

Cream satin wedding slippers, c.1889-1890. Ryerson FRC1987.04.001AB. Gift of Ruth Dowling. Photograph by Tori Hopgood, 2019.



Ryerson University
Fashion Research Collection

WEDDING SLIPPERS

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Dress artifacts often have complex histories. When an artifact is accepted into a collection and time permits, a detailed history is obtained from the donor and included in the object record. This type of information is invaluable to future researchers, providing contextual information and a social history for the artifact that is otherwise very difficult to obtain. Ideally **each donation would be accompanied by photos of the item being worn, information on where it was purchased, how much it cost, where and when it was worn.** When this type of information is recorded, it can materially affect the relative importance and value of the item within a collection.

One of my favourite artifacts in the collection is this beautiful pair of cream satin wedding slippers with a one-inch Louis heel that date back to 1889-1890. These slippers are in perfect condition with only the barest hint of a scuff on the bottom of the soles, indicating that they were worn at least once, and then were carefully stored away as a memory of the day. Like many shoes of the period, there was no left or right for the pair; shoes were supposed to be rotated to ensure even wear.



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Cream satin wedding slippers, c.1889-1890. Ryerson FRC1987.04.001AB. Rosette detail. Gift of Ruth Dowling. Photograph by Tori Hopgood, 2019.

The donor, Ruth D. wrote a letter that is on file that gives the history of these slippers.

“These were wedding slippers of Mary Lawson of Caledon who wed Edward Dowling (a telegraph operator) of Bolton in either 1889 or 1890. There is no record of where the marriage took place - either Bolton or Caledon. Miss Lawson had a sister who lived in Buffalo so the slippers may have been purchased there. For the wedding, Miss Lawson wore a pale grey, long satin dress.”

These shoes are important artifacts because of their social history. The fact that they were worn with a pale grey, long satin dress is also interesting. Although it was not unusual to wear a wedding dress that was not white, cream slippers would more typically have been worn with a cream wedding dress. How I wish I had a photo of the wedding couple!



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Cream satin wedding slippers,
c.1889-1890. Ryerson
FRC1987.04.001AB. Stitch detail.
Gift of Ruth Dowling. Photograph
by Tori Hopgood, 2019.



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Cream satin wedding slippers,
c.1889-1890. Ryerson
FRC1987.04.001AB. Heel detail.
Gift of Ruth Dowling. Photograph
by Tori Hopgood, 2019.

To see other examples of wedding slippers of this type, online collections with similar shoes include:

Costume Institute at the Met:

1880 cream leather wedding slippers: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/112828?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Wedding+slippers+1890&pos=13>

1894 cream silk and leather wedding slippers: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/113196?rpp=20&pg=1&ft=Wedding+slippers+1890&pos=15>

Oakland Museum:

1887 cream satin wedding slippers: <http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/h4623138>

The Ryerson Fashion Research Collection only has a small number of select shoes in the collection, since students and faculty have relatively easy access to the vast collection of the Bata Shoe Museum, which is nearby. Nevertheless, artifacts such as this lovely pair of wedding slippers that have a social history have been retained in the Collection.

For further reading on 19th-century dress:

Beaudoin-Ross, Jacquelin. *Form and Fashion: Nineteenth-Century Montreal Dress*. Montréal, Québec: Musée McCord d'histoire canadienne, 1992. Print.

Beaujot, Ariel. *Victorian Fashion Accessories*. London: Berg, 2012. Print.

Blum, Stella, ed. *Victorian Fashions & Costumes from Harper's Bazaar 1867-1898*. New York: Dover Publications, 1974. Print.

Brett, Katharine B. *Modesty to Mod: Dress and Underdress in Canada 1780-1967*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967. Print.

—. *Women's Costume in Ontario, 1867-1907*. Ed. Royal Ontario Museum. Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, University of Toronto, 1966. Print.

Perrot, Philippe. *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

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