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# Gifts to be Cultivated: Training in Dressmaking and Millinery 1860-1920

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GIFTS TO BE CULTIVATED:  
TRAINING IN DRESSMAKING AND MILLINERY 1860-1920

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

BY  
SUSAN MACK

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

2011

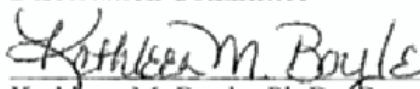
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GIFTS TO BE CULTIVATED:

TRAINING IN DRESSMAKING AND MILLINERY 1860-1920

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

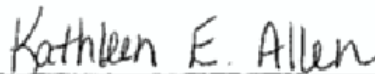
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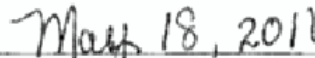
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Final Approval Date

## Acknowledgements

But the darkness has passed, and it's daylight at last! The night has been long,  
ditto, ditto my song, And thank goodness they're both of them over!  
-Gilbert and Sullivan, Nightmare Song from Iolanthe

I would not have embarked on this journey without the guidance and support of my professor and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Kathleen Boyle, who from the beginning thought this was a great idea. My committee members, Dr. Kathleen Allen and Dr. Thomas Fish provided vital guidance, helping me focus on what was most important. My cohort peers provided fabulous humor and endless encouragement. I would like to especially thank Dr. Sheryl Grassie and Dr. Noni Threinen. Lastly I thank and dedicate this dissertation to my beloved friend and pet, Murry, a Maltese Terrier who died the day my dissertation was approved.

As an ENTJ on the Myers Briggs, what was most difficult was the solitary nature of the work. In an effort to offset this, I convinced myself I was not alone. I hung pictures of dressmakers and milliners in my office. I printed quotes from Susan B. Anthony, Julius Caesar, and Alexander Hamilton, above my desk. I considered worshipping Clio the muse of history. I conjured Wendy Gamber, May Allinson, Cynthia Amnéus, Claudia Kidwell, and many others to be a secret source of strength for me, as I worked alone, as I know they did.

In the end, I fully enjoyed my time on this project. I never grew tired of my topic because I have so much respect for the women in this study. They knew hard work, the

challenges they faced were always greater than mine were, and that was humbling. For those considering embarking on an educational doctorate I would offer that there will be pain, there will be fear, but in the words of Abraham Lincoln, “Your own resolve to succeed is more important than any other thing.”

## Table of Content

Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Tables .....	v
Abstract .....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Self Study .....	14
Dressmaking and Millinery Training by Self Study Methods .....	14
Home Sewing.....	14
Women’s Magazines.....	31
Instruction Books .....	49
Correspondence Schools .....	54
Chapter 2. Apprenticeships.....	57
Dressmaking and Millinery Training through Apprenticeships .....	57
Apprenticeships.....	57
Chapter 3. Public School.....	74
Dressmaking and Millinery Training in the Public School .....	74
Kindergarten, Primary, and Grammar School .....	74
Trade Schools.....	79
High School - Household Arts Education.....	91
Evening School .....	105
Chapter 4. Private Schools and College.....	112
Dressmaking and Millinery Training in Private Schools and College .....	112
Private Dressmaking and Millinery Schools.....	112
College .....	118
Chapter 5. Community Education.....	120
Dressmaking and Millinery Training through Community Education .....	120
Community Education .....	120
Chapter 6. Implications .....	129
Implications for Progressive Era Women Training to be Dressmakers and Milliners .....	129
Leaving School .....	129
Marriage.....	134
Health.....	135
Conclusion .....	138
Appendix A. Supplementary Tables .....	150
Appendix B. Illustrations and Images.....	155
Appendix C. Dressmakers, Milliners and Sewing in Art.....	189
Glossary .....	189
Bibliography .....	205

## Table of Tables

Table 1. Magazine circulation numbers by year	34
Table 2. Household arts education curriculum structure	95
Table 3. Domestic arts education subjects	96-97
Table 4. First year course domestic art manual training high school	99
Table 5. Milliners age at leaving school New York, 1917	130
Table 6. Milliner's age at leaving school Boston and Philadelphia, 1916	130
Table 7. Milliner's level of schooling Boston and Philadelphia, 1916	131
Table 8. Milliner's reasons for leaving school	133
Table 9. Marital status of dressmakers and milliners, 1890	135
Table 10. Medical attention given to Manhattan Trade School students	136

## **Abstract**

Dressmaking and millinery flourished around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1900, there were over 420,000 women working in the trades. Trade work offered good wages, possibility for advancement, and autonomy, but required the worker to obtain substantial skills. The purpose of this historical research study was to identify training and educational opportunities in dressmaking and millinery during the years 1860-1920.

Women studied for years in order to be accomplished seamstresses in the trades. Each trade had numerous stages of ability and increasing duties that denoted the skill level of the worker. A potpourri of experiences existed for aspiring tradeswomen to obtain the skills necessary to become successful dressmakers and milliners. Girls had access to sewing instruction through home sewing, books, correspondence schools, apprenticeships, public school, trade school, and high school. As women they learned from magazines, evening school, private school, college, clubs, conventions, and fairs. Although the focus of information and instruction was often on home sewing, dressmakers and milliners used these same skills to forward themselves in trade. Almost every woman took her own route, discovering what was necessary to add to her medley of knowledge in order to be successful in business.

Dressmakers and milliners fought against their gender-determined roles. Instead of being homemakers they developed self-identity through their connections to their fellow workers, tradeswomen and customers. Work provided an avenue for tradeswomen



to feel needed and to satisfy their natural desire to help one another. Through their work-identity, they located themselves.

## Introduction

...An aptness for dressmaking and millinery is a gift to be cultivated.  
-Ella Rodman Church, *Money-Making for Ladies*

The dressmaking and millinery<sup>1</sup> trades flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1900, there were just over 338,000 dressmakers and almost 83,000 milliners in America.<sup>2</sup> Women's clothing fashions of the day required custom-fitting, high-detailed, and original pieces of art. Working in the dressmaking and millinery trades offered good wages, possibility for advancement, and autonomy, but required the worker to obtain substantial skills.

A reasonable amount of research exists to describe the dressmaking and millinery trades. What is lacking is research on the nature of the training and education women received.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of my research is to gain historical perspective and enhance the archives of knowledge on women's training and educational opportunities in dressmaking and millinery between 1860-1920.

This topic is of personal interest for a number of reasons. I sold millinery at Marshall Field's as one of my first jobs. Additionally, I lived in a small rural town in Minnesota from 2003 to 2007 and learned that Redwood Falls was once a shopping Mecca for women in the 1940s. As I looked into the origins of these roots, I discovered

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<sup>1</sup> **millinery** Hats, bonnets, and headdresses of all types worn by women and sold by milliners. 2. The business or trade of a milliner.

<sup>2</sup> Gamber, "The Female Economy," 4. Dressmaking ranked third on the list of female occupations according to the U.S. Census. See Appendix Table A1.

<sup>3</sup> McShannock, *The Business of Dressmaking*, 71.

women-owned dress and millinery shops as early as 1879. As I examined clothing from this period, in the Redwood County Museum, I became interested in how women acquired the necessary needlework skills to make these garments. I came across women-owned dressmaking schools in Minneapolis and Lamberton, Minnesota, as well as correspondence programs and sewing instructions.<sup>4</sup>

Much of my data is from, or in reference to, the years between 1880 and 1920, the period known as the progressive era. Certain information and happenings before the progressive era were also relevant, thus I decided to extend my research to include these prior to 1880. Like a third political party, the progressive era mindset caused much of the upheaval and innovation that took place during this time. In the dissertation, I use the term progressive era frequently to refer to events between 1880-1920 and note when data falls outside of this time-period.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I found a circular at the Minnesota Historical Society for the Northwestern Dress Cutting School, as well as a correspondence program from the Women's Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences and numerous sewing instruction pamphlets. The Redwood County Museum has a picture of Snow's Dressmaking School in Lamberton, MN, see Illustrations section.

<sup>5</sup> Several other dissertations explored dressmaking and millinery and were a source of great guidance in my research. Wendy Gamber's "The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930" is study of women at work, of women in business, and the history of consumption. Gamber's 1990 dissertation focuses on the East Coast and primarily Boston. Her exhaustive research is widely referenced, provides a wealth of information and was published in book form in 1997.

Nancy Page Fernandez's 1987 dissertation "If a Woman Had Taste...Home Sewing and the Making of Fashion, 1850-1910" analyzes how women's habits of fashionable dress changed revealing a complex relationship between technology, and culture. Fernandez's research provides detailed insight into how women sewed and made garments.

"The Transformation of Home Sewing and the Sewing Machine in America, 1850-1929" Marguerite Connolly's 1994 dissertation examines the industrialization of housework through the story of home sewing and the domestic sewing machine.

During the progressive era, improvements and changes in industry altered the landscape. These changes had a direct impact on the sewing trades and the women who spent their lives immersed in them. Immigrants poured into America. People left their rural homes and moved into cities and towns for newly available jobs. Businesses experienced upheavals. The increase in urban population led to lifestyle changes. Social and civic agencies came into existence to respond to new urban needs. Women took on leadership roles for the first time and women banded together and vigorously fought for their right to vote.<sup>6</sup>

Local governments directed additional resources to their school systems, which led to increased literacy rates. Common schooling grew nationwide and focused on particular purposes and aims. Schooling options for all girls expanded. As school programs and institutions of learning grew throughout America, a new permanent beginning of education for girls and women emerged. High school programs struggling between women's new independence and the departure from the family invented a

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Connolly explores in detail what happened when the sewing machine entered the home and the nature and purpose of home sewing.

Jean Parson's "Transitions in the Urban Production of Custom-Made Clothing, 1880-1920" is a careful examination of dressmakers and the dressmaking trade with a focus on the transitions that occurred as the ready-made industry expanded. She examines women working for wages, women as consumers, fashion and custom production. Parson's 1998 research looks primarily at the trades in Baltimore and the East Coast.

A dissertation written in 1919 by May Allinson "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women in Massachusetts" focuses on the various ways a woman could be employed in the trade such as family dressmaker, shop employment, and specialization. Allinson also reviewed the business side of the trade including management, capitol investments, labor, wages, and competition. Allinson's work gives valuable insight to the understanding of the business just after the trade had reached its prime. This study is widely referenced in this dissertation and will be referred to as the "Massachusetts Dressmaking Study."

