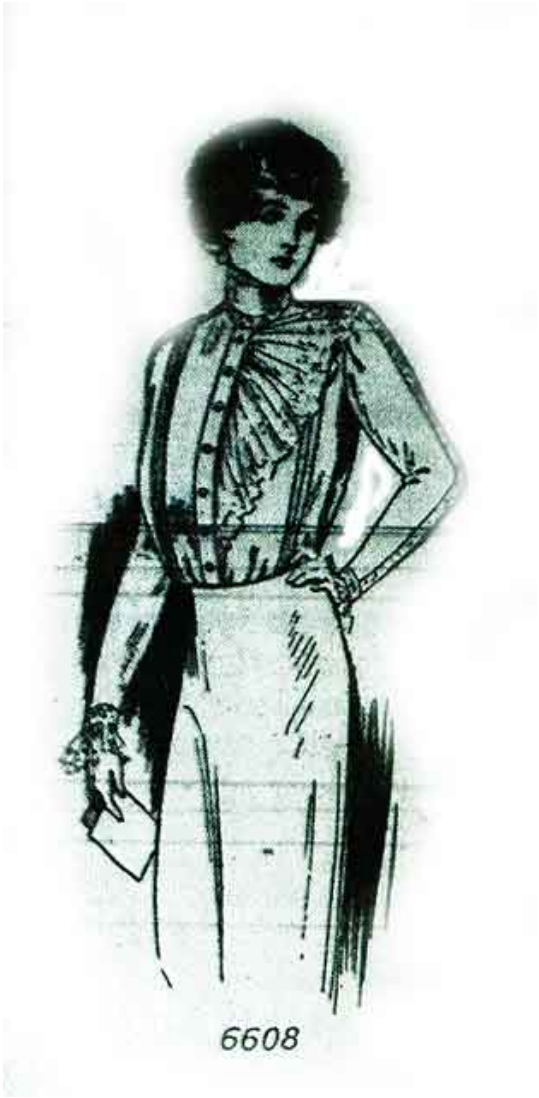


Figure 6.19 is another example of New York style dressmaking patterns calling for ruffles, from the article entitled "What I see on Fifth Avenue" by Alice Long in the August 1912 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. Long illustrated several dresses for many different occasions that

[75] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1912, p. 33.

were the latest fashion on Fifth Avenue in New York City, often displayed with "a first showing of smart gowns, wraps, and hats that delineate the change of mode to fit the fast-approaching up-coming fall season" (p. 29). The dress on the left in Figure 6.19 was cut on a slightly raised empire line, "just enough to give a becoming line," and trimmed with ruffles on the edges of the collar. The tunic style of the dress on the right in Figure 6.19 also had ruffled trim on the collar edge.

Figure 6.19 New York style dressmaking patterns trimmed with ruffles on the collars, 1912[76]

[76] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1912, p.29.

Figure 6.20 is a dressmaking pattern for a party dress, illustrated in an article, "If you have less than three dollars for your party dress" in the February 1913 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. The bodice of the dress was wrapped (a surplice style), and ruffles trimmed the edges of the surplice, the sleeves, and the skirt.

Figure 6.20 A party dress dressmaking pattern trimmed with ruffles on the surplice, sleeves, and the skirt, 1913[77]

[77] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1913, p. 78.

Two blouse dressmaking patterns illustrated in another Alice Long fashion column entitled, “What I see on Fifth Avenue” in the 1913 *Ladies’ Home Journal* (p. 41), showed ruffles. Long mentioned that the blouse on the left in Figure 6.21 could be used for an evening frock with a skirt to match. The blouse was claimed to be the popular drop-shoulder style, and was softly gathered at the V neck, where it was finished with a dainty frill of pleated net. The wrists of the sleeves were also trimmed with ruffles, although the strip appears to be thicker than the one used in Nelly Don’s pink gingham apron frock. The blouse on the right in Figure 6.20 was claimed to be for a woman who was slender, and the shawl collar and the cuffs of the sleeves were trimmed with ruffles. Long proclaimed that “these frills are very decorative and they have a wonderfully softening effect.”

Figures 6.22 and 6.23 were dressmaking patterns for summer frocks portrayed in fashion articles from *Ladies’ Home Journal*. The summer frock in Figure 6.22 was portrayed in an article, “Cool summer frocks of sheer fabrics” in the May 1914 issue (p. 55). It had an empire waist, kimono sleeves, and lace ruffle trimmings on the flat round collar, at the wrists, on all the edges of the peplum, and on the three tiers of the skirt at bottom. Dressmaking patterns in Figure 6.23 also showed summer frocks trimmed with ruffles at the neckline, on the cuffs of the sleeves, at the front yoke, or on the tiers of the skirt, as portrayed in an article, “Fourteen designs of summer clothes you can make at home” in the July 1916 issue (p. 64).

Figure 6.21 Blouse dressmaking patterns trimmed with ruffles at the neckline, collar, and wrists, 1913[78]

[78] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1913, p. 41.

Figure 6.22 Summer frock dressmaking pattern trimmed with lace ruffles on the collar, peplums, skirt tiers, and at the wrists, 1914[79]

[79] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1914, p.55

Figure 6.23 Dressmaking patterns for summer dresses trimmed with ruffles, 1916[80]

The 1915 *Bonwit Teller & Co*. ready-to-wear dress in Figure 6.24 was claimed to be the "epitome of daintiness." The ruffles were trimmed on the sleeves, on all the edges of the crossover blouse, and at the bottom half of the skirt of the dress. Also, the *Chicago Mail Order Company r*eady-to-wear evening or party frock in Figure 6.25, advertised in the 1916 *Ladies'*

[80] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1916, p. 64.

Home Journal, was cut on the empire line, trimmed with ruching on the waist yoke, had ruffles on the neckline and was priced at $10.95.

Figure 6.24 *Bonwit Teller & Co*. ready-to-wear dress trimmed with ruffles on the sleeves, blouse, and skirt, 1915[81]

[81] From *Harper's Bazaar*, May 1915, p. 49.

Figure 6.25 *Chicago Mail Order Company* ready-to-wear party frock trimmed with ruffles on the neckline, 1916[82]

Figures 6.26 and 6.27 are presumed to be home-made dresses stored in the *Kansas City Museum*, Kansas City, MO. The dress in Figure 6.26, appears to be a special occasion dress, possibly either for graduation or a dance, and was made of off-white net in lace and ivory ribbon, trimmed with ruffles on the waistline and on the lower three-fourths of the skirt. The dress in

[82] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1916, p. 61.

Figure 6.27, made of cotton gingham check, is trimmed with plain organdy ruffles at the crossover collar and on the cuffs of short sleeves. It is assumed to be made between 1916 and 1920, and likely was worn at home for a housedress, for an errand, or to go to market as was Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock.

Figure 6.26 The homemade dress for a special occasion trimmed with ruffles on the waist and skirt, Ca. 1916[83]

[83] Courtesy of the *Kansas City Museum*, Kansas City, MO, 68.1952.2. Photography by Y. Whang on November 12, 2008.

Figure 6.27 The homemade dress trimmed with ruffles on the collar and on the cuffs of sleeves, Ca. 1916-1920[84]

In short, many examples incorporated ruffle trimmings into a range of garments such as blouses, summer frocks, and special occasion dresses from 1911 through 1916. In fact, ruffles were claimed to add newness and prettiness to even many New York styles. Clearly, ruffle trimmings were one of the most popular design elements in women's fashion of the era, so it is not surprising that Nelly Don included such a feminine touch for her pink gingham apron frock.

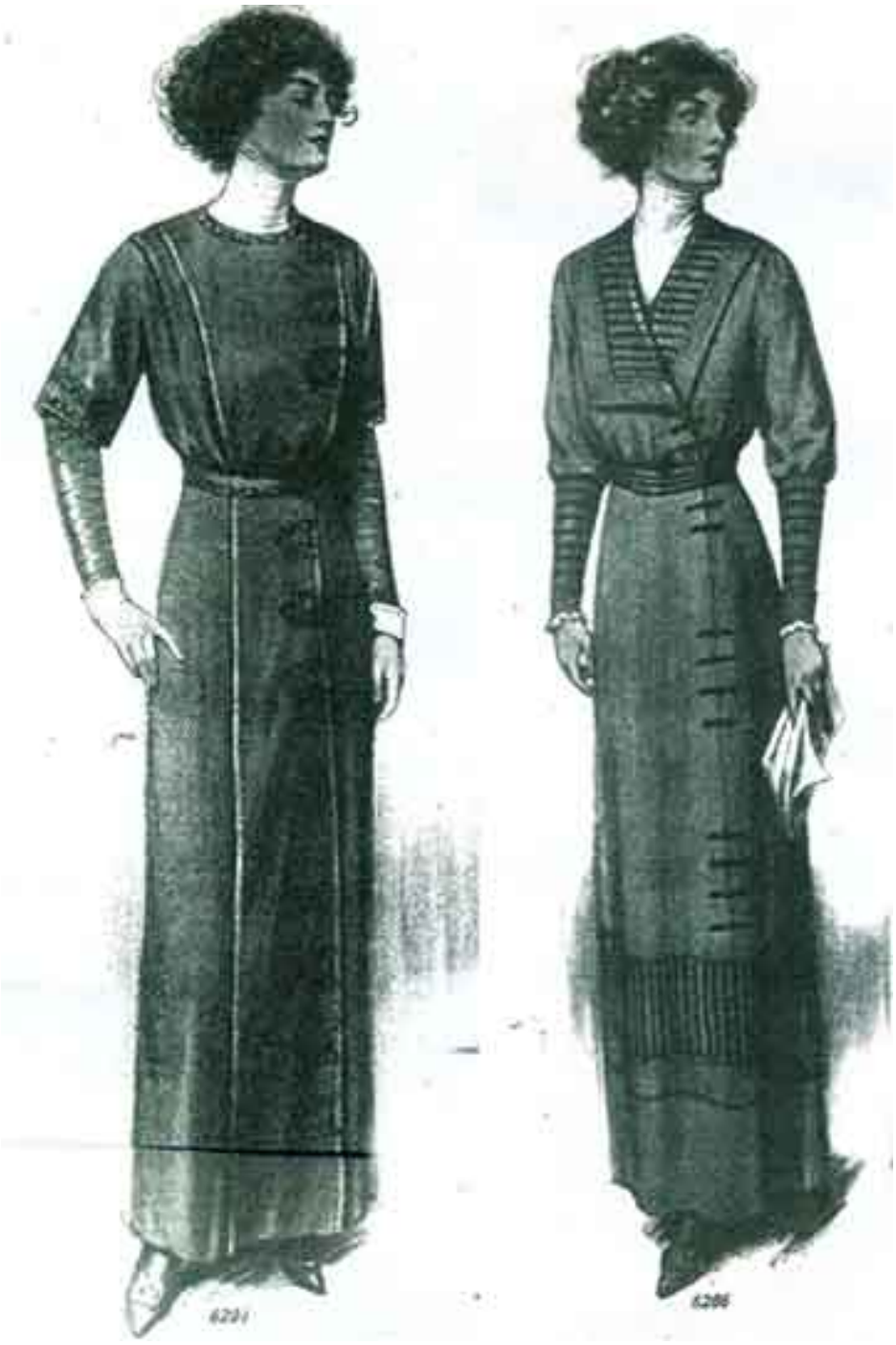
[84] Courtesy of the *Kansas City Museum*, Kansas City, MO, 1962.91.12. Photography by Y. Whang on November 12, 2008.

