

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
128 - WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR HEAD? - AUGUST, 2023



**WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 128... TODAY WE
WILL BE LOOKING HATS AS PART OF FASHION
DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.**



*IN FIVE CASES, YOU TELL ME, 'GET YOUR HAT'
PRIOR TO US HEADING OUT ON AN ADVENTURE.*



EVERY PROPER VICTORIAN KNEW ONE SIMPLY DID NOT GO OUT IN PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE OFFICE, WITHOUT AN APPROPRIATE HEAD COVERING...

UNLESS THEY WERE IN THE COUNTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE JOINED ME ON THE STREET WITH A DEERSTALKER.



WHILE MANY OF THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS INCLUDED YOU IN SUCH ATTIRE, THE HAT WAS NEVER MENTIONED IN THE CANON, AND WAS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE CITY.



A VARIETY OF OTHER CHOICES EXISTED FOR VICTORIAN MEN, HOWEVER, ONE'S SOCIAL STATUS AND THE FASHION AT THE TIME DICTATED THE EXACT STYLE.



WHILE NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF EITHER THE TYPE OF HAT MENTIONED IN THE CANON OR DURING THE 1800s MEN'S HATS INCLUDED THE FLAT CAP, THE TOP HAT (TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE STOVEPIPE AND THE OPERA HAT), THE BOWLER, THE HOMBERG, AND THE BOATER.



THE WOOL CAP HAS PERHAPS THE LONGEST HISTORY. IN 1571, PARLIAMENT DECREED THAT ALL MALES OVER THE AGE OF SIX MUST WEAR A WOOL CAP ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.





THE NOBILITY WAS EXCLUDED, LEADING TO AN ASSOCIATION OF THE FLAT CAP WITH THE WORKING CLASS.



TOP HATS HAVE A LONG HISTORY IN ENGLAND AND WERE ORIGINALLY MADE OF FELT FROM BEAVER OR RABBIT FUR. THE SILK TOP HAT MADE ITS APPEARANCE IN ENGLAND IN 1797.



YOUNG MEN WHO MADE THEIR GRAND TOUR IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE RETURNED WITH FRENCH TOP HATS. CHEESECLOTH, LINEN AND FELT WERE ARRANGED AROUND A WOODEN HAT MOLD AND THEN SHELLACKED TO CREATE THE STIFF FORM.



THE FINAL STEP WAS COVERING IT IN FRENCH SILK. THE TOP HAT HAD A DIFFERENT SHAPE FROM THE STOVEPIPE (WORN BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN). THIS TALL HAT WAS STRAIGHT WHILE THE TOP HAT WAS CURVED.



THE OPERA HAT LACKS THE SHELLACKED STIFFNESS OF THE TOP HAT WITH A MECHANISM TO MAKE IT COLLAPSE.



WHILE THE UPPER CLASS INTRODUCED THE TOP HAT, BY MID-CENTURY ALL CLASSES WORE THE STYLE (BECOMING A SYMBOL FOR CHIMNEY SWEEPS), AND THEN IT RETURNED TO THE UPPER CLASSES BY THE END OF THE CENTURY.



THE BOWLER (SUCH AS THE ONE SHOWN IN THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS ON YOUR HEAD) WAS INVENTED IN 1850 AND WAS ORIGINALLY USED BY GAMEKEEPERS BUT WAS ADOPTED BY THE UPPER CLASSES AND THEN MOVED TO THE CITIES WHERE THE LOWER CLASSES USED IT AS WELL.





THIS PARTICULAR HAT EVEN MADE IT TO SOUTH AMERICA WHERE A SHIPMENT TO BRITISH RAILWAY WORKERS IN BOLIVIA FOUND THEM TOO SMALL FOR THEIR HEADS.



THE BRITONS SHIFTED THEIR SALES APPROACH TO WOMEN, CONVINCING THEM THE HAT WAS THE LATEST FASHION IN EUROPE.





THE HATS FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE
TRADITIONAL DRESS OF THE CHOLITA,
INDIGENOUS BOLIVIAN WOMEN.



**THE HOMBERG APPEARED IN 1870 AND WAS
POPULARIZED BY THE PRINCE OF WALES.**



**THIS WAS CONSIDERED AN INFORMAL HAT.
THE STRAW BOATER ALSO MADE ITS
APPEARANCE IN 1870 WITH A MACHINE THAT
COULD SEW STRAW.**



AS NOTED, SEVERAL HATS WERE MADE WITH FELT. THIS PROCESS INVOLVES USING STEAM TO DRAW FIBERS FROM RABBITS, BEAVERS, OR WOOL INTO A CONE MOLD.



TRILBY

bowl top
small pinch
creases

brim is narrow in back and on the sides (about 1 inch). Wider in front, (between 1.5 and 1.75 inches).



band is flat, patterned fabric

brim turned up sharply in back

can be fabric, straw, or felt.
Fabric is usually patterned

FEDORA

top is creased

brim is slightly wider in front (2 to 3 inches) than in back or on the sides (1.5 to 2.75 inches),



deep pinch
creases

band is
wide
grosgrain
ribbon or
pleated
fabric

always made of felt.

The same shape in straw is a Panama
Never made in fabric

THIS MATERIAL IS THEN WASHED IN HOT WATER SEVERAL TIMES TO MAKE IT SHRINK TO THE APPROPRIATE THICKNESS FOR HAT-MAKING.



IN ADDITION TO HOT WATER, MERCURY NITRATE WAS OFTEN USED TO INCREASE THE BINDING PROCESS.





THIS LED TO MERCURY POISONING FOR WORKERS IN THE HAT FACTORIES, AND THE TERM 'MAD AS A HATTER.' THE PROCESS DID NOT END UNTIL THE 20TH CENTURY.



WHILE THE CANON INCLUDES MORE THAN SIXTEEN TYPES OF HAT AND EIGHT TYPES OF CAP WORN BY HOLMES AND VARIOUS CLIENTS, I INCLUDED FEW DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT WOMEN WORE ON THEIR HEADS.



**THIS LACK OF DISCUSSION OF WOMEN'S
HEADWEAR MOST LIKELY RESULTED FROM
SHIFTING FASHIONS AND SEASONS.**



**AN APPROPRIATE HAT FOR SUMMER—USUALLY MADE
OF STRAW—WOULD NEVER DO FOR WINTER ATTIRE
MADE OF SUCH MATERIALS AS VELVET.**



OVER TIME, BRIMS WOULD CHANGE LENGTH,
OFTEN ADAPTED TO THE CURRENT HAIRSTYLES.
ADORNMENTS FROM FEATHERS TO WHOLE BIRDS
APPEARED. HAT PINS ARRIVED TO HOLD THE ITEM
IN PLACE.



**ALTHOUGH YOUR SUPERIOR OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS
MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE
CHANGES, I MIGHT SIMPLY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO
DO THE SAME.**



Fig. 1.—Soubrette Aurora.



*IN ANSWER TO THE DIRECTIVE, 'GET YOUR HAT,'
BOTH OF US HAD A VARIETY OF CHOICES, BUT
RARELY THE BELOVED DEERSTALKER.*



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 128 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 129, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT MATHEMATICS DURING THE
VICTORIAN PERIOD.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

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