<sup>6</sup> Eisenmann, *Historical Dictionary of Women's*, xiv-xv – xvii.

profession in the home for young women through domestic arts education. Colleges admitted women for the first time, in both women's colleges and co-educational schools. The education of women to become teachers expanded through the rise of Normal schools.<sup>7</sup>

Women entered the realms of formal education and wage work. The female labor force grew from fifteen percent in 1890 to forty percent in 1930. Women found they could be successful in a host of occupations from medical, legal, clerical, business and the needle trades. Society recognized education for women as linked to succeeding in wage work.<sup>8</sup>

#### Purpose Statement and Research Question

This dissertation is concerned with discovering what the opportunities were for women training to be dressmakers and milliners and why situations existed as they did. Dressmaking and millinery were not occupations women could pick up in a matter of days, weeks or even months. It took five years to become an accomplished milliner.<sup>9</sup> Both occupations had numerous stages of ability and increasing duties that denoted the skill level of the worker. Women adhered to ever-changing but strict fashion mores in the years between 1860-1920. I used historical methods to gather data for this study. Primary

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<sup>7</sup> For an extensive account of the education of girls, see Powers, *The 'Girl Question' in Education* and Rury, *Education and Women's Work*.

<sup>8</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 91-93.

<sup>9</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 146. Labor expert Mary Van Kleeck (1883-1972) was recognized in Sue Heinemann's *Timelines of American Women's History*, 48. *A Seasonal Industry A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York* by Mary Van Kleeck will be referred to in the dissertation as the New York Millinery Study.

sources included books, journal articles, brochures, curricula, annual reports, advertisements, census records, newspapers, photographs, diaries, and magazines.

Secondary sources (compilations of primary sources and interpretations of primary sources), such as books, journal articles, dissertations, and other historical research on the period and trades also assisted in the analysis. The majority of data focused on Caucasian girls and women. However, as this research project looked to expand the knowledge base on the educational experiences of all women, all relevant data was included regardless of race.

### Significance of Study

Working in the dressmaking and millinery trades could result in abundant wealth and unprecedented independence for the most ambitious and hard-working women. Accomplished tradeswomen obtained a level of control over their own lives not known to other women. They had money, purchased property, and traveled nationally and internationally, all without permission from a man. Success and independence became a self-perpetuating cycle, each one supporting the other resulting in great confidence.<sup>10</sup>

Another benefit of success in dressmaking or millinery for a woman meant she could choose not to marry. The vast majority, over seventy percent in 1890, of women working in the trades were unmarried.<sup>11</sup> The life style of dressmakers and milliners included trips to New York and Paris often annually and alone, before it was customary to do so.

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<sup>10</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 53-59.

<sup>11</sup> Sumner, *Report on Condition*, 248. From the twelfth census.

Dressmaking and millinery provided an arena without much male influence. This was beneficial during a time when women had fewer legal rights, freedoms and opportunities than men did. Sewing was women's work and pursuit of the trade was deemed respectable during a time when most women did not work outside the home. Experienced dressmakers and milliners supported this division of labor. They benefited from the women-only environment, and were generally not suffragists. In the needle trades, they found autonomy, control, and female companionship.<sup>12</sup>

History writers, before the mid to late twentieth century, traditionally omitted, ignored and trivialized women's existence and influence. Studying the experiences of females who lived over 100 years ago is a form of self-defense. Women's history must be studied and accurately represented, otherwise the alteration of accomplishments of certain groups and individuals can occur.<sup>13</sup>

Women owe homage to those who lived before us. The sacrifices, determination, and hard work of women during the progressive era led to many of the opportunities enjoyed and taken for granted today. The women in this study were students, entrepreneurs, and leaders who deserve to be resurrected and celebrated.

Today's adult women grew up without many heroines due to the distortions of history. History has ignored or marginalized women's influence and accomplishments in almost every society. Until recently, the privilege of recording history has been exclusively male. Male history writers have favored acts of war and politics, both male dominated spheres, over all others.

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<sup>12</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Loewen, *Everything You've Been Taught is Wrong*, Lecture 1 Disc 1.

Women of course played vital roles in these and all areas of society in every culture throughout history, but male historians have repeatedly ignored their contributions across the globe. For centuries, female achievements have been downplayed, not only when they occurred but in the recording of history and stories. Men on all continents throughout history, have denied women the spotlight and due praise.<sup>14</sup>

A lack of history can be correlated with powerlessness.<sup>15</sup> Fortunately, this is becoming less and less acceptable to both writers and readers of history. Today women's history finally allows us to view the world more accurately and to make valuable connections to the past, present, and future.<sup>16</sup>

A recently recognized deficit with women's history has been recognition that what exists documents only extraordinary individuals.<sup>17</sup> This dissertation explores the educational experiences of women that entered the dress and millinery trades, all of whom were extraordinary in their own right because of the risks they took and the high level of skills they sought to obtain.

### Women's Sphere

Modern day historian and feminist Gerda Lerner clarified that when she talks of women, she is talking of women under patriarchy.<sup>18</sup> For women living between 1860-1920, patriarchy was their atmosphere. Everything about their lives, from the law, to

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<sup>14</sup> Brundage, *Going to the Sources*; Lerner, *Why History Matters*.

<sup>15</sup> Brundage, *Going to the Sources*, 7; Lerner, *Why History Matters*, 208.

<sup>16</sup> Lerner, *Why History Matters*, 201.

<sup>17</sup> Brundage, *Going to the Sources*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Lerner, *Why History Matters*, 209.



economics and politics, to societal expectations, had to do with the fact that they were women under patriarchy.

This dissertation allowed me to use historical research to learn more about women, education, training, and leadership. In this dissertation, I identify and explore the various opportunities that existed for girls and women to obtain dressmaking and millinery skills. I structure the data into six primary avenues of training; self-study, apprenticeships, public school (which includes trade school), private schools, college, and community education. I present training opportunities that existed in approximately the chronological order in which girls would have experienced them. Some of these opportunities would have occurred simultaneously. Many girls would only have been exposed or had access to one or a few of the avenues that existed during their lifetime.

### Dissertation Overview

In chapter 1, I address the method of obtaining skills through self-study. Self-study included home sewing, women's magazines, instruction books, and correspondence schools. During this time period of this study 1860-1920, women and girls just sewed. Home sewing played a role in preparing girls for the trades.<sup>19</sup> Magazines, instruction texts and correspondence schools also provided learning opportunities for dressmaking and millinery. In 1885, the *Delineator*, a popular women's fashion magazine had a

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<sup>19</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 156. "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women in Massachusetts" by May Allison will be referred to in the dissertation as the Massachusetts Dressmaking Study.

circulation rate of 165,000 subscribers.<sup>20</sup> Sewing and fashion information bombarded girls and women from numerous everyday situations.

Chapter 2 explores formal apprenticeship experience. Several different types of apprenticeship existed, depending on the arrangements made between the shop owner and learner. This system suffered from changes in industry throughout the Progressive Era and was fraught with problems. However, girls, tradeswomen, and educators maintained the apprenticeship system, even as it changed.<sup>21</sup>

Chapter 3 covers the public school system. Girls gained access to educational opportunities that prepared them to work in the trades throughout kindergarten, primary and grammar school, trade school, high school, and evening school. The majority of girls working for wages entered the trades right after, and even during, grammar school. The sewing skills girls gained from the public school system went with them into the workrooms in the back of shops.<sup>22</sup>

In an effort to curtail this flow of semi-skilled or unskilled girls to the trades, trade school emerged. Trade schools were a product of the public school system. These institutions sought to solve the problem of poor, unskilled girls entering the needle trades where they could not make enough money to earn a living.<sup>23</sup>

Chapter 3 also documents high school education between 1860-1920 and the wave of domestic arts education. During the progressive era, society simultaneously celebrated women's growing independence and ridiculed working women for deserting

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<sup>20</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 13-14.

<sup>22</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 152-153.

<sup>23</sup> Powers, *The 'Girl Question' in Education*, 28.

their families. This conflict is evident as high schools wavered between preparing girls for trade work or working in the home.<sup>24</sup>

The Public School system also provided sewing education for older girls and women through night school programs. Night school took place in public school buildings and instructors taught either home sewing or trade sewing skills. Night school on top of working all day could be taxing and some girls and women found they could not do both.

Looking outside of the public school system, chapter 4 focuses on private schools and college. Numerous private schools existed during the progressive era usually owned and run by a successful dressmaker or milliner. Girls hoping to gain training for wage work paid the Madame for course work that was several weeks or months long. Private schools treated the girls as customers, which meant at times sparing their feelings at the expense of teaching them real world skills. Additionally chapter 4 discusses how colleges handled sewing and domestic arts programs. Girls who completed high school and went to college did so primarily to become teachers. College sewing coursework intended to prepare women to sew for a family. A college education was not necessary to be successful in dressmaking or millinery and in fact, few tradeswomen had a college education behind them.<sup>25</sup>

Chapter 5 identifies community education opportunities. Sewers, looking to enhance their skills, took advantage of clubs, conventions, fairs, local classes, and youth groups. Whether they sewed to make their own clothes, clothes for their family, or

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<sup>24</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 139.

<sup>25</sup> Fales, "Organization and Management of Dressmaking," 110-111.

worked in a shop, girls and women participated in community education. Clothing styles changed with every season and community education helped sewers learn how to create the latest styles and know what was in current fashion.

In chapter 6, I review the implications of a life in the dressmaking and millinery trades including leaving school early, health, and marriage. The desire to begin earning wages tempted girls in the upper grades of grammar school and many gave up formal education in the seventh and eighth grades. Numerous tradeswomen left school early in order to pursue work. It was common for girls who left school early and were working for low wages to be in poor health. Both dressmaking and millinery were physically demanding and shop owners expected young girls to keep long hours. Additionally, shop workrooms could be unsanitary. Obtaining and maintaining good health was especially necessary for young trade workers.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to leaving school early and having to guard their health, dressmakers and milliners had the unique ability to remain unmarried if they so chose. Mentioned earlier, the independence that accompanied financial success in the trades gave some women the option to opt out of the bonds of matrimony. Chapter 6 also reviews this life implication for the majority of tradeswomen.<sup>27</sup>

The potential rewards of dressmaking and millinery pulled girls and young women to the trades. Girls saw accomplished tradeswomen having a great deal of money, owning property, and being independent and in charge. Shop owners traveled abroad, were involved in the excitement of fashion, and were an authority on etiquette, social

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<sup>26</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 66.

