

The Limner Portrait

Grade 5

Art History Lesson

Concepts:

1. The colonial painters were not trained. Typically, the American Primitive painters were ordinary craftsmen and sign, coach, or house painters who painted for pleasure and profit. Housewives and young ladies in seminary (school) painted in watercolors and vegetable dyes on velvet.
2. Colonial portraits were often painted by the Limners, house decorators who traveled from town to town painting likenesses and decorating the walls of houses. They often painted the bodies with decoratively planned torsos on their canvasses during the winter months when they could not travel. Then, in the summer months, the Limner would travel from town to town looking for customers, and would then paint in the faces.
3. Since the Limner portrait was rarely painted strictly from life and came from the memory image, the paintings showed a free run of poses, gestures, detail of costume, accessories and background. They appeared abstract in the sense that objects were distorted in form and color.
4. The characteristics of the colonial Limner portrait are:
 - a. Individuals and objects are usually shown in profile or full face.
 - b. Form is simplified and flattened.
 - c. Movement is restricted.
 - d. Contour lines are emphasized.
5. Most of the American Limner portraits were painted anonymously.
6. The portrait of a person often included a symbol showing something about the person, such as a favorite toy or a family pet.

Materials:

18" x 24" white paper, pencils, erasers, tempera paint, paper plates, sponges, water cans, brushes, and black marking pens.

Procedure:

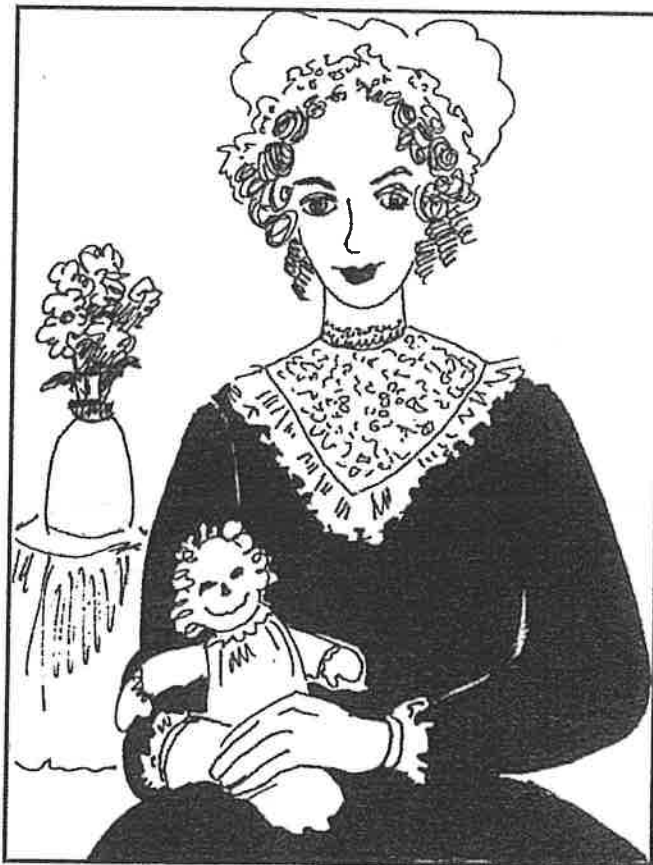
Part 1:

1. You must have at least one sample of an American Primitive portrait to show. A whole collection of prints is suggested. American Primitive paintings are found on greeting cards, calendars, posters, and in books. Book suggestion: American Primitive Painting by Jean Lipman, Dover Publications Inc. New York.

2. Define who the Limner was. Discuss the characteristics of the American Primitive portraits while showing prints.
3. Make charts from the drawing aids, showing dress from the colonial period. An excellent resource is: Everyday Dress of the American Colonial Period Coloring Book by Peter F. Copeland (Dover Press). Show the parts of the clothing grouped by types of sleeves, collars, jackets, bonnets, etc. Show costumes put together.
4. Describe the lesson. "Today you will do the drawing for a painting in the style of the primitive American Limner. This will be a portrait of yourself, a family member, or a family group. Your guidelines will be:
 - a. Figures should be large and should fill up a large portion of the paper.
 - b. Figures should be dressed in the clothing of the colonial period.
 - c. The portrait should include a symbol or symbols showing something about the person, such as his or her type of work, favorite toy, type of home, or family pet."

