



MAPLE GROVE HISTORY MUSEUM  
9030 Forestview Lane N, Door J, Maple Grove MN 55369  
[www.maplegrovernhistorical.org](http://www.maplegrovernhistorical.org)

**Purpose: To collect and preserve information and artifacts and to educate the community about the history of Maple Grove, MN.**

**The Clothes We and Our Parents Wore**

**Volume 114 February 2024**

**Fashion or Necessity**

All of the changes Americans experienced in society and the national economy from the 1920s to the 1990s were reflected in our clothing styles and accessories.

During World War II, fabric needed for the war effort and the military was rationed. This meant Americans had to be inventive and practical with the fabric available in stores and at home. If gently used clothes could be re-cut, sewn and re-used, they were.

Following World War II, as more and more women joined the work force and the economy grew, business suits became the fashion with straight skirts, padded shoulders in blazers and hats.

Remember the flapper dresses and fedora hats? What about patent leather shoes, go-go boots and bell bottom pants? All of these fashion trends were influenced by movie stars and music icons.

**WORDS AND SAYINGS**

**MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER**

Languages and local speaking traditions only stay alive if they are used by the people and culture of the times. We know what "Google" and "selfies" mean in 2024. What about "a young whippersnapper who is horn swoggled because something was catwampus?" Did you speak "Pig Latin?" Ever use an idiom like, "You bet your sweet bippy!"

Write your favorite memory!

**Remembering**

With the recent deaths of two of our long term members the song lyrics by John Denver echoes in my head.  
"County roads, take me home, to the place I belong."

One of our voluminous history writers, Lillian Weber Havel died in November of 2022 at age 100. She grew up on a farm, along Territorial Road, which was the "Downtown Maple Grove" of the past; Territorial Road was a Native American path in the "Big Woods", and on the Ox Cart Trail even before Minnesota became a state. The family farm was originally the 1855 homestead of Joseph Hopkins Briggs. Her Dad bought 15 acres and the buildings in 1920. Lillian eventually moved to Wisconsin, but her heart remained in Maple Grove-

Roger McHugh Dec 1935-Dec 2023 was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 64 years & 11 months, Caroline, whom he was grateful to have shared nearly 70 years with as she was his Osseo High School sweetheart; parents, Ralph & Sally McHugh; and brother, Larry McHugh. He said in <https://ccxmedia.org/cities/our-towns-story-maple-grove/> when he was young everyone had heard of Osseo, they had everything in their downtown area, "Maple Grove was too far."

In January, 2024, Eldon Tessman, age 95, passed-on. Eldon donated two of his grandfather's buggies to the Maple Grove Museum. His red barn on 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Brooklyn Park is a reminder of the long, successful history of potato farming in Minnesota. The red barn on



photo by Alicia Miller Osseo/Maple Grove Press.)

the farmstead was already built and in use when Eldon's grandfather purchased the farmstead. According to Hennepin County records, it is one of the oldest barns still standing. Eldon was raised in the 1883 house his grandfather built on the property. Eldon graduated valedictorian from Osseo High School, then went on to attain a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture from the University

of Minnesota. Eldon was a pillar and supporter of the communities Brooklyn Park, Osseo and Maple Grove. A memorial to Eldon's life can be found at: <https://ccxmedia.org/news/eldon-tessman-a-brooklyn-park-community-pillar-dies-at-95/>

**1900's  
when long dresses  
were still in vogue.**



David Krussow's family relatives

"So, the bigger the skirt, the more fabric you needed, the more wealth you were displaying. "With the World I from 1914 until 1918, the world faced war on a scale never before seen. this period saw tremendous technological, social and political upheaval. These profound changes led to a transformation in the way women dressed. Women were called to work, to the war effort. Following World War I, women in the United States gained the right to vote August 26, 1920.