<sup>27</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 42-43.

occasions, and dress. They achieved success, however, only after they acquired great knowledge and skills. In the hopes of obtaining these rewards, girls took up the challenge of training.

### Summary

This research is a presentation of each of the ways girls could obtain dressmaking and millinery training. Aspiring dressmakers and milliners obtained skills through a variety of ways. Home sewing provided fundamental sewing skills to girls who learned from their mothers, aunts, sisters, and other women in their lives. In the home, girls bolstered their skills by reading women's magazines, sewing instruction texts, or participating in a correspondence program. Apprenticeships existed in the dressmaking and millinery trades. Families and girls arranged with shop owners to perform a certain number of tasks in exchange for training. Girls and families made agreements regarding room, board, pay, and length of apprenticeship.

The public school system provided opportunities for girls to obtain needlework skills they could use to earn a wage. Sewing lessons started in kindergarten and continued through primary and grammar school and into high school where students took domestic arts classes. Public day schools aimed to teach girls the sewing skills they needed as a wife and mother, but these overlapped with the skills needed to work in the trades. Girls left grammar school in droves to work for wages in dress and millinery shops. In response to large numbers of unskilled workers entering the trades from grammar school, trade schools opened their doors to specifically teach girls how to be successful in the

dress and millinery trades. These yearlong programs often incorporated doing order work for the public and a short apprenticeship or field experience.

The public schools also offered night school programs that bolstered the sewing abilities of both home sewers and expert sewers. Girls who completed high school and went on to college had access to dressmaking and millinery classes on campus. Outside of the public school system, girls learned dressmaking and millinery in private schools run by accomplished tradeswomen. Courses in these schools ran for several weeks or a few months and many schools promised job placements upon graduation. Both home and trade sewers improved their proficiency thorough community education, almost an extension of the home study arena where women taught other women. Women got together through programs such as the YWCA, local churches, scouting, charitable sewing groups, conventions, and fairs all in the name bettering their abilities and sharing knowledge.

Girls took advantage of the various methods that were available to them. Options were based on where they lived, resources available, and family structure. Each aspiring dressmaker or milliner's path was individual, yet still dependent on natural aptitude, great determination, and a willingness to work exceptionally hard.

## **Chapter 1. Self Study**

### **Dressmaking and Millinery Training by Self Study Methods**

#### Home Sewing

##### Introduction

Between 1860-1920, women sewed as a part of everyday life. Girls grew up around women who sewed and learned to sew as soon as they were old enough to hold a needle. The clothes girls wore and household linens they used were homemade. Toys and books geared for girls revolved around sewing skills. Paper patterns, sewing machines, and drafting systems were readily available and present in all homes. Girls listened to adult women talk of sewing and fashion. Sewing surrounded girls.

The influence of home sewing enabled some girls to go directly into the dressmaking and millinery trades. Twenty percent of dressmakers had entered the trades only with skills gained at home, not from an apprenticeship or trade school.<sup>28</sup>

##### Ready-To-Wear Clothing

In 1860, women made the majority of their clothes, linens, and textiles used in their homes.<sup>29</sup> While men had the option of buying many of their clothes in stores, the

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<sup>28</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 156. See Appendix B. 1-2.

ready-made women's clothing industry was still in its' infancy. In 1890, seventy-five percent of ready-made clothing was for men and or children. Only after 1920, did the availability of ready-made clothing for women surpass the percentage of homemade clothing.<sup>30</sup> Before 1920, the ever-changing and intricate styles of women's clothing did not lend itself well to mass-produced clothing. Women expected variety and individuality not the uniformity that a factory churned out. As fashions streamlined in the 1920s and large-scale retailing grew, mass production of women's clothing expanded.<sup>31</sup>

As ready-made clothing increased in availability, for the first time, women weighed the value of their time and energy sewing in comparison to the cost of a new garment. Sewing at home was less expensive financially but some women justified that their time was better spent on other tasks such as caring for children, cooking or housekeeping. Other women chose to sew at home, or had to, because of cost considerations. Many women did a little of both. When making clothes at home women could afford to use higher quality materials, such as fabric and buttons. In turn, these clothes lasted longer and women could design each outfit for their individual figure, often providing a better fit.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fernandez, "If a Women had Taste," 103; Green, *The Light of the Home*, 79. Nathan, *Once Upon a Time*, 85. Maud Nathan lived from 1862 –1946 and was a social worker, labor activist and suffragist.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 3.

<sup>31</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 124, 177.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon "Make it Yourself," 6.



## Home Sewing

Young girls learned to sew at home, typically taught by their mothers.<sup>33</sup> Both men and women encouraged this skill in girls, as the home sewing needs were constant. Girls helped their mother's sew because of the steady flow of projects to the sewing basket. Sewing also served as preparation for running their own homes someday.<sup>34</sup> Typically female members of a family sewed copious articles of clothing including underwear, everyday work clothes, blouses, bonnets, aprons, short-gowns, chemises<sup>35</sup>, nightdresses, petticoats, and men's shirts, collars and cuffs. In addition, women were responsible for sewing sheets, pillowcases, mattress covers, towels, napkins, handkerchiefs, antimacassars<sup>36</sup>, and curtains.<sup>37</sup> After women completed these home textile staples, they continued to beautify their home by sewing such items as covers for wastebaskets, ottomans, bell-pulls, and cigar cases.<sup>38</sup>

Through sewing, women incorporated both creativity and frugality in their homemaking decisions. Women made pillows out of old curtains and took silk remnants to make napkins. Girls used scraps to make clothes for their dolls. These activities,

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<sup>33</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 149; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 3, 48.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 47.

<sup>35</sup> **chemise** Loose combination undergarment for women, hanging straight from shoulders covering torso. Originally with or without sleeves, worn next to skin, formerly called shift, also smock.

<sup>36</sup> **antimacassar** Covering or tidy, used to protect back, arms, and headrest of sofas, chairs, etc. Originally, to prevent soiling by macassar hair oil, used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>37</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 103; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 3.

<sup>38</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 204. Green, *The Light of the Home*, 100. See Appendix B. 3.

considered virtuous, allowed women and girls to demonstrate their artistic ability, femininity, and thrift.<sup>39</sup>

### Motherhood/Marriage

Sewing connected with motherhood. Women sewed in the presence of their children. Mothers taught their daughters to sew and expressed pride in their daughters' sewing abilities. Even with the availability of ready-made children's clothing, women often found more meaning in making them by hand.<sup>40</sup> Society equated sewing skills with being a good wife. Home sewing expressed love and attention to family members through the creation of clothes, linens, and home textiles. Women received praise through their sewing because in addition to representing thrift, discipline, and femininity, it represented family values.<sup>41</sup>

### Housework

Both men and women considered sewing a part of housework along with cooking, laundry, and cleaning. Of all housekeeping tasks, women spent the most time on sewing.<sup>42</sup> Along with sewing garments and household linens used by every member of the family, women mended these same items as well. Table lines, nightdresses, sheets,

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<sup>39</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 100.

<sup>40</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 16; Connolly, "Transformation of Home Sewing," 62.

<sup>41</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 15, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 60, 79.

and socks, periodically would tear with use. Women and girls sewed them back together instead of replacing them.<sup>43</sup>

Women knitted winter items for themselves and their family such as mittens, scarves, socks, and stockings.<sup>44</sup> Young girls learned to knit and could assist their mother's with these items. In order to keep sets of stockings together, girls marked stockings by knitting or embroidering numbers or initials into them. These marks were especially helpful in large families. By creating these matching marks on pairs of stockings, children had their first lessons in embroidery.<sup>45</sup>

### Types of Stitching

Women performed two separate types of stitching, plain sewing and fancy sewing.<sup>46</sup> Girls acquired basic sewing skills as a prerequisite for plain sewing. Plain sewing included unfitted loose clothing, hemming linens, and making seams.<sup>47</sup> Plain sewing provided women with an opportunity to sit down and even do a little daydreaming while still being industrious. Women could supervise children and household help and complete plain sewing at the same time.<sup>48</sup>

Mastery of plain sewing skills by women was a prerequisite for fancy sewing. Fancywork required intricate stitchery and incorporated embroidery, tapestry, and

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<sup>43</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 18; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 233.

<sup>44</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 79.

<sup>45</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 106.

<sup>47</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 46-47.

<sup>48</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 122.

needlepoint.<sup>49</sup> This kind of advanced needlework displayed a woman's skill and sense of design.<sup>50</sup> Fancy sewing allowed a woman to decorate her home and garments without spending a lot of money and have a creative outlet at the same time. Women embroidered flannel petticoats, chair backs, pillows, doilies, and antimacassars.<sup>51</sup>

### Eye Sight / Lighting

As women scheduled their numerous sewing tasks, they considered lighting. Most homes used candles, oil, and gas for indoor lighting. Plain sewing and knitting required little light and women scheduled these activities in the evening when necessary. Fancy stitches such as embroidery required a great deal of light and therefore were only suited to the daytime.<sup>52</sup> Maud Nathan, who lived to be eighty-four, reminisced how she spent mornings elaborately embroidering household items in the 1880s noting the work took a great deal of time and patience.<sup>53</sup>

Fancy work caused eyestrain and women from this time often mentioned experiencing bad days with eyesight in their journals.<sup>54</sup> Eyeglasses were available in the late nineteenth century and women wore them. Customers generally selected their own lenses from traveling salesmen. This, coupled with a relatively new technology, led to an

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<sup>49</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 224. **fancy work** Hand embroidery, decorative needlework requiring a great skill.

<sup>50</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 100.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Nathan, *Once Upon a Time*, 56. **antimacassars** Covering to protect chairs from men's hair pomade.

<sup>52</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 124.

<sup>53</sup> Nathan, *Once Upon a Time*, 85.