Asymmetrical Front Closure

Nelly Don's apron frock has an asymmetrical (side or unbalanced) button front closure that starts at the left shoulder and ends at the hip area. The practicality of this design feature was indicated in an article entitled, "The practical summer-morning dress" in the May 1914 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. The fashion editors of this article wrote that "a cool, comfortably fitting, easy-to-slip-on dress is an ideal summer possession and something that every woman should have" (p. 37). They went on to mention that the designs illustrated in the page would be practical since they could all be finished in coat fashion, open all the way down the front. An asymmetrical front closure was usually seen in more practical garments including daytime clothes, morning wear, business wear, and street clothes. This was feasible since garments with this feature could easily be slipped on, thus offering more practicality.

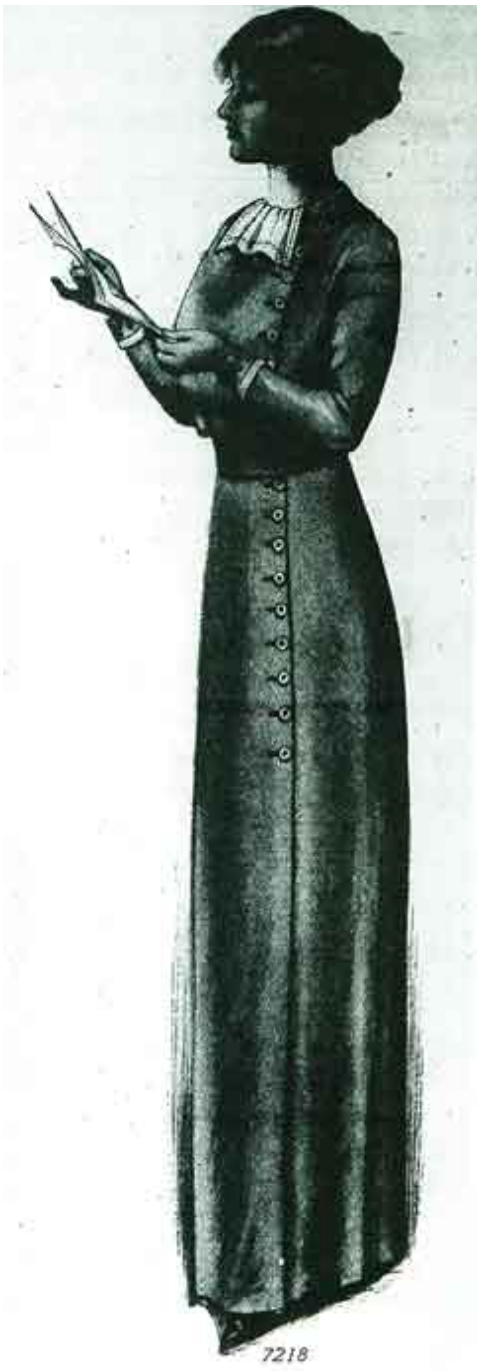
Figures 6.28 and 6.29 showed dressmaking patterns for business girl's dresses, structured with the asymmetrical front closure and promoted for their ease of wearing. "The slip-on-easy dress" (see Figure 6.28) in the September 1911 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*, described that, "with the vogue of the side and front closing in more practical daytime clothes the new dresses for autumn are sensibly adapted to the college or business girl who required garments which can easily be slipped-on" (p. 47). The dress on the right in Figure 6.28 had the side front closing with the broad sailor collar, empire waist, and waist yoke. The dress on the left also had the asymmetrical front closing, and was cut on the empire line with a waist yoke while the kimono sleeves had two tucks set on each shoulder. Additionally, an article, "The business girl's one-piece dress" in the October 1912 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (p. 49) stated that a one-piece dress for every-day business wear could not be equaled by any other type of garment for its economy and practicality, and portrayed several dressmaking patterns of one-piece dresses for business wear. Figure 6.29 was one such example with the asymmetrical button front closure and ruffled neckline.

Figure 6.28 Dressmaking patterns for business-girl's dresses with the asymmetrical front closure, 1911[85]



[85] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1911, p. 47.

Figure 6.29 Business girl's one-piece dress pattern with an asymmetrical button front closure, 1912[86]



The following one-piece dress in Figure 6.30 was one of the dressmaking patterns portrayed in an article, "The handy one-piece dress" designed by Mrs. Ralston in the October 1914 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (p. 104). This dress was cut with a curved front panel

[86] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1912, p. 49.

lapping wide on the side gore, creating a charming asymmetrical front closure. The round flat collar was also trimmed with ruffles, and the kimono sleeves had an under-arm inset.

Figure 6.30 Handy one-piece dressmaking pattern with an asymmetrical front closing, 1911[87]

[87] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, October 1911, p. 104.

The dressmaking patterns for street wear in Figure 6.31 also were designed with an asymmetrical front closure. These two outfits had a waist yoke with drop shoulder sleeves, and showed the new silhouette of hobble skirt fashioned by Paul Poiret, which was quite prolific in 1913 America.

Figure 6.31 Dressmaking patterns for street clothes with an asymmetrical front closure, 1913[88]

Dressmaking patterns for street, afternoon, or house dresses in Figure 6.32 were portrayed in the 1914 *Home Pattern Company* fashion catalog. They were all tunic style cut with an asymmetrical front closure, and, "tunic dresses… [were] not only popular for street and

[88] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1913, p. 32.

afternoon but may be made up in ginghams or percales into the most up-to-date housedresses" (p. 50). The model on the right in Figure 6.32 was actually described to be suitable either for house or street wear. Figure 6.33 shows another dressmaking pattern portraying a simple A-line flare one-piece dress with a side button front closure and the empire waistline.

Figure 6.32 Dressmaking patterns for street or afternoon or house dress with an asymmetrical front closure, 1914[89]

[89] From "*The Home Pattern Company 1914 fashions catalog*" by *Home Pattern Company*, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., p. 50.

Figure 6.33 One-piece dress pattern with an asymmetrical button front closure, 1915[90]

[90] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1915, p. 89.

Meanwhile, the 1916 *Chicago Mail Order Company r*eady-to-wear blouse advertised in the *Ladies' Home Journal* also showed the asymmetrical front closure (see Figure 6.34). It was described as a plain tailored blouse with new pointed opening, closed with silk loops and fancy ivory buttons.

Figure 6.34 Ready-to-wear waist with an asymmetrical button front closure, 1916[91]

In sum, the front closure in women's apparel was clearly apparent in the garments (i.e., business and school wear or house dress) that required easy putting on and taking off. A fashionable adaptation of that feature was the asymmetrical placement of the front closure, which

[91] From *Ladies' Home Journal,* February 1916, p. 61.

Nell Donnelly incorporated into her pink gingham apron frock. Ultimately, many popular designs attributes of the time period, including kimono sleeves, an empire waistline, a waist yoke, ruffle trimmings, and an asymmetrical front closure, as well as a shorter and wider hemline, were incorporated into Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock. These trends were prevalent in a wide range of garment designs in both public and private fashion from 1911 to 1916 showing that Nelly Don was aware of fashion trends. Her ability to combine fashion with function provided the foundation upon which was built the largest ready-to-wear apparel manufacturing company in the world by 1947.

Social Appeal: Influence of Consumption Culture on the Middle-class Housewife's Fashion Sensibility

Considering the forces behind consumption of goods in the 1910s, it is reasonable to assume that middle-class white American women would be exposed to and desire the pretty housedresses advertised in magazines and catalogs and seen in major department stores. Furthermore, this same consumer group could be predisposed to recognize and purchase the modern, pretty, and reasonably priced Nelly Don pink frock, and so her success in 1916 likely fits within the framework of emergent cultural and social trends. The women who bought Nelly Don's pink frock the morning it was first displayed at Peck's Dry Goods store undoubtedly could have seen the images of pretty women in pretty housedresses advertised in their favorite magazines.

The housedresses presented below were featured in various ads for housedresses in ladies magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Delineator, and Harper's Bazaar* from 1911 through 1916. Also, the clothing mail-order houses (e.g., *Simpson Crawford Co.*, *Bellas Hess & Co.*, *Allen, Brock & Smith Inc.*, and *Dix-Make*) advertised their fashion catalogs (also called style books) in those magazines, often using their housedress as a lure to entice readers to buy. The following advertisements portrayed in Figures 6.35 through 6.41 promote the housedress by appealing to the housewives' desire for fashion, practicality, and comfort, and at the same time offering value with good quality and reasonable price.

The *Simpson Crawford Co.* ad in the March, 1911 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (see Figure 6.35) maintained that "this extremely neat and attractive little 'Peter Pan' Home Dress is made of an excellent quality printed percale. The dress is not badly cut and simply thrown

together, as inexpensive garments are sometimes found to be" (style No. L101, priced at $1.50). The ad also emphasized the fine quality and careful finish of this model to urge middle-class housewives to purchase, offering descriptions of such design features as "a stylish turn-down collar and chic turn-back cuffs," and that "short plaits to yoke depth finish the waist in front." This ad also featured another model (style No. L108, priced at $3.95), which was claimed to be of the fine quality of the "pretty home dress," with a "careful" finish. It emphasized the superior quality of material that could stand repeated laundering and its design features of, "Gibson plaits front and back," "cute little kimono sleeves" trimmed with "bands of plain gingham matching the prevailing color stripe of the dress," and "the Princess panel at front."

Another *Simpson Crawford Co.*'s ad in the March 1912 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* portrayed a housedress (style No. L515, priced at $1) and other garments with their catchy sentence "The best values ever offered in New York or anywhere" (see Figure 6.36). The *Simpson Crawford Co.* claimed that their "styles were never more beautiful" and that they were "for the American woman who wants to clothe herself or any member of her family in the latest and best fashion at moderate expense." The housedress (style No. L515) had a Gibson shoulder, a waist yoke and an asymmetrical front closure.

Figure 6.35 *Simpson Crawford Co*. ad for its Fashion Book and housedresses in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1911[92]

L 101—**This extremely neat and attractive little "Peter Pan" Home Dress** is made of an excellent quality printed Percale. The dress is not badly cut and simply thrown together, as inexpensive garments are sometimes found to be. You don't get that kind of merchandise from Simpson-Crawford. The pattern of the material is a neat check, and we can furnish it with white ground and either blue or black checked effect. The dress is made with a stylish turn-down collar and chic turn-back cuffs. Both collar and cuffs are of plain French linene in a contrasting color. Dress is in one piece and buttons visibly at the front. Short plaits to yoke depth finish the waist in front. One patch pocket trimmed to match collar and cuffs. Plain gored skirt. Dress can be had with elbow sleeves only. *Express Prepaid* . . **$1.50**

No. L101
$1.50
EXPRESS PREPAID

L 1 0 8 — **You will be quite surprised at the fine quality of this pretty home dress** and the careful way it is finished. It is rarely you get the chance to obtain a dress of similar quality at our figure. The garment is in one-piece style and is made of superior quality fancy Roman-striped Madras, a dainty durable material that will stand repeated laundering and give you the best of wear. The waist has becoming Gibson plaits front and back, cute little kimono sleeves and is prettily trimmed with bands of plain gingham matching the prevailing color stripe of the dress. A charmingly stylish feature is the Princess panel at the front. The dress is trimmed with fine ocean pearl buttons and has a deep stitched skirt fold. Buttons invisibly at the back. Comes in an attractive three-toned striped design, showing black, blue and lavender stripes on a white ground. *Express Prepaid* . . **$3.95**

$3.95
No. L108 EXPRESS PREPAID

SIZES: 32 to 44 Bust measure. The skirts are about 40 inches long and have a deep hem so that you may alter the length to suit.

