

Basic Detail Report

Title Stays

Date about 1775

Primary Maker Unknown

Medium Hand-stitched linen and leather, with baleen boning

Description Brown linen stays, lined with tow and bound with soft, white leather. The stays are constructed in eight panels, each of which is stitched with vertical casings into which baleen boning is inserted. The panels are then whipstitched together. The center back opening is worked with eyelets for a spiral lacing. The bottom edge is shaped with tab extensions so that the stays will flare at the hip. The front of the seam between the first and second side panels is covered with a thin strip of white leather. The center front of the stays is approximately triangular in form, with a rounded point at the bottom; a blue and white woven linen strap is stitched across the bottom of the center panel to help keep the stays flat and force the bust upward into the desired conical shape. The boning is inserted in a V-shape in the front of the stays, straight up and down on the first side panel and on center back panels, and slanted in the second side panel so that when the stays are closed, they also form an approximate V-shape. The stays were originally constructed in the 1770s, but were modified around the 1780s to accommodate the new fashion for higher waists. This new shape was achieved by taking out the seams connecting the center front panels to the side panels, moving the side panels up an inch, and then whipstitching the seam together again.

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Dimensions Primary Dimensions (length x width across top edge): 17 1/2 x 31in.

(44.5 x 78.7cm)