<sup>54</sup> Venner, ed. *Queen City Lady*, 119; Green, *The Light of the Home*, 83.

inadequate solution. Electric lighting for home use did not become readily available until the middle of the 1920s.<sup>55</sup>

### Children's Sewing and Toys

Including observing their mother plan her sewing, girls grew up inundated with reinforcements to sew. In addition to their relationship with their mother, this included their books and toys.<sup>56</sup> In one such children's book, a little girl spending the summer away from her mother learns to sew with the help of magic sewing implements including Tommy Tomato Pin Cushion and Mr. Emery Bag.<sup>57</sup> The reward at the end of the story for the little girl is her mother's astonishment and pleasure at her sewing skills. The message of the book is that when girls learned to sew, despite obstacles, through sewing accomplishments, girls made their mothers proud.<sup>58</sup>

Toy makers profited by supporting parents in their campaign to teach girls to sew. Numerous toys existed for girls where the theme and activities centered on increasing sewing skills such as designing and making dresses for dolls. Doll clothing kits were popular. Girls first participated in a design process and then guided through actually making the dolls' garment. One such toy's instructions claimed, "Sewing was the most pleasing pastime known to childhood."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Eye glasses history website [www.teagleoptometry.com/history.htm](http://www.teagleoptometry.com/history.htm) 3/31/2010 and [www.ehow.com/about\\_5397793\\_history-home-lighting.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_5397793_history-home-lighting.html) 4/4/10

<sup>56</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 49.

<sup>57</sup> Fryer, *Easy Steps in Sewing*, vi.

<sup>58</sup> Connolly, "Transformation of Home Sewing," 62.

<sup>59</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 49.

### Charitable Sewing

In addition to books and toys, another way adults prompted girls to sew was through charitable acts. Sewing items to raise proceeds for a charity enabled both girls and women to contribute to their communities. During World War I, (1914-1918) both women and children performed charitable sewing, helping in any way needed from sewing soldier's uniforms to hospital linens.<sup>60</sup>

### Remaking Clothes

Women's close-fitting styles of the day required custom work. Well-designed and cut costumes improved or maintained one's status.<sup>61</sup> Because of the tight fit required the average women who mastered plain and even some fancy sewing still lacked the skills necessary to create a fashionable dress from raw materials.<sup>62</sup> Women's common solution for their inability to draft and cut a dress was to take apart one of their existing dresses, perhaps a well fitted dress made by a dressmaker, and use this dress as a model. A professionally sewn dress turned into a personal pattern in this way. Home sewing texts frequently gave instructions for making a dress in this manner.<sup>63</sup>

Women making dresses at home from an existing dress traced the basic shape of their existing garment. They sliced out the existing stitches and laid the dismantled dress

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<sup>60</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 19-20.

<sup>61</sup> Connolly, "Transformation of Home Sewing," 105.

<sup>62</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 104.

<sup>63</sup> "The best way for a novice is to get a dress fitted (not sewed) at the best mantua-maker's. Then take out a sleeve, rip it to pieces, and cut out a paper pattern. Then take out half the waist, (it must have a seam in front,) and cut out a pattern of the back and forebody, both lining and outer part.... When this is done, a lady of common ingenuity can cut and fit a dress by these patterns." Beecher, *American Women's Home*, 355.

pieces on a flat surface on top of tissue paper or lining fabric. Home sewers used chalk or pinpricks to outline the shapes needed to build a dress that would fit as well as the professionally made one.<sup>64</sup>

Another way of remaking a dress at home was to employ a combination of home sewing skills and that of a professional dressmaker. Since cutting was the most difficult part of the process, home sewers could pay to have a dress cut and fit by a dressmaker and then sew it up at home themselves. This saved money and allowed women the benefit of a well-made and fitted garment.<sup>65</sup> Women also remade dresses at home in order to adhere to new fashion standards or to accommodate a change in body size. Remaking included relining skirts, replacing trimming and combining useable parts of garments into one.<sup>66</sup>

### Tissue Paper Patterns

By the mid to late nineteenth century, mass produced paper patterns were readily available to help home sewers. Patterns existed for every type of garment, came in the latest styles, and cost only a few cents.<sup>67</sup> A wide variety of women and girls purchased patterns primarily from four major companies, Butterick, Demorest, McCall and

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<sup>64</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 103-104.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 3; Connolly, "Transformation of Home Sewing," 61.

<sup>66</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 44; Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 105 and Green, *The Light of the Home*, 80.

<sup>67</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 189.

Domestic. The pattern industry during the late nineteenth century experienced “all out prosperity”.<sup>68</sup>

In 1871, the Butterick Company claimed to be producing an average of twenty three thousand patterns a day and six million patterns annually. Patterns remained in high demand all through the progressive era.<sup>69</sup> In 1904, Butterick’s New York office received approximately thirty thousand letters each week with questions, suggestions and ideas.<sup>70</sup>

Patterns enabled sewers to achieve an accurate line, style, and size in the making of a garment.<sup>71</sup> Manufacturers graded patterns into sizes, printed them on tissue paper, cut, folded, and inserted them into envelopes complete with instructions. Patterns included a fashion plate; a color representation of the final product. In order to make a fashion plate, manufacturers constructed the garment from the pattern, sketched it, and had it engraved. These fashion plates presented the finished product to the consumer.<sup>72</sup>

Patterns assisted women in both making new outfits and updating an older one.<sup>73</sup> The tight fitting styles at the turn of the century generally were comprised of a separate skirt and bodice. Dresses made of two pieces were more easily remade and updated. Women could purchase a pattern for either a bodice or a skirt and wear the newly created

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<sup>68</sup> Fernandez, “If a Woman had Taste,” 239; Gordon, “Make it Yourself,” 85.

<sup>69</sup> The progressive era was from 1880-1920.

<sup>70</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 44; Fernandez, “If a Woman had Taste,” 250; [www.butterick-mccall.com](http://www.butterick-mccall.com) 3/29/2010.

<sup>71</sup> Fernandez, “If a Woman had Taste,” 238, 239.

<sup>72</sup> [www.butterick-mcmccall.com](http://www.butterick-mcmccall.com)

<sup>73</sup> Fernandez, “If a Woman had Taste,” 240.



item with existing pieces in their wardrobe at a cost savings from making a whole new outfit.<sup>74</sup>

Home sewers purchased paper patterns through popular women's magazines. Patterns were either included as a supplement or mail order information was listed inside the magazine.<sup>75</sup> Patterns could be unnecessary for simple garments, like cuffs, appropriate for sleeves and waists, and impractical for highly styled and complicated outfits such as a ball gown.<sup>76</sup> While patterns for clothing came first, manufacturers expanded to include patterns for the many home textiles women sewed including curtains, bags, stuffed animals, and tea coasies.<sup>77</sup>

Earlier paper patterns impersonate meandering through a labyrinth, with their confusing array of overlapping shapes, numbers and labels. This speaks to the skills already in place of the users of patterns. Manufacturers knew they were selling to women who could sew. A review of pattern instructions reinforces this.<sup>78</sup> Instructions do not define any of the terms used and provided the sewer with a choice of doing something

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<sup>74</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman had Taste," 240-241.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>78</sup> Harris, *Authentic Victorian Fashion Patterns*, 16. The following pattern instructions accompanied an 1890-91 ladies street costume from the publication *The Voice of Fashion*. "Use the scale corresponding with the bust measure to draft the basque, which consists of front-back, side-back, and under-arm-gore. Braid the waist down the front and the sleeves same as the skirt. The Jacket – Draft by bust measure; it consists of front-back, side-back, under-arm-gore, standing and medici collars, and two sleeve portions. Sew the medici collar on the dotted line, close the front with large patent hooks, make the garment as long as desirable. The Drapery – Draft with scale corresponding with the waist measure; is in two pieces, front and back; lay the pleats in the front according to the notches, gather or pleat the back. Regulate the length of the entire garment by the tape measure."

one way or the other. Given the success and popularity of paper patterns sold with this style of instruction, it is clear women of this period were accomplished sewers.

By a review of the advertisements of patterns in the late nineteenth century, companies did not have to convince customers to buy patterns, just to buy their patterns. Patterns did become easier to use overtime, forgoing some of the steps including the user having to calculate the seam allowance and doing away with much of the overlapping on the tissue papers. However, advertisers did not promote these positive changes, instead they focused on the style itself as a selling tool.<sup>79</sup>

### Sewing Machine

The invention of home sewing machines reaffirmed the central focus of sewing for a family by its female members.<sup>80</sup> Home sewers had their first opportunity to buy a machine in 1856 for a cost of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. By 1880, Singer sewing machine sales worldwide exceed 500,000 machines. By 1903, annual worldwide sales reached 1.35 million.<sup>81</sup>

When the one hundred and twenty-five dollar sewing machines first arrived on the market in 1856, the cost was exorbitant but prices soon came down. During the progressive era, sewing machines were commonplace and readily available, from a range of companies, and varied in their abilities and quality. Combined with the payment plans,

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<sup>79</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86. Fernandez notes in her dissertation "If a Woman Had Taste" This process of relying on information written in a magazine, following order instructions, sending correspondence and money to secure a pattern paved the way for catalogue shopping, 250.

<sup>80</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 225.

<sup>81</sup> singerco 3/21/2010; Connolly, "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 66.

Singer sold machines on installment plans for as little as five dollars down;<sup>82</sup> almost all families could secure a sewing machine. Families could purchase a sewing machine from traveling salesmen or agents, storefronts, or through mail order.<sup>83</sup> In 1891, *Godey's Lady Book*, a popular women's magazine, offered a sewing machine for eighteen dollars that included a one-year subscription. Through Montgomery Ward's mail order, home sewers could have a machine for sixteen dollars and fifty cents.<sup>84</sup>

Sewing machines companies also sold attachments to assist women in the varied types of stitches they performed including seaming, quilting, gathering, hemming, braiding and binding. In the fifty years before 1895, inventors submitted over fifteen hundred patents for hemming, binding, and fancy work attachments.<sup>85</sup> Women learned to use a sewing machine and its attachments one of several ways. For women in or near a city, salesmen provided lessons in their showrooms. Sewing machines came with instruction booklets written for the novice reader and machine user. Lastly, women taught each other.<sup>86</sup>

Sewing machines greatly reduced the amount of time needed to accomplish typical sewing tasks.<sup>87</sup> Women completed plain sewing previously done by hand in a tenth of the time with the use of a sewing machine. Home sewers could make a chemise in one hour with a sewing machine as opposed to over ten hours by hand. Without a

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<sup>82</sup> Connolly, "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 66; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste" 225 and Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 84.

<sup>83</sup> Connolly "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 133.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 73. 1883 was the year of this Montgomery Ward offer.

<sup>85</sup> Fernandez "If a Woman Had Taste," 231-232.

<sup>86</sup> Connolly "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 98-99.