To receive full value for your money **you cannot afford to be without a copy of New York's Leading Fashion Book and Shopping Guide.**
It is FREE. Write TO-DAY.
Address Dept. L.

Simpson Crawford Co
SIXTH AV. 19th TO 20th STREET. NEW YORK.
FOUNDED 1865

[92] From *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1st 1911, p. 34.

Figure 6.36 *Simpson Crawford Co*. ad for its Fashion Book and housedress in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1912[93]

[93] From *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1912, p. 65.

Figures 6.37 and 6.38 illustrate *Bellas Hess & Co.*'s housedresses advertised in magazines. The one shown in Figure 6.37 was advertised in the January 1913 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* urging consumers to buy "this neat, serviceable, well-made house dress…made of good quality washable Linon [cotton lawn, imitated linen] which will wear and launder in the most satisfactory manner," priced at "only $1." It continued to describe such design features as "pretty cuffs of cotton corduroy to match the collar," "contrasting color piping" trimmed on the front down the entire length of the dress and at the joining of the waist and skirt, and front fastenings with "fine pearl buttons." It finally emphasized that "this is an outfit that any practical housekeeper will be glad to have. It is a big bargain at this low price." The *Bellas Hess & Co.*'s housedress featured in the ad from the January 1914 issue of *The Delineator* (see Figure 6.38) was advertised as a "neat, well-made house or porch dress of pretty style, made of high-grade washable striped gingham," priced also at only $1. As with the ad in Figure 6.36, the fine and practical quality of the fabric with fast colors were emphasized and design features were described in detail, such as "becoming vest effect of plain gingham to match color of stripe in material," "little striped revers at neck," and "contrasting gingham-covered buttons."

Figure 6.37 *Bellas Hess & Co*. ad for housedress and sweeping cap in *Ladies' Home Journal*, 1913[94]

[94] From *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1913, p. 32.

Figure 6.38 *Bellas Hess & Co*. ad for housedress in *The Delineator*, 1914[95]

[95] From *The Delineator*, January 1914, p. 43.

Allen, Brock & Smith, Inc.'s "trim house dress" was advertised at a special price of 98 cents in the March 1914 issue of *The Delineator*, claiming that "you need a housedress that is dainty, neat and pretty." This ad also emphasized that consumers who purchased their ready-made clothing from their mail-order catalog could "save money, time, strength, labor," and they would "get better materials, better styles, better workmanship, better fit than you could get in any other way" because the company bought in such large quantities and had many connections. After its pitch on the company's forte, the ad described the design features of the housedress such as "the new coat effect," that it was "embroidered in an elaborate floral spray design" on the waist, and piped throughout style lines with fine white braid. The ad finally emphasized one more time that consumers could not find another housedress of this quality at such a low price of 98 cents anywhere around New York.

Figure 6.39 *Allen, Brock & Smith* ad for its Style Book and housedress in *The Delineator*, March 1914[96]

[96] From *The Delineator*, March 1914, p. 75.

The following two housedress ads in Figure 6.40 and 6.41 were featured in *Harper's Bazaar*. The ad for "*Dix-Make*: House and Porch Dresses" was portrayed in the March 1915 issue (see Figure 6.40) and claimed that "you can look your prettiest in the home, when you wear one of the modish Dix-Make house dresses." It also maintained that the company's housedresses were made in a variety of styles (200 styles) for all size figures, emphasizing their beautifully tailored and tasteful styles. Next, the ad for the "Utility Housedress" by *M. Alshuler Co*. was featured in the March 1915 issue with its catch phrase "Be prettily housedressed" (see Figure 6.41). It emphasized that "the Utility housedress is chic as well as incomparably convenient. It slips on like a coat and adjusts in 9 seconds. Just two buttons at waist, giving perfect bust and waist fit" (p. 107).

Figure 6.40 Ad for *Dix-Make* housedress in *Harper's Bazaar*, March, 1915[97]

[97] From *Harper's Bazaar*, March 1915, p. 107.

Figure 6.41 Utility housedress ad in *Harper's Bazaar* in March 1915[98]

[98] From *Harper's Bazaar*, March 1915, p.107.

In brief, although mail-order companies produced dresses for other occasions, they used housedresses as their main illustrated item in their ads. It probably indicates not only the company's intention to sustain a woman's attention with the value of their product, but also that they understood a woman no longer wanted to wear drab looking, self-made housedresses, even at home. Consequently, ads catering to the middle-class housewives predictably encouraged a desire to look pretty even at home (e.g. "look your prettiest in the home"). A housewife who did not have enough time or skill in the art of dressmaking might have purchased one of those housedresses in the ads, or if she was skilled at sewing, she might have purchased a housedress pattern or tried to copy one from an ad. Thus, the advertisements in ladies' magazines surely could have influenced a housewife to want to appear as the women in the ads were portrayed. The advertisers of the time employed appropriate tactics promoting a desire to look fashionable and at the same time promoting housedresses with value (i.e., quality, practicality, low price, a variety of styles with attractive design features) within the reach of the middle-class income. Thus, considering the factors of consumption culture in the 1910s, it is reasonable to assume that middle-class white American women would be exposed to and desire the pretty housedresses advertised in magazines and catalogs and seen in major department stores. The same consumer group could be predisposed to recognize and purchase the modern, pretty, and competitively priced Nelly Don frock. This social aspect along with the design appeal of Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock brought her huge success and thus played a role as a material culture example illustrating the modernized role of the middle-class American housewife.

CHAPTER 7 - Conclusion

This study investigated why Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock was so popular and found that the house dress illustrates women's shifting role from producer to consumer in the early 20th century. Both primary and secondary sources such as interviews, correspondence, extant artifacts, newspapers, ladies' magazines, mail-order catalogs, journal articles, dissertations, books on history, culture, and society were examined to develop the thesis of the study.

First, the design of the pink gingham apron frock was examined to determine how it was constructed, the materials of which it was made, and what design elements it integrated. Next biographical data was collected on Nelly Don to understand her background. Once this preliminary research on Nelly Don and her pink gingham apron frock was complete, research was conducted to develop the thesis which determined two main reasons why Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock was well accepted: first, it was appealingly designed, and secondly, it played to the emergence of consumerism and all that it entailed. In its design aspect, her housedress was very appealing since she incorporated popular design elements of the time including kimono sleeves, empire waistline, waist yoke, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffle trimmings. With respect to the rise of consumerism, many clothing options, prices, and the various outlets for promoting those clothes, and mass advertising, as well as fashion articles in the mass media, promoted and instilled in consumers a desire to look as pretty as the images of the women in the advertisements. Thus, this targeted consumer group, white middle-class American women, was predisposed to recognize and purchase the stylish, practical, yet affordable Nelly Don pink gingham frock.

To develop the thesis, an interpretative approach was employed to integrate information, connecting disparate pieces into a conceptual framework on the role of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock in cultural, social, and, political change. Following is a summary of this framework and evidence to support the arguments above.

The early 20th century was a transitional period when dramatic cultural, social, technological, and political changes occurred due to rapid industrialization. Women's lifestyle and roles changed as they entered new service oriented jobs, joined clubs, participated in sports

activities, and engaged in social reforms. This more active lifestyle brought about change in fashion, which became practical and comfortable. World War I (1914-1918) accelerated this trend as female war workers sought simple, comfortable styles that also showed a military influence. Influence from Paris, the central source for fashion news and inspiration, also affected American style, leading to the "copy of a Paris model" or "Paris model" (Ewing, 2001). As American fashion was influenced by French designers and Paris fashion, Oriental trends appeared in American fashion, and kimono styles became popular for leisurely, at-home wear and even for high fashion. However, changes in women's lifestyle and roles did not occur independently, but rather as a manifestation of a much broader social change during the time period in general. In short, households and society became modernized because of the wide variety of new mass-produced commodities, gadgets, and ready-to-wear clothing changing the role of a housewife from that of a producer to that of a consumer. As Americans' purchasing power increased, women began to fulfill their needs by purchasing ready-to-wear clothes, widespread commodities, and time-saving gadgets. As a result, a consumption culture emerged and fully bloomed by 1920.

Riding on this new trend, manufacturers, retailers, and advertisers were eager to sell more merchandise by establishing department stores and mail-order houses, and creating intriguing advertisements. To reach consumers more effectively, manufacturers and retailers began to advertise their mass-produced ready-to-wear in the ladies' magazines, and the publishers of home dressmaking patterns wrote a variety of fashion related articles about the latest trends and methods to make clothes to sell their patterns. Meanwhile, the advertisements for housedresses appealed to the housewife's sense of value and desire to appear pretty even while doing housework. For instance, *Allen, Brockman & Smith* (1914), a fashion mail-order company, advertised that they could offer consumers better values at less money because they bought in large quantities, while stating that "you need a housedress that is dainty, neat and pretty" (p. 75). *Dix-Make* (1915) stated "you can look your prettiest in the home, when you wear one of the modish Dix-Make House Dresses" (p. 107). Advertisements such as these appealed to the middle-class sense of value while urging the homemaker to look her best at home.

In contrast, the women who wore the Mother Hubbard at home in the 19th century may not have been as conscious of their images as perhaps the early 20th century women who were inundated with advertising images and fashion articles. Modern consumerism influenced

women's perceptions and preferences for dress, enticing them to emulate the advertised persona and images. The popularity of Nelly Don's pink gingham housedress perhaps fits here. The women who purchased Nelly Don's stylish, practical and affordable housedress the first day it appeared at *Peck's Dry Goods Company* in Kansas City had been predisposed through mass media to desire a fashionable housedress.

However, if Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock had not been well designed, those women eager to emulate the images displayed in the ads and fashion articles in the ladies' magazines would not have purchased the housedress. Nelly Don created a fashionable and functional housedress by incorporating popular design elements of the time along with practical features. Furthermore, her house dress offered value for these features at a competitive price of $1.00. The price of house dresses at the time ranged from 89 cents to $1.98 at general mail-order company such as *Montgomery Ward* and from $2.25 to $3.95 at the department store such as *Altman*. To support this claim, a survey of the garment designs presented in the magazines and catalogs, and extant garments from the period were examined.

