

## Frock Coat and Sack Coat

Site: The Forks

Date: 1880's

During the reconstruction at The Forks in downtown Winnipeg, an excavation in South Point recovered a tight ball composed of textile, sawdust and manure. Due to the overall poor condition of the ball, it was bagged and sent to The Manitoba Museum where it was placed in a freezer awaiting conservation treatment. In order to separate the layers which make up the ball, conservation staff began thawing and cleaning by pulsating a gentle flow of distilled water over the frozen ball. Upon slowly separating the layers, they discovered that the ball was actually two fabric items.

For one day a week over the course of a year, a conservation volunteer who specializes in clothing and textiles with a background in Costume History carefully conserved and reconstructed two coats dating back to the 1880's. Based on the skirt style of the first coat, it became obvious that it was indeed a frock coat. The sloping away of the skirt from the waistline in front to the hemline at the sides, as well as the broad tails in the back are a few of the distinguishing features of a morning coat; a variation of the frock coat. However, for the second coat, it was easily identified as a sack coat based on the single-breasted garment with a straight back and lacking a waist seam. This style of coat was known for its easy fit which would sometimes give it the baggy appearance.

Not only do the coats represent a distinctive stage in clothing fashion in this particular region during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were the only major reconstruction of clothing that were recovered from The Forks.



Frock coat (Left) and sack coat (Right)