



# WRAPPED IN STYLE

Marcia G. Anderson and Hilary Toren

*FROM the earliest days of settlement Minnesotans have coped with a dilemma in dress: how to stay warm in a northern climate while displaying cosmopolitan and fashionable taste. In 1849 Godey's Lady's Book noted that the newly formed territory was "looking up"; the Philadelphia publication, a leading arbiter of fashion, had received "four subscribers from this rather remote settlement."<sup>1</sup>*

*"Wrapped in Style," an exhibit at the MHS building in St. Paul, illustrates the multitude of ways in which Minnesotans met the dilemma in all seasons and on all occasions. The exhibit, which will be on display until November 26, 1984, highlights a small portion of the society's remarkable holdings; it features wraps dating from the 1820s to the 1950s, focusing on 100 capes, shawls, and mantles selected from nearly 500 such garments in the museum collections. These wraps were worn on a variety of occasions: at weddings, golf games, sledding, Winter Carnival parades, during mourning, at social functions of every description, for formal portraits, and in theatrical productions. And they were donned by men and children, as well as by women.*

*The following pages offer a sampling of the historical wraps in the display, which was mounted by the exhibits staff of the MHS education division and made possible in part by a grant from the St. Paul Foundation. Marcia Anderson, guest curator of the exhibit, is interested in learning more about Minnesota dressmakers and designers and would like to hear from readers.*

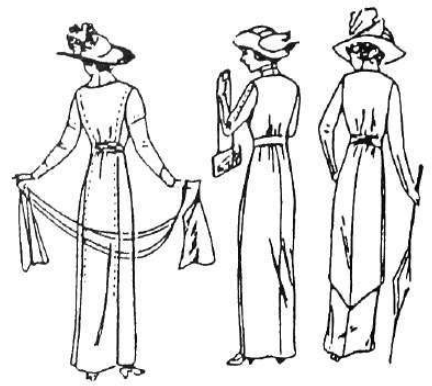
SHAWLS, CAPES, and mantles in numerous forms have been in use for centuries, but all three garments peaked in popularity among 19th-century Western consumers. The shawl, an ancient garment descended from Greek and Roman wraps, reigned supreme from the 1840s to 1870s. The Kashmir shawls of India and their European imitations, the so-called Paisley shawls, largely accounted for this fashion dominance. Others popular in the 19th century included the manton de Manila (a Chinese silk with reversible embroidery and elaborate fringes), stripes, prints, long wool shawls called plaids, changeable silks, and the timeless laces and lace imitations. Many shawl styles reappeared through revivals and survived into the 20th century. These garments are still a popular clothing accessory and appear frequently in the new lines of international fashion designers.

The centuries-old cape, long favored by religious orders and simple shepherds, showed up in much more frivolous and varied interpretations in the 19th century. The elaborate fur-trimmed pelisses of the 1830s and 1840s were more cloaklike in form than the capes that dominated women's and men's outer wraps in the 1890s and early 1900s. Capes of this period ranged from short, full circles of fabric to fur-lined, hip-length models, or full-length, semifitted traveling garments, and waterproof wools known as Mackintoshes. Like shawls, capes are present in the 1980s fashion picture.

