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PROMOTING AMERICAN FASHION 1940 THROUGH 1945:
FROM UNDERSTUDY TO STAR

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
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This work could never have been done without the love and support of my family and friends. To name them all would be to leave someone off the list. They believed in me when I doubted and prayed when I lacked strength.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

From the time that Louis XIV and his minister Colbert set about to solve seventeenth-century France's trade deficit by establishing the country as a fashion leader, Paris reigned as the indisputable queen of the fashion world. Walter Vecchio and Robert Riley noted that:

"For over three hundred years Americans have relied upon Europe for their fashionable luxuries. The inventories of our early sailing ships listed damasks and velvets from Italy; woolens and calicoes and fine leathers from England; perfumes, embroideries, sheet linens from Paris; laces made in the North countries. Our eighteenth-century dressmakers imported dolls dressed in the latest French fashions as models for their clients."

Despite the United States' declaration of independence from European rule, the American fashion industry before World War II persisted in following Paris's stylistic dictates. The fashion press from the United States and around the world eagerly attended couture's seasonal presentations and reported the latest developments in women's apparel to an eager readership. Couture dictated, and the public followed. Several costume historians likened Paris's followers to a flock of birds. According to Vecchio and Riley:
Twice a year, as though impelled by some migratory urge, the buyers, merchants, designers, manufacturers, publicists, and journalists of the United States flock like birds to the couture salons of Europe. There they hope they will learn what the women of American will be wearing next season - or, rather, what they will be able to adapt, produce, promote, and sell to these women.

Sarah Tomerlin Lee addressed this practice in even stronger words:

The American Fashion community, before World War II, was a colony of France as truly as America was England's before the Revolution. True, there was an independent outpost in Hollywood, but people wrote that off as pure "costume," not fashion. Meanwhile, the American genius for organization and manufacture, promotion and distribution was building a powerful empire. But the inspiration and authority was in Paris and nowhere else. When the collections were ready, the New York manufacturers, the retailers, the editors migrated as regularly as any flight birds toward their nesting ground in season.

The enthusiasm for these regular visits to Paris' salons was embraced by the French because, even into the twentieth century, fashion contributed a major portion of the nation's income. Couture houses, therefore, provided incentives for those making the trip including "posies presented to puissant editresses and buyers and with such little comforts as free hotel accommodation."

The regularity of this seasonal "migration," however, was temporarily interrupted when the German army occupied Paris in 1940. When Paris was cut off from the rest of the world, the fashion industry in the United States enjoyed a new freedom to develop on its own for an American audience, and, at least temporarily, declared its independence from
Paris. World War II, was "a watershed in fashion history. This is not to say that Paris was finally and irrevocably dethroned." When the Allies liberated Paris, its fashion industry set about regaining its former position. The hiatus from Paris leadership, however, was momentous in launching the accomplished, but under-recognized American fashion industry and the designers that worked within that industry. The purpose of this research was to examine how American fashion designers were promoted from 1940 through 1945.

The American fashion industry did not suddenly appear in 1940; it had been maturing for nearly a hundred years. When World War II provided the merchandising climate and economic opportunity for American fashion to take center stage, the industry was ready to meet the challenge. To appreciate the uniqueness of this opportunity, one must first realize the dominance of Paris in leading the fashion world but also see the growth of the American garment industry. World War II provided an intersection for these two vital forces in the design world which allowed the American industry to temporarily take a leadership role. When the war ended, Paris once again surged ahead, but it was no longer a leader and follower situation. Instead, the two industries established complementary, but equal domains that remain fifty years later.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


CHAPTER II
TWO GROWING INDUSTRIES

At the same time that the Paris couture industry grew from the formal establishment of its governing body, the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture de la Parisienne, in 1868, a second force enjoyed a parallel growth that would soon challenge the tenure of couture and offer the means for democratizing fashion - mass production of ready-to-wear apparel. The American ready-to-wear industry honed its skills largely as a result of pressing war needs. First the American Civil War created a need for the mass production of soldiers' uniforms. When the war ended, the clothing manufacturers turned their entrepreneurial eyes on the public domain and began mass producing garments for the retail market. Elizabeth King wrote in 1917 that prior to World War I, America, particularly New York, was the greatest rival to Paris possessing both the technology and the work force to become an international force.¹ She noted that what the American industry lacked, however, was inspirational, artistic design.

While it was true that American technologies received wide appreciation and were "copied universally," America was not short of designers; they just did not receive wide
appreciation. An exception was Harriet Beecher Stowe who advocated American dress when she admonished in 1848:

When a nice little girl adopts every unnatural fashion that comes from foreign circles, she is in bad taste because she does not represent either her character, her education, or her good points. It requires only an army of girls to declare independence in America and emancipate us from the decrees and tyrannies of French actresses and ballet-dancers. En avant, girls! You yet can, if you will, save the republic.

Stowe’s reference to the republic is perhaps indicative of one of the reasons why Paris designers were held in high esteem while American designers labored unrecognized. Throughout history, Paris couturiers catered to the elite of society and moved within their cultural circles. For example, Charles Worth gained renown during the nineteenth century by designing for the Empress Eugenie and Paul Poiret hosted elaborate parties for a circle of friends that included prominent artists. Caroline Milbank pointed out that these couturiers became "stars" earlier in their careers than did Americans in the fashion industry and were accepted as "gentlemen in society."

American designers often lacked the elite patronage that French couturiers enjoyed. While the United States had its share of prominent individuals, the majority of the American garment industry’s customers were middle-class citizens. As early as the turn of the century, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the ornate garments offered in Paris among those American consumers who could afford to
purchase couture garments. Milbank wrote that "the idea that there was a native American fashion suitable for independent American women had been brewing."\(^5\) This independence was fueled by rising taxes on imports and the adoption of ready-to-wear by women who could afford custom apparel. "Supposedly, women who used to take the ready-to-wear labels out of their clothes so that no one would know that they had been reduced to buying cheaper clothing continued to remove them for a new reason: they didn’t want anyone else running to the store to buy the same outfit."\(^6\) These reports indicate that even before World War I there was a growing awareness of the American fashion industry.

World War I created hardships in the Parisienne couture industry that resulted in fewer exports to the United States and a refocusing on the part of American retailers toward goods designed and produced in the United States. *Vogue* magazine continued to support Paris couture, but in 1915 only fifty American retailers made the buying trip to Paris when the usual number was two hundred.\(^7\)

Even in Paris, interest in fashion waned. Michael and Ariane Batterberrys concluded:

> It is useless in a way to discuss "fashions" during the Great War. Horrified by the disaster that had engulfed them, French women, for the first time perhaps in a thousand years, lost something of their interest in fashion. The decrease in social life left little inducement for it.\(^8\)

The war caused such a drain on manpower that women were called to run family businesses, nurse wounded
soldiers, and serve in whatever capacities, both at home and in Europe, that the war demanded. These activities not only changed their social positions by calling them out from leisurely lives, but also changed their mode of dress. 

"Glancing through the pictures at the mannish coats, Sam Brown belts, sturdy boots, and shapeless hair tucked in neat caps, one understands why when the war was over women were given the vote without a murmur." 

The American fashion industry was "plunged into confusion," but "new philosophies were emerging, imperceptible at first, more to be sensed than seen, but gradually beginning to manifest themselves in many ways."

With no French models to copy, the World War I era industry turned its attention, perhaps for the first time, to American designers. Harper's Bazaar, under the auspices of its "American Clothes for the American Woman" slogan sponsored an all-American fashion show at the New York Roof Garden on Times Square which proved to be a great success. Vogue reported on December 1, 1914: 

For the first time in the annals of dress New York has essayed the role of designer in an effort to show what it can do if called upon to make fashions of its own or go fashionless next spring. These New York designs were exhibited at the Fashion Fete at the Ritz Carlton. If these fashions showed strongly the influence of Paris, this is neither to be wondered at nor regretted for is not Paris the master and New York the pupil who, now that the master is otherwise occupied, seeks to prove that by constant study and appreciation it, too, has learned something of the art of making clothes?"
As in Europe, American women assumed new war responsibilities and Edwin Goodman, of Bergdorf Goodman, recognized a new customer, "the American woman with the taste to appreciate the best in clothing and the money to afford it, but with neither the time nor the inclination to fritter away her mornings in fitting rooms. Something was going to have to be done about this woman."\textsuperscript{13}

Even when World War I ended, drastic shortages of both materials and craftsmen left French fashion houses "[foundering] in complete confusion . . . [and] in a state of flux."\textsuperscript{14} Designer Eddie Mayer, who worked in the American industry during the war, commented:

\begin{quote}
As I look back over the years I do not think that France ever recovered after the first war. A few great artists still created. But the wholesale market had mastered Paris - it was never quite the same. The women of the world who came to Paris to plan and buy clothes for all and varied social occasions came no more. Their fortunes and the society of which they had been a part had been wiped out by war and the economic consequence of war.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

With its nation's economy struggling for recovery, the French fashion industry targeted its American customers and began designing to American needs. The United States was enjoying economic prosperity which, coupled with the lower value of the French franc, meant that Paris fashions were more affordable to American consumers and Americans were more willing than ever to buy them. Despite the fact that American designers had always responded to the needs of the nation's women for comfortable clothing which allowed
greater movement, Paris once again eclipsed the American fashion industry and dominated the world’s fashion scene throughout the 1920s.

After the war, American buyers resumed their practice of purchasing "several dozen copies of each selected model shown in Paris" for resale to their wealthy clientele. Buyers also resumed purchasing models that could be reproduced in department stores' custom salons. Many department stores, before World War II, maintained large custom salons that produced individual garments for prestigious customers in much the same manner as Paris’s couture salons.

Bergdorf Goodman’s custom salon was managed by one of the better remembered names in the custom business, Ethel Frankau. In addition to making buying trips to Paris, Miss Frankau supervised as many as six designers who worked in the Bergdorf Goodman salon creating originals that were marketed under the store’s name. These designers also created garments for individual customers. As was the situation with many American designers prior to World War II, these designers worked anonymously.

Bergdorf Goodman, like other department stores, included the equivalent of a garment factory within the store. Writing in 1959, Booten Herndon stated that the store’s custom department included sixty tailors, eighty-five custom dressmakers, seventy-five alteration experts,
eleven pressers, and three hemstitchers. This level of skilled personnel allowed the store to duplicate Paris originals for its customers. Bergdorf Goodman, in the manner of Paris couture houses, maintained several thousand dress forms padded to duplicate their customers' figures. These dress forms allowed the salon to fit a garment to an individual without that customer making numerous trips to the store.

Each Paris original purchased by a buyer came with a reference. The reference included a complete list of every item needed to duplicate the garment including fabric, zippers, buttons, and where the items could be purchased. It was the buyer's responsibility to estimate how many copies of the garment would be ordered by store customers and purchase enough of the same fabric used by the couture house. With an original muslin pattern, a toile, and the reference sheet, custom salons exactly duplicated their Paris counterparts.

Custom salons, however, lost money. They were maintained as a service for prestigious customers. One anonymous retailer told fashion historian M. D. C. Crawford, "We keep our custom department open for our old clientele and because it adds distinction to our more profitable ready-to-wear. But, we conduct this part of our business often at a loss." Speaking in the 1950s, Andrew Goodman said:
I wouldn't mind charging so much in custom if only we could show a little profit. And I wouldn't mind losing so much if we were selling our merchandise and services at a low price. But to charge so much and still lose, that I find downright embarrassing.20

Custom salons were neither competition for Paris nor profit makers for American retailers, so gradually retailers closed their custom salons and turned more attention to ready-to-wear. Nevertheless, in the 1920s, ready-to-wear designers did not receive any press coverage. Only Lois Long of the New Yorker visited and reported on wholesale houses, but she could only hint at what type of retailer would be carrying the garments.21

It should not be surprising that American custom salons did not make a profit, because Paris couture salons showed few, if any, profits. They had an advantage over American custom salons and houses, though, in that couture houses enjoyed the financial backing of textile manufacturers while American custom establishments relied on sales for operating funds. Textile manufacturers backed couture houses because couture served as a promotional means for French fabrics. The fabric manufacturers made their profits by selling fabrics to apparel manufacturers and custom departments who wanted to duplicate couture creations. American textile manufacturers looked to Paris for design inspiration and also subcontracted with French fabric manufacturers to produce French fabrics in America. This practice allowed French manufacturers to supply their
American customers and avoid paying American import duties. Elizabeth Hawes lamented that American custom design would not be competitive with Paris couture until designers and fabric manufacturers established working relationships similar to those in France.\textsuperscript{22}

Paris's reign over the fashion world began to slip with the Great Depression of the 1930s. The president of the Chambre Syndicale reported that French exports in 1926 were $80,000,000 but only $57,400,000 in 1929 and $55,640,000 in 1930 a drop of over 40 per cent in four years.\textsuperscript{23} Part of this drop could be explained by the fact that with the advent of the Depression the American government imposed a "duty of up to 90 per cent on the cost of the original model," but toiles (muslin patterns) could be imported duty free.\textsuperscript{24} Because the toiles came complete with instructions that manufacturers could use in constructing the garments, middle-class consumers could now purchase inexpensive copies of Paris originals. Sonia Delaunay closed her couture house in 1931 "because everything was becoming too complicated . . . And I saw that the future of fashion lay with industrial couture, what we call today 'ready-to-wear'."\textsuperscript{25}

Elizabeth Hawes reported that by 1932 buying original French designs was expensive. Furthermore, "the French weren't paying their debts and the British were 'buying British.' The public was holding onto its nickels. It
needed something startling to pry them loose." That "something startling" was the promotion of American designers, by name, by retailers, in the media. Due to the Depression, retailers were suffering from declining sales and in need of innovative promotions. In 1932 Lord & Taylor launched what Elizabeth Hawes termed a "press stunt" designed to boost lagging sales. Dorothy Shaver, Vice-President and Director of Lord & Taylor's style bureau, launched the American Style campaign and promoted American designers Elizabeth Hawes, Annette Simpson, and Edith Reuss, then Clare Potter and Muriel King. Shaver, called by Adam Gimbel "unquestionably, the American designer's foremost publicist," introduced the campaign at a luncheon saying:

"We still doff our hats to Paris. Paris gave us our inspiration, and still does. But we believe that there must be clothes which are intrinsically American, and that only the American designer can create them. That is why we turn today to commend the spirit and the enterprise of these young New York women who are working so successfully to create an American style."\(^{27}\)

The designers were widely publicized and advertised and a "flood of articles on American Designers came out in newspapers and magazines all over the U.S.A."\(^{26}\) This promotion of American designers, by name just as French designers names were used, was revolutionary at the time. Until this time, retailers opposed using the names of designers, except for French copies, because anonymity was thought to be good for business. "Anonymity made the store name more important, gave an impression of exclusivity, and
permitted pricing to be an individual store decision."³⁰ Jessica Daves wrote that Shaver's "step into the open for the makers has helped, through the years, to develop the sense of pride that is part of any industry's strength."³¹ Still, the press did not immediately endorse the idea of naming designers, but this reaction should not have been unexpected since "The New York Times did not even mention store names until 1939!"³²

The United States had its own wealth of fashion designers, but before World War II, most of them worked anonymously for manufacturers or in conjunction with large department stores. For the most part, the potential talent of American designers went unnoticed. Hawes lamented the fact that most people assumed that she went to Paris for inspiration. Frustrated, she wrote a book to tell the public that "clothes are designed in America. All beautiful clothes are not designed in France."³³

The American fashion industry made important advancements during the 1930s that laid the ground work for its production during World War II. American designers, however, did not maintain the hoped-for prestige initiated by Shaver for Lord & Taylor. Even though it promoted American designers, the store continued to rely heavily on Paris designs offering special orders for couture garments in its custom salon.³⁴ Milbank reported that "the entire
American fashion industry remained dependent on French designs.\textsuperscript{35}

The 1930s were a transitional time for the fashion industry with the *New York Times* calling American women "Slaves of Paris" at the same time that some women rejected Paris's dictates.\textsuperscript{36} Hawes wrote that the American Design movement was destined to fall on its face because there weren't enough trained designers in 1932 and that by 1934 one heard "comparatively little of the American Designers."\textsuperscript{37} By 1935 American and French fashions were being shown side by side at openings, and Hollywood was becoming an increasingly important style-setter.\textsuperscript{38} Still, according to Phyllis Levin, a building intended to hold an exhibition of American fashions for the 1939 World's Fair in New York "stood empty for lack of interest and support."\textsuperscript{39}

Government-sponsored technological advances in the apparel industry during the Depression also helped to promote the American industry. These included a WPA project for standardizing women's dress sizes, new engineering processes that allowed workers to produce garments by the section method (specializing in individual sections of a garment) that speeded up production by 20 to 25 per cent, and the development of spun rayon that could be worked on machines set up for cotton.\textsuperscript{40} These innovations gave American manufacturers the ability to quickly produce an economically competitive product that allowed American ready
to wear to steadily increase its share of French and English apparel markets. Some foreign shops specialized exclusively in American apparel while their department stores set up American departments with one Paris buyer reporting that he was "buying from America all the quota permitted; [and] he would continue to buy up to the limit of this quota." In 1939, "the American ready-to-wear industry was solid and strong. There were trained patternmakers available, skilled cutters, fitters, operators."

With the guns of war already firing in Europe, Paris held its last full, pre-World War II couture showing in the Spring of 1940 ignoring what it considered a "phony war." Carmel Snow, editor of Harper's Bazaar, reported reaching the Paris shows only by travelling a circuitous route arranged by the couture industry on a train completely without lights or heat. She reported that the Paris showings "demonstrated the courageous spirit of the French couture in the face of difficult conditions, and they demonstrated to me that Paris was still, and will always be, the center of fashion."

The German army occupied Paris in June 1940 and the world of fashion was thrown upside down. The Germans attempted to move the French couture houses to Berlin and Vienna, but Lucien Lelong, the president of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parsienne argued that the couture
houses were only a small part of France's fashion industry and persuaded the Germans to leave them in Paris. Approximately twenty couture houses remained open, but they were limited to serving the fashion appetites of German officers' wives, wealthy collaborators, and black market profiteers.47

In the United States, before World War II, the majority of women "dressed in mass-produced French interpretations"48 of couture designs, but with Paris occupied and cut off from much of the world, the American fashion industry began listening to voices such as Elizabeth Hawes who called once again for recognition of American design. Milbank reported that one group of entrepreneurs believed so strongly in the nation's potential that it launched a campaign to declare New York the new fashion capital of the world. New York's mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, endorsed the movement and established committees to develop a plan to lure buyers and editors to the city. This movement was only logical to those experts who proclaimed that American ready-made designs had always been original to this country and that actually only a few were copies of Paris couture.49 Others, such as Elsa Schiaparelli who was stranded in the United States by the war, argued that Paris was still the true fashion leader. Although not completely successful, the campaign drew attention to the potential of the American fashion industry.
With Paris' influence controlled by Germany's occupation, the American fashion industry looked homeward for inspiration and actively promoted designers who had long worked in the shadow of the Paris couture houses. Lacking Paris fashion news to report, American publications turned their attentions to American designers. While this was initially heralded as a patriotic move which grew from America's participation in World War II, as American designers developed their skills it soon became "clear that New York was also a fashion source worth covering."\(^{50}\) American department stores also contributed to the increased publicity of American fashion during the war when they campaigned for "home grown designers."\(^{51}\) Throughout the war, names such as Claire McCardell, Jo Copeland, Norman Norell, Adrian, and Emily Wilkins gained prominence in the American fashion market.

While the war provided the American fashion industry an opportunity to promote its own designers, it also caused some industry leaders concern about whether or not the war would drive the industry out of business. Soon, however, the public demonstrated that these concerns were unfounded. Fearing that the war would discourage women from buying new dresses, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, in 1940, launched a promotional campaign which proved to be "completely unnecessary because, to everyone's shock, women simply could not buy enough clothes to enhance their austere
lives and furthermore, they needed not an ounce of encouragement to shop for them."

With pent-up consumer demands, increased discretionary income, and with only soft goods such as apparel available for purchase, it would appear that promotional campaigns of any kind were not necessary to get women to buy apparel. These campaigns, then, must have served another purpose. As will be shown, the campaigns established the authority of American designers as fashion leaders.

When Paris was liberated in 1944, the American press, with writers such as Carmel Snow, again flocked to Paris for fashion news. The times had changed, though, and the fashion industry changed with them by promoting both French and American fashions. Paris continued to reign as a fashion leader, but American designers "who had finally received recognition were not about to relinquish it." Even the nature of apparel retailing had changed. Until the end of the war, large downtown department stores dominated the retail market. With the end of the war and the resulting housing boom in the suburbs, department stores and specialty stores expanded to include branches in shopping centers. This expansion resulted in an increased demand for merchandise in large quantities to stock the stores, and this expanding market provided more opportunities for the American ready-to-wear industry. Even the couture industry recognized changes in the fashion market,
particularly in the United States, after World War II. Paris designers such as Dior and Jacques Fath, in addition to operating their couture houses, entered the New York ready-to-wear industry.

Throughout history, textiles and apparel trade have contributed to both the French and American economies. In France, the couture industry, composed of both the design houses and auxiliary industries that provided materials, played a dominant role in the nation's economy providing both employment and a source of international trade. In the United States, Elizabeth Hawes ranked the apparel industry as the second largest business in the country. The nature of trade in apparel products had been gradually shifting before World War II with couture exports to the United States gradually falling off during the Depression, and, as will be shown, World War II provided the American fashion industry an opportunity to make some significant changes in its relationship with Paris. Before the war, France provided design leadership for the growing ready-to-wear industry in the United States, but today design innovations occur in both countries. After World War II, the American fashion industry "became one of the most promising sources for new industries anxious to launch it," and the expanding industry prompted new positions in advertising and in public relations. Both the expansion
and the new promotional positions grew from changes made by the American fashion industry during World War II.

Because fashion reflects the culture that produces it, part of the changes in the fashion industry resulted from changes, due in part to World War II, in the women that the industry served. While fashion, particularly couture fashion, had once been reserved for the elite, by World War II mass production techniques democratized fashion so that women at all economic levels could participate in fashion. Furthermore, American women experienced new freedoms during World War II as they served in both military and civilian capacities in the war effort. These new activities meant that women had less time to spend on the fittings necessary for custom designs and it also meant that women exercised more independence from fashion dictates. American women developed a style of their own and sought out those in the fashion industry who could satisfy their fashion desires. All of these influences contributed to a new stature for the ready-to-wear industry. As Beryl Williams Epstein wrote in 1945:

Nowadays the status of designers has changed again, because their customers have changed. Those customers have learned to think for themselves about clothes, and have come to the conclusion that things should be wearable as well as a badge of one's ability to 'keep in style.' And those customers now include, not just the noble-blooded or the very wealthy, but - because of the development of the wholesale ready-to-wear industry - all women, everywhere.
So American designers today, although they are vital, imaginative personalities in themselves, are more than that. As a professional group they are the sensitive, intelligent reflectors of what American women want them to be, creating what American women want to wear.

Need For The Research

During World War II, the American fashion industry experienced major changes in how it operated. Before the war, the American industry followed the stylistic dictates of Paris couture and had very few recognized designers of its own. After the war, American designers produced fashions under their own names and enjoyed a new celebrity status. While progress has been made in including American fashion in surveys of historic costume, comparatively speaking, the period during World War II, when this new status for American designers emerged, has been largely neglected. This time period has received either brief mentions in larger volumes of history, or very specific issues have been addressed in popular literature. There is clearly a need for more scholarly research into the American fashion industry, its designers, and the forces that allowed the industry to take a leading place in the world market.

After reviewing the available literature on the time period, this research will be structured by the following propositions:

Proposition I

The growth and stature of the American fashion industry was not accomplished by a singular force.
Instead, there was a synergistic effort among the designers, retailers, and some writers in the press, particularly from the newspapers, to maintain the prominence of the industry.

Proposition II

While during World War II promotion of the American fashion industry was conducted under the auspices of the patriotism that prevailed, it was primarily an economic interest that solidified the efforts of this group.

The designers, retailers, and the press worked both independently and together to promote American designers and, thereby, to promote their own interests. This study will explore the nature of those promotions.

Limitations

World War II was a time of many changes in the American fashion industry. For example, markets in several parts of the country continued to grow, the United States' government imposed a myriad of price and styling regulations on the apparel industry, and the war forced trade changes with several countries. This research, however, will focus on the New York apparel industry, the largest apparel industry in the country and the largest industry in New York City, and will be limited to women's apparel. Furthermore, it will concentrate on the promotion of American designers as seen in a local newspaper from 1940 through 1945. This time frame allows for establishing promotional patterns before Paris' occupation in June 1940 and exploring new promotional endeavors throughout the war and several months
beyond. It also allows for comparisons of promotional campaigns before Paris' occupation, during its occupation, and after its liberation. While a number of government regulations influenced the American apparel industry during the war, this research will only address those regulations that had an impact on the promotion of American designers.

**Research Question**

How were American designers promoted to the public from 1940 though 1945 as shown by *The New York Times*?
NOTES


3. Ibid., 211.


5. Ibid., 56.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 62.


9. Ibid.


11. Ibid.


17. Herndon, 159.

18. Ibid.


24. Laver, 246.


27. Levin, 213.


29. Hawes, 196.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 55.

33. Hawes, 158.

34. Milbank, 112.

35. Ibid., 105.


37. Hawes, 260-61.

38. Lauer & Lauer, 194.
40. Daves, 52.
41. Crawford, 220.
42. Ibid., 220-21.
43. Herndon, 181.
44. Laver, 248.
46. Ibid., 137.
48. Hawes, 324.
49. Milbank, 130.
52. Levin, 199.
54. Ibid.
CHAPTER III
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fashion historians have, until recently, largely ignored the time period from 1940 until the introduction of Dior's New Look in 1947. Yet, while government regulations in the United States imposed styling limitations (General Limitation L-85) that would ultimately save fabric, and England's government imposed strict rationing of clothing, fashion did not stand still. Instead, the industry matured and developed new skills that allowed it to emerge from World War II with a new vitality directed toward middle-class consumers. A more thorough investigation of the American industry during this time period is warranted.

Some costume historians, such as R. T. Wilcox, skip the war years altogether in reporting fashion changes while others, including James Laver, Douglas A. Russell, and Francois Boucher, report on European, particularly French and English, fashions, but ignore the United States. There is also some difference of opinion as to what was really happening, particularly in the United States, in the fashion industry. Rachel H. Kemper wrote:

Cut off from the fashion source at Paris - which was in an equal state of paralysis - America was forced to improvise and turned to the military for
inspiration. Eisenhower jackets, Montgomery berets, and other patriotic motifs were common. Chinese and Russian themes came and went in direct relation to the political climate. Evening wear, predictably, was unusually alluring. Whether white, bouffant, and innocent, or black, sequined, and slinky, it served the same fascinating purpose and contributed, in no small measure, to the baby boom of the mid-1940s.5

Kemper further reported that after the war "fashion dithered around until 1947 when Dior’s New Look was unveiled as a stylish and elegant release from wartime restrictions.6 In a catalog on haute couture from the end of the war to the present, Melissa Leventon wrote that the designer ready-to-wear industry in the United States began to blossom during the war:

Yet, for many reasons, all eyes turned once again to France at war’s end. In many ways the war had frozen fashion in time; it must have seemed perfectly natural to return to the pre-war status quo. Perhaps, too, the fashion ideas of the French couturiers were truly more attractive or exciting than were those of their American counterparts.7

Writing less than a decade after the end of World War II, Cecil Beaton concluded that:

During the war no one thought much about frivolous fashion, and there were no new styles. Only those which had been left over when the war began (p. 215). American designers tried to prove that they were independent of Paris, but evolved no significant fashion, marking time until the day when they could again receive inspiration from the accepted source.8

Perhaps Beaton was referring to his native England in his reference to frivolous fashions; however, in the United States fabrics such as taffetas and failles were not restricted if made from fibers other than wool or cotton.
Furthermore, frivolous fashions for evening were encouraged in the media so that women could look glamorous for their soldier sweethearts and therefore boost morale.9

Joan Nunn, another English author, wrote of the war years that:

In America, where for so long Paris had been considered the main source of fashionable dress for women, the fashion trade was thrown back on its own resources, and a distinctive American look emerged, based on folk fashion: print cotton dresses, such as the early settlers wore, frilled cotton skirts and blouses from Mexico, fringed leather from the American Indian, Stetson hats and boots, and above all T-shirts and the stitched and riveted functionalism of working-men’s overalls which, as denim jeans, have become possibly the most universally popular garment ever worn by rich and poor alike throughout the world.10

In references to American stylistic themes, Jane Dorner mentioned $1 dresses with "frills and flounces influenced by neighbouring Mexico" and California sports clothes including "fresh cotton blouses with miners’ levi pants."11 These authors fail to mention the elegant suits that designers such as Adrian offered the public and that dominated the American war-time fashion scene. Instead, they have captured peripheral fashion influences and reported them as mainstream. Promoted for their versatility and investment potential, tailored suits so dominated the American fashion scene during this time period that they came to be regarded as the civilian uniform. Katel le Bourhis wrote:

During the war years, chic American women prided themselves in showing their sense of social consciousness and patriotism by dressing in an appropriately restrained manner. From their pre-war
wardrobes, they relinquished the fantasy of their Schiaparellis or the grandeur of their Balenciagas. The mainstays of their wardrobes were almost identically tailored suits made of sensible, sturdy fabrics like tweed and worsted wool. The jacket was cleanly cut and worn over a plain skirt that just covered the knee. With broad shoulders as their only fashion characteristic, these are remembered as "Victory suits." Women used as little fabric and as few buttons as possible; this austerity became part of patriotic American chic.  

An advertisement for Polsky's, an Akron, Ohio department store, demonstrated this phenomenon by saying:

MORE Women are Wearing MORE Suits than Ever Before .  .  . because there's work to be done, a war to be won and women never cease wanting to look smart .  .  . SUITS are their first line of defense. Suits that, like themselves, serve unflinchingly, are fresh and forthright, tell the world of an unafraid heart.  

Only one English author, Deborah Torrens, characterized "Fashion From the States" as being more classic in nature. Without mentioning any designers, her discussion centered on designs produced in New York as a response to rising temperatures.  

Some English costume historians have been more generous in their reports of American design during the war. Elizabeth Wilson and Lou Taylor, in reporting the lack of Paris's design influence during its occupation, quoted Eric Newby, the son of a wholesaler, as saying:

The American fashion industry hoped to fill the void, and in fact aimed to replace France as the world fashion leader after the war. . . and that British ready-to-wear looked to New York, as well as to its own London designers for inspiration. . . [Wholesalers] filched [designs] from any available copies of American Vogue.
In her review of Western fashion, Maggie Pexton Murray said that American designers "hit their stride" during the war, began to "star," and that "with all foreign markets eliminated, the eyes of the fashion world, of necessity, concentrated on American fashion." However, she also commented that the government's "fashion restrictions were drastic" and that General Limitation L-85 "specified the amount of yardage used in clothing." The war did not eliminate all foreign markets, as a review of American newspaper advertisements during the period showed that England exported both wool fabrics and wool suits to the United States during the war to generate funds to support their war efforts. Furthermore, General Limitation L-85 imposed styling restrictions, but not yardage requirements, and the restrictions were permissive enough that in the second year of their implementation, designers voluntarily cut them back even further.

Not all writers have painted American fashion during this time period with such sweeping generalities. Notable exceptions include a collection of biographies of American designers including Adrian, Claire McCardell, Mainbocher, Norman Norell, and Pauline Trigere edited by Sarah Tomerlin Lee and Caroline Rennolds Milbank's study of New York fashion. Both volumes concentrate on the growing American fashion scene and its designers and represent the most exhaustive studies of American fashion during the 1940s that
could be found. Nevertheless, Lee's text focuses on the careers of the individual designers with very little mention of the World War II years. Milbank's work covers a wide range of topics including biographies of numerous designers and chronicles of the growth of the New York fashion industry. Her discussion of the 1940s, however, leans heavily on the effects of the war on the clothing. Milbank mentions promotional efforts including that of Eleanor Lambert, who was hired by American designers to serve as a publicist, but her work is not exhaustive and does not include details of war promotions.

Michael and Ariane Batterberry included extensive discussions of fashions during both World War I and II including information about industry activities. While their text included the rise of American designers including McCardell, Trigere, and James, they gave only a brief mention of one promotional campaign, that of Harper's Bazaar's coverage of the New York openings. In writing about the activities of the New York fashion industry prior to the showing of the Theatre de la Mode in New York in 1946, Bourhis reviewed a number of issues including the L-85 restrictions and included discussions of designers Adrian and Claire McCardell. Bourhis noted that before the war, American designers worked mostly anonymously but that after the declaration of war "American magazines patriotically began to give American fashion the recognition previously
 accorded the French. Gradually the names and personalities of American designers became preeminent." Bourhis, however, did not discuss newspaper promotions or the types of promotions used to recognize American designers. Valerie Steele, in her biography of Claire McCardell, addressed the issue of promotions when she quoted fashion editor Bettina Ballard who said:

   Before and during the war there was a terrific vogue for what were call 'the American Designers,' who were being discovered and promoted by Dorothy Shaver at Lord & Taylor. During the war they received an inordinate amount of publicity, what with Paris dead to the press, and also because they represented a good national fashion story.  

While Ballard noted that promotions "put Seventh Avenue on the map,' she characterized them as having a "glorified covered-wagon quality." Steele did not, however, describe what type of promotions were used by either retailers or the press.

British writers Elizabeth Wilson and Lou Taylor, in conjunction with a BBC television series, studied Western dress from 1860 to 1989 and included discussions of the effects of major cultural events on dress such as World War II. Their discourse on utility dress in England during and after the war was the most inclusive that could be found. While their concentration was on the British scene, they included much smaller, but equally interesting mentions of the American market. These authors document that the British apparel industry, with the absence of Paris, looked
to the United States for design leadership. They also state that the New Look, introduced in 1947, "was France's secret weapon to wrest world leadership of the fashion industry back from Seventh Avenue, New York." They did not, however, include any discussion of the rise of American designers which in turn established the leadership of New York to the extent that France felt the need to reclaim its dominant role.

Perhaps sensing the new importance of American designers, Beryl Williams Epstein published a collection of biographies of contemporary designers during the war, but did not comment on the workings of the industry. By contrast, M. D. C. Crawford wrote just after the end of World War II purposing to "define the critical situations which have arisen in our fashion trades due to this present war," to compare them to the effects of World War I, and to place these events in the historical pursuit of beauty. Crawford's text included discussions of influences on the growth of the American fashion industry including the invention of the sewing machine and concluded with a discussion of the relationship between war and fashion. While the final chapter included details of the war's effects on Paris, England, and the United States, it was largely a philosophical piece and did not directly address the questions raised in this study.
Some works included biographies of some of the American designers who worked during the 1940s along with designers from other periods interspersed with discussions of a variety of aspects about the industry. These include Bernard Roshco, Phyllis Lee Levin, Jessica Daves, Katie Kelly, Eleanor Lambert, Prudence Glynn, Ernestine Carter, Barbaralee Diamonstein, and Valerie Steele. In addition, a number of histories about department stores have been written that include pieces of information about this period. Some of these include Lloyd Wendt on Marshall Field’s, Henry Givens Baker on Rich’s of Atlanta, Booten Herndon on Bergdorf Goodman’s, Stanley Marcus’s memoirs on Neiman Marcus, Mark Stevens and Maxine Brady on Bloomingdale’s, James M. Wood on The Halle Brothers’ Co., Leon Joseph Rosenberg on Dillard’s, and Nan Tillson Birmingham’s collection of favorite stores across the country. These histories tend to center on personalities within the stores and how the stores evolved during the century. For these reasons, mention of the time period of this study is often transitory at best. Another history of the same nature is Kelly’s chronicle of Women’s Wear Daily from its beginning until 1972.

Some writers provided valuable insights into the fashion industry because they had been participants themselves. Elizabeth Hawes pooled the memories of her career,
particularly through the 1920s and 1930s, along with her personal critique of the industry and concluded that "Fashion is Spinach."\(^{48}\) Despite her criticisms, her book provides extensive information on the difficulties of designing apparel in America. Two influential fashion magazine editors, Carmel Snow\(^{49}\) and Diana Vreeland\(^{50}\) wrote autobiographies that include some information on the fashion industry, however, both were devout followers of Paris fashion and, therefore, somewhat biased in their perspectives. Several writers have focused on specific issues from this time period including Ink Mendelsohn's look at how clothing in America indicated social status,\(^{51}\) Sue Fleishman's discussion of the 1932 Olympic's influence on California sportswear,\(^{52}\) and Gloria Ricci Lothrop's study of how Esther Williams, Helen Rose, and Rose Marie Reid (all participants in the Hollywood movie industry) influenced the development of the California sportswear industry.\(^{53}\)

While surveys of costume histories that span several hundred years must of necessity contain only brief discussions of any one period, several writers have included both background information about the period of history and discussions of the American industry, but without discussions of promotions. These authors include J. Anderson Black and Madge Garland;\(^{54}\) Marybelle S. Bigelow;\(^{55}\) Blanche Payne, Geitol Winakor, and Jane Farrell-Beck;\(^{56}\) and Phyllis G. Tortora and Keith Eubank.\(^{57}\) Shirley Miles
O’Donnell devoted an entire chapter to World War II in her book on American dress for the theater, including the impact of shortages. There was no discussion, however, of industry activities. The only scholarly studies of this time period found were V. C. Billings’ look at the sociological implications of classes of elite women as they developed within the American fashion industry from 1930 to 1955, Janet Nancy Eiger’s examination of how World War II shortages and regulations affected women’s dress from 1942 to 1945 and the implications for theater costuming, and this author’s look at how department stores used their fashion advertising to recruit women for war factory work in Akron, Ohio.