<sup>87</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 81.

sewing machine, women spent fourteen and a half hours making a man's shirt, with a sewing machine it took just over an hour. Young girls could use a sewing machine for hemming and straightforward seams.<sup>88</sup> Women's diaries for the period indicate girls began to use their mother's sewing machines around the age of ten.<sup>89</sup>

Manufacturers of sewing machines touted that time saved by completing home sewing tasks on a machine could be spent on children and the home instead. These vast reductions in time necessary to accomplish sewing tasks did not always result in a time saving measure. Women exchanged this reduction in time and supplemented it with over enhancing garments and bed linens, often with lavish embroidery connoting wealth.<sup>90</sup>

A paradox arose after sewing machines settled in homes. On the one hand, fashion dictated women dress to a certain, ever-changing style and women received praise for a beautifully decorated home. On the other hand, women received criticism from their peers for trying to appear to be better than they were, embellishing their clothes and linens.

Ownership of a sewing machine was as an opportunity for women to earn money. The Singer Company promoted the ability to use a sewing machine as a way for women to earn wages. "A girl who has been properly trained in the use of a Singer Machine is not only able to save herself and family much money and time, but is equipped to quickly earn her own living, should she require to do so, in one of the great sewing industries."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Connolly "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 80, 105.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>90</sup> Green, *The Light of the Home*, 83; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 230.

<sup>91</sup> Connolly "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 110-111; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 84.

## Drafting Systems

Along with paper patterns and sewing machines. Drafting systems were another breakthrough tool to help the home sewer learn how to make garments. Drafting systems helped in the drafting<sup>92</sup> and cutting of clothes. Drafting systems identified and guided sewers through a series of instructions and steps, so that cutting became a learned skill as opposed to an innate talent.<sup>93</sup> Drafting systems reduced both the amount of time and skill necessary to create a garment that represented current fashions.<sup>94</sup>

The number of patents applied for also indicates the vast variety of drafting systems available for sewers. Manufacturers employed various materials including wood, paper, metal, and cardboard. These systems incorporated highly specialized devices, use of scales or circumferential dimensions.<sup>95</sup> Women purchased drafting systems from traveling agents, sewing machine salesmen, dry goods stores, department stores and even dressmakers. In 1896, the Buddington Dress Cutting Machine retailed for five dollars.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> **drafting** Creating the outline drawing of a pattern, made usually with a ruler, tape and pencil.

<sup>93</sup> Kidwell, *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*, 98. See Appendix B. 4.

<sup>94</sup> Experienced dressmakers could take advantage of the more complex drafting systems, requiring mathematical knowledge, designed for the trade. Drafting systems purpose evolved becoming a tool more for the tradeswoman than home sewer near the turn of the century. The U.S. Patent Office received around three hundred and fifty patent applications for drafting systems between 1840-1920. Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste" 125.

<sup>95</sup> Kidwell, *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Buddington Instruction Manual. The creation of drafting systems resulted in an unintended negative consequence. These systems "became the basis for the sizing system of the paper pattern industry and the ready to wear industry. The success of these industries diminished the importance of the custom made dressmaking trade." Kidwell, *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*, 1. In addition to supporting paper pattern companies, sewing machine retailers and drafting system inventors, home sewers from 1860 to 1920 supported the economy through their purchases of fabric and dress goods. Home sewers

## Sewing Groups

Women and girls came together through female sewing groups. Frequently a seamstress or dressmaker, sought for her higher skills, joined a sewing group. Quilting was a form of a sewing group, bringing women together for a social, celebratory and productive sewing activity. Marriage engagements often resulted in the bride to be throwing a quilting party where her supporters helped sew together the three separate layers of fabric – the top, the filling, and the lining. Quilting parties were popular throughout the progressive era.<sup>97</sup> Through these sewing groups, women learned from each other and girls picked up the sewing culture.<sup>98</sup>

During social visits women sewed together. Hand sewing lent itself well to women's lifestyle in the progressive era. Busy women could hem or mend while seated, taking a break from other tasks, but still visit and supervise children and household help. Women could partake of a conversation or listen to music or a reading, and sew at the same time.<sup>99</sup> Opportunity existed for "blurred boundaries between work and leisure" in sewing. Sewing was considered work but enjoyable work.<sup>100</sup>

The sewing machine changed how women sewed together. During a social visit, women shared and used sewing machines but the machine caused the dynamic to change

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selected fabrics made of cotton, linen, wool, and silk that came in a range of textures, patterns, colors and prices. In order to make a costume, in addition to fabric, women needed a great deal of dress goods. Dress goods included linings, whalebones, crinoline, belt tapes, ruches, trimmings, and buttons. Nathan *Once Upon a Time*, 85 and Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 81.

<sup>97</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 209-210; Connolly, "The Transformation of Home Sewing, 102.

<sup>98</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 127; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 234-235; Nathan, *Once a Upon a Time*, 85 and Green, *The Light of the Home*, 80.

<sup>99</sup> Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 18.

<sup>100</sup> Gordon "Make it Yourself," x, 21.

from how it had been in a hand-sewing group. When using a sewing machine the sewer had to focus down on the project and not other people, the machine was loud and not conducive to conversation. Women could not as easily transport sewing machines, as they could a basket of hand sewing.<sup>101</sup>

### Entering the Trade with Skills from Home

Between 1860-1920, girls grew up surrounded by sewing. They lived in homes filled with articles women had embroidered, and girls wore clothes their mothers had made. Children watched their mothers sew daily, sometimes from morning until night. When children accompanied their mothers on excursions, the sewing basket went along to the park or neighbor's house. Girls listened to women discuss the purchase of a sewing machine, the latest drafting system and what patterns they had ordered. Girls learned first to knit, mark stockings, and then to hem. Growing up the books girls read and the toys they played with incorporated sewing into their games and imagination. Girls by the age of ten generally were learning to use a sewing machine. Home education, in many cases, was enough of a training ground from which girls could enter the trades directly. Their childhoods had consisted of one long continuous sewing lesson.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Connolly, "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 100.

<sup>102</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 154.

## Women's Magazines

If the dressmaker values her reputation as a dressmaker and wishes to increase her income she will pay as much attention to the selection of her fashion journal, as the doctor does in selecting his medical journal....

-*Suggestions for Dressmakers*, 1896

### Proliferation of Magazines

A synergistic confluence of factors led to an explosion of magazine publications. In 1870, five years after the Civil War had ended, the economy prospered. In 1874 the Post Office Act passed, reducing the rate for periodicals to three cents per pound.<sup>103</sup> Technology improvements in the printing industry, including refinements to presses, stereotyping, and engraving, led to an increase in magazines, their accessibility and their popularity. Greater urbanization caused an increase in literacy rates.<sup>104</sup> The panic of 1873 caused a brief disruption in industry, including publishing, but the economy recovered around 1880. According to advertising directories, the number of publications increased dramatically between 1865 and 1885:<sup>105</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Publications</u>
1865	700
1870	1,200
1880	2,400
1885	3,300

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<sup>103</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 285.

<sup>104</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 5.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.



Magazines created specifically for women flourished and fell under three distinct categories; fashion, general interest and trade. Women's fashion magazines existed for the purpose of sharing fashion news and promoting the products.<sup>106</sup> General interest magazines sought to combine literature, fashion, cooking and child rearing.<sup>107</sup> Trade journals encouraged the success of businesswomen through the dissemination of relevant information.<sup>108</sup>

Home sewers, aspiring tradeswomen, as well as professional milliners and dressmakers purchased and read all of these publications obtaining information on women's clothing styles and how to sew them. Reading these magazines and following their directions is one way girls could have obtained skills necessary to work in dressmaking and millinery. Magazines also provided useful information to professional sewers at every stage of ability, enabling them through self-study to improve their skills as well. Fashion magazines and trade journals focused exclusively on women's dress and the needle arts but even the general interest magazines included some information on women's clothing styles and sewing.<sup>109</sup>

An examination of all magazines published in 1916 revealed that, six of the top ten were women's magazines, specifically created for women readers and focused on or

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<sup>106</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86.

<sup>107</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 98.

<sup>108</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 111.

<sup>109</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 285-286; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 87 and Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 96. See Appendix B. 5.

included discussion on sewing: *McCall's*, *Pictorial Review*, *Women's Home Companion*, *Delineator*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Women's World*.<sup>110</sup>

Trade journals such as *Illustrated Milliner* and the *Millinery Trade Review* catered to professional dressmakers and milliners. However, professionals did not have exclusive access to the latest fashion information, women's magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Demorest*, and *Peterson's* were read by both professionals and home sewers.<sup>111</sup> A regular feature in *Godey's Lady's Book* "Hints to Dressmaker's and Those Who Make Their Own Dresses" illustrates this dual readership.<sup>112</sup> Of the three types of magazines created for a female readership; fashion, general interest and trade, fashion magazines were especially good sellers, with higher circulation rates than the general-interest or trade publications. In 1880, an almanac listed eighteen fashion magazines in New York alone.<sup>113</sup>

Women bought all types of women's magazines at a substantial rate. *Godey's* had over 100,000 subscribers in 1865, *Peterson's* passed 150,000 subscribers in the early 1870s, Harper's Bazar reached 80,000 by 1877 and the *Delineator* had 165,000 subscribers by 1885. The *Ladies Home Journal* with 270,000 subscribers in 1885 was the first U.S. magazine to have more than a million subscribers by 1904.<sup>114</sup> The following table illustrates the subscriptions popular magazines experienced.

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<sup>110</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86.

<sup>111</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 111.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. Note: Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879) edited *Godey's Ladies Book* for 40 years and was the author of the nursery rhyme *Mary had a Little Lamb*.

<sup>113</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines III*, 97.

<sup>114</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 1; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86. Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 6-7.

**Table 1. Magazine circulation numbers by year**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Magazine</u>	<u>Circulation</u>
1865	Godey's	100,000+
1870s	Peterson's	150,000+
1877	Harper's Bazar	80,000
1885	Delineator	165,000
1885	Ladies Home Journal	270,000
1904	Ladies Home Journal	1,000,000+

*Source:* Data adapted from Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III 1865-1885* (Cambridge, MN: Harvard University Press, 1938), 6-7.

### Magazine Ownership and Advertising

Paper pattern companies, drafting system manufacturers and sewing machine producers, all entered magazine publishing in an effort to sell their products via the advertisements and articles. The Butterick Pattern Company published *Delineator* and McCall's Pattern Company published *McCalls's*. Both of these magazines met with great success and held some of the highest circulation rates.<sup>115</sup>

In an effort to promote the McDowell Drafting System, the inventor founded the magazine *Pictorial Review* and promptly filled it with advertisements. Madame Demorest advertised for her "System of Dress Cutting" in her fashion journal.<sup>116</sup> The publisher of the *Domestic Monthly: New York and Paris Fashions* magazine was the Domestic

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<sup>115</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 87.