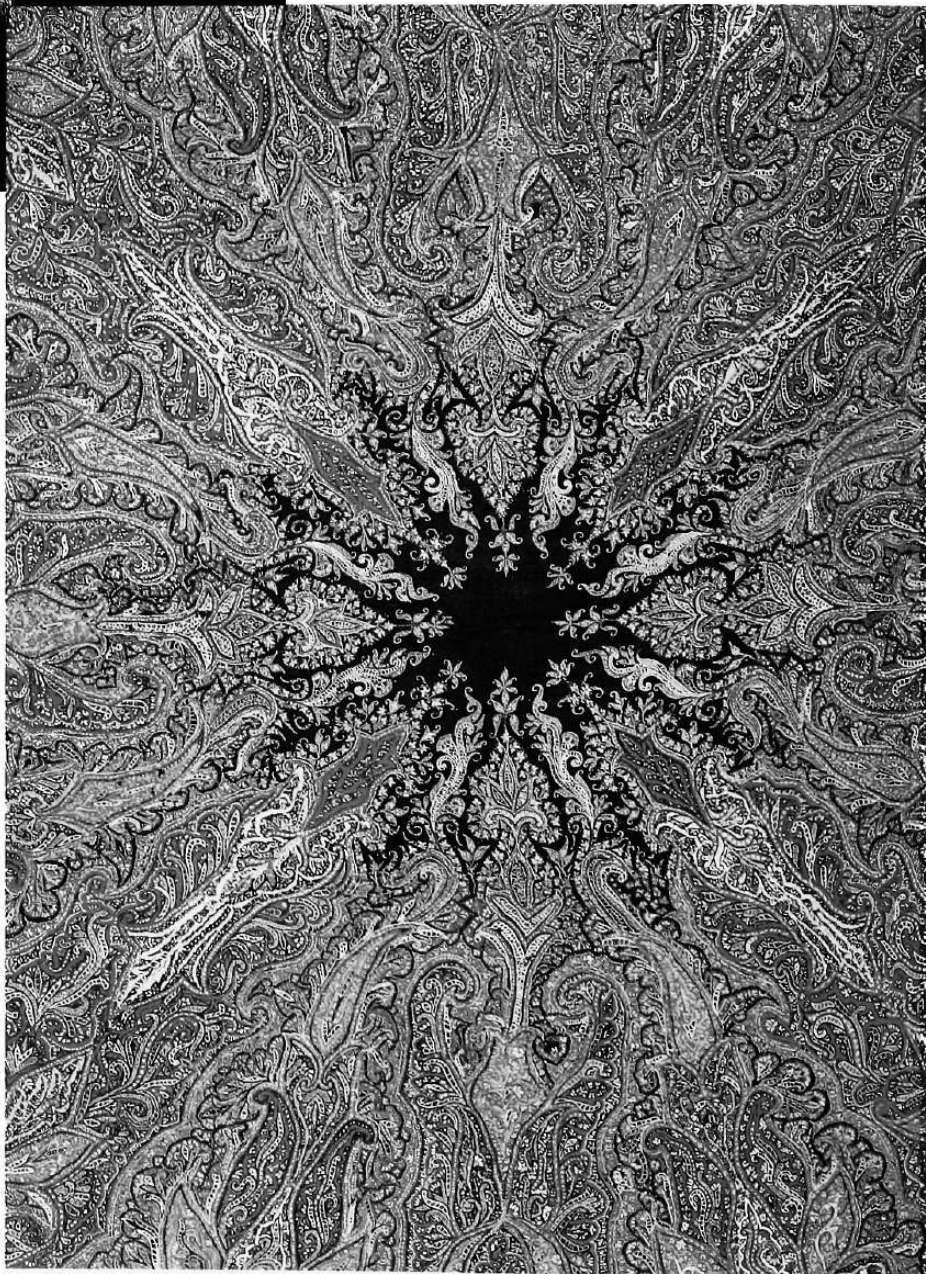
A mantle is perhaps best described as a cloak or loose garment. This broad definition does not begin to picture

<sup>1</sup>Godey's Lady's Book, August, 1849, p. 155. The authors wish to thank Mary Barton, Dorothy Burke, and Suman Shenoi for their assistance.