From 1911 through 1916, many examples integrated the design elements of the kimono sleeves, empire waist, yoke design, ruffle trimmings, and asymmetrical front closure into a range of garments. Clearly, the kimono sleeves and empire waist were very popular, and were utilized in both high and low price points of fashion, particularly in Oriental-inspired designs that focused on comfort. There were also many examples incorporating ruffle trimmings into blouses, summer frocks, and special occasion dresses. In fact, the decorative design element of ruffles was claimed to give a touch of newness and prettiness. Furthermore, the front closure in women's apparel was actually apparent in garments that required the practicality of easy putting on and taking off. Moreover, the skirt length became shorter and the skirt width wider around 1916 than in previous years, and Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock reflected these trends accordingly.

More specifically, Nelly Don successfully integrated important elements desired by the middle-class white American housewife in the early 20th century into a housedress: stylish fashion, feminine charm, and practicality. The frock's stylish fashion was exemplified in the empire cut, kimono sleeves, yoke design, and asymmetrical front closure; ruffle trimmings demonstrated feminine charm; and the front closure achieved practicality, which was reinforced by shorter skirt length, wider skirt width, and the durable, washable gingham fabric. In other

words, the pink gingham apron frock exemplified where high fashion elements met practicality while preserving the feminine charm in a dress for everyday wear. It blurred the distinction between public and private fashion by integrating both elements. Thus, it can be concluded that the design attributes in Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock were prevalent in a wide range of garment designs from 1911 to 1916. Additionally, it is reasonable to assume that Nelly Don kept up with fashion trends, and that when she designed her pink gingham frock, she incorporated them deliberately, ensuring great success in 1916, which led to the largest ready-to-wear apparel manufacturing company in the world by 1947.

In addition to her design elements, Nelly Don offered the average housewife a purchasing alternative and simultaneously a modern lifestyle free of long hours spent sewing. Furthermore, the pink gingham apron frock was one of those housedresses that could be worn for housework, out on the street for an errand, or for visiting a friend. Thus, it is plausible to argue that Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock provided a clear illustration of women's shifting role from producer to consumer. While the exceptional success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock benefited from the social and cultural trend in transforming the role of the American white middle-class housewife, at the same time, it channeled that transformation into regions where progress was relatively slower than in more industrialized regions such as New York City.

Limitations

While the research supports my thesis, nonetheless, the study is limited because of a lack of primary anecdotal testimonies of women describing their experiences with clothing consumption, and their lives and roles at the time. It was impossible to collect this information since the period of interest was about 100 years ago. Also, while examining contemporary artifacts was a key component of data collection, artifacts such as housedresses and other occasion garments were too limited to add more in-depth knowledge about the housedress options and real clothes that women wore. Instead, the analyses had to rely on the limited amount of physical evidence found through searching in museums, archives, and private collections as well as secondary sources. The range of secondary sources to strengthen the information gathered from the primary sources was also limited, yet enough information was found to interpret and explore the reasons behind the success of the Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock. It is, however, true that while the limited availability and range of contemporary evidence constrained the scope of the framework, it did not compromise the validity of the thesis.

On the other hand, the narrow analysis adds to the value of this study's contributions. The early 20th century was a critical time period forcing many changes in a woman's life, and the significance of the role of the housedress, with Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock providing an example, in this transitional period provides valuable insight into the role of fashion in social change. This study interpreted available information about one of the most critical eras for middle-class American housewives through a visible reflector of the time: Nelly Don's1916 pink gingham apron frock. Hopefully, the collected information will encourage other researchers to examine the interrelationships among fashion, women's lives, and society.

Future Studies

This study examined the reasons behind the success of Nelly Don's first ready-to-wear dress, which provided impetus for starting what was to become the largest women's wear garment manufacturing company in the world by 1947. Future research topics related to Nelly Don are plenty due to the fact that Nelly Don produced various affordable and quality garments catering to the average worker and homemaker from 1916 until she sold her business in 1956. Nelly Don's retail business strategies, advertising techniques, and design niche (i.e., original textile prints), as well as her philanthropic achievement are viable research topics.

As an extension of this study, researchers might focus on the collection of 24-inch dolls, each clothed in the best-selling Nelly Don dress of every year since the first pink gingham apron frock in 1916. This doll collection not only depicted styles of the 36 years of Nelly Don's creations, but it presents a historical picture of American ready-to-wear fashion during that period (1916-1952). Extending the conceptual framework proposed in this study, researchers could investigate design elements including silhouette, design details and lines, and exclusive fabrics, categorizing the dresses accordingly to determine how they could possibly reflect fashion, technological, cultural, social and/or political changes. For example, World War II falls in this time period bringing even more changes to the role of the housewife. Such research could be important for helping the researcher delve into historically significant knowledge about the design evolution of Nelly Don's line and its role in social change through the perspective of mass-produced women's ready-to-wear garments from the late 1910s to the early 1950s.

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Appendix A - Glossary[99]

Afternoon dress: Term used during the 19th century (c.) to indicate a dress for daytime social functions. In the early 20th c. indicated a dressy dress, suitable for a garden party or formal tea.

Ascot tie: Broad neck scarf, tied so that ends come horizontally on each side of knot, then cross diagonally, worn by men fastened with scarf-pin, but also by both men and women.

Basque: Bodice closely fitted to waist, often extending beyond the waistline in a short shirt-like extension. French word meaning short skirt, as on bodice or jacket; originally on doublets, which was men's jacket worn in the 17th c. In the early 20th century, it refers to a woman's waist-length jacket or dress or blouse that fits tightly through waist and rib cage.

Beach Cloth: Even-weave fabric with cotton warp and mohair weft used for summer clothes.

Bias binding: Narrow strips cut on the bias (line taken, in folding or cutting materials, 45 degrees to selvages), thus flexible for use in covering raw edges of curved necklines, armholes, or used for trimming.

Blouse: Clothing for the upper part of the body, usually softer and less tailored than a shirt, worn with skirt, pants, suit, or jumper.

Bonnet: Sometimes used as a generic term for head covering, but is more exclusively applied to headwear for women, children, and infants that fits over the back and top of head and ties under chin.

Bustle: Pad or frame worn below waist at back to puff up skirts.

Calico: Plain weave, light- to medium-weight cotton usually printed with small figured pattern (e.g., flowers, geometric forms) on one side.

Cassinette: Cloth having warp (lengthwise direction of the cloth) of cotton, filling (crosswise direction of the cloth) of wool or wool mixture.

Chambray: Either refers to gingham of fine quality, having colored warp and white filling or a similar but heavier cored yarn fabric used for work clothes. Other weights are used for sports clothes and dresses.

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[99] The definition included in this glossary were excerpted from "*The Fairchild Dictionary of Fashion (3rd Ed.)*" by C.M. Calasibetta & P. Tortora, 2003, New York: Fairchild Publications Inc., *"A dictionary of costume and fashion: Historic and modern*" by M.B. Picken, 1988, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., and "Fabrics for clothing" by E.J. Gawne, 1973, Peoria, Il: Chas.A. Bennett Co., Inc.

Charmeuse: Trade name for soft, light-weight fabric in satin weave with twilled back, having subtle sheen, used for draped dresses or for formal gown if it is silk charmeuse.

Charles Frederick Worth (1826-1895): French couturier born in England went to Paris in 1845 and became famous in the 19th century as dressmaker for Empress Eugénie and the ladies of the court of France's Second Empire. He is considered to be the founder of the haute couture industry, and the House of Worth was a fashion leader without peer dressing the courts ladies and high society women all over Europe and America. Worth was the innovator in the presentation of his gowns on live models and was the first to sell models to be copied in America and England

Chemise: Dress style that derives from the undergarment called a chemise, hanging straight from shoulders.

Chiffon: Soft, delicately transparent fabric in plain weave of silk, rayon, etc, used for dresses, blouses, scarves, and so forth.

Coatee: Short, close-fitting coat with short skirt or coattails worn in mid-18th century and also in 1860s.

Cotton suiting: A type of cotton fabric with enough body to tailor well for suitable for shirts, suits and pants.

Corduroy: Sturdy cotton or rayon cut pile fabric in either plain or twill weave with cords or ribs, used for coats, trousers, suits, skirts, dresses, etc.

Covert cloth: A very firm twill weave fabric used for men's and women's suits and coats. Its imitation made of cotton is used for work clothes, caps, and uniforms.

Crepe: Any of various fabrics having crinkled surface, caused by either way of twisting of filling yarns or novelty weave or chemical treatment.

Crepe de chine: Fine, light-weight silk crepe-textured fabric made with highly twisted yarns in the crosswise yarns.

Crossover collar: A convertible collar with two large lapels that is overlapping when buttoned up to the neck.

Dance dress (frock): Youthful, often bouffant in style, not-too formal evening dress.

Daytime dress: Dress less elaborate than afternoon dress, suitable for general town wear and luncheon.

Dressing gown: Worn by men as a bathrobe, made in wraparound style with long shawl collar and waist sash, and for women, it refers to voluminous wraparound worn in boudoir.

Epaulet (epaulette): Ornament shoulder trim on military uniforms, sometimes fastened with a button on shoulders of uniforms and also used on military-inspired style fashion coats, jackets, shirts, etc. (e.g., trench coats).

Evening dress (gown): Women's dress usually made of opulent or delicate fabric, for formal occasions or evening wear to a dance, concert, theater, or the like.

Flannelette: Soft cotton fabric, napped on one side, used for sleeping garments, interlinings, and shirts.

Foulard: Soft, washable silk with fine twill, usually having small figures on the ground, used for dresses, blouses, lounging robes, ties, and scarves. Also used for soft, fine, mercerized cotton fabrics in twill weave.

Flounce: Strip of material either circular, bias-cut, or straight-cut then gathered or plaited and sewn to garment, lower edge often being left free, usually used on the bottom of skirt, sleeve, or cape.

Galatea: Durable cotton fabric of fine quality in satin weave.

Gingham: Firm, yarn-dyed light- or medium-weight, washable cotton fabric in plain or fancy weave. It is woven in solid colors, stripes, checks, or plaids, used for dresses, shirts, aprons, and children's clothes.

Gore: Skirt section, wider at hem than top, providing fullness and shaping to waist without using dart. In sewing, a triangular or trapezoid insert of fabric that creates desired shape, used in skirts and bell-bottom pants.

Handkerchief linen: Light-weight linen used for handkerchiefs, lingerie, neckwear, dresses, blouses, and infants wear.

Hem: The lower edge of an item of clothing, which is folded under to create a finished bottom of clothing.

Inset: Piece of fabric inserted into a garment for decoration or fit.

Lawn: Fine, soft, sheer fabric usually woven in cotton in plain weave, filled with sizing and starch. Often printed after it is woven, it is used for handkerchiefs, dresses, blouses, aprons, and curtains.

Leg-of-mutton (gigot): Refers to sleeve shaped like a leg of mutton that is full, loose, rounded from shoulder over elbow and fitted at wrist. Gibson waist has this sleeve shape.

Linen: Sturdy fabric woven of smooth-surfaced flax fibers, usually in plain weave. Collectively, articles made of linen including household articles.

Madras: Firm cotton fabric woven in satin, basket, or figured weaves used for shirts, dresses, aprons, etc. It is also woven in durable, wash silk, usually striped used for tailored blouses, dresses, men's negligee shirts.

Madras gingham: Gingham of finer yarn than ordinary gingham with usually more colors.