This review of research available on the American fashion industry from 1945 through 1948 indicates four major trends. (1) As Vecchio and Riley stated, "It is surprising that so little has been recorded of this business." (2) While European scholars have long been ahead of American scholars in studying costume, Europeans often neglect to include American costume in their histories of Western dress, and, when they do, the information is not always accurate. (3) Even among those scholars who have studied American design during World War II, there is disagreement as to the accomplishments of American fashion designers. Some authors believe that they finally had their chance to display truly American designs while others stated that they
were biding their time until they could receive true guidance and inspiration from the only real leader in women's fashions - Paris. (4) There is a lack of scholarly research concerning the American fashion industry from 1945 through 1948.
NOTES


6. Ibid.


17. Ibid., 108.

18. Buckland, 83.


24. Ibid.


26. Ibid., 145.


61. Buckland.

CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGY

This study used an historical approach in answering the research question outlined in Chapter II. Historical research seldom, if ever, follows a strictly linear path but tends, instead, to be cyclical in nature. New evidence may require repeating a step in the study, but the progression is always toward the goal of answering the research question.¹

Despite its non-linear path, historical research is ordered by prescribed steps. First, data must be collected from primary sources with secondary sources providing direction in the search. Second, the data must be "critically [analyzed] for authenticity (external criticism) and for credibility (internal criticism) before using the source."² The data is then recorded and analyzed. Finally, the data is "synthesized into a meaningful pattern of reconstructed truth - an interpretation - using both imaginative insight and scholarly objectivity."³

This study took a qualitative, adductive approach in gathering and analyzing the data. Fischer defines adductive reasoning as "adducing answers to specific questions, so that a satisfactory explanatory 'fit' is obtained" and so
that facts are "arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm." Fischer further defines an explanatory paradigm as "an interactive structure of workable questions and the factual statements which are adduced to answer them." In this study, adduction was appropriate because there is little doubt that the American fashion industry is a vital part of the global economy. The larger issue to be answered by the research question was, how did it move from an inferior position following Paris' dictates to a leading position with global recognition? Qualitative, adductive research, through analyzing the collected data and examining for patterns within that data, can lead to the formulation of hypotheses and possibly to theories. Because data collection and intermediate interpretation are concurrent operations in qualitative research, it is also possible that working hypotheses can emerge as the research progresses which can then be tested during subsequent data collection and interpretation.

With qualitative research it is difficult, if not impossible, to precisely define a research methodology. Instead, a "design emerges as the study unfolds." This does not mean that the study proceeds with no plan or pattern at all, but rather that the researcher is free to allow the patterns in the data to unfold as they will, rather than limiting the researcher to specific issues and, therefore, possibly missing important pieces of the story.
This research followed a general plan allowing for the possibility of new sources as the research progressed.

Research Plan

To answer the research questions as precisely as possible, this research project used two methodologies. The first was an interpretive, qualitative content analysis of extant material culture data from 1940 through 1945. This analysis provided a foundation for the second methodology, oral histories. In his model for material culture studies, E. McClung Fleming defined four operations to be performed on five characteristics of artifacts. The four operations included identification, evaluation (judgment), cultural analysis (relationship of the artifact to its culture), and interpretation (significance) and the five properties included an artifact's history, material, construction, design, and function. Due to the relatively recent nature of the artifacts used in this study and the purpose of the study, the four operations were followed, but it was not necessary to complete them on the five characteristics.

This study relied on written documents, newspaper advertisements, and newspaper stories; therefore, their identity was known. In this situation, Fleming noted that identification could be simple and brief. Evaluation entails assigning a relative worth to an object based on its authenticity. In other words, those documents that are judged by the researcher to be authentic should be assigned
more merit in the final analysis. Because the written sources used for this study carried identifiable documentation, they were judged as being authentic and assigned equal weight.

Newspaper advertisements were chosen over magazine advertisements because newspapers are published every day and, therefore, offer data that is more current. This is due to the immediacy of newspapers and their ability to react quickly to changes in the cultural environment. In addition, retailers advertise more in newspapers than in magazines. This is demonstrated in advertising figures used by Dillard's department stores in 1953 when five per cent of the stores' estimated sales were devoted to advertising. Of each advertising dollar, seventy cents went for newspaper ads, about ten cents for store displays, "ten cents for radio and television, five cents for supplies, two cents for direct mail, and two cents for incidental expenses." Chisholm Halle, of Halle's department store in Cleveland reflected a similar strategy noting that they spent $2.3 million annually in two Cleveland newspapers. He said, "Since Cleveland department stores together spend $10 million with the two papers, we are responsible for bringing the newspapers out each morning and evening."

The final two steps, cultural analysis and interpretation, were particularly valuable for this study. This research examined a particular culture, the New York
fashion industry including its designers, retailers, manufacturers, and promoters. Fleming included determining the function of an object as part of its cultural analysis. This step is pertinent in the study of an unidentified object, but the major function of a newspaper is known. That is, conveying information that is current to the time and place of its production. Within the newspaper, this study included the examination of articles, editorial features, and retail advertisements. Because the creation of retail ads often falls outside the editorial control of the newspapers that feature them, ads were assumed to be promoting a particular product to the consuming public.

As part of his cultural analysis, Fleming documented several authors who commented on intersections between cultures and their objects and how changes in the objects reflected changes in the culture. He included content analysis as one particularly relevant methodology for studying these intersections. He wrote, "From the standpoint of content analysis, every artifact is a document bearing some content of evidence about its culture, and in this role it can serve as primary source material for the cultural historian." By using content analysis of written documents and newspaper accounts of the six years in question, changes in the cultural attitudes toward American fashions were reflected in the material culture, the
newspaper accounts and written documentation, left from the

time period.

Finally, interpretation "focuses on the relation
between some fact learned about the artifact and some key
aspect of our current value system."¹² Before World War
II, designers usually worked anonymously, but today,
American fashions are valued and designers are often
celebrities. An analysis of the data left from this pivotal
time period demonstrated how that transition took place and
how our culture came to shift its values.

The content analysis was conducted on articles,
editorial features such as fashion pages, and advertisements
carried in The New York Times from 1940 through 1945. From
January through May 1940 only Sunday papers were analyzed to
establish advertising patterns before Paris' occupation.
From June 1940 through December 1945 both daily and Sunday
papers were analyzed. All articles concerning either French
or American designers and all advertisements that mentioned
American designers or mentioned American fashions were
photocopied and studied for patterns within the data. In
addition, all editorials concerning women's apparel were
copied and studied. This study defined American designers
as those working in the New York market in either custom
salons or in the ready-to-wear industry. This definition
excluded couture designers such as Mainbocher, Molyneux, and
Schiaparelli who designed for the United States market after
fleeing Paris during the war. Both the latent and content messages in the articles and advertisements were examined to determine the marketing strategies of the retailers, the use of designers' names, any mention of fashions as being specifically American or from Paris, and to determine other relevant trends.

In addition to the written documents from The New York Times, the archival holdings at the following institutions were studied:

The Fashion Group International was founded in 1931 by prominent women in the fashion industry. Originally established in New York City, the group, during the 1940s, had a network of branch groups in cities across the country with the purpose of bringing together women executives in the fashion industry. From 1940 through 1945 the group held monthly luncheon meetings where the industry discussed its business concerns. Its archival holdings included copies of some monthly newsletters and transcripts of some speeches given during the time period.

Fashion Institute of Technology was founded in 1944 and trains students in all areas of the fashion industry. In addition to its large costume collection, the Institute includes the Gladys Marcus Library which includes large holdings of period photographs and the transcripts of oral histories of various members of the New York fashion community. Due to the time period of this study, few
participants in the 1940s industry could be found or were willing to be interviewed. Only Miss Eleanor Lambert, a publicist for the New York Dress Institute, agreed to be interviewed. Consequently, Miss Lambert's interview with this author was compared to that held in the Institute library and transcripts from the Oral History Project were substituted for researcher interviews. 

Tobe Fashion Reports was founded in 1927 by Tobe Coller Davis who described her association as:

... the reporters and interpreters of the fashion world speaking to the fashion-makers and the fashion sellers. ... Our job is to tell the makers what the sellers are doing and vice versa. Most of all, we interpret and evaluate for each what is happening to fashion itself. ... We make it our business to stay abreast of those economic, social, and art trends which I maintain are the great formative currents of fashion. ... From all these we try to pick the significant trends that will change our lives, and hence our fashions. 13

Tobe publishes a weekly newsletter that is sent to subscribers across the country. Weekly newsletters from January 1940 through 1946 were analyzed as part of this study.

The New York Times archives that address fashion issues include a number of published documents and correspondence among staff members. All the fashion holdings, ranging from approximately the late 1930s through the 1950s were included in this study.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Costume Institute was founded in 1937 with funds raised by the fashion industry. In addition
to its costume collection, the institute has a research library, however, the only library data pertinent to this study were listings of designers' garments featured in various periodicals.

This use of multiple sources of information and methods is particularly important in qualitative analysis to triangulate, or establish the trustworthiness of the data. A variety of sources also provides varying perspectives on an issue so that a more accurate picture of events can be established. This is particularly important when conducting oral histories because memories can sometimes be flawed. The multiple and varied sources in this study led to a richer, more complete picture of the American fashion industry during World War II.
Glossary

advertisement  A retail message paid for and controlled by an identified sponsor with the purpose of increasing sales.

designer  A person who generates original ideas for garments.

editorial  A written column or fashion layout generated by the publication in which it is found.

fashion  A particular style found in a specific place at a specific time and expected to change. For this study, a fashion refers to a garment.

promotion  A campaign by a retailer, designer, organization, or the press to encourage the adoption of a particular fashion.

publicity  News or information not paid for or controlled by a sponsor.

retailer  A business establishment that purchases goods from the wholesale market for resale to the public at higher (retail) prices.
NOTES


3. Ibid.


5. Ibid.


8. Ibid., 156.


11. Fleming, 159.

12. Ibid., 161.

13. Speech by Tobe Coller Davis to Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 25 April 1957 in Jeannette A. Jarnow, Miriam Guerreiro, and Beatrice Judelle, Inside the Fashion Business: Text and
CHAPTER V

ASSUMING THE FASHION MANTLE OF PARIS:
JANUARY 1940 THROUGH DECEMBER 1941

Introduction

The American fashion industry began the year of 1940 with an acute awareness of the war raging across Europe. The New York Times daily carried front page accounts of Germany’s assaults on its neighboring countries and of the beseiged nations’ heroic efforts to forestall occupation. While the United States argued the merits of joining the fight or remaining isolated, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for American industries to become the "arsenal of democracy." In 1939 the President first sold arms to the United States’ allies under the Cash and Carry program, and then, when the allies’ cash reserves ran out, sold them arms on credit under the 1941 Lend Lease program.¹

The President’s actions impacted the American fashion industry on two fronts. First, increased manufacturing contributed to the end of the 1930s economic depression and provided Americans with greater discretionary income that could be spent on fashions. Second, a secure market for arms lured some textile manufacturers to switch from producing fabrics for the domestic market to armament
manufacturing. Debates over this country's involvement in World War II, a transformation of the nation's economy, and shifts in domestic manufacturing placed the fashion industry in a position of watching and waiting. Historian E. B. White characterized the years before Pearl Harbor as "like the time you put in in a doctor's waiting room."^2

Although estimates of the size of the New York fashion industry vary according to author, it played a major role in the nation's economy and provided a large portion of the country's manufacturing base. In October 1940 Tobe reported that fashion manufacturing was third among the nation's industries employing 578,000 people with a dollar volume of $2,506 million yearly.^3 Virginia Pope called fashion New York's "ace" industry reporting that there were "some 5,000 shops in the city, in which about 130,000 persons [worked] at dressing the American woman." She further estimated that New York garment industries used 255,000 miles of materials each year in dressing 70 percent of American women.^4 A 1948 publication commemorating New York's fiftieth anniversary of fashion stated:

The ramifications of the needle fashion industry, so great that they cast an economic significance over America's entire economic order - farms, railroads, steam ships, printing plants, cattle herds, mines, chemical plants - are all a necessary part in the production of that beautiful suit or coat you saw on Fifth Avenue. Retail establishments from coast to coast, from Canada to Mexico, depend on New York for fashion merchandise. In fact, New York City itself contains more couturiers than pre-war Paris: more lingerie and hosiery shops than London, Vienna, Berlin and Paris combined; more fur stores than the whole of
Russia. The combined fashion industries in New York including men's, women's and children's wear, employ over 2,000,000 people. More than 60% of New York City's employed are directly or indirectly dependent upon the fashion industry for a livelihood. . . .

Frank L. Walton, who served as director of the Textile, Clothing, and Leather Division of the War Production Board during World War II, provided a further indication of the impact of both economic and manufacturing shifts in the nation's textile and apparel industries when he said that he knew that "practically every industry in the United States [was] dependent in one way or another on the Textile, Clothing and Leather industries."

As part of this mammoth national enterprise, the American fashion industry speculated as to how the European war would influence this nation's fashions. An editorial carried in the January 11, 1940 Tobe Fashion Reports entitled "Fashion Against the Background of War" indicated the nature of the industry's collective questions. Tobe relayed that the nation was not yet in the war, but feeling its effects. Tobe continued that it was then "inevitable" that certain questions about the effect of the conflict be addressed. Of the four questions Tobe addressed, two concerned the war's effect on styling and two concerned the comparative influence of Paris couture and American designers:

1. Has the war lessened the influence of the Paris couture?
2. Has the war enhanced the prestige of American designers?

Our first answer is a categorical statement: as long as the Paris couture continues to function, so long will they continue to set the fashions for the world.

Yes, we realize full well the implications of this statement. We realize that on the surface it sounds as if we were not fully appreciative of the undoubted talents of our own American designers. That is not true. But after many years in the fashion world, we have learned how to separate the wheat from the chaff, how to distinguish the work of a great master from that of his talented disciples.

We believe that our American designers make some of the most beautiful clothes in the world. But with a few rare exceptions, all of them go to Paris twice or even four times a year, and definitely draw their inspiration from the Paris couture. We will grant that sometimes they even improve on the original idea - but that most beautiful adaptation is still not an original . . .

Again we do not mean to imply that our American designers are not capable of developing originality themselves. We believe that they can but only if and when the Paris couture has stopped functioning for at least several seasons. For such is the wealth of inspiration with which they provide us in each collection, that there are ideas enough to go on for some time to come. If and when this flow of original ideas is ever cut off for a long enough time, then we believe our own ability to really create fashions will be forced into flowering.

But this presupposes the fact that the Paris couture will cease to function. At the risk of sticking our neck out, we venture to prophesy that this will never happen as long as Paris itself stands. For the creation of fashion is one of the arts that is an intrical part of the genius of France . . .

And in the epitome of the artistic soul of France, we hear also the heart beat of the French couture. Come what may, it will go on creating clothes to make women look beautiful - beautiful in war-time simplicity - beautiful in peace-time extravagance.7

Tobe continued by reviewing events during World War I and pointed out that because Paris continued to lead fashion during the war, American buyers "[ran] the guantlet of submarines and mines twice a year in their search for new
fashion for the American woman." Tobe also pointed out, however, that World War I allowed American designers to be recognized for the first time. The newsletter included a copy of a *Vogue* page and quoted several lines from *Vogue* that followed the headline "Paris by Proxy:" "Having no heart just now for conducting the Affairs of Fashion in Person, Paris Permits a Power of Attorney and the New Modes are sifted, judged, accepted, or rejected in NY." Tobe responded:

Note "sifted - judged - accepted or rejected" - not a word about fashions being created in NY. Now look closely at the sketches. Not a line of credit to any of the makers - not a word of any of the American dress makers to whom fashion must now look instead of Paris! Yet that marked the beginning of the first recognition by the fashion press of any American design at all.

If one considers that Tobe Fashion Reports saw as its purpose to "interpret and evaluate for each what is happening to fashion itself . . . to interpret the current scene," then one must conclude that the fashion industry was concerned about the war’s effect on its immediate future. On the one hand Tobe acknowledged Paris’ strong history, while on the other, it recognized American talent. No one knew if Paris could once again elude occupation, so no one could know for certain what challenges lay ahead for the American fashion industry.

The New York fashion industry, along with its supporting enterprises, could not escape the impact of the war in Europe. Even though the United States had not yet
chosen to become actively involved in the fighting, its commitment to its allies, in the form of defense supplies, brought major changes to the fashion industry. Even before the United States' declaration of war at the end of 1941, however, the fashion industry would radically change both its source of fashion innovation and how it promoted those innovations to the American consumer. To understand the nature of those changes, one must examine three fashion industry participants - The New York Times, the manufacturing sector of the garment industry, and retailers.

Paris Says . . . The American Industry Before Summer 1940

The New York Times regularly featured fashion articles because the newspaper considered fashion to be news. Tobe credited Kenneth Collins with selling The Times on the idea that fashion was news.\(^{12}\) In a memo to The Times editor, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Sunday Editor Lester Markel articulated the paper's policy on fashion coverage writing:

> We publish fashions because they are news, and not because they are "publicity". If they are "publicity" or "free advertising" and not news, then we could save a great deal of money and effort by dropping all of our fashion presentations; and by so doing, we would avoid many headaches. But we feel that, as a newspaper, we must print the news, and that, without question, fashion is part of the news--and an important part.\(^{13}\)

Despite its position that fashion was news, however, The Times limited its coverage to "custom designers and Paris fashion."\(^{14}\) Furthermore, The Times had a "policy of forbidding editorial credits for fashion retailers and
Because the majority of American designers worked for manufacturers, this policy meant that The Times also omitted designers' names. According to, then Fashion Editor, Virginia Pope, the paper established the policy after it "'had its fingers burned' when a department store, inadvertently left out of a piece on Fifth Avenue fashion merchants in an early issue of the newspaper's rotogravure section, 'withdrew thousands of dollars of advertising.'" Pope's biographer Bill Cunningham reported that credits first appeared in The Times in September, 1939, however, the Sunday features in the paper in the early months of 1940 ran without credits.

As part of its fashion coverage, The Times devoted a full page in its Sunday paper just to fashion. This coverage always included several sketched illustrations of current style trends or creations by individual designers. The illustrations, however, did not include credits for either the designers or the retailers offering the merchandise unless the designers were French (see figure 1). After a Paris opening, the fashion page included sketches of couturiers' designs as well as the names of the creators (see figure 2).

Each fashion page also included fashion articles by Fashion Editor Virginia Pope or by Kâthleen Cannell. Often the page contained articles by both. Pope regularly covered the New York market while Cannell reported from Paris. The
FOR THE OPEN AIR:
SPORTS TOGS

A—The girl with the matched attire wears a crush-resistant blouse. The blouse is made with a cotton back at the front; it has self-finished sleeves. The dress very in the color gives the modish dress a look worthy of a gift designer.

B—A blouse that is rich in feeling and appearance. The blouse is in a fancy fabric. The color a fancy pink. The dress is made in a style that goes over the modern silhouette. The blouse is high and is a full, tailored back that is easy to handle.

C—The worn immediately on the broadloom of wool. The skirt is white, the shirt turned. Small sleeve buttons are set down the front. The skirt follows a prevent to impressively. A good outfit for outdoor sports.

A New High for Hems

Paquin's Midseason Collection Endorses Short Skirts—Frocks Feature Venus Figure

Fig. 1 The New York Times, 14 April 1940, 4D.
PARIS SAYS: BE FEMININE

SCHIAPARELLI
Spring: The back-draped coat with gold metal trim is mounted on square red felt. Bottom:算是更多支持的面的外，这一次的外套是用一块金色金属片制成的。外套的装饰部分采用金色线缝合。

ROBERT MOULIS
Hat: A short-tailed coat that takes on the shape of a turtleneck when worn over a long, black-haired, donut-shaped dress. The neckline, shaped in gold, contrasts with the coat's back. Many bands.

POMpadour
The most knitted bloomers on the market, the coat has a black, square shape. The hat is pleated, the side gently flared, with a seam at the same angle. A fine gold chain holds the coat.

SCHIAPARELLI
Ladies' hat, completely with hand-embroidered cloisons, and long black dress, also a matching dress. The unusual crossover at the center is a ribbed, black, field flower on the hat.

POMpadour
Left: A dress designed with many white bands in the same color as the black dress. The full skirt is made of white, fine stripes. The dress has been cut to the back of the coat.

Birdlike Effect in Hat
Schiaparelli Has Fresh Millinery Ideas—Shows Hand-Knit Wool Stockings

ROBERT MOULIS
The coat is worn by the man in the second row at the right. Gigantic creases and pleats on the skirt, heavily cut at the front, make the coat look very light and airy.

Fig. 2 The New York Times, 10 March 1940, 4D.
differences between the two women's articles are indicative of the differences between The Times policy toward domestic fashions and Paris fashions.

While Pope was free to mention that she had visited designers, and free to include sketches and photographs of their work, she was not free to mention their names. On January 14, 1940 the fashion page carried the title "Giving Fresh Dash to Winter Modes" and featured seven sketches of garments and one photograph. Pope contributed an article entitled "In the New York Market" and wrote, "As we look back over lists made during days of search through the market - in the towering loft-building showrooms where designers exhibit their creations - we find that the word 'gray' crops up persistently." In the same article, however, Pope mentioned specific styling details that reflected those of Augustabernard, Dormoy, and Patou - Parisian designers. Pope's articles, then, remained limited to lengthy discussions of colors, fabrics, and styles.

On this same Sunday, the Rotogravure, a section of The Times devoted largely to photographs, carried a page of fashions entitled "Sweaters for Evening." As on the fashion page, the fashion photographs carried descriptive captions but no credits to designers, manufacturers, or retailers. Instead, both the fashion page and the Rotogravure included a small square bearing the message "Information regarding fashions may be obtained by writing or telephoning to the
Fashion Editor of The Times" (see figure 1). Virginia Pope originated the query box as a means of promoting American designers.¹⁹

On the same fashion page as Pope’s article, Cannell offered coverage of "Paris Sports Novelties" with the dateline of Paris, January 12. Her article opened "A talented newcomer in the Paris field of sports and novelty design is Lulu Nepotny."²⁰ After mentioning the designer’s name, Cannell proceeded to describe Nepotny’s designs.

The contrast between The Times coverage of the New York market and Paris is especially noticeable in the reports of Paris’ Summer 1940 openings. The Sunday, March 10, 1940 fashion page bore the title "Paris Says: Be Feminine." Pope wrote, "It has been a busy week in New York’s fashion world. The fruits of the Paris Summer openings have been pouring in. To editors’ desks have come sketches made in showrooms abroad; to the stores and designers models selected and ordered a bare month ago."²¹ Pope continued her piece with both descriptions of the new styles and credits to their Parisian designers. Although Pope did not often write about Paris fashions, when she did, she, too, was free to mention designers’ names.

A further contrast in reporting policies is found in the pictorial coverage of the Paris openings. The fashion page included numerous sketches of Paris designs. However,
unlike New York designs, the couture creations carried both stylistic descriptions and the names of the designers.

The March 10, 1940 Rotogravure included two sections - one of which was devoted to fashions entitled "Paris: Design for Evening." Each photograph of a Paris design included a design credit. Although Paris fashions enjoyed exclusive presentation on both the cover and the first few pages of this photographic section, the Rotogravure also featured American designs, but the captions omitted any mention of American designers or manufacturers. Even on the Paris pages, however, was the usual disclaimer that information about the designs could be obtained by contacting the fashion editor. This Rotogravure coverage illustrates the differences and similarities between The Times’ reporting on French and American fashions. The French fashions took the prominent position with American fashions taking second place. French designers received credit for their creations, but American designers did not. The Times treated both American and French fashions equally in adherence to its policy of not giving retailer credit regardless of whether the designs originated in France or the United States.

The Times’ non-credit policy extended beyond regular fashion features to events that might be classified as regular news as opposed to fashion news. In May 1940 the World’s Fair opened in New York City. Included among the
pavilions was one reserved just for fashion. When the Rotogravure section featured photographs from this exhibition, the lead caption read, "New fashions by American designers were placed on display yesterday at the World of Fashion Building at the Fair." The copy, however, failed to include the names of those designers.

Arguably, the paper included coverage of this opening event on a page that regularly featured fashions, so the piece could represent just another fashion story. By its very nature, however, the World's Fair represented an important news story. Equally important and significant, though, was the fact that the Fashion Building provided an opportunity for American designers to display and promote their work to an international audience. The Times, however, limited its coverage of the fair's fashion events to short columns on a page devoted to fair events. The significance and potential for world recognition of American designers through fair participation, however, remained largely unheralded, at least at this time, in the pages of The Times.

Manufacturers and Promotions

Not all of the blame for this lack of promotion or publicity can be credited to The Times editorial policy, however. Part of the difference in coverage between Paris and New York must be attributed to the differences between operations of the two industries. The Paris industry openly
courted world-wide publicity and embraced it as vital to its survival; the New York industry did not.

The Parisian couture industry benefitted from an organizing body, the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture de la Parsienne, which coordinated fashion shows at member couture houses during Paris openings. While the scheduling system was not without flaws, it allowed buyers and reporters to attend a large number of openings during their stays in Paris. Fashion publicist Eleanor Lambert recalled that the American press depended on Paris for fashion news because Paris offered the only prepared stories available. While the Chambre Syndicale courted the press by coordinating designers' shows, the "charismatic Parisian designers wooed the American press."23

Tobe also reported that Paris courted the American fashion retailers and manufacturers who traveled to France because Paris "had snob appeal. And Paris gave them all that for the least money - the least effort. America went in for culture with a vengeance - snob and chi chi and a Paris label were a part of it."24 She continued:

Paris . . . decided that if it wanted to hold American dollars and American fashion business, it had to organize itself a little better. . . . The Syndicale de la Couture organized opening dates, shipping dates, etc and entrance cards with your picture as passport - and you had to pay a forfeit of $100 if you did not buy.25

Tobe explained that hundreds of American buyers in Paris spent millions of francs "because we got a great deal for
our money. It was easy - it was organized - it was fun.\textsuperscript{26} According to Tobe ten days in Paris cost $1,000 and allowed a buyer to see 4,000 to 5,000 original Paris models. Buyers could purchase the minimum of three to five dresses, or 100 to 150 as bigger stores did, and at the same time get ideas for thousands of dresses or suits or coats.\textsuperscript{27}

Perhaps more importantly, Paris expected its designs to be copied by American retailers and manufacturers, and even aided in the process. While the Chambre Syndicale patented designs, prosecuted unauthorized stealing of designs, and banished from its openings press members who published design information before a specified date, a large portion of the industry's revenues depended on the income from copying. For a fee, or caution, retailers could purchase a muslin toile of a selected design which also included construction details and information for ordering findings. Virginia Pope wrote, in commenting on Paris designs on \textit{The Times}' fashion page, "All the designs shown on this page are taken from couture originals which are being copied for American women."\textsuperscript{28} Copying and interpreting Paris designs constituted a major source of design innovation for the American fashion industry.

Some Paris designs were copied legally, others were not. New York buyer Mildred Kare recalled attending Paris shows twice a year and returning with models. She said, "I used to bring back the models and we had them copied here."
Vionnet, with fagoted sleeves; coats from Paquin. Anything that was gorgeous."^{29}

Illegal copies could be achieved with the help of a sketcher, unknown to couture employees, who would attend shows and memorize designs as much as possible, then make sketches after the shows. Sometimes the sketchers worked independently and sold sketches to clients, and sometimes they were hired by individuals. In reminiscences of his father-in-law, designer and manufacturer Maurice Rentner, Arthur Jablow remembered that Rentner regularly attended Paris showings, but instead of trying to remember everything he had seen, he employed a young lady in Paris who did sketches "under his auspices." These sketches were made despite the fact that Rentner also "bought a lot of merchandise."^{30}

Paula Neiman, an employee of Rentner's, also recalled attending the Paris shows and buying the minimum garments that she had to, but also taking along an unknown sketcher. Neiman had a photographic memory, but would tell the sketcher "mark this down." Then every night she met with the sketcher and "for a couple of hours we did all the sketches, with all the important features. If she forgot something, I reminded her. And colors, and so forth."^{31} Between purchasing some pieces and secretly sketching others, Neiman reported that she would then have an entire line.
In addition to design innovations, Paris provided a source for technical knowledge. American designer Norman Norell went to Balenciaga when in Paris and returned with garments. Fellow designer Louis Clausen recalled that:

Norell would take them all apart and would call me back in the work room to see the Balenciaga jacket or collar, all taken apart carefully, so we could see how bias on bias worked in chiffon or organza to give a collar a right roll. And it was his mastery of the technical part that Norman loved so... He loved to see even how a sleeve was put in. And that famous roll to the Balenciaga collar. And how they weren’t heavy, but they were like little soldiers. He really admired Balenciaga.32

In contrast to Paris, American fashion manufacturers feared copying and, therefore, shunned publicity of their designs. American manufacturers so distrusted the press that fashion reporters could only gain entry to seasonal openings in the company of a buyer.33 Virginia Pope played an instrumental role in changing the American industry’s attitude toward the press and in opening designers’ and manufacturers’ doors to publicity. Before she began covering the New York fashion industry "American manufacturers were wary of having their designs pirated if photographs appeared in the press before the clothes were in stores - especially since pictures would have been published without credit."34

This lack of credit for designs extended beyond newspapers and included fashion magazines. In an interview with Eleanor Lambert, Phyllis Feldkamp commented on the lack of editorial credit in women’s magazines stating:
It took us ages to break the French connection. There was, there really aren't any mentions of any designers in any of the ads, much less the picture credits, the editorial ones, and it was just Paris, Paris, Paris. . . . It made it hard for American design didn't it? [to which Lambert replied] I don't remember ever seeing Mrs. Chase [Vogue editor] at an American fashion opening; I think Carmel Snow [Harper's Bazaar editor] did come, and of course Tobe came faithfully and went to the Paris collections too.^^

Because the American press, before 1940, reported more Paris fashion news than American, and because American manufacturers shunned publicity, American designers and manufacturers often worked in anonymity. While they bore part of the responsibility for this oversight themselves, part must also rest with how retailers promoted American fashions. Sometimes, even when designers and manufacturers tried to break from the system, their efforts remained futile. Maurice Rentner's daughter recalled Rentner trying to break with the established system stating "in those days [between the world wars] even though he had the tag on the back of a jacket, they were always taken off in the stores. Nobody knew who made what."^^ Eleanor Lambert also recollected that, while New York had "enormous" dressmaking firms, they did not place their own labels in the garments they produced. Instead, the manufacturers sold garments to the stores, and the stores sewed in their own labels.^^ This type of labeling promoted the store rather than the source of the garment.

While manufacturers fell victim to store re-labeling which largely left the manufacturers unrecognized by the
public, designers who worked in the garment industry found themselves buried even farther back in the recognition line. Maurice Rentner, who struggled to have his company's name left in his garments, did not extend that struggle to designers working in his establishment. When the Council of Fashion Designers of America was founded in 1962, Rentner complained to Eleanor Lambert that he had not been asked to join. She replied that he had never introduced her to any of his designers. He responded that "they were in the back room where they belonged." By the 1960s Lambert and Rentner had known each for over twenty years, but he had not introduced a single designer.

Lambert's memories of this manufacturer's attitude toward his designers corresponded with interviews about Rentner. In recalling Rentner, relatives and associates related that he employed several designers which were sometimes sent to Paris for openings. They also could recall that his designers were good, but unknown; yet, no one remembered or mentioned their names. As Rentner's son-in-law remarked,

He also never had 'name' designers as such. He had . . . There was a woman . . . I can't think of her name off hand. She's a heavy set woman, who worked there for many years. . . . He would tell her, "I don't like that. I don't think that has the look that we're after. . . . Throw it out. Get something else."
The lack of promotion of American designers in the early months of 1940s went beyond newspaper editorial policies and industry fears of promotion. Retailers participated in the heavy promotion of both Parisian fashions and the use of couture terminology in connection with couture copies as well as non-couture garments. Because the press and retailers heralded Paris fashions as being the epitome of design, retailers used multiple references to the French industry allowing a halo effect to raise lower-priced merchandise to a higher prestige level.

On January 28, 1940 Bonwit Teller included a section in its Sunday advertisement entitled "Paris Broadcast" (see figure 3). Tobe noted that the section had run for several seasons immediately after Paris openings and called the ad "nothing short of brilliant . . . making their customers feel that not only is Bonwit's first with Paris fashion news but actually ahead of it!" The section pictured a woman sitting before an NBC microphone and included several quotes from a radio program hosted by broadcasters Emmy Ives, Fashion Editor of Vogue, and Captain Molyneux, a couturier.

Bonwit's cleverly included promotional messages for items carried in the store. For example, "'Skirts,' said Molyneux, 'are narrower, short - yet have the freedom American women want.' Slim straight skirts - in our Molyneux-type dressmaker suit. Misses Dresses. Sixth
This interweaving of messages, from the broadcasters and from the retailer, aligned the store’s merchandise with Paris designs.

Included in the Paris Broadcast section, however, was a reference to an American designer. The lines read, "'The bloused bodice,' said Captain Molyneux, 'over slim skirts, in coats and dresses.' The bloused coat - by Clare Potter. Showing how this brilliant designer anticipates Paris.

69.95 Town and Country Coats. Sports Fifth Floor." This reference to an American designer, however, was a rare inclusion in fashion advertisements in the early months of 1940.

A survey of the March 10, 1940 fashion advertisements in The Times that mentioned either Paris fashions or American fashions provides an indication of the flavor of fashion promotion in early 1940. Bergdorf Goodman announced:

every one of Paris Imports is here to be copied to order or sold outright . . . We bought as many French clothes and hats as ever, and this time we brought in every piece duty-paid. So those who love to wear French originals may have a wide choice of them here in our great Spring Collections."

Bonwit Teller heralded "The new French Line . . . Just to see the newly arrived French collections is to know immediately the gist of Spring 1940. . . . Hailed by the whole Paris couture. And particularly appealing to the American eye." The ad included five sketches. Three were credited to French designers Maggy Rouff, Molyneux, and
HIGHLIGHTS FROM FRIDAY AFTERNOON'S
PARIS BROADCAST

by EMMY IVES, Fashion Editor of Vogue, and
CAPTAIN MOLYNEUX, leading couturier

"Colour rampant," said Mrs. Ives, "predominance of colour over black. Great deal of navy, gray."

Navy, gray, hot pink, mauve — to mention a few Bonwit colours Openings endorse.

"Skirts," said Molyneux, "are narrower, short — yet have the freedom American women want."

Slim straight skirts — in our Molyneux-type dressmaker suits. Misses' Dresses, Sixth Floor

"The bloused bodice," said Captain Molyneux, "over slim skirts, in coats and dresses."

The bloused coat — by Clare Potter. Showing how this brilliant designer anticipates Paris, 69.95
Town and Country Coats, Sports Fifth Floor

"Prints very important. Schiap, Lelong show."

Bright flower prints — see our "Fun with Flowers" windows and fashions throughout shop.

Fig. 3 The New York Times, 28 January 1940, 5.
Piguet; one carried only a style description; and one was credited to American designer Philip Mangone.

B. Altman & Co. featured sketches by French designers Molyneux, Lucien Lelong, Alix, Balenciaga, Piguet, and Schiaparelli with the title "Our Paris copies are ready now . . . beautifully done copies of selected originals from the recent openings, flown to Altman by clipper" (see figure 4). Macy's offered original French accessories such as earrings, but also offered:

Imported French Dressmaker Fabrics . . . Paris to Macy's To You . . . You've heard about, read about, talked about the famous French couturiers. Marveled at the masterpieces woven from their exquisite creations. Tomorrow you can buy many of those same fabulously beautiful French fabrics at incredible savings.

The ad went on to mention names of French fabric manufacturers. This indicates that the American public knew the French couture industry sufficiently well that even those who sewed their own clothes, as opposed to those who purchased Paris originals, recognized the names of French fabric houses well enough that their inclusion in ads served to attract customers. Gimbel's stated in its ad, "A whisper has crossed the Atlantic from Paris . . .".

