durable. The taste that Dutch merchants helped to inspire for garments fashioned from worsteds persisted into the eighteenth century before linens and eventually cottons surpassed their popularity. The new fashion for woolen garments also sustained the production of woolen cloth in England, the United Dutch Provinces’ most active trading partner in the seventeenth century. By 1700 as much as two-thirds of the value of all British exports may have derived from the woolen industry, and outer clothing fashioned from wool had become a venerable staple in the wardrobes of Europeans.

**Locks, Lace, and Leather.** Dutch elements of style spread easily through Europe because of the commercial contacts of this small but important trading region. The freer-flowing garments the Dutch favored were soon imitated throughout much of Northern Europe. Like the Spanish style that had preceded its rise, Dutch style was popular largely because of its ready adaptability to different circumstances. On the one hand, Dutch clothing styles provided a practical form of day wear for merchants, bankers, and other members of the urban middle classes in Northern European cities. The emphasis on a new informality and on comfort, as opposed to artifice, was enthusiastically embraced in Europe’s cities, and the clothes that were favored there came to be relatively unadorned, even severe. Among aristocrats, though, elements of Dutch style continued to combine with a fondness for decoration, giving rise to courtly ways of dressing that favored generous amounts of lace and other trim by the mid-seventeenth century. By the 1630s, aristocratic dress in much of Europe had produced a style with a notable fondness for “locks, lace, and leather.” This way of dressing can be seen in the many portraits of King Charles I of England and his Cavalier supporters, many of which were completed by the great Flemish artist Anthony Van Dyck in the 1630s. In one of these, *Charles I From Three Different Angles* (1636), the king’s two profiles and frontal view are depicted sporting the elaborately curled long hair and lace collars that were then the aristocratic fashion of the day. Another portrait from the same year, *Charles I at the Hunt* shows all the elements then in vogue in noblemen’s fashions, including a rakishly worn felt hat, an outer jacket or doublet worn over a lace shirt, and knee-length britches that met leather boots. The effect that such costumes produced was refined and elegant while at the same time allowing for greater comfort and freedom of movement than the fashions of the later Renaissance. In this way, then, the elements of Dutch style came to be combined with aristocratic tastes for luxurious opulence, and the fashions of the Netherlands, like those of Spain before them, came to be transformed in ways that were very different from their original source.

**Sources**


**The Age of Louis XIV**

**French Civilization.** During the long reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715) France dominated affairs throughout Europe. Louis XIV assumed the throne when he was only five years old, and instability, revolt, and other troubles plagued his early years as king. During his minority his mother, Anne of Austria, and his chief minister Cardinal Mazarin dominated royal policy and administration. In the years following Mazarin’s death in 1661, though, Louis came into his own, announcing his intentions to rule without the aid of his ministers. Over the next half century he devoted himself to his own glorification and that of France as the most powerful state in Europe. Although he planned to rule alone, Louis nevertheless relied on a series of ministers to place his stamp on royal policy and administration. The first years of his independence were notable for rising standards of luxury at court, increased patronage of the arts, and a consequent brilliant flowering of French high culture. In such figures as Jean-Baptiste Molière (1623–1673) and Jean Racine (1639–1699) in the theater and Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) in the musical world, French taste set the standards for Europe. While influencing the rest of the continent, French arts and learning were, in turn, affected by the absolutist political doctrines practiced by the king and his chief ministers. Music, literature, painting, and architecture all flowed from the royal academies that Louis XIV founded, or which he expanded. These institutions controlled the production of works of art and the training of those artists who worked at court. They promoted tenets of design that were frequently raised to the level of rules that were inflexible and bound French artists to emulate classical principles. At the same time, the crafts and industrial production served as tools of royal government, as Louis XIV and his most influential minister Colbert nourished native French industries. The reigning economic theory of the age was mercantilism, a philosophy that linked a nation’s wealth to its money supply and which tried to foster
exports while limiting imports as a drain on national resources. The rise of mercantilist theory points to the importance of a “national economy” in seventeenth-century Europe. Louis XIV’s ministers and officials carefully developed native industries in the production of lace, fabric, jewelry, and other consumables that might compete successfully against items that had long been imported from elsewhere in Europe. Although other centers of design and production continued to be important in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, the royal industries that Louis founded influenced styles throughout the continent, a testimony to the success of the royal policies that the king and his ministers practiced. By 1700, the idea of fashion in Europe was increasingly synonymous with the trends set by the French court and by wealthy aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie who lived in and around Paris. As a result of these developments Paris emerged as the center of European fashions, a role that it has continued to play until contemporary times.

