



# What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America

*Linda Baumgarten*

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**What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America** Linda Baumgarten  
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 volume features 18th- and early 19th-century garments from the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Illustrated with more than 300 colour photographs, including many details and back views, the book treats not only elegant, high-style clothing in colonial America but also garments for every day and work, the clothing of slaves, and maternity and nursing apparel. Drawing on contemporary written descriptions and on actual costumes of the period, the text analyzes what Americans in the 18th century considered fashionable and attractive and how they used clothing to assert status or to identify occupations. It also examines the myths and meanings of clothing in British and American society, clothing for the entire life cycle, and a history of clothing alteration. There are informative sidebars on a variety of topics.

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