Matelasse: It is a French word for cushioned, which is the appearance of this fabric. It is made of two sets of filling and warp yarns that interlace to produce a crepe effect, usually made of silk, rayon, or etc.

Meteor crepe: Superior grade of light-weight silk crepe with satin-finished inside.

Navy middy blouse: Loose, unbelted, hip-length, slip-on blouse with sailor collar worn by the U.S. Navy and by boys since the 1860s, but by the 1890s it was adopted for women for a sport activity.

Net: Open-work fabric with hexagonal meshes of varying sizes.

Organdie (organdy): Light sheer cotton fabric with a permanently crisp feel in plain weave.

Outfit: Complete ensemble, normally worn for a certain occasion.

Pannier: Oval wire, whalebone, or wicker hoop extending far out sides over the hip, giving effect of puff form.

Peplum: Extension of dress that comes below waistline, sometimes, gathered, pleated, or flared. Popular in mid-1860s, 1890s, and revived periodically in the 20th c.

Percale: Very common close, firm cotton fabric in plain weave usually printed but may be solid colors. Checks and plaids may be printed to simulate gingham used for dresses, blouses, sleepwear, children's clothes, and sheets.

Plaid: Common term for pattern woven of various colored, yarn-dyed yarns in stripes of different width running at right angles to form varied squares, usually woven of twill cotton, woolen, worsted, silk, or synthetic fabric.

Plisse crepe: Light-weight cotton crepe in plain weave with permanent puckered stripes, or allover blistered effect produced chemically.

Revers: Another name for lapels, actually the facing of the lapels, which fold back to show the reverse side of the collar and lapels, used on blouses, coats, suits, dresses, etc.

Ruching: Trimming made by pleating a strip of lace, ribbon, net, fine muslin, or silk so that it ruffles on both sides, made by stitching through the center of pleating. For a contemporary usage, it is defined as clothing with large rippled areas formed by gathers.

Sateen: Cotton fabric in firm satin weave with lustrous finish, used for underskirts, dresses, linings, slip-covers, etc.

Seersucker: Fabric with crinkled effect that is made by a slack-tension method where there are two warp beams; the yarns on one beam are held at a regular tension while those on the other beam are at a slack tension, and as the fabric is woven, the slack yarns crinkle. It is used for dresses, summer suits, and men's sport jackets.

Sports clothes (suits): Originally designated apparel worn for active sports such as tennis, golf, horseback riding, bicycling, ice skating, etc. By the 1920s and 1930s used for casual wear for leisure time and suitable for onlookers (e.g., sweaters, skirts, blouses, pants, and shorts). In the post-WW II period, sportswear has become synonymous with casual wear and is worn for day or evening and even for work.

Street dress (clothes): Simple, tailored dress appropriate for daytime wear for shopping, business, etc.

Surplice: Refers to garment itself that overlaps diagonally in front or neckline that is wraparound blouse, dress, or robe with one side lapping over other to form a V in center front.

Taffeta: Smooth, glossy, somewhat stiff silk fabric in plain weave and now made of other fibers than silk.

Ticking: Firm cotton cloth in twill weave, with yarn-dyed stripes on white or colored background, and sometimes made with printed design.

Top: Clothing worn as a blouse or shirt with pants or skirt mainly for sportswear and sometimes for evening. The term came into use in the 1930s when halter tops were in vogue for both sportswear and evening.

Tuck: A method of controlling fullness in a garment in which part of the garment piece is pleated (folded) and stitched to the fold, and fullness is released where the tuck ends.

Tunic dress: Two-piece dress with a long over blouse, usually to hip line or longer, worn over a separate narrow skirt or a one-piece dress designed to give this effect.

Vestee: Woman's decorative imitation vest, half vest, or blouse-front attached around neck, worn with a dress or jacket.

Veiling (veil): Net fabrics made in different constructions to from open-weave used for trimming. It also refers to light, thin piece of fabric (made of net, tulle, or some other transparent, lace-like fabric), worn over head or face for ornament, protection, or concealment.

Velvet: Fabric with soft, short pile surface of looped warp yarns, and plain back. It may be made of all silk, silk or rayon pile with cotton back, or synthetic fibers, suitable for formal gowns and evening coats.

Voile: Fine, transparent or semi-transparent fabric of cotton, silk, rayon, or wool. Cotton fabric of two-ply, hard-twisted yarn is dainty and durable, used for dresses, blouses, etc.

Waist: Referring to blouse or shirtwaist; term in use from around 1890s to the 1920s.

Walking costume/dress (promenade costume/dress): Clothes proper for walking and shopping as contrasted with a carriage dress (worn for riding in carriage or wagon) in last half of 19th century.

Wrapper: Men's loose overcoat worn in 1840s, whether single- or double-breasted. In the early 20th c., it referred to housedress, and evolved from a woman's dressing gown.

Appendix B - Manuscript: Nelly Don's 1916 Pink Gingham Apron Frock: An Illustration of the Middle-class American Housewife's Shifting Role from Producer to Consumer

Abstract

Nell Donnelly created a stylish, practical, affordable pink gingham apron frock in 1916, selling out her first order of 216 dresses the first morning at $1 apiece at Peck's Dry Goods Company in Kansas City. This study investigates the forces behind the success of her dress, and finds that during the early 20th century, woman's role became modernized, shifting from that of producer to consumer, and that clothing—in particular, the housedress—was a visible reflection of this shift. Specific attributes contributed to the success of the apron frock in design and social perspective. First, her housedress incorporated current design elements including kimono sleeves, empire waistline, waist yoke, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffle trimmings sensibly. Socially, mass advertising and mass media articles promoted fashion consciousness in women to look as pretty as those in the ad or article. As a result, integrating trendy design elements into an affordable housedress along with the growing demand for a stylish, yet practical housedress guaranteed the success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock. As such, the availability and value of the apron frock provide a vivid illustration of woman's shifting role: its popularity as an alternative to old-fashioned Mother Hubbard housedresses demonstrates both women's new consumer awareness as well as their growing involvement in the public sphere.

Introduction

Nell Donnelly Reed (1889-1991), Kansas-born housewife, created tasteful housedresses for herself, friends, and family, and they encouraged her to make them available for sale, so in 1916, she took the pink gingham apron frock (see Figure 1) to *Peck's Dry Goods Company* in Kansas City, a leading dry goods store. Her first order for 18 dozen sold out the first morning at $1 apiece, leading to the *Donnelly Garment Company* (DGC) established in 1919 by Nell and her first husband, Paul Donnelly. They employed 1,000 people and made 5,000 dresses a day by 1929, and became the largest dress manufacturing company in the world by 1947. DGC was known for producing affordable, quality garments, catering to ordinary women until it was sold in 1956 (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006).

Insert Figure 1

Nelly Don researchers (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987) maintained that the only housedress available when she created hers in 1916 was the Mother Hubbard, a shapeless, dull colored-dress available at dry goods stores for 69 cents. However, sewing patterns and a variety of ready-made housedresses were promoted in advertisements, fashion columns, and mail-order catalogs around 1916, indicating that housewives did indeed have options. Nonetheless, given the initial sales of her housedress, the overarching research question was why Nelly Don's 1916 housedress was so well-accepted? The answer to this question is rooted in the modernized role of early 20th century women as their role changed from producer to consumer, and the notion that clothing—in particular, the housedress—was a visible reflection of this shift. At this time, women's fashion began to modernize following contemporary cultural, social, and political surroundings shaped by a more active and mobile lifestyle and World War I (1914-1919). Thus, fashion reflected social and cultural progress (Blanke, 2002), and Nelly Don's apron frock serves as a material culture example with its modern, practical, yet affordable style.

Our thesis offers two main reasons why Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock was well-accepted; first, its design incorporated popular design elements including kimono sleeves, empire waistline, waist yoke, asymmetrical front closure, and ruffle trimmings sensibly.

Secondly, mass advertising and media articles instilled in women a desire to look as pretty as the women illustrated in the publications. Such women were perhaps predisposed to purchase the stylish, practical, affordable pink gingham apron frock. To support the thesis, the study employed a qualitative historical research methodology to gather and interpret data using primary and secondary sources such as interviews, extant artifacts, company correspondences and letters, advertising materials, magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals, thesis and dissertations, and books on history, culture, society, and fashion. Touliato and Compton (1988) maintained that historical research depends mainly on a systematic collection of data, and the logical interpretation of this evidence. Thus, historical researchers integrate facts into meaningful generalizations rather than merely recounting facts so as to expand and clarify existing knowledge as well as discover new knowledge. McDowell (2002) stated that the historical study encourages researchers and readers to develop a greater awareness of and interest in the past, appreciate the forces that have brought about change, and that it provides a framework we can use to make sense of our experience and guide our actions. Therefore, this study employed an interpretive approach to formulate a conceptual framework (see Figure 2). This framework postulates that industrialization influenced the cultural, social, and political environment, and in turn women's fashion as well as their roles and lifestyle. Specifically, industrialization modernized American households and society, generating a consumption culture. In this context, Nelly Don's apron frock reflected current cultural, social, and fashion trends in this transformative period. It also served as a material culture example illustrating the shifting role of the middle-class American housewife from producer to consumer.

Insert Figure 2

Nell adopted the persona of 'Nelly Don,' which was both a label of the company and her moniker; therefore, in this study, Nelly Don refers to Nell Donnelly Reed herself and to Nelly Don dresses. The name 'Nell Donnelly' also refers to Nelly Don before her second marriage to James A. Reed.

Housedress

The house dress (or housedress) in this study refers to the inexpensive, washable work dress worn by middle-class women with limited or no domestic help, not the elaborate version of

at-home attire worn by the wealthy with domestic servants. This definition excludes other occasion dresses for shopping, walking, sports activity, and formal events. The house dress was also termed a morning dress, work dress, wash dress, house frock, house gown, tub frock, wrapper, or bungalow apron. In the 19th century, the Mother Hubbard was the middle-class housewives' house dress (Calasibetta, 1988; Wilson & Newby, 2004) or maternity dress (Helvenston Gray, n.d) for its loose-fitting comfortable nature. However, in the early 20th century, the Mother Hubbard was viewed as old-fashioned (Austin, 1906; "Maternity frocks," 1915).

Despite scholars' claim that the only available house dress option around 1916 was the ugly, shapeless Mother Hubbard (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006; Snider, 1991; Wilding, 1987), there was a consumer demand and supply of alternative ready-made housedresses. Neither the old-fashioned Mother Hubbard nor the wrapper that evolved from the bed robe were popular between 1911 and 1916, and styles of house dresses progressed from loose fitting styles to those with an increased fit at the waistline or waist yoke, controlled by gathers or pleats, and fashionable style features. The fashionable and decorative style features included Gibson shoulders, asymmetrical front closure, yoke skirt, flared skirt full at lower portion, empire waistline, lapped fold down the center front, three-quarter length sleeves with self-material or contrasting fabric cuffs, piping, pearl buttons, and so forth. Catalog offerings, department or dry goods stores, and dressmaking patterns gave the American middle-class housewife a range of housedress options, many of which could serve as examples of modernization. Furthermore, despite the availability of other house dresses at the time, Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock sold sensationally, which invites analysis as to why it was so popular and why it serves as an example of modernization.

