



THE
ISABELLA MACTAVISH FRASER
GOWN – PATTERN & CONSTRUCTION





The rare, extant women's tartan gown known as The Isabella MacTavish Fraser Wedding Dress presents a number of fascinating aspects in fabric choice, construction, and fit. In our exploration and recreation of this gown in May of 2019, we tried to understand the “why” behind these choices rather than simply the “what”.

The gown reportedly dates from 1785 and has been owned by the original family for its entire history. It appears unaltered, a rarity among surviving 18th century gowns, but it also exhibits stylistic choices and construction techniques that speak to earlier times.

The tartan fabric was originally produced from the now-extinct Scottish Dunface sheep, and was known as “hard tartan,” coming directly off the loom in approximately 26 inch (66 cm) widths. It is a very heavy, dense-woven textile that made up into quite a weighty gown. The tartan set, or pattern, assisted greatly in our recreation of the back pleats of the bodice, and revealed a few other clever cutting methods used by the original dressmakers.

There are curious construction features throughout the original dress, and many we've called out in the pattern. Most notably is the mistake in the sleeve and the subsequent correction of it, covered with the out-of-fashion pleated cuff. Another atypical method is found in the gown skirts, which were pleated, whipped over the top, then backstitched to the bodice, the raw edges left exposed on the inside.

This pattern is not restricted to wool tartan. It may be made in any material – wool, cotton, linen, or silk. It is important to note that this is not a pattern taken directly off the original Isabella gown. Limited access and a fragile condition made this impossible. Instead, this pattern is draped on a body very close in measurements. To adjust this to your own measurements, make particular note of the waist length and shoulder width, in addition to the bust and waist circumferences.





**PATTERN BODY MEASUREMENTS IN STAYS
(APPROX):**

Bust - 33" - 35" (83.8 - 88.9 cm)
Waist - 28" - 30" (71 - 76.2 cm)
Shoulder Width - 13" (33 cm)
Back Neck to Waist - 17" (43.2 cm)
Waist to Floor - 40 - 42" (101.6 - 106.6 cm)
Height - 5' 6" (167.6 cm)

PATTERN NOTES:

All measurements in this pattern are given in inches.
Centimeters and Millimeters are in brackets.
1 square = 1 inch

MAKE A MOCKUP!

- * Check waist length of bodice
- * Check hem length of skirt panels and back pleated panel
- * Check sleeve circumference and length
- * Check shoulder width
- * Check bodice front neckline depth
- * Check bodice front length
- * Take and adjust all measurements over stays, skirt supports, petticoats, and with your 18th century shoes on.

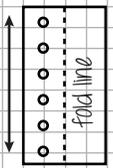
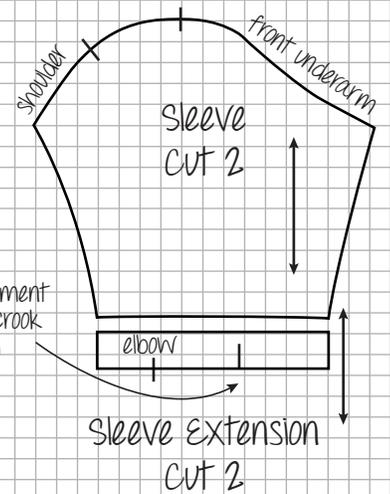
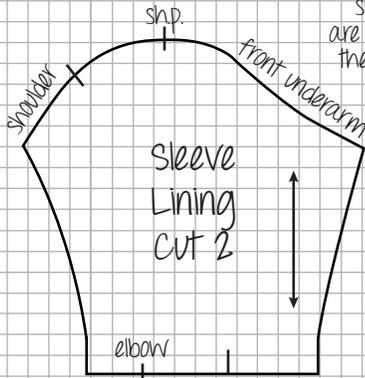
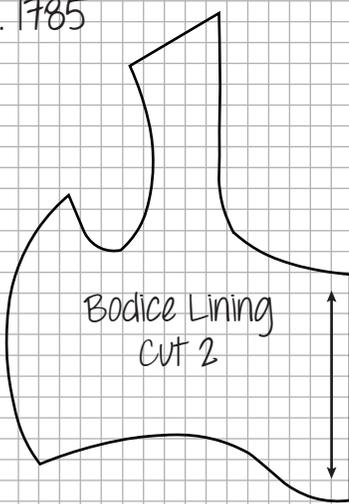
Isabella Mactavish Fraser Gown

c. 1785

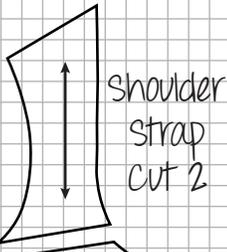
1 in / 2.5 cm

sleeve seams are placed toward the back of the arms

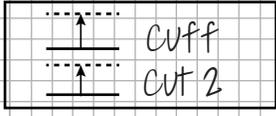
if using tartan, checks, or stripes, the shoulder straps and the sleeve extensions do not need to be pattern matched



Lacing strip cut 2

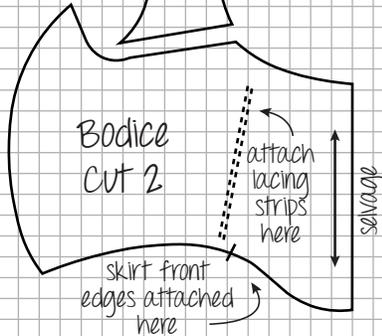


Shoulder strap cut 2

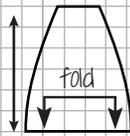


approx placement for cut at crook of arm

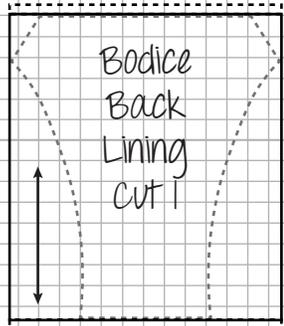
the cuff top edge covers the join between the sleeve and sleeve extension



Bodice cut 2

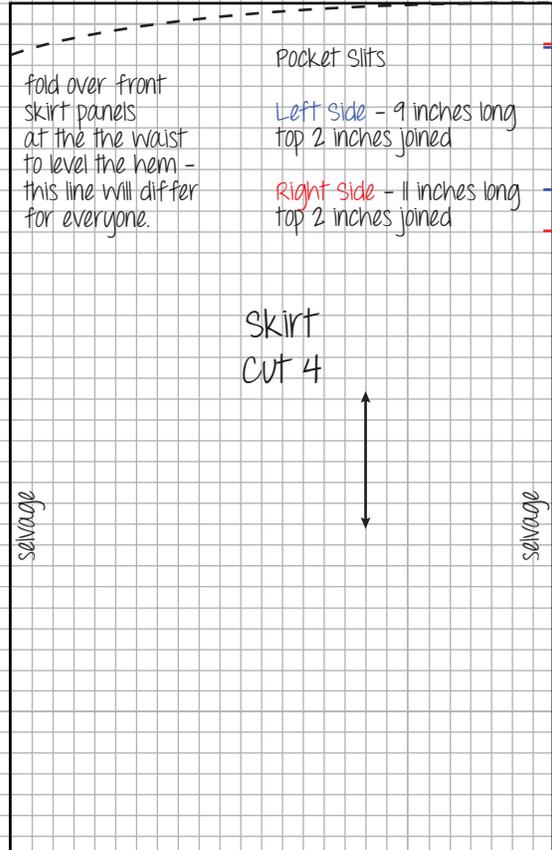


Cuff Lining cut 2 on fold



Bodice Back Lining cut 1

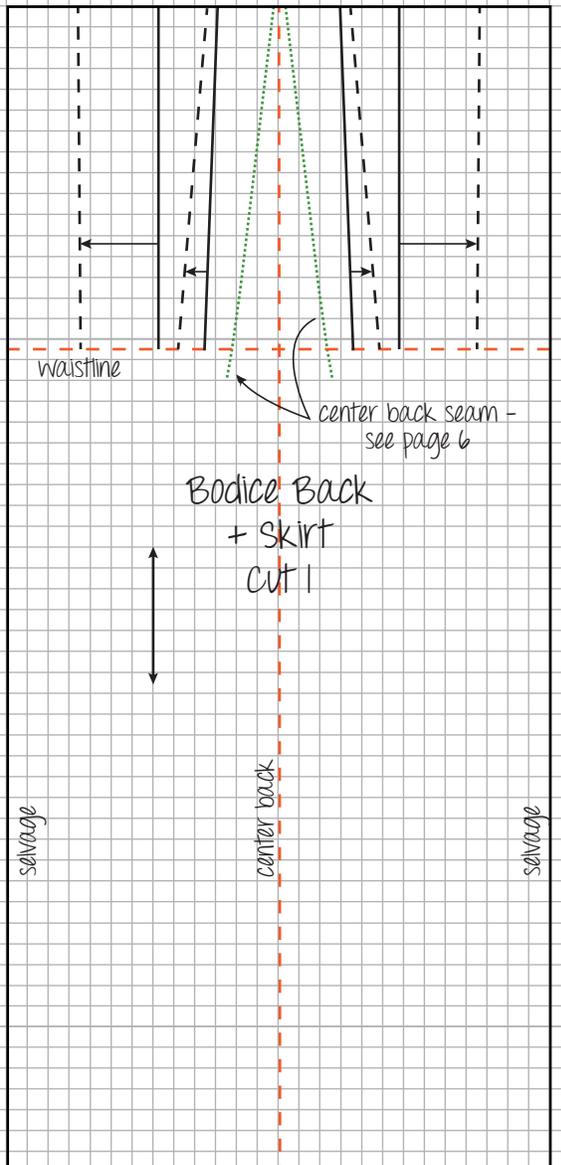
Bodice back lining is a large rectangle of fabric applied over the back bodice pleats. It does not need to be cut to shape - the excess will come out in the bodice fitting.



