From a letter by Amelia Bloomer 12/2 8 '89 in Religio Philo Sophical journal. Chicago.

True History of The Bloomer Costume.

In January or February, 1851, an article appeared editorially in the Seneca County Courier, Seneca Falls, N. Y., on "Female Attire," in which the writer showed up the inconvenience, unhealfulness, and discomfort of woman's dress, and advocated a change to Turkish pantaloons and a skirt reaching a little below the knee.

At this time I was publishing a monthly paper in the same place devoted to the interests of woman - temperance and woman's rights being the principal subjects. As the editor of the Courier was opposed to us on the woman's rights question this article of his gave me an opportunity to score him one on having gone so far ahead of us as to advocate our wearing pantaloons, and in my next issue I noticed him and his proposed style in a half-serious, half playful article of some length. ~~Exxxxxxxx~~ He took up the subject again and expressed surprise that I should treat so important a matter with levity. I replied to him more seriously than before, fully indorsing and approving his views on the subject of woman's costume.

About this time, when the readers of the Lily and Courier were interested in and excited over the discussion, Elizabeth Smith Miller, daughter of the Hon. Garret Smith of Peterboro, N. Y., appeared on the streets of our village dressed in short skirt and full Turkish trousers. She came on a visit to her cousin, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was then a resident of Seneca Falls. Mrs. Miller had been wearing this costume some two or three months at home and abroad. Just how she came to adopt it I have forgotten, if I ever knew. But she wore it with the full sanction and approval of her father and husband. During her father's term in Congress she was in Washington, and the papers of that city described her appearance on the streets in the short costume.

A few days after Mrs. Miller's arrival in Seneca Falls, Mrs. Stanton came out in a dress made in Mrs. Miller's style. She walked our streets in a skirt that came a little below the knees and trousers of the same material - black satin. Having had part in the discussion of the dress question it seemed proper that I should practice as I preached and as the Courier man advised - and so a few days later I, too, donned the costume, and in the next issue of my paper ~~xxxxxxxx~~ announced that fact to my readers. At the outset I had no idea of fully adopting the style - no thought of setting a fashion- no thought that my action would create an excitement throughout the civilized world and give to the style my name and the credit due Mrs. Miller. This was all the work of the press. I stood amazed at the furor I had unwittingly caused. The New York Tribune contained the first notice I saw of my action. Other papers caught it up and handed it about. My exchanges all had something to say. Some praised and some blamed, some commended and some ridiculed and condemned. "Bloomerism," "Bloomerites," and "Bloomers" were the headings of many an article, item, and squib, and finally some one - I don't know to whom I am indebted for the honor - wrote of the "Bloomer costume," and the name has continued to cling to the short dress in spite of my repeatedly disclaiming all right to it and giving Mrs. Miller's name as the originator, or the first to wear such dress in public. Had she not come to us in that style it is not probable that either Mrs. Stanton or myself would ever have donned it.

As soon as it became known that I was wearing the new style letters came pouring in upon me by hundreds from women all over the country, making inquiries about the dress and asking for patterns - showing how ready and anxious women were to throw off the burden of long, heavy skirts. It seemed as though half the letters in the mails were for me.

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It Increased Her Paper's Circulation.

My subscription list ran up amazingly into the thousands, and the good woman's rights doctrine was thus scattered from Canada to Florida, and from Maine to California. I had [illegible]gotten myself into a position from which I could not recede if I had desired to do so. I therefore continued to wear the style on all occasions, at home and abroad, at church and on the lecture platform, at fashionable parties and in my business office. I found the dress comfortable, light, easy, and convenient, and well adapted to the needs of my busy life. I was pleased with it and had no desire to lay it aside, and so would not let the ridicule or censure of the press move me. For some six or eight years, or so long as I remained in active life, and until the papers had ceased writing squibs at my expense, I wore no other costume. During this time I was to some extent in the lecture field, visiting and lecturing in all the principal cities of the North on temperance and woman suffrage, but at no time on any occasion, even alluding to my style of costume. I felt as much at ease in it as though I had been arrayed in the fashionable draggle skirts. In all my travels I met with nothing disagreeable or unpleasant, but was universally treated with respect and attention by both press and people wherever I appeared. Indeed, I received flattering notices from the press of my lectures. If the dress drew the crowds that came to hear me it was well. They heard the message I brought them, and it had borne abundant fruit.

My paper had many contributions on the subject of dress, so that question was for some time kept before my readers. Mrs. Stanton was a frequent contributer and ably defended the style. She continued to wear it at home and abroad, on the lecture platform and in the social parlor, for two or three years, and then the pressure brought to bear upon her by her father and other friends was so great that she finally yielded to their wishes and returned to long skirts. At least this was the understood cause of her change. Elizabeth Miller wore the style for many years, but I think abandoned it several years ago.

Lucy Stone of the Woman's Journal adopted and wore the style for many years on all occasions, but she, too, with advancing years saw fit to return to long skirts. We all felt that the dress was drawing attention from what we thought of far greater importance - the question of woman's right to better education, to a wider field of employment, to better remuneration for her labor, and to the ballot for the protection of her rights. In the minds of the people the short dress and womanb rights were inseparably connected. With us the dress was but an accident, and we were not willing to sacrifice greater questions to it.

From scrapbook of Elizabeth Smith Miller
Peterboro Geneva N.Y.

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