Pauline Kottke (1900)  
Victoria Joyner's mother

**The Roaring 20's!**



Joyce Deane's mother  
Bernadine Trombley Scherber

"Fashion in the 1920s was all about the whole look and there were trends in how the body itself was fashioned. The simple lines and androgynous shapes of fashion looked best on bodies free from curves. Through exercise, diet, and various shaping undergarments, women attempted to achieve this look... Many women cut their hair into a bob, Hairstyles kept getting shorter first with the shingle and then with the Eton crop, but like hemlines, as the decade drew to a close, women were starting to grow their hair longer again. The cloche hat became an extremely popular ... with these short hairstyles." <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1920-1929/>



Tom and Margaret DeMars



Oh for a fur coat!- Joyce Deane photo from her family album



1920 - my grandmother, Valaria Zimny & friends smoking cigarettes in the backyard in Milwaukee. Karen Brajdich



My father in law was Earl Gruidl. His mother Bertha Kobow was born on a farm on section 18 of Maple Grove. The property is now the home of Rush Creek School. Bertha Kobow married Peter Gruidl and moved to Minneapolis.

In 1910, Bertha and Peter's son, Earl was born. Earl open his Minneapolis "Gruidl Furs" store in 1933 and in 1941, moved the business to a newly built store located at 2019 Emerson Avenue North and West Broadway.

Throughout his life, Earl was a born athlete. In Earl's fast-pitch softball days, it was recorded in the Minneapolis Star Journal that:"Earl Gruidl was hotter than one of his fur coats."

Until the early 1980's Earl sold so many of his furs throughout the country. Members of the Vikings football team also bought their fur coats from Earl. Wearing fur coats was in-vogue fashion for men and women. Then time changed and fur coats were no longer in fashion.

Pelts and fur helped to build a worldwide trade and Bertha Kobow Gruidl's son "hot" Earl was a local part of the fur coat history!

By Rose Gruidl



Cyril and Bernadine Scherber (Joyce Deane's parents) in 1940's



Pat Foley Ruffing, brother Alan and a friend in her Mother's fox and mink furs -

Early 1950's—in Sunday church clothes— Pat Foley Ruffing, mother Alma Foley and sister Mary

## A Very Special Dress Shop

Before she married my grandfather, Ben Miller in 1910, my Grandma Emma was a dressmaker. She sewed for many people around the countryside. After her children were grown, grandpa was injured in a farm accident so whatever extra income she could earn was very helpful.

When I grew up next door to them, I would enjoy watching all the different things folks would bring to her to make from fabric, or to shorten or lengthen hems, make them fit, or sometimes even repair. There was nothing grandma wouldn't tackle. She made everything from wedding dresses, to outer coats, men's suits and everything in between. Her work was impeccable and her clients were so pleased and referred many to her.

Growing up I didn't think much of picking fabric from a hand me downs from my mom or aunt to have a new something made. It was a real treat and that was just what I was used to doing. Sometimes I even got to go to the feed store and pick out a feed sack that I liked best that would become a new dress or skirt when the bag was empty.

As I grew older, I began to hear other girls talk about shopping in stores or out of the catalog for their new outfits and I thought that would sure be special. I didn't understand that often the things didn't fit so they would have to bring them to grandma to alter them to fit. "A store-bought dress was something I never had until I was of high school." That is when grandma was diagnosed with cancer and was no longer able to sew my clothes.

If only I had known then what I know now, I would really have appreciated what she did for us all. "I always had plenty of things to wear, but back in that day, we didn't have the closets full we seem too today." We had what we needed to wear to school and for chores, and always a Sunday dress. We absolutely didn't consider anything but a dress for church. Christmas and Easter were always occasions for a new dress, but they were only worn for church or special occasions.

Now that I have lost seven inches in height because of spinal stannous, I so wish I had a dress maker I could go to because it is almost impossible to find things that fit properly. If you can find someone, you can hardly afford them.

Styles seem to come and go, we had our share from poodle skirts, big full skirts with lacy crinolines under them so they could really fluff out to skin tight skirts you could

hardly walk around in and on and on. That used to bother me a bit cause sometimes it was hard to duplicate the latest fad, but today that doesn't seem important. Now days kids love to find their things at thrift stores or yard sales. Grandma of course wasn't too worried about the latest fads.

I so wish grandma would have been able to make my wedding dress. She did however make my junior prom dress which I attended with my blind date, Earl (my husband for 62+) so that is almost as special. Unfortunately, she passed away soon after I graduated from high school. I do have several quilts made with pieces of items she has made for me and it is fun to remember what was a dress, a skirt, and so on.

Most of all, I wish I had understood and told my dear grandma how special she was to me and how I appreciated all the beautiful outfits she sewed for me. I didn't know it then, but a lot of the girls really wished they had what I had. By Lois H. Caswell



Fish Lake school  
Dist 46 - 1949  
First day of  
school & wearing  
the red, not the  
blue sweater.

