

COSTUMES AND TRADITIONS OF THE RIVER BRETHREN

Women

The River Brethren women in the early period in Kansas all looked alike for they wore a black matching cape and apron called a “Frock and Yoke”—a long black dress reaching to the ground and a plain “Fichus,” a three cornered piece which hung over the shoulders from the neck.

A long skirted huge bonnet of black and a tiny sheer cap called a “Prayer Covering” which was never removed except for sleeping and combing*. No jewelry or adornments and plain black high shoes. The daughter was a small replica of the mother.

Men

The Men generally word heavy beard but with the upper lip shaved. The hair worn very long and brushed straight back from the forehead. The “Sunday go Meeting,” suit black trousers cut in the ancient sailors pattern and called “Broad front.” The coat was collarless and sometimes clerically cut, white collar but never a necktie. Black high shoes and a black felt hat with a wide brim, Quaker fashion.

These early River Brethren pioneers had a taboo on likeness or graven images, as they called them and there are few, if any photographs of the original settlers to Kansas. We have searched every probable source for a picture of Jacob Eisenhower but have been unable to locate one. We did find an artist’s drawing of Jacob, made from descriptions given by some of the older members

*Mr. John Long, a classmate of Dwight’s at Lincoln School in a letter written March 6, 1970, says his mother was the first Brethren lady to take off the “Prayer Covering” and Mrs. Eisenhower the second.