<sup>116</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 149.

Sewing Machine Company. An annual subscription included a *Quarterly Catalogue of Fashions* that sold the Domestic Companies paper patterns.<sup>117</sup> The Domestic Sewing Machine Company also was behind the crowd-pleasing *Style* magazine that ran from 1880-1894.<sup>118</sup>

As circulation rates increased for women's magazines, manufacturers took advantage of this growing opportunity to spread information about their wares.<sup>119</sup> In addition to advertisements for patterns, drafting systems, and sewing machines due to magazines frequently being owned by those manufacturers, commonly advertised products included sewing shears, fabric, toiletries, furniture and ready-made underwear. Since corsets and bustles were two of the few ready-made garments available to women, advertisers promoted the items that women could purchase in local general or dry goods stores or through the mail.<sup>120</sup> Advertisements for piece goods<sup>121</sup> frequently appeared highlighting seasonally popular patterns, colors and textures.<sup>122</sup>

Advertisers used ads not only to sell products but to reflect values as well. An advertisement for a correspondence school told of a wife who improved her marriage by designing and sewing appealing clothes for herself.<sup>123</sup> Advertisements depicted the art of sewing as a way to be beautiful and increase sex appeal at an affordable cost.<sup>124</sup> Ads

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>118</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines III*, 98.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 10; Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86-87.

<sup>120</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 138; Kidwell, *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*, 81.

<sup>121</sup> **piece goods** Fabric sold in pieces of fixed length or by the yard.

<sup>122</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 82.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

during this period reinforced the attitude that women were obligated to look appealing and that women needed a man's permission to buy.

Women's magazines regularly included free patterns and drafting systems as an incentive to purchase the magazine. *Leslie's Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Godey's Lady's Book*, and *Demorest's Illustrated Monthly* participated in this tradition.

Originally, these patterns were un-sized, and therefore information and diagrams on how to use them and how to make them work with different body styles was commonplace. Magazines also offered patterns and drafting systems for purchase through the mail.<sup>125</sup>

### Magazine Content

Women's magazines, both fashion and general interest, promoted sewing through their articles, the advice in those articles, and the products advertised. Women and girls reading these issues had a constant flow of information in regards to fashion and sewing, including details that could be useful in trade work. Review of these magazines documents both a high volume of sewing amongst the readership and a high expectation of sewing ability.<sup>126</sup> A review of the content not related to sewing speaks to societal values, the magazine editor's agenda for women and their relationship to home and society.

### *Content Specific to Sewing*

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<sup>125</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 157, 162, 289-290; Strasser, *Never Done*, 132.

<sup>126</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 86-87.

In the years between 1860 and 1920 contents specific to sewing frequently included the following; the latest styles, information on fabrics, guidance for making new styles, instructions for using patterns, and the use of sewing machines.<sup>127</sup> Emphasizing the ubiquitousness of everyday sewing, directions for taking correct measures appeared frequently in *The Delineator* as well as other magazines.<sup>128</sup>

Key sewing and fashion themes from magazines included; saving money, how to dress, thrifty use of fabric, useful colors, sewing advice, individuality as a reason to sew, and the most popular theme, instructions for making over old dresses.<sup>129</sup> Publications also included discussion on clothing budgets, sewing tools, notions,<sup>130</sup> material selection, needlework patterns, instructions for household sewing projects, and embroidery tips.<sup>131</sup>

Women's magazines encouraged women to improve their sewing skills and mocked poor quality work.

Inaccurate cutting, poor basting, seams badly put together, plaids that do not match, tucks that are not taken up evenly, gathers that show large and uneven stitches, figures cut both ways when there is an up and down, and seams and plaits that are hastily pressed or not pressed at all, are a few of the errors that, in many cases, give the garment the home-made look so dreaded by the woman of taste and refinement.<sup>132</sup>

Editors, through this kind of article, that identify superior methods, implicitly gave their readers permission to judge one another on their skills and abilities.

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<sup>127</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 82, 87; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 222.

<sup>128</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 249.

<sup>129</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself" 87; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 243.

<sup>130</sup> **notions** Small useful article or clever device; any of the items included in a notions department of a store; buttons, pins, fasteners, sewing accessories, such as thread, needles, findings, etc.

<sup>131</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 290, 256; Swan, *Plain & Fancy*, 204, 208.

<sup>132</sup> *American Modiste* V, no. 3 (1907).

### *Non-Sewing Content*

By perusing women's magazines for their content not related to sewing, one finds that readers received pep talks on housework, decorating ideas, money-saving recipes, and household cleaning tips. Editors also included advice on how a woman could distinguish herself, entertaining her guests, raise her children, behave properly and sanctify her home. Additionally turn of the century publications incorporated fiction and non-fiction articles, women's worldwide activities, and women's career details including college, job training and salaries.<sup>133</sup>

The columns featured month after month in magazines for women identify the interests of editors and readers during the period. In the 1880's, *Demorest Magazine* published a regular column "What Women Are Doing". Articles highlighted both female celebrities as well as local women leaders.<sup>134</sup>

### Consumer Letters

Readers had their interests and questions make it on to the pages of their favorite magazine through consumer letters and the editor's answers, a popular feature in most women's magazines. Common themes among the correspondence included how to use fabric from an older garment to make something new, or what sort of dress was most

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<sup>133</sup> Schneirov, *Dream of a New Social Order*, 52; Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 287, 290-291 and Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 85-86.

<sup>134</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 287.

useful if the reader could only afford one new outfit.<sup>135</sup> Questions often sought both fashion and etiquette advice.

Jessie M. : - Tulle-black or white makes a pretty ball dress and is much in favor just now. If you are dark-haired, a deep yellow tulle would doubtless be becoming. Gloves are worn at a ball. It is a gentleman's duty to thank a lady after having danced with her, but it is not necessary for her to make any formal response.<sup>136</sup>

Correspondence was so popular *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* recognized a need to set guidelines for their column. In 1883, on the "Ladies' Club" page the editor explained that due to an increase in the number of letters received by the magazine they struggled to find the time and space to respond to all. They asked letter writers for brevity, clearness of statement, decisive knowledge of their questions, and interest to other readers as well.<sup>137</sup>

A letter to *Demorest's* from a reader expresses the opinion that women found these types of magazines to be helpful.

Since I have been living in the country I have had to use my own taste and skill in many instances, and have learned to be not only my own dressmaker, but milliner also. With the aid of your excellent Magazine I get along nicely. Your patterns give a more perfect fit than any I have ever used. Until last year I employed a dressmaker, but I find I can, with a good pattern, suit myself better; if I can't give a dress the stylish set, I can get a perfect fit.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 88.

<sup>136</sup> "Answers to Correspondence" *Delineator* XXVII no.2 (February 1886):140.

<sup>137</sup> "Ladies Club," *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* (July 1883): 591

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*



## Specific Women's Magazines

### *The Ladies Home Journal*

*The Ladies Home Journal* a modern women's general interest magazine grew out of first a section and later a supplement by the same name in the magazine *Tribune and Farmer*. The first official *Ladies Home Journal* hit newsstands in December of 1883. It was a small folio in size, inexpensively made and sold, and appealed to middle class, white women. The magazine incorporated sewing, embroidery, fashion, household hints, recipes and gardening.<sup>139</sup> The magazine included patterns for sewing household linens such as tea cozies, and sold home patterns through the mail.<sup>140</sup> The magazine addressed women's social issues but also encouraged women to be consumers and emphasized that women's proper role was that of homemaker.<sup>141</sup>

### *The Delineator*

The Butterick Pattern Company created *The Delineator* in 1873. *Delineator* grew out of two merged Butterick magazines, the *Ladies Quarterly Report of Broadway Fashions* and *Metropolitan*. While the intention behind *Delineator*, as earlier Butterick magazines, was to increase the sale of patterns, *Delineator* readership grew and the magazine responded by including more fashion advice and general interest items. By 1890, *Delineator* boasted the fourth highest circulation of any periodical.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume IV*, 536-537.

<sup>140</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 289-290.

<sup>141</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 7-8.

<sup>142</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 286. See Appendix B. 6.

An annual subscription to the forty-eight page square octavo *Delineator* sold for a dollar originally, carrying the subtitle *A Monthly Magazine Illustrating European and American Fashions*. Subscribers to *Delineator* received patterns with the magazine. Regular features inside *Delineator* included “Seasonable Styles”, “Hats and Bonnets”, and “Stylish Lingerie”. Other popular topics inside *Delineator* included fancywork, fabrics, hairdressing, gardening, and correspondence.<sup>143</sup> The *Delineator* was known for their “Dressing on a Dime” feature as well as “What to Wear and How to Make it.” The first column covered economical use of fabric and the second focused on making over old garments.<sup>144</sup>

#### *Harper’s Bazar*

Fletcher Harper created *Harper’s Bazar* for women based on the Berlin periodical *Der Bazar*. When originally launched in 1867 the sixteen page weekly magazine carried the subtitle; “*A Repository of Fashion, Pleasure, and Instruction.*” The magazine contained patterns, large woodcuts of style, high quality art, cartoons, fiction, and miscellaneous information. Editors dedicated themselves to fashion, fancywork and household problems. The fashion plates came from Germany with European descriptions of style. The New York staff at Harper’s Bazar added their own American interpretation of style. The magazine remained a weekly fashion fixture at newsstands until 1901 when it changed to a monthly format.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 482.

<sup>144</sup> Gordon, “*Make it Yourself*,” 87.

<sup>145</sup> Mott , *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 388-390.

### *Demorest's Illustrated Monthly Magazine*

*Demorest's Illustrated Monthly Magazine: Mme. Demorest's Mirror of Fashions* sold for three dollars a year in 1865. The magazine boasted color fashion plates, woodcuts of fashion as well as non-fashion material including poetry, art, music and fiction. *Demorest's* tissue-paper patterns stapled inside contributed to its popularity and success. *Demorest's* magazine evolved out of an earlier quarterly publication titled *Mirror of Fashions*. Both magazines featured "Mme. Demorest" as editor and "Jennie June" as assistant. The Ladies Club section of *Demorest's* served as a popular question and answer column and ran for years. In 1889, the magazine's name changed to *Demorest's Family Magazine*.<sup>146</sup>

### Other Texts and Catalogues

In addition to magazines, girls and women gained sewing direction from numerous published instruction booklets and guides. Both Butterick and McCall's published these types of materials aimed at children and adult sewers. Throughout these texts, it is evident that editors and readers took home sewing for granted.<sup>147</sup>

The Butterick Pattern Company published numerous educational sewing books that included illustrated instructions for making garments and described how to reconcile patterns based on the varying body types. In Butterick's *The Art of Dressmaking*, twenty-four pages were devoted to altering patterns for figures that varied from average. This book identified its readers as both amateur and professional. *The Dressmaker*, also a

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<sup>146</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III*, 325-327.

