

Dressing, Living, and Surviving in the Latter Part of the Model A Era

by Anne Neely-Beck

Living during the latter part of the Model A era which encompassed the Great Depression, that started with the crash of the stock market in 1929, was challenging.

Many of the clothes we show in the Fashion Guidelines were not affordable to most common ladies of that time.

In 1931 the Great Depression was real to most people. People sewed their own clothes, remade them and passed them down to others. During this time about one fourth of the nation's work force was unemployed. The "Dust Bowl" started in 1931 which force a lot of people in the Midwest to leave and try to find work elsewhere.

In *Homeless on the Range*, by Barbara Barden Margerum, she gives a detailed description of her family's experience living in their Model A on the road in 1931. She was four at the time and she recounted her family's travel via letters her mother had written to her sister and a journal that her father kept.

The following are dresses the lady of the house would wear while at home doing the daily household chores. There are morning frocks, wash frocks, and Hoover dresses. Hoover dresses were an evolution of the coveralls (Hooveralls) that became the Hoover Apron. In 1917 when Herbert Hoover was director of the Food Administration he developed a plan for civilians to supply food to the military; house wives were issued a beret and coveralls that became known as the Hoover apron. In 1929 when the market crashed Hoover was president then and a kind of wrap-around house dress was handed out by city relief agencies to families of the unemployed, hence the Hoover dress.

When the lady of the house did go out to the market she would change into a nicer dress and wear a hat and gloves. If you lived on a farm these would be dresses that you wore most of the time, except to church or going to town.