Best & Co. did not sell Paris originals, but promoted its own merchandise with a Paris reference stating, "Everybody loves a JACKET DRESS . . . And, this Easter, it's Fashion . . . Paris furor over one of America's favorite fashions - the jacket dress . . .". Bloomingdale's offered "First Editions . . . scoop collection American-
designed clothes. The ad included fashion sketches with descriptive captions, but only one name, Daisy Lane. Daisy Lane could have been a designer, but, because no data was found under that name, it could also be a store label. One sketch carried the caption "Paris influence. The coat Molyneux inspired."

While Sunday, March 10, 1940 followed closely on the heels of the Paris summer openings, the advertisers' heavy reliance on Paris was not unique to this particular edition of The Times. Very few American designers received any kind of promotion in the newspapers. The exceptions, in the opening months of 1940, included those mentioned previously, Sophie Gimbel, designer at Saks Fifth Avenue, and Nettie Rosenstein by Bonwit Teller. Hattie Carnegie and Sally Milgrim designed independently and promoted their boutiques which also carried their names.

New York retailers' ads changed dramatically in May 1940. Stories and pictures of the war in Europe ran beside the fashion ads, and The Times reported that the German army had invaded Scandinavia. The paper also carried articles about the American armed services recruiting soldiers and pictures of Army recruiting posters that featured Uncle Sam. The German army had already invaded France and was pushing towards Paris. Suddenly fashion ads carried messages with a decidedly American flavor. Paris did not completely disappear, but more American references appeared.
Our Paris copies are ready now...
Stern's offered "Great American Cottons" in "Yankee Stripes." B. Altman & Co. promoted Connie Foster of California a "young designer who has a way with play clothes . . ." and "sky flight fashions" that featured flying motifs by designer Ann Sutton. Lord & Taylor advertised Brigance, "hailed by press and public as his most brilliant and inspired collection - Summer 1940 beach and play clothes by Brigance, Lord & Taylor's own gifted young designer who sets the sports clothes trends for America" (see figure 5). Bonwit Teller featured the Belmont opening with sidesaddle fashions "indicated by Balenciaga in Paris, by Clare Potter here." Russeks displayed gingham fashions by American Charles Armour and sportswear made in California. Bonwit Teller tried a new slant on fashion by introducing members of their staff who directed various aspects of the retailer's operation. Each was presented as an expert on fashion selection.

While Kathleen Cannell continued her coverage of Paris, including the mid-season openings, the look of the fashion page often reflected American summer scenes. On May 5, the page featured fashions to wear to the New York World's Fair; on May 12 seaside styles headlined; and on May 19 Americana: Country Style dominated the page. Virginia Pope continued to promote American design while Cannell reported Paris happenings.
Hailed by press and public as his most brilliant and inspired collection—
Summer 1940 beach and play clothes
by Brigance. Lord & Taylor’s own
gifted young designer who sees the sports
clothes trends for America. Come
see his JUMPER BRAS. HIS DUTCH
EAST INDIAN DRAPING.

**His FEMININES. His MOONLIGHT BATHING.** Come see why fashions
by Brigance have been the sensation of
every smart resort from here to the
coast of Jamaica, Bermuda—a furore even
on the Black Riviera.

**BEACH SHOP ON THE FIFTH FLOOR**
Lord & Taylor, Fifth Avenue at 39th Street

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Fig. 5 The New York Times, 5 May 1940, 13.
On May 26, 1940 New York retailers took a new promotional stance that would serve as a preview of retail’s adjusted role during the war. Jay Thorpe announced that it would dedicate the following Monday to "the relief of war sufferers." The store listed prominent New York women who would serve as hostesses for the day’s activities including a fashion show. The store also announced that a "generous portion" of the day’s sales receipts would be donated to the American Red Cross. Clearly, the war was coming closer to New York.

On Saturday, June 15, 1940 The Times front page headlines announced that the Germans occupied Paris. The fashion page on the following day featured "New York Chic For Summer" with articles by Virginia Pope and Winifred Spear, but there was no mention of Kathleen Cannell or Paris fashions. On June 19 the first and only news article about fashion for the month concerned the World’s Fair. On the page devoted to Fair news, an article included details of a fashion show, including the names of the stores that participated. While fashion activities, and subsequent coverage, slowed during the summer months, the appearance of only one fashion article for June reflects the industry’s concern for the fate of Paris and the future of fashion.

Finally, on Sunday, June 30, 1940 The Times carried pictures of Hitler touring conquered Paris under the headline
"Dictators on Tour of Occupied France - Hitler in Paris and Mussolini in the South."\(^{58}\)

The fall of Paris brought an almost tangible somber mood to The Times. The paper carried an increased number of articles on war relief, there was an increased emphasis on patriotism, and the society pages included more notices of charity benefits for war relief. Was it coincidence that the June 30 fashion page carried the heading "July Black?"

The fashion world mourned the fall of Paris, its leader. The war had suddenly come much closer to home. It was no longer the remote struggle across the ocean. The New York fashion industry was now a strong, but headless entity looking for direction.

Forced Into Flowering

The news of Paris' fall shocked the American fashion world, but it did not come as a complete surprise. Those in the industry who had attended the city's last complete couture openings in 1940 reported that France's involvement in the war presented difficulties. Vogue Fashion Editor Emmy Ives told the Fashion Group at their monthly luncheon, that the "French were thrilled to see Americans come" and they "made such a great effort to show us beautiful things, that the air fairly crackled with sparks of love."\(^{59}\) She continued, however, that the shows were "difficult" because the men who supported the shows, the photographers, for example, "kept getting called back to their units."\(^{60}\)
Just five short months later, the Fashion Group held its final meeting of the season. Two designers, Mary Lewis and Madame Lyolene addressed the topic, "Now that Paris is closed . . . What shall we do now?" Mary Lewis began by saying:

We must now answer the question, "Are we mice or designers?" What shall we do without Paris? What shall we do without certain fabrics, leathers, embroideries, laces? Certainly, we shall do without, and in many cases we shall invent something better, for resourcefulness, and inventiveness, are bred in the American soul. And so, too, is the creative spark, if we will but allow it to be kindled. Nineteen-forty, perhaps, marks the end of an epoch -- whether it also marks the beginning of a great one in American fashion history is for us to say. I, for one, have always felt that never would we know our own strength, so to speak, until we were physically cut off from Paris. For, haven't we always been somewhat in the position of the pampered wife or child who never had to face reality, but who faces it and shows her mettle, in adversity? The present unfortunate events in the world spell adversity for our fashion trades -- but they also spell opportunity.64

Lewis continued by noting that Paris got the inspiration for its designs from its cultural surroundings, but pointed that New York was equally as rich in cultural enterprises. She pointed out, however, that American designers lacked in that domestic fabrics were not as inspirational as European fabrics. She continued:

What can our designers do to improve themselves, and keep the fires of genius burning more brightly? Perhaps they can convince their bosses that they're more useful out of the office than in. Perhaps they'll not keep their noses to the grindstore as much. For Fashion, inevitably, takes its inspiration from the documents of the past, and the life of the present. Are all of us, in this business, keeping as informed on the life of the present, as we should? We won't learn about it in our offices, or in our designing rooms. But we
will learn about it when we "go places and do things". Those fashions live that most truly reflect the life of the times -- those styles endure that most suit the needs of the day. As designers you will want and you will merit recognition. When we talked about Paris, we did not talk about the Rue de la Paix, but about the personalities who gave luster to the street. When we talk about Seventh Avenue, we usually preserve complete anonymity. Let us highlight our designing personalities more -- they have names -- let us make them known to the public. For the public is interested in people, and American design will mean more to our public when they know the people behind it.

What is the role of the store in this new fashion picture of America? What is the role of the buyer? We are a country fed on, and susceptible to, advertising and promotion. An obligation is imposed on us, therefore, to use, not abuse, this great instrument of propaganda. Let us, once in a while, forget the profit motive. There is usually something more interesting about a garment than its price, but usually in our advertising, price holds the stellar position. Let us tell our customers the story of the new fashions, let us sell them by being sold ourselves, on the timeliness and fundamental rightness of such new fashions. Let us use all the agencies at our commands -- window, interior display, fashion shows, advertising, to put across successfully those new fashions in which we believe. And let us not, any longer, be snobbish about the source of inspiration for those fashions. New York may replace Paris as a fashion center. But it need not, necessarily, be the only source of fashion in this country. Stores in other cities may themselves prompt new fashions from inspiration in their own home towns. . . . you and I are Americans, and there perhaps, in just being American -- with an awareness of all that it stands for -- is the answer to our fashion destiny. Let us get over being lazy, snobbish, dependent -- let us be ourselves, and go to work!"

After Mary Lewis, Madame Lyolene addressed the same question of what American fashion could do without Paris stating:

Friends, I want you to know that I am today an American designer. I cannot go back to France. I am a refugee. I do not want you to think that I somehow deny my ally who is France, I mean Paris. All I know in fashion I owe to Paris. I somehow believe in God and in the spirit of Paris which is the tradition of Paris. . . . The French designer is the privileged designer; has always been the privileged designer. He has not the
questions, how much it will cost, how many yards it will take, how will the public like it and I am talking that I was always a practical designer. I didn't have any money even if I did a big business. I did millions but I never did any profit. . . . Now, the American designer is just like a bird in a cage and here is where comes my voice in the wilderness. They are tied up and not given the freedom of designing because first thing is the cost and the yardage and the cost of material and then comes the manufacturer and says the buyer won't like, then comes the buyer and says, "Oh, no, the public won't like it." I am asking you how all these people know? . . . Now, I will say another thing -- please again, it is very awkward, I am not criticizing -- I accuse the American designer of one thing and that is some kind of laziness of mind. We don't want a collection unrehearsed and unprepared. . . . So, it is always an echo. It is never the voice here; it is always an echo, whether it is clothes, whether it is materials. . . . I am defending the American designers without denying the French designers. I know they can do it if they are given the freedom. . . . when we can go back to Paris, we will all go and contribute to Paris because Paris is our mother and father but for the time being, we must learn how to walk on our feet. . . . You will have the most wonderful design, I am sure.63

Madame Lyolene noted an important advantage that America possessed that Paris did not — promotion. She continued that while America had publicity "we never have them in Paris; we don't know what it is. We give a sketch here and there. We are happy when they take them."64 While the American fashion industry possessed the tool of publicity, it also tied publicity's hands. While Paris required that no photographs of new designs could be published until a month after they were shown to the public,65 New York designers and manufacturers shunned publicity until designs reached the retailers. Even then, The Times would not give credit to the designers or include
any mention of where the creations could be found. While both industries feared plagiarism, publicity and promotion were tools that the New York fashion industry needed to re-assess in its efforts to survive without Paris’ leadership.

The Fashion Group’s monthly meetings, such as the one reported above, were often attended by several hundred members of the fashion industry. One can only speculate as to whether Tobe, a member of The Fashion Group, may have been in attendance at the July 11 luncheon. In the July 16 Fashion Report, Tobe included an editorial that echoed the sentiments of the Fashion Group speakers and added her views on the American design situation. Many of the Fashion Reports carried no editorials, so it is significant that within months of her January editorial on American design, Tobe again addressed the issue. This editorial was more than theoretical - the fall of Paris was no longer a subject for speculation, it was now fact. This editorial outlined specific steps that the industry needed to take to survive. She titled her message "American Designers and the Future of American Fashions" and wrote:

The fall of 1940 will go down in history as the year in which the whole structure of the fashion business had to be rebuilt. For with the collapse of France and the German occupation of Paris, the Paris couture was scattered to the four winds - some in London, some in America, some in Spain, some in unoccupied France. And with them, of course, went the foundation of the fashion world as we have known it.

But since life goes on in spite of war and pestilence and famine, so must the life-giving industries of nations go on. Everything dies once, but something new is always born in its place. The world-
wide fashion industry is too important and too wide-
spread to collapse even if its sturdiest underpinnings
have been knocked out. It may totter but with good
strong props it will stand up again.

Our problem then is to provide these props as
quickly as possible. They should not be makeshift
crutches for temporary use, but solid uprights that can
be made the basis of a new foundation. For it is
useless to keep on thinking "we must do this or that to
tide us over the time until the French couture can
reorganize." We hope the French couture will live again
as we hope that France will rise once more. But it may
take years - for after all, most of the world is in the
throes of a devastating war, whether we are too ostrich-
like to see it or not. Also it may emerge under the
aegis of a system of government with which the free
American people will have no truck - and then what good
will it be to any of us?

No, the course we must take lies open before us.
The destiny of American fashions lies in the hands of
American designers. The two questions upper-most in the
minds of everyone concerned with fashion is - "Are the
American designers able to do it?" - and second, "How
should it be done?"

The first question is one of talent. If there is
real talent among our designers, then eventually they
will produce as beautiful clothes as any other person of
talent has ever done. To us the question of time and
place are academic. We admit that any designing talent
is stimulated by a sympathetic milieu - but we also
believe that real talent transcends all that.

The question then narrows itself down to "Is there
the requisite talent among the American designers?" We
think there is - although we admit very frankly that we
have seen few evidences of original talent - up to the
present. Our American designers have produced beautiful
clothes, sometimes surpassing Paris - but almost always
the critical designs came from the Paris couture. It
was easy for our designers to work that way - to use
freely the wealth of design inspiration that came to
them four times a year. They never needed to test their
own abilities at all - except in small ways here and
there.

But now the supreme test is at hand. Can they
measure up to what we expect of them? We think they can
eventually - but we must have the belief and patience to
encourage them while they are testing their fledgling
wings. After all, every thing grows by a process of
evolution. . . .

So it is with our own American designers. We think
they have the seed - now they must make it grow without
the help that they have usually had from France. But
they need help of another sort - from us and from you - 
faith - patience - and above all, guidance.

This brings us to the second question. How can 
American design be made most effective for American  
fashions. That is really the crux of the matter. For 
what most of you do not realize, is the fact that the  
most important contribution that the Paris couture made 
to the world of fashion, was, not just the designs in  
themselves, but the fact that these were immediately 
available to our whole R-T-W [ready-to-wear] industry. 
This meant that every American designer, big or little,  
good or bad, had the advantage of the fashion trends set 
by the Paris dress makers.

The importance of this cannot be over estimated, for 
it gave a sense of direction to the whole fashion  
industry. And that is what we will miss most in the  
future. The lack of it is not apparent as yet in the  
present dress collections because after all, these were  
still patterned on the fashion of the Paris mid-season  
openings. But the set-up here in America is very 
different. Here the fashions of any one designer are  
only available to his or her own customers, so that no 
matter how smart nor how influential these are, they  
cannot establish a sense of direction very quickly  
because their scope is automatically limited by their  
restricted distribution.

That as we see it is the biggest hurdle that we have 
to take in establishing American fashions. At the  
moment no practicable way has been devised for jumping  
over it, although the best brains in the fashion  
industry are working on it night and day. For everyone  
recognizes the vital need - and great ideas are always  
born of stark necessity.

Meanwhile, while waiting for an ultimate solution,  
there are plenty of other things to do. We must begin  
immediately to build up authority for American designers  
as the creators of fashion for America. Many of you are  
already consistently advertising and featuring the  
fashions of our top designers, as Hattie Carnegie,  
Nettie Rosenstein, etcetera. But that is not enough -  
for in order to make the big American public believe in  
American design, you must make original American designs  
available to more women than are represented by the few  
who can buy your top flight models.

Choose some "name" designers in the medium price  
brackets as well to give direction to your American  
fashions. There are not as many in this field of  
course, but there are a few . . . Claire McCardell . . .  
Charles Armour . . . Eisenberg. Other designers will  
now emerge from the anonymity that has cloaked them in  
Seventh Ave. showrooms because from now on the
continuity of a name in American fashions will be important.

We are by no means suggesting that you start featuring American designers’ names without rhyme or reason. You must be very careful. Consider all those that are available to your store— and the list will be different for almost everyone because of exclusive lines—and then choose the three or four that you think make the clothes most of your customers like. But after that, get behind them and plug them hard. Introduce them to your customers in advertisements; see that you get local newspaper publicity on them; make your customers so familiar with their fashion importance that they will in truth accept them as the authorities who create and direct fashion.

That is where the real future of the American fashion business—your business and ours—lies—in the creation of American fashion authority. And it is part of all our jobs to do this.

... even the prospect of a re-established couture should in no way affect the plans for establishing the authority of American designers and for doing it now. The world is changing so fast these days that we must all build for the future and not look back at the past. We must build our own house now.

And then, if and when the magnificent French couture rises like a phoenix in a free France again, why we will be all the richer for it!

Tobe’s message to her subscribers was more than just a call for the American fashion industry to utilize its own designers. Instead, it reflected a very real concern on the part of the industry that with the prospect of war, and now with the collapse of the Paris fashion industry, the American fashion industry would, itself, collapse. She pointed out that the entire industry needed to be rebuilt with sturdy underpinnings as quickly as possible. While it can be tempting to look at the American fashion situation in the summer of 1940 as merely New York’s attempt to usurp Paris’ authority, the ramifications of an industry in
confusion had great economic significance both to New York and to the United States.

Industry Fears

Because the fashion industry constituted the nation’s third largest industry and New York City’s largest industry, any changes in consumer demand could severely damage both the nation’s and the city’s economies. The American industry feared that American women would lose interest in fashion and stop purchasing. Eleanor Lambert reported that the garment unions were afraid that they would be out of work without Paris.67

In a message to The Fashion Group, Clarence G. Sheffiled, First Vice President of Garfinckle’s, a retailer, stated:

It is no easy task we have before us and it is hard to know where to start, but we cannot wait too long. We must somehow create an American couture. . . . Our great fashion publications and our great retail stores with their enormous power to influence public opinion have an important part to play and may need to spend important sums of money to help create the couture I visualize, but it must be done.68

He expressed his fear that if the American fashion industry did not design beautiful things for the American women, then they would lose interest in their clothes and turn to classic sportswear. He continued:

I, as a retailer of fine merchandise, see this coming and it frightens me. Unless the whole business of making and distributing fashion wakes up to the fact that we are on our own, and are going to be for a long time to come, and unless we are able to keep the
American woman beautifully groomed, we will lose her respect and much of our profitable business. . . .69

Speaking to the same audience, Leo Cherne, Executive Secretary of the Research Institute of America, commented on advertising's power to shape American consumers' thinking in order to profitably impact the American fashion industry. Despite its fears, Cherne pointed out that the industry also had the power to positively influence, economically at least, its consumers. He said:

I think that advertising brains will agree with me that American women are what you make them, and American women will buy what you have to sell, and by and large American women will look for what you want them to look. So that here is your opportunity to take a market in good part fresh, and also a market in good part spoiled, and bring that market around to what will be most socially and economically desirable to you.70

With her timely knowledge of the industry, Tobe realized its fears and offered her subscribers suggestions for promoting American design as quickly as possible, using the power of promotion, before American women lost interest. She stressed establishing American authority while Paris continued to impact domestic designs. She wrote:

The question of what to do about American fashions and American designs is uppermost in everyone's mind at present. Not only in your and ours and the rest of the fashion world, but in the mind of your customers as well. They want to know - "where are the fashions coming from now that Paris is gone?" - and "Are the fashions going to be as good as they were?"

It's up to you to answer them - and answer them soon! Your answers must be strong enough to be convincing and dramatic enough to catch and hold the public attention. . . .

. . . The American woman must be thoroughly sold that American designers can design the smartest thing in
any line that she needs - and that she can buy it from you.

Yes we know that at the moment the whole status of American design is still somewhat disorganized. We know that many of you think that you should wait until some authentic order has been brought out of this chaos before you start to feature named American designers in any haphazard fashion. But it will take a long time before any real coordinated authority evolves and meanwhile you cannot afford to wait.

We are faced with an extraordinary situation and we must take extraordinary measures to combat it. No store can afford to let the American public believe for a minute that their fashion authority has let down even temporarily. You must seize whatever fashion authority you can now - and keep it alive by vigorous methods.

There is a second reason for launching an American design gala immediately. You know and we know that the Fall 1940 fashions all spring from Paris inspiration - from the mid-season openings. This means there is a continuity of fashion themes that insure a sense of authoritative direction. Goodness knows when this will happen again, if each American designer works off at an individual tangent. It is the continuity of a fashion theme that has been Paris' most valuable gift to us every year . . .

. . . In other words, take a tip from Hollywood and go out and do a really big promotional job in selling American designers and American fashions to your public in a "Super-Colossal" way.

That's the only way you can do it fast enough to meet the present crisis!71

Considering the enormous economic impact of the fashion industry in New York City, it is not surprising that the state of the industry drew political attention. Even before Paris fell, Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia staunchly supported New York as a fashion center. In a speech to The Fashion Group's monthly meeting in March 1940, three months before Paris' invasion, Mayor La Guardia presented his views on New York design and designers. He said:

New York City is the center of fashion of the entire world. . . . I don't see why we have to take our fashion from any other country. . . .
This is the designers’ paradise in the world. There isn’t anything like it, nothing that you can compare with it. We have also produced the talent, the art of making in addition to that of designing and creating, of course, the task of the designer to dress the American woman is much easier than it is to dress any other woman. . . .

And I hope to see the time come when people will be copying New York models. It is only a habit, perhaps to talk of any chic designs that come from some other capital in the world. It so happens that I have a great deal of appreciation for that. Now, our designers have had the opportunity to develop.

[The] dress industry [is] not as prosperous as I would like. . . . I want to say this to dress manufacturers: they have to give more considerate attention to their designers. It is getting to be a habit to hire designers by the hour or sometimes by the day and it is simply disgraceful! You just can’t expect creative work to be successful and to be beautiful if the creator is working under the stress of economic problems. A good designer ought to be employed by the season at least. Of course, you take a chance.72

In August 1940 Mayor La Guardia called a press conference and invited twelve New York fashion editors to his office. The editors included Virginia Pope of The Times, Gertrude Bailey of The World Telegram, Helen Canavarro of PM, Alice Hughes of The Post, Winifred Ovitte and Alice Perkins of Women’s Wear, Amy Porter of The Associated Press, Katherine Thomas of The Sun, Katherine Vincent of The Herald Tribune, Florence Wessels of The Journal, Prunella Wood of the King Syndicate, and Jane Worth of The Mirror. The Mayor told them:

I never had a press conference cause so much excitement as this one. . . . As a matter of fact, this is a conference in reverse. I’m interviewing you today; you are not interviewing me. I want to learn something about the fashion business. What’s all the conflict about in the dress designing field?73
The editors explained to the Mayor that Paris had led the fashion world and supplied the New York market with new models. The editors also expressed their confidence that New York had designers who could take the "generalship in the present situation." Pope reported that the Mayor followed every word, "listened with rapt attention," and from time to time "mussed his front hair." The Mayor made it obvious to the group that he wanted to stand by "New York's kreatest [sic] industry and [do] all he [could] to help it in its moment of confusion."74

The Mayor stated that it had come to his attention that "there [were] several groups who [seemed] to be struggling for control of the field [in New York], but quickly sidestepping this disturbing issue, he made it known that they [were] the designers and that it [was] the encouragement of artistic creation that most [concerned] him."75 The Mayor also said that he had a plan to help the industry, but was not ready to reveal it until he knew more about the industry itself.

When the Mayor asked what constituted fashion leadership, one editor replied that fashions started at the top of social circles and spread so that the "snobbery of style . . . gave it its elan." The Mayor responded, "Snobbery can't be the controlling power any more: times are changing. More and more women are buying every season. Nowhere else in the world are as many clothes sold." He
further stated that American designers would be in the clear if they could go for two years without missing Paris. "Then if France regains her soul and Paris comes back," he said, "we will have established a wholesome and stimulating rivalry."76

While the Mayor’s plan did not come forth as quickly as he had promised the fashion editors (a week to ten days), the Mayor demonstrated his support of the fashion industry by actively participating in promotional events throughout the coming months. The Mayor’s called conference with the fashion editors showed that the summer of 1940 became a very busy time for the fashion industry as it scrambled to regroup and survive. If one can characterize the timing of the fall of Paris as advantageous, then the early summer date benefitted the New York industry. Historically, the summer months were slower seasons for the fashion industry, so it had a few short months of relative inactivity to strategize before its normally busy Fall season.

Part of the planning involved major changes in how the New York industry promoted its products. In August 1940 Maurice Rentner, then President of the Fashion Originators Guild of America, was asked by Virginia Pope if he felt New York was prepared to become the world’s style center. He replied that the New York industries had been successfully dressing American women for twenty-five years and that the "garment industry [had] never been more active than this
He noted that the problem would be in how to make the nation aware of new style trends once they had been launched. As he pointed out, "The wholesale designers of New York [had] never presented their collections publicly, as was the custom of the members of the Paris couture." Rentner proposed inviting foremost designers to participate in a fashion show for the fashion press who could use their columns to tell the "season's new fashion story." Rentner hoped that the show would be a "fresh venture" for wholesale designers who had "kept themselves discreetly in the background" while setting the style trends in much the same way that Paris had previously set trends. It is ironic that Rentner proposed spotlighting the same wholesale designers that he, himself, employed but failed to promote. While Rentner acknowledged "all that Paris has meant to New York," he maintained that "all American design needs is its opportunity."

Within days of Maurice Rentner's announcement of his proposal, Times writer Kathleen McLaughlin reported that "vast changes" were in progress. One of those changes included a nationwide search for design ideas culled from American sources. McLaughlin reported that designers, set free from Paris, were "combing . . . American cultures and . . . regional customs and costumes" for design ideas, something that would have been "incredible while Paris reigned."
Tucked in the last paragraph of McLaughlin's story sat perhaps a more significant indication of the changes in progress. Charles Oppenheim Jr., President of Jay-Thorpe, expressed his confidence in New York designers. To demonstrate his "faith in the originality" of their work, Oppenheim announced that he was adopting a policy of giving design credit in fashion advertisements and in fashion events to the staff designer at Jay-Thorpe, Wilson Folmer. Located on Fifty-seventh Street, Jay-Thorpe served as a major retailer of French imports and custom-designed garments, so this public recognition of its designer reflected a growing change in attitude among members of the New York fashion community.

In late August, The Times carried an announcement of a major promotional shift stating, "Something of the anticipation, the excitement and the glamour of the Paris openings of other years will descend upon New York next week when the fashion world experiences its most crowded hours since the eclipse of the traditional style capital." The article continued that six "high style" upper Fifth Avenue retailers, Bonwit Teller, Bergdorf Goodman, Hattie Carnegie, Jay Thorpe, Milgrim, and Saks Fifth Avenue, would feature 800 original American designs at store fashion shows. The shows would be held in the French tradition with soft lights and music, and only those with invitations and proper credentials would be admitted. Because the retailers had
"united into a group to meet the contingencies confronting them," they had timed the shows so that there would be no scheduling conflicts. The store also announced that there would be no "insistent harping on the patriotic theme, out of respect for the past glories of the French couture, still indirectly represented in the mode."82

It was not, however, until September 1940 that the full extent of the industry’s changes in promotional attitudes could be seen. After a summer of speculation and regrouping, the industry used the Fall season to demonstrate its will to survive. As one former Parisian stylist commented of the time, "No doubt about it, this is the 1776 of the fashion world, and revolution is afoot."83

When Fashion Became News: The 1940 New York Openings

Virginia Pope began her coverage of the retailers’ fashion shows by saying:

This is a memorable week in the history of New York’s field of dress design. For the first time six member stores of the Uptown Retail Guild are showing original custom-made collections created solely by New York designers. It is the beginning of an American couture. The openings, held by invitation for the press, began yesterday afternoon . . . New York was definitely established as the fashion center of the Western Hemisphere. . . .

Bergdorf Goodman presented the first show with 300 designs presented in a two-hour "pageant held for the store’s official family and a few invited guests, largely members of the fashion press and magazines."85 After a lengthy discussion of the displayed styles, Pope concluded
her review by devoting an entire paragraph to Bergdorf's designers, Mary Gleason, Peggy Morris, Mark Mooring, John Dean, Alice Kelly, and Phillip Heulatar [Philip Hulitar], all supervised by Ethel Frankau.

In the same article, Pope also reviewed the Jay Thorpe and Saks Fifth Avenue openings. The Jay Thorpe show carried the title "All-American," and Pope concluded that:

American designers proved themselves worthy in this presentation to carry on the great traditions of the French and to make New York City the design center. . .

As the models paraded cameras flashed, at times halting the procedure. This was the first time that New York has treated an opening with the dramatic acceptance formerly accorded to the Paris couture showings.

True to the store's announced change in policy, the Jay Thorpe designers were mentioned including Wilson Folmer, Lydia Moss, Patricia Spaulding, Carolyn and Martha. Saks Fifth Avenue presented a smaller, less glamorous show geared to more general wear, but still, designers Sophie Gimbel and Emmet Joyce warranted mention in the review.

Throughout the week, The Times devoted extensive coverage to fashion openings by Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, The Tailored Woman, John Wanamaker, Hattie Carnegie, Milgim's, and a second, more elaborate, showing by Saks Fifth Avenue. The paper included both lineage and photographs, with store credits, to such a level that on September 5 all of an entire page, except for a very small art article, was devoted to fashion.
Of the Lord & Taylor opening, Pope said:

With the courage that has long been characteristic of Lord & Taylor in the matter of supporting American designers, this store introduced ten designers at a press luncheon yesterday. Those designers, while they have hitherto been nameless to the buying public, have nevertheless been creating wearable clothes for smart women for years.  

At the Lord & Taylor opening, store President Walter Hoving announced that the store would open a new Designers' Shop that would begin with these ten designers including Charles Cooper, Frances Troy Stix, Vera Jacobs, Karen Stark, Zelma Golden, Fritzie Hannah, Vera Host, Bertha Altholz, Will Saunders, and Pat Warren. The store's First Vice-President, Dorothy Shaver, announced the designers' names to the 200 guests affirming "the store's faith in American designers, declaring that no billion-dollar industry could have existed without creative talent."  

Hoving began his remarks by protesting against the snobbery of copying expensive French designs. He continued:

Snobbery of price . . . has been one of the deterring forces in the evolution of American fashion design. . . . Now it is self-evident that leadership in American design can in no sense rest on such a basis. . . . We must have original creations, and not just copies of higher-priced things. As soon as we realize that in America, and dispense with the dampening effects of price snobbery, then we will build a great tradition of clothes designing in this country.  

Mayor La Guardia demonstrated his support for the fashion industry by attending one of the final showings of the week, Saks Fifth Avenue's opening in its Salon Moderne. After watching the show, the Mayor told the audience of 300
and the designers that the work "'far surpassed' his expectations." He further commented that there was "no reason why New York should not be the fashion center of the world, just as it is in art and music. . . .

Every designer in New York has one great advantage, that is the beauty of American women."90

Tobe reviewed the week's showings to her clients saying:

The week of September 3rd-7th 1940 may well go down in fashion history as the time in which American designed fashions at last came into their own. For during the past few days, the smart New York stores have outdone themselves in a series of superb fashion presentations for both the fashion press and for the public - all designed to show that the questions of whether America can design her own fashions has been answered once and for all time in a loud and ringing affirmative!91

Virginia Pope summarized the importance of the week's fashion openings by saying, "For the first time New York stepped out of the position of understudy and took over the stellar role. . . . for the showings left not the shadow of a doubt about the range of New York's creative abilities. The American woman faced the Winter as well dressed as ever."92

Several significant changes in the way the press covered American fashions followed closely on the heels of the American openings. On September 5 Vogue placed a large ad in The Times with the headline, "For the first time in history - AMERICA MAKES THE MODE! Can America design? Can America lead fashion? Vogue days, YES!"93 The ad (figure 6) continued:
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FASHION HISTORY, America is on its own - without the direct inspiration of Paris. And all over the country women are asking what the new made-in-America mode will be.

The first completely American Collections are now ready. They settle, once and for all, the question agitated in the headlines of every newspaper, "Can America Design?" For the AMERICAN OPENINGS have given us clothes that are wearable, charming, original. American women will keep their reputations as the best dressed women in the world!

Vogue is proud to review the American Openings (the most important ever held in this country) in its two September issues. They are reported with the same authority, the same critical judgment, the same brilliant picturing of the mode by top-flight artists and photographers, that Vogue has brought to the reporting of the Paris Openings, during the past fifty years.94

Vogue used the ad to promote two "American 'Openings' Issues" one dated September 1 and one September 15 by stressing that with "the voice of Paris stilled behind an impenetrable screen of silence" readers needed Vogue more than ever to point the fashion way.95 This was the same magazine that Lambert and Feldkamp said did not attend American openings. One might argue that, without Paris, Vogue had nothing to cover if it ignored the New York openings. Yet, as will be seen, Paris was not entirely silenced. Still, this change in reporting allowed American designers to be presented, for the first time, on an equal footing with Paris.

On September 8, the Sunday following the American openings, The Times displayed a similar change in editorial policy. The fashion page in this issued carried the title "The American Couture is Launched." Virginia Pope reviewed
For the first time in history—

AMERICA MAKES ONE!

Can America design?
Can America lead fashion?

Vogue says, YES!

For the first time in fashion history, America is on its own—without the direct inspiration of Paris. And all over the country, women are asking what the new made-in-America mode will be.

The first completely American Collections are now ready. They settle, once and for all, the question agitated in the headlines of every newspaper, "Can America Design?" For the AMERICAN OPENINGS have given us clothes that are wearable, charming, original. American women will keep their reputations as the best dressed women in the world!

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STUDY THE NEW TRENDS
Read the Who's Who of American fashion. Study the new silhouettes. See the new lines. Go to the American Openings. Study the American Fashion. New fashions, new silhouettes, new combinations. Then, when you shop, you'll know what's in fashion when to get it and how to wear it.

This year more than ever, with the value of Paris stifled behind so many imitations of silhouettes, you need Vogue more than ever, to point the way in the changing fashion scene. You need its expert judgment, its ability to pick the best fashions and forecast coming seasons. Every penny you spend for Vogue counts for dollars...help you avoid costly mistakes.

AMERICAN "OPENINGS" ISSUES

Fig. 6 The New York Times, 5 September 1940, 12.
the showings in her regular column while a second, uncredited article, summarized the prevailing trends in the shows. The second article could have been prompted by the concern in the industry that there needed to be a leader, a trend setter, rather than having the designers all going in their own directions. By summarizing the shows, the article presented a cohesive compilation of the New York fashion scene. These designs, however, still largely drew their leadership from Paris. It would not be until the Spring showings that the American designers would have an opportunity to present ideas free from Paris' influence.

The significance of this fashion page, however, is that, for the first time, the American designers received credit for their work. While on Sunday, September 1, Pope reviewed the Fall silhouette, mentioned "American designers," and included sketches without designer or store credits, on Sunday, September 8, Pope reviewed designers' work and mentioned them by name. Furthermore, the fashion sketches carried the names of the retailers.

Clearly, The Times had changed its editorial policy concerning store credits for designs. This change, however, did not come without complications for the paper. Several memos in The Times archives between store executives and paper executives indicate that the stores fiercely competed for lineage (that is, the number of lines of coverage in a fashion piece). In addition, the stores preferred that
Virginia Pope covered their fashion shows, rather than another reporter from the paper.

Bloomingdale's complained to The Times editor, "We got some pretty horrible treatment yesterday by the New York Times and its representation, or shall I say misrepresentation of our Fashion Show on page 18."96 The retailer complained that Miss Pope did not attend their show and that the story was buried in a small review at the bottom of the page. The writer continued, "This is the kind of thing that brings our organization down like a ton of bricks on my office, and by deflection, on the New York Times. I don't know what can be done about it now, but it looks as if along the line somewhere somebody didn't care."97 Macy's voiced a similar complaint when it wrote to The Times, "I am enclosing a little exhibition here of why Macy's sometimes thinks that Virginia Pope does not love us. To have our press fashion show reviewed in a column headed 'Mainbocher Leads Day's Style Shows' is not at all gratifying to our vanity."98

The Times archives contain a number of letters concerning Macy's complaints about fashion credits in the paper. One complaint prompted The Times staffers to meet with Edwin Marks of Macy's in which "Mr. Marks turned the meeting into a tirade against The Times for its 'unfair distribution of fashion publicity.'"99 Marks produced a lineage count comparing Macy's to Saks for six and a half
months. Marks was of the opinion that papers made a mistake in giving store credits because credits as advertising were worth "at least three times the regular advertising rate," and he expected Macy's to get equal credits or he would pull his advertising from the paper.

A series of memos concerning the issue of credits revealed that credits were "an essential element in the news presentation," were included as a service to the reader, and "from whatever angle you [viewed] it, the credit line [belonged]." Part of the problem, at the time of the Macy's complaint, was that Virginia Pope did not have a regular space in the daily paper and the Woman's Editor frequently planned articles with multiple illustrations from a variety of stores that conflicted with Pope's writing plans. This conflict brought to Pope and the advertising department's head the "ire of some of our good customers." These incidents show that while credits benefitted designers, and usually retailers, they could also be a source of conflict and headaches for The Times. The fact that retailers charted lineage for themselves and their competitors demonstrates how fiercely they coveted such coverage.

