Chapter Two

BASIC MILLINERY SUPPLIES

“What makes a milliner?” is a question often asked, and the answer is simply this: Most women are born with good taste—a sense of color and line and a flare for style. Teach this woman millinery technique, and you have a milliner.

I’d like to qualify this statement by saying that a good milliner has a real interest in and love for hats; that she finds satisfaction in working with her hands; that she has the patience for painstaking work; that she has some gift of imagination plus some common sense. Logical procedures are most useful.

Learning millinery is a step-by-step process, and every hat you make will add to your experience. As in any kind of fashion work, you’ll never learn all there is to know! As long as you keep on doing it, however, you’ll keep on learning and improving your technique.

There are two things you may expect to learn from these Millinery Technique lessons. First you become acquainted with the different millinery materials; secondly, you learn how to use them.

BUCKRAM

If you are going to make your own frames, you must use buckram. Willow molds more easily, but does not have enough body to make a satisfactory frame. The buckram family is a large one, including many kinds of elastic nets.

The kind we have found to be most satisfactory for general use is a coarse, heavy net, stiffened with sizing. It is elastic only when wet. The sizing should be impregnated in the weave; and should not look like a coating or “second” layer. Buckram can be shaped over a block when wet.
CRINOLINE

Crinoline is lighter-weight material, with a simple basket weave. It looks like stiff cheesecloth. It has less sizing in it than buckram, and is used as stiffening or in frame making. We call it "crin."

MILLINERY WIRE

There are a number of sizes and kinds. You will find the heaviest paper-covered wire (No. 19 or No. 21) useful for many different hats. You can bend and adjust this wire.

For a stiff straight brim (sailor or cartwheel) you will use steel wire—a wire that will not bend. It is joined together by a wire joiner. If you cannot make purchases at a millinery supply house, perhaps your local milliner will sell—or give—you a joiner.

MILLINERY GLUE

Millinery glue is used for gluing fabrics. It holds securely without injuring or staining materials. It is also used for gluing feathers and flowers, and in the making of some ornaments.

Gluing Brims: In covering a brim, you may use glue to make the material conform to the shape of the brim. In a brim designed to be worn flat (such as a sailor) it is not necessary to glue, for you can control your fabric by sewing at crown line and on the edge. Any brim that has a "curve," however, will need to be glued. (If it is not glued, it should be stitched.) An indented crown should also be glued.

Some milliners use a knife or spatula to spread the glue over the buckram. I usually use the finger method, especially in small areas. (I worry about getting it

Covering a "curved" brim with material. (left)
Use glue on upper side of Breton. (right) Use glue on under side of Mushroom.
off my hands after I have gotten it onto the hat! And by the way, the stuff doesn’t wash off — it rolls off.)

Hold the tube of glue close to your hat brim and squeeze out a few drops of the thick and heavy glue. Spread thinly and evenly, and then press your fabric down firmly and hold in place for a minute. Glue dries very rapidly, so you must work fast.

Now lift up another portion of material and spread glue over another small area. Smooth and pat material in place.

Continue this operation until the entire brim is covered with glued material.

If your brim turns up — for instance, a Breton — you will need to glue only the top, or convex, side. Your material will naturally cling to the underside as it curves out and up.

On the other hand, if your style is a mushroom brim, you will need to glue only the underside.

If your brim curves down to one side and up on the other side, you will use this same principle. Use glue on the inside curve, whether it is up or down.

Removing Glue: If you get a spot of glue on the outside surface of felt or fabric, wait until it dries and then rub gently with a fine sandpaper.

**GROSGRAIN RIBBON**

Buy millinery grosgrain, and ask for it by name. Be sure that the edge is saw-toothed. This ribbon will “circle”; the straight-edged grosgrain will not. Grosgrain comes in different widths and all colors, and is used extensively in millinery.

**Headsize Ribbon:** A grosgrain ribbon is used to finish the inside of a straw or felt hat. This ribbon takes the place of a lining and is called a “headsize” ribbon. No. 5 is the size used for “headsize,” but before it is sewed into the hat, it must be “circled.”

**How to Circle Ribbon:** If you use a steam iron lay the ribbon flat on the pressing board in the shape of a circle; press, stretching the outer edge of the ribbon as you go. If you use an ordinary iron, the ribbon must be pressed round under a damp cloth.
Other Uses: Grosgrain is also used for outside trimming bands, bows, and bindings, using the proper width and color.