Skirt cut 4

fold over front skirt panels at the waist to level the hem - this line will differ for everyone.

Pocket Slits
 Left side - 9 inches long top 2 inches joined
 Right side - 11 inches long top 2 inches joined



Bodice Back + Skirt cut 1

Most modern fabrics are wider than 26 inches. When cutting panels to the historic widths, use a mantua-maker's seam to join and secure the raw edges.

seavage edges may be joined with a running backstitch



MATERIALS

Original:
8 yards/meters – wool hard tartan, average 26” (66 cm) wide.

1 yard/meter – linen twill, natural ivory

½ yard/meter – plain weave linen, natural ivory

1-2 spools – heavy linen thread, natural ivory

SUGGESTED DRESS FABRICS

Wool flannel, worsted wool, printed cotton, plain linen, silk taffeta, silk brocade, silk satin

FABRIC YARDAGE CONVERSION

Approximate yardages for other common fabric widths.

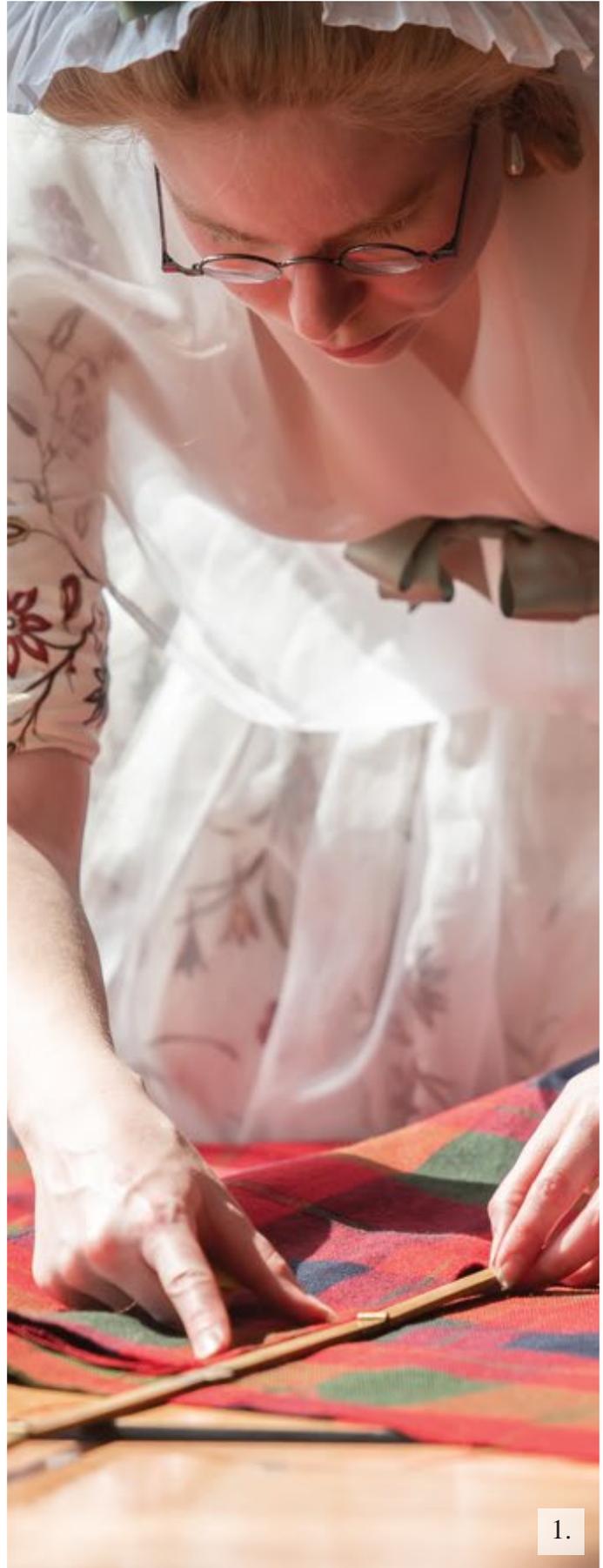
| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| 8 yards/meters | 26 inch wide (66 cm) |
| 5 yards/meters | 45 inch wide (114 cm) |
| 4 yards/meters | 52 inch wide (132 cm) |
| 3.5 yards/meters | 60 inch wide (152.4 cm) |

PREPPING THE SKIRT PANELS

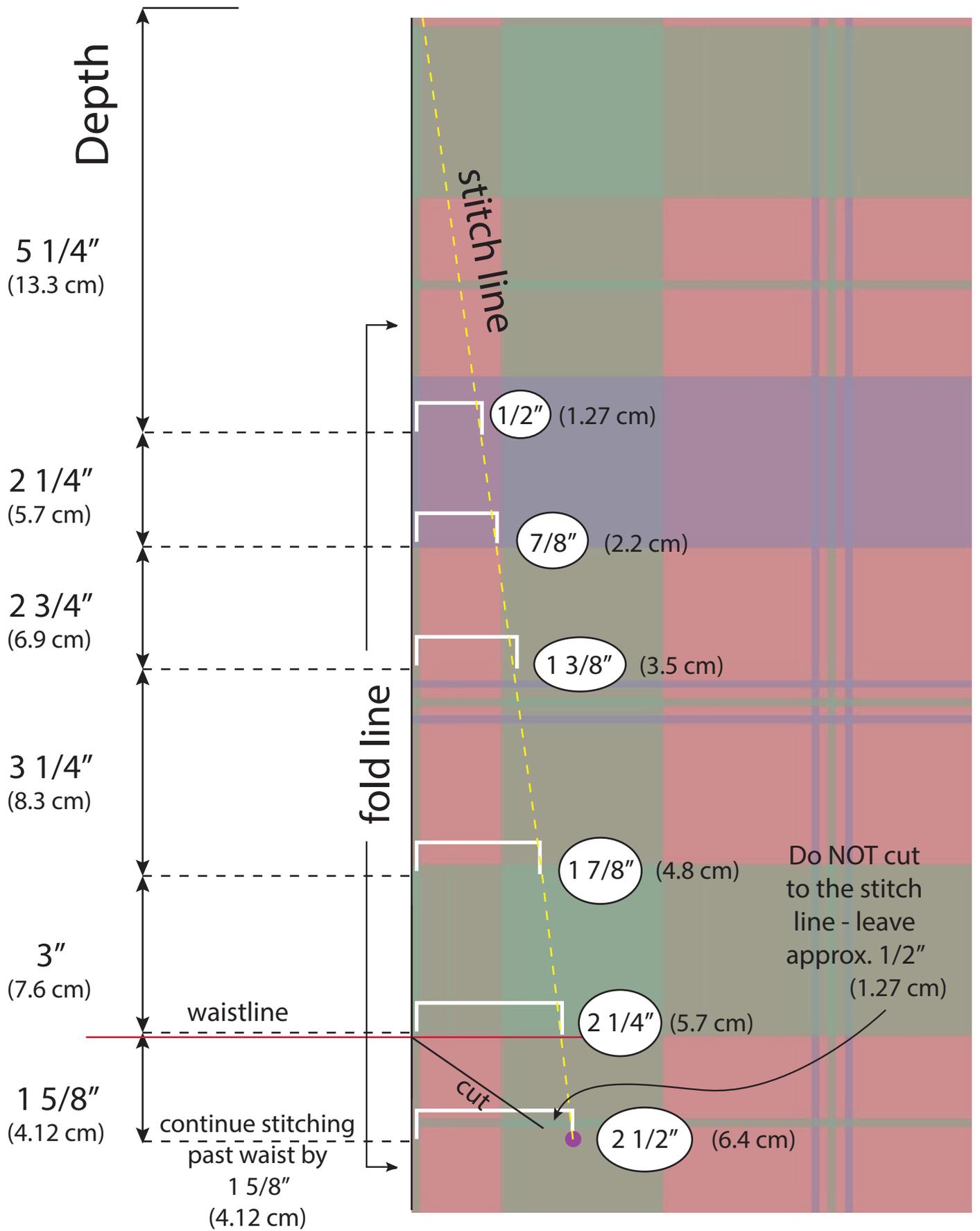
1. Before cutting the skirt panels, measure your longest point from your waist to the floor over all underpinnings. Adjust the length as needed and cut four panels this length and 26" (66 cm) wide.
2. Mark the opening and ending points for the pocket slits – note they are different on each side – then place the left side panels right-sides-together and backstitch together about ½" (1.27 cm) from the edge, approximately 5 stitches per inch. If you have cut your panels to 26" (66 cm) wide and have no selvages, use a mantua-maker's seam to join the skirt panels. Repeat for the right side.
3. If you have nice selvages, there is no need to hem the pocket slit openings, but if you have cut your panels to width, then turn double and narrow hem stitch or running stitch the pocket slit edges.
4. The original skirt front edges are unhemmed, relying on the excellent selvage. If you too have nice selvages, feel free to let them stay. If you have cut your panels to width, turn under ½" (1.27 cm) and baste, then turn again and hem stitch or running stitch the front edges. Leave the hem un-sewn for now.



