

Basic Detail Report



Title Dress

Date about 1887

Primary Maker Elizabeth Gay Sisson

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Medium Machine-stitched and hand-stitched silk and cotton, with baleen

boning, brass hooks and eyes, ferrous metal strip, unidentified metal snap,

elastic, and wool hem tape

Description Woman's two-piece day dress, consisting of a bodice (.a) and skirt (.b), made of burnt-orange-colored ribbed silk, brocade, and orange-brown

velvet. The bodice neckline is V-shaped. The proper right side of the bodice is

made of the brocade, which is woven with a design of lilac sprigs. The left side of

the bodice is the ribbed silk, pleated towards the center, with a strip of the

velvet bordering the pleats from the shoulder to the waist. The V-neck is edged

with the velvet. The center front opening fastens with brass hooks and eyes,

which alternate for an extra-secure fit. The right side overlaps the left side at the

bottom and fastens with a snap and a hook and eye. The waistline is pointed at

center front and center back. A strip of velvet in a V-shape hooks across the front

of the bodice waistline; the center front point also hooks to the skirt drapery.

The shoulderline is natural, and the three-quarter-length sleeves are slightly

gathered at the top of the shoulder. The sleeves are slightly curved, and end

with gathered strips of the brocade and velvet twisted together. The Brussels

lace that edges the neckline and wrist openings is not original to the dress, but is

appropriate. The front of the bodice is fitted with two long darts on either side of

the opening. The pattern of the bodice back is cut in eight pieces to achieve a

close fit. All of the seams and darts are boned; the boning is covered with twill-

woven silk tape. The lining fabric is a cotton sateen, printed with white

diagonally barred dots and fine orange stripes on a beige background. The

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seams are finished by turning the raw edges of the fashion fabric and lining

fabric in towards each other and whip stitching them together. The skirt is

assymmetrically draped. The center front panel of brocade is flanked by lengths of

the ribbed silk; the fabric of the proper left ribbed silk panel is pleated. Other

pieces of brocade are revealed by the folding back of ribbed silk panels. The

front of the skirt is smoothly fitted. An eye at the center front of the skirt

attaches to the point of the velvet strip on the bottom of the bodice, giving the

effect that the velvet is pulling up the drapery of the center front of the skirt. The

back panel is gathered closely into a separate eleven-inch length of waistband,

which hooks onto the main waistband on either side of the center back. The

back of the skirt is entirely made of the ribbed silk. The skirt is lined with plain-

woven brown cotton. The back of the skirt is gathered along a metal strip, with

the ends tied together with elastic and plain cotton tapes. This keeps the

fullness of the skirt controlled in the back and keeps the front smooth. The

bottom edge of the skirt is faced with wool tape. The front of the hem is slashed

perpendicular to the edge and finished with the wool tape, presumably to allow

ease for the wearer to step forward.

Dimensions Bodice (center back length x width across shoulders): 21 x 14in.

(53.3 x 35.6cm) Skirt (center front length): 41 1/2in. (105.4cm) Hem

(circumference): 80 1/2in. (204.5cm)