**ZENITH AND DECLINE OF LOUIS XIV’S POWER.**
The centralized and absolutist policies of Louis XIV meant that the royal government in France dominated and controlled the country’s economy and industries. At first, particularly under the leadership of Louis XIV’s powerful minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683), these economic policies produced brilliant results. Later, in less capable hands, many of France’s state industries underwent a period of stagnation before being renewed under Louis XV in the mid-eighteenth century. By the 1680s, though, most elements of Louis XIV’s regulation of the French economy were in place. The state supervised everything from lace making to road building. At the same time Louis’ grand pretensions and, in particular, his penchant for waging costly international wars intended to foster French preeminence meant that his state always rested on feet of clay. His desire to control his subjects’ religious beliefs and economic activity proved increasingly problematic as well. In 1685, the king revoked the Edict of Nantes. Since 1598, the terms of this

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**OF THE FINEST GOLD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Madame de Sévigné was one of the great letter writers of the seventeenth century. Most of the beautiful correspondence she wrote was sent to her daughter, Madame de Grignan, a noblewoman who lived away from Paris and the court. Her mother kept her informed on many things, including the latest fashions and fabrics available in the capital. In this excerpt she describes how the latest style of “transparents” was introduced into court society through a gift made to Madame de Montespan, Louis XIV’s then-reigning mistress.

royal edict had guaranteed a degree of religious toleration to French Huguenots, Protestants who held to the ideas of John Calvin. Under the influence of his pious second wife, the commoner Madame de Maintenon, the king’s attitudes toward divergent religious ideas had grown increasingly inflexible. In the years following the Revocation, French Huguenots were forced to convert to Catholicism or leave the country. The migration of Huguenots to England, Germany, Holland, and colonial America proved detrimental to France’s economic life, since many of them were important artisans and commercial figures. Yet the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was only one of many measures that pointed to an increasingly rigid and high-handed royal administration. With the death of his chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1683, Louis had been forced to rely on figures that were considerably less adept and who drew him into costly international wars. By the final years of his reign the advances that French industry and commerce had made paled in comparison to a mounting royal debt, corruption in public life, and an increasingly unpopular, yet nevertheless ambitious and grand, royal court. Although the king had been idolized and glorified throughout much of his life as the very epicenter of French life and culture, he ended his days as a widely unpopular figure.

**Character of Court Life.** Despite the long-term trends of Louis’ reign, it is difficult to overestimate the importance that France’s court life exercised on the imagination of Europeans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During his reign France’s royal court became the major force in setting styles and fashions throughout European aristocratic society as nobles from throughout the continent imitated the elaborate etiquette that was practiced in France and adopted innovations in art and dress that had been pioneered in and around Paris. The stage on which many of these trends were set throughout Louis’ reign was Versailles, the magnificent royal château that was located just outside Paris. During the 1660s Louis had begun to shower his attentions on this former royal hunting retreat, using it as a place for hunts, celebrations, and spectacles. In 1678, the king decided to expand the palace to truly grand proportions, and in 1682, he moved his government permanently there. At Versailles every element of daily life and court ceremonial was carefully choreographed and governed according to a formidable set of rules. These tactics were in large part a response to the series of rebellions known as the *fronde* that had occurred in and around Paris in 1648 and 1653. At one point in these revolts the underage king and his mother, Anne of Austria, had been forced to flee the capital and had even hid out for a time in a stable to avoid the angry crowds and rebellious aristocrats of Paris. To insure that he was never again subjected to such humiliation, Louis defined life in his court circle in ways that domesticated his nobles, transforming them into decorous but powerless courtiers. As was everything else in the life of the court, dress came to be dominated and defined by the figure of Louis XIV and his family. Certain costumes were prescribed for certain occasions, and among the small noble faction that surrounded the king during his reign, expenditures on clothing were truly profligate, often reaching standards of expenditure that were more than 100 times those of simple shopkeepers and artisans in the city of Paris. The number of aristocrats that attended the king at Versailles was relatively small, however, and the Parisian nobles who rarely attended court functions were far less lavish in their expenditures on clothing. Despite being confined to a relatively small portion of the aristocracy, the brilliant patterns of consumption at Versailles prompted criticism of the French nobility and aristocracy in general.
GRAND PREPARATION FOR A ROYAL WEDDING