An interior skirt seam from the original gown, sewn selvege-to-selvege with spaced backstitches.



HALF WIDTH OF BACK SEAM WHEN FOLDED, READY TO STITCH





ASSEMBLING THE BODICE BACK & SKIRT

We've included a pleating guide for the original gown here, but the 18th century mantua-maker who made this gown pleated organically according to the tartan pattern. The result is a very wide top that narrows in a "Y" shape before flaring into the skirt. You do NOT have to stick to this pleating diagram exactly. Depending on your fabric, measurements, and preferences, you may wish to adjust these pleats.

1. The bodice back is made of one full-length panel of fabric. Before you start, measure the length from the nape of your neck to the floor, plus an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) at the top and 1" (2.5 cm) at the bottom for seam allowance, then adjust the pattern as needed.

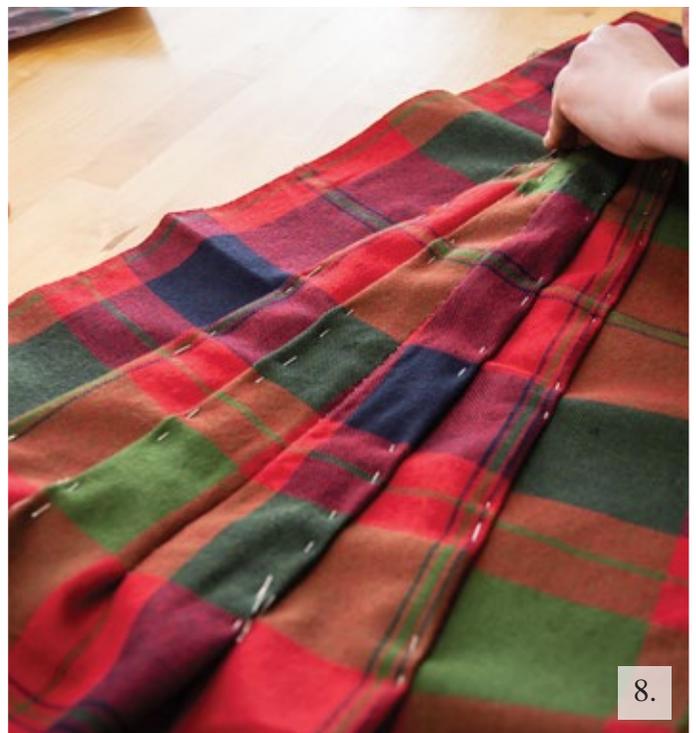
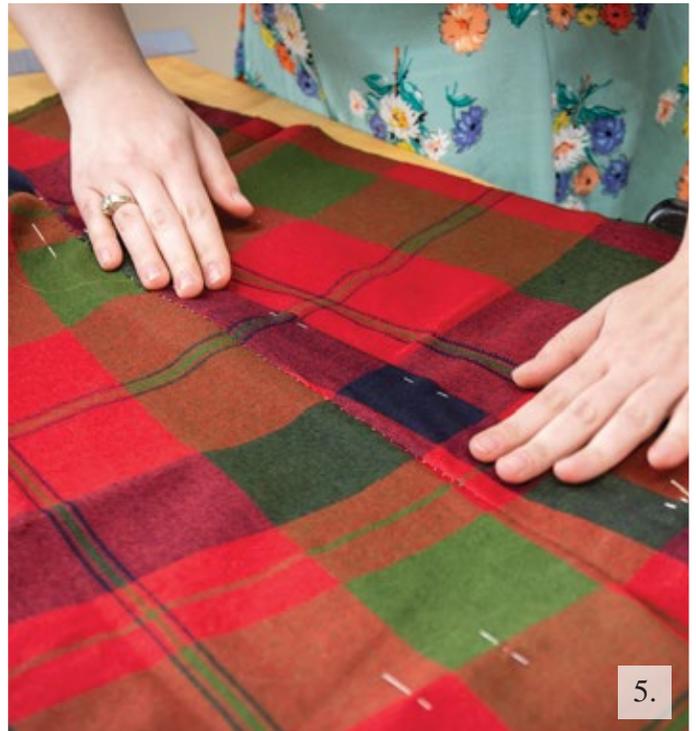
2. Fold the fabric in half lengthwise and, starting $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) down from the top, mark the angled seam using the diagram included in this pattern. You may need to adjust the placement of the waistline according to your own torso length.

3. Backstitch along the angle line, continuing $1\frac{5}{8}$ " (4.12 cm) past the waistline.

4. Carefully make an angled cut from the waistline toward the bottom of the stitching line, stopping $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) from the stitch line.

5. You may choose to cut open this seam along the fold or leave it closed. In either case, open the fabric out flat and press the seam allowance "open" and flat.

6. Starting on the right side of the fabric, pleat the first, top-most pleat on the left-hand side. Work according to the pleat depth guide based on the original gown, or by your own intuition. Note the scant 0.65 " (16.5 mm) at the top of the first pleat. Pin into place.



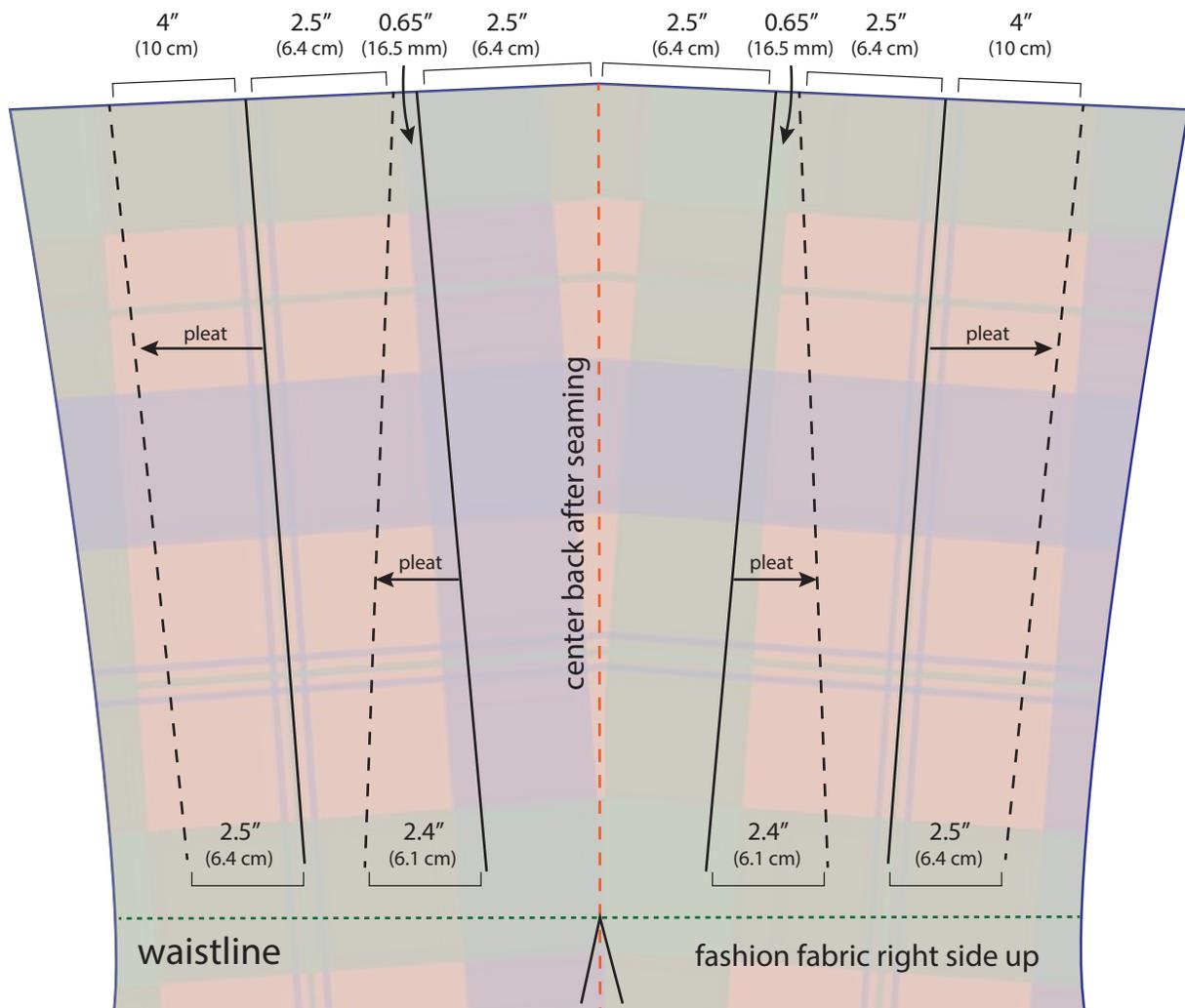
7. Next, pinch up and pleat the second, bottom-most pleat on the left side. Notice the broad 4" (10 cm) wide depth at the top. These pleats make good use of the tartan fabric, but if you have different tartan you may want to adjust the pleat depths to make best use of your pattern. Pin into place.





