Chapter Eight

HOW TO REMAKE AND RENOVATE

Almost every woman has a few old hats lying around that she wishes she knew how to utilize. Sometimes it’s an old favorite that she can’t quite make up her mind to discard; sometimes it’s a mistake, bought in an unguarded moment. In either case, why not bring them out and look them over?

The old favorite may be past redemption by cleaning and patching, and in this case you had better lay it away — with no regrets. If it is that far gone, it must have served you well and been worth every penny you paid for it.

However, I’m not suggesting that you throw it into the furnace yet. Look at the lines of the hat and consider its style. Perhaps it would be well to take a pattern from it, since you liked it so well. There are quite a number of hats you should be able to copy after you have studied these millinery lessons, and this may be one of them. You can rip the hat apart and copy it that way, or you can take a tissue-paper pattern. You need not allow for seams on this pattern, but make a note, “no seams allowed,” so that you won’t forget.

Save all ornaments, ribbons, and veiling. Ribbons can be washed out and pressed — to freshen a veil, just take it off and press it with a warm iron.

Fur Felts: If your hat is fur felt, save the pieces. Have a scrap-box labeled FELT for just this purpose.

Fur felt is a precious material, and even when a hat is worn out there will be parts of the felt that can be used for trimmings. There are many different ways to use it, and no other material will stand reworking quite as well. It should never be thrown away; if you don’t intend to use it, give it to some woman who will.
Wool Felts: Old wool-felt bodies are not worth saving for trims; they are too coarse and heavy to use. You can freshen up an old wool felt by reblocking and perhaps retrimming. Even if the crown was made on a fancy block, you can reblock it on your own round block. The result, of course, is just a round crown, but perhaps you can add style interest by using a trim. (A substitute block tip, as described in Chapter V, would not be feasible here because of the pressure that must be used in blocking a wool felt.)

Reblocking Felt Hats: To reblock, brush off all surface dirt and then put the felt on the block and steam-press, following instructions for blocking. You will find that the felt gains new life and luster, and that the blocking process is also a cleaning process. (This applies to all kinds of felts.) Reblocking the crown usually means that the brim changes shape, and you may have to cut off your brim and resend it. You may want to do this anyway because you can’t very well “clean” (by blocking) your brim while it is attached to your crown.

Frame and Material Hats: Frame and material hats, when well worn, are hardly worth saving, although a long draped band — or a velvet snood — might be reused after it was cleaned and pressed.

Reusing Trims: Flowers and feathers usually show the same wear as the hat, and not much can be done about it if they are badly soiled, broken, or discolored. These same trims, however, taken from a hat that has not been worn much will be well worth reusing — especially if they look like fairly expensive trims. A feather may need to be reglued or a flower resewed; cleaning fluid used sparingly will make them seem fresh and new again.

Cleaning Hats: In fact, cleaning fluid is the solution for a complete hat that is just a little soiled. Use a little fluid on a small piece of turkish toweling or a small wad of tissue paper which will not leave any lint — use a quick, light, brushlike motion in rubbing. Don’t wear a soiled hat even to the corner grocery store — it’s as bad, or worse, than a stocking run. A run might develop on the way, but everyone knows that your soiled, untidy hat was that way before you started.

Remaking: After you have eliminated the worn-out hats in your wardrobe, it is time to decide what to do with the rest.

Consider the possibilities of cleaning, retrimming, mending. If you still won’t like the hat after all this is done to it, then the fault must lie in the lines of the hat — you have found that they are not becoming to you, or else that it is completely out of style.

Remaking Felt Hats: If your “mistake” is a felt, and a fur felt at that, rip it up and prepare to have fun remaking it! (You must have found at least one good suggestion in this book to follow.) Don’t try to do the impossible. Remaking always “takes up” felt. If you start out remaking a large felt, you will end up with a not-so-large felt; but even a small hat can be remade if you have it in mind to add a trim — a trim that will also build up the line of the hat. Remember, too, that felt can be pieced. Lay one section over another and sew twice across with the sewing machine; the second sewing should be about 1/8-inch from the first.

