

## Ladies

The following thoughts are applicable to every impression for this event.

It is June 1864 in upstate NY. Elmira has been the site of a New York military recruiting & draft rendezvous since April of 1861. This means there has been and continues to be a significant amount of uniformed Union troops about town. By 1864, there have been more than a half dozen Federal infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineer units raised from the local communities. A General Hospital has been in operation to house recuperating victims of battlefield and disease related maladies. It is also about to become the location for a Confederate prisoner of war camp.

This means the overt presence of Confederate impressions is not an option (i.e. no Confederate patriotic clothing, aprons, secession cockades etc). There are ways you can however, harbor personal Southern sympathies, after all, the Presidential campaign of 1864, is beginning to ramp up between the Lincoln Republicans and the McClellan Peace Democrats. You may find an outlet in political memorabilia, just put it through the 19<sup>th</sup> C filter of “politics in public is not ladylike” (note the unapproving tone of the Oneida “Whig” in the following link).

Elmira is somewhat of a leading-edge community, while at the same time maintaining many of the more traditional mores of the time. It is a mere 60 miles from Seneca Falls, the site of the 1848 Women Rights Convention, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton presented her Declaration of Sentiments, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration\\_of\\_Sentiments#Signers,site](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Sentiments#Signers,site), site of Elmira Female College and an active Underground Railroad location. If you choose to take on a controversial impression, expect to experience conventional & usually negative reactions. Ladies of the community are actively engaged in patriotic, philanthropic and business activities associated with the wartime economy.

A wide range of impression opportunities are available from the most affluent to inhabitants of the Poor House. The following links are a good place to begin your familiarization with Elmira:

- Elmira City Directory 1863-64 <https://www.joycetice.com/director/1863elma.htm>
- Chemung County 1860 Census <https://www.joycetice.com/censusc/1860elmr.htm>

Once you have been approved & registration fee submitted, you will be added to the Citizens of the Chemung Valley FB group, where specific event related questions can be asked & answered in detail.

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### **When do I have to be in period attire?**

The event is scheduled to go “live” at 10PM Friday & run through the Sunday memorial service. This means if you are staying on site, you will need to insure you have appropriate garments on at all times during that period, including night time comfort runs to the outhouse and morning meal preparations. If staying off site, you only need to be in period clothing when you arrive at the event site.

### **What kind of materials should my clothes be made from?**

The full range of wools, silks, linen, cottons & blends of these are all acceptable. We do ask that they be paired appropriately with the style. For example, high fashion looks, like waist & skirt combos, need to be constructed from fine wools & silks, not quilting weight cottons. Lower economic class impressions are not limited to low end fabrics, as the better fabrics can be in the form of hand me downs or second hand market purchases, however, these garments should have that “well worn” character about them.

### **Are there any styles not allowed?**

Yes. Mismatched sutler row quality cotton skirt/blouse combos are prohibited. Specialty impressions like “Bloomer” styles can be approved on an exception basis, if documented to the Elmira area.

### **What kind of weather should I prepare for?**

June can be a fickle month. It can be extremely rainy & chilly, mild & pleasant, hot & humid or any combination during the course of one day. Planning a wardrobe in layers would best serve you. Check the weather forecast just prior to your departure, as forecasts more than 3 days out tend not to be very reliable, due to lake effect weather inconsistencies.

### **Can I carry my cellphone?**

Yes, as long as it is unseen AND unheard. Keep it in your pocket & on vibrate if you have a situation that requires you to be on call. Please avoid flashing it in front of folks to take pictures. Be considerate of others. If it is modern, it can and will be seen at the most inopportune time.

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We will start with the foundational basis for every impression. Without the proper undergarments, you simply cannot achieve “the look”.

### **Undergarments**

Chemise – Cotton or linen, with cotton being the more common & provides perspiration/comfort protection underneath your upper body support choice. It also is a layer of modesty should you take a tumble.

Corset- A must have item. It may be a fully boned or soft stay style, both are acceptable. Keep in mind your overall impression. If you are portraying a well to do individual, opt for the fully boned version. Working impressions may choose soft stays to accommodate the planned activity. Corsets are not an instrument of torture, are quite comfortable when properly fitted & crucial to your final appearance.