The back pleats of the original gown

PLEAT DEPTHS & MEASUREMENTS OF THE ORIGINAL GOWN



not to scale

8. Working from the other side, repeat steps 6 and 7 for the right side. Adjust and fiddle as necessary to get the look you want, then baste all of the pleats into place.

9. Top stitch the inner-most pleats before the lining is attached, using a small spaced backstitch or prick stitch about $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) apart, and $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) from the edge. The outer-most pleats are NOT stitched yet.

10. Turn under the $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) seam allowance on the top, now a curved edge, and baste.

At this point, the back is pleated and the back skirt is still in one un-cut piece. Do not cut the skirt at the waist yet – this comes later. Give everything a good press to lock it into place.

BODICE BACK LINING

1. Place the pleated back atop a larger length of linen twill fabric and pin into place.
2. Mark the waistline and add $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) extra seam allowance below it. Mark an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) seam allowance on the top neckline edge, then trace around the sides .
3. Cut away the excess linen.
4. Stitch the pleated back to the lining through the center back seam with prick stitches about 1" (2.5 cm) apart, starting 1" (2.5 cm) from the top neckline edge and stopping 1" from the bottom.

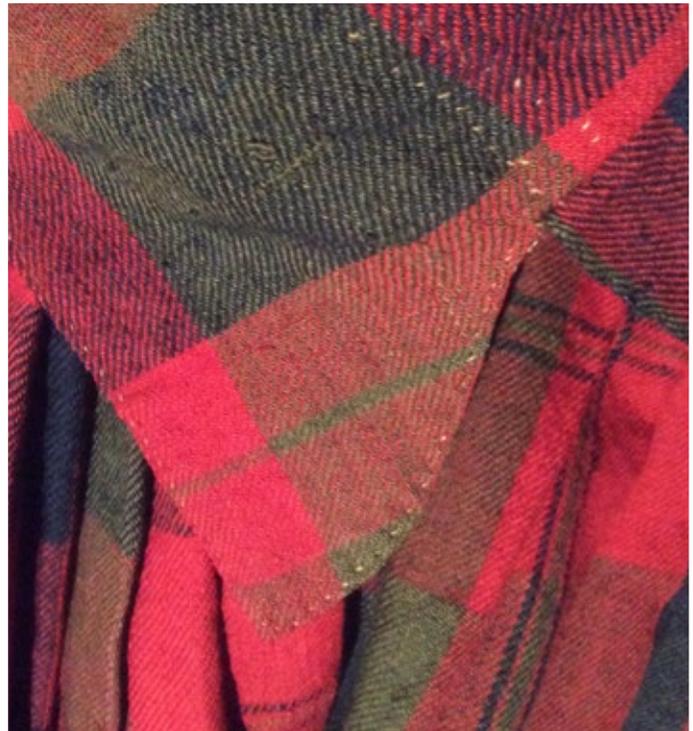




ASSEMBLING THE BODICE FRONTS

Both the tartan and the lining of the original gown are cut on the straight. While we have presented the original here, feel free to set both your lining and fashion fabrics on the bias. If you choose to cut your lining and fashion fabrics on the bias, use the fashion fabric bodice pieces for a separate body and shoulder strap, and cut the shoulder strap on the straight of grain.

1. Cut out the linen twill lining pieces, noting that the shoulder strap is cut in one with the bodice piece.
2. Cut out the fashion fabric pieces, noting that the shoulder strap is a separate piece from the bodice. The plaid on the original gown does not match. No matter how you choose to cut your bodice piece – on the straight or on the bias – the shoulder straps must be cut on the straight.
3. On the fashion fabric, join the shoulder straps to the bodice right-sides-together with a backstitch, then press the seam allowances open.
4. Turn under $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) on the neck edge of the shoulder straps, neckline, bodice front edges, and the bottom "point" to the mark indicated on the pattern, and baste. Press if needed.



The center front point of the bodice of the original gown

5. Set the lining to the bodice wrong-sides-together and match the raw armhole and side seam edges. Pin here and there in the body of the pieces to hold the two together. Turn under the same edges as in step 4 to just inside the fashion fabric edge, pin, and then baste through all layers.
6. Hem stitch or running stitch the fashion fabric and the lining together along the turned and basted edges, stitching through all layers.





Lacing strip and bodice interior on the original gown

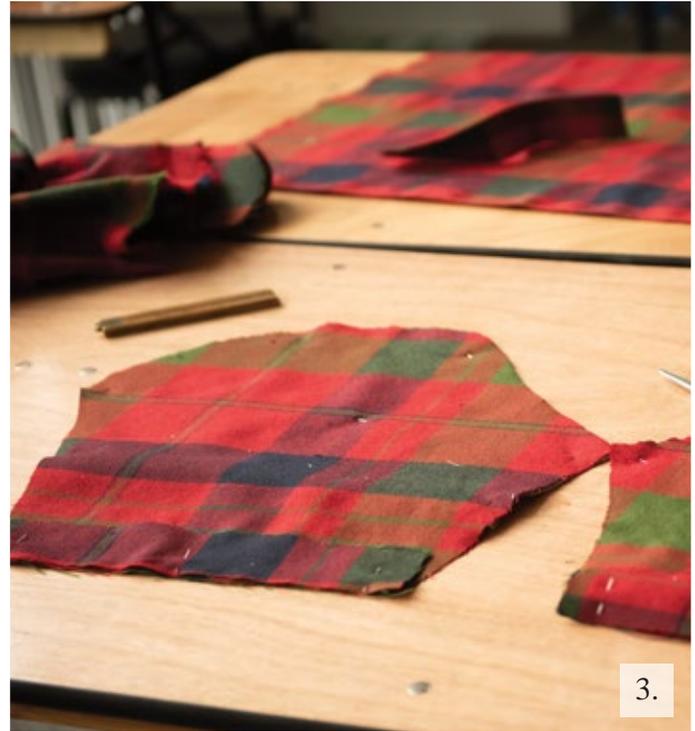
LACING STRIPS

Because of the weight of the wool gown, lacing strips were used to keep the back well-fitted and take the pressure off the pins that closed the center front of the bodice.

1. Cut two lacing strips from the linen twill. Fold in half lengthwise and press.
2. Mark the position of the 6 eyelets on each strip, then work each eyelet by piercing with an awl and whipping over the raw edge with the heavy linen thread. The original gown's eyelets are quite large and roughly sewn, so do not feel these need to be perfect. Once stitched, poke through each eyelet again with the awl to round it out.

ASSEMBLING THE SLEEVES

The sleeves of the original Isabella gown are a fascinating mish-mash of mistakes and on-the-fly problem solving. The lining comes up short on left sleeve but not on the right; there is piecing, clipping, fiddling, and corrections throughout.



We attempted to recreate the process of these mistakes and corrections. For the sake of clarity we will treat both the left and right sleeve the same in this pattern, as we did on our recreation of the gown.

1. Before you start, measure the length of your arm from shoulder point to elbow and adjust the sleeve patterns as needed so that the full length of the sleeve extends just past the elbow.
2. Cut out the plain-woven linen sleeve lining, sleeve fashion fabric, and sleeve fashion fabric extension. If you do not want to deal with the extension, use the sleeve lining pattern for the fashion fabric as well.
3. Join the fashion fabric sleeve and sleeve extension right-sides-together with a running backstitch, then open and press the seam allowances flat.
4. Place the lining and the fashion fabric sleeve wrong-sides together and baste around the sides and top. Treating the lining and fashion fabric as one, fold in the back edge seam allowance and baste.
5. Roll the sleeve into the round and lap the back edge over the front edge about ½" (1.27 cm). Pin length-wise.



