

Doll Clothes of Yore

Original, Historical Designs for 18" Dolls

American Civil War Period: Circa 1840-1860



'Mary Anna Custis Lee' Dress

History

Who is Mary Anna Custis Lee?

Mary Anna Custis was the granddaughter of Martha Custis Washington, George Washington's wife. She was raised in Arlington, Virginia, and was well educated. She grew up with her future husband, Robert E. Lee, who was her third cousin.

Robert and Mary Anna had 7 children together and raised them in Arlington. Mary Anna inherited Arlington House in 1857, and enjoyed entertaining there. She was very religious, and like her husband advocated 'Eventual Emancipation' of slaves. Mary Anna suffered from debilitating arthritis, and by 1860 was using a wheelchair. During the Civil War, Mary Anna and her daughters evacuated Arlington, which was occupied by the Union Army, and used as their headquarters for Northern Virginia.

After the war, Robert and Mary Anna decided not to regain their property in Arlington and Robert felt it would be too divisive. Robert became president of Washington College, later named Washington and Lee University after his death.

Fashion

What is 'Venise' lace?

'Venise' lace, or 'point de Venise' is a type of lace that is still popular today in bridal wear. It originated in the 17th century in Venice, Italy. It has a rich and soft look that is very distinct. It was widely used by the wealthy during the Victorian period, as the Industrial Revolution made lace-making by machine possible.

During what is commonly known as the 'Early Victorian' period, a 'hour-glass' figure was very fashionable. Necklines were usually dropped off-shoulder to enhance not only the width of a lady's shoulder, but also to make the waist seem smaller. Large ball-shaped skirts were in style, and until the 'Crinoline' or 'Hoopskirt' was patented in 1856, women wore many layers of starched petticoats to achieve the fashionable shape.