INTRODUCTION: The Duc de Saint-Simon was one of the most brilliant diarists of Louis XIV’s and Louis XV’s court. In the following entry he recounts the preparations for Louis XIV’s grandson, the Duke of Bourgogne’s marriage to Princess Marie Adelaide of Savoy. The marriage occurred in 1697 during the period of austerity encouraged by the king’s pious second wife, Madame de Maintenon. Despite the financial problems of the latter years of his reign, Louis decided to celebrate the marriage with great fanfare, causing everyone at court to try to outdo each other in the clothes they purchased for the wedding. Saint-Simon relates that there were scarcely enough tailors and workmen to finish the outfits, and one noblewoman even resorted to kidnapping workers from another job. The Duc de Saint-Simon and his wife ended up spending 20,000 livres on their outfits alone, enough to have fed many peasant families for several years.

The King continued to be delighted with the princess, who fully merited his affection by her extraordinary precociousness, her charm, intelligence, and response to his advances. He determined to lose no time after her twelfth birthday, which fell on 7 December, a Saturday, before celebrating the wedding. He let it be known that he would like the Court to be resplendent and himself or-dered some fine clothes, although for years past he had dressed with the utmost simplicity. That was enough for everyone, excepting priests and lawyers, to disregard their purses, or even their rank. There was hot competition in splendour and originality, with scarcely enough tailors and workmen to finish the outfits, and one noblewoman even resorted to kidnapping workers from another job. The Duc de Saint-Simon and his wife ended up spending 20,000 livres on their outfits alone, enough to have fed many peasant families for several years.

The Duc de Saint-Simon was one of the most brilliant diarists of Louis XIV’s and Louis XV’s court. Royal directives concerning clothing were quite specific. For instance, at each of the royal palaces and retreats that the court visited a different kind of court costume was prescribed. At the small palace of the Trianon at the far edges of the gardens of Versailles, men were expected to wear red embroidered with gold, while at the royal hunting lodge of Rambouillet, those who accompanied the king on hunts had to don blue outfits made of heavy fabric that were again embroidered in gold. As in most royal courts, the ceremony of presentation was an occasion that demanded a different kind of finery from the other balls, ceremonies, and festivities the court celebrated. No one might expect to move about in the court circles that surrounded the king without being formally presented to Louis XIV and the queen. For these ceremonies, women were expected to wear a dress with a tight-fitting bodice supported by a whalebone corset. Their dresses were required to have a long train and an opulent skirt, while the neckline had to be oval shaped and their sleeves short and decorated with profusions of lace. Most women’s dresses on this occasion were made out of black cloth to underscore the solemnity of meeting the king and queen, although women who were in mourning sometimes wore white to emphasize the difference between their own personal tragedies and the public ritual of presentation. Men’s

CLOTHING QUEEN MARIE-ANTOINETTE

INTRODUCTION: At Versailles, an unbending court etiquette defined almost every aspect of daily life. In the years following the French Revolution, Madame Campan, one of Marie-Antoinette’s closest ladies in waiting, published her memoirs and described the often tiresome round of activities at court that were prescribed by royal protocol. Her description of the process of dressing the queen each day runs many pages, from which this excerpt describing the choosing of the queen’s clothes is drawn.