Sharon Hopkins 1949

## Childhood Memories of the Great Depression

My mother was an excellent seamstress and she used to make most of my clothes, but when the Depression began, my brother Eddie, was a toddler and she had less time. She began to watch the Sears catalog sales where she could get girls' dresses for about 99 cents and other clothes for very little money. She still cut down some of her old coats to fit me. Most of our shoes came from Sears, too. , When soles went through, my father fixed them with rubber soles and cement that came in a kit that also came from Sears. They worked well but sometimes the cement would let loose in front and in order to walk, I would have to kick my foot out ahead of me and then put it down— sort of a “goose step”... I also remember a jacket I had looked like blue sued, but it was made of rubber. When it got warm, it smelled like skunk...

Clothes were bought to grow in to. Boys overalls had to be big enough to last out the school year. The cuffs were rolled up several times, if necessary, Buttons were moved on shirts to make them last longer.

We didn't wear shoes in summer, everyone went barefoot. When school started in the fall, we'd wear our shoes to school. When we got there, we would ask the teacher if we could go barefoot. The teachers always give us permission. Then we would take off our shoes 'til it was time to go home. ( Lillian Weber Havel from 32 Nov. 2005 newsletter.)

In another article Lillian wrote:

Girls always wore dresses. There were no slacks or shorts... In winter, to keep my legs warm, I wore long underwear and long woolen stockings. The stockings were held up by pinning them to the underwear with safety pins. In the spring and fall I wore light, summer weight underwear and long cotton stockings. When summer came, the underwear was put away, and I wore bloomers. They were knee light underpants with elastic at the knees and I wore anklets instead of long stockings.

My brothers wore bib overalls... in summers, if my brothers had overalls that were old and had holes in the knees that could no longer be patched, my mother would cut off the legs at the knees and they would wear short pants at home.



*Paying your January membership dues  
Helps keep Historic  
Maple Grove in the public news!*



My brother Bill started 1st grade in 1935. My mother sent him to school in Knickers, How did she afford Knickers during the Depression? Other boys of that era wore them too. When my brother Jerry started 1st grade in 1937, Bill begged my mother to dress him in long pants, so he would not be embarrassed wearing Knickers, as the small town fashions had evolved! Pat Ruffing



Lynn Cook remembers that his sister Hazel was about 10 years when she made this flour sack dress. It has “1939” in the pattern and is on display at the Museum. Her mother Evelyn Cook was a dressmaker and may have helped her.

The family lived on the East side of Fish Lake then.

## Chicken Linen by Kathy Bjorklund



My Grandma Lilly was a seamstress and before she was married, she made her living travelling by horse and buggy to different families to sew for them. While doing their sewing repairs and making new clothes for the family, she often

stayed with the family for several days.

In the 1940's, after raising her own family, having grandchildren, and then being widowed, my Mom would pick Grandma Lilly up and drive her the 20 miles to our house and sew for my sister and me. She would stay for a week making dresses for us, sometimes out of feed sack cloth.

**Feed sack cloth (also known as chicken linen) – what is that?**

*By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it became more cost-effective to package and ship in cloth sacks rather than in barrels, which had been previously used. A barrel held 196 pounds of flour, and the first commercial cloth feed sacks were sized to hold fractions of that amount.*

*By the beginning of the 20th century, flour sacks and other sacks were produced in a variety of fabrics of tighter weave and often printed in various colors and designs and recycled for clothing and other purposes. Farm women recycled the cotton sacks in which flour, sugar, animal feed, seeds, and other commodities were packaged, shipped, and sold. A 100 lb. bag provided slightly more than one yard of material, with four sacks providing enough for one adult woman's dress.*

*The fabric and bags have variously been referred to as feed sacks, flour sacks, commodity bags and chicken linen.*

*During World War II, textile shortages limited production of both commercially made garments and the retail yardage to make garments at home. However, cloth feed sacks were still available to make clothing and it was regarded as patriotic and thrifty. This became an iconic part of rural life from the 1920s through the Great Depression, World War II, and post-World War II years.*

*With feed sacks and flour bags, farm women took thriftiness to new heights of creativity, transforming the hum-*

*ble bags into dresses, underwear, towels, curtains, quilts, and other household necessities. Feed sack fashion reflected rural culture in the first half of the 20th century.*