ASSEMBLING THE CUFFS

Unlike many other winged cuffs, the Isabella gown's cuffs feature a side seam and were lined in the round rather than flat.

1. Cut out the cuff fashion fabric pieces and mark the pleat lines. Then turn up the seam allowance on both long edges and baste.
2. Match the short raw edges right-sides-together and backstitch, then open the seams and press.
3. Now working in the round, right side out, pleat the cuff, bringing the solid lines up to the dotted lines as indicated in the pattern. Pin. The pleated width should be about 1 ¾" (4.4 cm) at the center.
4. Top stitch through all layers with a running back stitch / prick stitch for about 3 ½ – 4" (8.9 - 10 cm), centered over the narrowest part of the cuff.
5. Cut out the plain-woven linen cuff lining and turn the fashion fabric cuff inside-out so the raw edges are visible.
6. Working in the round, apply the cuff lining starting at the widest point, pinning, turning under the lining edges to just inside the fashion fabric edges, and



adjusting as needed. At the narrowest part of the cuff, the lining does not meet. The raw edges are folded under and about 1 ½" (3.8 cm) of the pleated fashion fabric is still showing.

7. Hem stitch around all edges of the lining. Press.



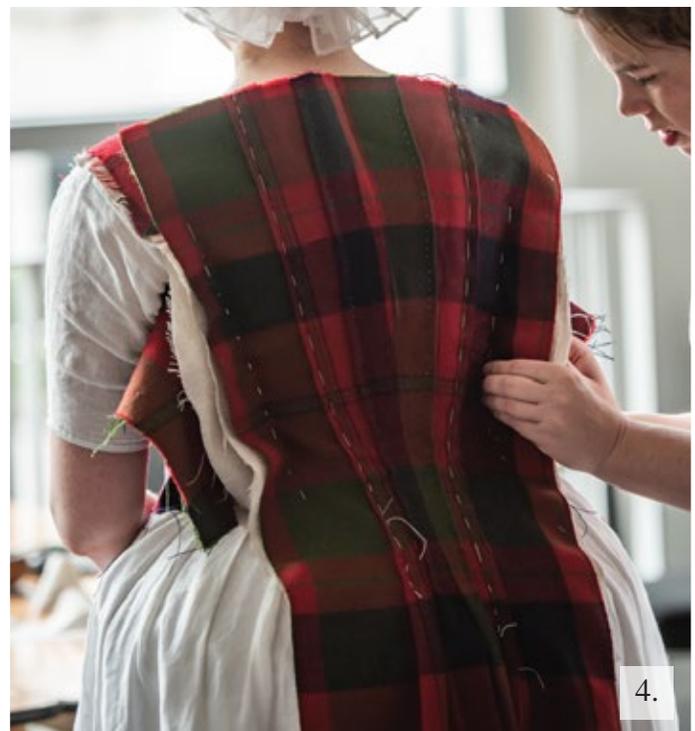
1.



2.



3.



4.

FIRST FITTING – BODICE & SLEEVES

For the first fitting, you, the model, or your dress form should be in all underpinnings and petticoats, with shoes on as well.

1. Place the pleated bodice back and skirt panel onto the model, finding the waist. Pin to the stays so the piece is securely held in place.

2. Next, working flat, pin the center front of the bodice together, then place on the model, finding the waist and roughly pinning the shoulder straps. Note the seam allowance on the waist edge and be sure the waist will be sitting in the right place when this seam allowance is turned under.

3. At the side seams of the bodice front pieces, separate the fashion fabric from the lining. Taking up



just the bodice front lining, pinch it together with the bodice back edges, treating the fashion fabric and the lining of the bodice back as one. Pin, then repeat for the other side.

4. Work back and forth on each side, pinching, taking up excess, and pinning until the bodice fits smoothly all the way around. The bodice front fashion fabric is still hanging free of the pinned side seams at this point. You may have a lot of excess on the side seams – this will be trimmed later.

5. Now is a good time to fit the sleeves. Pull the sleeve on and fully onto the shoulder. Keep the model's arm straight. Unpin the lapped edge of the sleeve seam and re-lap it to tighten the sleeve. The arms must stay straight through this process. Really crank that lapped edge nice and tight. Pin.

6. Remove the sleeve and top stitch the lapped sleeve seam through all layers with a spaced back stitch about ¼” (6 mm) apart and ¼” (6 mm) from the folded edge. The raw edges are left untrimmed and raw on the inside.

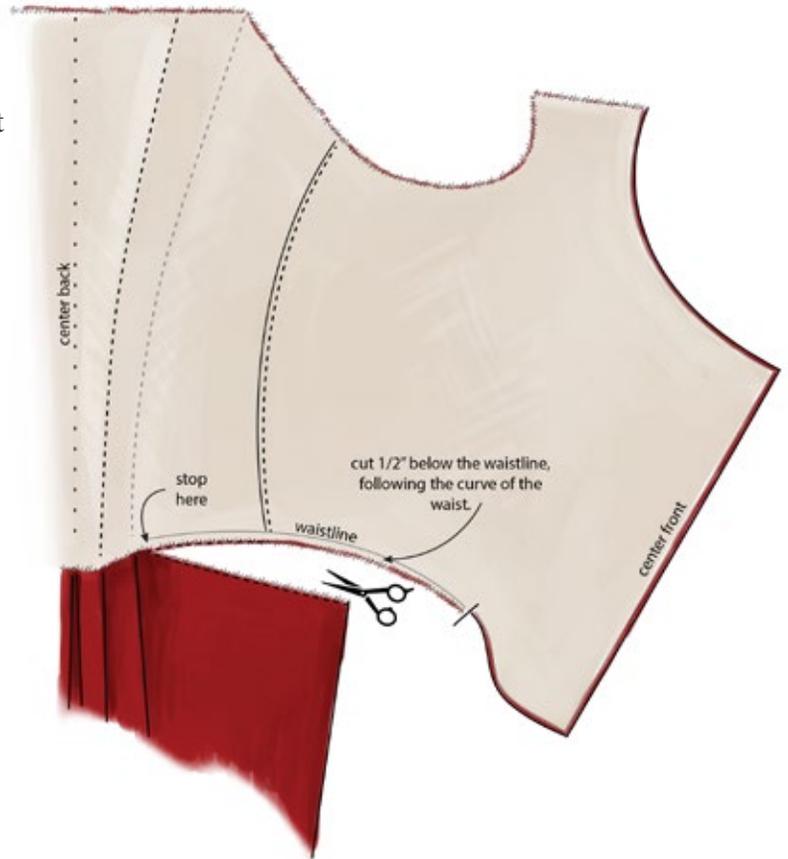
7. Unpin the center front of the bodice and the shoulder straps and remove from the model, keeping the side seams pinned.



THE SCARY CUT

1. With the gown laid out flat on the table, draw a gentle curve between the bodice front lining where it meets the side seam and the known waist point at center back. It's easy for this part to come up short-waisted, so give yourself about ½" (1.27 cm) extra below this mark for seam allowance.

2. Carefully clip along the lower line you drew to just under the first back pleat. Repeat on the other side. Handle the gown with care after this point – these cuts are the weak points and can tear.





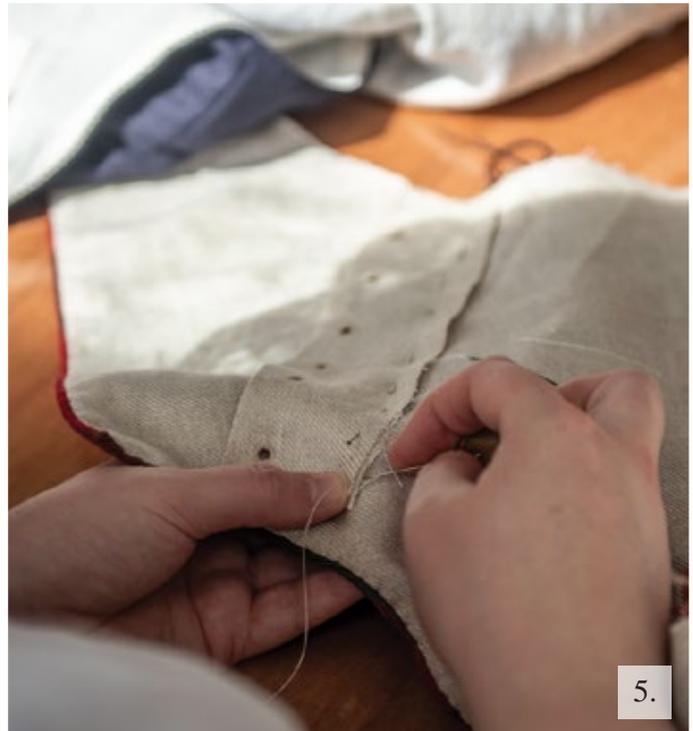
ATTACHING FRONTS TO BACK & LACING STRIPS

1. On the inside of the bodice, a clean folded edge has been made by the pinning method when fitting the gown on the body. Adjust the pins before stitching. With the bodice front fashion fabric pinned out of the way, stitch the lining pieces together from the right side with a hem stitch, working through all layers, including the fashion fabric of the bodice back. Make sure the bodice front fashion fabric is not caught in this stitching. Press, then carefully cut away the excess seam allowance, leaving about 1" (2.5 cm) on each side.