Remaking Straw Hats: Straw hats, of course, can be reblocked and many of the same suggestions that apply to felt may also be used with straws. If you have an out-of-date brim of straw, you might try
reblocking the crown and using the old brim in a new way. Cut it according to pattern, bind the raw edge with grosgrain ribbon. Or use the old brim as a trim — double it and use it across the front of a round crown — giving sort of a ruffled off-the-face effect.

If the brim was made of straw braid, it can be ripped apart and resewen into a newer shape. Or you can make a complete new crown out of the old straw braid. Stiff braid is usually easier to handle when it is slightly wet. Dip it in a pan of water, and you will find that it becomes pliable and soft.

To make a round crown, work with the braid on the block, starting with the center crown — the spot on your block that would correspond to the crown of your head. Circle the braid, going round and round, following the outline of the block. You can sew on the block as your circle or you can pin the braid and then take it off to sew. Use any kind of a stitch that can be lost in the indentations of the straw. After it is sewed, the crown must be blocked — steam-pressed.

**Sizing Straw Hats:** You will find that most straws need sizing to make them keep their shape. Just brush the sizing on after the crown or brim has been blocked and is dry. Sizing looks something like shellac, but don’t make the mistake of thinking you can use ordinary shellac in its place! Some of the students tried that once on black straws, and they came out several days later with gray straws. Hat sizing is not supposed to discolor.

**Remaking a Covered Frame:** A “mistake” in the way of a covered frame hat is not so easy to correct. You might try ripping the brim off and using an entirely different, but harmonious, trim for the crown. These hats — along with wool felts — have the least possibilities for remaking; but, lest I discourage you too much, I might also add that if you are really ingenious, you may be able to do something, even with these. It has been done!

**Business Possibilities:** The remaking and remodeling of hats — as the basis of a small business — ought to present an opportunity to someone who is clever with her hands. There need be no capital or overhead involved; — and there are lots of old hats around, just waiting to be used!

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**BANDS, BOWS AND BUTTONS**

If you like ribbon bands, make them look individual by adding little bows or loops of velvet or satin, and attach them to hat pins or hair pins and place them above each ear. If you have a piece left over from your dress or blouse, make hand-made flowers, attach flowers to a pin so that they can be switched around to other hats.

To add a bright note to a plain colored band or calot, go through your button box and pick out vari-colored buttons of uniform size and scatter them over your hat or band. Another idea is to string the buttons together to form several loops and place one group above each ear, letting it hang over the side of the hat.
WHAT’S WRONG?                      POSSIBILITIES

Out of style                        Good—but must change style.
Out of shape

Out of style                        Good. Make a hat that goes on back of head instead of forward. (Crown will have to be made more shallow if you want to continue to wear it forward.)
Out of shape

Out of style                        Good. Make a “coolie.”
Out of shape

Out of style                        Many possibilities.
Out of shape

Soiled and out of shape             Good. Will need new trim.

Soiled and out of shape             Unless you have beret block can’t do much except “freshen.” You can always use fur felt for trimmings.

Soiled and out of shape             You’re in luck! Wear backward instead of forward.
HOW TO CHANGE

Reblock crown, using a "makeshift" fancy block to give height and new style interest. Cut off narrow brim and turn upside down around top of hat. Bow trim.

Take brim and crown apart. Freshen both by blocking. For back of head hat, block on round crown. Pin brim on again to get proper arrangement. Sew and trim.

Reblock crown on round block. Cut center back brim and take out enough so that it fits new shallow crown. . . . Make seam in brim by whipping edges together on wrong side. Steam press on right side. Run hand stitching around edge of brim. Pull slightly tight.

Can remake into many different styles.

Use makeshift fancy block. Try to use something that will come near being like original line of hat. Use new trim of flowers, veiling or bow across front . . . Back interest? Make a cut-out ladder effect in back of hat.

Use steam pad under hat and hold in steam from teakettle. Brush while steaming. Baby the hat — pat and mold with fingers — try to regain original line. Add new ribbon or trim (or snood in back.)