Advertising Changes

Along with the changes in the retailers' presentations of new designs and the changes in how The Times credited fashion events, fashion advertising in The Times also
exhibited a major change. Before Paris' fall, many fashion ads carried some reference to France and, during the summer months of 1940, The Times contained very few retail fashion ads with any mention of a design source or inspiration. After the September 1940 openings, however, fashion ads reflected a sharp increase in references to American inspiration and to American designers.

On September 8 Lord & Taylor launched its Designers' Shop with an ad that claimed all but a small section of an entire page (see figure 7). Against a background of design sketches, in individual boxes, ran the names of the ten designers chosen to inaugurate this new promotional concept. The headline read, "Revolutionary - The Designers' Shop - a new kind of dress shop featuring 10 of the most successful designers in the American fashion field who will create exclusive dresses for Lord & Taylor." According to Dorothy Shaver, the store selected the designers because they were known in the professional world and worn by thousands of women, but not known by the public. Tobe said that the store deserved a laurel wreath because "it is the first concrete step taken by a store to establish American fashion leadership in a way that will reach the average American woman and bring actual business besides. We think you should all take this to heart as a lesson." Perhaps the most revolutionary part of the new Designers' Shop was the store's acknowledgement of the
The Designer's Shop Undated

The American fashion field who will create
exclusive designs for Lord & Taylor
exclusive field who will create
exclusive drives for Lord & Taylor

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designers by placing each designer's name in the garments that he created. Furthermore, the store mentioned this policy in its ads for the shop. As one ad said, "...Yours - for your very own, in your size, your color, your most flattering lines - the signed originals of these talented ten."\textsuperscript{105}

On the same day that Lord & Taylor launched its Designers' Shop, Franklin Simon introduced a new campaign entitled "American Genius." The first ad featured milliners and said that it was the first in a series featuring American designers. On September 15 the store featured its own Bramley fashions (see figure 8), and September 22 it displayed jewelry.

Tobe reviewed these two campaigns to her subscribers stating that their purpose was "to familiarize the public with American designers and establish the authority of American-designed fashions."\textsuperscript{106} Tobe also noted that Lord & Taylor placed cards throughout the store promoting the shop and that live models showed the original collection of fifty models for the first three days of the shop's opening. In addition, both Lord & Taylor and Franklin Simon used their windows to promote their new themes. Franklin Simon used live models, that changed every five minutes, that passersby viewed through convex lenses, giving a miniature effect. Lord & Taylor included pictures of its designers at work with samples of their designs and dressmaker dummies
Fig. 8 The New York Times, 15 September 1940, 4.
with banners that read "Designers' Shop." According to Tobe, the windows, which had been announced in the stores' Sunday ads, were "mobbed." Other retailers also adopted the American theme with Bergdorf's quoting reviews of its first "All-American collection," Russeks referring to its "All-American Costume Suit," and Arnold Constable's full page, "American Creators" ad that credited the designers and carried their pictures. Even stores that did not regularly feature designer goods promoted American designs. In an unusual ad for the retailer, Macy's placed a full-page piece that read, "The Importants of New York! Macy's bows low to New York . . . undisputed fashion capital of the world! May her new responsibility rest lightly on her. May she long remember all the wonderful things Paris taught her!" Perhaps McCreery said it best, however, in a very simple ad that read, "the new American designers say . . . ."

Continued Loyalty to Paris

Despite all the energy and enthusiasm for American design that the industry created with the September openings, however, there remained those voices that stayed loyal to Paris. On the same page as reports of the American openings, Kathleen Cannell, with a dateline of Paris, reported on the activities of the fashion industry in "Paris as the center of fashion." She reviewed, negatively,
the premieres of several new fashion magazines and commented on their emphasis on "don'ts" and on "purifying" the mode. She lamented that luxury and artistry were the hallmarks of Paris couture and continued, "Regiment it, standarize [sic] it, limit it to a budget, and it ceases to be couture." Cannell ended with what she called a "rather menacing note: The haute couture then can never disapperar, but it may disappear - from France. That will happen if it clings obstinately to old forms of organization instead of confronting squarely and courageously the problems of the future." Later in September, The Times carried a description of new Paris styles with no writer credits simply a dateline "PARIS, Sept. 20 (delayed via Berlin)." These two articles carried a rather cryptic message of the struggles in Paris and Germany's attempts to move the couture industry out of Paris. By October, however, Cannell reported on a Maggy Rouff opening stating that it was in the style of Paris' pre-war glory. She reported that the salon was crowded with smart women and "only the grey-green uniforms, studded with decorations, of high German officers who occupied 'the royal box' hinted that the war and armistice had passed over the style capital." Another Paris influence that remained in the news was Elsa Schiaparelli. Lord & Taylor promoted a talk by the designer which was held in its Designers' Shop before an
audience of 2,000. Schiaparelli proclaimed that New York could not replace Paris as the fashion center of the world because in America the emphasis remained on the commercial, rather than artistic value, of design and because mass production concerns limited designers freedom of expression. The designer said that America did well in designing for the millions but "prophesied that Paris would again rise to assume the work of dressing women of taste and elegance throughout the world." She continued:

France and its industry have not been smothered. There may be ashes on the fire, but the flames are still there. This industry struggles to thrive and produce once more. Be assured it will rise again to its place as the center of artistic creation in fashion.

Schiaparelli was also in New York to introduce a line of designs at Bonwit Teller. The designs received promotion by the store in The Times ads, and warranted a review by Virginia Pope who wrote that, "It was an interesting offering from many angles." One of the interesting angles suggested by Pope was the fact that New York manufacturers produced copies of the designs to be offered to retailers across the country. A subsequent ad noted that Schiaparelli had arrived in New York with a lone suitcase. The designs represented Schiaparelli's wardrobe for a cross-country speaking tour, and she was having this same wardrobe reproduced for retailers.

The continued coverage of Paris activities and Schiaparelli's promotion of her designs indicate that Paris
was not really silenced, nor was it forgotten. The September openings showed that America had talent and that the fashion industry knew how to promote that talent. Still, one wonders how many truly believed that New York could replace Paris, and how many believed, as Mayor La Guardia believed, that New York had the potential to produce a good rivalry with Paris.

Industry Promotions

One part of the New York fashion industry watched the September openings and thought that more remained to be done. In November, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, as a preliminary to December contract negotiations, announced that it would ask manufacturers to join with the unions in an effort to introduce more efficient production methods and "[advertise] New York as a style center." The union initiated the move to "halt the exodus of business from New York."

Julius Hochman, Manager of the New York Dress Board, announced that he had requested the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency to prepare an "exhaustive analysis of the institutional advertising used in other industries and of the manner in which such advertising might be applied to foster a demand for New York made dresses." He further stated, "The New York dress market can maintain its leadership as the fashion and manufacturing center of the world only through proper promotion and the modernization of
its dress factories." Hochman continued by noting that New York still did four times the volume of the other American dress markets combined. He credited retailers by stating, "This year the New York department stores have done a find job in promoting their new Fall styles in a way never attempted before. . . . Unfortunately, despite the opportunity offered, the dress manufacturers continued to do nothing. What [is] needed [is] a real promotional drive for the largest industry in the nation's largest industrial center."  

A joint board, headed by Hochman and made up of representative of ten industry organizations, presented manufacturers with a plan to raise $1,500,000 to finance an advertising campaign and two fashion shows each year. To begin the fund, the union offered to donate $100,000 out of its own treasury. It requested, however, that in return, a union label be sewn into every dress made in the city, and that the label be included in advertising campaigns. The union once again presented the campaign as a means of stimulating the New York industry's business by increasing demand for New York dresses.  

In lauching this promotional campaign, Hochman expressed the industry's fear of losing business when he said, "We know that the time is gone when every buyer in America blazed a trail to the New York showrooms. Today, in Chicago, St. Louis and elsewhere, manufacturers have joined
Hochman outlined five objectives for the campaign:

- To make New York City the world's style center.
- To maintain New York’s leadership in the dress field.
- To obtain a greater percentage of the nation’s business for New York City.
- To increase total dress sales.
- To foster a desire for better dresses.

The union's commitment to the campaign was so great that in contract negotiations, the union "withheld any demands for higher wages, concentrating instead on inclusion in the contract of measures to enforce a program of management efficiency and to raise a $1,500,000 promotion fund for the dress industry."  

Eleanor Lambert, who later worked as a publicist for the organization, recalled that this proposal by the union eventually resulted in the formation of the New York Dress Institute. She remembered that the unions and dress manufacturers banded together "in fear that if war came, the dress business would go to pieces, people wouldn't buy clothes. So they made this agreement which [she thought was] historic in labor union history because it was the first joint agreement for a national promotion."

The unions and the manufacturers set up a contract that stipulated that the union would contribute $100,000 and the union dress manufacturers would contribute one half of one percent of the volume of their businesses. The Times
reported that the manufacturers' contribution was one third of one percent which was lowered to one sixth of one percent in September 1942. Both Mayor La Guardia and Eleanor Roosevelt helped to launch the program in July 1941 by endorsing the New York Creation labels. Manufacturers paid into the Institute's fund by purchasing these labels and sewing them into every dress they made. The money went into a fund that was turned over to the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency to do "big billboards." One of the campaigns that Lambert recalled was "Aren't you ashamed you only have one dress - One-Dress Beulah."

Lambert further recalled that the industry's fears that women wouldn't buy dresses was unfounded because "dresses were among the few things that you could buy after the war began . . . so the business boomed and therefore the fund grew and grew, and they couldn't possibly spend it all." When Lambert began working for the organization, she complained that she couldn't promote the industry without designer names. The executives of The New York Dress Institute chose a number of designers, including Nettie Rosenstein, Jo Copeland, Maurice Rentner, Ben Reig, and Adele Simpson, who became the core group of the Couture Group of The New York Dress Institute. Eventually, the Dress Institute expanded to include makers of coats, suits, and sportswear, and they used their funds to sponsor Press Weeks which started after the United States declared war.
In addition to the industry’s efforts toward promotion, New York’s Commerce Commissioner announced plans to host a two-day fashion event to launch the 1941 Spring fashions. The show would be called New York’s Fashion Futures and, the Commissioner predicted, it would be the largest ever held in the city. Hosted by Mayor La Guardia and put on by The Fashion Group, the purpose of the show was to coordinate certain style trends and "dramatize New York City’s leadership in the fashion world and . . . stimulate and inspire the productive forces throughout the fashion industry." Invitations to participate would be sent to prominent retailers and to merchants in Canada and South and Central America.

When George Sloan, Chairman of the Mayor’s Business Advisory Committee, spoke to an organizing committee for the show, he estimated that the show would affect industries with a total value of $10,500,000,000. In this estimate he included textile producers, manufacturers, and retailers. The intent of the show was to display fashions at all price levels, but the group stressed that nothing would be admitted to the show except on the basis of "artistic excellence and its worthwhileness as a fashion." Dorothy Shaver, of Lord & Taylor, told the group that the show would "clarify the now confused production of heterogeneous modes and create the focus that Paris formerly supplied for American clothes. Out of it will come the
authority that is now lacking - the segregation of those
trends that will later affect the entire vast industry
revolving around fashion."\(^{136}\)

The importance of the show even reached to the White
House when Eleanor Roosevelt, who was a member of The
Fashion Group, consented to being a member of the advisory
committee for the show. Mrs. Roosevelt invited Carmel Snow
of Harper's Bazaar, Edna Woolman Chase, of Vogue, and
Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor to the Red Room where the
project was discussed "in detail" with the First Lady, over
tea.\(^{137}\)

Publicity for the show, scheduled for January 8 and 9,
1941, began with a picture of Mayor La Guardia touring the
International Dress Company as it produced garments for the
show. The Mayor echoed Dorothy Shaver's words when he said
that the show would set the styles for the coming season.
The publicity article stated that nearly 300 manufacturers
were participating and that 400 to 500 people would be
working in addition to the 200 manikins that would model the
500 presentations.\(^{138}\)

In interviews given by organizers of the Fashion
Futures, Dorothy Shaver, who spoke for a group of fashion
leaders who referred to themselves as "fashion pilots,"
called the show the largest in the world. She stressed that
the designs had been produced "at least six weeks before the
first styles arrive from Paris." Shaver again stressed that the purpose of Fashion Futures was:

to keep the American market from running in several directions at once. . . We consider all the styles, edit them, and then present them for the approval of American women. Our job as a group of fashion executives is to develop taste. We are not concerned with merchandising. We are the same people who formerly did the work in Paris.

The Times covered the fashion show with both photographs and a review by Virginia Pope. She outlined the sequence of the evening which consisted of a number of vignettes from around the city in which manikens modeled garments. A second article began, "Publicly and in splendor, in glamour and gayety, an American couture was born last night in the grand ballroom of the Hotel Astor." Again, reviewers called the evening epochal and again, the Mayor announced that New York was the fashion leader of the world and had been for some time. He added, though, that "now and then we had to send 'em [styles] over to Paris to get a label stuck on before they came back here." In introducing the Mayor, however, Commissioner Sloan paid tribute to Paris saying:

This occasion, which may well mark a new era in fashions for this country and for the entire Western Hemisphere, does not mean that we care less for the Paris of old, its gay spirit and its Marsellaise, but simply that we care more for our own New York - and that we recognize the achievements of our local trade in style consciousness and leadership.

At a cost of $53,000, 3,500 people attended the show which raised $10,000 for British War Relief. On the
Sunday following the fashion show, Virginia Pope devoted the entire fashion page to a review of the show. In addition, a number of retailers referenced the show in their ads. The Tailored Woman carried a picture of one of their submissions to the show and quoted Virginia Pope's comment about the design. In addition, Russeks featured a dress "fresh from 'Fashion Futures,'" and B. Altman & Co. showed a dress shown at "the famous style revue, New York Fashion Futures, presented by the Fashion Group this week."

Throughout the following Spring and Summer fashion coverage continued as the style had been set in the Fall. The Times contained regular features about the events transpiring in Paris including details of how the couture was being reorganized and descriptions of couture openings. Retail advertisements still referred to couture designer Molyneux, but many also contained references to American design and to American designers. In the Fall, retailers again held promotional openings in the same manner as they had in the Fall of 1940. Once again, Vogue heralded the wonder of the American designs and promoted them in two September issues.

The fashion industry found a new promotional device during the Fall 1941 season - television. Bloomingdale's and Abraham & Straus teamed up to produce the "first sponsored television fashion show." The ad for the show boasted of live manikens in a show that could be seen at
home or in the store, and that would be repeated every
Thursday evening.

The Spring and Summer also witnessed a new promotional
campaign that slowly began to spread among various
retailers. Stores began to feature soldiers in fashion ads,
and campaigns encouraged women to dress for their men. The
war drew ever closer to American shores, then in December it
exploded on the nation's agenda with the bombing of Pearl
Harbor. Bonwit Teller seemed to summarize the New York
fashion industry's attitude toward war-time promotion in an
ad that featured women in evening gowns dancing with
soldiers. Entitled "Dress up . . Heads Up," it read:

America's always been a spunky nation. It's not our
way to turn a long face to danger. It's "send us more
Japs" and "Up and at 'em" and "Never give up the ship."
Today America doesn't want its women dreary. It
wants you looking nice. Not only because it's good for
what ails you. Or because the boys, God bless 'em, like
to see you that way. But because there are other
important reasons too.

You know, the fashion industry is in the second line
of defense. Making your clothes and accessories helps
make the dollar behind the men behind the guns. And who
mans America's great fashion business? WOMEN. Stores
plus the fashion industry are the largest employers of
women in the country. It's important that you keep them
busy. This is why - women with salaries keep homes
going . . . release men for service . . . buy defense
stamps! 148

Perhaps it was appropriate that on December 31 the New
York Dress Institute placed its first ad in The Times. In a
full-page ad picturing a soldier on duty and a woman's face
floating among the stars, the text read:
That there may always be a Christmas
Somewhere Under The Stars Tonight a man is standing
guard over all the things he holds dear.
He is thinking about the Christmas season at home .
. . about those he loves . . . about the happy voices of
children . . . about the gaiety and warmth and cheer.
About all the things worth fighting for.
Most of all, he is thinking about the woman he
adores.
When war first came to Europe, the women of England
stepped forward gallantly with their men. In their zeal
they all but threw away the symbols of their womanliness
. . . their charms of face, of person and of dress. And
all but lost the very thing a nation at war most needs.
Tonight, there's dancing in London . . . dresses are
gay and feminine again . . . laughter ripples even from
broken homes and hearts.
For a woman in war must be more than the equal of a
man. She must be his guiding star. Whatever war tasks
she undertakes, she must still shine forth as Woman.
That there may be hope and courage in the hearts of
Men. That life may go on. That there may always be a
Christmas."^{49}

In the two years following the outbreak of war in
Europe, the American fashion industry underwent dramatic
changes in the source of its design leadership and in how it
promoted fashions to the American woman. In the first few
months of 1940, Paris dominated both the fashion stories and
the retail ads. When Paris fell, the American industry
found itself in a state of confusion. There was no
organizing body, there were no specific trends apart from
those already set in Paris openings, and several groups
struggled for leadership.

In the Fall of 1940, a new independence of design and
a new appreciation for the American designer showed forth in
the first fashion openings held for the press to be reported
to the public. Suddenly American designers had names and
faces as the industry strove to demonstrate to the public that New York could serve as a fashion authority just as Paris had in the past. Still, the fashion industry did not forget Paris. When news became available, The Times presented it to its readers. While a number of industry leaders repeatedly proclaimed New York as the new center of fashion, supplementary remarks often revealed that what they really sought was recognition for American expertise and the ability to compete with Paris once it became free.

Over all of the activities, however, loomed the prospect of war. With the increased demand for resources and manpower, the war effort began exacting a toll on the fashion industry. The toll escalated as the nation’s involvement in the war escalated, and soon the fashion industry concentrated more on surviving than on who was leading the fight.
NOTES


8. Ibid., 3.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.


15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.


19. Cunningham, 82.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


31. Paula Neiman, Ibid., p. 68.


34. Cunningham, 82.


36. Selma Frankel, "Memoirs of Maurice Rentner," p. 34.

37. Eleanor Lambert, Interview by Phyllis Feldkamp, p. 12.


40. Tobe Fashion Reports, 15 February 1940, p. EE.


42. Ibid.

43. Bergdorf Goodman ad, Ibid., 2.

44. Bonwit Teller ad, Ibid., 5.


46. Macy's ad, Ibid., 30.

47. Gimbel's ad, Ibid., 22.


50. Ibid.

51. Stern's ad., Ibid., 5 May 1940, 8.

52. B. Altman & Co. ad, Ibid., 9.

53. Ibid., 30.

54. Lord & Taylor ad, Ibid., 13.

56. Russeks ad, Ibid., 19 May 1940, 6.
57. Jay Thorpe ad, Ibid., 26 May 1940, 3.
60. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 4-6, 9.
64. Ibid., p. 19.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., 12.
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128. Eleanor Lambert, Interview by Phyllis Feldkamp, Ibid., 27.


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CHAPTER VI

A DIFFERENT ROAD . . . FOR THE DURATION:

JANUARY 1942 THROUGH DECEMBER 1944

Introduction

After the United States' declaration of war, the American fashion industry shifted its focus from concentrating on establishing its native industry as a world force in the fashion field to giving attention to how fashion could best help to win the war. At least for the time being, the case for American fashions had been firmly established. American women had not, as feared, lost interest in fashion without Paris' influence, but had, instead, bought American designs "with enthusiasm." While some information about the activities of the Paris couture industry reached and was reported in the American press, for the most part, Paris presented little competition for the American fashion industry.

With the fight for recognition of American design temporarily behind it, the United States' fashion industry accepted a new role beyond supplying apparel. In a retail market where consumer goods were rapidly disappearing, fashion became a means of keeping the American economy alive and vibrant despite government regulation and fears of
rationing. Furthermore, the fashion industry adopted the role of teacher in educating the American public about war-related topics including government-endorsed issues and programs.

Due to shifts in available resources and limited saleable goods, advertising as a whole, and fashion advertising as a part, also changed its role in the marketplace. Fashion advertisers faced the dilemma of maintaining the public's interest in available goods without creating so great a demand for apparel that government-threatened rationing would become necessary. Because of this need, fashion advertisements became a vehicle for both promotion of American goods as well as public information and endorsement of government programs.

Nevertheless, despite the challenges presented by shortages in resources and less attention to Paris' activities, the fashion industry developed several new promotional means for undergirding New York's fragile reign as the world's fashion leader. New design awards evolved, The New York Times launched a new fashion show, Mayor La Guardia spearheaded a drive for a design center, and the New York Dress Institute initiated its first Press Week. Despite war-induced hardships, the United States' fashion industry faced the challenges and still continued its promotion of American design.
New Roles For The Fashion Industry

Fashion cannot exist unless it is sensitive and responsive to the changes that occur in the context on which it depends for inspiration and survival. As American women's roles changed in response to increased demands presented by the war, fashion adapted to meet the physical challenges of women's new jobs and to meet the psychological needs of the nation. As women accepted both volunteer assignments for the war effort, paid employment in manufacturing centers, and positions in the military, the fashion industry provided functional, adaptable clothing to address a variety of needs. Then fashion moved beyond the immediate apparel needs and served as a means of maintaining morale both for the women who wore the garments and for the men who observed them.

While there may have been those who questioned the need for fashion during a time of war, the United States government supported the fashion industry for its economic contributions. In a January 16, 1942 speech to the New York Fashion Group, Vogue editor, Edna Woolman Chase, told her audience that American women would wear sack cloth if it would help win the war, but that doing without might do more harm than good because the fashion makers were "operating with full government approval. Whatever is on sale in a shop is there to be bought, with the government's full permission. Refusal to buy only helps to dislocate the
Chase noted that some in the fashion industry felt ashamed of their jobs and "apologetic for the very term Fashion. They think, perhaps, that any talk of Fashion is too trivial for days as dark as these." She countered this attitude by saying:

Fashions do not die because of wars; many of the best of them are created by war's necessities. They would not be fashions if they did not conform to the spirit and the needs and the restrictions of the current times. . . . Today, we want to take the folly out of fashion, but not the charm, the taste, and the becomingness.  

Tobe concurred with Chase when she wrote:

For that fashion will always be a part of our life - no matter how long the war lasts nor how much hardship lies ahead - there is no longer any doubt. For fashion is the changing flux of life itself - translated into the material things by which mankind lives. Yesterday we walked - today we ride - tomorrow we fly. As life goes, so goes fashion. Show us the fashions of a country, and we can reconstruct its life. The fashions of this war era will help write the history of the great war itself.

. . . In time of war, fashion takes on a dual personality - practical, durable, classic on one hand - frivolous, provocative, sexy on the other. It reflects the two basic principles of human behavior which transcend all others in wartime - Self Preservation and Self Perpetuation.

Stanley Marcus, who at the time was in the process of developing the government's shortly-to-be-announced styling regulations, echoed these sentiments when he told the Fashion Group, "Fashion has played a tremendous part in the development of our industrial world. I find no desire on anyone's part to eliminate it; only the necessity of circumscribing it for the duration." At the time of his remarks, Marcus was working as a dollar-a-year man for the
Textile, Clothing and Leather Division of the War Production Board under the direction of Frank L. Walton. Walton addressed the issue of the place of fashion in a war economy in an article in The Times entitled, "There will Always be Fashion." Walton said:

One of the questions foremost in the minds of women today is: What will happen to fashion in the months to come? . . .

In view of the tremendous readjustment imposed by the war upon our way of living, the questions, What place does fashion occupy in this wartime economy?" - "Will I have enough clothes to meet my needs?" - and, "Will I eventually be compelled to dress like all other women in a wartime uniform?" are to be expected. . . .

. . . Fashion is very definitely alive - even more vitally today than ever before, in the opinion of many people. The American people, even as the American soldier, are the best dressed in the world. It is to be hoped that this will continue to be true. It can be. It is going to require the cooperation of the buying public, who must buy wisely, of the designers who must design economically and with discretion, and of the producers who must produce with the minimum expenditure of manpower and materials. This combined effort can do much to protect the fashion industry, aid the government, and keep the American people well clothed.

The importance of fashion to the nation's economy became an issue when, as will be shown later, newspapers faced limited space to carry promotional retail advertisements. In a message to the Fashion Group, Herald Tribune Advertising Director William E. Robinson told his audience:

We try, we believe that it is important . . . to attempt within the limits of our war duties to preserve as well as we can the normal economy of the country. Your business is a part of the normal economy of the country, and as such we think it deserves whatever support we can give it within the limits of the newsprint which has been made available to us. We think that that economy, the normal economy of the country, is
two-sided; first, the materialistic side of it because we have to preserve whatever business we can that does not interfere with war effort so that that business can be healthy and stay healthy for the continuation of it and after the war, and, second, we don't think it is necessary for the public to go around with a hair shirt on.

Paul Murphy, Publicity Director for Loeser's (a retailer) agreed with Robinson saying:

[Robinson] said, "life at home must go on." Stores are an integral part of that life, therefore stores must be doing everything they have or can do to help carry on that life, subject to two limitations: One, whether or not they can get merchandise; second, certain government limitations that have to do with promotion, not emphasize on textile merchandise, and with regard to the amount of newspaper space which is available.

Fashion had the full endorsement and encouragement of the American government; however, fashion promoters faced a number of challenges in the war economy including the procurement of merchandise. The war effort, in clothing its soldiers and providing them with armaments, voraciously devoured both manpower and resources which hindered apparel manufacturing. Nevertheless, enough apparel remained to meet the demands of consumers so long as the fashion industry did not over promote its goods and induce a run on its products. Keeping this promotional balance presented a very real challenge, particularly over the next two years as consumers experienced rationing of foodstuffs, transportation items, and leather shoes.

The challenge was further complicated by an influx of new consumers into the market. These consumers worked in the war-related industries and possessed money that they
were anxious to spend. Tobe called them the "new-money customers" and told her readers:

... And naturally, as in most persons unaccustomed to spending, their tastes are untutored, and are usually on the ostentatious side. And why not? The spending money to them has a double purpose - to buy something they want - and to show the world that they have the money to do it!"**11**

Tobe recommended that stores stock "merchandise of a lower or gaudier taste level" at all price levels to address these consumers' demands.**12**

A few months later, Tobe again addressed the demographics of the buying public. She divided consumers into two groups, the New Poor and the New Rich. The New Poor represented the former moneyed classes, income classes, and salaried classes who were buying only the necessities. Their incomes had decreased or become static because taxes, war bond purchases, and the constantly rising cost of living cut down on their spendable income.**13**

Tobe expressed the opinion that the New Rich would be the "big buying public" for the war years. The New Rich represented working class people who, due to the personnel demands of the war, were now scarce. Competition for their manpower thrust them into the "fabulous salary class" while taxes had not yet caught up with them. Tobe reported that these workers had more money to spend than ever before and wanted the world to know it. They couldn't buy appliances, so they were spending their money on themselves and wanted clothes and accessories that were the "showiest, the gayest,
the most obvious they [could] find." With their clothing appetites and available cash, the New Rich caused a "great buying wave in dress-up showy merchandise in all price ranges." This buying spree was just as Tobe had predicted to her readers in January 1942 when she forecasted the war's effect on consumers. Tobe also noted that one American producer, Traina-Norell, designed by American Norman Norell, was the top producer in the "fine expensive line" because their dresses were "trimmed within an inch of their lives with sequins and jewels and tassels and braids." Furthermore, Traina-Norell's colored, fur-trimmed coats were also selling well because they could be seen.

Madelyn P. Coe, Fashion Coordinator for J. L. Hudson Co. in Detroit, a war industry city, confirmed Tobe's message when she told the Fashion Group that Hudson's clientele had changed. She reported that defense plant workers, the "new-moneyed customers," had "more money than ever before, and [were] buying the things they [had] always longed to have." Coe said that these women wore slacks provided by the factories to work, so they spent their money on off-duty clothes. Coe continued, "She is interested in something eye-catching, she wants her friends to know she has spent more money than ever before." Coe presented the opinion, however, that these women were not good judges
of quality. "New customers are not experienced shoppers - to them the price tage denotes quality." ²⁰

While these consumers drove sales figures up, Coe reported that the New York market had not been able to meet Hudson’s demand for goods. Hudson’s buyers had then shopped other markets. This kind of buying surge might have been beneficial to the fashion industry economically, but it also posed a very real danger. As the war effort escalated and resources at hand dwindled, increased consumer demand threatened to produce shortages and government-enforced rationing. The Times reported in January 1942 that consumers had already produced several buying rushes, particularly in women’s apparel, in response to fears that armament demands would result in shortages. Furthermore, this demand had cut into retailers’ stocks resulting in difficulties in getting prompt deliveries of replacements. By January, the public turned to other items it feared would be lost to the war, including wool clothing. ²¹

With all of the pressures and constraints of the war effort, the instinct for economic self-preservation, the temptation of a public wanting to spend but with fewer consumer goods available, and fears of government regulation, the fashion industry adopted a patriotic stance in its efforts to promote available goods without inadvertently setting off a buying rush. Two major themes appeared early in the war effort and continued throughout
the war years: quality and women's responsibility to look attractive for the nation's morale. The issue of quality, however, presented problems in the industry. As Coe mentioned, some retailers took the attitude that the new consumers, who wanted their clothing purchases to be noticed, lacked the buying experience to recognize quality. Campaigns directed toward quality might, therefore, prove ineffective without some consumer education for these New Rich women. Edna Woolman Chase told the Fashion Group in January 1942 that they had a responsibility to provide leadership to "millions of other women all over America" who needed to be educated and would look to them. She challenged her audience:

This is where we have our greatest opportunity and our greatest duty, in the field of women's morale: It is our job to make it clear what is sacrifice and what is folly where spending is concerned . . . expressing publicly our views, or shaping, or helping to shape the views of many other women in America. 22

She continued that the time had come to think more of value and that women wanted beautiful things more in war than in peace saying:

A man who sees his wife every day may not notice if she wears the same old uninspired dress or suit; a man who only gets an occasional furlough wants his wife to look as glamorous and wonderful as she can for the little while they have together. 23

Chase advised that quality and value must be the selling points for fashion. She then quoted a current editorial in Vogue reading, "I am a woman, and I have two major weapons. I have my hands, I have my heart." The editorial continued
that a woman could work with her hands, and with her heart she could keep a good home, be a good wife and keep her head concerning her purchases. She could buy wisely and not be swayed by those who advocated buying everything she could and hoarding and those who questioned whether it was right to buy anything. The editorial advised "spending it where it will do the greatest possible good for America and for me. I can fight. I can win. And I can look pretty right through it all."^24

Fashion as a means of maintaining an attractive appearance demonstrated a sensitivity to those women who sought to participate in the war effort in the early days of the nation's involvement before more organized means of service drew their attentions. Tobe wrote, "Speaking for the women of America, we can say quite confidently that everyone of them has a strong desire to identify themselves in some way with the war effort."^25 Tobe then categorized 1942 fashions into four groups: 1) Work-Duty Clothes for job, home, or war work, 2) Dress-Duty Clothes which were pretty dresses for relaxation and that could boost the morale of both men and women, 3) Investment Buying which was partly being done against the continued threat of rationing, and 4) Timeless Fashion that were never outmoded.^26

Functioning within these various economic and social contexts, the role of fashion promotion, to a large degree, shifted its focus from a constant striving to create as much
consumer demand as possible to a focus on wise, investment spending. To this end, fashion designers worked largely around two dominant themes, providing practical, adaptable clothing, such as suits that could be accessorized for a variety of occasions, for whatever work women performed by day and somewhat restrained glamour for the evenings when women served as morale boosters. For the fashion industry, these two needs, one managerial and one stylistic, merged into an overriding mission of patriotism.

From a promotional perspective, a patriotic emphasis meant that there was no longer as great a need for a New York versus Paris, or an us versus them, advertising stand. Instead, every promotion somehow became patriotic and, therefore, it became American. American designers grew particularly important in this endeavor for three reasons: (1) they represented the highest level of design that America had to offer, (2) they served the American woman who became increasingly important to the nation’s war effort, and (3) their profession contributed to the fashion industry which was such an integral player in the United States economy. As Adele Elgart, Executive Director of Specialty Stores told the Fashion Group:

The public was sold on the imported label; now they are beginning to forget it, because we do not get imports and because our own creators are doing a fine job. . . . Right now our domestic designers’ clothes are substitutes for Paris designed clothes and . . . to my mind are better.27
Elgart's remarks indicate that the fashion industry knew that consumers' enthusiasm for American designs resulted partly from the nation's growing patriotic stance and partly from the fact that Paris designs remained limited. This does not mean that no news of Paris reached the American public. Berlin allowed some reports of couture activities, and the United States' involvement in the war did not prevent the media from publishing what information became available.

Changes in The Times

The New York Times continued to carry stories about the Paris couture. In June 1942 the paper reported that while discussions continued about political collaborations between France and Germany, economic collaborations had made the greatest progress, particularly in the textile industry. Grouped into one organization, French textile firms worked "in close association" with German artificial silk and cellulose producers resulting in the potential increase in production of cotton and wool.  

In August 1942 The Times reported that, since the Armistice, the haute couture industry had "never known such prosperity." The article continued that, despite textile rationing, forty couture houses had re-organized into a privileged group, received special exemptions from textile restrictions, and were thriving. Perhaps because "the sky
was the limit for prices," wages for personnel in the houses had also risen sharply.\textsuperscript{30}

In July of the following year, Mme. Dieudonne Coste arrived in New York with her suitcases full of Paris couture garments. \textit{The Times} carried a lengthy report of the items in her wardrobe complete with stylistic details. The unidentified author noted that none of the designs showed the restraints imposed in the United States by the L-85 regulations (to be addressed later). Mme. Coste reported that Paris couturiers were:

. . . as eager to design as they were when Paris was at its gayest. In fact, . . . they [were] even more ambitious than in the past. They [were] motivated by desires other than profit. They [wanted] to keep their establishments going to hold together the faithful personnel trained through the years and, above all, to keep up the spirit of France.\textsuperscript{31}

The irony of the article is that \textit{The Times} devoted considerable column space to an article about one woman's traveling wardrobe at a time when paper shortages forced the paper to limit its fashion coverage. For example, first the paper stopped printing the Rotogravure section and moved the fashion pictures usually carried there to the Magazine section. By January 1943 the Fashions editorial page included classified ads until space limitations caused the Fashions page to be eliminated later in the month. Fashion articles in the daily paper grew smaller and smaller and often became surrounded by articles about food rationing and recipes to aid homemakers in coping with shortages.
Part of the immersion of fashion articles among food problems and social concerns grew from the need to conserve and better utilize available newsprint, and part grew from a shift in *The Times* editorial policy towards fashion coverage. In an August 1942 memo to the publisher, Sunday editor Lester Markel wrote of *The Times* coverage:

If we assume, therefore, as we should, that fashion is news, the question arises: what kind of fashion news shall we print? The answer, it seems to me, is two-fold:

1. We ought to publish the news of fashion creation. That is, the news which originates in the so-called designer group, where the tone is set more or less for the general fashion picture. There are certain designers acknowledged to be fashion leaders in the sense that Paris produced fashion leaders in the days before the war; and it is in this group that the news of fashion creation originates.

2. We ought to publish the news of fashion acceptance. That kind of news originates in stores which cater to the larger rather than the smaller groups of women. This is fundamentally, the department store group, although, of course, there are occasions when the department stores also supply news of fashion creation.

We have been accustomed to deal largely with the first category of news. With the coming of the war and the insistence on economy and simplification, we are now planning to publish more news in the second category.

In line with the thoughts set out above, we ought to be devoting more attention to the second kind of news—in other words, without cutting down on the news of fashion creation, we should print more of the news of fashion distribution.

It seems to me advisable, inasmuch as we are giving a page to women's news every day, that fashion be included in that page regularly and according to some more definite formula than the one now in effect. I see no reason why we shouldn’t print a single fashion picture on that page with a short caption every day in the week.

This correspondence illustrates a shift in editorial policy away from the small group of elite fashion consumers.
and more towards the larger group of mass fashion consumers. It is also interesting to note that Markel recognized American designers as leaders on the same level with Paris designers. These editorial attitudes make the inclusion of Mme. Coste's wardrobe even more noteable. This coverage of what might have been, in peace times, an event that would have gone unnoticed, demonstrates that Paris might have been limited in its access to the outside world, and the world to Paris, but its design mystique had not been forgotten.