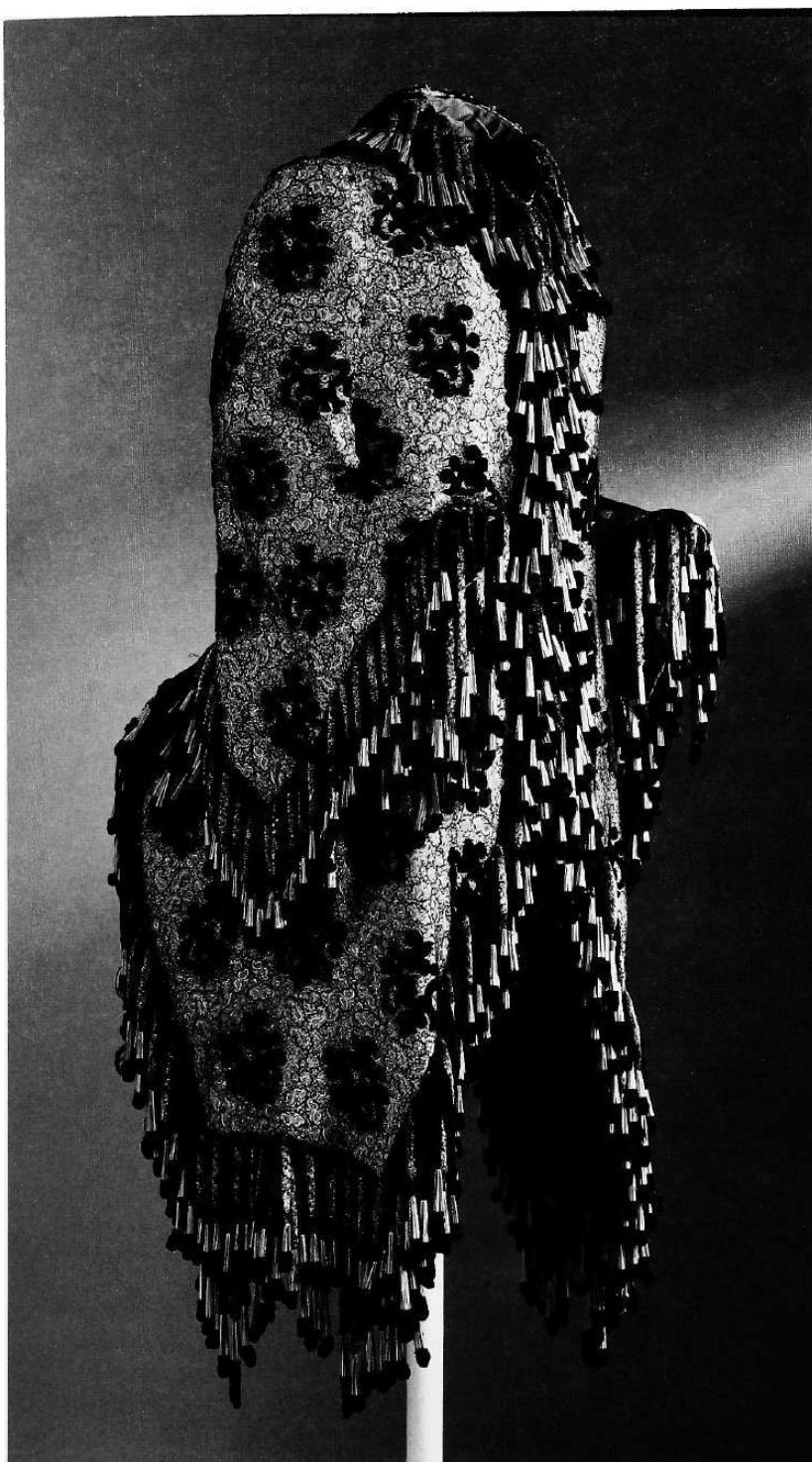
Marcia Anderson is curator of the MHS museum collections. Hilary Toren, MHS museum collections assistant, was a researcher for this exhibit.



