

Hair Buns and White Gloves

At Easter this year I happened to be conversing with someone right before morning service began, and the subject of the fact that ladies no longer wear hats and white gloves like they once did came up. That immediately brought up the subject of ladies' attire long ago.

Up until the mid-1960's our church had a large group of elderly (and mostly widowed) ladies in the congregation. Social customs being what they were at the time, this group of ladies always came to church dressed in the prescribed attire of the period. Part of their dress consisted of white gloves. Every one of them came in with their white gloves on each Sunday morning as well as their little hats. They were never seen without them in church. Most of the hats were very unassuming reflecting the meager incomes of some of the ladies as well as their humility. Most of the hats had the low bowl appearance with beads or other ornamentation on them replete with flowers, small feathers, and mesh veil.

This group of ladies also had something else in common. At that time the hairstyle for many of them consisted of their long hair braided and hair pinned around their head and then covered with a hair net or else braided and then a neat bun in back with a hair net covering them. Then their hat was often pinned to their hair to keep the hat from falling off. That was just a standard hair-styling arrangement for nearly all of them.

Their dress also usually consisted of dotted Swiss material or flowered or other designed cotton dresses. Again, they were very conservative and unassuming. Their shoes were usually the low high-heeled type with a large solid heel for good support. Stiletto heels were definitely not in vogue at that time.

Another noteworthy accoutrement of dress was the broach that most of them wore on their dresses. I can still recall the one that my grandmother wore all the time. Most of them were cameo pins of some sort.

Pocketbooks with long straps for handles were also the standard for the day. The gloves were many times stored in the purses, but they came out one way or the other as the ladies arrived at church. It was as much a part of their total dress as the gloves or hats.

Last but not least was the face powder that most of them used which left a very distinctive aroma in their presence as well as a lasting memory of these elderly ladies. Every now and then I get a whiff of talcum that takes me back to that beloved group of ladies who used to grace our church. That group consisted of Mrs. Gertie List, Miss Carrie Coulter, Aunt Helen Coulter, Aunt Lizzie Blake, Aunt Florence Downey, Mrs. Josie Coppinger, Mrs. Bertha Coppinger, Mrs. Neva Bolton, Miss Bertha Wall, Aunt Burleigh Downey, Mrs. Mildred Hancock, Mrs. Martha Coppinger, Miss Anna May Brown, Mrs. Maggie Troutman, and my own beloved grandmother, Florence Victoria Coulter.

They may all be gone, but they are certainly not forgotten.