THE EFFECTS OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR ON NORTHERN FASHION OF THE ERA AS REFLECTED IN PETERSON’S MAGAZINE

Nicole Johnston-Blatz

Dr. Laurel Wilson, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The Civil War had far-reaching effects on American society, the political system, and the economy. Some historians argue that the war had little direct influence on the continuity of Western fashion. However, detailed examination of Peterson's Magazine before and during the war provides a clearer picture of how the war affected American fashions. Written content, patterns and illustrations were analyzed during the years 1859, 1861, 1863 and 1864 to determine quantity and quality of references of numerous categories including apparel, accessory, color, trim and fabric types. Analysis revealed that quantities of almost every category decreased beginning in 1861 to lesser levels than those of 1859. However, the year 1863 revealed significant unexpected increased in all categories. To conclude, the war resulted in lesser availability of and access to various types of both foreign and domestic fabrics, trims and fashions, as well as an increase in frugality and economy of dress. Further research will provide a clearer understanding of the effects of the Civil War on the American economy, culture, and textile and apparel production during the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the changing roles of women in American society.