

## *We Dress Bleurette*

### Empire Dress – 1908 – Robe Empire

*This little dress is an entirely new style, and besides it is very simple to make. Choose satin, taffeta or other fabrics which are supple yet strong. The fashionable colors are Nattier blue or cherry red. [Nattier was a famous 18<sup>th</sup> c. French portrait painter, and his blue was a medium azure.]*

*For cutting out you have five pattern pieces [and one sleeve cuff]:*

*1<sup>st</sup> The front of the skirt, of which you have one half. You place the pattern on a fold of the fabric which is on the straight of the grain, and cut the front of the skirt from two thicknesses of fabric.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> The rest of the skirt is cut in two pieces and the side seams unite the front with the backs.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> The bodice. It is made of three parts. The front is one piece cut on the straight grain fold of the fabric. The lapel fold line is indicated on the sketch by the line of crosses. Placement of two large buttons [1/4"] on each side of the center front is shown. The back is made of two similar pieces which are hemmed along the center back edge. The backs and front are united by the shoulder seams.*

*Putting together the dress: Gather the top of the skirt evenly to correspond with the measurement of the bodice. The center back skirt seam goes from the hem to the point marked by the small arrow. From the arrow to the top of the skirt is left open, because the dress, in spite of the appearance of an opening in the front, actually opens down the back. The joining marks are indicated and set as shown by the letters. After that you stitch the skirt to the bodice right sides together.*

*Sleeves: Each sleeve is one piece, but is cut on the straight grain fold of the fabric. Gather the top of the sleeve as indicated on the pattern. Gather the bottom of the sleeve across the entire length to fit the cuff of the sleeve, for which you have a pattern for one half.*

*Place one knot of ribbon on the front of the sleeve cuffs and another larger knot of ribbon on the front of the bodice to achieve a note of elegance for the dress.*

*Aunt Jacqueline*

[Two paragraphs concerning the inlay of lace motifs on a linen or toile empire dress for mid-summer have been omitted. ]

### Empire Dress -- 1908 -- Modern Sewing Suggestions

Cut the skirt and sleeves as indicated on the original pattern. On each bodice pattern piece add a 3/8" seam allowance around the neckline including the lapels and down the center front. The front will have a seam, now, instead of being on the fold.

Cut the bodice out of dress fabric and lining fabric, which can be the same or two different fabrics. Keep in mind that the lining fabric will show on the lapels. Mark with tiny notch, pencil mark, or pin where the lapel starts (on center front seam) and ends (at start of shoulder seam). These points show you where to sew the lapel seams.

Sew the center front seam and the shoulder seams of the lining and of the bodice, joining front to backs. Press seams open or to the back.

With right sides together, pin the lining to the bodice around the neckline, including the lapels. Make sure the shoulder and center seams match up. Sew around the neckline using a 3/8" seam; do not sew over any seam allowances, but leave them free by starting and stopping your new seams at the seamlines already made. This allows the lapels to pivot freely.

Clip the seam allowances around the back of the neck, and at the start and end of the lapels, so they can fold back easily. Snip off a portion of the seam allowance of the point of the lapels. Turn the bodice right side out and carefully finger press the seams, to push them out. Use a small pointed pusher to turn out the point of the lapel. Press the new seams, and turn the lapels back, finger pressing the fold, which should remain soft, not sharply creased.

Narrow-hem the center back seam allowances of both skirt backs. Gather each back piece to fit the bodice backs. With right sides together, sew skirt backs to bodice backs.

Mark center front of skirt with a tiny notch or pin. Gather skirt front to fit bodice front. With right sides together, match center front mark on skirt to center front seam of bodice, and sew skirt to bodice.

Gather the tops of the sleeves to fit the armhole. Cut sleeve cuffs and lining for them. [If you wish to simplify the cuff, cut it with the peak on one edge, flat on the other edge, and a little wider than the original pattern piece. The flat edge will be sewn to the sleeve and the peaked edge is the turned up edge. The original cuff has a shaped edge on both sides. See photo below.] Sew the lining to the cuff right sides together along the top edge, cut a tiny notch out of the seam allowance at the peak to allow it to turn nicely, turn, and press.

Gather the bottom of the sleeve to fit the cuff. With right side of cuff (which will be the lining side, if you are using contrasting lining for the cuff and lapel) against the wrong side of the sleeve, stitch cuff to sleeve. Press seam up, towards top of sleeve. With right sides together, sew the sleeve into the armhole opening. [On the original pattern, the sleeve is set into the armhole, with the seam of the sleeve placed toward the front at point g on the bodice front pattern.]