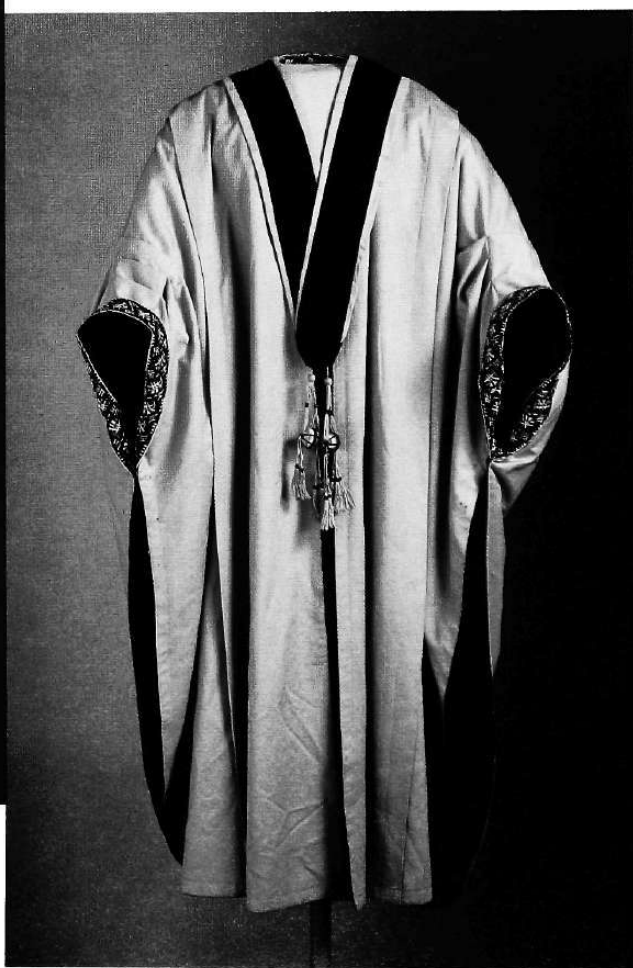
*THE REVERSIBLE* silk manton de Manila shown above was donated by Mary H. Folwell, who purchased it in Cuba about 1900. The knotted silk fringe is sewn on by hand (accession no. 7010.5). The intricate detail on this 67-by-69-inch Kashmir shawl (right) from the mid-1800s shows to fine effect the "amli" or hand-embroidered work done on a pieced twill background (accession no. 8005).







*THE PAISLEY motif (left) shows in the figured silk background of this elaborate mantle with raised, black cut-velvet medallions and silk chenille fringe. The garment was worn in the 1870s by Mary Proal Saunders of St. Paul (accession no. 8633.34). The wool mantle (below) illustrates the Oriental influence on the fashions of the early 1900s, with a loose body style and kimono or dolman sleeve line seen frequently in Paris designs (accession no. 9681.14).*



A CIRCULAR CAPE of off-white pleated silk organdy complemented the costume worn by Mrs. Saunders (accession no. 8633.8). Her evening gown, thought to have been designed by St. Paul dressmaker Mary Molloy, is black cotton net with appliquéd velvet strips over an ivory lining.



the variety of wraps that borrow characteristics from capes, shawls, cloaks, and coats, resulting in apparel that often features a sculpted (partially fitted) look. Mantle fashions, seen in several forms throughout the century, were most visible during the 1860s to early 1890s, peaking in the 1870s and 1880s when the large skirts then in vogue made them ideal outer garments.

All these kinds of wraps were worn by Minnesotans, and they appeared in fabrics and styles appropriate to every function and economic class. The owners and donors of these garments and their families were among the people that built Minnesota, and they represent every economic level and occupation — legislators, early settlers, farmers, governors, clerks, millers, historians, butchers, car dealers, secretaries, educators, laborers, lawyers, architects, decorators, milliners, tailors, surveyors, merchants, lumberjacks and lumber barons, cooks, socialites, physicians, librarians, judges, entrepreneurs, builders of railroads, bridges, and canals, and many more.

Minnesotans learned of trends and fashions through several mediums. Despite the label of “remote settlement” applied to their state, they were clearly fashionable and fashion conscious. Magazines, newspapers, and other publications piqued Minnesotans’ interest about international designer clothing and offered commentary on local and imported ready-to-wear and on regional designers and dressmakers. They gave suggestions on how to create “that special look” in your own home, and some of them offered a forum for their readers.

In 1895 one young girl described to a Minneapolis-based publication her ingenious solution to the problem of making a modern bicycle suit. (Her letter also offers one explanation as to why so many everyday shawls failed to survive!) “I confided my troubles to an old aunt, and she at once said she thought she could furnish the cloth for the suit, and brought to light a large, heavy wool, grey double shawl, large enough for a counterpane.

When the patterns came we tore the shawl into convenient pieces — it was too large to dye whole. It took three packages of Diamond dark blue dye, and being all wool it took a good blue.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, some other garments have survived as reincarnated capes. May Leonard, for example, wrote: “I have just made a lovely cape from a tan broadcloth skirt that had become sun-faded. I dyed the goods black, and as it was an old-fashioned narrow skirt, made the cape in gores. It has six gores and the seams are covered with narrow black silk gimp. A fancy deep full collar comes over this and is edged with wider gimp, as is the cape proper. At the back of the neck is a big stiff bow of four-inch satin ribbon, that has done duty before upon a hat. This adds a jaunty, stylish look to the garment.”