The tirewoman had under her order a principal under-tirewoman, charged with the care and preservation of all the Queen’s dresses; two women to fold and press such articles as required it; two valets, and a porter of the wardrobe. The latter brought every morning into the Queen’s apartments baskets covered with taffety, containing all that she was to wear during the day, and large cloths of green taffety covering the robes and the full dresses. The valet of the wardrobe on duty presented every morning a large book to the first femme de chambre, containing patterns of the gowns, full dresses, undresses, etc. Every pattern was marked, to show to which sort it belonged. The first femme de chambre presented this book to the Queen on her awaking, with a pincushion; her Majesty stuck pins in those articles which she chose for the day,—one for the dress, one for the afternoon undress, and one for the full evening dress for card or supper parties in the private apartments. The book was then taken back to the wardrobe, and all that was wanted for the day was soon after brought in in large taffety wrappers. The wardrobe woman, who had the care of the linen, in her turn brought in a covered basket containing two or three chemises and handkerchiefs. The morning basket was called prêt du jour. In the evening she brought in one containing the nightgown and night-cap, and the stockings for the next morning; this basket was called prêt de la nuit. They were in the department of the lady of honour, the tirewoman having nothing to do with the linen. Nothing was put in order or taken care of by the Queen’s women. As soon as the toilet was over, the valets and porter belonging to the wardrobe were called in, and they carried all away in a heap, in the taffety wrappers, to the tirewoman’s wardrobe, where all were folded up again, hung up, examined, and cleaned with so much regularity and care that even the cast-off clothes scarcely looked as if they had been worn. The tirewoman’s wardrobe consisted of three large rooms surrounded with closets, some furnished with drawers and others with shelves; there were also large tables in each of these rooms, on which the gowns and dresses were spread out and folded up.

For the winter the Queen had generally twelve full dresses, twelve undresses called fancy dresses, and twelve rich hoop petticoats for the card and supper parties in the smaller apartments.

She had as many for the summer; those for the spring served likewise for the autumn. All these dresses were discarded at the end of each season, unless, indeed, she retained some that she particularly liked. I am not speaking of muslin or cambric gowns, or others of the same kind—they were lately introduced; but such as these were not renewed at each returning season, they were kept several years. The chief women were charged with the care and examination of the diamonds; this important duty was formerly confided to the tirewoman, but for many years had been included in the business of the first femmes de chambre.

SOURCE: Madame Campan, Memoirs of the Court of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France. (Boston: Grolier Society, 1890): 156–158.

dress was even more highly prescribed on these occasions, although it was not as costly as women’s. For men, the ceremony of presentation stretched over three days. On the first day, men were presented to the king in an elegantly embroidered justaucors—a close-fitting, long coat that covered a man’s britches and often had highly decorated long sleeves. This style had developed around 1670, and the justaucors was usually worn over an interior vestcoat. These three pieces—justaucors, vestcoat, and britches—formed the basis for the modern three-piece men’s suit, but at the time the rise of this new fashion replaced a taste for elaborate britches known as rheingraves that had a wide leg and were decorated with elaborate lace flounces. With the new fashion for the justaucors, French legwear gradually grew more restrained, and ornament came to be concentrated on the outer coat. On the second day of a man’s presentation at court, he was expected to undertake a hunt with the king during which he had to wear a vest and britches of red cloth and an outer coat of grey cloth. Finally, on the third day, men were presented to the king’s family, and were expected to wear another outfit that was less grand than that of the initial presentation to the king.

DRESS AT OTHER COURT OCCASIONS. Court life demanded specialized clothing for a number of occasions. Besides royal hunts and ceremonies of presentation,
life in Louis XIV’s court witnessed a steady progression of banquets, balls, diplomatic receptions, and theatrical and operatic performances that required sumptuous clothing. The ceremonies of the king’s and queen’s rising—known as the levée—and of their coucher—that is, their retiring in the evenings—also became central features of Versailles’ daily schedule. Daily mass, too, was another occasion that called for finery. During the seventeenth century the cost of clothing a courtier for these occasions rose to new, unprecedented heights, but even this level of expenditure was to be vastly outdone by the excesses of the eighteenth century that followed. Dress and gambling were the two greatest expenses of those several thousand nobles who attended the king at Versailles. For courtiers, a typical day in the life of Versailles began with the levée. Louis XIV divided his ceremony of waking up and dressing into two parts, which became known as the petit levée and the grand levée. At the petit levée the king was washed, shaved, and dressed by his most trusted courtiers, and he said his daily prayers before being presented to a larger circle in the grand levée that followed. About 100 nobles attended these events each day, and it became a great honor to be asked to assist the king on these occasions. Daily mass, the hunt, and a tour through the gardens were other events that filled the day, but it was in the evening that court festivities really got underway. Beginning about six o’clock courtiers were entertained with plays, operas, several suppers, a ball, and gambling that stretched deep into the early morning hours. During all this time only members of the royal family were allowed to sit down; nobles who broke with this key rule of etiquette were dismissed from court. After catching a short nap in the early morning hours, the aristocrats who attended the king were expected to be elegantly dressed and coiffed again to begin the new day by eight the next morning. This daily round of decorous, often frivolous activities was known to have physically, morally, and financially exhausted many nobles. Some fled court life rather than take part in the endless cycle. But for those who preferred royal offices and who desired to be at the center of power conforming to Versailles’ routines was a necessary evil in obtaining the king’s favor. At the same time the monotonous hum of royal social activity was not always constant. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, increasingly bleak financial realities, the king’s growing piety, as well as his advancing age meant that the cycle of Versailles’ social events grew more subdued. Still, taking part in the
rituals of state within the palace proved even then to be a daunting and expensive affair. While minor innovations were made in court dress during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the patterns that Louis XIV stipulated for both men and women persisted until the French Revolution in 1789. The Revolution swept away such patterns of dress and abolished the royal court, although the restoration of the monarchy in the nineteenth century brought with it new prescriptions for court attire. By contrast in England, court apparel came to be defined and influenced in large part by French examples in the eighteenth century, but these patterns of dress at court presentations were amazingly long-lived. Until the 1950s, those presented to the English king and queen were required to dress with many elements of clothing that had largely been set down in the 1700s.