Part 2:

5. Paint the portrait, keeping the colors dull.

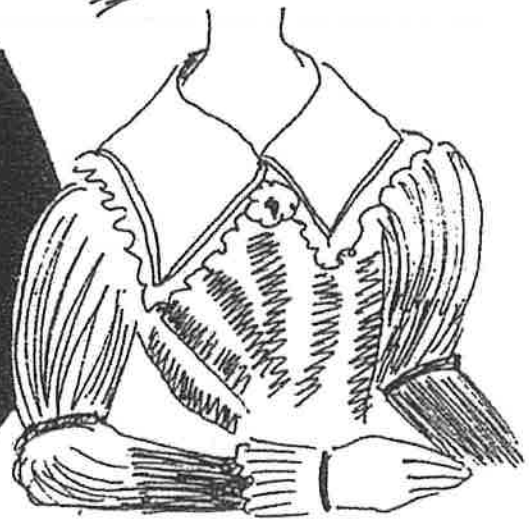


The resources for this lesson are:

American Primitive Painting by Jean Lipman, Dover Publications Inc. New York.

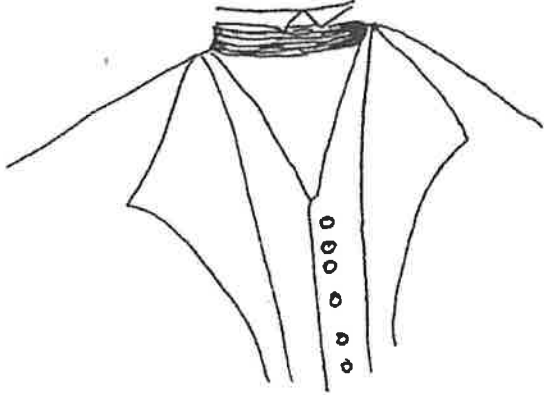
Everyday Dress of the American Colonial Period Coloring Book by Peter F. Copeland.
(Dover Press.)

DRAWING AIDS

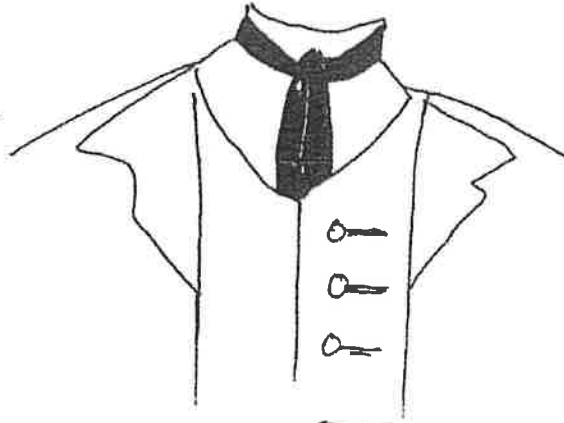


DRAWING AIDS

turnover shirt collar



Knotted Cravat



tricorn hat

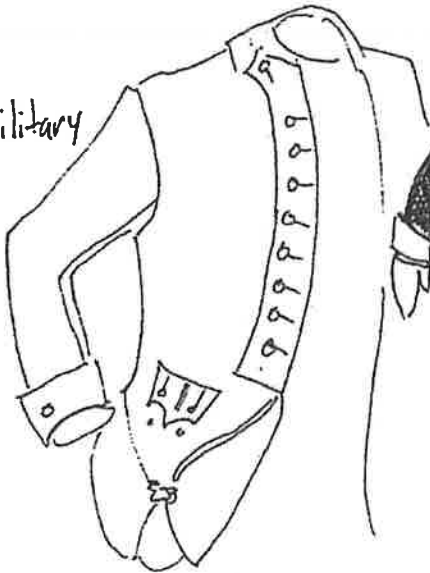


wig



Military

Military



Frock Coat