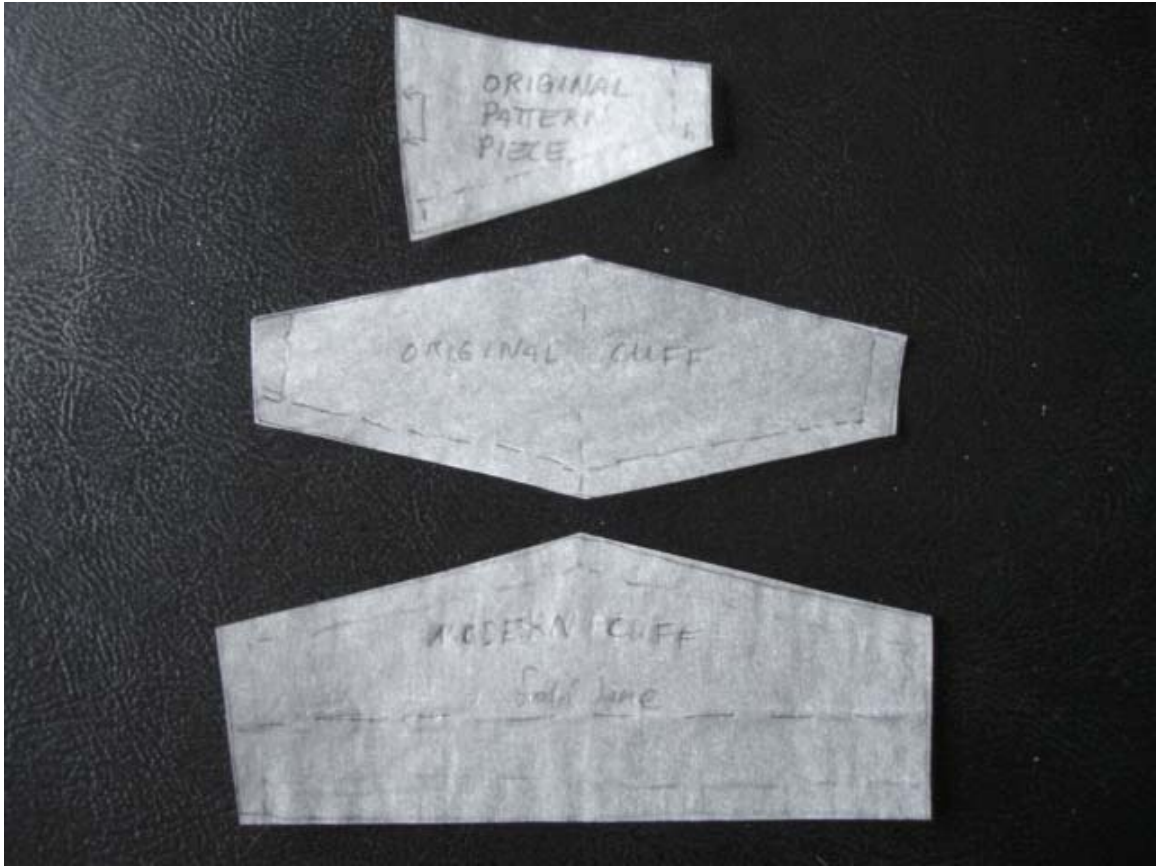
Sew the side seams including the sleeve and turned up cuff. (If you do not want the seam on the inside of the cuff to be at all visible, sew the cuff seam first, right sides together, and then flip to the other side, and right sides together, sew the side seams of the rest of the sleeve and the dress.) Press the seams of the skirt open or to the back. Hem the skirt. Sew on the four small decorative buttons as shown. Sew ribbon bows to the front of the sleeve cuffs (which can serve to tack the cuff turn-up in place) and to the center front of the bodice as shown.



Wrong side of dress before sewing side seams, showing lining fabric of lapels and cuffs, center back opening, and cuff shape.



Right side of dress before sewing side seams, showing the finished edges of the neckline and lapels, and the cuff application.



Original sleeve cuff pattern piece at top.

Next, original cuff as it looks when cut on fold—both sides are shaped.

Modern interpretation of cuff, made to be lined, and folded up with shaped side at top.

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