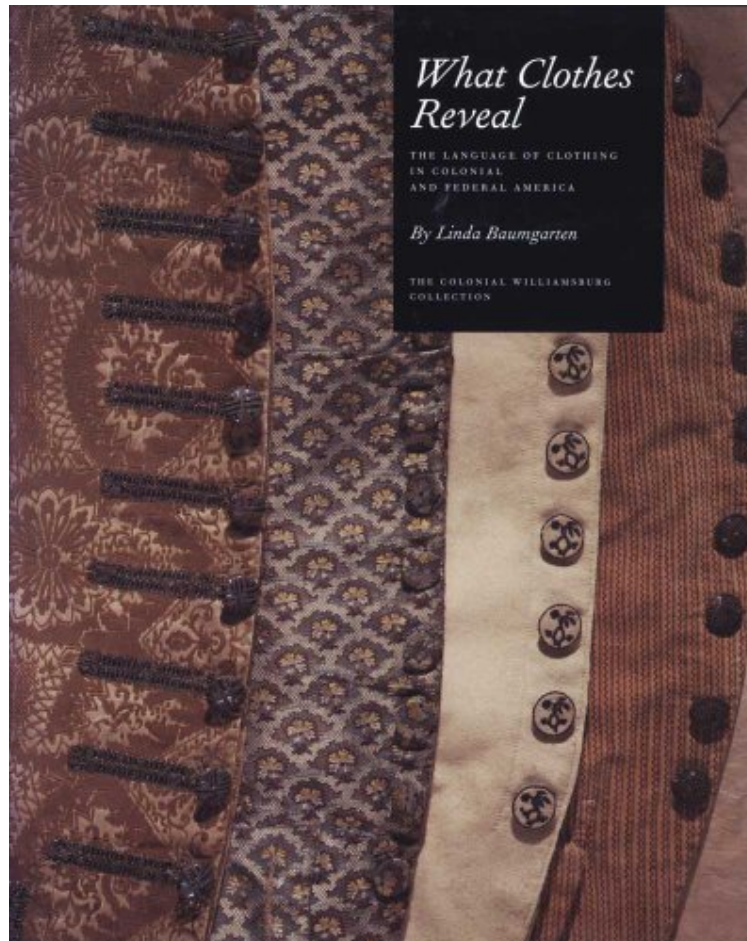


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## What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America (Williamsburg Decorative Arts)

Linda Baumgarten

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**Linda Baumgarten : What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America (Williamsburg Decorative Arts)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America (Williamsburg Decorative Arts):

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial Federal AmericaBy Jon N. Austin"What Clothes Reveal" is first and foremost a history of American and British wearing apparel from the 18th and early 19th centuries found in the Colonial Williamsburg collection. It is also a social history of the period illustrated by garments and accessories that allows the reader to delve beneath the outer surface silhouette seen in paintings, prints, and on museum mannequins to reveal garment construction, fit, underpinnings, alterations,

and simple thrift. While many costume histories focus on a single gender and social class, "What Clothes Reveal" includes examples for men, women, and children--not only gentry but also common folk. While author Baumgarten's "Eighteenth Century Clothing at Williamsburg" was intended to be a catalog of the collection, "What Clothes Reveal" goes several steps further. Baumgarten explores the deeper meaning of individual items and their construction, offers an curatorial interpretation of the garments and objects, and places them in a historical context by identifying details about the original owner where possible. While not intended to be the minute examination of garments in her "Costume Close-up: Clothing Construction and Pattern, 1750-1790," it is an important companion. While the general photos are typical, the detail photos are rare in costume histories. Readers shouldn't ignore the sidebars, the timeline, or the footnotes. The extensive bibliography offers a superb list of additional titles to assist with further research. This book is a must for costume historians, curators, collectors, re-enactors, and others who seek to understand 18th and early 19th century garments and the lives and times of those who wore them. Baumgarten unbuttons many mysteries in a thoroughly readable style, leaving the reader anxious for her next contribution to the field of costume history.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy A. SowersAs described and would buy it again!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Ms. NilsonGreat book for costume design research.

Paintings of upper-class men and women tell an important part of the history of costumes, but surviving garments themselves reveal even more. Every crease, stitch, and stain in a piece of clothing supplies information about its wearer and its era. This stunning book features eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century garments from the premiere collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Illustrated with more than 300 color photographs, including many details and back views, the book treats not only elegant, high-style clothing in colonial America but also garments for everyday and work, the clothing of slaves, and maternity and nursing apparel.Drawing on contemporary written descriptions and on actual costumes of the period, the book analyzes what Americans in the eighteenth century considered fashionable and attractive and how they used clothing to assert status or to identify occupations. The book also examines the myths and meanings of clothing in British and American society, clothing for the entire lifecycle, and a history of clothing alteration. Informative sidebars on a variety of fascinating topics complete the volume.

From BooklistIf clothes, as they say, make the man (and now, of course, the woman), then knowledge about garments makes an individual understand the past in relation to human nature. Colonial Williamsburg curator and author (Eighteenth Century Clothing at Williamsburg, 1986), Baumgarten explores via the museum's collection the process of becoming a connoisseur of antique frocks, fabrics, mythos and meanings, life passages, alterations, and common dress. Everything's explained against a visual panoply of period paintings, artifacts, and clothing, executed in slow, sometimes meandering prose. Along the way, tidbits and informational sidebars stand out. Such as in the 1700s, when male wigs were in fashion, while at home, men removed them in favor of soft caps. Another interesting fact is that frontier legend Davy Crockett usually wore normal clothing, donning a hunting shirt only to appeal to his rural Tennessee voters. And George Washington was, in truth, taller than his forty-second successor, George W. Bush. Intended for fashion fans with enough time to wade through and reorganize fashion facts. Barbara JacobsCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Beautifully produced. . . . Like the best of exhibition catalogs, this book reaches far beyond the objects presented. . . . Well written, well priced, and full of pertinent details about the daily lives of our American ancestors, this book for both scholars and casual readers is recommended for all libraries."Library Journal