A myriad of local firms advertised and offered international designer fashions, modish ready-to-wear, bargains galore on “last year’s popular look,” and individual attention by local dressmakers. Minneapolis firms included L. S. Donaldson, the “first department store in the Northwest,” founded in 1881 by William and L. S. Donaldson, immigrant sons of a Scottish shawl maker. Others in the Mill City were W. S. Nott Company (specializing in waterproofed and rubberized garments), C. P. Clenthy furriers, the Young-Quinlan Company, Rohann’s furriers, Segelbaum Brothers, Vanstrum’s Supply House, the Plymouth Clothing House, and the Dayton Company. St. Paul boasted the firms of Field Schlick, Inc.,

<sup>2</sup>The quotations here and in the following paragraph are from *Farm, Stock and Home*, 11:285 (July 15, 1895), 12:245 (June 15, 1896).

Cathcart's (dry goods), Dickinson's Department Store, Mannheimer Brothers, Schaub Brothers, Inc., E. Albrecht and Son Furs, and D. W. Ingersoll. Other population centers — New Ulm, Stillwater, and Duluth, for example — claimed equal fashion access.

In 1856 D. W. Ingersoll offered "New York Prices At St. Paul," including "rich broche square and long shawls, plain and embroidered crape shawls, wool, plaid, square and long shawls, gentlemen's heavy long shawls." Three decades later Dickinson's Department Store proudly advertised "The largest and most Extensive Cloak Department in the Northwest," with opera wraps and shawls of silk, wool, velvet, and fine black cashmere. An elegant assortment of capes carried by the Plymouth Department Store in 1897 ranged from cloth to seal plush. One such garment was a "Tailor-made cape of fine English melton, 28 inches deep, 135-inch sweep, made with the new Empire back, trimmed with military braid and jet, inlaid velvet collar, edges double stitched. Plymouth price, \$10.50."<sup>3</sup>

Minnesotans' most intimate fashion contact came through local designers, dressmakers, and tailors, many of whom made regular buying trips to Europe, making sketches of "new looks" and buying yardage and trims in modish colors and patterns. A variety of locally distributed publications enabled even dressmakers unable to travel to keep current and offer stylish options to their customers.

In January, 1897, the *American Queen*, a publication distributed by the Plymouth store in Minneapolis, featured bold fashion statements from a special correspondent in Paris. "Certainly the wraps this season, whether coats, capes or fanciful mantles, are by unanimous consent short.

"Velveteen and Lyons velvet are extensively worn this season, and fur, lace, embroidery and glittering passementeries are lavished upon these beautiful backgrounds. Black velvet can almost be called a toilette for all occasions, as it is seen on the street, at receptions during the day, and for full dress what can be handsomer than real lace, rich velvet and diamonds?"<sup>4</sup>

Local dressmakers advertised through city directories, the *Dual City Blue Book*, in newspapers, and by word of mouth. The *Blue Books* carried ads for "M. E. Dale. MODISTE. Ladies' and children's robes. St. Paul, Minn."; "Morrissey. Robes et Manteaux. A choice line of imported dress fabrics and trimmings. Minneapolis"; and "Petty. Leading importer of ladies' fashion. Patterns furnished from all leading fashion journals published."<sup>5</sup>

Among the well-known Minnesota dressmakers and tailors represented in the society's exhibit is Mrs. A. (Mary G.) Worley of St. Paul, whose active career in dressmaking spanned the years from 1864 to 1896. She worked mainly for herself but from 1883 to 1891 managed the dress-making department at Mannheimer Brothers. Rose H. Boyd, who advertised herself as an importer of *robes et manteaux* and also listed a Paris address, was active in Minneapolis from 1880 to 1917. Mme. Boyd de-



AN ELEGANT black silk satin mantle (above) designed by Mary G. Worley, a St. Paul seamstress active during the last half of the 19th century (accession no. 9616.6); the luxurious ivory wool mantle (below) is the work of Madame Rose H. Boyd, whose career spanned the years from 1888 to 1917 and included twice yearly trips to Paris to attend fashion openings (accession no. 8633.38).