*During World War II it was estimated that 3 million women and children in the United States were wearing feed sack clothing at any given point in time. After World War II, use of cloth sacks for packaging declined and were replaced with less expensive paper. Most feed sack production ceased by the early 1960's.*

I remember going to the store with my sister and Dad where Dad bought chicken feed for Mom's chickens. On the six mile drive our excitement would build up as to what colors and designs would be available for our new dresses. Seeing a multitude of different designs on the cloth that held the chicken feed would bring careful thoughtfulness in deciding which one to choose. As our Mom dressed us alike for many years (too many), we had to agree on four sacks of the chicken feed with the same design. My Dad was very patient with my sister and me as we perused the different designs. Once selected, we happily rode back home dreaming of new dresses.

Grandma Lilly would come to do our sewing and I remember waking up to the sound of the metal scissors on the kitchen table crunching with each cut across the sack cloth like a soldier marching, as the fabric was cut to pattern. The material was cotton and sometimes felt a little rough, but after several washings and ironings it was comfortable to wear. Grandma sometimes made doll clothes for us from the leftover material. Nothing went to waste, and I could probably look at some of our old quilts and still find squares of chicken linen sewn in



Early 40's ladies in feed sack home made dresses, Grandpa Trombley in patched overalls with visit from relatives from city - Joyce Deane

## How President Franklin Roosevelt Shortened Women's Skirts!

President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order known as regulation L-85 which created the War Production Board, and that board on April 8, 1942 reallocated materials deemed necessary for military success in World War II, such as steel, wool, and nylon and they placed limitations on clothing. "The order specified the amount of fabric that could be used to create a garment and listed the measurements for feminine apparel items. For example, hems and belts could not exceed two inches in width, garments could not have more than one pocket, and ornamental sleeves, hoods, and scarves were banned." The only exception for clothing being manufactured was infant and toddler clothes, bridal gowns, maternity dresses, burial gowns, religious clothing with specified rules, or clothes needed due to abnormal height, size, or physical deformities. ( from Federal Register)

Because of the war, current European fashion was no longer available to women in the United States.

Civilian clothes were made of rayon or viscose. Skirts became slimmer, shorter with hemlines just below the knee. Women adopted a style of clothing— more military looking, suits with blouses and jackets with shoulder pads, and hats like Army berets. Stockings disappeared- women went with bare legs.



In the 1940's U.S. women did not commonly wear trousers in public. They began to wear them out of necessity, as they were practical and covered stocking less legs. Dress pants were wide legged and high-waisted and worn with tucked-in blouses. After the war dresses came back in style, but trousers remained in the wardrobe!

Nearly one out of three American men went off to serve in the military between 1941-1945, over 6 million American women had joined the workforce, nearly one in four married women were juggling household duties and jobs in factories, laboratories, power plants, government and

education. "Women driving trucks, flying military aircraft, and working in shipyards, safety and practicality took precedence over glamour and femininity." Fashions changed quickly. ( from National Archives )

Men were in military uniform or they wore suits for business and Church. Most wore a fedora felt hats. The suits were single breasted during the war. But when the war ended men's suits became baggier and double breasted with wider labels. A bold look in suits and ties, with louder patterns, and sport jackets were the choice of the men returning home from military service.



(National Archives identifier 535413)

"Rosie the Riveter" meant slacks and headscarves were stylish. Women traded their high heels for khaki jackets and trousers. Women's Hair was typically shoulder length or longer, was pinned back to avoid getting it in machinery.

### UTILITY DRESSES

Regularly \$2

\$1

Sizes 12 to 44 in the group

Button - front coat frocks, fine quality cotton, open blue stripes on white. Style sketched sizes 12 to 40. ONE OTHER STYLE with white collar in sizes 42 to 44!



The 1940s was a period marked by iconic headwear and Wrap around dresses made of denim or seersucker.

replaced by men once they returned from war." it is remarkable what women accomplished

on a national scale in just four short years.

These women demonstrated patriotism, skill, and determination, making an undeniable impact on the workplace—and the fashion world."

During the 1940's, the two-piece swimsuit became popular which later led to the Bikini



**Question:??** Was President Franklin Roosevelt to be congratulated or blamed for shorter skirts, wilder suits, and for the bikinis by his executive order L-85?