Women's Lives and Fashion Shaped by the Cultural, Social, and Political milieus of the early 20th century

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women started to idolize the "New Woman," portrayed as the symbol of freedom, individuality, and modernity. The New Woman appeared in public and at outdoor activities and women's clubs either for self-enhancement or for social and political causes (Steele, 1985). By 1920, more than 8 million women had joined the work force (many in new positions such as typists, telephone operators, or salesclerks), thousands went to college, and untold numbers participated in sports (Kidwell & Christman, 1974; Tortora &

Eubank, 1998). While 50% of single American women in 1910 worked, only around 10% of married American women reported employment (Cross & Szostak, 1995). Nelly Don left her rural home for Kansas City when she was 16 years old, worked as a stenographer before getting married, went to college at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, MO, after which she returned home and made housedresses as attractive as street clothes (McMillen & Roberson, 2002; O'Malley, 2006).

New Women believed in progress, and some fought for legislation to punish evildoers, and prevent wrongdoing (Schneider & Schneider, 1993). For example, according to Blanke (2002), activists including Jane Adams, Florence Kelley, and Alice Paul, who worked in the settlement houses, expanded social reforms to child care, urban pollution, global peace, and consumer protection. The women's suffrage movement (a political effort to earn women's right to vote) contributed to the social change. Jane Addams (1910) (the founder of the settlement house in 1889) argued in "Why women should vote" in *Ladies' Home Journal* that their votes were needed concerning the many social and educational issues (p. 21). Club women and settlement workers believed that they could upgrade the quality of life by cleansing local, state, and federal houses; also, women workers turned to unions and the National Women's Trade Union League to fight for better wages and working conditions. Meanwhile, housewives found their households changing; they were expected to produce less, and began to rely more on consumables (Schneider & Schneider, 1993).

Women's fashion went through a major transformation in the early 20th century with all these changes (Ewing, 2001) and women began to demand affordable and practical ready-to-wear clothing (Miller, 1999; Ewing, 2001). The baroque opulence of shape and decoration of the Edwardian styles were replaced with simpler, straighter, more columnar lines with much less decoration (Ewing, 2001; Hill, 2004), reflecting the spirit of the New Woman. Fashion adapted to various outdoor and sports activities including bicycling, swimming, horseback riding, golf, and tennis with specialty costumes (Livoni, 1996). One of many examples is the 1915 ready-made *Altman's* "sports clothes" portrayed in their spring and summer catalog, featuring a waist and a skirt that was casual and comfortable, yet decorative and fashionable with pleats, big pockets, a skirt yoke, tucks, and a neck band trimming with contrasting color fabric (B. Altman & Co., 1995, p. 10). Moreover, when assembly production lowered the cost of Ford's Model T from $3,000 in 1900 to $600 by 1912, middle-class Americans and the higher-paid working class

could afford them (Blake, 2002). An automobile costume (motoring clothes) was soon developed to protect enthusiasts from the weather and dust from unpaved roads. World War I (1914-1918) accelerated this trend as female war workers sought simple, comfortable styles that also showed a military influence including big patch pocket, caplets, epaulets and metallic buttons (Hill, 2004). The military influence was seen in ads for ready-made garments and dressmaking patterns of the time. Influence from Paris, the central source for fashion news and inspiration, also affected American style, leading to the "copy of a Paris model" or "Paris model" (Ewing, 2001). Moreover, the modern French designers' embracing of the construction components in East Asian garments influenced American design following its export to Western society after 1854 (Mears, 2005). As American fashion was influenced by French designers and Paris fashion, Oriental trends appeared in American fashion, and kimono styles became popular for leisurely, at-home wear and even for high fashion (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). Alice Long's (1914) article indicated this trend well, stating in *Ladies' Home Journal* that "So on Fifth Avenue one can not walk a block without seeing some adaptation of this [Paris] style…Really this season we are borrowing from almost every Oriental country and the effect is most picturesque: we adapted the Persian lampshade tunic and headdress, the Chinese colors and embroideries, kimono effects and collars from Japan and burnoose draperies from Arabia" (p. 24). Clearly, such changes in women's lifestyle manifested a much broader change in general. Therefore, the next section presents the modernization of the household and society to better clarify its driving force.

Modernization of American Household and Society

By 1900, America's population was about 76 million, which supported an industrializing economy and reached peaks of around 800,000 in the early 1880s and in the1910s (Norris, 1990). In the early 20th century, Italians, Jews, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans immigrated to the U.S., and many thousands of them headed for big cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia for factory jobs, needle trades, and the expanding clothing industry (Kidwell & Christman, 1974). The invention of weaving and spinning machines, the automatic bobbin-changing loom, and printing machines made fabric in great quantities and varieties possible. Thus, extraordinary and expensive 18th century fabric such as calicos became cheap by the last quarter of the 19th century (Kidwell & Christman, 1974). Cross and Szostak (1995) noted that Henry Ford employed serial production and produced Model Ts on a mass scale to reduce cost. A few years later, Nelly Don also employed assembly line techniques to mass-produce her

ready-to-wear clothing (O'Malley, 2006). With the expanded work force and market for mass-produced goods and scientific management caused by technology-driven industrialization, the U.S. was becoming an industrial society (Callan, 2006).

Industrialization also impacted women's work at home before which the family was the core social unit, mostly rural, large, and self-sustaining. In pre-industrial households, women spent a great deal of time spinning and weaving cloth, tending garden and poultry, and making clothes, whereas industrial housewives purchased these items mass-produced (Cowan, 1983; Connolly, 1994; Cross & Szostak, 1995). Households became centers of consumption as the housewife's role transformed from producing to consuming in the early 20th century. According to Severa (1995), whether women decided to buy or make clothing depended on socioeconomic status, whether she worked for wages, had access to shops, had enough spare time, had skill in sewing, and a sense of style. However, sewing continued to resonate with feminine work, economic need, women's roles, cultural traditions, and artistic enjoyment and satisfaction (Helvenston & Bubolz, 1999). Gordon (2004) also noted that in the early 20th century, women's magazines emphasized the pleasure and self-fulfillment of sewing to entice women since sewing-related advertisements were one of their revenue sources, and they were competing with the ready-made clothing market. Besides, ladies magazines also sold their own patterns; *The Delineator* published by *Butterick Co.* promoted and sold *Butterick* patterns, and *Ladies' Home Journal* advertised dress patterns that were published by *Home Pattern Company*. They rigorously promoted their patterns by describing new fashion, materials, or colors, stressing economy and ease of dressmaking, and some patterns offered design options to create alternative looks. Gordon (2004) claimed that this versatility encouraged creativity as well as pleasure. We believe that fashion editorials and illustrations of desirable design features attracted home dressmakers and influenced the middle-class housewife's fashion sensibility and desire for a new look. For instance, an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* illustrated a choice of dressmaking patterns, colors, and fabrics for dresses and suits and presented the marked change in style for autumn ("New autumn dresses selected by the fashion editors," 1914). Moreover, multi-purpose was the theme of an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* entitled "The girl who makes her own clothes" (Koues, 1910). Koues says that a wise girl made her clothes at home using their suggested pattern for different purposes including house dress, office wear, school dress, or afternoon dress changing fabric choice, neckline, sleeve design, and length, or adding

embellishments like lace or braid. Another tactic to promote sewing and encourage creativity was a dress contest held by *Ladies' Home Journal* ("Summer dress contest," 1916). The magazine advertised that the participant should make a dress costing not more than two dollars. They offered $25 for first prize; $20 for second; $15 for third; $10 for fourth; and $5 each for fifth and sixth prize. These examples indicate magazine fashion editors' attempts not only to inform readers of fashion trends and sewing advice and ideas, but also to entice them to sew.

At this time, most women likely had both home-made and ready-made clothing. However, by 1920, women bought 80% of goods for their families (Scanlon, 1995), becoming a consumer rather than a producer. Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock provides an ostensible example of this shift from industrialization to modernization. The following section delves into another relevant consequence of social modernization: consumption culture. Evidently, consumption culture contributed to the success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock, being a major phenomenon of social modernization.

Manifestation of Consumption Culture

Peiss (1986) noted that Americans, by 1920, embraced consumption, and defined their material environment and themselves by their mass-produced goods. While consumerism, the belief that goods conferred meaning on individuals and their roles on society, manifested in daily experiences (Cross, 2002), the culture of consumption gradually "encompassed service and comfort as desirable goals, intermingling competition and cooperation and blurring the lines between work and leisure" (Leach, 1984, p. 320).Correspondingly, the home was solicited by mass circulation magazines, mail-order catalogs, newspapers, and other outlets for advertising manufacturers' stock of mass-produced goods (Fox & Lears, 1983). Some manufacturers established mail-order firms, others founded department stores and they all used mass-media to promote their merchandise, which helped push a consumer-oriented culture. Peiss (1986) stated that shopping for clothing, similar to shopping for many other consumer products, became synonymous with fulfillment and pleasure as promoted by the advertisements. According to Leach (1993), by the turn of the century, the mass retail businesses such as huge, prolific department stores surpassed the retail dry goods stores of the past, and fell into frenzied competition, forcing new ways of merchandising to entice consumers such as display, decoration, and service.

In the 1910s in the Kansas City area, before the full-scale department store was established, only dry goods retailers such as *Peck's Dry Goods Company* existed where Nelly Don took her house dress. Dry goods stores sold ready-to-wear clothing, hosiery, gloves, underwear ("*Linhoff Dry Goods Co*.," 1916), as well as dress goods (e.g., ginghams, calicos, percale, lawns, batiste, sateen, and bleached and unbleached muslin), ribbons, buttons, handkerchiefs, "fancy work" supplies, yarn and knitting needles, tea towels, various notions, and so forth (Landis, 1986). Likely their displays were not as intriguing as at the well-established department stores, but they perhaps displayed or advertised their merchandises conscientiously to entice consumers to purchase them. For example, the following *Linhoff Dry Goods Company* ad printed in *The Democrat-Tribune* newspaper in 1916 shows this strategy well: "On the second floor at our new location, and take a glimpse at the many New Garments which we are showing this season. The new styles are all practical and serviceable, and best of all, you can find a good variety of styles so moderately priced that if the garment appeals to you, the price surely will" ("*Linhoff Dry Goods Co*.," 1916, p. 1). Apparently, women in the Kansas City area had the options of either purchasing housedresses through mail-order catalogs or at local dry goods stores unless they hired professional dressmakers or sewed themselves.

Meanwhile, general mail-order catalogs such as *Montgomery Ward* and *Sears* provided rural dwellers with fashion news and trends as well as a variety of yard goods and ready-made clothes with value, style, and a reasonable price. Specialty clothing mail-order firms such as *Bellas Hess & Co. The Bedell Company, Perry, Dame & Co*., *Philipsborn, National Cloak & Suit Co, Allen, Brock & Smith*, and *Simpson Crawford Co*. often provided the latest "New York style" or "Paris fashion" at affordable prices. The department stores such as *Gimbel* and *Altman* also flourished and published a mail-order catalog to reach consumers; stressing their ready-made garments had value, quality, and style. For instance, a caption in the *Gimbel*'s catalog clearly emphasized its marketing strategy focusing on value, "this charming morning frock is a splendid example of Gimbel style in the famous Gimbel quality and at a money-saving price that is characteristic of Gimbels" (*Gimbel Brothers*, 1994, p. 8). In addition, influences of high fashion from abroad were promoted, "The newest of modes of Paris reproduced by Gimbel" represented "The Paris of America" (*Gimbel Brothers*, 1915, p.7). Even those who could not afford a stylish, high-end garment were made aware of current modes of fashion from such appealing presentations.