2. Turn the gown over, fashion fabric side up. Release the bodice front fashion fabric that was pinned out of the way and smooth it back and over the side seams.

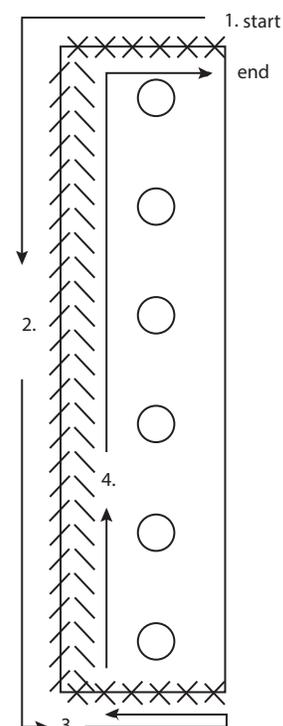
3. Turn under the raw edge on the bodice front side seam and pin through all layers. The seam will be in roughly the same place as the lining side seam, but does not have to match it exactly. Adjust both sides to be even and symmetrical.

4. Top stitch the bodice side seams through all layers using a spaced backstitch / prick stitch about 1/4" (6 mm) apart and 1/4" (6 mm) away from the edge.



Press.

5. Turning the gown over again, lining side up, place the lacing strips on the inside of the bodice front pieces along the dotted lines indicated on the pattern. Following the diagram below, whip stitch them in place, leaving the short top and bottom edges free. The raw edges are finished only by this whip stitch. Note that the stitching of the long edge goes through all layers and is visible on the exterior of the bodice.



ATTACHING SKIRTS & PLEATING

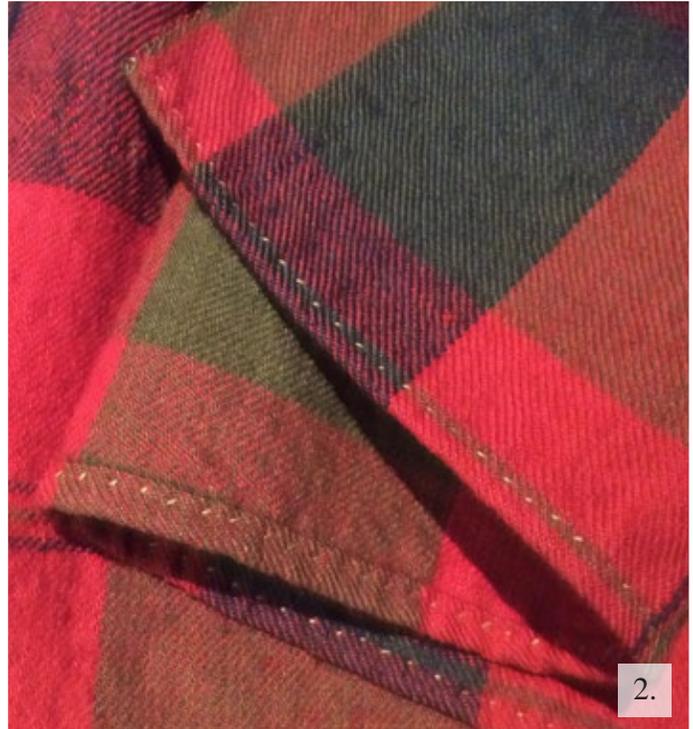
1. Join the skirt panels to each side of the center back skirt with a spaced backstitch about 5 stitches per inch. If you have raw cut edges, do mantua-maker's seams to join the panels.

2. Now you can hem the skirt. Turn up about ½” (1.27 cm) and baste, then turn up ½” (1.27 cm) again and running stitch in place.

3. With the gown laid out on the table, fashion fabric side up, knife pleat one side of the skirt towards the center back. All of the pleats are directed to center back, and they are not even – pleat by eye and adjust as needed to match the length of the waist edge of the bodice. Don't obsess!

4. When you reach the tricky back skirt pleats, you may have quite a bit of excess skirt fabric to shove under the center back pleats. “Shoving” describes this part of the original gown well – it is not elegantly done and there is a lot of bulk at this point. Worry not. So long as it looks good on the outside, let it be a hot mess on the inside.

5. For sanity's sake, we recommend thoroughly basting the skirt pleats across the top and 4” (10 cm) down as well.



The hem of the original gown showing both the inside and the outside.





SECOND FITTING – SKIRTS

1. With your model again wearing stays, shoes, and all other underpinnings, carefully put the gown on, checking the waist. You can now use the lacing straps to hold the gown closed, and pin the center front edges together. There is a lot of weight on the cuts in the back panel, so have a friend help hold the skirts up or place them on a chair or table so the gown doesn't rip while you're closing the bodice.

2. Place one side of the skirts in position, raw edges upward, and adjust the placement of the pleats so that the hem is level. You will have quite a bit of extra skirt at the bodice front waist edge, and less tapering towards the back.

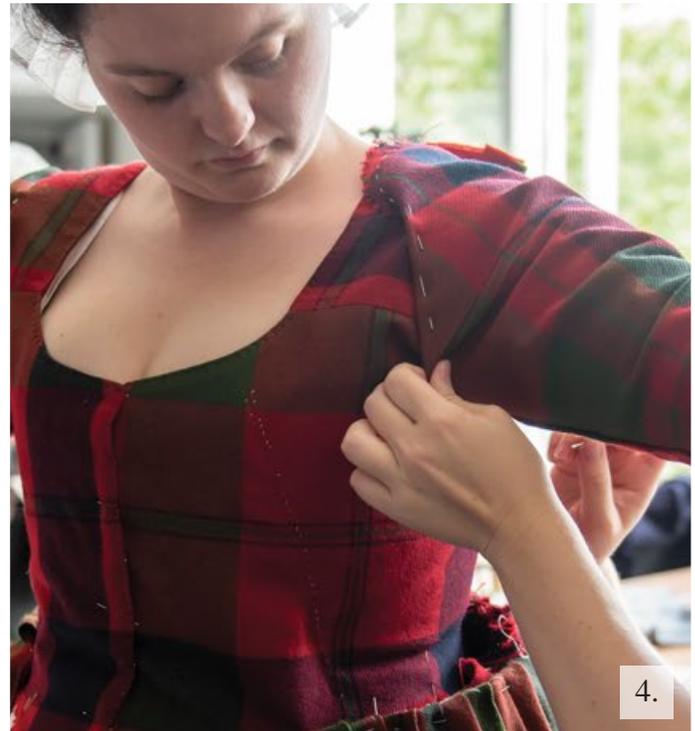
3. Mark the line of the waist on the skirts.

Option 1 - If your fabric is thin enough, you can chalk or pin right along the waistline curve on the exterior of the skirts, right across the pleats.

Option 2 - if your fabric is thick and you can't feel the waist, fold the raw top edge of the skirts under along the waistline and pin securely.



4. Repeat for the other side of the skirt. This is a very tricky part of the gown, and a bit of a weird order of operations, but stick with it! Once marked or folded, keep the skirts pinned to the bodice to take the weight.



