

Even Tualatin's Fashions Evolved...

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

With all the interest in period dramas like *Downton Abbey*, it's fun to look back at how our community used to dress. Starting with underwear, a subject not suitable for discussion a hundred years ago, clothing has changed a lot.

Women used to stuff themselves into tight uncomfortable corsets, trussed up like a turkey ready for the oven. "Unmentionables" (undergarments) were hid in a pillowcase to dry on the clothesline so the neighbors wouldn't see. Men wore "union suits," all-in-one garments with a flap in the back for practical purposes.

After the first world war women's fashions changed dramatically, in ways that encouraged female emancipation. Women unwound their buns, braids and updos and cast off their hated corsets. Bobbed hair and straight chemises made women feel free at last.

Of course some things didn't change. For example, Monday was still wash day. Many women still hauled water from their well to be heated on their wood burning kitchen stove. And clothes were still scrubbed by hand on a zinc washboard with a bar of Fels Naptha soap. A far cry indeed from today's automatic washing machines and dryers. And then folks did not change their clothing as often as we do today. A girl would likely have two home sewn dresses, wearing one to school for two days and the other for three days. Until recent times girls would not have been allowed to wear trousers to school. Drip-dry fabrics were not introduced until the late 1950s, relieving women of the chore of ironing every piece of clothing. Irons have evolved along with clothing. Heavy flatirons used to be heated on a wood stove. Here was the system: Wash, rinse, starch, hang on the line to dry, sprinkle with water, (a pop bottle with a strainer spout), roll up neatly. On Tuesday set up the ironing board and heat the flatirons. Yes, flatirons! Those things yuppies buy at antique shops and use as doorstops. When electricity came to the common folk in the 30s the electric iron was introduced, saving women who could afford to purchase one the back breaking task of ironing.

One of the most evolved fashions of course, is the swimsuit. Several Tualatin families used to drive down to the coast and camp out in late summer. The Nybergs, Byroms and Geibergers would dig for clams and play in the surf. Their "bathing attire" was made of wool, covered most of the body and could not possibly have been very comfortable. Those proper ladies would have been shocked to see today's swim suits—many of which could fit into a shot glass. Any boy wearing his pants hanging down so low he could hardly walk and his shoelaces dangling would be deemed an escapee from the looney bin and treated as such.

So fashions evolve just like everything else: Who knows what the future will bring? And what kind of column will some old lady write a hundred years from now about the quaint clothing of early 21st century folks?



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Dedication of the new Methodist church. Men wore suits and ties, boys wore knickers.



Primary grades at the old 1900 Tualatin school. Boys often wore overalls; girls wore homemade dresses, black stockings and lace up shoes. Girl's hair was usually pulled back in braids with a big bow in back.



The Little Red Schoolhouse, as it was called just before the new 1900 school opened. Very few children are barefoot in this scene. Lottie Galbreath was the teacher. It was built in 1860 on the corner of Boones Ferry and Avery Street.



Around 1910. Women wore light colored long dresses and large hats in summer. Men and boys always wore hats outside.



Tualatin High School students about 1920. The sailor look was popular. Girls wore high laced up boots and midi skirts.



Tualatin families used to go down to the beach in late summer. This photo was taken in the 1920s.



About 1935. Some girls still wore long stockings, but wore their hair "bobbed." Boys often wore sweaters with a tie.



This unidentified photo of an old Tualatin farm shows the way working people would dress. The lady appears to be trussed up in a corset. Notice the split rail or "snake" fence on the right.



Tualatin High School's girls' basketball team. The large bows on the top of the girls' heads may have been to hold their hair in place.