On display in *A Century of Style: 1860 – 1960* are 'special occasion dresses' including an exquisite two-piece white cotton tea gown that conjures up the romantic aesthetic of contemporary designer Stella McCartney, a pink and green lace and velvet bridesmaid dress that would be at home in Raf Simons's (for Dior) vintage inspired fall runway show, and a Chanel-esque sheer bejeweled black flapper dress as 'on trend' today as it was 100 years ago. The featured clothing ranges from hand-made to mass-produced and reflects changes in length, size, and exposure. 'Special occasion' status is likely the reason these items have survived. Perhaps the wearers also recognized their value as objects with cultural significance — documenting a particular time and tradition in Wilton's history.

What do Wiltonian's closets — and the special occasion clothing inside them — say about who we are, what we value and how we live in 2018? What is important for us to know regarding the way our clothing is designed, produced, distributed, worn and cared for? And which items will be worthy of closer examination 100 years from now? Will yoga pants, for example, survive the test of time?

The items in *A Century of Style* represent a small sampling of the clothing the Wilton Historical Society has amassed over the decades. The Society's equivalent of a walk-in closet is actually their basement, overflowing with treasures documenting the lives of Wiltonians past. An abundance of carefully wrapped and tagged clothing and accessories for men, women, and children, represents every decade beginning around 1740. The collection includes wedding gowns and suits, mourning coats, infant christening outfits, hostess' dresses, even a whole collection of nightshirts. And a plethora of shoes (about 350 pairs)! A Century of Style: 1860 – 1960 was made possible through the generosity of Catherine Roman, Co-Vice President, Collections, at the Wilton Historical Society.

The exhibition is the result of a collaboration between the Wilton Historical Society, writer and designer Pamela Hovland, and Megan Smith-Harris, Editor of *Wilton Magazine*.

We hope you enjoy the exhibition and return for more forays into Wilton's history. Collections, exhibitions and preserving historic buildings are only possible with funding. Please consider supporting these efforts by becoming a member or giving a donation. Thank you!

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**A Century of Style: 1860 – 1960**
A Glimpse Inside the Wilton Historical Society's Clothing Archive
August 2018 – October 2018
Throughout the 1920s.

The rhinestone design of this dress was inspired by the Art Deco movement which rose to popularity in art and design throughout the 1920s.

The flapper dress is the iconic fashion of the Roaring Twenties. Inspired by women who were rejecting previous social norms, flapper dresses were more revealing than previous styles. Sleeveless dresses with knee-length skirts became in vogue for both day dresses and evening dresses alike. Loosening up waist dresses replaced the corsets of earlier decades, and in many cases dresses achieved a more androgynous look with no defined waist at all.

Loose fitting drop-waist dresses replaced the corsets and petticoats of earlier decades, and in many cases dresses achieved an hourglass shape. Dresses of the 1850s saw the skirts grow wider than previous decades, frequently assisted by the development of inner crinoline cages as well as tiers of flounces sewn into the skirt. Note the wide 'Pagoda' sleeves which were briefly popular in the 1850s and imitated the flared roofs of East Asian buildings.

Gift of Lindsay Alston

Chiffon, Rhinestones
Gift of Lindsay Alston

Gift of Mrs. Alfred Birch

Gift of Marie Donahue

Gift of Laura Caravatt

Gift of Mrs. Alfred Birch

Gift of Mrs. Alfred Birch

Gift of Mrs. Alfred Birch

Gift of Mrs. Alfred Birch

Gift of Marie Donahue

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