### Kissing the War Goodbye

Created: Taken on 14 August 1945 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/87/>



### Hooray! for this Day!

Here is my memory of May , 8th, 1945, the day World War II officially ended. I was a Junior in high school. It was late in the afternoon when the sirens started blasting on my street. Everyone ran out of their homes. In just a few minutes the street was crowded with men, women and children, some sobbing, others banging on kettles.

Because leather had been rationed during the war, most of us, especially the younger people wore wooden shoes. The same type of shoe worn in Holland. We kicked off our shoes and threw them in the air!

Fireworks joined in the jubilant occasion. Some folks partied through the night and were screaming "The War is over! The War is over!"

What a lesson and memory for me of what freedom really means!  
By Virginia Hoppenrath.

### Bell Bottoms and Fashion



The seams ran down the front, sides and back of the pants. At knee level, the pant legs start to expand. By the time the flare nears the ground, your shoes are hidden beneath the bells and you are swimming in fabric.

To keep my bell bottoms from touching the ground and prevent fraying on the hem, I wore one-and-a-half-inch platform shoes. At a height of five feet, eight and one half inches, I was already tall. Add the platform shoes and I was super tall! I wore bell bottom jeans in an array of colors and styles during the 1970s.

Photo back story: In this picture, I am standing next to the fountain in the Heidelberg castle courtyard in Heidelberg, Germany. My three-week European adventure started in June but turned into a five-month stay. There were many excursions to other cities and countries during that time. Through it all, two pair of bell bottom jeans kept me clothed. By the time I returned to Minnesota in December, 1974, the jeans in this picture were limp and lifeless from repeated wearing and washing and I had to retire them. A year or two later, my mom cut-off these bells and along with another pair, made me a jeans skirt.

Bell bottom jeans were a symbol of the 1970s and worn by hippies and nonconformists alike. Bell bottoms were a statement against war, society and the establishment. The Baby Boomer generation embraced them. "Go anywhere to view a sea of bell bottom jeans worn by both sexes in a myriad of colors, patterns and styles."

Here is a June, 1974 a picture of me wearing bell bottom jeans. They weren't loud but understated. The jeans were narrow at the waist and hips, with a side zipper.

By Karen Brajdich



## Denim Daze

It was the fall of 1997 when I decided it was time for my family to have our photograph taken by a professional. Even though my college-bound kids hadn't yet moved out, their lives were full, and I was already missing them. I knew that having a photo of all of us together would be something to treasure, it would warm my heart long after they were grown.



I decided that we would follow the popular 'denim on denim' trend that even celebrities were embracing! My first challenge was convincing my then 19-year-old son, my then 17-year-old daughter, and my dubious husband to agree that we would all dress alike .... in denim jeans, matching denim shirts, and white turtlenecks. Yes, bribes may have been offered. Thanks to J.C. Penney, and a local tailor, we made it work. Next, I had to find a photographer who agreed to let us bring our pets – three cats! After all, they were 'family', too! After multiple phone calls, at last, success!

We made an appointment and soon met at a studio in Maple Grove; the kids arrived separately, probably not wanting to be seen with us, while my husband and I brought our not-at-all-happy cats (Callie Anne, Grover Cleveland and Bosworth – known as "Boz"). In preparation for a situation that had great potential for bedlam I'd firmly reminded my family that each of them had darned-well better cheerfully cooperate and smile, no matter what they thought of my brilliant idea. (I may have threatened death, dismemberment and limited access to college funds if they didn't politely cooperate, but twenty-plus years later 'recollections vary' on what may, or may-not, have been said.) In we went, dressed in our matching, stylish denim outfits, only to be told that we'd arrived on the wrong day!

My kids breathed a sigh of relief, thinking they were off the hook, but apparently they didn't know their mother as well as they thought they did! Of course we rescheduled! Less than a week later, amid hissing, and struggles to hide,

or escape (the cats, not my husband or the kids), a very patient photographer captured a selection of photos – including some where all three cats and! the four of us were looking at the camera at the same time – yes, I was thrilled!

In retrospect, our trendy photo-shoot results are rather comical, but our family memories of that crazy experience still make each of us smile. By Kate Wodtke

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### MAPLE GROVE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY

City of Maple Grove Government Center  
12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway, Maple Grove MN 55369-7064

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(renewable each January)

Annual Membership (tax deductible)

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I am interested in helping with

- Writing article
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