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Madeleine Delpierre, Dress in France in the Eighteenth Century (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997).

FASHION BEYOND THE COURT
CLOTHING SOCIETY AT LARGE. The fashions of the court of Versailles are among the best known in Europe during the seventeenth century, in large part because of the wealth of testimony that has been left behind in art and documents of the period. Outside these exalted circles, though, consumption of clothing was considerably less grand, even among those nobles who did not frequent Versailles or who went there only occasionally. Cloth was an expensive commodity, although it was one of the most universally produced items throughout Europe. For most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the production of cloth was not mechanized as it was in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, but produced through a series of steps that have been described as a “putting out” system. Historians have described these techniques of production as “proto-Industrialization.” In this system cloth merchants known as mercers, rather than entrepreneurs or investors, parceled out various parts of the production process to families. Raw wool was purchased and then given over in succession to carders, spinners, and dyers, who prepared the thread for weaving. Once the cloth had been produced by various categories of weavers, the fabric was again turned over to others who were responsible for finishing it and returning it to the great cloth merchants who sold it. While these techniques provided for certain economies of scale that had been lacking in ancient and medieval methods of production, cloth was still an expensive commodity. Thus one of the most obvious distinctions in the early-modern world between rich and poor was in the amounts of fabric their clothes consumed. Female servants, by and large, did not wear floor-length skirts, but ones that reached only to the mid-calves or ankles. Male shopkeepers and workers did not wear the elegant embroidered justaucorps tailored from silk and other expensive fabrics, but instead wore chemises or shirts, vests, and jackets constructed of far less expensive cloth. Even a comparatively wealthy bourgeois woman did not waste fabric in trains and elaborate skirts that were common among the wealthiest aristocrats.

HOUSEHOLD INVENTORIES IN PARIS. Another picture of consumption patterns can be gleaned from the inventories compiled of household goods at death. These inventories were undertaken in order to levy inheritance taxes, and so some families may have eluded taxation by giving away part of the deceased’s wardrobe before the inspector arrived. Still in a great city like Paris a number of these documents survive and their profusion has allowed historians to gauge consumption patterns in the city around 1700. At this time about three percent of the city’s half million people were members of the nobility. Great diversity characterized these aristocrats, and many divided their time between the city, their country estates, and Versailles. Those with modest incomes consumed clothing in ways that were little different from prosperous artisans and merchants. But in wealth and splendor the value of the aristocracy’s clothing as a group far outstripped even that of the wealthiest merchants in the capital, although the Parisian nobility, as opposed to those who resided at Versailles on a full-time basis, spent comparatively little of their wealth on clothes and jewels. Studies of the death inventories reveal that the average Parisian noble wardrobe, together with its jewels, was valued at around five to six percent of the family’s total wealth. At the same time, the deep social divisions that existed in early-modern society become evident when the values of the wealthiest of the nobility’s wardrobes are compared against those of modest workers and shopkeepers. The greatest noble families spent as much as 200-300 times more to clothe and adorn themselves as workers with modest incomes did. Thus sumptuous wealth and extravagant consumption existed side-by-side in Paris with relative economy, even privation. The consumption habits of Parisian aristocrats stand out in even greater relief when it is remembered that studies of death...