Binding: A grosgrain binding for the edge of a brim is made by folding the ribbon in the center. Press, and then proceed to "circle" the doubled ribbon.

Hat Bands: Hat bands for outside crown trims must also be circled. Proceed as described above.

MILLINERY NEEDLES AND MILLINERY THREAD

Millinery needles are usually imports, most of them coming from England. They are long and strong.

Sizes: Where you particularly need strength — for instance in wiring a brim — use Needle No. 5 or No. 6 with a No. 24 millinery thread. Use Needles No. 7 and No. 8 with thread No. 40 for finer finishing work. You may also use sewing thread No. 50 for finishing. Millinery thread has a different finish from ordinary thread and greater tensile strength.

STARCHED CHIFFON

This sheer, stiffened material may be shaped over a block by steaming. It is used as a lining or as a base for soft turbans.

SIZING

This is colorless liquid used to stiffen felts or straws. Brush on where you need to stiffen. Do not use on a damp surface — be sure your hat is dry before applying sizing. A second or third coat may be used if you desire extreme stiffness, but let each coat dry before applying another.

HAT BLOCK

If you want to make very many hats for yourself, you must have a block that measures the same size as your head. If you want to make hats for people with different headsizes, then you will need more than one block.

Some hats can be made without the use of a block. Examples are pillbox, visor hat, sailors, and berets, included in the Pattern Section.
OTHER SUPPLIES

The supplies listed above (in addition to your “outside materials”) are those you need for making hats. Keep enough on hand (tucked away on a closet shelf) so that you can make a hat when the mood strikes you.

You will want flowers, veilings, and ornaments to use as trims, but buy these as you need them. They should be individually selected for each hat you make.

MILLINERY EQUIPMENT

As for millinery equipment, lots of women already possess it.

Sewing Machine: You do not have to have a sewing machine, but it is extremely useful. There are details on almost every hand-made hat that can be done faster and better with a sewing machine.

Iron: A steam iron is fine for pressing materials and seams, circling ribbons, and blocking fabrics; but is not much good for blocking felts. If you do not have a steam iron you can get steam by applying a hot iron to a wet press cloth.

Steam Pad: Make a steam pad for hand blocking and finishing touches by using a yard of muslin. Fold it until you have a square about 6 inches x 6 inches. Hand sew the layers together. This pad will pro-

PINS

You can’t make hats without pins. Use lots of them — ordinary dressmaker pins for fabrics; a larger, heavier pin for block pinning.
tect your fingers when you are working with iron and steam. Use it for last-minute pressing and blocking in “hard-to-get-at” places.

Pressing Board: A good-sized bread board, padded and covered, makes a better pressing board than your ironing board. The latter will prove to be too narrow for much of your work.

Steam-Press: A smooth, heavy linen towel makes a good press cloth. The term “steam-press,” as used hereafter, will indicate use of a wet press cloth plus the use of your hot iron on top of it.

Do not iron — S-T-E-A-M!

STUFFED TUBING

Stuffed tubing is a tubing made out of muslin (cut on the bias) and then stuffed tightly with cotton (the kind that is used for quilting). Tubing can be made thick or thin, depending on its use.

After the tubing is made, it must be covered. You can use any kind of dress fabric for draping the tubing. Cut bias strips of material, 4” or 5” wide and sew strips together so that you have a long continuous piece about three times as long as the tubing you wish to cover.

Gather the drape at one end and sew it to the end of the tubing. Now, proceed to wrap the tubing with the bias material, letting the material fall into folds around the tubing, as you wind. THE TUBING MUST BE HELD TIGHTLY AND THE MATERIAL MUST BE STRETCHED. Keep one side of the drape turned under, as this will finish the preceding raw edge. If the drape is wound right, it will not need to be sewed except at ends.

Use this procedure in making a “halo” brim (it can be used effectively on any kind of a crown). Make a “thick” tubing, about 23” long. Join tubing ends at center back and then cover with draping. Attach this brim to the crown by tacking in place at base of crown.

“Thick” tubing: Use bias muslin, 5” to 5½” wide, as long as you wish. Make side seam, turn right side out and stuff with cotton. “Thin” tubing: Follow above directions but make the bias muslin strips only 2½” to 3½” wide. A “medium” tubing, draped and tied in a knot or a figure “8” at top front of crown, gives a turban effect hat.