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LOS ANGELES LETTER

Preview of Spring 1952

Season of hope

Los Angeles welcomed its hordes of visiting buyers to the spring showings with a deluge of floods and rain that topped all records for « unusual » weather. (We brag so much about our climate and geography that the smallest shower is « unusual » weather.) Santa Anita race track



PAT PREMO

Exciting cocktail dress, typically Californian, in gold and silver printed chambray.

*Stoffel & Co.,
Saint-Gall.*

JACK HUSTON

The sailor collar is trimmed deftly with a charming guipure trim.
Forster-Willi & Co., Saint-Gall.

Photo DuBois.



DE DE JOHNSON

Slim sheath dress in silvery black swiss moucheté.

Photo John Engstead.



opened in spite of rain with a large and fashionably dressed crowd. Your correspondent made a small killing on a tired, but mud-loving horse while busily observing the scores of smartly dressed horse women whose well-detailed suits by Athena, Edith Small, Sarusa and others boasted fabrics of Swiss origin.

All the suits we saw were consistently long-jacketed, slim-skirted and beautifully tailored with discreet details. This has come to be known as the « California » suit and is as recognizable on the streets of New York, Palm Beach, Rio or London as it is in Beverly Hills. Details consist chiefly of collar and cuff inserts or additions on a basically conservative body. For example, Irene covers the deep left lapel of a black suit with heavy white Swiss lace while Rex, the milliner, sculpts a small tiara of the same lace on a simple black velvet band to match.

Overwhelmingly large orders placed with hundreds of Los Angeles manufacturers proved that crying skies had no dampening effect on buyers who were greeted with a multitude of new designers to choose from, a large crop of refreshingly new styles and a color array that cheered the hearts of buyers from less sundrenched parts of the country. An Oriental influence was reflected in one collection which featured ming jade, lacquer red, mocha, China blue, Siamese pink and Persian turquoise. However, the headiest note of the season was the grouping known as benedictine colors: burnt sugar, lime, creme, champagne, red and apricot. Other designers merely identified benedictine as spice and combined it deftly with black in practically every collection.

Please note that we have included in this report only those houses which manufacture in large volume, yet give so much in quality, tailoring, fine fabrics and inventive ideas that they often supersede high-fashion houses because of price and value. Many of these designers use Swiss fabrics to a large degree, especially in their spring lines, and since many of these fabrics are designed in Switzerland exclusively for these firms, a great touch of individuality is maintained as their orders spread out among the thousands of stores throughout the country.

In spite of gray skies, an elated mood emphasizing the more uninhibited and zany qualities of Southern California pervaded the showings.

The high-style note of the market was the spencer jacket, — a close-fitting, very brief jacket, sometimes buttoned tightly like a bellboy's jacket, sometimes merely a loose little bolero, sometimes collared, sometimes cardigan. This is a wonderful cover-up for California's suntan dresses, for strapless evening creations or for an added suit-look over separate blouses and skirts, blouses and shorts, blouses and slacks which have now become an «at home» staple garment rather than an outdoor sportswear item. New note: «peon pants», a variation of a Mexican native's short trousers which tie just below the knee.

One new house, Graywood of California, has made a sales point of its exclusive use of fine Swiss fabrics. Other houses, De De Johnson and Pat Premo, have built famous reputations on specially designed St. Gall cottons, for example, which have characterized the individuality of their lines. Embroideries are used more and more and the Swiss market is now expanding to include Swiss knits, treated in the California manner by Sydney of La Cienega, a famous Los Angeles hand-knit designer who creates her own hand embroideries, insignia and appliques to add a unique touch.

