



Happy New Year 1925

By Phoebe Forbes, Textile Curator and Fenton History Center Staff

The Hotel Jamestown was officially opened on December 31, 1924 with a gala party. More than 800 partygoers filled the Crystal Ballroom and mezzanine dining rooms. The Hotel Jamestown was a community social center as well as a first class hotel to serve the growing city's prosperity as a furniture manufacturing center. It served as the hotel of choice for the out-of-town clients attending the bi-annual furniture shows at the Furniture Exposition Building, also known as the Furniture Mart, on the corner of Second St. and Washington St. A special dress in the collection of the Fenton History Center was received from Mrs. Elizabeth Anderson Cass in 1982. This was the dress she wore on New Year's Eve of 1925 to the Ball celebrating the completion of the Hotel Jamestown.

A letter, which she sent along with the dress, shows her excitement about attending this "gala event".

"Along with many public-spirited citizens, my father, Oscar E. Anderson, then owner of the Monarch Furniture Company, was one of the prime instigators and stock holders in the formation of this enterprise. Incidentally, his brother, Frank O. Anderson was the first President of the Hotel Jamestown, Inc. For all these men it was a dream come true for the betterment of our city. In my turn, my father and mother, Antonia Sellstrom Anderson, concurred that I, their teenage daughter, should attend this gala event which now holds many cherished memories.

While in New York City for the Fall Furniture Market, my parents purchased for me at Best and Company (an exclusive Fifth Avenue store for young folk) this Paris imported, blue georgette gown, trimmed with brown lace flounces and to complete the outfit brown satin slippers with the "Baby Louie" heel. Later, I recall wearing this dress to my first dance at the Eagle Temple.

Still now, some sixty years later, this event stands out in my mind's eye – namely the huge Crystal Ballroom, the beaded ball gowns, the jeweled tiara and fan-shaped combs. The favors for the ladies – mother of pearl atomizers – the men, attired in tails and tuxedos, the formal printed menus, complete with gold tassel, and the pheasant under glass, no less, and bell-shaped, molded ice cream with petit fours - and lastly, after the dinner, being sent home, alone, in a taxi cab ere

the merry bells of the New Year rang out and the celebration for all the guests outlasted the wee hours of New Year's Day. Yea, through my looking glass it has been great to once again reflect on this memorable event."

The dress is fashioned from blue silk crepe georgette, trimmed with blonde lace. The yoke and the flounces, as well as the short sleeves are made from the lace. A silk flower "corsage" is placed at the left shoulder and at the lower right skirt.

During the early 1920's, skirts were much diminished in fullness, becoming very tubular. The waist disappeared as the dresses fell to the hips. This was a characteristic feature of high fashion in 1925. By that time, skirts were also becoming much shorter than previously, and the 'flapper' era was beginning, much to the dismay of many. By 1926 skirts were at their shortest in the Twenties decade and this fashion showed the knee until 1928. The whole leg as far as the kneecap was revealed. Never before had so much leg been revealed. Both Ohio and Utah, legislation was proposed to levy a fine and imprisonment on those who wore dresses "higher than three inches above the ankle.

1925 was an exciting time in Jamestown. The economy was growing and the Hotel Jamestown was opened. And as in Mrs. Cass's life, the Hotel Jamestown would hold special memories for so many Jamestown residents and visitors.

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