

From the Collections

BOTH JOSEPHINE TOFTNER of tiny Gary, near Minnesota's northwestern border, and Clotilde Irvine of St. Paul, the original owners of these two fashionable dresses from the early 1900s, chose graceful garments featuring subdued colors and hand-worked embellishments. Toftner made her crocheted tunic over an ivory satin underdress for entry in the 1917 Minnesota State Fair, where it won third place. Irvine probably purchased her equally elegant pink linen day dress in New York in about 1915. It bears the label of the New York showroom of Lucile, Ltd., an exclusive English designer with showrooms there and in Chicago. The dress features professionally done hand embroidery.

These dresses from the Minnesota Historical Society's costume collection are excellent examples of its focus on Minnesotans



Josephine Toftner in her crocheted dress, about 1917

across the state and the styles they chose to wear. The collection's more than 23,000 items date from the early nineteenth century to the present. They include special-occasion and everyday clothing and accessories in popular local and national styles that were made by Minnesotans or brought to the state from around the globe. Toftner's donation to the Society included her state fair entry form and a photograph of the seamstress wearing her dress; the day dress was given by Irvine's estate. —LINDA McSHANNOCK, museum collections curator



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).