PRESSRELEASE

Mayor's Office • 100 East Michigan Blvd. • Michigan City, IN 46360 • (219)873-1400 • Fax: (219)873-1515
www.emichigancity.com

For Immediate Release

Date: July 1, 2003

"Summer Whites: A Glimpse Into a Victorian Wardrobe"

Michigan City, IN (July 1, 2003) – Barker Mansion's current display, "Summer Whites: A Glimpse Into A Victorian Wardrobe," begins in the turn-of-the-century mansion's foyer with Catherine Barker and her governess welcoming visitors.

"A model wears Catherine's white first-communion dress which is accented with pin-tucking and lace insertions," said Cecilia Zubler, Director of the Barker Mansion. "The governess model wears a white cotton netting and Venetian lace dress."

By the 1890's, Zubler said, sheer white undergarments became so elaborate with lace inserts, silk ribbon, and tucking that outer gowns were designed in a similar fashion and were known as the lingerie dress. From around 1897 to 1915, this pure white gown was the most popular fashion for both young girls and women. The "Delineator," an 1890's publication, stated, "Indeed, the entire summer wardrobe may be in white." Thanks to the sewing machine, frills and ruffles proliferated, and white cotton batiste was the chosen fabric for these garments.

"In the master bedroom, there is Mrs. John H. Barker's white batiste gown, embellished with a lace bodice and hand embroidery on the skirt," Zubler said. "Other white batiste gowns displayed are accented with yards of lace insertions, pastel sashes, or empire style bodices. Hats, shawls, and parasols complete this summer scene."

In Catherine Barker's childhood bedroom, a group of children stand poised to have a summer tea party. Antique dolls in antique dresses sit at a small table and an older girl watches the baby in a bassinet covered with Catherine Barker's net bassinet skirt. Children wore clothing styled after adult fashions, and 1895-era original patterns were used for children's clothing in this exhibit.

Zubler continued, "Until the 1890's, only the wealthy could afford a white wardrobe because of the impracticability of keeping white items clean. In the Mansion's lower level, there is a typical laundry scene with laundry tubs, Fels Naptha soap, washboard, and a hard-working maid hanging laundry on a line."

The Summer Whites display continues through September 30 and is viewed during guided tours offered Monday through Friday at 10 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday at Noon and 2 p.m. There is an admission charge. For more information, call 219/873-1520. Barker Mansion, located at 631 Washington Street, Michigan City, Indiana, is the 1905 home of the freight car industrialist John H. Barker and contains original furnishings, works of art, and an architectural-style garden. The Mansion was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on October 10, 1975.

####

Contact: Cecilia Zubler **Phone:** 219/873-1520 **E-mail:** czubler@csinet.net