Drawers – Cotton or linen & optional based on age & social standing. Drawers can add a certain level of modesty protection.

Under petticoat- Cotton or linen. Absolutely necessary for modesty purposes unless your intention is to share “the goods” when ascending/descending inclines/stairs.

Skirt supports – Cages, boned hoops or multiple highly starched petticoats with give your skirt the lift it needs. Corded petticoats can be worn but are relatively uncommon by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> C.

Stockings – wool, silk or cotton.

### **Footgear**

Boots – front or side lace up with eyelets not modern “speed lacing”. Elastic sided “Congress” style pullons are also acceptable. Toe boxes should be square shaped, not pointy. Barefoot is not recommended. The event area is a flood plain & all kinds of nasty things get washed across the flats at times. A sweep will be made pre-event for large obvious debris, but glass shards are always a possibility. Then there is always the goose crap to consider as the area is host to a rather large community of Canada geese.

Overshoes – Optional. Tingley or other appropriate rubber overshoes may help provide protection against the heavy dews than can appear near the river.

### **Dresses**

Day dress – One piece matched bodice & skirt. Gathered bodice styles are very common among extant cotton dresses. Fitted/darted bodices can be cotton but more frequently silk or wool. Sleeves may be of any style made from any fabric, with the exception of open sleeves that are not commonly found on cotton dresses. Open sleeves normally require the use of undersleeves. The exceptions being sheer dresses. White collars and cuffs are necessary for most dresses.

Wrappers – Optional. An extremely comfortable garment that lends itself well to after/early morning hours “at home”. With the exception of ladies “In the family way”, it should not be worn when engaging in public activities.

Separates – Swiss waists, Garibaldis, unmatched bodice/skirt combos are all indicative of high fashion forward styles suitable to the more affluent citizenry and are made in high quality wools & silks. Do not mistake these items for the ubiquitous cotton blouse/skirt combos often found for sale on sutler row which are unacceptable.

### **Outerwear**

Sontags, shawls, paletots, jackets, mantels are all acceptable & your choice. Style, pattern and fabrics appropriate to the period are required & be consistent with your overall impression.

### **Headgear/Hairstyles**

Hair- Commonly a center part, no bangs, confined at or below the base of the neck. Hairnets are acceptable over properly dressed hair. In other words, if you take the net off, your hair is still appropriately styled. Decorative hair adornment to be consistent with your impression. Heavy, nylon, modern crocheted “snoods” are unacceptable.

Head cover – Fashion, slat, corded, straw, knitted, quilted bonnets of period appropriate patterns and materials consistent with your impression are required when “outside the home”. Caps are acceptable in informal social settings or engaged in light activities. Hats are acceptable with impressions portraying sporting or picnicking activities. Heavy working impressions may wear head scarfs when engaged in work related activities.

### **Accessories**

Aprons – Period correct style, fabric & construction are required when worn. Appropriate situations include food preparation, household chores, work activities. Fancy silk aprons are appropriate for affluent impressions in a social home setting. Aprons should be removed when outside the home, unless your occupation might benefit from the use of an apron.

Eyewear – mid 19<sup>th</sup> C or earlier styles. Contact lenses are acceptable.

Cosmetics – None or very light applications consistent with your impression are acceptable.

Gloves – commonly black, white or brown leather that do not extend beyond your wrist bone.

Parasols – optional and must be of period appropriate pattern and material. Battenberg lace is a late 1800’s fashion and inappropriate for this event.

Jewelry- can range from none to dripping with gem stones consistent with your overall impression. Period appropriate design & materials required.

Timepieces – optional & of period appropriate design. Wristwatches are unacceptable.

Cargo carriers – for lack of any better term, this includes anything used to carry our “stuff” around in. Acceptable methods are skirt pockets, baskets, market wallets and carpet bags. Carpet bags should have leather,

not wooden handles. Period appropriate coin purses, reticules, and small leather style purses are also acceptable. Absolutely NO over the shoulder tapestry haversack style bags are allowed.