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Local Living Historians to Host Antique Fashion Exhibition

Hitchcock, OK, May 4, 2007 - On Saturday May 19th, 2007 Shooting Star Enterprises will host a reception to display Marna Jean Davis' collection of antique Victorian and Edwardian "everyday" dresses. Her collection started several years ago with a land-run period dress that stole her heart on eBay.

Frustrated by reenactors wearing the same fancy dresses to working events as they would to a formal ball, she decided to delve deeper into the everyday dress of the average woman. "These are women like my grandmother's grandmother—the women who made their own soap, spun their own wool, and raised a passel of kids and grandkids. I felt, they deserved to be remembered in their own realm," commented Marna Jean. "You see plenty of men portraying cowboys, farmers or even the occasional shopkeeper, but the women walk about wearing saloon girl dresses, if not fancy silks and satins. I think it really struck home when I was reading from my antique fashion magazine collection."

The magazine, a *Demorest* from 1884, read, "Fashion Writers may talk of silks and satins as if they were the everyday wear of all women- but, in reality, the dress in which the husband and children see the wife and mother, at least six days out of seven, is a print, and the silk, if it exists at all, is only taken out of its folds for occasions, and is quickly restored when the motive for the unwonted display has ceased to exist."

When Marna first started collecting these specimens noted in the magazine, she noticed there were very few resources for ladies who portrayed the "gentle-tamers" of the United States. These working dresses weren't the pristine lace and beaded confections most assume were worn during the 19th Century, but neither are they the shapeless smocks that many people believe was a common working dress. But they were feminine and stylish.

Impressed by the designs of the dresses she was finding, Marna decided to collect the gowns and information so she could reproduce them in patterns and teach others about what she'd

learned. Marna Jean points out, "Most of the dresses in my antique collection show evidence of careful mending—or even piecing of the fabric—most so closely that the design itself is matched. It's this sort of detail and fastidious care that I want others to know about."

To help educate the public about her learnings, Marna now offers an online class called "No Lady of Leisure" on the company's website www.shootingstarhistory.com. In addition, Marna Jean and her husband Doug are hosting a reception on Saturday, May 19th, 2007 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The exhibition includes work gowns, maternity garments, aprons, bonnets and the tools from the 1860s to the early 1900s. In addition, Marna Jean will be on site to answer questions and will be giving a short lecture on the misconceptions of ladies work clothing in the mid to late 19th Century.

In addition to hosting the reception on May 19th, Marna Jean will also be modeling her working dress reproductions at a number of events in the upcoming months. The National Cowboy Hall of Fame spotted Marna last year while she was wearing a copy she'd crafted from the gowns in her collection. That sighting resulted in the museum inviting Shooting Star Enterprises to be part of several events, including the upcoming Chuck Wagon Festival May 26th-27th 2007.

ABOUT SHOOTING STAR ENTERPRISES - Shooting Star Enterprises Historical Clothing and Living History is located one mile east of Hitchcock on Highway 8. To learn more about Shooting Star Enterprises' upcoming events, which includes an Edwardian Girls Day Camp, visit www.shootingstarhistory.com or call 580-825-3374.

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