Further evidence of this lingering attachment to Paris can be seen in the continued, and regular, promotion of French couture fragrances such as Lucien Lelong's "Tailspin," "Opening Night," and "Balalaika," and Schiaparelli's "Shocking." In addition, when The Times reporters covered openings of French designers who were working in New York, they often mentioned their design heritage. So, despite allegations of French collaboration with the Germans, and despite the fact that the United States was now at war with Germany, at least some American consumers continued to have an appetite, albeit largely unfulfilled, for French design and French products. Perhaps cognizant of this continued attachment to Paris, two organizations recognized the need to continue their programs to promote New York designs - the New York Dress Institute and the Mayor's office.
The New York Dress Institute

The New York Dress Institute began 1942 by placing full-page promotional ads in The Times that encouraged women to continue to look attractive, and in doing so, to buy dresses. The first ad, titled "Lend Wings to Victory," stressed that, though it might be tempting to give up all joys during a war, life must go on or morale suffers. It continued:

More than any other group, the women of a nation carry the delicate flower of morale in their hands. From them, as ever, must come the fragrance of a life worth fighting for. With them must be found surcease from strain. On them is the burden of relief from the tragic, the grim and the drab.

It is no accident that the Winged victory is a feminine figure.33

A week later, the Institute followed with another full-page piece aimed at women, morale, and dresses titled, "One thing more you can do:"

When war came, one of your first thoughts was: WHAT CAN I, A WOMAN, DO?

The tasks you saw yourself able to undertake perhaps seemed so little, so unimportant to you.

But do not deceive yourself.

For you are helping . . . tremendously . . . when you do your daily work with a song . . . when you keep your home gay and bright . . . when you send your husband away to his work with a kiss . . . your children off to school, confidently . . . when you keep calm, smiling, steadfast . . . the nation keeps that way.

Yes, you can do these things. And you can give, as you have, your time and service to organized war work. But there is one thing more you can do, too.

This one thing more springs from the deepest impulse of your heart . . . and your heart is right.

It tells you to continue being lovely, every hour of the day, that men may take courage from that loveliness. Lovely in your face and being. Lovely in the clothes you wear.34
On January 20, 1942, the New York Dress Institute ran its third, and final ad (see figure 9). The ad depicted a fashionably dressed Martha Washington with the troops at Valley Forge and read:

Back in 1778, a very great lady gave wings to victory, as only a woman can. That, too, was a bitter winter of war. The newborn United States of America had undertaken what seemed to the world an impossible task.

The men of that first American army had very little to justify their hopes. They were ragged, they were starved and their ammunition was pitifully low. but they had a dream, as we have a dream, of a new way of life.

And they had homes--and women they loved.

At their spirits' lowest ebb, Martha Washington set out over the frozen roads, to visit her husband. She packed what luggage she could. Packed it with dresses... charming, colorful, feminine... and she wore them all that gallant winter.

At the very sight of her, fresh and lovely, in that desolate camp, new courage sprang up in the hearts of General Washington and all around him... courage that made this country a nation.

The Institute financed the ads with the money from its new promotional fund. Eleanor Lambert later called the Martha Washington ad "hilarious." According to Lambert, the stores "scolded" the institute for the ads and told them "that the whole thing was ridiculous, the angles they were taking." The Institute then went to several retail leaders including Mr. Holmes of Bonwit Teller, Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor, Andrew Goodman, and Adam Gimbel who told the Institute that retailers "needed publicity to make people believe in American fashions designed and made in America." The retailers suggested that the Institute work with Lambert, but she complained that it was impossible
Mrs. Washington at Valley Forge

Back in 1778, a very great lady gave wings to victory, as only a woman can.

That, too, was a bitter winter of war. The newborn United States of America had undertaken what seemed to the world an impossible task.

The men of that first American army had very little to justify their hopes. They were ragged, they were starved and their ammunition was pitifully low. But they had a dream, as we have a dream, of a new way of life.

And they had homes—and women they loved.

As their spirits' lowest ebb, Martha Washing-
ton set out over the frozen roads, to visit her husband. She packed what luggage she could. Packed it with dresses...charming, colorful, feminine...and she wore them all that gallant winter.

At the very sight of her, fresh and lovely, in that desolate camp, new courage sprang up in the hearts of General Washington and all around him...courage that made this country a nation.

NEW YORK DRESS INSTITUTE

Fig. 9 The New York Times, 20 January 1942, 12.
to do campaigns without designers and suggested that industry design leaders be chosen for promotion. This suggestion led to the formation of the Couture Group of the Dress Institute made up initially of eleven American designers including, among others, Nettie Rosenstein, Jo Copeland, Maurice Rentner, Ben Reig, and Adele Simpson.39

Further evidence that not everyone in the industry approved of the Dress Institute's campaigns came in the form of a law suit brought by Jaunty Juniors, Inc. of New York which objected to purchasing the dress labels through which the Institute raised its funds and promoted New York design. A Supreme Court Justice, Philip J. McCook, issued the following statement in upholding the promotional effort as legal:

One may well have, as an individual, a profound conviction that it is impractical, unwise and dangerous to attempt, by means of a collective agreement to bring business to New York or to induce business to return here when once fled. He may regard it as far more practical, wise and safe to seek rather, by fair and equal treatment, to induce business already here to remain.40

Perhaps part of the criticism for the promotional efforts of the Institute stemmed from the fact that the funds for the promotions continued to grow because, as has been shown, apparel was among the few items available for consumer purchase. In July 1942, The Times reported that the initial contribution by manufacturers of one-third of one percent of their gross business had been reduced to one-sixth of one percent. Lambert recalled that business
"boomed" because "dresses were among the few things that you could buy after the war began," so the Dress Institute's promotional fund "grew and grew, and they couldn't possibly spend it all."41 As will be shown, the Dress Institute soon recognized that it needed to direct its promotional efforts along new avenues.

The New York Fashion Center

Another group that recognized the need to keep promoting New York design while Paris remained out of the picture, was the Mayor's office. In August 1943, Mayor La Guardia announced the formation of a committee, headed by Grover Whalen, that would research the building of a world fashion center in New York City. La Guardia told the press, in announcing the formation of the committee that the fashion center had not been "an impulsive, overnight idea," but had been under consideration for years.42 The Mayor's committee included members from the public, manufacturers, retailers, buying offices, labor, real estate, finance, transportation, hotels, and the city. Representatives from fashion included, Edna Woolman Chase of Vogue, Virginia Pope of The Times, Dorothy Shaver of Lord & Taylor, Tobe of Tobe Fashion Reports, Mary Lewis of Sears & Roebuck, and Mabel Greene of The Sun. The Mayor further announced that:

Functions of the committee will be to examine the city's apparel arts and industries, to make recommendations for their expansion and stabilization; to determine the feasibility of establishing such a fashion center; to investigate all suggested sites and
make recommendations as to location, and to determine the best method of financing the project.\textsuperscript{43}

Several days after the Mayor's announcement, Whalen emphasized to the press that the endeavor was "a post-war project, of a mammoth group of buildings to be known as 'The World Fashion Center'" with the goal of continuing the prosperity of the region.\textsuperscript{44} Whalen continued:

Here the great New York headquarters of the nation's retail stores should be housed. Here, in specific buildings specially designed to meet their requirements, the different divisions of the apparel industries, the shoe trades, the handbag, millinary, jewelry and other industries should be centered. Special auditoriums for seasonal showings should be part of each building. Shipping facilities should be underground, actual manufacturing spaces should be so arranged as to permit streamlined production at minimum costs.\textsuperscript{45}

The Mayor stressed that the style center was intended to invite cooperation within the industry and not compete with existing enterprises,\textsuperscript{46} however, controversy arose over its planned location. Whalen announced that the center would be on the east side of the city in an area bounded by Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue, East Thirty-fourth Street and East Twenty-sixth Street. Immediately a group formed and expressed its objections stating that the west side should also be considered.\textsuperscript{47} Others endorsed the center including the real estate community. Peter Grimm, a former President of the New York Real Estate Board, told a group of realtors that the center would establish New York as a point for fashion creation and attract business to the city.\textsuperscript{48}
Stanley Marcus, however, openly criticized Mayor La Guardia's efforts to establish New York as the fashion center of the world and particularly cited the Mayor's support for the New York Dress Institute. Marcus stated that the Mayor should promote New York as a leisure center, or playground, for the wealthy, instead. He said, "The place where the wealthy, leisured people of the world gravitate will be the fashion center of the world." 49

Marcus continued:

The Mayor cannot seem to see that clothing manufacture and creative design are two distinct things. Creative design cannot originate in a manufacturing plant, since mass production must have something it can be sure will sell in volume. It cannot afford the experimentation necessary for the creation of fashion. . . .

With the decentralization of clothing manufacturing, resulting from the war, New York is through as the clothing manufacturing center for the country. . . .

The day is gone when the rest of the country thinks that only in New York can good dresses, good hats, good accessories, be designed.50

Marcus' comments caused an uproar in the fashion industry to the extent that The Fashion Group included a special insert in its bulletin, with the context of his speech, in order to "correct misinterpretation due to partial quotes in the press."51 In explaining the insert, the bulletin included this statement:

We have no doubt that his talk, or excerpts from it, have been read by most of our members, both in their local papers and in Women's Wear. However, the battle of words, wherever fashion people gather, still goes on, for and against New York as the fashion center of the world, with those who agree with most of Mr. Marcus' reported remarks and those who disagree, equally divided.52
The insert then quoted Marcus who stressed that encouraging
cultural enterprises in New York would "solidify its
position as style center."  

Thus the issue of New York as the world's fashion
leader proved to be controversial. As The Fashion Group
Bulletin noted, those who agreed with the idea and those who
didn't remained equally divided. In other words, not
everyone shared Mayor La Guardia's dream. For the moment,
New York reigned. South America eagerly sought American
fashions, predicted that this pattern would continue after
the war, and saw Europe's design influence as passing.  
Canada borrowed American designs to copy in their apparel
industry.  
England's war effort consumed too much of the
nation's attention for London to serve as a fashion leader
while Italian and Parisian industries remained under Axis
control. Only New York remained both free and able to lead
the fashion world. As a Times reporter wrote:

New York's fashion dominance is now established.
Caught off balance by the catastrophic collapse of
France, the ranking American designers, on whom the
ermine of style leadership descended, were discovered
leaning comfortably against the bolster they had always
known - the Parisian couture. It was understandable
that they floundered a bit before learning to stand
erect and alone; but the crown no longer wobbles [sic],
and the throne has ceased to teeter. They have arrived.

... 

Nearly $1,500,000,000 is expended annually for
apparel or accessories in the city [New York]. This
conveys a graphic idea of the importance of retaining
for New York the style dictatorship that Hitler covets
and that he has tried unsuccessfully to regain, through
the medium of what remains of the once flourishing haute
couture in conquered Paris.
The question of New York's position as the world's fashion leader provided opportunity for great dreams, big plans, and controversy. The fashion industry recognized that Paris couture remained operational, but during these first two years of America's fighting involvement, no one yet knew if the couture industry could ever again operate as freely as it once had or whether German control would forever mar its creativity. While consumers accepted and enthusiastically purchased American-designed garments, discerning leaders recognized that the issue of New York versus Paris remained unresolved but secondary to more pressing national needs. Vogue editor Jessica Daves voiced this concern in a message to the Fashion Group saying:

These new American clothes, done without recent benefit of Paris, have a certain genuineness that is better than the feeble imitations of great design which once characterized our markets. American designer's clothes this spring have a genuineness, freshness and suitability to American women that is a hopeful sign for American fashion independence after the war. You will notice that I do not say fashion superiority. That is not the point and cannot be decided while Paris is out of the running. When the Paris couturieres come out of the dark cloud of war, there can hardly be a doubt that they will again present designs of imagination, richness, variety and great beauty. Then will come the acid test. Then we will see whether American designers will have learned permanently to walk alone. . . . But now, we are in danger of being too easily satisfied with designs just because they are American! The greatest disservice we, as members of the fashion profession, can do for American design is to let friendly enthusiasm take the place of judgment and taste. We must evaluate American designs strictly by the highest standards, with no leniency of judgment because our own people made them.
With the advent of war, American fashion took on a new role in the society. Faced with the need to maintain its position as a major factor in the United States' economy but hobbled by material and manpower shortages, the fashion industry adopted a new promotional stance. First, it advocated quality over quantity for consumers. Second, it aligned its products patriotically with the war effort by encouraging women to maintain their appearances as a means of maintaining national morale. With this new promotional attitude, the fashion industry shouldered new challenges and adopted new promotions.

L-85 . . . Providing Design Leadership

When Paris first fell under German occupation, American fashion leaders expressed great concern over who would set the style trends for the fashion industry. Generally, the industry felt that it had design talent sufficient to provide stylistic variety to American women, but there remained the question of organization and leadership. As noted in Chapter 5, Paris' dominant contribution to the fashion world rested in its organization of seasonal showings and in its setting of trends. Whatever Paris decreed as a new trend, the rest of the industry either directly copied or adapted for its own needs.

Some industry leaders feared that American designers would go off on their own paths leaving no clear trends to unify the industry's efforts. Without a unified stylistic
message, the question remained as to whether or not American women would follow the leadership of American designers. Virginia Pope served as one who tried to present a cohesive fashion picture by seasonally summarizing trends for The Times' readers. Still, no one organizing voice emerged to lead the American fashion industry.

In the spring of 1942, just as American designers were breaking from Paris' influence, one demanding voice overrode all those who competed to lead the American fashion industry to world supremacy. Coming from an unlikely source, that voice commanded adherence to its dictates and dominated all others until after the end of the war. That voice came from the United States' government, specifically, the War Production Board.

On January 16, 1942, President Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB) from the Office of Production Management, established in 1941, and gave it the authority to "exercise general responsibiltiy" over the nation's economy in any way it saw fit or necessary for defense.58 The WPB's sweeping power encompassed the Textile Division of the Office of Production Management, directed by Frank L. Walton, which had been established in March 1941.59 Under the new title of the Textile, Clothing, and Leather Division, Walton and his team called Stanley Marcus, President of the Neiman-Marcus department store in Dallas, to oversee the women's clothing division beginning in
January 1942. Facing escalating war needs, growing consumer demands, and limited resources, the WPB targeted women's apparel for one of its first conservation orders designed to conserve textiles that could then be diverted to military use.

Marcus began development of the clothing regulations by calling industry leaders to Washington so that he could gather their suggestions for conserving both textiles and manpower. Because of brisk industry sales, Marcus' first challenge lay in convincing the industry that there was a threat of shortages. Marcus tried scare tactics telling leaders how bad shortages could become, then appealed to their patriotism. Still, at every advisory meeting, manufacturers and retailers appealed to him to soften the regulations claiming, "This regulation will force us out of business." Marcus rejected yardage limitations such as those being used in Britain's utility garments, because he recognized that he lacked the manpower to enforce them. Instead, he chose styling limitations that "would be easy for any patriotic woman to discern and for any competitive manufacturer or storekeeper to check on." Thus, Marcus focused on two objectives in developing the L-85 Regulations. First, he intended that they would be self-regulating, and second, that they would freeze fashion so that existing clothing would not become obsolete due to
fashion changes. Thus, the L-85 Regulations established a basic silhouette and set prohibitions on dress "lengths, sleeve fullnesses, patch pockets, ensembles, hoods, sweep of skirts, width of belts, and depth of hems." While the regulations primarily addressed the use of wool, cotton, and rayon, the government left unregulated, and encouraged the use of, rayon net, taffeta, and faille "in order to keep existing manufacturers employed."

Maurice Rentner's son-in-law recalled that Rentner was one of those industry leaders that Marcus called to Washington to advise him stating:

The limitation on fabric and labor and all those things . . . Maurice was very active in that. In fact, Maurice was the guiding genius behind Stanley Marcus at the time. You know, Stanley . . . was a capable retail executive. But what did he know about limitations? But he had a very good friend in Maurice Rentner, and he and Maurice worked it out. And it really worked very well for the industry as a whole.

Marcus may not have been schooled in the ways of manufacturing, but he knew how to market a campaign. Instead of following the usual procedure of just giving the orders to the press, Marcus received special permission to hold a press conference. Then Marcus broke WPB rules and leaked the regulations to Women's Wear Daily so that the paper could have sketches of regulated styles ready to publish. On April 8, 1942, Marcus announced and explained the necessity for General Limitation Order L-85 to a Washington D. C. assemblage of both the New York fashion press and the Washington press.
Tobe told her readers, "We were thrilled to have been included and we are very much impressed by the careful planning and enormous amount of work that preceded the writing of the order and by the sincerity with which it was presented." Tobe also reported that the limitation was "the longest ruling issued by the WPB on any subject to date," but that "we find it very fair and much less restrictive in many respects that we had imagined it might be." Of the need for a special press conference, Tobe said:

We confess that we were a little ashamed to find that they were forced to feel anxious about the way in which the public would react and so felt it necessary to stage a special fashion press conference. Much bigger W.P.B. limitation orders hitting important industries have been released without nearly so much fuss.

We think it's up to the retail stores to show the government that the fashion business can take it too - and take it gracefully!*

In an editorial following the press conference, The Times said:

Probably no order of the War Production Board to conserve steel, copper or other scarce and strategic materials received more prayerful consideration than the board's new order to conserve fabrics which will influence the future course of women's clothing styles. The board, which is entirely composed of men, must have faced a difficult problem. If its regulations should materially alter current styles, one of two things might have happened: There might have been a stampede to buy up existing stocks of apparel in order to avoid the new war styles or there might have been a refusal to use up existing stocks on the theory that they would soon be outmoded. Both horns of this dilemma have been avoided.71

Because the government press could not immediately print the extent of the regulations, Women's Wear Daily carried a
reprint of the entire order and offered reprints for ten
cents a copy. \textsuperscript{72}

Between his consultations with industry leaders, his
leak to Women's Wear Daily, and speeches he gave before the
L-85 press conference, Marcus gave both the industry and the
press time to prepare a positive, patriotic presentation for
the American public. He told a Fashion Group gathering in
February:

The great patriotic job for the fashion industries
is to make that which is left over for civilian
consumption, after giving precedence to military needs,
go as far as possible and make it as good as possible.
The designers of this country have a great
responsibility. They must take the materials available,
and add to them ideas so fresh and so original, that the
new products will have merit in their own right... 

Not even since France have our designers had the
chance of being completely on their own as they will
have in the season to come. The French tradition still
being heavily over some of them. Now the American
tradition will emerge from its state of adolescence.

The fashion press has its responsibility in the
proper presentation of a Fashions for Victory program.
Their job, as I see it, is to interpret conservation to
the readers in the various social and economic stratas
to whom they appeal. The magazines have the power to
fan a great flame of demand by their endorsement of a
given fashion. They can serve best by endorsing both
editorially and pictorially those fashions which in
their opinion are the best expressions of our
conservation program. \textsuperscript{73}

Like Women's Wear Daily, The Times published sketches
of designs as they would appear both before and after
invocation of the L-85 regulations. Despite Marcus' reports
of industry opposition to the regulations, Virginia Pope, in
announcing L-85, told her readers:

Whole-hearted approval of the new WPB rulings on
women's apparel was voiced yesterday by retailers,
garment manufacturers, spokesmen for labor, leading
designers, fashion authorities and outstanding women in
many lines of endeavor.\textsuperscript{74}

Thomas F. Conroy, reporting to The Times from Washington,
echoed Pope's comments writing:

Fashion designers, retailers and manufacturers,
consulted previously on the program, praised the
regulations as permitting full scope for style ideas
even though extravagant use of material is to be curbed.
It was emphasized, in fact, that American designers will
answer the call with still greater ingenuity . . . .

Mr. Marcus, in discussing the order said: "Through
the regulations issued today we are trying to forestall
any shortage of fabrics later on and to avoid
rationing."\textsuperscript{75}

Pope also told her readers:

There are always some changes in style. In the past
we took orders from Paris; this time it is Uncle Sam who
is the arbiter. There's no frivolity involved in his
dictum. He is motivated by a stern reality - the saving
of materials. For this reason certain fashion details
will be eliminated for the duration of the war. They
are minor things that are relatively unimportant.\textsuperscript{76}

On April 26 Pope devoted her fashion pages in The Times'
Magazine to a display of the regulated designs (see figure
10). In presenting them, she wrote:

Long before the recent WPB ruling on styles, New
York designers began to anticipate it. Rumors
circulating freely through the garment world were
sufficient to set them on their way to creating clothes
that would meet the wartime standards. They have begun
to show how smartly stylish they can make dresses with a
limited amount of material . . . .

Designer genius can put in a fold here and a drape
there, add a graceful ruffle or applique a bow that
gives a dress a new chic. The designers say their
talent will rise to meet any emergency. They accept
Uncle Sam's challenge and are eager to demonstrate what
they can do.\textsuperscript{77}

Thus, in a strange twist of war-born necessity, the
government's L-85 regulations provided the design leadership
WAR TIME
Measures

By VIRGINIA POPE

Long before the recent WFW ruling on styles, New York designers began to anticipate it. Rumors circulating freely through the garment world were sufficient to set them on their way to creating fashions that would meet the exigencies of war. They have begun to show how neatly, stylishly they can make dresses with a limited amount of material. To prove that a monotony of design can be avoided with a minimum of fabric, our three show costumes, none of which uses more than four yards of material, serve us even less.

Dressers have put in a hat here and a dress there, and a graceful belt or appliqué a bow that gives a dress a new look. The designers say their stores will rise to meet any emergency. They accept Uncle Sam’s challenge and are eager to demonstrate what they can do.

Fig. 10 The New York Times, 26 April 1942, 31.
once provided by Paris, but which had been lacking to date in the American market. The regulations forced designers’ efforts along a much more narrow design path than they might have sought if left to their own imaginations. The limitations provided a central rallying theme for the American fashion industry. Regardless of private reservations, the industry enthusiastically presented the regulations to the public (see figure 11) as a patriotic means of supporting the war effort, because, as The Times’ editorial pointed out, to do otherwise could have been an economic disaster for the fashion business.

The regulations also forced a final design break with Paris. Stanley Marcus predicted that even greater fabric savings than at first anticipated would probably result from designers’ going beyond what the government required them to do. He said:

The result of the order has been as anticipated in that the majority of mass manufacturers are working up to the full limitation of measurement. But the top designers, in order to have distinction, are working below limitations. They will set a trend which in turn will be copied by the mass market next Spring and next Fall, resulting in even greater conservations than the order technically specifies. . . .

I believe that American design has been more greatly stimulated by the restrictions than anything that has ever happened in the history of the industry, for the simple reason that designers are forced to discard their Paris memories and work from scratch instead.78

In an article in The Times Magazine promoting fashions for the Fall 1942, Marcus again said:

From the standpoint of conservation, which was the sole purpose of WPB Order L-85, the greatest
Fig. 11 The New York Times, 31 May 1942, 13.
accomplishment has been the hastening of the trend toward a slim silhouette. From the standpoint of fashion, the greatest achievement has been the liberation of our designer ing talent from the heritages of the past.

The old adage, "Necessity is the mother of invention," has been proved in the production of our major American designers in the current Fall collection. The restrictive details of L-85 forced designers to forget tradition, to close their Paris sketchbooks, to relegate even their photographic memories of seasons past and to create clothes that could be produced with the yardage-saving limitations of L-85.\(^79\)

Fashion writers expressed similar opinions to Marcus'. In reviewing a Henri Bendel show, a Times reporter wrote, "The fashion parade, apparently stimulated rather than stifled by shortages and restrictions, was augmented yesterday by the Autumn collection of another leading couturier."\(^80\) In an advertisement for its custom designs, Bergdorf Goodman included reviews of their fall show including one by Kay Thomas of The New York Sun who wrote, "Maybe L-85 is responsible, but Bergdorf Goodman's clothes never looked more restrained nor more subtly elegant than in this collection for the fall of 1942."\(^81\) The Times also said that "feminine interest in fashions was never keener in this country than in the interval since the fall of Paris" and that there was "mounting consumer interest in the L-85 theme."\(^82\) In presenting fashion for Spring 1943, Virginia Pope of the regulations:

Conservation is the keynote of the Spring fashions. To designers the government's program has been a spur into new and fresh creative realms. From it they have drawn inspiration. They must cooperate with the government's ruling to save material and labor, yet they must uphold the standard of American design.\(^83\)
In March 1943 a group of American designers announced to the press that their spring designs reflected a desire to conserve even more fabric than the government asked. Despite their efforts, rumors of impending clothes rationing continued. The government announced that despite the fact that "'statistically' rationing would appear necessary," WPB officials hoped that further adjustment of available resources would prevent it. In May 1943 the WPB announced revisions to the L-85 order that created a body basic, a more strictly defined silhouette, for all styles and introduced a yardage restriction by imposing "square-inch limitations on the amount of material which [could] be used for all trimmings, collars, pockets, etc., and by imposing restrictions on the size and design of those trimmings." Again, officials stated that designers would rise to the new challenges posed by the changes.

The Times devoted an entire article to American designers' reactions to the new limitations. Only Omar Kiam stated that he found the changes "drastic" and "difficult." Nettie Rosenstein said that designers had grown used to being "frustrated," but that the new rules were not too strict. She continued that "the only way designers can be stifled is if the government refuses to allow [us] to work at all as [we] are willing to meet any and all challenges." Claire McCardell said, "It's rather fun to have a limit," and Jo Copeland added, "There were too many
loopholes before. Designers felt they were using ingenuity to get around the loopholes. Even Eleanor Roosevelt participated in the designing issue when she told a Washington audience that she "refused to concede that attractiveness in clothes must be abandoned," and continued "while it is necessary to adapt clothing to wartime conditions, design becomes more important than ever."

While the L-85 regulations provided necessary manpower and resources conservation for the war effort, their enactment addressed more far-reaching issues than the immediate needs of the war effort. At a time when the American fashion industry had not yet jelled into a cohesive entity, the regulations provided a universal challenge and, therefore, a rallying focus for the industry. As Tobe said, "We needed some guidance even if it was only Washington."

The regulations also stimulated consumer interest in fashion. Perhaps more importantly, the regulations focused attention on American fashion and on American designers' responses to the limitations. Through media coverage of the WPB's efforts to conserve textiles, the public regularly saw both American designers' names and visuals of their creations. Thus, L-85 offered a means of further promoting the work of American designers and a means of elevating the designers to a position that went beyond design leadership to heroic status as patriotic icons in the war effort.
The government, through the L-85 limitations, became almost a substitute for Paris. First, it provided the trend leadership that the industry needed. Second, the regulations provided the media, in disseminating information to the public, an opportunity to repeatedly present American designers to consumers. These activities suggest that, just as Paris once had, the L-85 regulations offered design leadership and celebrity designers that interpreted the dictated trends.

**Retailers’ Promotions in the War Effort**

During the war years fashion retailers faced a myriad of issues and government restraints, both legal and implied, that directly impacted how fashions could be presented and promoted to the buying public. As has been mentioned, consumers changed as economic shifts among civilians redistributed discretionary income. Because the new consumers had less buying experience, and because the fashion industry needed to maintain a delicate balance between promoting available goods without creating a buying panic, fashion retailers adopted a promotional strategy of investing in quality apparel that would last for the duration. Conservation through wise purchasing became the new patriotic theme along with keeping up appearances for morale. Nationalism through design, with Paris unable to participate in world trade, shifted from buying American instead of French to buying American to help the fighting
soldiers overseas. With this focus, the L-85 regulations did not present a major promotional problem.

Retail advertisers, however, faced issues greater than changes in their customers and the L-85 limitations. First, they faced the question of the need for advertising at all. With war industry paychecks pushing retail sales up at a time when goods remained limited, where was the need to advertise? Furthermore, paper shortages soon squeezed advertisements first into smaller spaces and then sometimes out of newspapers all together. Then, the government began addressing retail promotions. In response, fashion retailers undertook two major advertising themes, quality and morale, in ever-shrinking media space, while they adjusted to new shoppers and still bowed to government intervention and leadership in public campaigns. As Richard G. Meybohm, Manager of the Sales Promotion Division of the National Retail Dry Goods Association told a Fashion Group luncheon:

Retailing now has a "different road" to travel, a road which cannot bear the traffic of high-pressure promotional selling aimed at increased volume, but one on which customer information and public service in keeping with the war effort will be dominant. . . .

A revolutionary change in retail promotional aims was forced on December 7 when a little group of yellow men upset the apple cart. There is a job to be done, a job of re-education, both for the benefit of the country at large and for the retail store itself.

First it seems to me that the natural inclination will be for stores to place more and more cogent emphasis on the quality story to replace appeals based solely on fashion features or fad impulses which have served well in normal times. . . . Strong and special interpretations of the fashion advantage to be gained by
the purchase of smart, well-made quality clothes that will last and will be considered fashion-right for more than just a short period should be the order of the day."

Before examining retailers' promotional campaigns built around this new promotion philosophy, it is first necessary to consider the constraints that comprised a war-time infrastructure upon which all fashion advertising rested.

Advertisers in the United States had seen the effects of shortages of wood pulp in England and the limitations they had caused there for advertisers. In May 1941 advertising executive John P. Cunningham told a Fashion Group audience:

Over here, whether you write advertising, or approve it, or buy it or sell it, I urge you to see to it that it doesn't appear to the public and to the government to be a terrific waste. As long as it stands as a vital force in the creation and selling of goods - we have little to fear in the war economy ahead. If our use of this wood pulp, however, seems wasteful and inefficient, the government is likely to lay down restrictions. And after all . . . only God can make a tree."

The Times also addressed the necessity for advertising and its place in the war economy. A June 1942 editorial said:

The war has inevitably brought great changes to the advertising business. At a time when there are growing shortages of consumer goods it would be neither necessary nor desirable to seek to stimulate increased consumer demands for the products that are scarce. . . . . . . Advertising, like propaganda, is a powerful means of carrying to the people the message of what each man's part must be in total war. But whereas propaganda, by masquerading as news, poisons the free press, advertising does not. . . . . . . war . . . creates a new and vital role for advertising in helping to direct the interests and energies of the people along the lines of necessary wartime effort, sacrifice and cooperation."
Neither of these opinions, however, can be viewed as completely impartial. Advertisers feared a loss of business and newspapers depended on advertisers for operating revenues. The government did not directly regulate advertising, but chose, instead, to use advertisements to promote war messages.

In a speech to the Fashion Group in October 1942, H. Andrew Dudley told the audience that the government was turning to advertising people and their techniques to distribute information. He noted that retail advertisements had been quick to reflect the war and that retailers had a stake in preserving the United States’ way of life. Furthermore, he noted that advertisers had the promotional facilities and were an important media in getting war facts across to the public.

On the same day, Ruth West, Special Consultant to the Office of War Information on Retail Activities:

declared that store promotion people, more than any other profession in America, have the responsibility of mobilizing women far more completely to the war effort. We should have a sign over our desks with these words written on it: "MY JOB - to clarify, simplify, dramatize, explain to women, the part each can and must play if we are to win the war." West continued that 23 of 52 war effort campaigns were either entirely or largely dependent on the nation-wide cooperation of women for their success and that advertising’s job was to make frightful realities happening so far away real and "the job each woman has to do as urgent
as it really is." She stated that this was an advertising problem - not selling merchandise but ideas and that the results would not be measured in sales but in action. Those actions included "an army of women, marching into factories, chemistry labs and industrial schools." West believed that advertising had a big public relations job to do:

Multiply us by our colleagues in America's 6,000 department stores, and among us we reach virtually all of America's 40,000,000 women. They read our ads, look at our store windows, ask advice of our salespeople, run in and out of our stores, with the most avid interest. We hold our jobs because we're specialists at catching women's attention and influencing their minds. . . . Think how to interpret [war effort campaigns] into vivid, personal, specific terms so that women who read our copy, look at your windows, talk to your salespeople will know what to do, why it is urgent, and be moved enough to go home and do it." 

Tobe reported that the Office of War Information's Bureau of Campaigns and the Central Committee of National Retail Associations worked out a Retail War Campaigns Calendar which was to be implemented beginning January 1943. The first campaign was "Use it Up, Wear it Out, Make it Do - or Do Without." The campaign calendar provided facts that the two organizations wanted emphasized regarding wearing apparel, the reasons for the emphasis, and ways to carry out the campaigns through newspaper copy, store posters, window displays, and price cards.

Tobe reported that the OWI Retail War Promotion for May was "Womanpower - The More Women at Work, The Sooner We Win." She continued:
In the War Promotion Calendar sent to retailers, suggestions are presented for advertisements and displays tie-ups — such as Mother’s Day, Graduation, Florence Nightingale’s birthday, etcetera. Women’s magazines have combined to contribute a Retailers’ Portfolio of Time Saving Housekeeping Shortcuts to help housewives allot more time to war work and civilian defense work, and if you are adequately equipped, your store can conduct classes and clinics to help stimulate the recruiting of women for war work and nursing. Don’t miss an opportunity to promote these services in advertising, posters, special features and as Lord & Taylor did in their W.I.V.E.S. windows reported March 11th — tie it up in your window displays.101

The front page of the March 1943 edition of The Fashion Group Bulletin included a squared-off space in its center with the heading "Government Data Simplification Orders." Included in the box was a heading for promotions. The government urged that promotions be planned to help the war effort and allay panic buying saying, "Store advertising should be worded not to incite shoppers to overbuy."102 While this particular message appeared in response to a consumer buying spree after the sudden announcement of shoe rationing, it demonstrates how the government used retail fashion advertisements to promote its own messages.

Robert Ferry, Assistant Director of the Office of War Information told a Fashion Group luncheon of his organizations activities,

We try to give guidance in O.W.I., in a gentlemanly way to advertisers on converting their advertising and doing some public service.103 O.W.I. is not concerned, nor can it be concerned, with the contents of an advertising message. We have tried positively to suggest ways and means to have this vast force hooked into a public service thing in time of war.104
While no evidence could be found that the agency used any form of pressure beyond patriotism to get advertisers to comply with the government campaigns or that retailers faced penalties if they did not comply with the government's suggestions, their announcements were important enough to be included in Tobe Fashion Reports and *The Fashion Group Bulletin*. Furthermore, Tobe reported that Lord & Taylor used at least one campaign suggestion and she encouraged her readers to do the same. One can only speculate whether retailers used government campaigns for patriotic reasons or out of fear that failure to do so would result in restrictions on future advertising promotions. Regardless, the government recognized the power and the influence of the fashion industry and found enough worth in retail fashion advertising to use it for its own promotional purposes in influencing the women of America.

The fact that the government used advertising in the newspapers to promote its own messages did not, however, exclude newspapers from WPB regulations. By January 1943 the WPB had enacted a number of rulings that cut back the amount of wood pulp that newspapers were allowed. The orders came in response to shortages of wood pulp due to shortages of labor and production equipment such as trucks and tires.¹⁰⁵

By March, one could almost see *The Times* shrinking in size as it conformed to the WPB limitations.
advertisements grew smaller with only Sunday and Thursday ads at a nearly normal size. Furthermore, the Easter ads, which usually were large and plentiful, were fewer, more subdued, and appeared later than usual. Fashion articles in the daily papers also shrank, appeared lower on the page than previously, and often ran without an accompanying picture. Sometimes fashion coverage consisted of a single photograph and a caption.

By July 1943 entire issues of The Times ran without any women's fashion ads; for example, July 24 and July 31. While fashion promotions, except for hat shows, usually slowed during the summer, this was the first time, during the war, that they had stopped altogether. With the September shows, coverage again increased. On November 16 The Times reported that the Miami Herald was conserving paper by publishing its Monday editions without any advertisements. On Monday, November 22, The Times included a small message at the bottom of one page that read:

The Times regrets that it is obliged to omit from today's issue 24 columns of display advertising; it hopes it will be able to present this advertising to its readers at a later date. . . . This is done in order adequately to present all the news and still conform to the newsprint limitations imposed by the War Production Board.  

The shortage of newspaper advertising became so acute that the Fashion Group held a luncheon meeting to discuss
the topic. Aaron Sussman, an advertising executive said of the advertising problem:

Most of us have tried to get space in the newspapers and have had this nightmare of making plans a week or a month head [sic] and then discovering there is no way of getting our ads in in the size we want or days we want or the cities we want or anywhere near the schedules we want and there are some newspapers that have handled this problem very well and some very badly. One of the newspapers in this city has messed it up as bad as any newspaper in the United States while another paper, the Herald Tribune, has handled it so well, that most of us who have used it are not only delighted with the way it was handled but wonder how they do it . . .

One can only speculate as to which New York paper Sussman referred to, but it could have been The Times since it was the other major paper in the city. William E. Robinson, Advertising Director of the Herald Tribune, in response to audience questions, stated that his paper gave priority to "any advertising that [was] directly concerned with the war effort," including recruiting ads and war bond advertisements. He also told the audience that his paper gave priority to fashion ads saying:

It may seem silly to give it priority over food advertising but we do and we do because we think it is more important at the moment. Beyond that, we think there is no advertising that has so much news value as fashion advertising and we think that it contributes to the news and reader interest in the paper.