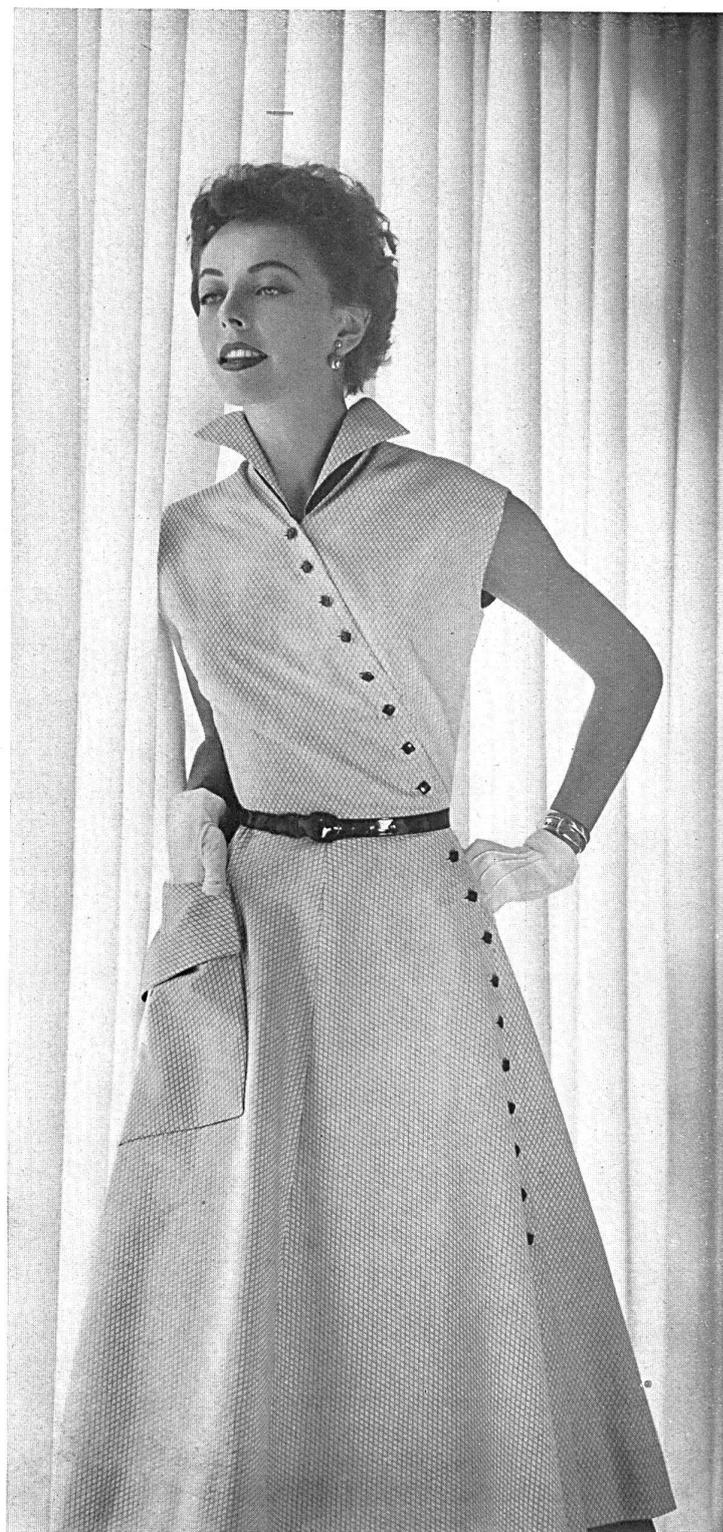
The strong trend in California sportswear and dresses is toward fabrics which require less and less care: Swiss synthetics that shed wrinkles and travel well, miracle fabrics like orlon and nylon, wrinkly-surfaced cottons that have a textured look and need no ironing, embossed cotton imports, cottons with a pebble-like finish that disguises crush and creases, Swiss weaves simulating heavy silks with a rich air of elegance and a minimum need for careful upkeep.

Of course, throughout the market in the dressier houses, we saw billowing Swiss organdies and eyelets, the romantic dresses that our Southern girls dream of and Northern women worry about, the dresses that offer the utmost in appeal to men and hours of worry over a hot ironing board to the young women who buy them. Spring is not spring without the swallows and summer is

not summer in this country without its wonderful Swiss peek-a-boo wearables!

But when-oh-when will the ingenuity of clever craftsmen bring us the freedom of a wrinkle-free organdy so that busy, fashionminded women can be their sleek, efficient selves by day and the most feminine of sirens after sunset? When this development occurs California designers will welcome it gladly and work unceasingly to create more and more of our gay, colorful and funloving clothes. Can we order such a miracle any time soon?

HELENE F. MILLER.



PAT PREMO
Satin back piqué.
Stoffel & Co., Saint-Gall.