

Costume Collection of the Massachusetts Society

The Massachusetts Society has a collection of over 7,000 items primarily focused on women's dresses and accessories of the 19th century. Our collection also includes 18th and 19th century children's clothes and the collection of women's clothing ranges from 1750 to the present. The collection is stored on the fifth floor of our Headquarters House, the William H. Prescott House on Beacon Hill, and in rooms on three other floors. The collection is available for viewing by researchers and scholars.

The Massachusetts Society was selected by the Costume Society of America (CSA) in 2011 as the recipient of its prestigious Angels Project. The Angels Project brings together skilled professionals in the fields of historic clothing and textiles who volunteer to work for one day on the collection of a non-profit organization. The "work day" was held on June 7, 2011, before the National Symposium of the CSA started in Cambridge, MA.

Thirty textile/costume conservators, museum staff and professors of clothing and textiles worked together on the Angels Project to review the cataloguing of our collection, perform minor conservation work, analyze artifacts, and vacuum and re-house objects. Grants obtained by the Costume Society of America from the American Institute for Conservation, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the Southwestern Chapter of the CSA allowed for the purchase of specialized vacuum cleaners and other appropriate equipment. Proper archival storage materials were donated by Gaylord Brothers and University Products.

Our Costume Committee and other Dames participated in the Angels Project and while working with the professionals were trained in proper methods of storage, handling and conservation. We do encourage you when in Boston to come view our Headquarters House and our selection of costumes on display!