<sup>147</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 88-89.

Butterick publication, taught the reader about using commercial patterns and how to adapt them.<sup>148</sup> Pattern catalogues produced by pattern companies were yet another venue to promote pattern sales and dictate styles. Agents distributed the catalogues that could obtain as many as two hundred patterns all represented in pictures.<sup>149</sup>

The autumn 1898 *Catalogue of Fashions* published by Butterick included a chart of typical proportions for the average women. For example, if a woman had a bust of thirty-four inches her waist should fall between eighteen and twenty-four inches.<sup>150</sup> Measurements falling outside of these averages caused the need for special alterations when making garments.

### Technology / Fashion Plates

Magazines between 1860-1920 utilized images and artwork to promote fashion. Great effort went into the artwork used to define the latest styles. The fashion plates communicated style, dress mode and appropriate attire for specific occasions.<sup>151</sup> Americans accepted the French authority on fashion and American fashion editors copied French fashion plates from the outset.<sup>152</sup> Popular magazines obtained illustrations from the major French fashion houses.

In 1890, *Pictorial Review* showcased fashion plates for just under fifty costumes shown at the Paris Expedition. The magazine published cut-to-measure patterns along

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<sup>148</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 255. See Appendix B. 7.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>150</sup> *Catalogue of Fashions*, inside cover.

<sup>151</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 170; Green, *The Light of the Home*, 79-80.

<sup>152</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 298.

with the fashion plates so that their readers could create the garments at home.<sup>153</sup> Magazine editors knew consumers chose their magazines carefully, and significant resources went into the printing of color plates of new designs.<sup>154</sup> *The Metropolitan* magazine shared with readers in April of 1871 that beginning in July issues would include “four pages of beautiful Chromo Lithographs, each month, showing the styles in colors much better than it is possible to do otherwise.”<sup>155</sup>

### Dolls, Paper Dolls and Models

Dolls, paper dolls and cloth models promoted fashions through yet another medium. Magazines occasionally included paper dolls or cloth models of the fashions described or advertised in the magazine. These were miniature replicas of ladies garments. *McCalls*, the *Delineator* and *Harper’s Bazar* all participated in this practice. Fashion houses and shows utilized dolls to model the newest styles in miniature replicas.<sup>156</sup>

Paper dolls appeared in publications including newspaper style sections. The most famous of which took place between 1895-1896 in the *Boston Herald*. The paper first printed a blond doll wearing a corset and petticoat on March 24, 1895. A brunette doll, in the same pose, joined the series on June 16, 1895. Thirty-eight costumes in the latest fashions, interchangeable between the two paper dolls, appeared over the course of two

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<sup>153</sup> Fernandez, “If a Woman Had Taste,” 298.

<sup>154</sup> Gordon, “*Make it Yourself*,” 82.

<sup>155</sup> *Metropolitan Magazine*, back cover.

<sup>156</sup> Fernandez, “If a Woman Had Taste,” 292.

years.<sup>157</sup>The Sunday *Herald* of January 5, 1896 noted the following in regard to the series:

The plates are of interest to children as well as women; but while they furnish a constant source of pleasure and amusement to the little ones, they are more than just toys, because they serve to give from week to week the best practical idea of just what the latest Paris fashions are.<sup>158</sup>

The plates for the dolls and costumes that appeared in the Boston Herald also showed up in newspapers across the country, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Philadelphia Press* and *St. Louis Republic*, the rights for publication having been sold. Different cities put their own spin on the series, adding other costumes, and presenting the outfits on different dates, which accounts for variety upon comparison. The newspapers usually included a large front image of each costume, a written description, and a smaller sketched view of the back.<sup>159</sup>

### Trade Journals

The third type of women's magazine after fashion and general interest was the trade journal. Trade Journals targeted professional dressmakers and milliners as their audience.<sup>160</sup> The articles, advertisements and information within these trade journals specifically related to the business side of dressmaking and millinery. Popular trade journals included *The Millinery Herald*, *The Millinery Trade Review*, *The Milliner and*

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<sup>157</sup> *Boston Children's Museum*, introduction. Note: The dolls and costume sheets are marked "Copyright 1895 by G. H. Buek & Co., N.Y. Lith.

<sup>158</sup> *Boston Children's Museum*, introduction.

<sup>159</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 293.

<sup>160</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 170.

*Dressmaker and The American Dressmaker*. Two Butterick publications, *The Quarterly Report of Metropolitan Fashions* and *The Dressmaker and Milliner* were intended primarily for professional garment sewers. Their popular *Metropolitan Catalogue of Fashions* also included a section for the professional sewer.<sup>161</sup>

Trade journals provided their professional readers with the latest fashion news from Paris via representatives traveling to France in the fall and spring. These magazines sought to be the ultimate authorities on fashion. Journal articles conveyed a certainty on fashion information and a confidence in the writer's opinion.<sup>162</sup>

Additionally trade journals provided useful information for small business owners on topics such as advertising, selling tactics, consumer relations, and the impact of commercial and technological changes in the trade. The editors included articles that discussed the different shop workers positions, training on the job issues and salary information.<sup>163</sup>

Sometimes a manager is too apt to decide quickly as to the style of trimming she wants, and it is possible that the trade, were they to see the different styles, would select the trimmer's style in preference to the manager's. Meet the trimmer half

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<sup>161</sup> Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste," 256.

<sup>162</sup> Gordon, "Make it Yourself" 88. "For spring costumes, silk or woollen materials, or a mixture of both, will be the fashionable and favourite wear. Woollen materials and generally striped in Algerian style, the shades and colours in them varying from the darkest to the lightest. Navy blue serves for a foundation colour to many of them, and continues to be highly favoured as before. These spring fabrics are almost all made double width in order to facilitate the cutting of the polonaise, of which the success is now quite assured. The form of v $\hat{e}$ tement we most highly recommend to complete a costume is that of a cuirasse at the back, where it has five seams and is half-fitting, long square fronts. Collar at the neck, finished in front with bow and long ends of ribbon." "New Styles and Coming Fashions *The Milliner and Dressmaker*, (1876).

<sup>163</sup> *The Millinery Herald* "Editorial," 24.

way....Patience with an agreeable girl, who is willing, will oftentimes make a fine trimmer for you....<sup>164</sup>

Trade journals provided information helpful to women in the trades at different skill levels. An advice book for tradeswomen in 1896 stated the importance of the trade journals and recommended that dressmakers should only rely on journals with illustrations from Paris and original designs.<sup>165</sup> It is apparent from this and other data that dressmakers and milliners not only read trade journals but also were particular in their selection, emphasizing their involvement in their work and dedication to being up on the latest fashion information.

Trade journals had a second agenda of delivering male advertisers and manufacturers' points of view to female professional dressmakers and milliners.<sup>166</sup> From a review of these journals, men working in the trades experienced frustration with the women working in the trades. Male publishers criticized female retailers of inappropriate business customs, lack of judgment and a tendency to forget prices and quantities. One problem existed of female retailers returning unused goods to male wholesalers. Trade journal editors in an effort to convince dressmakers and milliners to discontinue this practice of returning items dedicated more space to this dilemma than any other topic.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> "It is important for dressmakers to have only the best fashion journals, the ones that give her strictly original designs of the most fashionable and artistic grade. The only fashion journal worth subscribing to is the one that gets its illustrations from Paris, not from foreign periodicals, but from the artist-designers of fashions who design exclusively for the journals in question. It is important for the dressmaker to select out of these a few that are most correct." [Broughton] *Suggestions for Dressmakers*, preface.

<sup>166</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 170.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 173, 236.



“If the retailer will help the wholesaler to abolish the Returned Goods evil, the retailer will share with the wholesaler the benefits of saving this needless expense.”<sup>168</sup>

### Magazines Influence

Women’s magazines reflected not only fashion but also how the editors thought women should see their family life, home, work, and society. The advice women readers received sought to preserve the status quo more often than not. Women’s magazines, reflecting greater society, both promoted and impeded the social changes occurring. Additionally magazines, except trade journals, encouraged consumerism and nurtured the idea that housework was a woman’s true calling.<sup>169</sup>

Magazine owners, editors and advertisers sought to reach out to white, native-born middle-class women as their consumers.<sup>170</sup> The numerous illustrations found in women’s magazines depict this intentional reader. Women’s magazines did not acknowledge race in their articles, consumer letters, or illustrations. Magazines left out the issues and interests of immigrant women, women of color, women without husbands or families, and women who sought social change.<sup>171</sup>

For the intended reader, women’s magazines provided a constant source of information in regards to style, dress, and sewing. Through magazines, girls, aspiring seamstresses and experienced sewers could obtain information that would help them in

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<sup>168</sup> *The Millinery Herald* “Mutual Gain,” 25; Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 172.

<sup>169</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 2, 50.

<sup>170</sup> Gordon, “*Make it Yourself*,” 85.

<sup>171</sup> Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 7.

the trade. Not only did magazines show styles, but also they instructed the reader how to make garments in great detail, including the type of materials and best colors.

### Instruction Books

For girls considering a dressmaking or millinery future, there were two kinds of books. First, there were advice books on how to how to earn a living that included the needle trades, and secondly sewing instruction books, books that taught sewing for trade work as well as home sewing. Between 1860-1920, these types are books were perpetually published.

### Vocation Advice Books

Books that provided advice to young women about earning a living written between 1860-1920 had many similarities. Typically, the books review a host of potential occupations, along with the pros and cons of each trade. The authors invariably included key traits for success, success stories, words of encouragement, and the issues of marriage and health.

