

PIONEER TREK CLOTHING

Check bostonstaketrek.org for more details and patterns

Dressing in pioneer clothing can have a tremendous impact on the spirit of the trek. The following is a short description of what the pioneers wore as they crossed the plains. It also gives some hints for trekking in our day. You are welcome to wear specific vintage clothing that honors your background and ancestry.

MEN'S CLOTHING

Shirts

Men's shirts were worn loose. They had a narrow neck-band with no collar. Plain colors were most common, but stripes or plaids were also used. For modern day trekkers, light colors will be coolest. Choose something larger than a regular fit, with long sleeves.

Pants

Men's pants were also worn loose. Wool or linen was used. Colors included blue, black, gray, and browns, especially beige and tan. Trekkers in our day find that wool is too hot but that cotton, corduroy, twill, and canvas pants are good choices. Choose styles that are rather loose fitting through the crotch and thigh area to add comfort in walking.

Suspenders

Men's pants were held up by suspenders that were buttoned on the outside of the waistband, and crossed in the back.

Hats

Men's everyday hats ranged from pilot caps, straw hats, wide brimmed low felt hats, or round crowned hat. Modern day trekkers should not wear ball caps or army hats.

Vests/Ties

Usually these items were worn only on Sunday or when attending a meeting or social event. Ties were small, black, and silky, and were wrapped around the neck once and tied in the front with a square knot.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

Dresses

Women's basic dresses were floor length. It could be plain or have many ruffles. The sleeves were full, and long, with buttons or bands at the wrist. Necklines were usually high, with buttons up the front. Fabrics were cotton in solid colors or small print. Bright colors were popular (especially bright yellow). Blouses and long skirts or jumpers could be used. Pioneer trekkers now have found that dresses and skirts should be mid-calf or above the top of a hiking boot in length (so the young women do not trip over their skirts while pulling).

Aprons

The standard apron was six to twelve inches shorter than the skirt length. It gathered at the waist and tied. The bib attached at the waist and was pinned to the dress bodice at the top two corners, hence, the name pinafore (Pinned at two of the four corners!). Daytime aprons were made of calico remnants. Sunday aprons were made from white fabric and did not have a bib. For trekking today, large deep pockets are important to be able to carry different items along the trail.

Bonnets or headdresses

Women wore bonnets whenever they were outside. They were made of cotton with a deep stiffened brim and a back ruffle to protect the neck. They could be white, plain colors or a print, but they never matched the fabric of the dress. Today, bonnets or straw hats for young women are important; they need to have something for protection from the sun.

Pantaloon

These were worn underneath the dress and were normally white. Their length was usually between knee and mid-calf. Modern day trekkers could use scrubs or pajama pants hemmed shorter. Wearing pantaloons helps maintain modesty in trekking situations. (Although you may want to wear denim jeans, on the trek you should not because they are too tight, too hot, and don't "breathe")

Shoes and Socks

Shoes for both women and men need not be "period" style. Comfort is most important. Do not wear new hiking boots unless you have taken at least two months to break them in. Bring two pair of shoes in the event that one gets wet or causes blisters. Pack clean socks for each day. Some people wear a double pair of socks, with a smooth, lightweight nylon stocking being closest to the skin.

Clothing Sources

Check local second-hand stores or borrow clothing. Look up websites for Butterick and McCall's patterns under costumes (they have pioneer patterns). Authentic clothing patterns can be obtained from: www.pastpatterns.com/1830.html also look under 1840-1850's Many bonnet and dress patterns can be obtained through the internet. We will also help support you.

Helpful items

Sunscreen, chap-stick, sunglasses, insect repellent, lotion
Work gloves
Spray bottle
Camera

NOT allowed

Things that should not be allowed include: electronics of all kinds, baseball caps, t-shirts, tank tops, blue jeans, canned drinks, candy, weapons, perfumes.