One more consideration in the advertising problem is that, at least during the first Greater New York War Bond Pledge Campaign in early 1942, newspapers cooperated in the war bond campaign by adjusting their advertising rates for the firms who placed special ads.
If the Herald Tribune gave special consideration to war promotions and to fashion advertisements, it is conceivable that its competitor, The Times, did the same. This is particularly possible in light of the fact that retailers placed ads in both papers and used the Herald Tribune's actions as a means of negotiating with The Times. Therefore, considering that newsprint shortages limited advertising space, that newspapers gave special priorities to war promotions and fashion advertisements, and that newspapers gave special rates to war bond promotions, and considering the general patriotic attitude of the country, it is not surprising that fashion retailers developed ads that addressed war issues, encouraged war bond sales, and promoted merchandise all in the same space. As Samuel Reyburn, Chairman of the Board of Associated Dry Goods Corporation, told the Sales Executives Club:

Business, which has neglected its responsibility in helping to mold public opinion for many years, now has its greatest challenge and opportunity to make its contribution by selling through its widespread contacts the idea of individual loyalty and responsibility in the war effort. . . . . . . all of the skill of sales managers in the crisis facing the United States must be transferred from selling things to selling ideas.113

With all these issues and constraints in mind, New York retailers developed several kinds of ads including institutional ads, group ads, and educational ads as well as ads that promoted merchandise through the themes of quality investments and morale. On January 1, 1942 The Times
carried a number of institutional ads promoting patriotism and defense stamps and bonds. For example, The Uptown Retail Guild, which consisted of Bergdorf Goodman, Bonwit Teller, Hattie Carnegie, De Pinna, Jane Engel, Gunther, Jay Thorpe, McCutcheon's, Milgrim, Revillon, Saks Fifth Avenue, Stein & Blaine, and Tailored Woman, sponsored an ad titled "Buy a share in the future now" with the message:

Because the United States Defense Savings Bonds and Stamps give all of us a way to take a direct part in building the defenses of our country, we're turning the facilities of our shops over to their sale.

You'll find Defense Stamps on sale at all the shops of The Uptown Retail Guild. Ask any salesperson, any floorman, any employee. Take your change in stamps. Turn any loose coins you have in your purse into Defense Stamps.

It's the American way to provide the money so urgently needed for the national emergency. And because we know how much our customers want to help, we put all our services at their disposal.

Everytime you come to shop . . Buy Defense Stamps.

Bonwit Teller announced in its ad that booths in its Fifth Avenue entrance would be open from 6:30 to 12:00 p.m. so that patrons could buy war bonds "day and night." On January 4, Macy's suggested, in conjunction with its fur and coat sales, that consumers should "Buy Defense Bonds with the Dollars You Save!" Throughout the Spring, fashion ads often carried a small insignia of a soldier with the reminder to buy bonds.

In July, retailers joined forces for a Retailers for Victory month. Again, retailers encouraged consumers to purchase war bonds and take their change in war stamps. As
Bloomingdale's said, "We have no better BARGAINS to recommend than WAR STAMPS and Bonds."  

New York retailers also joined together to run a number of ads about operational changes and retailing concerns. The first appeared on February 8, 1942 in which the Uptown Retail Guild asked consumers, "When you Shop - Will you Help?"  

The Guild asked customers to carry purchases, avoid rush deliveries, avoid returns, and to conserve wrappings.

In response to a consumer buying spree that drove sales up thirty percent over the previous month and forty percent over the same month in the previous year, on February 15, 1942 twelve retailers joined forces in what The Times believed to be the "first joint anti-hoarding drive anywhere in the country." In the ad, under the heading "For Distinguished Service to the Axis . . . FOR HOARDING," the retailers defined hoarding and suggested that the cure would be government rationing of consumer goods. The bottom of the ad carried the message, "This advertisement is published in the interest of intelligent buying and patriotic behavior by Abraham & Straus, B. Altman & Company, Arnold Constable, Bloomingdale's, Bonwit Teller, Gimbels, Loeser's, Macy's, McCreery, Saks Fifth Avenue, Saks-34th Street, and Stern Brothers."

On March 6, 1942 thirty-four retailers ran a full-page message in The Times with the title, "... to help save
things your country desperately needs . . . will you Carry your share?" The ad told readers that because of shortages of rubber for truck tires, gasoline and oil, and paper to wrap packages, stores needed to reduce deliveries on small items and requested that customers carry their own smaller packages as a sign of patriotism. The ad also carried the threat that unless voluntary reductions proved successful, the stores would be forced to charge for deliveries or the government might stop them entirely. When the Office of Price Administration imposed price ceilings for apparel, thirty-eight retailers ran a full-page ad in The Times with the message, "As of tomorrow the undersigned stores signify that their prices are at or under the ceilings established by the Office of Price Administration."

By the summer of 1943, the government’s Office of Defense Transportation enacted new delivery rules and again fashion retailers Bergdorf Goodman, Bonwit Teller, Hattie Carnegie, Jay Thorpe, Milgrim, De Pinna, Jane Engel, McCutchion, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Tailored Woman ran a joint ad explaining the new rules.

A number of retailers, both individually and in groups, also used their ads to provide information to consumers that would help them to understand and cope with war-time adjustment. Bonwit Teller’s Chairman of the Board, Hortense Odlum, conducted a series of town meetings for the store’s customers then reported activities in their
advertisements. Part of the March 22, 1942 ad (see figure 12) carried the following question and answer:

Question: "What does the government mean when it says the silhouette is to be 'frozen,' skirts narrowed? Will this make my clothes look dated next Spring?"

Answer: That’s exactly what the government wants to avoid. The fabric conservation rulings will not be such that present clothes will become obsolete.124

After gas rationing went into effect, a number of stores addressed using public transportation to shop in Manhattan. On July 5, 1942 fashion retailers Saks Fifth Avenue, Bonwit Teller, Bergdorf Goodman, W. & J. Sloane, De Pinna, McCutcheon, Tailored Woman, Jay Thorpe, Milgrim, Jane Engel, and Coty Fifth Avenue, ran a joint ad that told customers which buses or subways to take from various locations to reach the uptown stores (see figure 13). Their message said:

Make a Pleasant Day of it - WHEN YOU COME IN TOWN SHOP UPTOWN

You used to hop in your car and drive miles to the nearest shopping center. Now when you step on the New York train to go shopping, remember - uptown is a woman’s world. In the upper Fifth Avenue neighborhood you have stores that make a life work of dressing you to look your best. Clothes with plus value. Lovely things for the home. Headquarter for beauty. Interested, unhurried service. Pleasant places to have luncheon. Everything to make your day in town pay double.125

These types of ads informed the public, but also served to enhance the stores’ images. These ads aligned the stores with the public’s interests in coping with war shortages while at the same time portraying the message that consumers could trust the retailers to help them. While the
Mrs. John Q. Public
Speaks up
at Customers' Town Meeting

The first Customers' Town Meeting, held this past week, shows that American women are keenly alive to conditions. They want to learn to buy wisely. They want clothes keyed to new wartime lives.

Question: "What does the government mean when it says the silhouette is to be 'frosted', skirts narrowed? Will this make my clothes look dated next Spring?"

Answer: That's exactly what the government wants to avoid. The fabric conservation rulings will not be such that present clothes will become obsolete.

Question: "Does that mean, then, that clothes will remain absolutely unchanged for the duration?"

Answer: No, within the boundaries of fabric and labor conservation, designers will be free to express originality.

Proposal: "I live in the suburbs and we know we'll all have cool houses (temperature 68 degrees) next Winter. I suggest long-sleeved nighties, warm robes, house slippers high and maybe lined."

Answer: We'll try to have them for you.

The next Town Meeting will be held in mid-April in my office. Please write in if you would attend.

Sincerely,

Chairman of the Board, Bonwit Teller, New York

Fig. 12 The New York Times, 22 March 1942, 5.
WHEN YOU COME IN TOWN
SHOP UPTOWN

You used to shop in your car and drive miles to the
nearest shopping center. Now when you step on the New York train to
go shopping, remember—uptown is a woman's world. In the
upper Fifth Avenue neighborhood you have stores that make a life
week of dressing you to look your best. Clothes with plus
value. Lovely things for the home. Headquarters for beauty. Interesting,
unhurried service. Pleasant places to have luncheon.

Everything to make your day in town joy double.

Saks Fifth Avenue
Bonwit Teller
Bergdorf Goodman
W. & J. Sloane
DePinna
McCutcheon
Tailored Woman
Jay Thorpe
Milgrim
Jane Engel
Coty Fifth Avenue

Fig. 13 The New York Times, 5 July 1942, 5.
public transportation messages aided women in reaching the uptown area, they also encouraged customers to continue to shop in their establishments despite difficulties in traveling.

In promoting fashion merchandise, retailers emphasized two major themes - quality investments in clothing purchases and women's responsibility to look attractive for their men's morale. In an ad for suits Tailored Woman featured two garments and a message surrounded by a border that included a reminder to buy war stamps and bonds. The sales message was typical of many that took the stance of quality for the duration. It read:

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SPRING 1942 - a SUIT SEASON!
And when it's suits - see the Tailored Woman, especially in this new era of "Quality Buying". Long famous for suits whose meticulous tailoring and simple elegance endow them with a long, year-to-year life. Tailored Woman presents its Spring Collection.  
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In promoting beauty for morale, retailers adopted a number of messages. In an ad for beauty products, Saks-34th said, "THIS EASTER, MORE THAN EVER . . . Beauty is Her Duty!" Perhaps Macy's summarized the message best in an ad that pictured an attractive woman with the Statue of Liberty in the background (see figure 14). It said:

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Head Up, Chin Up . . . Under a Pretty Hat!
It’s true!
A pretty hat proclaims your spirit louder than words. A pretty hat is as American as a soft drink.
Of course the privilege of wearing a pretty hat isn’t what we’re fighting for.
But it’s a symbol. Of the pleasure we still take in little things.
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Fig. 14 The New York Times, 30 March 1942, 5.
Of our new clothes philosophy (hard-working clothes, long-lived clothes . . . and the joy of a gay, feminine hat).
Of your determination to be pretty for your sailor or soldier boy.
(Suppose a woman's hats have always been the butt of a man's jokes?
He loves you in them . . . he remembers you in them)!
Why—a gay hat, a pretty hat can make a man's spirits soar.
It can help you put the best face on things.
So . . . this Spring, think of hats as spirit-lifters.
And think of Macy's for pretty hats, piquant hats, bold hats. 128

Although messages such as these that emphasized quality and morale dominated the fashion promotional scene, two stores continued to use American designers' names in their ads, although not as frequently as before the United States' involvement in the war. For the two years following Pearl Harbor, Lord & Taylor stopped using its Designer Shop as a campaign, but the store continued to make mention of several designers including Vera Maxwell, Brigance, and Claire McCardell. Their names did not appear as often as they had before the war effort, but, instead, seemed to take a secondary position behind more general themes. Despite the fact that Claire McCardell's designs appeared in only two ads during 1942 and 1943, Lord & Taylor placed her name prominently in the ads and devoted the entire spreads to her works. In September 1942 the store promoted her country wool dresses (see figure 15) and in November 1942 the store featured "Our 'Pop-over' designed by Claire McCardell." 129
Fig. 15 The New York Times, 6 September 1942, 13.
By contrast, Bonwit Teller promoted a larger number of American designers and did it more frequently than Lord & Taylor. Most of the ads remained small with the mention of a single designer, but these were augmented by the appearance of full-page ads that stressed American Design. These large ads represented a new campaign for the store.

In a full-page Sunday ad on March 1, 1942, Bonwit Teller presented "Tender Portrait - America's little band of great designers do lovely timeless clothes for this never-to-be-forgotten spring." The ad included sketches of designs along with descriptions and credits to seven designers, Philip Mangone, Germaine Monteil, Nettie Rosenstein, Traina-Norell, Louise Barnes Gallagher, Anthony Blotta, and Clare Potter. A second large Sunday ad appeared on September 6, 1942 (see figure 16) under the heading "America's Great Designers do wool for the long pull" and said, in part, "See here one example each from the design rooms of seven great Americans whose work it is our privilege and pleasure to present to New York." The list of designers, however, omitted the name of Germaine Monteil and included, instead, Adrian. On February 28, 1943, a Bonwit ad declared in bold letters, "AMERICA'S GREAT DESIGNERS do clothes and hats to make you look lovelier longer." This time the list of designers expanded to nine with the additions of Maurice Rentner and Morris Kraus. Bonwit's again featured these nine designers in a September
Fig. 16 The New York Times, 6 September 1942, 5.
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12, 1943 full-page ad with photographs and the message, "Now that each dress is allowed just so much fabric - and no more - design is what makes the difference. How fortunate America in the growing greatness of its designers. Nine whose work it is our privilege to present here show the ordered simplicity of the new season."\textsuperscript{133}

Of the New York retailers, Bonwit Teller made the most pronounced effort to present American design to the public through its advertisements. The large Sunday ads prominently featured each designer's name and work. Furthermore, the store effectively tied the designers with the issues facing the fashion industry; namely, the imposed fabric restrictions and the need for investment clothing.

Other American designers received credit in The Times' continued coverage of retailers' fashion shows. Stores benefitted from this coverage because, while it did not cost them anything, it also did not deplete dwindling advertising space. When Virginia Pope reviewed the fall collections at Saks Fifth Avenue, she began her article with Sophie Gimbel's name then continued with details of the show.\textsuperscript{134} In the column beside the Saks review and under the same title, Pope reported on Bonwit Teller's fall offerings. As with the Saks article, she began the piece with Fira Benenson's name. Both Sophie and Fira Benenson supervised the custom salons for these two retailers. Nevertheless,
before the war, their names would not have appeared so prominently in articles of this type.

American designers received some store credits for their work during the first two years of the United States' war effort, but they did not receive the same amount of coverage that they had immediately after Paris fell. Instead, the topic of American design dropped behind national issues. In comparison to a decrease in advertising space concerning American design, several new promotional efforts focused exclusively on America as a design leader.

**Promotional Innovations: Fashion Shows and Forecasts**

Despite the hardships imposed by the war, the American fashion industry launched several new campaigns designed to promote American design. Some were larger than others, but they all received press coverage, so they served to maintain both the issue of New York as a fashion leader and to reinforce the names of American designers with the reading public. As in the years preceding the United States' involvement in the war, there was no one organizing body in coordinating the efforts of various groups, but instead promotions continued to spring forth independent of each other.
American Fashion Critics Award

On January 16, 1942 Coty announced the first new promotional tool, the American Fashion Critics Award. In a message in The Times Coty stated:

During the war years, some of the materials of fashion will disappear from our lives. Others will be curtailed. The ingenuity and resourcefulness of our fashion designers will be called upon as never before. To them must go the task of helping to sustain national morale; of helping to maintain the enormous industry that supports one hundred thousand wage earners, contributes three billion dollars yearly to our national income. Coty is keenly aware of America’s dominant place as a world fashion center, and of the necessity of stimulating our great fashion industry during the war effort and afterwards. Coty has infinite confidence in the ability of American designers, and believes their achievements need greater public recognition. ... These prizes will go to the professional designer who originates the trend that, in the opinion of the judges, becomes the outstanding style trend of the year. ... Coty hopes that, by helping to secure proper recognition for American designing genius, this nation’s rightful place as fashion leader of the world may be assured for all time.35

The announcement also said that the fashion editors of national magazines, newspaper syndicates, and metropolitan newspapers would choose the winner by secret ballot and that that designer would receive a trophy and a check for one thousand dollars.

Of particular significance is the intent of the award; to choose a designer who set a trend. By stating this purpose, Coty encouraged designers to work toward a unifying style instead of following their own particular interests. This goal was in keeping with the other voices in the industry that questioned who would lead the American
industry in setting trends since Paris no longer acted in that capacity.

In January 1943, in a ceremony in the main hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with Mayor La Guardia participating, Grover A. Whalen, Chairman of the Board of Coty and soon-to-be-named chairman for the mayor's style center planning committee, presented the first award to Norman Norell. Coty also presented citations for "specific fashions which provided strong influence for the year 1942 within wartime restrictions" to Adrian for his V-line suit silhouette, Hattie Carnegie for the short evening dress, Clare Potter for her ruffled blouse, Charles Cooper for the drawstring drape, Mainbocher for the lumberjack suit, Claire McCardell for her Popover dress; and Valentina for her skirt with trouser pleats. Coty also placed ads in the fashion sections of The Times Magazine that placed the Coty Awards name before the public and reinforced its sponsorship of American designers and its belief in New York as a world fashion center.

In the Fall of 1942, New York hotels became another source of fashion promotion. Several uptown hotels began offering lunch-time fashion shows that featured American designers. The Times said of these shows:

New York's large hotels are rapidly assuming the role of fashion impresarios. Under their aegis many designers are getting a visual introduction to the public. The luncheon presentations are the stage on which well-edited collections created by the talents of
individual designers are getting a distinguished presentation. 138

Not only did the shows provide an opportunity for designers to display their work, but The Times reported on the shows. The designers, then, received credit before an even wider audience than those who could lunch during the weekdays. The Hotel Pierre first offered the shows with the Waldorf Astoria soon following suit. Some of the designers presented included Norman Norell, Jo Copeland, Nettie Rosenstein, and Mary Lewis.

With a growing promotional fund, the New York Dress Institute used its funds to begin two new endeavors. In September 1942 The Times reported that the American Council of Dress Manufacturers was in the process of collecting signatures from its members in order to present a petition to the New York Dress Institute asking that it establish a design school in New York. Chairman of the council, Sidney Vlock, said that $600,000 had already been raised for the promotional fund of the Institute and that by the end of the year that figure would reach $1,000,000. 139 In suggesting using the fund to start a design school, Vlock said:

The time has come to translate words into action. Right now we've got two strikes on France - maybe three. We must clinch our hold on the fashion supremacy and look forward to the post war period. . . .

It is entirely within the powers of fashion creators here to decide whether New York will be the style center of the world or whether they will capitulate after the war to the old Paris tradition. Today we are free from the hampering influences of supposedly superior foreign fashion. With the money available to start an American fashion academy, it is our duty to develop American
creative talent through free scholarships, 'Oscar' awards, and the like.\textsuperscript{140}

By November, the petition contained 300 signatures and the Council presented it to the Institute for action. Included with the petition were a number of letters from New York retailers endorsing the project as well as one from New York Governor Herbert H. Lehman which read, "I believe that a dress institute of design would be of very great value and would help the city to remain the center of the style world after the war."\textsuperscript{141} By the end of 1943, the Institute had not announced any definite plans for the school.

Press Weeks

In July 1943, the New York Dress Institute initiated the first of its Press Weeks. Using money from its promotional fund, the Institute hosted a week of fashion showings and entertainment for fifty-six members of the fashion press. The Institute invited the press from cities from all across the country and offered to pay their expenses in the city. Eleanor Lambert recalled that Press Week began at a meeting of the Couture Group of the Dress Institute when Ben Reig asked her what he should do when "those women from out of town, those newspaper writers come horning in with the buyers and they want to know if they can see a showing."\textsuperscript{142} She replied that they should not just be allowed in, but invited in. According to Lambert, originally the Institute invited 150 editors, but 53 came.
While the Institute offered to pay their way, she said "we had sense enough to make it optional."143

For many of those attending, it was the first time that they had seen a complete line presented by a manufacturer. The attendees of the first Press Week finished their week with a luncheon style show at the Hotel Pierre. Mayor LaGuardia took the opportunity to address the editors and extol the virtues of New York City.

Lambert also recalled that the Institute's promotional funds lasted for eighteen years, with part of it financing Press Weeks. Lambert asked each designer to do twenty minutes of his most "stunning" work for the press after the regular buyers' showing. Thus, the press saw as many as fifty-five shows in five days.144 Through their own experiences and press releases from the Institute, the editors took the message of American design and designers home to their readers across the country.

Fashion Forecasts

As local newspapers adjusted their copy to include stories of New York fashions relayed first-hand by those editors who attended Press Weeks, The Times also made several changes in its fashion coverage. Despite paper shortages that caused the elimination of the Sunday Fashions page and the Rotogravure, The Times expanded its coverage of the Spring and Fall fashion collections. The paper presented the first of these new sections on September 13,
1942 in the Magazine section with thirty-five of the sixty-four pages devoted to fashions or fashion ads (see figure 17).

Virginia Pope opened the new section with an editorial titled "Fashion Forecasts" in which she wrote:

A new fashion season is dawning, one of the most vital in the history of American design. Operating under wartime restrictions and completely freed from any foreign influence, designers have met the challenge and are creating authentic all-American styles, suited to the needs of the emergency.145

The second page included photographs of ten designers along with their comments on American design and their predictions for the future. The remainder of the section contained photographs of new fall styles along with store credits and designers’ names and articles about the fashion situation including one by Stanley Marcus on conservations measures. In correspondence following the publication of this new Magazine section, Lester Markel wrote to Arthur Sulzberger that the reactions were very good. In fact, the paper had received "quite a collection of letters from people in the advertising field who were very much impressed."146

In March 1943, Virginia Pope again presented her forecast for American fashions and again spotlighted American designers and their thoughts. Among them, Claire McCardell said, "America is developing honest to goodness clothes made only for the ways and habits of American women and the lives they are living. Their need of the day is to dress themselves for hard work, a few hours of play on a
don't miss
Fashion Editor Virginia Pope's

fall fashion forecast

an exciting preview of the Fall fashion scene to help you select clothes for your Fall wardrobe that are both beautiful and useful... in today's issue of

The New York Times Magazine

Fig. 17 The New York Times, 13 September 1942, 52.
holiday and a last minute party." Nettie Rosenstein offered, "The consideration of morale on the home front is an inciting challenge to the designer. Clothes should be feminine and flattering and must take men's minds far from the thought of uniforms." Again, the fashion section took up half of the magazine and included a wide variety of clothing styles and accessories as well as several articles on the clothing situation in the country.

The September 1943 Fall Forecast followed the format of the previous issues, but it contained more ads from fashion retailers than its predecessors. Grover H. Whalen wrote of his goal of creating a style center in New York saying:

The thing we wish to encourage in this whole endeavor is an expression of the American sense of beauty. We maintain that we have our own genius for beauty, whose harmonious development should be furthered by all means within our power. In the World Fashion Center, as we see it, there will be room for all the talent in the world - and we will welcome competition.

The New York Dress Institute placed a full-page ad in the magazine in which it quoted reactions to its Press Week from some of the editors who attended (see figure 18). The ad also said:

From California to Oregon - Florida to Maine - from every corner of the country - came the fashion writers of America to see the Fall Fashions that will set the pace for America for months to come. In settings of unsurpassed beauty, the great Creators of New York revealed the newest of the new, inspired by this glamorous city where fashions begin. New York Creations, born in the Fashion Capital of the World, are designed skillfully, knowingly for all American women -
"...probably the best clothes the world has ever produced..."

From California to Oregon—Florida to Maine—from every corner of the country—came the fashion-makers of America to see the Fall Fashions that will set the pace for America for months to come. In settings of surpassing beauty, the great Creators of New York revealed the newest of the new, inspired by this glamorous city where fashions begin. New York Creations, born in the Fashion Capital of the World, are designed skillfully, knowingly for all American women—the most wearable, the most flattering, the most suitable clothes of our time.

Here are the glowing tributes the fashion press paid:

Fig. 18 The New York Times, 12 September 1943, 31.
the most wearable, the most flattering, the most suitable clothes of our time.\textsuperscript{150}

These new magazine sections are particularly notable in that they expanded \textit{The Times} fashion coverage beyond what it had previously allotted to Paris fashions. Paris fashions usually received three or four pages of photographic coverage along with crediting captions in the Rotogravure section. There were no comments, articles, or advertisements. The spring and fall forecasts, supervised by Virginia Pope, allowed for a cohesive and comprehensive presentation of the New York fashion market. In this format American fashions received promotional consideration that surpassed what the paper usually gave to Paris' seasonal openings. Furthermore, the fashion coverage carried very few references to Paris, calling it, instead, the foreign influence. This may have been intentional or it may be an indication of how much the industry was focused on national concerns and the survival of the New York industry.

\textbf{Fashions of The Times}

Beyond this expanded fashion coverage, \textit{The Times} also presented the first of what became a series of yearly fashion shows. On September 15, 1942 the paper announced that it would sponsor a fashion show, to benefit the Army Emergency Relief Fund, that would reflect how American fashions had responded to the L-85 regulations and "the progress in American fashion leadership after two years of
independence of the former style capital." Of the L-85 regulations the article said:

Originated in response to the mounting consumer interest in the L-85 theme, the whole panorama will crystallize for the spectators the result of that government order, which was awaited with deep misgivings, but which has roused genuine enthusiasm for the suits, coats, and dresses of the war era. Visual evidence will be given in the succeeding scenes of the stimulus L-85 has proved to be in good design and of the adaptability of the American designer when confronted with the necessity of improvisation and new materials.

In the weeks preceding the show, The Times regularly featured articles and announcements about the show. In them, the paper emphasized that the designs shown would be from both custom collections and those of lower price ranges. Eventually called "Fashions of The Times," the paper repeatedly stressed that this show would not be like ordinary fashion shows. Instead, the emphasis would be on innovations in both designs and fabrics brought on by the war. A possible explanation for this continued presentation could be that the government had repeatedly asked that retailers discontinue promotions geared to increase sales levels and possibly cause buying sprees. Furthermore, aligning the show with war issues gave it a more patriotic emphasis.

After the first show, The Times devoted an entire column to the rationale behind the planning of the show. The paper stressed that the show had been in the plans for years and that the purpose of the show was to display the
progress of American designers in working without Paris' influence. The article expressed the fashion industry's concern that Paris might not ever be free of Hitler's influence; that Paris might not ever be what it had been in the past. It also stated the opinion that the L-85 regulations served as a stimulant, rather than a hindrance, to American designers. The article said:

Inception of the production known as "Fashions of The Times' dates back to the day the pavements of Paris echoed to the rumble of German tanks, the tread of German boots. For on that June day of 1940, when Paris surrendered, the domination of the fashion world which the French capital had exercised for centuries ceased forthwith. New York woke up simultaneously to a responsibility and a natural role, as inheritor of that tradition. . . .

. . . If [American designers] had needed further prodding to stir them to their finest efforts, it was at hand in the blusterings of Hitler, that he would dictate styles for the women of the world, as well as the terms of the Allied armies.

Hitler has been rather too much occupied in the intervening months to have given the project his most serious thought. His fashion dictates have been feeble and limited in scope. . . .

Because this development [of American designers] was a story of moment, THE NEW YORK TIMES has followed it consistently in its columns. From the first thunderclap of French capitulation to the stimulation of the L-85 and succeeding orders it has chronicled each stage of the progress made. And plans had been in progress, even before Dec. 7, to present a fashion show to signalize awareness of the city's position as the hub of fashion inspiration.

Abandoned temporarily when Japan's tactics in the Pacific plunged this country into the conflict, these plans were revived some weeks ago when the growing confidence and ingenuity of designers here made it evident that the time was at hand for recognition of the forward strides they have taken, the prestige they have attained.153

On October 6 and 7, 1942 The Times presented four showings of the one hundred designs, chosen because they had
"definite fashion significance" and exhibited democracy in fashion, to sold-out crowds of approximately 2,000 people. Mayor LaGuardia again took part in the ceremonies and expressed his support for the fashion industry. The Times used professionals experienced in stage work to expertly design and coordinate the show, so that the final product was an elaborate, entertaining presentation. Then, on the days following the shows, the paper carried full pages of photographs of the exhibited fashions along with credits to their designers and participating retailers. In addition, the paper took the opportunity to include extensive column space devoted to details of the show and to express its support of the American fashion industry, such as in the one quoted above.

The Times repeated Fashions of The Times in October 1943, but expanded the show to three days, six shows, and thirty-two designers. Again, the proceeds went to charity. In promoting the show, the paper said:

...Many of the designers are world famous. Others have burst upon public consciousness recently and will acquire new luster in the coming months...

...In effect, this handsomely staged presentation of American modes is said to have become the National Academy of the fashion world. The spectators will comprise a "jury of award" to decide the honors.

After the opening of the first show, The Times devoted front page coverage, directly under the masthead, to the show. The article began:

The second edition of "Fashion of The Times" — staged to illustrate the ability of New York’s designers
to create fashions for all and at all price levels—rolled out yesterday headlined by Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia as "something new in journalism."

. . . It was an opening of what has become the most comprehensive fashion showing in the city, encompassing merchandise from fifty of New York's leading stores, and a production which, this year, reflected the designers' anticipation of victory.157

As in 1942, the paper again devoted extensive photographic and column space to details of the show (see figure 19). In addition, credits contained the names of designers as did articles about the show.

These elaborate fashion shows, which cost $18,900 in 1942 and $30,500 in 1943,158 provided a number of opportunities for The Times to place American designers' names before the public both at the shows and in the coverage afterward. With all the glamour and promotions, they also elevated the designers to celebrity status on much the same level as Paris couturiers. With all the special lighting, settings, and famous attendees, American fashion also enjoyed a status beyond what it had before the war. This focused attention took American design from something ordinary and taken for granted to something valued.

These new promotions also eased some of the discomfort of the L-85 regulations, threats of clothing rationing, and shortages in consumer goods. Furthermore, they kept fashion before the public at a time when the industry feared that civilians might become preoccupied with the war and forget about buying new clothes. The promotions also helped the industry to continued its position as an important member of

Fig. 19 The New York Times, 21 October 1943, 24.
New York's, and the nation's, economy. The government's concern that the country's economy should continue to function as normally as possible perhaps explains why government officials participated in events that could have increased sales to a level beyond which the industry had resources to provide goods.

These two years, 1942 and 1943, provided American fashion designers a protected environment in which to develop their skills without the competition usually provided by Paris. Furthermore, because New York remained relatively free during the war, it was the logical alternative to Paris for the duration, so other nations looked to America for fashion leadership. One of the problems that the American industry faced, however, was the lack of a focused design trend. Instead, the concern lingered that designers might follow their own design tangents which could undermine New York's fashion authority in the eyes of consumers. This leadership, once dictated by Paris, appeared in the form of the L-85 regulations. They came at the time that the American designers had just begun to throw off designs seen in previous Paris seasons. In a strange twist of events, the government actually provided the badly-needed leadership and forced the design industry to focus its attention on a single theme instead of going off in multiple directions.
By the end of 1943, however, the industry began looking more towards victory in the war and the possibilities of its aftermath. As The Times said in its coverage of Fashions of The Times, designers looked ahead to victory. For over two years, American designers had had little or no competition, but no one knew what would happen if and when Paris regained its freedom. As will be shown in Chapter VII, with thoughts of the post-war situation and foreign competition, both retailers and The Times made subtle shifts in their coverage of American designs in 1944. Some in the fashion industry had bragged that they welcomed this competition, but the challenge was easy to make as long as Paris remained occupied. As the nation looked to victory in Europe, Paris appeared as more of a threat to New York’s newly realized status as the world’s fashion leader.
NOTES


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


12. Ibid.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.
16. "The Women Enlist for the Duration!" Ibid., 9D.

17. Ibid.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 5.


23. Ibid., 3.

24. Ibid., 4.

25. "The Women Enlist for the Duration!" Ibid., 1D.

26. Ibid., 6D.


30. Ibid.


37. Ibid., 29.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 30.


41. Lambert, Ibid., 29.


43. Ibid.


45. Ibid.


50. Ibid.


52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.


61. Ibid., 115.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.


67. Marcus, 117.

68. "The War Production Board Issues Its Limitation Order for Women's and Children's Apparel," Tobe Fashion Reports, 8 April 1942, A.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., c.


72. Ibid.


88. Ibid.


90. Tobe Fashion Reports, 27 May 1942, 10.


94. Frank W. Fox in *Madison Avenue Goes To War: The Strange Career of American Advertising, 1941-1945* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975) reported that in 1941 the advertising industry faced extinction for two reasons: (1) It was under government investigation by the Justice Department which was considering antitrust prosecution and by the Federal Trade Commission which was considering whether or not advertising was a necessary business expense. (2) The Emergency Price Control Bill gave the president the power to stop advertising altogether if he thought it was inflationary. Realizing its predicament, the advertising industry offered its skills to the Office of War Information as a coordinating agent for civilian information.


96. Ruth West, Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid., 3.

100. Tobe Fashion Reports, 18 November 1942, E.

101. Tobe Fashion Reports, 8 April 1943, E.


104. Ibid., 7.


110.  Ibid., 12.


140. Ibid.


143. Ibid., 31.


148. Ibid.


152. Ibid.


155. "1,000 Turned Away In Style Show Run," The New York Times, 8 October 1942, 23.


CHAPTER VII
PROMOTING AMERICAN FASHIONS UNDER THE PROSPECT OF PARIS’ LIBERATION: JANUARY 1944 THROUGH DECEMBER 1945

Introduction
As the American fashion industry began 1944, the Allies’ war efforts looked promising in their mission of freeing Europe from German control. While the fashion industry anticipated an end to the war, it nervously considered how Paris’ liberation would affect New York’s newly found position as a world fashion leader. Could American design maintain a recognized leadership role in the fashion world and compete with the French industry, or would it once again take second position to Paris’ leadership? What part would American designers play in initiating style trends for the nation and for the world? What would become of America’s fashion leadership in other countries such as Canada and South America?

Anticipating renewed relations with the French industry, in January 1944 New York retailers began promoting American designers with renewed vigor. As compared to 1942 and 1943 when American designers’ names appeared less frequently in stores’ newspaper advertisements than they had just after Paris’ occupation, retailers increased their use
of designers' names and launched several new promotional campaigns. After the August 1944 liberation of Paris, New York retailers included designers' names in their newspaper advertisements at an accelerating rate. By the end of 1945, designers' names in retail ads had become the norm rather than the exception, even among smaller stores.

Paris' liberation prompted increased discussion of the question of the relationship between Paris and New York. American industry leaders participated in forums, such as Fashion Group meetings, to consider the situation. The industry repeatedly asked itself in private meetings and in publications - what will happen now?

Paris fashion leaders, faced with the challenge of rebuilding both its industry and its reputation, asked the same question. France desperately needed the income from its fashion industry to rebuild the nation's economy. To achieve this goal, French envoys travelled to its former markets, including New York, in an effort to re-establish trade relations.

By the end of this two year period, World War II was over, but its desolation remained. The American fashion industry continued to operate under government control and it feared that these restrictions would hinder its struggle to maintain leadership. Nevertheless, American consumers now recognized American designers and requested their creations by name. Within this atmosphere of fledgling
achievement, the American fashion industry determined that the post-war years would see a competitive relationship between New York and Paris. The industry would no longer be characterized as "Paris Says," but, rather, "Paris Plus New York."

**Anticipating Paris' Liberation**

On New Year's Day, 1944, *The New York Times* set the tone for an increase in the promotion of American designers when it printed the first article in a new series of biographies on American designers. Throughout the next three months, *The Times* carried twelve designer articles featuring fifteen designers: Nettie Rosenstein, Jo Copeland, Stella Brownie, Norman Norell (see figure 20), Adele Simpson, Clare Potter, Bruno Stehle, Louise Barnes Gallagher, Philip Mangone, Vincent Monte Sano, Vera Maxwell, Joset Walker, Omar Kiam, Vincent Coppola, and Maurice Rentner. In launching the series, written by Virginia Pope, the introduction stated, "Leading creators of fashion are making a distinguished contribution to New York as a design center. Their spring collections will be described in a series of articles which will appear on this page during the coming weeks." Pope then continued:

The new year finds New York's designers ready to greet it with styles appropriate to the times. They are styles which, in spite of the many obstacles that have beset their creators since the beginning of the war, do honor to them and standards of the past reputation of the city as a center of design.
DESIGNER STRESSES SIMPLE SILHOUETTE

Norman Norell Likes a Line Dropped Low to Hip and Dress Cut to Follow Natural Curves

This is the seventh of a series of articles on New York fashions designed by Norman Norell.

BY VIRGINIA POPE

"When I design I never start with the neck and finish with the hem. I design from the head to the sole. These words were spoken by Starck. They are the truth from India, where style evolves in poetry, but not in New York. This writer never refers to a silhouette which, as he says, is "nothing but a line dropped down to essentials." The favor-black crepe carries the eye to the neck where the sailor middy. In India, they have a line dropped down to essentials which is seen in both day and night wear. The line of the dress is strong, whether it is a dropped one, a straight one, or a one-piece dress, but always the line of the dress is strong. The writer also favors the device of bringing the eye to the hem. He has seen that this is not the eye alone which creates interest, but in all of a jump with the eye. At the same time the neck looks as if the dress were a simple droop. The eye, the head, the neck, the face, the figure, the dress, the dress, the dress..."

The figure..."

Fig. 20 The New York Times, 24 January 1944, 14.
The major portion of the designs which clothe America's women are created in its great garment center. There, season in and season out, the women and men who work are but names to the rest of the country. They are inaccessible to the general public. As personalities they are practically unknown. Yet, they are doing a job of inestimable value for the American public. They are maintaining a high level in the art of dress.\(^3\)

This series of articles is notable for a number of reasons. First, the print media continued to struggle with the lack of available paper. The Times continued to report on fashion happenings, but it often compacted articles. Despite these necessary measures, each designer article included a photograph of the designer and a photograph of one of his/her creations. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 6, The Times adopted a policy of favoring articles about consumer fashion adoption rather than fashion creation. This series, then, considering the publishing environment, appears contextually luxurious.