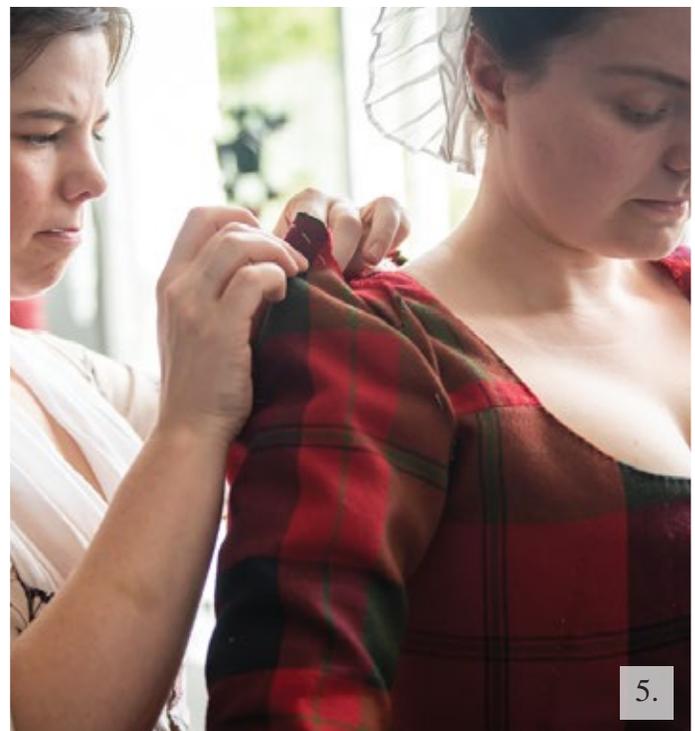
SECOND FITTING - SHOULDER STRAPS, SLEEVES & CUFFS

Because Isabella was quite narrow in the shoulders, the shoulder straps and back pleats of this gown present the biggest challenge and most difficult aspect of fitting. The construction is atypical, and it will be difficult to achieve the intersecting lines of the back pleats and shoulder straps on a model with broader shoulders. This is OK! The wide breadth of the back pleats of the original gown are unusual and out of fashion for the mid-1780s. Do not fret if you need to set your shoulder straps wider for a good fit.

1. Treating the fashion fabric and lining fabric shoulder straps as one, tuck the raw ends of the shoulder straps beneath the turned and basted top edge of the bodice back pleats, between the fashion fabric and the lining of the bodice back. Pin.

2. Turn under $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) on the underarm curve of each sleeve, roughly from mark to mark under the curve of the armpit. Baste. The top of the sleeve head can be left raw.

3. Pull the sleeve onto the model's arm and up onto the shoulder, then nip in under the arms and very carefully pin the turned edge of the sleeve to the



bodice all the way around the underarm and up the front to the shoulder point.

4. Adjust the pins as needed so that the model has a good range of motion. She should be able to rotate her arms in all directions. Move the pins to accommodate the movement.



5. On the top of the sleeve, between the shoulder point and the intersection with the bodice back, ease in the excess of the sleeve and tuck it between the fashion fabric and lining of the strap. You can do this with a line of gathering stitches or just shove it in there and scotch it around.

6. Turn under the seam allowance on the fashion fabric strap and pin through all layers.

7. Pull the cuff onto the bottom of the sleeve, making sure you've got the right cuff - pleats upward! - and placing the top edge roughly on or just above the sleeve extension seam.

8. Position the cuff so that the narrowest part is in the crook of the model's arm, and the tiny winged part is pinched up at approximately the models elbow. The wing is pinched only at the top edge.

Now it's time for the correction to the sleeve. When the sleeves were fit, they were tightened with the model's arm straight, inhibiting her motion later on. Here's how they fixed that...

9. With the sleeves still on the model, very carefully make a small vertical cut into the crook of the model's arm. Go a little at a time until she can bend her arms and touch her nose. Yes, this is how the original



gown was corrected! Be careful not to cut the cuffs or the model's body.

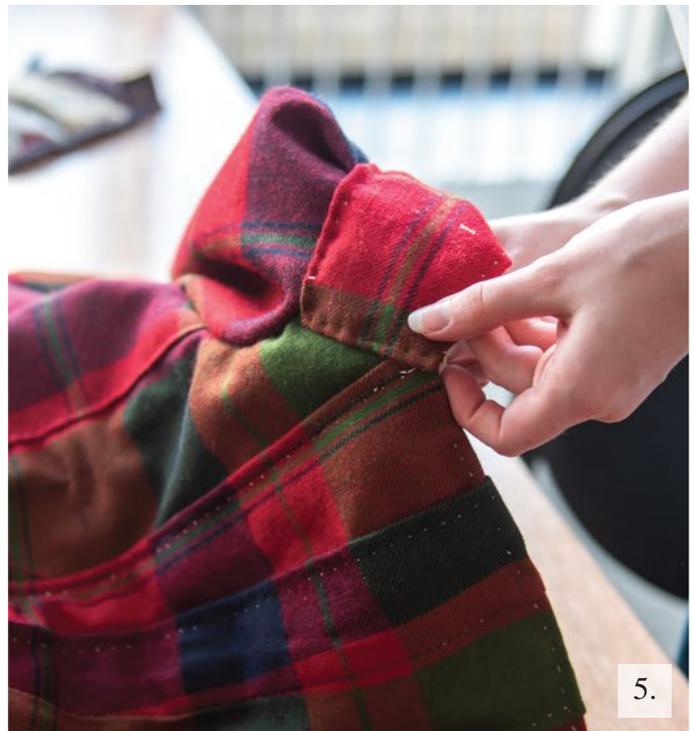
10. Carefully remove the gown, adjusting any pins that caught the model's underpinnings, and keeping the weight of the skirts suspended and all other pins in place.

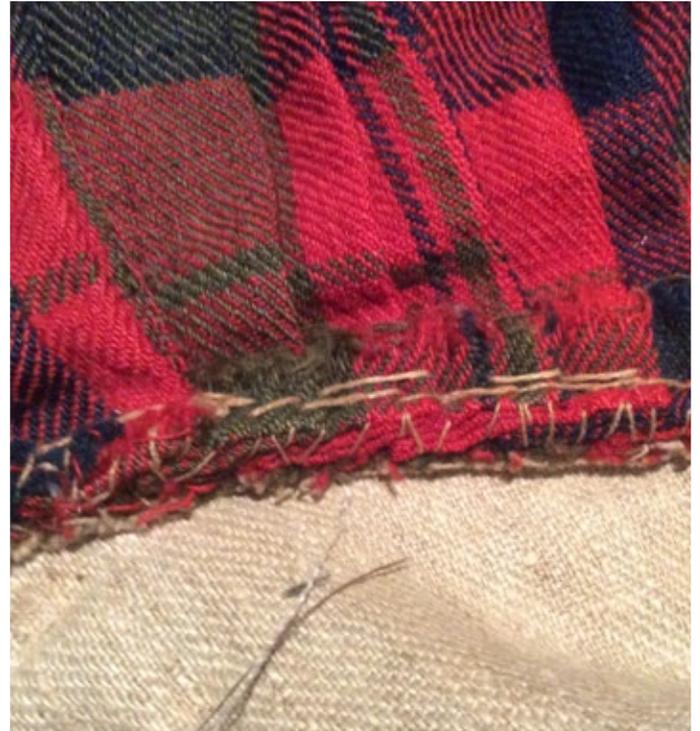
FINISHING THE LINING, SLEEVES & SHOULDER STRAPS

1. On the inside of the bodice back, turn under the lining along the top neckline edge and shoulder strap to sit just inside the exterior edge. Hem stitch across the shoulder strap, neck edge, and opposite shoulder strap.
2. Place another line of small running stitches $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) below the neckline edge just between the two shoulder straps
3. Next, pinch and hold the seam allowance of the armscye from the inside around the underarm curve and carefully move the exterior pins to hold the pieces together around the resulting curve. For a video on a clever way to pin an armscye, [click here](#).
4. On the inside of the bodice, draw in the armscye curve with a pencil. Securely backstitch along this line to the shoulder point on top, and the intersection of the back pleats and shoulder strap on the back. Check your work on the outside to make sure everything was caught and stitched.
5. Moving back to the exterior of the gown, top stitch the sleeve and outer pleats of the bodice back from shoulder point to the waist in one long line, using a spaced backstitch / prick stitch through all layers, about $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) apart and $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) from the edge.



Back neckline finishing of the original gown with two lines of stitches.





The interior top of the skirt of the original gown, at the waistline, showing the folded top, rough whipping, and large backstitches.

JOINING SKIRTS & BODICE

1. If it is not done already, fold down the raw, pleated top edge of the skirt along the line you marked earlier. The folded depth at the skirt fronts will be roughly 2 - 3" (5 - 7.6 cm) (but may be more) tapering to nothing folded at the back, past the pocket slits.

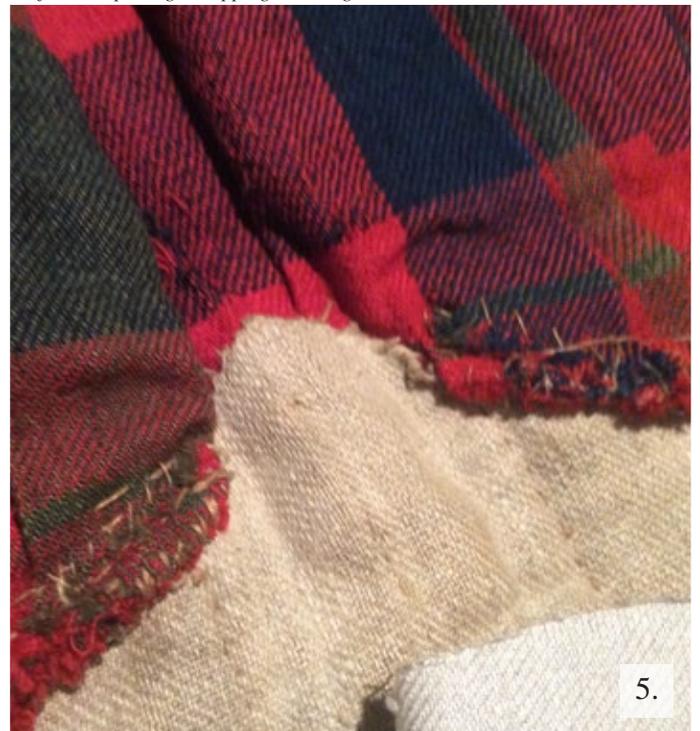
2. Whip over the top of the fold and remaining raw edges with great big, sloppy, crazy stitches in the heavy linen thread.