<sup>3</sup>*Daily Minnesotian* (St. Paul), November 12, 1856; advertising circular of Dickinson's, circa 1880, p. 6, 7, copy in MHS; *American Queen: The Gentlewoman's Paper and Gazette of Fashion*, October, 1897, p. 6, copy in the Minneapolis History Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.

<sup>4</sup>*American Queen*, January, 1897, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup>*Dual City Blue Books* (sometimes subtitled *Householders' Directory*) were published from 1885 to 1924 by R. L. Polk Co., St. Paul. They contained a private address directory and a "ladies' calling and shopping guide"; copies in MHS.



A YELLOW wool broadcloth "daffodil" cape with a lavender silk lining and a deep wool hood (accession no. 7554.8); a triangular black silk Chantilly lace shawl with delicate, naturalistic floral motifs (accession no. 68.183.52s); a fashion plate from Godey's Lady's Book with mantles from the mid-19th century.





A BLACK-AND-WHITE wool hooded cape from the 1930s, by Phillip Mangone of New York (accession no. 61.13.83)

AN 1890s golf cape, belonging to Mrs. Joseph S. Gibson (accession no. 67.7.41)



A RED wool flannel cape from the 1916 Winter Carnival, worn by Schuneman and Evans marching club members (accession no. 8627)

BESSIE Petit Douglas wore this green silk velvet cape from New York in the 1920s (accession no. 8782.19).



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signed for many prominent Minnesotans including the Pillsbury, Brooks, Sullivan, and Salisbury families.

The Schaub Brothers opened a tailoring firm in 1887 in St. Paul, where they continued to produce finely made garments until 1970. While the majority of their work was in men's clothing, the firm followed "the trend of modern times and in answer to an increasing demand" established a ladies' department in 1932. [It] achieved immediate favor, and grew so rapidly that many of its garments have been heralded in the East." The company advertised that its customers included the Hill, Donnelly, Kellogg, Sanborn, Sibley, and Weyerhaeuser families.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly enough, the personal touch and fit of a custom-made garment sometimes cost no more than comparable items available from local merchants or through mail-order catalogs. For the reasonable price of \$10.00, Mrs. James J. Hill had a cape made for her daughter Gertrude in 1905 by J. Fink, a St. Paul ladies' tailor specializing in cloaks, suits, jackets, and capes. And sophisticated travelers were not always more pleased by foreign shops than by Minnesota merchants. Mary Heywood Folwell, for example, wrote this to her mother, Sarah: "I've bought next to nothing. There is nothing to buy. The Cubans have no originality. The only things I've seen that you and I would wish are the crepe shawls. I have adopted the Cuban habit of keeping my liberty scarf ready to pull on. I understand now the use of the mantilla, low necks, and some light thing to pull on."<sup>7</sup>

In the heady world of fashion, the final decision of what to wear and where to find it rested with the discriminating Minnesotan. One of the finest sources on Minnesota tastes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is the library, archival, and manuscripts collections of the society. Used in conjunction with artifacts in the MHS museum, they provide rewarding insights to the ways Minnesota consumers shopped, spent, and dressed.

<sup>6</sup> *Schaub Brothers, Inc., 50th Anniversary*, [3] ([St. Paul], 1937), in MHS pamphlet collection.

<sup>7</sup> Personal voucher 23.777, July 1, 1905, in James J. Hill Papers, James Jerome Hill Reference Library, St. Paul; Mary Folwell to Sarah Folwell, May 5, 1900, in William Watts Folwell and Family Papers, MHS.

THE ILLUSTRATION on p. 56 is from *American Queen*, January, 1897, p. 5; all photographs are in the MHS collections. Eric Mortenson took the color pictures on p. 58, 59, 62, and 63 (lower left). Paul Fielder photographed those on p. 60, 61, and 63.

MARY HEYWOOD FOLWELL in her Cuban lace mantilla, about 1900 (accession no. 7010.5)

WRAPPED IN STYLE to fit the climate, these Minnesotans, shawls at the ready, pose near a 1900 laundry wagon.





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