The copy in each article included highlights of each designer's spring collection, and some personal information about the designer including his/her design philosophy. For example, Pope said of Nettie Rosenstein in the first of the series:

\[\ldots\] Each creation that leaves her establishment is worked over with infinite care. \ldots\]

\[\ldots\] Mrs. Rosenstein knows her metier from start to finish. She has grown up in it. In her design room she supervises every detail. Her delicate fingers arrange the drapes for which she is so well known. \ldots\]

Nettie Rosenstein's fashion credo is: Every dress must have individuality, be executed with finesse and bear the stamp of distinction.
By this type of writing, Pope gave a human dimension to each designer's name. Pope displayed the designers as real people, real celebrities, that the public could remember, identify with, and follow. At a time when designers usually did not present individual shows of their work, but received limited publicity as part of a retailer's show or a public fashion show, The Times afforded the designers an individual forum to distinguish themselves. This individual attention was more in keeping with the type of attention and celebrity status usually reserved for French couture designers.

The copy also highlighted the quality and distinctiveness of American designers' work. In so doing, it elevated the perceived quality of American design to a level more on the scale of couture work. At a time when quality and value represented patriotism, this positioning aligned the designers with American nationalism and with industry advertising campaigns.

Finally, the articles allowed the designers to address the question of New York as a design center and contrast New York and Paris designs. For example, Pope quoted Jo Copeland as saying, "Clothes in Paris were complete without the woman. Here we try to adapt them to the woman and her needs. They must express her individuality."5 Vincent Coppola stated:

We can never forget that we were the pupils of Paris; today we are the alumni, standing on our own feet. We have a golden opportunity in being able to design for the American woman. Her beauty and character
make her the most interesting of all women to work for. I have her and her needs ever in my mind when I create a collection.\textsuperscript{6}

Morris Kraus agreed stating, "A New York designer thinks of the woman, the Paris designer of the garment."\textsuperscript{7} Philip Mangone, however, said of Paris, "I’ll hop the first boat after the war. Won’t you? We need the air of Paris if we don’t want to get stale here."\textsuperscript{8} Though they had different opinions, quoting the designers’ thoughts about New York and Paris articulated for the reader the value of New York and reinforced the positioning of New York as equal with Paris.

The Times expanded the articles with additional photographs and reprinted the series in a booklet under the title "they have designs on you!" The only date on the booklet is on the copy of a front page of The Times used for the cover, dated May 15, 1944. As an introduction, Virginia Pope wrote:

Designers, not buildings, make a fashion center. Hours of work mounting into years establish the firm foundation on which it stands. Individual effort contributes to the character of its structure. Its far-reaching influence spreads because of talents unstintingly given in order that it may live. With this in mind, the following articles were written. They deal with leading New York designers who have done much to bring fashion fame to the city.

Only those functioning in the field of mass production were selected for the present series since theirs is the most widely felt influence. To them, and many others not included because of the limitation of space, goes the honor of giving New York that leadership which has firmly established it as a great fashion center.\textsuperscript{9}

In stating that the designers make the design center, Pope appears to be challenging Mayor La Guardia’s efforts to
build a New York design center to house industry activities. She puts individuals and their talents at the heart of the industry rather than buildings. Nevertheless, the booklet provided an organized, professionally designed format to showcase those designers at the forefront of the New York industry. There is no indication as to how this promotional piece was used, but it would have been a useful tool to those seeking to promote American designers.

In addition to this special series, The Times continued its coverage of retailers’ fashions often including the names of featured designers. The attention on the designers extended to custom designers that worked in private salons in the leading fashion retail stores. When Virginia Pope covered the spring opening at Saks Fifth Avenue’s Salon Moderne, she used Sophie (Gimbel’s) name (Sophie of Saks) in the headline rather than the store’s. The store received only two mentions — one in the picture caption and one in identifying the salon.10

Pope followed the same pattern when she wrote about Fira Benenson’s designs for the Salon de Couture at Bonwit Teller. Once again, she included the designer’s name in the subheading, but mentioned the store’s name only in locating the salon. As she did with Sophie of Saks, Pope concentrated on Benenson and spent the entire article describing her designs. This practice stands in sharp contrast to articles written earlier in the decade when
custom designers’ names were often omitted entirely and only the store received credit for the work done in its custom salon.

The Times also continued to feature fashion in its Sunday Magazine section. Virginia Pope authored the majority of the articles which usually featured a seasonal or design theme. As in the recent past, the articles contained photographs of fashions along with store credits and often designers’ names. For example, the March 5, 1944 Magazine piece reviewed the work of some of New York’s custom salons including Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman’s, Jay Thorpe, Bonwit Teller, Milgrim’s, and Hattie Carnegie. In addition to the store credits for each photograph, the credits included Sophie (Saks) and Sally Milgrim.¹¹

In place of Virginia Pope’s articles, the Magazine sometimes carried pieces by Jean Pettibone who wrote about the California design market. As in Pope’s pieces, the articles contained pictures of garments on models with design credits, but not store credits. The difference continued in that the models were sometimes Hollywood starlets. Favored designers included Adrian and Howard Greer.¹² The Magazine did not, however, renew the large spring and fall forecast sections discontinued in 1943. The Times steadily ran its articles on fashion acceptance in the daily papers with one or two pictures of
the mentioned style along with both designer and store credits. In what appears to be an expansion of its coverage, in May The Times included a series of articles on the St. Louis fashion market written by Virginia Pope. In one she discussed the junior market, in another the St. Louis design school, and in an article for the magazine, she reported on St. Louis designers including pictures of their work.

The Times coverage of fashion markets outside of New York indicates both that other locations were providing New York with competition and that The Times saw their efforts as newsworthy. This coverage reinforces reports that New York City was losing part of its fashion business to other cities. It also shows why Mayor La Guardia, the fashion unions, and manufacturers so anxiously sought to promote New York City as the design center of the nation and the world.

Increased Retail Promotions

Just as The Times expanded its coverage of American designers in the months preceding Paris' liberation, the New York City retailers also increased their use of designers' names in their retail ads. As in the preceding years, Bonwit Teller, Lord & Taylor, and Saks Fifth Avenue used designers' names more often, more prominently, and more aggressively, but smaller retailers began to follow their pattern as well. Along with the war messages about buying
bonds or serving in the military, New York City retailers added new designer names to their advertisements.

Arnold Constable, located at Fifth Avenue and 40th, some distance from the more upscale fashion retailers, featured dresses in the $8 to $12 range designed by Henry Rosenfeld. In its copy on January 2, Constable called Rosenfeld "the man behind all those, bright, timely dresses with price tags to scale with today's sensible-living budgets." In May, Russeks, which often promoted quality women's suits, also featured dresses from $8.95 to $10.95 by Henry Rosenfeld, while Saks 34th, more budget-oriented than the uptown Saks Fifth Avenue, promoted $12.95 Rosenfeld dresses.

In March 1944, Tailored Woman, which carried fashions in the over $50 range, featured suits by Davidow for the first time. The text read, "Steeped in the tradition of 'Quality' for which Tailored Woman is famous, these Town-and-Country Suits and Toppers -- superbly tailored by Davidow -- are born to lead a long and useful life." Davidow manufactured quality women's apparel in New York City, but received no promotional credit in retailers' ads during the years of this study until this time. Other retailers also mentioned manufacturers in their ads or used language such as "couture" and "designer."

These examples indicate that the use of designer names was spreading and, therefore, becoming more commonplace than
before the war. Though the practice was originally concentrated among the more uptown, and upscale, retailers, by 1944 it had been adopted by a wider variety of stores. Furthermore, advertisers usually placed designers' and manufacturers' names in prominent positions within the ads, not just in the descriptives credits under featured designs. Using American names to promote fashion had moved from the unusual to a more general business practice.

The stores that had already been using American designers' names, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bonwit Teller, and Lord & Taylor, increased their ads devoted just to designers and launched several new campaigns. In January 1944 Saks Fifth Avenue premiered its new "Saks Fifth AveNEWS" ad (see figure 21). Its large format, which occupied over half of the newspaper page, was designed to look like an open book. Initially, Saks told its readers:

Look at these pages. Get to know them. In this space, our new daily fashion folio makes its debut tomorrow in the New York Times. We call it SAKS FIFTH AVENews.

Because we believe that at any time, fashion is news to women. Because we believe that fashion news is made at Saks fifth Avenue every day; it's that kind of a store. Our own brilliant staff of designers, our many scouts in the markets of the country, our exacting clients, all join together to make us a creative shop.

So we will report daily to you, the shifting fashion scene as we see it. We invite your comments. What would you like to see and read in Saks Fifth AveNEWS? 

The store's first installment of SaksNEWS, which ran the day following the above announcement, featured Sophie Gimbel, Saks' customer designer and supervisor of its Salon
Fig. 21 The New York Times, 7 March 1945, 7.
Moderne. Half of the ad, a lengthy text, discussed Sophie’s fashion philosophy and apparel suggestions for different times of the day, and half contained a sketch of a Sophie design. In part the ad said:

Sophie, top fashion designer and guiding light at Saks Fifth Avenue is tall, fair, soft-spoken. There is nothing out-of-this world about her. She is very much of this world; believes in fashions that accurately reflect the life and times of the woman she dresses. Because mistakes are costly and wasteful, she believes a wardrobe must be planned now, ahead of the season. So we’ve condensed her Spring, 1944 thoughts into a little bulletin of good advice, good sense, good looks.¹⁶

Just as Virginia Pope’s feature articles about American designers portrayed them as real people interested in their consumers, the Saks ad portrayed Sophie as a real person; not just a name. The ad also aligned her design concerns with the larger national concern for quality and conservation. In the following months, the ads addressed a variety of style issues and regularly featured Sophie’s work.

In May 1944, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bonwit Teller, and Lord & Taylor became involved in an advertising competition that revolved around who carried the most American designer apparel. The competition began when LIFE featured American design on the front cover of its May 8, 1944 magazine then carried seven pages of pictures and information about ten American designers.¹⁷ LIFE introduced the piece by saying:

The U.S. fashion world is becoming very proud of U.S. clothes designers. As long as Paris ruled in the realm of style, Americans were apologetic about their designers. But when Paris fell Americans began to
appraise and appreciate their own. Fashion stores throughout the U.S., which used to brag about their Alix or Chanel copies, are now advertising Carnegie, Adrian or other American "name" originals. 18

On Sunday, May 7, Bonwit Teller's ad carried a photograph of the magazine along with the same designer photographs and write-ups carried in LIFE (see figure 22). The ad said:

Life names leading American designers... magazine polls America coast to coast... finds 10 leaders in U.S. fashion designing... of the ten names seven belong to Bonwit in New York... here... their pictures as seen in the May 8 issue of LIFE... and at Bonwit's you'll find their clothes that have made American women proud of U.S. designers... see them now in our Fifth Avenue windows. 19

On the following Sunday Lord & Taylor ran an ad equal in size to the Bonwit ad, but it only contained extensive copy (see figure 23). It said:

Let's get this question of American Designers straightened out right now! First of all, what's this furore over only TEN leading American designers? In this great country of ours? Come, come, Life Magazine. We'd say it should be over MANY TIMES that number.

We know, because we were the first store in America to publicize and promote American designers when everybody else passed them up to run to Paris. And we have consistently encouraged American designers for twelve years. We know American designers and the topflight talent. . . .

As a customer, eager to buy the best of American fashions, you may have gotten a little confused as to WHERE you will find them. For the sake of the record, here are some of the distinguished American designers whose clothes you will find, right now, at Lord & Taylor: 20

The ad then listed twenty-nine designers. Saks Fifth Avenue also ran an ad the same size as the Bonwit Teller ad, larger than the usual Saks ad, which contained a sketch of the
Fig. 22 The New York Times, 7 May 1944, 5.
Let's get this question
of American Designers
straightened out right now!

First of all, what's this fuss over only TEN leading American designers?
In this great country of ours? Come, come, Life Magazine. We'd say it
should be over MANY TIMES that number.

We know, because we were the first store in America to publicize
and promote American designers, when everybody else passed them up to
run to Paris. And we have consistently encouraged American designers
for twelve years. We know American designers and the topflight talent.

It's like the old business of the "ten best dressed women". You'd
think, from the sound of it, there were only ten women in the country
who really know how to dress. Ten? There are hundreds of thousands!

As a customer, eager to buy the best of American fashions, you
may have gotten a little confused as to WHERE you will find them.

For the sake of the record, here are some of the distinguished American
designers whose clothes you will find, right now, at Lord & Taylor:

Fig. 23 The New York Times, 14 May 1944, 13.
store front, a list of fourteen designers, and the following message:

Saks Fifth Avenue gives national scope to AMERICAN DESIGN . . . We are proud of the part that Saks has played in the development of American design . . . .

Over a period of years, we have, we believe, given valuable support to fashion originators in many fashion fields. Today, they are nationally known by name as well as by merit, by a nation-wide audience of well-dressed women. And this is as it should be. Many other fine stores throughout the country have played their part in the public acceptance of this wealth of American talent.

We list here a group of designers which has grown with us, and has consistently contributed to Saks Fifth Avenue collections - plus newer names that we back in the belief that they will join in the future, the ranks of the nationally established leaders.21

After this war of words on the two Sundays, these retailers featured few designers in subsequent ads until Lord & Taylor launched a new campaign with the title, "Something is happening in fashion!"22 The ads revolved around the New York fashion openings, but the openings would not be taking place until September. These ads appeared just days before Paris' liberation and seemed more attuned to reinforcing the use of American names, before Paris could again compete, than in reporting on the New York shows. The first ad (see figure 24) read:

New York Fashion Openings providing most revolutionary changes since last Paris collections. New feeling from top to toe, inspired by ravishing new hats. Omar Kiam's Edwardian cape suits a furore. Watch for Ben Reig's high-necked, tight-sleeved black dresses, narrow-skirted, cascades of low draping to balance new hat height. Tunic costumes look most elegant, Nettie Rosenstein's sensational. . . . This is advance fashion news . . . Lord & Taylor . . . August 6, 1944. New York City23
New York Fashion Openings providing most revolutionary changes since last Paris collection. New feeling from top to toe, inspired by ravishing new hats. Madame Edwina's Edwardian cape suits a...
Two more ads followed in this format, again mentioning American designers' names and creations.

The advertising behavior of these stores shows how fiercely they competed among themselves and how much they coveted the public's recognition that they carried American designers' work. Alignment with American designers had moved from a stop-gap effort to fill the void left when Paris fell to a coveted and fought-over position in the fashion market. American designers were no longer advertising afterthoughts; they had ascended to a level of individual public recognition and respect. They had also gained a certain celebrity status.

Industry and City Promotions

Just as in the past years, the manufacturing side of the industry provided part of designers' newly found status. In June the Educational Foundation for the Apparel Industry, in cooperation with the Board of Education of New York, established the Fashion Institute of Technology. The apparel industry donated $500,000 to the experimental school, enough to fund it for five years. On the school's first anniversary, Governor Dewey praised the program saying it was "an excellent example of the cooperation of both labor and industry in the promotion and financial support of a program of education to train designers and fashion leaders for the huge, dominant clothing industry of Greater New York." This new effort
to train designers for the New York industry, supported by the industry, suggests an effort to maintain New York's position in the fashion world.

In January and July 1944 the New York Dress Institute again hosted Press Weeks for editors from around the country. In January, Press Week ended with a fashion show and party at the Plaza Hotel chaired by Grover A. Whalen, the head of the Mayor's Committee for a World Fashion Center. Mayor La Guardia attended the event as an honored guest and took the opportunity, as did Whalen, to praise the Institute for promoting the city's fashion industry.26

In its coverage of the July Press Week events, The Times stressed the fact that of the seventy-seven participating, fifty-one editors had also attended the original Press Week and sixty-six had attended in January.27 The article quoted several of the editors who expressed the opinion that the Press Weeks provided them with valuable fashion information and should be continued after the war. Aileen Ryan, Women's Editor of The Milwaukee Journal, was quoted as saying, "We see all the definite trends in a very short time."28

The Press Weeks also allowed individual designers to display their work to editors who spread their stories to readers all across the country. The Press Weeks provided editors with up-to-date fashion information, allowed designers to individually show their work, enhanced New
York's fashion image, and showcased the city's manufactured goods. Editors' repeat attendance indicate the importance of the events in promoting American design.

The annual American Fashion Critics Award (Coty Awards) provided another promotional event that added to designers' celebrity status. In February 1944 Grover A. Whalen, Chairman of Coty Inc., presented the second awards to Claire McCardell, milliner Sally Victor, and accessories designers Mr. and Mrs. William Drown Phelps. Again, Mayor La Guardia attended the event and used the occasion to praise New York City's fashion leadership.

In addition to their participation in these events, the Mayor and Whalen continued to promote their plans for a New York design center. In June 1944 the Mayor hosted a large luncheon for the city's business leaders where he announced that the World Fashion Center would be located from Twenty-fourth to Thirtieth Streets between Broadway and Fifth Avenue with a real estate cost of $18 million and a construction cost between $40 million and $45 million. In his remarks the mayor said:

It will be a contribution to the welfare of the city and will keep things going in the transition period from war to peace-time. Otherwise the cost of relief will be much more than the cost of the center and we will have nothing to show for it.

Both Whalen and Mayor La Guardia answered those at the luncheon who suggested that Paris would reclaim its position as the world's fashion leader. The mayor responded, "Do you
know what made Paris designers famous? It was the American woman - she gave beauty to their primitive designs." Whalen "disclaimed any ambition to eliminate Paris as a dominant factor in the fashion world" and suggested that the market had room for both, but continued that "as Americans possess the greatest purchasing power New York might properly cultivate the ambition to become the fashion authority of the world." 

Perhaps beyond the arguments as to who would lead the fashion world, the heart of the campaign lay in Whalen's warning that New York continued to lose apparel manufacturing to other cities. He stated that between 1927 and 1939 the value of New York's apparel production had declined thirteen percent more than other areas of the country, and its percentage of the apparel market had dropped from forty-one percent to thirty-four percent. In stressing his belief that a "well-knit, organized industry could better meet competition from other cities," he asked, "Do we need better evidence than that that New York City's apparel industries are lagging behind the national trend?"

Whalen's statistics and remarks perhaps more accurately reveal the true nature of the push to promote New York as the world fashion leader. The city's leaders looked to compete with Paris and, in so doing, to bolster the city's lagging manufacturing base. Their concern appears to
be more of an economic nature than one of aesthetics. Still, their continued announcements of New York City’s design virtues, particularly by Mayor La Guardia, drew press coverage and, therefore, public recognition of the design progress, independent of Paris, made by the industry and by individual American designers. After its June 1944 coverage of the luncheon and one brief piece concerning objections to the center’s location, The Times carried no further information about plans for the World Fashion Center during the years of this study, and the center was never built. Publicity about the Mayor’s plans, however, brought attention to the city’s efforts to maintain its economic base.

As the American fashion industry watched the Allies’ progress in liberating France, Tobe again offered her opinions on Paris and the status of American design. In a June article titled, "The Next Time We See Paris," Tobe questioned Paris’ future and whether couture could "recapture its crown and reign once more as the undisputed fashion queen of the world?" While Tobe acknowledged that she would be one of those on the first boats to Paris, she maintained that the couture industry was no longer there as it had been before the war. Because the houses struggled with shortages and some designers were tainted with collaborationist labels, Tobe expressed the opinion that it
would be "some time before the Paris couture [would] again share in the fashion leadership of the world."³⁶

Perhaps part of Tobe's contention that fashion leadership would be a shared role lay in the distinct differences between the New York City and Paris industries. She pointed out that while Paris worked with private customers, American designers "[designed] for the American woman but [sold] through stores."³⁷ She continued that this system led to conservatism as buyers based new collections on past sellers, and designers lacked the opportunity to try their designs on the women who wore them. Tobe looked to retailers to remedy the situation stating that they had to "encourage American designers to make greater and greater efforts in the field of original and daring design - and to buy and believe in their creations."³⁸ Tobe believed that with these measures "our place as one of the world fashion leaders is assured."³⁹

Note that Tobe included America as one of the world fashion leaders, but not the only one. Despite those voices that proclaimed New York City as the world fashion leader while Paris' fate remained an unanswered question, others took a more cautious position and sought to establish New York City's reputation independent of Paris, but as a competitor in a different market. In August, just days before Paris' liberation, Tobe repeated her June story and added:
In the two months that have gone by since we wrote this, we feel more strongly than ever the necessity for giving the accomplishments of our American designers the widest possible sort of recognition. For as the road to Paris opens up, we find a slight tendency on the part of some fashion authorities to minimize this accomplishment - to play a "we're waiting for Paris" kind of game.

And we consider this both a little unfair and more than a little reactionary. In the first place the whole trend of life today is to look forward and not backward. We all want a bigger and better status for everything in the world - bigger and better Paris fashions, bigger and better American fashions, bigger and better London fashions. In the second place, it's certainly not fair to minimize what American designers have done in the past two years.

Tobe continued that American designers had done wonders, especially in light of the L-85 regulations, and that it was a "privilege for stores to tell the world about them - as well as a business duty." She then praised Lord & Taylor's new "Something Is Happening In Fashion" campaign saying:

One of the most important features of this series of advertisements is the constant iteration of the designers' names. We believe, of course, that this is vital to the future of American fashions. We cannot achieve, or maintain, fashion leadership, with anonymous designers.

... Just as designers must not be anonymous, so also they should not be too exclusive and unattainable either. Lanvin and Patou and Vionnet and Chanel became household words in America because every shop in America advertised their names! And that's what our American designers need too. But to achieve it, every store that actually buys their dresses must be allowed to use their name as well.

Tobe continued that without this recognition, American design would not get the recognition it needed to hold its place in the "world-wide competition for fashion leadership that will
ensue after the war. We think it's worth fighting for.
Don't you?"43

**After Paris' Liberation**

On August 24, 1944 *The Times* carried the headline "Paris is Freed"44 and the American design industry expressed joy over the city's liberation. Still, American designers expressed the opinion that Paris would need time to re-establish itself and would again "exert considerable design influence," but they "doubted that it would dominate the fashion world as completely as in the past."45 While Maurice Rentner said that he would return to Paris for inspiration but not to copy French styles, Hattie Carnegie declared that she would always go back but would "always work on [her] own."46 Lord & Taylor celebrated with a series of Liberation Day windows and Altman's flew both the French and American flags.

Also on August 24 *The Times* began its quest for fashion information from liberated Paris. A telegram from Daniell (*Times'* London correspondent Clifton Daniel) to Managing Editor Edwin L. James dated from France, August 24 said that fighting continued in Southern France then continued:

all those requests for Paris Fashion stories etcetera eyev [sic] onpassed Denny but hes [sic] pretty busy and doubt if wire facilities can used by any but accredited correspondent.47
A number of telegrams went back and forth between the United States and Europe as The Times sought reliable and well written stories about France. In suggesting using a former head of Fairchild's Paris Bureau, Women's Editor Eleanor Darnton wrote to James:

... It seems to me an arrangement might well be worked out that would in no way reflect on The New York Times whereby Mrs. Perkins could cover for us on a free lance basis any fashion news that might break. This way we would have an expert in the field giving us authoritative stories without either the cost of a full-time woman - which seems to me unwarranted at this time - and without taking a chance on an unprofessional.48

In spite of these difficulties, The Times carried its first coverage of Paris fashions on August 29 and resumed its practice of featuring both French and American designs. Its first article, however, opened with the following paragraphs:

After a couple of days looking around a Paris that has been reborn, this correspondent would like to go on record as saying the city is still the style center of the world - war or no war. Paris is still chic and if materials are inferior, cut and design have disguised them completely.49

Despite the paper's desire for stories about the French fashion industry, correspondence among the staff reveal some prejudice in coverage. Darnton wrote to James in March 1945:

I agree that Miss Pope knows more about fashion than the rest of us. My problem with her at the moment, however, is one of space. She is so almost hysterically opposed to Paris at the moment that she can't see any story out of there, whereas I think some of them have news, as well as fashion value. To counteract the Paris coverage, she tends to puff up local stories. For instance today I have from her a Bergdorf Goodman piece
that runs to 1300 words. I just haven’t room for that much. I assure you I try my best to be just. There is certainly no intent to underplay fashion, American fashion above all.  

Less than a week after its liberation, Paris began preparations to resume its fashion showings and issued a challenge to other markets. Lucien Lelong predicted that in two months the couture industry would be ready to "give the world a new and dazzling fashion show reflecting our joy at our liberation." The article reporting these activities continued that the Fall would be the most important season in years because "Paris [was] out to recapture its position as supreme fashion center of the world and M. Lelong [did] not doubt for a minute its ability to do so."

When the couture industry launched its first show on October 2, 1944, Edwin L. James asked Callender (Times' correspondent in France) for six pictures from the top couture houses, but then expressed concern to Eleanor Darnton that their publication in late October would be dated. The French couture industry strictly regulated when the press could publish photographs of couture designs, and The Times had agreed not to publish pictures until October 31, 1944. Failure to comply with the agreement could mean The Times' exclusion from future shows. Despite their renewed coverage of Paris couture shows beginning on October 3, The Times held to the agreement and published its first couture pictures on October 31.
The American industry immediately responded to couture's challenge. Within days of Lelong's published remarks, The Times published a compilation of statements by various members of the fashion industry. Samuel Zahn, Chairman of the New York Dress Institute said, "There is no conflict between New York and Paris. Both are good, and both have their places just as they do in the other arts." An unidentified store executive added:

American designers, who have been widely recognized for the first time during the period of Paris' occupation by the Germans, will certainly never degenerate into "mere slavish imitators." Paris will no more be ignored than the classics of literature are ignored by modern writers. With all the talk about American fashions, there was never any question of our not going back to Paris after Paris was fumigated.

Another unidentified source added:

Every store wants to be the first one to show Paris models, but that doesn't mean at all that they have forgotten the fine work done by American designers in the past few years.

On September 10, in an unusual article due to its being unrelated to a particular fashion event and its inclusion on a Sunday, Virginia Pope summarized the recent New York fashion openings including mentions of retailers and specific designers. The lengthy article was particularly significant in light of a Times announcement the following day stating that, while The Times published more news in 1944 than any other New York City newspaper, newprint shortages forced the paper to "omit several millions of lines of advertising offered it for
Considering the continued paper shortages, Pope's article was a luxurious use of column space since the paper had already reported on each of the shows. Pope also took the opportunity to express her views on the New York and Paris competition saying:

Recent reports from Paris say that French couture is recovering from its dim-out and that soon it will return to its pre-war activities with formal showings as of old. New York hails the news and offers its warmest congratulations to the gallant couture.

For four long years New York designers have functioned without the guiding hand of Paris. During that period they have learned the valuable lesson of being able to stand on their own. They have created, and well, for the American woman. Held in restraint by the Government regulations that exacted the saving of fabrics, they have yet evolved a style that will go down in fashion history as that of the period of World War II. It's streamlined, functional, dignified and American.

On the same day, in an unusually early announcement, The Times promoted its third edition of Fashions of the Times, which would be held on October 24, 25, 26, and 27. This additional coverage and the timing of the fashion show's announcement reflect the paper's on-going support of the American fashion industry.

Further indication of this support can be seen in the continuance of the Fashion of the Times show and in its expansion. At a cost of $57,300, the show consisted of eight sold-out performances showing 156 garments provided by 50 New York designers and 41 retailers. The promotional importance of the show can be seen in the 117 press representatives from magazines, radio stations, trade and
business publications, and newspapers from across the United States who attended, and therefore reported on, the show.\textsuperscript{64} Furthermore, buyers and merchandise managers attended the elaborately staged productions.

As in the past, Virginia Pope produced the 1944 show which again stressed the talents of American design. The show also continued to emphasize the democratization of fashion through the country's mass production capabilities. While this focus originally began in response to the government's plea not to over promote luxury goods during the war, at this time, with the heightening question of competition with Paris, it stressed the uniqueness of New York's contribution to the fashion world. Furthermore, Pope took the opportunity to single out four designers for special, on-stage recognition during the show (see figure 25). Claire McCardell, Hope Skillman (a fabric designer), Omar Kiam, and Vera Maxwell appeared before a B-29 bomber to symbolize the flight between fabric and apparel designers.\textsuperscript{65} Julius Hochman, Vice President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union said of the designers' stage appearance:

> Bringing on the stage for the first time in America four leading designers will do good all around. It will do the public good to see them and do them good to get a real taste of public appreciation.\textsuperscript{66}

Because so many media personnel from across the country attended Fashion of the Times and took stories back to their readers and listeners, the message of the show went
Fig. 25 The New York Times, 25 October 1944, 25.
far beyond New York City. It provided a national forum for showcasing American design and designers and contributed to their growing recognition and status. By also including scenes that depicted the creation of fashion, the show brought together all segments of the garment industry and even launched a new color - limelight. Grover H. Whalen said that the event "was an outstanding example of what could be done when everyone works together."\textsuperscript{67} Julius Hochman summarized the show's importance saying:

I am very impressed by the very idea that The New York Times has taken up fashion. And they are rendering a great community service by showing not only high style but the whole range from exclusives wholesaling from $175 up, down to dresses wholesaling for $1.37. In explaining the story of fashion, showing how it originates, The Times is doing in its show much of what the ILGWU has been attempting for years, - working to promote New York products in America, to promote New York as a fashion center, to find new markets for New York creations.\textsuperscript{68}

American or Parisian Designs?

On the same day that The Times opened its fashion show, 700 members of The Fashion Group\textsuperscript{69} attended its October luncheon where they heard various fashion leaders address the topic, "Fashion at International Crossroads."\textsuperscript{70} Chairman Ida McNeil said in her opening remarks:

... We have a very important meeting today. We are glad to see so many of you today and are very glad for the reason that it proved to us that we are not alone in questioning many of the things that go on in the industry, in questioning the future of fashion. We planned this meeting because there are two vital factors that are influencing much of our thinking and questioning. One is the return of Paris to the fashion scene and the second is the tremendous background work
going on now that is bound to have its effect on this side of the Atlantic crossroads. To clarify our thinking we have a panel of experts, including designers and the fashion press who will answer many of the vital questions that are uppermost in the minds of the fashion industry.\(^1\)

The President of The Fashion Group, Prunella Wood, serving as mistress of ceremonies, reiterated the importance of the meeting, and stated that, despite "zepher criticism" of the topic, the group was proud to give "flowers to a live issue."\(^2\) Speakers at the luncheon included Tobe Dress Editor Mildred Smolze, Saks Fifth Avenue Promotion Manager Janet Taylor,\(^3\) Harper's Bazaar Merchandise Editor Esther Lyman, Claire McCardell, Mr. John of John-Frederics (milliners), Vogue Associate Editor Eleanor Scully Montgomery, and a written message from Madame Valentina.

Smolze began her remarks by saying:

> To those of us who love France and love Pris, the publicity given to the present Paris fashions, has, in our opinion, been both premature and unfortunate. In the first place, it has given a fake impression of lightness and gaiety in the midst of the grim business of war a picture resented by many American women with husbands, sons or lovers fighting in the fields of France. In the second place, it is unfair to judge Paris by its present fashions - created under the hard yoke of occupation. In the third place, it is almost an insult to offer fashions conceived under those circumstances to the very fashion-conscious American public.

> Nevertheless all this has brought right out in the open the question of what are stores - what is the press - what is the fashion industry as a whole going to do about Paris and American fashion recognition? For Paris is still a magic five-letter word. It has a tremendous emotional appeal to every man and every woman.\(^4\)
Smolze then continued by reading her editorial, quoted earlier, concerning the differences between the New York and Paris industries. When asked if Harper’s Bazaar would continue to feature American fashion and American designer names as it had during the war years, Esther Lyman replied:

> Of course, we shall continue to feature in a very extensive way the good fashions which are produced here, just as we always have. If the Paris designers also show good fashions, we shall illustrate those, but they will be selected and edited in exactly the same way that we edit American fashions. We are confident that the American dress manufacturer need not be at all concerned about his representation in the magazines if he continues to do the fine job he is capable of doing.

> During the past three years, women have learned the names and labels of good manufacturers, through the promotional activities of the makers themselves and also the stores have helped. Now they know which names they like best. Are these names going to be dropped in favor of Paris names? I think not. You may be sure we shan’t drop them as long as a high standard of design and workmanship are maintained and as long as they are interesting to our readers.  

When asked if retailers would continue to promote American designers and how could designers maintain their names, Janet Taylor, as had Smolze, pointed out the differences between the French industries and the American industries and stated that it was unfair to compare custom work and mass manufacturing work. As to whether or not the industry would again allow the French couture to set style trends, she said that it depended on the merit of their post-war designs. Of promotions, Taylor said:

> . . . Certainly fashion stores will continue to use the names of good American designers, probably more than
ever before. We can be sure of this no matter how many future Paris names we see fit to add to our copywriter's vocabularies.

... to maintain the use of their names, the designers need only continue to make these names stand for original design and/or good making. ... Feeling still seems to be running very high in fashion discussions at this time. It is all tied up with questions of deep national and personal pride. I think that if some of the questions that are being asked were analyzed, less emotionally, we would find that most well-informed people in the fashion business are fundamentally agreed on the subject of French and American fashion. ...

... Thousands of women in this country recognize the names of leading American designers as much from the quality and the general satisfaction they have in wearing a well-made garment as from its design. This does not exist in France, and cannot be used in comparisons with France in any reasonable discussion. ..

... Those [designers] who continue to do original work in design as opposed to manufacture will get credit lines from stores, glory from the magazines and public recognition according to their merits.75

In her editorial in the November 1 Tobe Reports, Smolze stated that retailers had the "largest stake in our American fashion future, for it [translated] itself directly into dollars and cents in [their] cash registers."76 She added that retailers should continue to buy and believe in American designers because they provided the stores with both "ideas to promote and merchandise to sell." She then pointed out that, in promoting American designs, stores offered customers "something more than a Paris name ever did:"

... You are giving her fashion prestige first - as you always did with Paris fashions - but you are also backing it up with a fashion product of recognized integrity as well. Paris system designers create fashion and Tom, Dick and Harry on Seventh Avenue produce them. Some are good and some are bad - but
regardless of standards they all bear the Schiaparelli or Molyneux copy label.  

Smolze contrasted this with American designers who both designed and produced their garments and could, therefore, offer an original model instead of a copy. She added, "Thus we think the question of Paris versus America is nonsense. It's Paris PLUS America - now and forever!"  

A meeting held in early January 1945 by the Ready-to-Wear Group at the National Dry Goods Association meeting reflected Smolze's stance when it held a forum titled "America Plus Paris - for Fashion." Discussions focused on the best way to coordinate the showings of both the French and American designs, with the industry asking if the press might suppress the news of Paris showings until American manufacturers could have apparel patterned after their trends in the stores. It was suggested that in the interval, the press could promote American designs because they would be more readily available. Jessica Daves, of Vogue, offered that the press would not suppress news of Paris, but might not promote it as heavily until manufacturers were ready. This discussion was prompted by the fact that manufacturers, while embracing the return of Paris, did not want to go back to their former system.  

Dress manufacturer Herbert Sondheim said that he hoped:  

... Paris [would] continue as it existed prior to the war but [would] not cause wholesalers and retailers to lose as much money as it did in the past.  

The overemphasis of the publicity connected with the Paris showings in our fashion magazines and the
attendant scrambling in haste by us as manufacturers to reproduce copies at a time of the year that made it impossible for us to properly manufacture this merchandise invariably led to losses by us and eventual mark-downs by retailers.80

Hope Skillman, textile designer and President of Skillmill, Inc., also appealed to retailers' profits saying:

If you treat American designers shabbily, you will be destroying a section of American industry, the wealth of which is essential to your profits. By all means, show French fashion - welcome it back lovingly, but keep on showing your Americans and publicizing them.81

All of these fashion industry meetings reflect the deep concern about what would happen to the progress made by American design and designers now that Paris was free. The industry had poured tremendous effort, and promotional dollars, into aligning itself with American designers and into a different way of doing business. That is, originating its own design instead of waiting for Paris' leadership and then making copies of French creations. The question at this time was how to integrate the old with the new - the old Paris traditions with the new American design system.

As Taylor told The Fashion Group, retailers answered the question by increasing both the number of ads that featured American designers and the number of names in each ad. Saks Fifth Avenue directly addressed the issue just a few weeks after Paris' liberation in an ad with no products, just text. It began, "People are asking us 'What effect
will the liberation of France have on American Designers,"
then continued:

Will Saks Fifth Avenue Go Back to Paris For Fashions?
Yes, as soon as Paris is able to show collections for export. Because we know that the Paris tradition persists. The brilliant creators of fashion, from the little button maker to the haute couture, will not have disappeared!