3. Next, place the bodice waist edge against the turned skirt waist edge, right sides together. This is a bit weird and tricky where the scary cut is at the bodice back pleats, but try to get it all pinned in there so the raw edges are matched up.

4. Join the skirt to the bodice with gnarly, huge, mama-don't-care backstitches through ALL layers, stopping at the end of the scary cut on each side. Yowza!

5. At the center back lining "tail," turn under the raw edges and hem stitch down.

6. Turn in and adjust any remaining raw bits along the bodice front waistline where it joins the skirt.



The center back "tail" finishing on the original gown, where the lining meets the bottom of back pleats at the waist.





A view of the lining, lacing strips, and top of the skirt of the original gown

FINISHING

1. Stitch the cuffs to the sleeves along the top edge with a running backstitch, leaving the tiny wing at the back unstitched for about 1" (2.5 cm) at just the top.
2. On the inside of the sleeves, very roughly turn under and coarsely hem the "V" cut at the crook of the arm.
3. Very roughly overcast the raw edges of the sleeve ends, catching in just the lining of the cuff.
4. Cut out the excess in the armholes leaving about ½" (1.27 cm) seam allowance, and roughly overcast the raw edges.

You're done!

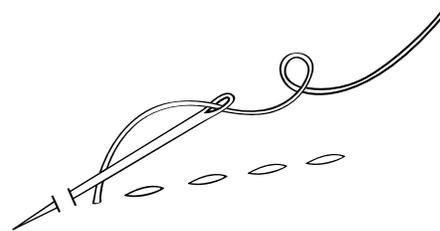


Interior view of the sleeves of the original gown, at the cuffs. Note the unfinished or poorly turned and whipped edges.

STITCHES & SEAMS

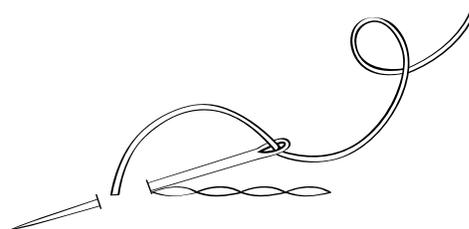
RUNNING STITCH

Working from right to left weave the needle up and down through all layers. When you're using running stitches for hemming or a seam, make sure that the visible stitch is very fine. Basting stitches should be long and even.



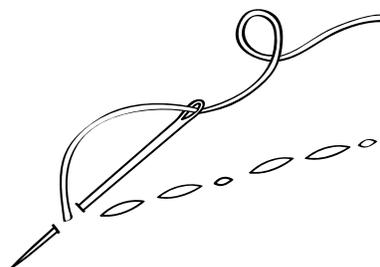
BACKSTITCH

Working right to left, anchor the knot on the wrong side of the fabric, bringing the needle up through all layers. Travel a couple of threads to the right of where your needle came through, push the needle through all the layers, and bring it back up equidistant from the first puncture. Bring the needle to that same thread entry point, pushing down through all layers, travelling equidistant to the left, bring the needle up through, and repeat. This is the strongest stitch, ideal for seams.



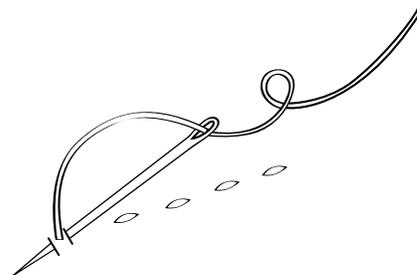
RUNNING BACKSTITCH

Using the instructions above, combine the running and back stitch. Stitch two or three running stitches and then a back stitch for strength. This stitch is commonly used in skirt and petticoat seams.



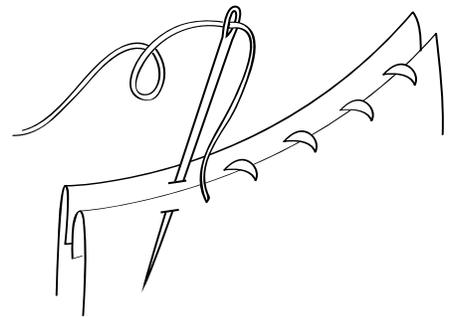
PRICK STITCH

Working from right to left, anchor the knot on the wrong side of the fabric, and come straight up through all layers. Bring your needle down 1 or 2 threads to the right making sure the needle goes through all the layers. Bring the needle up equidistant from how far you spaced the stitches from the seam edge. For example if you're sewing $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) in from the folded edge, space your stitches $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) apart. This careful and visible spaced backstitch is used most often on side seams



EDGE STITCH / EDGE HEM STITCH

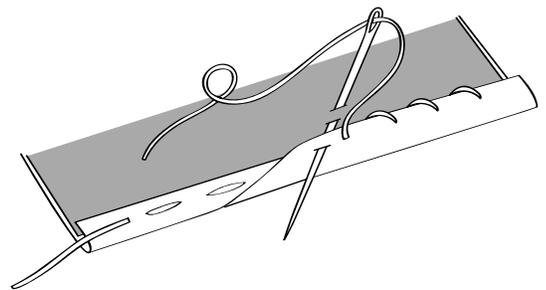
This stitch is commonly used to join the fashion fabric and the lining. Before stitching, turn in the seam allowances on both pieces and baste. With the two pieces placed wrong sides together, offset the fashion fabric slightly above the lining fabric and pin into place. With the lining side facing you, bury your knot between the two layers with the needle coming out towards you. Travel a small amount to the left and make a small stitch catching all layers, and bring the needle back towards you. Repeat. This stitch is visible on the outside and should be small.



MANTUA-MAKER'S SEAM

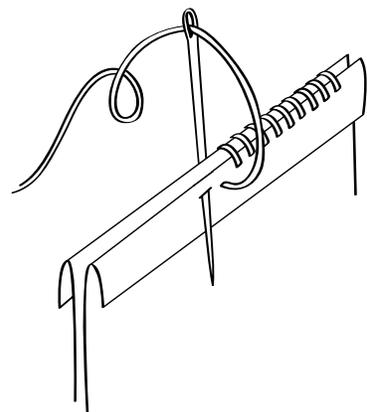
The mantua maker's seam is an efficient, period correct way to connect and encase raw edges on skirt panels in gowns.

Start with two layers of fabric, right sides together. Offset the bottom fabric $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm). Fold the bottom fabric up and over the top fabric once and baste. Next, fold the baste edge up once more and hem stitch through all layers. When you're finished you will have a clean finish on the outside and an encased raw edge on the interior.



WHIP STITCH

Commonly used over an edge, either raw or finished. Place the two pieces of fabric right sides together and pin. Working right to left, work with the needle pointing towards you, passing through all layers. Bring the needle back around to the far layer, passing through the layers with the needle facing you. Repeat.



This project was the brainchild and passion of Rebecca Olds of Timesmith Dressmaking.

The Isabella MacTavish Fraser wedding gown is held in the Inverness Museum and Art Gallery in Inverness, Scotland.

The reproduction hard tartan fabric was created by Prickly Thistle Scotland Ltd.

FABRIC & NOTIONS

- * Burnley & Trowbridge - www.burnleyandtrowbridge.com
- * Renaissance Fabrics - www.renaissancefabrics.net
- * Colonial Williamsburg Shops - www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/shop
- * Dharma Trading Company - www.dharmatrading.com
- * Silk Baron - www.silkbaron.com
- * Pure Silks - www.puresilks.us
- * Mood Fabrics Inc - www.moodfabrics.com
- * William Booth, Draper - www.wmboothdraper.com
- * Britex Fabrics - www.britexfabrics.com

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Janet Arnold. *Patterns of Fashion: Englishwomen's Dresses and Their Construction c 1660-1860*, Macmillan/QSM, 1964.

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SEWING & PRODUCTION TEAM

Rebecca Olds - Timesmith Dressmaking
Lauren Stowell - American Duchess
Abby Cox - American Duchess
Peryn Westerhof Nyman - Isabel Northwode Costume
Katy Stockwell - Regency Regalia
Alexandra Bruce - Alexandra Bruce Costumes
Georgia Gough
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