

ChicagoHistoryMuseum

The Costume Collection

With over 50,000 costume and textile artifacts, the Museum's collection spans the breadth of Chicago's history and is particularly strong in materials from the late 19th century to the present. The Museum's extensive couture holdings, ranging from Charles Worth gowns to the innovative designs of Yohji Yamamoto, have earned an international reputation.

Many artifacts in the Museum's collection were made by Chicago's dressmakers, milliners, and manufacturers. The costume holdings encompass a number of items worn by prominent Chicagoans and Americans; some unique pieces include personal items belonging to Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln, Michael Jordan's basketball uniform, and Mahalia Jackson's choir robe. The earliest pieces include suits worn by George Washington and John Adams.

A new emphasis on the significance of clothing as historical artifacts has increased interest in the collection. Recent acquisitions include clothing documenting 19th- and 20th-century work attire, such as uniforms of nurses, police officers, and flight attendants, as well as clothing from Chicago's immigrant communities. Future collecting will also focus on Chicago's once-thriving garment industry.

Items from the Museum's costume and textile holdings are available to researchers by appointment only.