As a result, both mail-order firms and department stores played a key role in emerging consumption culture, enticing consumers to buy and look as stylish and modern as the attractive-looking ladies in the catalog pages or window displays. The sheer proliferation of clothing options, prices, and the various outlets perhaps accelerated desire to purchase and consume more, which in turn fueled consumerism. The middle-class housewife who had had to sew at home did not have to anymore with available, affordable, tasteful ready-made clothes like Nelly Don's pink gingham frock, which perhaps hastened her transformation into consumer. Ladies' magazines also played a significant role in promoting mass-produced ready-to-wear. Waller-Zuckerman (1989) noted this feasibility since, in the early 20th century, circulation soared showing consumers could be reached this way as magazines needed advertising dollars to thrive. In 1891, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Delineator* (ladies' magazines) had a circulation of 600,000, and 393,000 respectively. By 1912, the circulation of *Ladies' Home Journal* had increased to 1,538,360 and *The Delineator* to 930,600. Accordingly, as advertisers sought ladies' magazine's pages, their advertising revenues increased steadily. Thanks to expanding readership and growing advertising revenues, Benson (1986) noted, ladies' magazines could influence and entice women to look, dream, and purchase as department stores did. This study addressed only ladies' magazines as their circulations were the highest during the period studied, though many types of publications advertised ready-to-wear clothing (Waller-Zuckerman, 1989). At the same time, their target consumers were perhaps the same as those who purchased the Nelly Don dress, middle-class white American women (Scanlon, 1995), and Nelly Don's success in 1916 probably fits within this framework of cultural consumption. The next section revisits Nelly Don's apron frock and analyses its design attributes and further the influence of mass media, especially housedress ads from the ladies' magazines to develop the reasons behind its success.

Reasons behind the Success of the Nelly Don's Pink Gingham Apron Frock

Advertisements for housedresses appealed to the housewife's sense of value and desire to appear fashionable. *Bellas Hess & Co.*, a fashion mail-order firm, urged consumers to purchase their "neat, serviceable, well-made house dress" at $1 by stating that "If you do [keep your house], you will be charmed with this practical, comfortable and becoming house dress and sweeping cap" in a 1913 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal* (see Figure 3). The ad also emphasized that the house dress "is made of good quality washable Linon [cotton lawn, imitation of linen] which will wear and launder in the most satisfactory manner," and portrayed its fashionable

design features including “pretty cuffs of cotton corduroy to match the collar,” “contrasting color piping,” and “fine pearl buttons.”

Insert Figure 3

An ad for *Allen, Brockman & Smith*’s “trim house dress” from *The Delineator* (1914), offered consumers better values at less cost as they buy in large quantities, urging that “you need a housedress that is dainty, neat and pretty” (see Figure 4). The ad emphasized that consumers cannot find another housedress of this quality at such a low price, 98 cents, anywhere around New York. Another *Bellas Hess & Co*.’s (1914) housedress was advertised as a “neat, well-made house or porch dress of pretty style, made of high-grade washable striped gingham,” priced also at only $1 in *The Delineator* (p. 43). As with the previous ads, this page also described the fine and practical quality of the fabric’s fast colors along with detailed design features such as “becoming vest effect of plain gingham to match color of stripe in material,” “little striped revers at neck,” and “contrasting gingham-covered buttons.” *Dix-Make*, a uniform manufacturing company, claimed in an ad from 1915 *Harper’s Bazaar* that “you can look your prettiest in the home, when you wear one of the modish *Dix-Make* house dresses” (p. 107).

Insert Figure 4

Advertisements such as these appealed to the middle-class sense of value while urging the homemaker to look her best at home. A housewife who did not have enough time or skill for dressmaking might have purchased a housedress; or if she was skilled at sewing, she might have purchased a housedress pattern or tried to copy one. Thus, the advertisements in ladies’ magazines surely played a role in influencing the middle-class housewife’s' desire to appear as the women portrayed in the illustrations.

Logically, if Nelly Don’s pink gingham apron frock had not been attractive, those women eager to emulate images in ads or fashion articles would not have purchased it. As shown in Figure 1, the pink gingham apron frock has kimono style sleeves, a raised waistline or empire waist, and a waist shaped with a yoke (waist yoke). The kimono sleeve was very popular due to the strong Oriental influence in the early 20th century and appeared in at-home wear as well as

high fashion (Tortora & Eubank, 1998). The empire waistline was the predominant waistline from the late 18th century to the 1820s during the Empire and Directoire periods in France, and has been periodically popular throughout fashion history (Picken, 1999). Numerous garments from about 1911 to 1916 were designed with the empire waistline, which manifested its popularity. A waist yoke, the fitted portion of a garment to which the bodice and skirt is sewed, was also popular during this time period.

We strongly believe that the pink gingham apron frock was well-designed with popular design elements. The survey of the garment designs presented in the magazines and catalogs and extant garments from the period provided evidence of the popular design elements, speaking to the success of Nelly Don's design. Roughly from 1911 through 1916 (the period when Nell Donnelly stayed home and produced dresses), many examples integrated kimono sleeves, empire waist, waist yoke, ruffle trimmings, and asymmetrical front closure. The kimono sleeves, empire waist, and waist yoke were very popular design attributes, and appeared in a range of garment designs for patterns and both high and low price-point fashion. The garments with the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and/or waist yoke are shown in Figures 5 through 8. Designers often incorporated popular features in one garment, as Figure 5 shows. A popular combination was the kimono sleeve style with an empire waist and/or a yoke design. The *Bellas Hess & Co* ready-made dresses (see Figure 5) advertised as "the latest New York Style" in the 1911 *Ladies' Home Journal* shows this trend well. Two advertised dresses were style No. 35L31 (dress on the left) made of "finest quality imported striped gingham" and style No. 35L32 (dress on the right) made of "finest quality washable mercerized batiste." The ad claimed that the "charming one-piece washable dress" (No. 35L31) had "the short kimono sleeves" with "a fold of striped gingham", and its "high girdle forms a slight Empire effect and is outlined by solid color gingham." Meanwhile, the "beautiful white lingerie dress" (No. 35L32) also had "short kimono sleeves" and "slightly raised waistline, giving [the] Empire effect, formed by fold of colored batiste." Two one-piece dressmaking patterns for lingerie gowns that Mrs. Ralston presented in an article, "Some new fashions that Paris promises for the summer," in 1914 *Ladies' Home Journal* also shows this trend well in the flowing lines and loose cut of the kimono sleeves, a slightly raised waistline, and hobble skirt along with ruffle trimmings (see Figure 6).

Insert Figure 5

Insert Figure 6

These elements also appear in couture designs. For instance, Lady Duff-Gordon (Lucile, 1863-1935), a prominent couturier, introduced her designs in 1915 *Harper's Bazaar*, showing kimono sleeves, empire waist, and/or waist yoke (see Figure 7). Further examples of these trends were in the 1915 ready-to-wear tea gowns from *Harper's Bazaar* (see Figure 10), which sold for $18.50 each. Apparently, the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and/or yoke design were very popular, and both ready-to-wear and couture designers utilized them from about 1911 to 1916, which argues for the design elements cutting across garment type and socioeconomic status.

Insert Figure 7

Insert Figure 8

Many examples also incorporated ruffle trimmings into a range of garments such as blouses, summer flocks, and special occasion dresses from 1911 through 1916. The subsequent article written by Blanche G. Merritt entitled, "What I see in New York" from the January 1912 issue of Ladies' *Home Journal*, described the "new" popular element of ruffles very well. Merritt mentioned that this page was designed to assist the reader who wanted a new dress, something different with "a touch of newness or prettiness or of the unexpected" for the upcoming spring season (p. 33). Merritt pointed out that "all the newest models I have seen in New York have the dainty frill at the wrists and side front," and that "wrist ruffles, which you will see are used on two of the models on this page, are so new and popular that they are put wherever lace or frills are used about the neck of the dress." The "lingerie waist" in Figure 9 was one of the features on this page trimmed with ruffles at the wrists and side front. The home-made cotton gingham check dress (Figure 10) examined at the *Kansas City Museum*, Kansas City, MO, was trimmed

with organdy ruffles at the collar and cuffs. Clearly, ruffle trimmings were one of the most popular design elements in women's fashion of the era, so it is not surprising that Nelly Don included such a feminine touch for her pink gingham apron frock.

Insert Figure 9

Insert Figure 10

Furthermore, the front closure appeared in women's garments that required easy donning and removal (i.e., daytime clothes, morning wear, business wear, and street clothes), which was feasible since garments with this feature could easily be slipped on, thus offering more practicality. The practicality of this design feature was indicated in an article entitled, "The practical summer-morning dress" in the May 1914 issue of *Ladies' Home Journal*. The fashion editors of this article wrote that "a cool, comfortably fitting, easy-to-slip-on dress is an ideal summer possession and something that every woman should have" (p. 37). Some examples are dressmaking patterns for street, afternoon, or house dresses illustrated in a 1914 *Home Pattern Company* catalog (see Figure 11). The dresses were all tunic style cut with an asymmetrical front closure, showing that "tunic dresses are not only popular for street and afternoon but may be made up in ginghams or percales into the most up-to-date housedresses." The model on the right in Figure 11 was described as suitable either for house or street wear depending on the fabric.

Insert Figure 11

The skirt length became shorter and the width wider around 1916 and Nelly Don's 1916 frock reflected this trend. Although the silhouette, skirt width, and skirt length fluctuated, elements of the kimono sleeves, empire waistline, waist yoke, ruffle trimmings, and asymmetrical front closure consistently appeared in a wide range of designs from1911 to 1916. Thus, it can be concluded that the design attributes in Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock were prevalent in a wide range of garment designs from 1911 to 1916. Additionally, it is

reasonable to assume that Nelly Don kept up with fashion trends, and that when she designed her pink gingham frock, she incorporated them deliberately, ensuring great success in 1916. Her ability to combine fashion with function provided the foundation upon which was built the largest ready-to-wear apparel manufacturing company in the world by 1947. In this way, her frock reflected social and cultural change in this transitional period, and exemplified the modernization of the middle-class American housewife.

Conclusion

Our thesis is that Nelly Don's 1916 apron frock was well-accepted for two main reasons; design elements and social change. Socially, mass advertising and articles in mass media promoted fashion sensibility and instilled in consumers a desire to look as pretty as the women portrayed in the ad or article. In contrast, the women who wore the Mother Hubbard at home in the 19th century may not have been as conscious of their images as perhaps the early 20th century women who were inundated with advertising images and fashion articles. Modern consumerism influenced women's perceptions and preferences for dress, enticing them to emulate the advertised persona and images. We believe that the popularity of Nelly Don's pink gingham housedress fits here. The women who purchased Nelly Don's stylish, practical and affordable housedress the first day it appeared at *Peck's Dry Goods Company* in Kansas City had been predisposed through mass media to desire a fashionable housedress.