Will France and America Compete With Each Other?
No, because the greater part of French designing is done for a very small group of women, in custom workrooms. American designing, even in the finest ready-to-wear is produced for thousands of well dressed women.

Will Paris Designers Overshadow The American Designers?
No, emphatically no! In these last four years especially, our designers have received public recognition, and have become firmly established in the fashion world. They have created beautiful clothes, not only without Paris inspiration, but under difficult restrictions. They are building their own tradition, which will continue to grow after the war.

The ad then listed twelve American designers. Whether the ad reflected an expressed consumer concern or whether it was simply a promotional tool, it served as a leading indicator of retailers' positions concerning American designers. Only one retailer, Russeks, mentioned Paris design after the liberation and in only two ads, then quickly followed with a third extolling American design.

On January 12, 1945, Dorothy Shaver, First Vice President of Lord & Taylor, held a press conference to announce that her store would continue its promotion of American design in a new advertising series called "The American Look" (see figure 26). In launching the new campaign, Shaver predicted that after the war there would be
The American Look— it's doing

your hair so it looks soft and natural, not too, too formally arranged.

It's dressing to show off your own figure, not somebody's creation.

It's thinking in terms of "Does it flatter me?" rather than "It's new." It's

looking gay and fresh rather than worldly, and too-wise. It's the

American Look. Our American designers are inspired by it.

Watch for the young, pretty American Look in spring clothes. It's in

the bright simple tie dress... Philip Mongeau's side-button coat...

with silver stole, his bright-cuffed flared coat... in Jo Copeland's

casual tier dress... in Kraus' nifty peplum suit. It's in our

disarming hairstyle hats.

The American Look— it has become the world's
greatest fashion influence.

Fig. 26 The New York Times, 14 January 1945, 14.
one world of fashion in which American fashions would be
widely copied. She continued:

I will welcome the moment when the creative talents of
all countries can be freely exchanged, but this time I
believe the flow of talent will be coming from as well
as to the United States. . . .
For many years we looked upon ourselves as the
pupils of the master couturiers of Europe. After four
years of using their own resourcefulness and ingenuity,
our designers are now making a permanent contribution to
fashion and style. "

The first of the series appeared in The Times the following
day. It contained fashion sketches and the following
message:

The American Look – It’s being beautifully dressed
but never overdressed. It’s wearing hats that attract,
not startle. It’s using makeup so you look naturally
pretty, not artificial, nor hard. It’s looking like an
interesting person leading an interesting, active life.
It’s typically the American Look. And our own American
designers interpret it beautifully because they
understand it. Watch for the natural, charming American
look in spring clothes. It’s in Philip Mangone’s tiny-
check suit . . . Jo Copeland’s scarf sleeve dress . . .
Coppola’s brief coat . . . Gershel’s shirred yoke coat . .
Brownie’s little boy-collar suit. It’s in our very
young hairline hats. The American Look – it has become
the world’s greatest fashion influence!"

The January 21 edition of the ad contained no specific
product or designers, but instead continued to praise the
virtues of American women with phrases such as "America is
amazing – it has so many, many pretty girls" and "American
girls have the prettiest legs in the world."

The text said, in part, of the American Look, "Today, it’s a
permanent contribution to fashion. And we believe this:
The American Look is, and will continue to be, the most
important style trend there is. The American Look – it’s
going to be copied all over the world! Throughout the rest of the year, Lord & Taylor continued with the same design format of the ad, sometimes featuring American designers and other times just promoting the look, but not always with the American Look heading.

Tobe Reports praised Lord & Taylor for the new campaign which told its consumers the fashion story in "such a simple, graphic way." Tobe also quoted Shaver's press conference remarks in which she also said:

. . . For many years, even before the war, the American woman’s natural manner, her simple elegance, created comment in all countries, wherever she went. Since the war, with the uninterrupted talents of the American designers at her disposal, without the influence of other markets, this American look has become better defined. I believe it will be copied all over the world and that it will be a great fashion influence in international designings.

. . . There should be no rivalry between America and Paris. The fashion world has room for all kinds of talent - the more the merrier. . . . With the coming of age of our designers we can look forward to an intelligent interchange of ideas, rather than the old mother-and-child relationship with the French couture.

In its May 20 ad, Lord & Taylor thanked LIFE Magazine for its recognition and its "splendid photographic essay on it in your current issue." In its May 21, 1945 edition LIFE devoted five pages to its definition of the American look inspired by Lord & Taylor's ad campaign. One page included a large photograph of Shaver and her staff as well as Shaver's thoughts on what distinguished American girls from those of other countries. Important among the virtues
listed were the health benefits that American girls enjoyed and that contributed to their beauty.

This campaign went beyond promoting products to promoting national pride. At a time of heightened patriotism, both generally and in respect to American fashions, the ads once again brought American designers to consumers' attention and aligned them with a popular cause. Neither the ads nor the LIFE article, however, criticized other nationalities, but took a positive stance on what America could contribute to the world.

The campaign, and messages from other groups in the industry, demonstrates a calmer position than what initially ensued after Paris' liberation. Then, emotions ran high and the American industry worried about what would happen to it. By January 1945, the industry had taken stock of its strengths and decided to concentrate there instead of fearing the Paris couture industry. On January 10, 1945 Jessica Daves, Managing Editor of Vogue, told the Washington Fashion Group that "the fact that the American fashion industry will welcome Paris design and is not isolationist has become a certainty only in the last week." Daves reached her conclusions after attending the previously mentioned meeting of the National Retail Dry Goods Association. She continued:

The recent authorization for shipment of Paris models and the fact that the French and American Governments were working together to make the imports possible, crystallized this sentiment."
Anyone interested in fashion is foolish if they think Paris designs will hurt American design. American women have learned to love the clothes of American designers and to ask for them by name. America will not in future be a fashion stooge for Paris as we were often in the past.90

She added, however, that Paris would now have to key into "the stability of the American silhouette under L-85."91

Paris' Struggle to Rebuild

Some of the fears of Paris' influence on American design were premature considering the crippling effect the war had exacted on the French couture industry and the fact that the industry was not yet allowed to export its goods. In January 1945, there was "no progress whatever" in obtaining export permits to send apparel to New York.92

Because of this restriction and because there were still no New York buyers in France, Paris geared its Spring 1945 shows to the French market rather than foreign markets. Still, Lelong fought criticism for his promotion of luxury goods in the face of continued shortages. As a Times report said of the announced couture showings:

Manikins' teeth may chatter and overcoated clients may stamp their feet in sub-freezing showrooms, but more than 100 big and little Paris dressmakers will show their summer styles . . .93

Lelong defended the couture industry’s efforts to re-establish itself arguing, "We are the locomotive that draws the great train of the French clothing industry and it is our duty to keep it going."94
This great train supported a million French workers who had to produce a spring showing with very few materials. Silk was "extremely rare," so designers used rayonne, and only light-weight wools or wool mixed with rabbit hair were available for the very popular tailored suits. Furthermore, the pre-war designers had 300 dyes to work with, but in 1945 they had only seven. Despite inflated prices, with suits averaging $300 as compared to the 1938 price of $60, the industry did not expect to make great profits.

When the spring shows opened, the limited dyes, including only being allowed to use three colors in each fabric, resulted in collections that centered around browns and greys, so that critics charged that the shows were "monotonous." Reports of the shows, however, praised the designers' ingenuity in disguising poor quality fabrics with delicate embroideries and trims. To complicate couture's progress even more, reports of $600 spring dresses prompted "smart" Parisians to boycott the showings. Consequently, only black market participants could afford the couture clothes, so wearing the new garments quickly became a sign of bad taste. Perhaps even worse, the couture industry that had set the trends for the world's fashion markets, offered very little that was new and showed no design unity, no leading trends. Furthermore, for the first time in history, the Chambre Syndicale set restrictions on the couture houses allowing them to produce only sixty models,
limiting the amount of fabric that could be used in designs, and imposing price ceilings.\textsuperscript{101}

Despite these difficulties, the new French Office of Art and Creation announced in April that it would send a mission to the United States to investigate the American market including consumer needs and how many French goods the market could absorb.\textsuperscript{102} A spokeswoman for the group stressed that their purpose was not to compete, but to collaborate for the good of both nations. One member of the group was Chambre Syndicale President Lucien Lelong whose goal was to:

\texttt{...dissipate a number of misunderstandings that arose during the four years of the occupation, arrange dates for fashion openings suitable to both Paris and New York, and make arrangements for the purchase and exportation of French haute couture models.}\textsuperscript{103}

One of the misunderstandings that continued to haunt the couture industry was the rumored collaborations with the Nazis and profits made from selling to them. For example, just after the liberation The Times carried the story of Reich Marshal Hermann Goering's wife ordering a number of couture dresses just two weeks before Paris' liberation.\textsuperscript{104} The sales director at Jeanne Lanvin explained that Madame Goering was an old customer, but went on to laugh at the size, loud prints, and inappropriateness of the dresses. The report quoted one Frenchman as saying, "Madame Goering will probably be the best-dressed woman in exile and certainly the biggest one."\textsuperscript{105}
Upon her return from a trip to Paris, Harper's Bazaar Editor Carmel Snow defended the couture industry in a speech to the Fashion Group. She described "unheated sewing rooms where manikins shiver, midinettes' hands are swollen with chillblains and workers must sew after hours at night because the electricity has been turned off all day." She hailed the courageous efforts of Lelong in preventing the Nazis from moving the industry out of Paris and emphasized the importance of the industry to the French economy. Snow addressed the issue of black market profiteers purchasing couture garments stating that they were spending money like "lunatics," and were, therefore, the "most dreadful-looking [women] in the world." She also reported that "less than one percent of Paris couture during the occupation was sold to the Germans." She offered no explanation as to other buyers except the implication of black market profiteers.

Snow's addressing the question of collaboration before a large Fashion Group audience indicates that this stigma lingered in the minds of fashion industry leaders. Because Americans were still fighting the war in Europe, against the Nazis, collaboration remained a sensitive issue. Still, the French trade mission arrived in New York in May 1945 and met with leaders of the American fashion industry. When participants asked Lelong about the question of French versus American fashions he read a printed statement which
said, "There is no conflict between American and French creation. All countries must have their own creators of fashion." Furthermore, Lelong expressed the opinion that trade could not resume until 1946. A Chambre Syndicale official explained the importance of renewed trade when he said, One exported dress would allow us to import ten tons of coal."

Despite their continued assertions that they did not want to compete with New York, the couture industry sent fifty dresses to Rio De Janeiro as part of a cultural exhibition. When Paris was occupied, South America had looked to the United States for fashion leadership and by 1944 considered New York to be the fashion center of the world. Fifty newly designed garments was a large number for a cultural exhibition, and considering the war-induced shortages of materials and their relatively poor quality, more historic garments might have shown French craftsmanship in a better light. This gesture appears to be more an assertion of the industry’s post-war design abilities and a further attempt to re-establish trade contacts.

The behavior of the French couture industry toward the New York industry demonstrated a certain respect for the market that did not exist before the war. Before its occupation, Paris catered to and courted both American buyers and the American press, but the Chambre Syndicale scheduled shows, not so much for the convenience of the
American visitors, as with the purpose of allowing as much exposure of its products as was possible. While it made concessions to the American consumer and relied on exports to the United States to bolster its economy, the couture industry reigned as a benevolent dictator to the fashion world. After its liberation, the couture industry traveled to its New York market instead of waiting for it to come to Paris, expressed no desire to compete with New York, suggested that it sought to coordinate showings with New York, and sought to regain the South American fashion leadership assumed by New York during the war. These activities suggest a respect for New York's progress in establishing the importance of American design that did not exist before World War II. By October 1945, the French ambassador's wife, in discussing the future of fashion suggested that the French and American industries might participate in a "friendly competition." 

After the War

By the fall of 1945, World War II was finally over. Throughout the year, retailers continued to actively and prolifically promote American designers, and the New York Dress Institute again held Press Weeks in January and July. In February, Coty awarded the Fashion Critics Award to Adrian, Tina Leser, and Emily Wilkins (see figure 27). Adrian said in accepting his award, "To receive an honor like this at any time is a very exciting experience. To
Fig. 27 The New York Times, 18 February 1945, 21.
live in a country where you can receive it at this time is a great privilege."  

Adrian may have been referring to the restrictions that continued to limit designers' work and that some felt hindered their efforts to compete with Paris. In October Omar Kiam complained to Virginia Pope that he and other designers had designed garments outside of the L-85 restrictions in anticipation of their repeal, but could not market them. Despite the end of the war, continued fabric shortages forced some manufacturers to overdye previous seasons' colors with black, and prompted the government to continue enforcing the limitations. Kiam told Pope:

Now, wherever we turn we are obliged to hear that Americans can't do it, that we must have Paris to show us the way. While we are sitting with hands and spirit shackled we must watch the couture work. Over there in their Government-supported fashion industry there are no restrictions on fabrics and no price controls.

All we ask is to be permitted to go ahead on parallel lines with Paris. We want an even chance. We would like the opportunity to silence those tongues that say we have no fashion initiative.

When the day comes, maybe next spring, that the regulations are lifted, the fifth columnists in fashion will have put over their deadly work that we have no imagination, no originality and that we are only copyists. I, for one, wish to register my protest.

Designer and retailer pressure forced the government to ease the L-85 restrictions in November 1945 allowing fuller and more varied sleeves, but the major portion of the restrictions continued in force until October 1946.

Despite renewed activities in the French industries and freer access to information, The Times continued its...
support of American designers both in coverage of New York openings and in features in its Magazine. In October 1945 The Times sponsored the first Fashions of the Times show held during peacetime but still subject to war regulations. The Times reported on the show in a front page, center column stating that the purpose of the show was to show that New York designers could create fashions for all ages and markets and that "the industry enters the post-war world confident and cherishing dreams that it intends to fulfill." The show began with Virginia Pope seated at a typewriter typing the following message, "Gone is that chaos of 1941 when the fashion industry was asking: 'Where do we go from here?' Today the lights are on again all over the world and the American fashion industry faces with optimism a post-war future."

Merchandise buyers again timed their buying trips to coincide with the show, and industry executives praised its promotional benefits. Henry Silver, President of the National Dress Manufacturers Association said, "The show does as much for the New York fashion industry as anything could possibly do. It proves that the American designer is the equal of any other designer in the world."

The 1945 show differed, however, in that it devoted one scene just to the influence museums contributed to fashions. In a setting titled the "Metro-Brook Museum," designers demonstrated how they took ideas from the Costume
Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and from the Brooklyn Museum and translated them into both fabric and apparel designs. In explaining the inclusion of the scene, Virginia Pope said:

New York's art museums have been taking an increasingly important part in the fashion life of the city. They are continuously used by designers who go to them for source material or merely to be stimulated by looking at treasures of the past.\(^{19}\)

To demonstrate this importance, the paper devoted an entire page of photographs to the art and culture that inspired designers. This particular focus addressed those who pointed out that Paris served as such a leader in the fashion world because it possessed such a rich culture. This production highlighted the rich cultural holdings in New York's museums and also served as a means of showing that the New York fashion industry had secured one more link in making it a strong contender in the competition for world fashion leadership. The production also offered American designers another chance to show their works before a national audience and to take their design philosophies to consumers across the country.

By the end of 1945, the American fashion industry had survived its initial worries over Paris' liberation. Its leaders met, discussed, and finally concluded that the Paris and New York industries were equally talented, but that they addressed different markets. American women now had original designer labels of their own. The women recognized
American designers and requested them. Eleanor Lambert explained that the majority of American women had never owned Paris designs, so it was very easy to promote American designers to them and the women readily accepted them. The difficulty lay with the retailers. When the stores saw that American women wanted American designers' apparel, they were more willing to promote them. Retailers' competition to show consumers that they carried American-designed apparel illustrates Lambert's point.

The greater dependence on American designers also changed retailers' buying habits in Paris. When Fira Benenson, designer and supervisor of Bonwit Teller's couture salon, returned from Paris in November 1945, she reported that in the future buyers would be more discriminating in their purchases. She said, "Where we bought sixty or eighty costumes in the past we will buy twenty." At the end of 1945 the American design industry continued to struggle with regulations that limited its designs and frustrated their creators. But through fashion shows, press weeks, advertising credits, and design awards, American designers gained a celebrity status not known before Paris' occupation. Furthermore, after its liberation, the Paris couture industry demonstrated a respect for the power of the New York industry both economically and aesthetically. By the end of the war, both
industries expressed a desire for cooperation, a respect for their differences, and a goal of friendly competition.

In its final report of the year, Tobe said, after viewing American spring designs:

As we stand on the threshold of not only a new year but a new era as well, we know, beyond any doubt - that the fashion future of our American designers is triumphantly secure. We've always been confident of it ourselves, but if the world needed proof, it was certainly forthcoming during the year just past.

If these [spring designs] are a foretaste of what they can do when given complete freedom of design, and when beautiful fabrics and wonderful new colors are to be had for the choosing once more, then there can be no longer any question of the fact that American fashion design is entitled to a share in the fashion leadership of the post-war world.

So with happy conviction, we make this confident prediction for the New Year and the New Era - The Sun Will Never Set On American Fashion Design!"122
NOTES

1. Each article and advertisement photocopied from The Times from 1940 through 1945 was filed in chronological order. A list of the contents of each copy was then compiled. An interpretive analysis of these lists indicated an increase in the frequency of advertisements using designers' names.


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


7. Ibid.


17. "American Designers: U.S. public is getting to know their names and styles, LIFE, 8 May 1944, 63-69.

18. Ibid., 63.


23. Lord & Taylor ad, 6 August 1944, 14.


25. Ibid.


28. Ibid.


31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 2.
37. Ibid., 3.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 4.
40. "Dress Editor Speaks Her Mind," Tobe Fashion Reports, (10 August 1944): 1D.
41. Ibid., 2D.
42. Ibid., 2Da-2Db.
43. Ibid., 2Db.
44. "Paris Is Freed; Rumania Quits; Marseille and Grenoble Won; German Flight Nears a Rout," The New York Times, 24 August 1944, 1.
46. Ibid.
52. Ibid.


57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.


67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.


71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 2.

73. Ibid., 3.

74. Ibid., 15-16.

75. Ibid., 10-13.


77. Ibid.

78. Ibid., 57.


80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.


86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.


90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
96. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
105. Ibid.
107. Ibid.


113. Tobe Fashion Reports, 22 March 1945, A.


115. Tobe Fashion Reports, 24 October 1946, A.


117. Ibid.


122. Tobe Fashion Reports, 27 December 1945, 1D-2D.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Contrary to the popular understanding that the fashion industry stood still during World War II and that fashion design was frozen until Paris' liberation, the war years proved to be a pivotal time for the American fashion industry. Perhaps at no other time in history did the industry so forcefully display its courage, its talent, or its strength. The industry feared extinction and faced tremendous operating constraints, yet it turned a difficult business climate into an opportunity to declare its freedom from Paris' design control and to restructure its design and marketing policies.

In the years between Paris' occupation and the end of World War II, the American fashion industry transformed itself from a follower in the fashion world to a leader. It chose to recognize its own strengths, to gamble on the American woman's desire for apparel designed for her needs and lifestyle, and to invest in new promotions. The industry could have chosen to "make do" until Paris could once again lead, but instead it capitalized on a crisis and emerged an independent participant in the world fashion market.
Before the war, the American industry so depended on Paris that, even as the German armies threatened France, New York journalists, such as Carmel Snow, risked their lives to get a last bit of French fashion information. It is not surprising, then, that Paris’ occupation threw the American industry into a state of confusion. Paris’ 1940 showings provided enough style leadership that the New York industry could have followed Paris’ trends for at least a year. Furthermore, Berlin, with an economic interest in maintaining French couture, periodically released enough information that New York could have attempted to follow Paris’ leadership until the end of the war. Instead, the American industry chose to differentiate itself from Paris couture. It proved so successful in this endeavor that other countries, including England, Canada, and Brazil, looked to New York as the world’s fashion leader instead of Paris.

Economics proved to be the overriding motive for the American industry’s decision to turn its design focus from Paris to the United States. Manufacturers feared that, with the importance of the war, women would lose interest in fashion and the industry would soon be out of business. Leaders looked for some marketing tool intriguing enough that it would keep women buying clothes.

Economics was also a factor in producers’ desire to offer the American woman original designs instead of Paris
copies. Despite the strong tradition that Paris offered the highest level of dress designing and should, therefore, be loyally followed, the American fashion industry lost money on the copying process. Custom shops in high-fashion retail stores, such as Bergdorf Goodman, charged very high prices for individually crafted copies of French models, with the approval and support of the Paris industry, and yet the stores continually lost money on the ventures and only kept the salons for their prestige value. Manufacturers and retailers lost money on mass-produced copies because of the timing of the Paris shows. As a result, retailers often had to mark down the copies in order to sell them. Originating design in the United States made the American industry less subject to the whims of Paris designers and gave manufacturers greater control over their product.

Despite these business losses and the seemingly logical step of breaking with the tradition of selling Paris copies, many fashion leaders held a tremendous respect and loyalty to Paris. For several decades prior to World War II, those seeking innovative fashion designs religiously made pilgrimages to Paris. In Paris, esteemed as a center for the highest level of Western art and culture, American fashion leaders formed close friendships and forged business alliances. It was, therefore, with stunned anguish that these leaders helplessly watched as Paris fell to Nazi control. On a personal, rather than business, level, they
feared for the safety of their French friends and business associates.

The decision to break with the French tradition was based on the need for the fashion industry to survive both for the American industry's profits and as a means of maintaining the nation's economic stability. While these factors presented compelling logic for the American fashion industry to strike out on its own talent, the strong emotional ties with Paris proved far more difficult to sever. Evidence of these lingering ties can be seen in the continuing references to Paris made in industry meetings and in The Times' reporting of Paris fashion industry activities.

Despite these emotional struggles, World War II offered the American fashion industry an opportunity that it had never had before. During World War I, Paris couture had continued to operate, so that by 1940 Paris had been leading fashion for several hundred years. The Paris industry needed to export its fashions to support the French economy, so, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, it catered to foreign buyers and the foreign press. It even made design adjustments with an eye towards the American woman. Still, French fashion exports to the United States declined during the 1930s. This indicates a trend, in the United States, away from couture; a trend aided by decreasing profits in both custom and mass copies of French designs.
Part of this trend resulted from women's changing lives. The French couture and American custom workrooms were patronized by women who had the money to purchase original designs and the time to invest in fittings. By the 1940s, their numbers had dwindled. Most American women purchased ready-to-wear dresses and, while they may have known French designers' names, they had little connection to Paris couture.

The American fashion industry had talented designers, but most of them worked anonymously for manufacturers. Because they spent much of their time interpreting French fashions for the American market, their creative talents largely lay undeveloped. For the most part, American women remained unfamiliar with American designers because neither manufacturers, retailers, or the press promoted them. Even if they had known of them, American women couldn't choose American designers in the way that they could choose a French couturier, because most women purchased their clothing through retailers whose buyers screened the stores' merchandise. Unless American women possessed the economic means to patronize custom salons, their freedom to choose a particular designer was limited by their retailers' purchasing and assortment decisions.

With Paris' occupation, the American fashion industry faced a dilemma. Much of the industry operated on the practice of copying France, even though it lost money in the
process, and the American industry had strong emotional ties to Paris after so many years of working closely together. The question remained, though, how would Paris emerge from the war? Would it be as it once had been, or would it remain under Nazi control? Fear that the war would force the American fashion industry out of business, loss of profits from Paris copies, changes in women’s lifestyles, and Nazi occupation of Paris brought the American fashion industry to a crisis point. Should it attempt to follow what design information emerged from occupied Paris or should it make the bold step of establishing a new tradition?

New York emerged as the logical fashion leader for the world, at least for the duration, because it remained the only fashion center not directly involved in the fighting. Axis forces controlled Italy and France, and although London’s fashion industry continued to operate, it was constantly under attack. The American industry chose to redefine itself rather than to wait on Paris’ uncertain future, and part of its new stature rested on the launching of American designers.

First, the industry needed to present American designers to the American public and, as Tobe emphasized, to establish their fashion authority. These designers already dressed most American women, but they had no authority because they followed Paris dictates while working
unrecognized in manufacturers’ back rooms. Since they continued their affiliations with manufacturers throughout the war, promoting American designers also meant promoting New York manufacturers which was a popular idea with the unions and the city.

Because Paris fell in early summer, a time when the fashion industry was usually rather quiet, the New York fashion industry had several months to develop promotional campaigns before the Fall fashion season. By September, the industry launched American designers with a renewed vigor and confidence that was, at least initially, more hoped for than actually felt. Despite a common ambition to see the New York industry flourish, no one entity emerged to organize or coordinate the promotional efforts. Instead, *The New York Times*, the retailers, and several organizations launched independent campaigns. Each effort, however, contributed to a snowballing effect, a synergistic movement, toward the shared goal of not just maintaining, but advancing, the New York fashion industry.

*The Times* changed its credit policy and, for the first time, allowed both store and designer credits to accompany featured American fashions. Largely through the efforts of Virginia Pope, the paper regularly reported on fashion events including the names of both stores’ and manufacturers’ designers. The paper, despite on-going newsprint shortages, also expanded its coverage of fashion
to include Spring and Fall forecasts in its magazine section and to include extensive photographic layouts.

Retailers changed from regular references to their Paris copies to headlining American designers. After the United States joined the war effort, these references slowed as the stores used their fashion ads to influence their readers to more patriotic activities. With the liberation of Paris, retailers competed with each other in trying to present themselves as having the most American designers. Throughout the war, stores moved from the prestige of Paris copies and promoting fashions under the authority of the stores’ names to promoting American design under individual designers’ names.

Several organizations began promotions of their own that enhanced the efforts of The Times and retailers. Mayor La Guardia, concerned with the city’s manufacturing base, sought to build a new design center in the garment district with the goal of establishing New York as the nation’s, if not the world’s, fashion leader. While he had his own plan for the city, he also regularly attended fashion events sponsored by other groups. His participation exhibited his enthusiasm for the fashion industry and allowed a higher publicity profile for New York fashions.

Also concerned with New York’s dwindling manufacturing base, the unions and manufacturers committed funds to establish The New York Dress Institute. The Institute began
its promotional activities with a number of very visible, but somewhat controversial ads, then concentrated its efforts on Press Weeks. In hosting the nation’s fashions editors and providing them with New York fashion news, the Institute was perhaps the most influential in coordinating seasonal fashion showings and in disseminating information throughout the country. In this capacity, it came closer to the activities of Paris’ Chambre Syndicale than any other organization.

The monthly meetings of The Fashion Group aided these promotional efforts by serving as an informational forum for the industry. The Fashion Group chose industry leaders who monthly tackled controversial issues facing the New York fashion industry, and also allowed government officials to use the meetings to explain war-related regulations and limitations. In so doing, the meetings contributed to a unity in the industry; a solidarity in the necessity of adjusting the industry to the vagaries of war.

The numerous fashion shows contributed to the authority of the American fashion industry, and probably the most important and unifying of these shows was the Fashions of The Times. The Times’ shows proved unique in that they drew a national audience of both press correspondents and retailers who included the shows in their buying trips. They were also unique in that they drew participation and endorsements from all aspects of the fashion industry.
Designers created special fashions for the shows, retailers contributed custom garments, stage designers created the settings, and scenes within the shows showcased the creative process from textile design to manufacturing. The shows also provided the opportunity for designers to appear on stage for the first time as national celebrities.

These multiple promotional efforts took American designers from their places of anonymity and set them before an American public caught up in the war effort and eager for heroes. With a heightened attitude of nationalism and patriotism, the country was ripe to welcome home-grown designers who embraced the American ideals and incorporated them into their designs. Retailers, such as Lord & Taylor with its "American Look" campaign, capitalized on this national attitude. The nation's war effort, then, became a rallying point in fashion promotions, so American designers augmented their celebrity, hero status when they served as interpreters of the government's L-85 regulations.

The L-85 regulations, which the industry at first feared and fought against, actually proved beneficial to the fashion industry. One of the industry's fears in launching American designers centered on the problem of who would set fashion trends as Paris always had in the past. If each designer worked in a different direction, the industry would appear fragmented to the public and, therefore, look as though it had no authority. If designers could not decide
among themselves on style trends, how could they lead a national industry? Different voices in the industry, such as Virginia Pope in The Times and retailers in their ads, sought to predict, interpret, or summarize trends. Yet it was the government’s styling regulations, introduced in the second fashion season after Paris’ occupation, that unified the American fashion scene and pulled the industry in the same stylistic direction. Furthermore, the regulations stimulated attention to fashion at the very time that fashion leaders feared American women would lose interest. Thus, the regulations solved two important problems for the industry at a time when it struggled for leadership.

The government provided further leadership for the fashion industry by encouraging its continued operation in order to support the national economy. As can be seen by consultations with fashion industry experts in establishing the L-85 regulations, the federal government faced the challenge of allotting resources in a manner that benefitted both the war effort and private business. This is not surprising considering that many of the officials, such as retailer Stanley Marcus, brought to Washington to oversee the war effort, were experts in the industries that they sought to direct.

The American fashion industry, then, received support in its efforts to restructure its operations from a variety of sources. The federal government wanted its economic
contributions as did Mayor La Guardia, the unions, and apparel manufacturers. Retailers needed fashions to promote, and The Times recognized the redefining of the nation's third largest industry as important news. Despite the fact that a single entity failed to emerge that could direct the industry's activities in the way that the Chambre Syndicale directed the couture industry, the New York fashion industry formed some new alliances, such as the New York Dress Institute and the Coty Awards, and strengthened some already in place, such as New York's museums participating in fashion events. This new strength and cohesion can be seen in how the New York industry responded to Paris' liberation.

As soon as Paris was free, it set about to regain its pre-war position as leader in the world fashion market. Couture houses quickly organized shows, but their materials were limited and of poor quality, and they lacked the trend-setting style directions of their former days. Furthermore, France could still not export its products, so no American buyers attended their shows.

Immediately after the liberation, the American fashion industry fell into a small panic. What would happen to its newly established fashion authority? Even though the press immediately began filing reports of couture's activities, the American industry chose to increase its promotion of American designers rather than to rush to follow Paris. The
American industry had an interval between Paris’ re-opening and the time it could again export its designs, and it used the time to promote the uniqueness of American women and their clothing needs. The American industry soon recognized that Paris and New York served different markets with separate needs. With this realization, the American industry concentrated on promoting its strengths secure in its position as a leader in the fashion world. Further support for this new leadership came from Paris itself as it sought to re-establish trade with New York, but this time offering to coordinate showings rather than to dictate schedules.

In just four short years, the American fashion industry redirected its design efforts from adapting Paris fashions to fit American women’s lifestyles to initiating fashions uniquely suited to their needs. World War II served as a catalyst in launching American designers who offered consumers original designs carrying individual rather than store labels. While the industry did not make a single, unified effort, it rallied around the shared cause of promoting American fashion. The industry went beyond stop-gap measures and seized the opportunity to restructure its operations and to reposition itself in the fashion world. By the end of World War II, the American fashion industry stood on an equal, but different footing with
Paris. The industry had evolved from "Paris says" to "Paris Plus New York."

**Implications**

Rather than a time when nothing happened in fashion, when fashion stood frozen, the years from 1940 through 1945 proved to be a time when, for the American fashion industry, everything happened. This was a time when the industry made a very bold decision to redefine how it operated and to redefine its place in the global fashion industry. Innovations launched during these few years, often in response to war-induced government limitations, continue to impact the American fashion industry in 1996. American designers enjoy not just a national, but an international, celebrity status, the union label is still sewn into American apparel, and retailers continue to promote individual designers under their own names and labels.

Yet, as we train fashion merchandising students, few textbooks make mention of the rich heritage of the American fashion industry or of this very pivotal time in its history. Instead, texts devote space to the history of the Paris couture industry and often limit mention of the American industry's history to manufacturing innovations and the development of retail stores. The emergence of American designers from anonymous laborers to fashion leaders receives even less coverage.
In *Fashion: From Concept to Consumer*, Fifth Edition, Gini Stephens Frings mentions that an American design direction emerged during the war, but credits the leading of Mainbocher and cites only three American designers, Claire McCardell, Hattie Carnegie, and Vera Maxwell. While the text is correct in that McCardell and Maxwell received increased fame during the war, Hattie Carnegie was not so much a designer as a manufacturer employing other designers. The text further credits McCardell with originating the "American Look," concentrates on the preponderance of sportswear, characterizes the popular suits as masculine due to their military influence, and states that "fashion remained relatively stable during the war years." The American Look was a design campaign used by Lord & Taylor, suits were designed for adaptability but maintained a definite feminine flavor with lacy blouses, and fashion enjoyed many innovations despite war regulations.

In *Marketing Today's Fashion*, Third Edition, Carol Stewart Mueller and Eleanor Lewit Smiley state that during Paris’ occupation “American designs were the only fashions of note" and recognize Dorothy Shaver as promoting American designers. They concentrate, however, on biographies of Adrian, Claire McCardell, and Norman Norell with mentions of Tom Brigance, Claire Potter, Vera Maxwell, and Elizabeth Hawes in connection with Shaver’s 1932 promotions. Despite extensive coverage of the establishment
of the Paris industry, this text concentrates on a limited number of individual American designers and ignores the majority of industry promotions.

In *Inside the Fashion Business, Fifth Edition*, Jeannette Jarnow and Miriam Guerreiro provide a forceful discussion of the American industry's practice of copying Paris copies and the break with the tradition during World War II. They credit Dorothy Shaver with promoting American designers for the first time, but erroneously attribute her 1932 campaign as occurring during the war years. Again, other industry campaigns are ignored as are many designers.

In *Introduction to Fashion Merchandising*, Patricia Mink Rath, Jacqueying Peterson, Phyllis Greensley, and Penny Gill devote only one paragraph to the 1940s in their discussion of the history of the women's apparel industry. Without mentioning them by official number, they concentrate their discussion on the styling regulations and state that manufacturers copied the military look. They also emphasize the popularity of the housedress. Their discussion ignores the issue that many women were working in factories rather than at home and, again, erroneously stresses the military influence on women's designs.

In *Fashion Merchandising and Marketing*, Marian H. Jernigan and Cynthia R. Easterling mention the growth of the American fashion industry during World War II and state that Charles James, Mainbocher, and Norman Norell provided design
leadership. They state that "gradually these names became recognized as equals to Paris couturiers as they developed their own elegant, sophisticated designs." They also mention the "American Look" without crediting Dorothy Shaver, but instead use it to refer to sportswear that emerged during the 1930s and 1940s.

In *Fashion Merchandising: An Introduction, Fifth Edition,* Elaine Stone includes a lengthy discussion of the development of the Paris couture industry and lists couture designers, but does not discuss the emergence of American design. Instead, she includes a chart of social and economic influences on fashion in the United States and includes a section on the 1940s. Within this chart she includes the "exit" of France as a fashion source and the "emergence of American designers." Within the confines of the chart, however, there is no room for discussion.

These examples demonstrate the glaring omission of the history of American designers in fashion merchandising textbooks. While they give attention to the development of the ready-to-wear industry in the United States, their focus is on manufacturing and retailing. They largely ignore the creation side of the product. Furthermore, they do not credit the American fashion industry with the revolutionary changes that it instituted during World War II nor do they mention the new working alliances forged in order to promote grow within the industry.
In order for the students in training today to appreciate the heritage of the American fashion industry, more textbook space must be devoted to the evolving nature of that industry. Just as the war environment of the 1940s forced adaptations and provided opportunities for new business practices, today's changing global market provides myriad challenges to the American fashion industry of the 1990s. Today the fashion leadership so innovatively won during the 1940s is being challenged by foreign competition; and today, as in the 1940s, the industry faces the challenge of the loss of business and of jobs. By looking at how the industry worked together to meet the challenges of the past, future industry leaders can garner a more thorough understanding of potential solutions to today's problems.

The problem with this strategy, however, lies in the attention given to present operations and marketing strategies without giving the industry's foundations proper attention. The American fashion industry enjoys a rich heritage of facing challenges and overcoming obstacles through innovative business strategies. Unless educators invest the time in helping students appreciate this rich history, our students will not have the respect for the heritage of the American industry that is accorded to the French industry. While American design today stands equal with Paris design, our pride in its history does not. This study, then, is a step in filling the void of knowledge
about the history of the American industry. By implementing this information into our curriculums and by expanding our studies of the American fashion industry, scholars face the responsibility of maintaining the hard-won recognition of America’s fashion leadership. It is our challenge to see that Tobe’s prediction of nearly fifty years ago continues into the future—"The Sun Will Never Set On American Fashion Design!"¹²
NOTES


2. Ibid., 19.


4. Ibid., 179.

5. Ibid.


9. Ibid., 124.


11. Ibid., 114.

12. Tobe Fashion Reports, 27 December 1945, 2D.
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