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Historic Fashion Exhibit to Open at the Illinois State Museum

SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

There is perhaps no more intimate connection to the women of the past than the clothing they left behind—garments that were once worn on a living, breathing person going about her daily business, garments that were soiled and washed and mended and altered; garments that expressed her aspirations and reflected her condition.

On March 21, more than 40 historic garments will go on view in the Illinois State Museum’s new exhibition, *Fashioning Illinois, 1820-1900*.

Fashioning Illinois is a celebration of nineteenth century women’s clothing that explores both the personal experience of wearing and caring for clothing as well as the way that fashion reflected the changing roles and attitudes about women over the first 80 years of Illinois statehood.

Visitors to the exhibition will see examples of historic costumes, textiles, and accessories from the Illinois State Museum’s Illinois Legacy Collection. Among the garments that will be displayed are an 1830s printed cotton dress; an 1850s maternity dress worn by a woman who died in childbirth; an 1890s mourning costume; and a 1900 ball gown.

“The Illinois State Museum has an extensive collection of historic clothing, yet most of these dresses have never been on display before,” said Erika Holst, curator of the exhibit. “We’re excited to showcase so many of our stunning and significant textiles in this show.”

The Illinois State Museum is particularly proud to feature a reproduction of a dress worn by freed slave Lucy McWorter (1771-1870), recreated from an 1850s photograph by local seamstress Mary Helen Yokem in collaboration with the Springfield and Central Illinois African-American History Museum.

The exhibition will also showcase a blue bustle-style gown from the 1880s selected for display by First Lady M.K. Pritzker.

“I continue to be amazed and delighted by the work of the Illinois State Museum and its dynamic collections. This dress was my pick because it is so identifiable with its time period and has a vibrancy and style that visitors will really enjoy. My goal was to help bring history to life, and this exhibit does so with captivating grace,” said Mrs. Pritzker.

The exhibition will also feature historic artifacts related to making cloth as well as storing, washing, mending, and repurposing clothing.

“Visitors will really get a sense of how much time and effort went into making and caring for clothing in the nineteenth century,” said Holst. “It was the opposite of ‘fast fashion’. People were very invested in their garments and tried to make them last as long as possible.”

Interactive displays throughout the exhibition will provide children and adults alike the opportunity to indulge their tactile senses. Children will have the opportunity to try on reproduction nineteenth century clothing, while visitors of all ages can try their hand at dressing a mannequin in all the layers that a nineteenth century woman would have worn.

ISM Director, Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, shared “There is so much to see and learn in *Fashioning Illinois* – whether you experience the exhibit or engage in a program – museum-goers will be talking about this show for many years to come and remembering to think more deeply about how clothing is made and what messages are sent with each clothing choice, or lack thereof. I am excited for folks to see it.”

On Thursday, March 19, members of the media are invited to a special preview of the exhibit from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Accompanying this exhibition is a series of educational programs; more information and locations are forthcoming on illinoisstatemuseum.org. We can offer this “save-the-date” list now.

- March 20, 6:00-8:00 pm Member/Donor Preview Reception (invitation only)
- March 27, 5:30-8:30 pm, Museum After Hours: ‘60s Night
- April 15, 12:00-1:00 pm, Brown Bag presented by Dr. Holly Kent, UIS on Antebellum fashion advice literature
- May 14-Sept 1, High School Fashion Showcase exhibition
- June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 2:00-3:00pm, *History Up Close* Textile Demonstration
- June 3, 10, 17, 24, 2:30-3:00 pm, *In Style with Mary Lincoln* tour with Mrs. Lincoln
- June 5, 12, 19, 26, 2:00-2:30, *Fashioning Illinois* Walk & Talk Tour
- June 6, 11:00 am – 3:00 pm, *Fashion Illinois* Super Saturday
- June 17, 10:00-11:00 am, *Fashioning Illinois* Conversations with a Curator Program

- July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 2:30-3:00 pm, *In Style with Mary Lincoln* tour with Mrs. Lincoln
- July 1, 7:00-8:30 pm, Mickey Learning Series program presented by Dr. Carmen Kiest, Bradley University, on fashion history
- July 6, 13, 20, 27, 2:00-3:00 pm, *History Up Close* Textile Demonstration
- July 8, 11:00 am-12:00 pm, *Fashioning Illinois* Conversations with a Curator Program
- July 10, 17, 24, 31, 2:00-2:30 pm, *Fashioning Illinois* Walk & Talk Tour
- July 15, 12:00-1:00 pm, Brown Bag program presented by Erika Holst, ISM, "Corpse Bride: A Gothic Tale of Death, Discovery, and an Awesome Donation"
- October 7, 7:00-8:30 pm, Mickey Learning Series program presented by Erika Holst, ISM, on 19th century fashion and women's suffrage

The Illinois State Museum is located at 502 S. Spring Street in Springfield. It is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sundays from 12:00 noon to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults ages 19-64.

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