Hands On Learning
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VICTORIAN HOME LIFE H256/A

Nightgown

Nightwear for men and women was almost always made of cotton or linen. This nightgown is trimmed with broderie anglaise, a style of open embroidery, where small holes with stitched edges make up a decorative pattern. This style of embroidery became popular from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.



Invalid Cup

This ceramic cup is known as an invalid cup. These cups were used throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century for feeding sick people who were too weak to feed themselves. Liquid could be gently poured into the persons mouth by the long spout.



Nail Buffer

The nail buffer probably would have formed part of a vanity set - grooming kits that ladies often kept on their dressing tables. It would have been rubbed over the surface of the fingernail to make it shiny. It is made of chamois leather and ebony, a type of hard wood.



Clothes Brush

Most outdoor clothing in this period was made of heavy wool. In order to keep it clean, brushes like this one were used to sweep off dirt and dust. Outer clothes, especially ladies, which were floor length, would have become very dirty, as roads were poorly surfaced and horse drawn traffic would have fouled them.



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Glove Stretcher



Gloves were extremely fashionable in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and were often worn inside as well as outside. It was important to keep them both clean and in shape. At the time there were no stretchy materials like Lycra, and gloves were often made of materials like leather and worn skin-tight. Glove stretchers like this example could be used to stretch the finger of each glove so that they could be put on more easily. This glove stretcher is long so that it could also be used to stretch evening gloves that went up to the elbow.

Hat Stretcher

Both men and women wore hats for everyday use, as well as special occasions, at the turn of the century. This tool could be inserted into the hat to help it retain its shape when it was not being worn.



Dressing Table Runner

This mat would have been placed on top of a dressing table or a chest of drawers. It was intended to protect the surface and to decorate the room, giving it a clean, fresh appearance.



Collar Box

In the Victorian and Edwardian periods shirt collars were usually detachable - they were fastened to the shirt by two metal studs. Having a false collar allows the shirt to be washed without the special washing method that a starched collar requires. When travelling a gentleman's set of collars could be carried in a box like this, which kept them safe from being crumpled.



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Goffering Tongs



Rolls of delicate frills and lace, which were used as decoration on caps, aprons, night-gowns and underskirts, required special treatment with goffering irons and tongs. A goffering iron can be seen below. The poker was warmed on a stove and then inserted into the tube on the goffering stand in order to heat it. The moist starched fabric was then grasped in both hands and pressed over the tube to obtain a semi-circular scallop or flute effect.

These tongs worked in a similar way and were used to produce more delicate frills. They were heated, then used with a scissor like motion to hold the fabric until pleated.