However, if Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock had not been well designed, those women eager to emulate the images displayed in the ads and fashion articles in the ladies' magazines would not have purchased the housedress. Nelly Don created a fashionable and functional housedress by incorporating popular design elements of the time along with practical features. Nelly Don successfully integrated important elements desired by the middle-class white American housewife in the early 20th century into a housedress: stylish fashion, feminine charm, and practicality. The frock's stylish fashion was exemplified in the empire cut, kimono sleeves, yoke design, and asymmetrical front closure; ruffle trimmings demonstrated feminine charm; and the front closure achieved practicality, which was reinforced by shorter skirt length, wider skirt width, and the durable, washable gingham fabric. In other words, the pink gingham apron frock exemplified where high fashion elements met practicality while preserving the feminine charm in a dress for everyday wear. It blurred the distinction between public and private fashion by integrating both elements. In addition to her design elements, Nelly Don offered the average

housewife a purchasing alternative and simultaneously a modern lifestyle free of long hours spent sewing. Furthermore, the pink gingham apron frock was one of those housedresses that could be worn for housework, out on the street for an errand, or for visiting a friend. Thus, it is plausible to argue that Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock served as a material culture example illustrating the modernization of the middle-class white American housewife in the early 20th century. While I believe the exceptional success of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock benefited from the social and cultural trend in transforming the role of the American white middle-class housewife, at the same time, it channeled that transformation into regions where progress was relatively slower than in more industrialized regions such as New York City.

While the research supports our thesis, nonetheless, the study is limited because of a lack of primary anecdotal testimonies of real women describing their experiences with clothing consumption, and their lives and roles at the time. Analyses had to rely on an extensive search from secondary sources to strengthen the information gathered from the primary sources, yet there was sufficient evidence to support and interpret why Nelly Don's house frock was so well-accepted. It is, however, true that the limited availability and range of contemporary evidence constrained the scope of the framework. On the other hand, the narrow analysis adds to the value of this study's contributions. Early 20th century was a critical time period forcing many changes in a woman's life, and the significance of the role of Nelly Don's pink gingham apron frock in this transitional period provides valuable insight into the role of fashion in social change. This study attempted to systematize available information about one of the most critical eras for middle-class American housewives through a visible reflector of the time: Nelly Don's1916 pink gingham apron frock.

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Figure 1. On the left: Full scale reproduction of the Nelly Don's 1916 pink gingham apron frock, c. 1940. Courtesy of the *Jackson County Historical Society of Independence*, MO. Photograph by M. Day. Second from left: Pink gingham apron frock, first modeled by Anna Ruth Donnelly, Paul Donnelly's sister, from "*Nelly Don: A stitch in time,"* by T. O'Malley, 2006, MO: The Covington Group, p. 2. On the right: A detailed flat drawing of pink gingham apron frock, illustrated by the researcher using Adobe Illustrator.

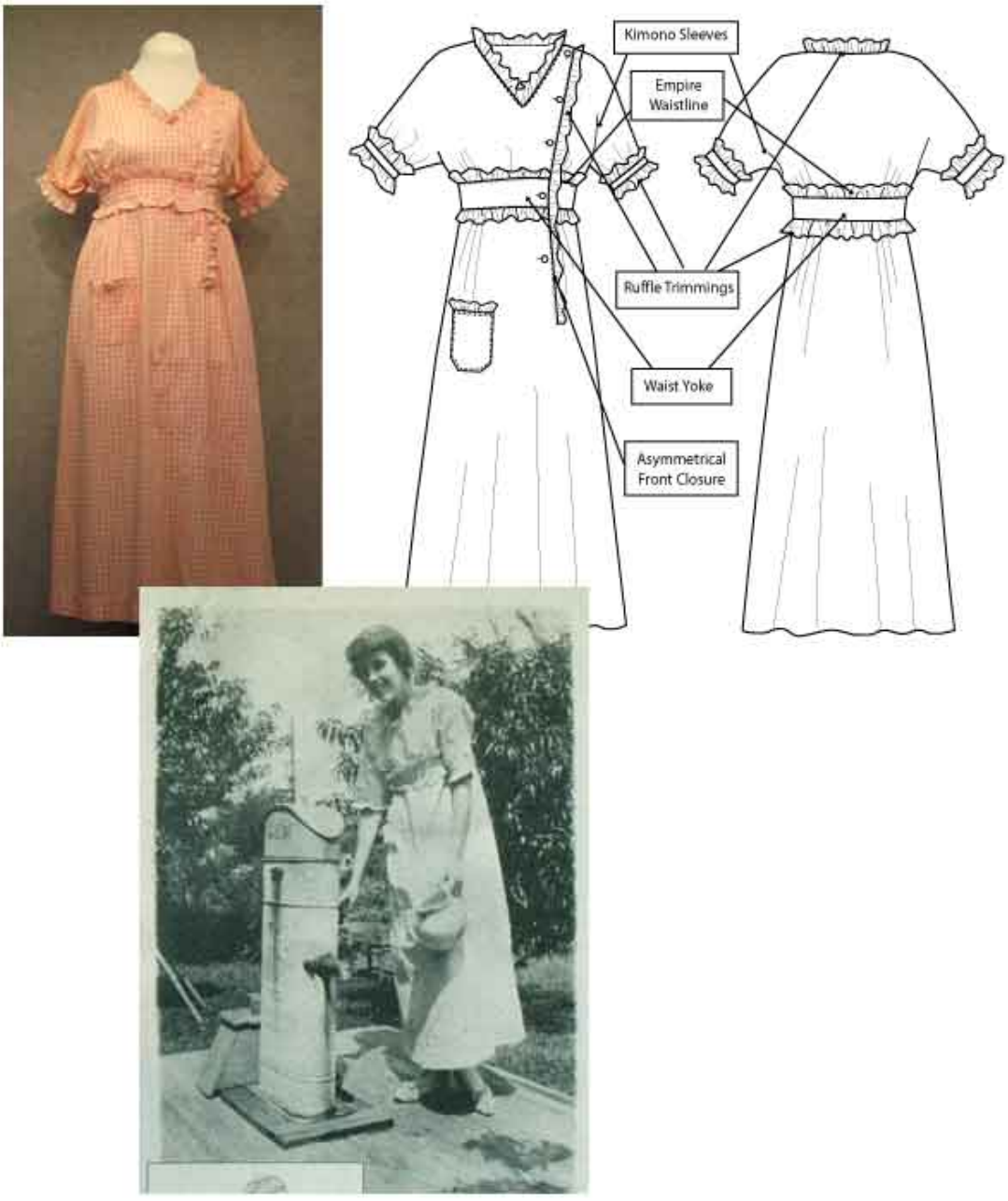

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for interpretation of the success of the 1916 housedress created by Nelly Don

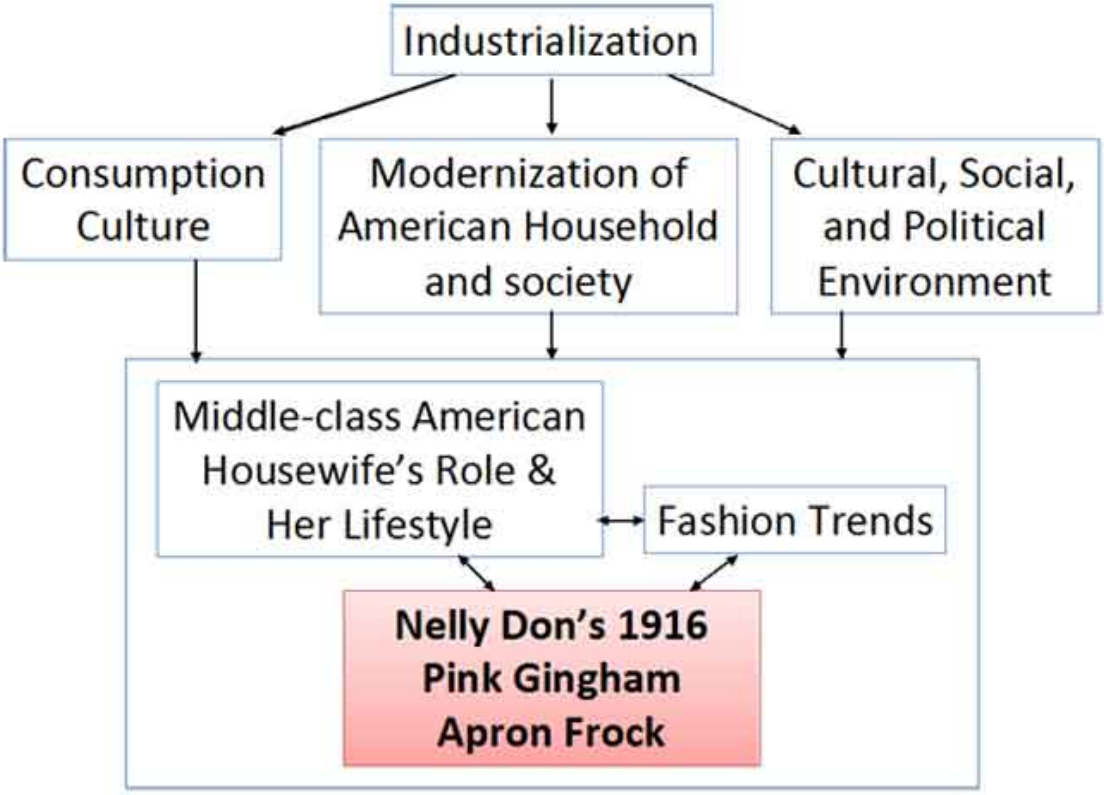

Figure 3. *Bellas Hess & Co*. ad for housedress and sweeping cap promoting sense of value and style. From *Ladies' Home Journal*, January 1913, p. 32.

Figure 4. *Allen, Brock & Smith* ad for Style Book and housedress stressing better values at less money with better fit, styles, and workmanship. From *The Delineator*, March 1914, p. 75.

Figure 5. The latest New York style of *Bellas Hess & Co.*'s ready-to-wear dresses with the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and/or waist yoke. From *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1911, p. 59.

Figure 6. Dressmaking patterns for lingerie gowns with the kimono sleeves, empire waist, and ruffle trimmings. From *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1914, p.38.

Figure 7. Couture garments designed by Lucile with the kimono sleeves, empire waistline, and/or waist yoke design elements. From *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1915, p. 42.

Figure 8. Ready-to-wear tea gowns with kimono sleeves and empire waist design features. From *Harper's Bazaar*, June 1915, p. 60.

Figure 9. The lingerie waist dressmaking pattern trimmed with ruffles at the wrists and side front. From *Ladies' Home Journal,* January 1912, p.33.

Figure 10. Homemade dress trimmed with ruffles on the collar and on the sleeve cuffs, Ca. 1916-1920. Courtesy of the *Kansas City Museum*, Kansas City, MO, 1962.91.12. Photography by Y. Whang.

Figure 11. Dressmaking patterns for street, afternoon, or house dress with an asymmetrical front closure. From "*The Home Pattern Company 1914 fashions catalog*" by Home Pattern Company, 1995, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., p.50.