A review of the titles from some of these vocational advice books reveals how they approached the topic. For example; *Money Making for Ladies*, *The Girl and the Job*, *Helps for Ambitious Girls*, *Women in the Business World* or *Hints and Helps to Prosperity*, *How Women May Earn a Living*, *The Girl Who Earns Her Own Living*,

*Thrown on Her Own Resources, What Girls Can Do, and How to Make Money Although a Woman.*

Authors frequently dedicated their book to their young female readers. Helen Hoerle and Florence Saltzberg, members of a high school vocational guidance committee, write “To the girls of America, with the hope that it may aid them in finding themselves, their life work and happiness, this book is fondly dedicated.”<sup>172</sup> In addition to dedications, authors employed quotes. Quotes by John Ruskin appeared frequently. In *The Girl and the Job*, the author’s include “Whatever else you may be, you must not be useless and you must not be cruel.”<sup>173</sup> A quote from Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* appears on the cover of *Suggestions for Dressmakers*. This book was an entire text devoted to helping the reader master the trade as opposed to a chapter or section in a book, which was more typical.<sup>174</sup>

Some of these books took a step back and shared with the reader a bit of history. In Madame Aguirre’s 1894 book she shares, “The needle has slain more than the sword...With this weapon women have stood off the wolves, hunger, and sin, through the centuries.”<sup>175</sup> And Ella Rodman Church mentions, “...The needle had always been a great favorite with poets and writers...”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, dedication copyright page. Note: Authors Hoerle & Saltzberg in their 1919 text state the most reliable studies of occupations for women are made by the Russell Sage Committee, one such study by Mary Van Kleeck is widely referenced in this dissertation.

<sup>173</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, preface. Note: John Ruskin 1819 –1900, English art critic, poet, artist, and social thinker.

<sup>174</sup> [Broughton], *Suggestions for Dressmakers*.

<sup>175</sup> Aguirre, *Women in the Business World*, 264.

<sup>176</sup> Church, *Money-Making for Ladies*, 60-61.

Vocation advice books generally reviewed a dozen or so possible occupations, including dressmaking and millinery. Other popular occupations at the time were domestic service, laundry, clerking, stenography, and teaching. The authors often recommended dressmaking and millinery above the other trades.

Authors commonly rallied behind women and gave encouragement through the sharing of success stories. The texts often introduce the reader to a young girl before she has succeeded, described the girl's hard work and clever ideas, which culminate in her success later as a milliner or dressmaker. In one book, we hear of a pair of sisters who never let a hatbox go home without a civil note of thanks.<sup>177</sup> In another text the author fondly remembers a classmate whose buttonholes were a "class scandal" and whose "stitches wandered" but who later became a successful buyer because she knew the "value of lines and color".<sup>178</sup>

The moral of these success stories pointed out the traits a girl must possess to succeed as a milliner or dressmaker. Girls needed to be sensible and observant, have initiative and good taste. More specifically, art and design instinct were required, understanding fabric and color combinations and the value of lines. If a girl had these traits plus a commercial instinct, business head, and bookkeeping abilities her future looked promising. However, the ultimate definition of an excellent dressmaker or milliner was an artist who had a sincere interest in making others look their best.

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<sup>177</sup> Aguirre, *Women in the Business World*, 267.

<sup>178</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 61-62. See Appendix B. 8.

## Sewing Instruction Books

Once a young woman decided she wanted to increase her sewing skills, be it for home or trade, she could teach herself through books that taught sewing. Every age group and skill level was represented in these books, starting with the very young.<sup>179</sup> In reviewing sewing instruction books, like the vocation books, common themes arise. Authors employed dedications or clarified their intentions in some way. Olive Hapgood wrote in her preface “with the hope that the information thus acquired will assist in fitting her [the reader] for her duties of life.” Authors sometimes included how they had come to see a need for the information. Emma Goodwin wrote *Goodwin’s Course in Sewing* because through her work in the dressmaking trade she realized a need for more thorough training of workers. Her outline she claimed was the foundation for advanced technical training fitting to the trades or household sewing.<sup>180</sup>

Some sewing instruction books emphasized their versatility by being valuable for trade work, home sewing and for use in schools. Simplicity of the lessons was emphasized in a number of the books.<sup>181</sup> Mrs. Coleman who invented the *Science of Gynametry*, a measuring system based on geometric principles, assures her readers that by following her methods, “it will be easy to cut a dress...”.<sup>182</sup> Jane Fryer titled her book for children *Easy Steps in Sewing*.<sup>183</sup> While the texts emphasized ease of learning,

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<sup>179</sup> Fryer, *Easy Steps in Sewing*, 26. “Little fingers thin and nimble, Fit to one, a little thimble; Right hand – finger number two-Put the hat on, - that will do.” Fryer, *Easy Steps in Sewing*, 26.

<sup>180</sup> Goodwin, *Goodwin’s Course in Sewing*, 5.

<sup>181</sup> Hapgood, *School Needlework*, 186.

<sup>182</sup> Coleman, *Gynametry*, 10.

<sup>183</sup> Fryer, *Easy Steps in Sewing*. Fryer also wrote *Easy Steps in Cooking*.

they also placed responsibility on the pupil, even when that pupil was child. In Fryer's book the child character from the book has a message for readers.

If any little girl, who really wishes to learn to sew, will follow the lessons exactly as given by the Thimble People, she can hardly fail to win the Needle-of-Don't-Have-to-Try for her very own.<sup>184</sup>

Authors emphasized the importance of mastering one skill or lesson, before moving on and attempting work that was more difficult. "If each one of these lessons is master in turn, the next one will not be difficult."<sup>185</sup> In addition, author Emma Goodwin explained in her text that principles of plain sewing would be necessary in proceeding with her additional lessons.<sup>186</sup>

Sewing instructions in the progressive era often identified the skill level of the intended audience. They ranged from beginning for children to sewers with moderate exposure. Kate Giblyn's book *Concerning Millinery* "...presupposed a knowledge of sewing and a well-filled workbox..."<sup>187</sup> Sometimes authors included their aims of individual lessons or aims of the field in general. For example, *Concerning Millinery* states, "Should attention be first drawn to the hat, irrespective of the wearer, then the aim of the artist milliner is lost."<sup>188</sup>

Other common attributes of sewing instruction books included referring to the information as hints and providing a timeline for how long mastery of the lessons should

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<sup>184</sup> Fryer, *Easy Steps in Sewing*, vi, preface.

<sup>185</sup> Burke, *Perfect Course in Millinery*, 6.

<sup>186</sup> Goodwin, *Goodwin's Course in Sewing*, 7.

<sup>187</sup> Giblyn, *Concerning Millinery*, 13

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

take. Almost all instructions included mention of the importance of good lighting, ample workspace and a comfortable chair.

Dressmaking in the progressive era mushroomed with inventions for drafting systems, cutting machines, and unique measurement methods like Coleman's *Science of Gynametry* mentioned earlier. These inventions accompanied by written instructions for the user, resulted in an ever-present proliferation of written material for women and girls.

### Correspondence Schools

Correspondence schools were a more guided method of self-study for both dressmaking and millinery than instruction texts. Participation requirements varied from simply doing the work on your own, to those with self-study questions, to schools that sent a diploma only after weeks of mailing in written tests and samples of work.

Associated with the latter was the *Complete Sewing, Dressmaking and Tailored Course* from the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences. The replete requirements of exams and producing work to be judged, was accompanied by eleven pages of written guidelines, study tools, and encouraging bits of wisdom. These preliminary remarks included how to underline, what ink color was to be used for exams, the importance of setting time aside to study, and the advice to "never let up until you have conquered". Sending in work required the use of a class letter and number, to avoid confusion among girls of similar names. An example exam showed students how to fill

out the included answer sheets. Other instructions included envelope addressing, postage considerations, and the mailing address.<sup>189</sup>

The theme of claiming extreme ease of learning was commonplace in correspondence school materials. The Diamond Garment Cutter Correspondence School included a preface that stated the specific system used in the lessons were so simple a mere child could follow. Both dressmaking and millinery correspondence school lessons progressed in complexity. Dressmaking typically started at stitches and plain sewing and advanced to measuring, drafting, working with patterns, dresses, and tailored suits. Millinery lessons generally started with creating the wire hat frame and progressed through making bows, straw hats, and velvet bonnets, to cleaning crepe, ribbons, silks, and chiffons.<sup>190</sup>

Correspondence school circulars utilized testimonials. One testimonial from Browning Millinery College endorsed the correspondence method of learning. “While I learned my trade in your school, I am quite familiar with your methods of teaching by mail, and am confident that it is so thorough and plain that any one cannot help but understand it and derive the same benefits that they would receive by attending the school.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Woman’s Institute of Domestic Arts and Sciences, associated with the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1924, was founded by Mary Brooks Picken the same author who wrote *The Fashion Dictionary*. She was a prolific author on sewing and taught at Columbia University.

<sup>190</sup> Kintzel & Lunt. *Complete Guide to Millinery*; Browning, *Browning Millinery College*.

<sup>191</sup> Browning, *Browning Millinery College*. Testimonials were from Illinois, Colorado, Texas, Tennessee and Kentucky. See Appendix B. 9.



It was common for correspondence schools to be named after a woman and/or for a specific woman's picture to appear on the admissions information. Examples of this includes Browning Millinery College named after Edna A. Browning, Principal, whose portrait graces the cover of the 1900 circular. *Dressmaking Taught in Twenty Complete Lessons* displays a photo of the author Madam Edith Carens on the cover.

Some correspondence schools were a component of a traditional private school, discussed in chapter 4, that provided classes on-site, such as the Browning Millinery College in Chicago at 34 Monroe Street, at the corner of Wabash. Browning also treated their students as customers, selling them the materials required to learn millinery. Materials such as velvets, chiffon, satins and silks were purchased by the yard, costs ranged from forty cents to three dollars. Items such as birds, ribbons and flowers, cost between five cents and ten dollars, with most items costing around one dollar. For one hundred dollars, Browning Millinery College sold what they considered "a complete stock of millinery." Everything needed to open up a shop.

The circular circa 1900 for Browning suggested the course was valuable for three reasons; it could enable a women to be self-supporting if necessary, it would be a cost savings in the home, and it gave women something to think about. During the progressive era there were three possible aims of correspondence schools; home use only, both home and trade purposes, and solely for trade purposes. The latter was the case more frequently with millinery correspondence schools. For girls and young women seeking to obtain skills that would enable them to earn wages in dressmaking or millinery, correspondence schools provided a self-study method.

## Chapter 2. Apprenticeships

### Dressmaking and Millinery Training through Apprenticeships

#### Apprenticeships

##### Types of Apprenticeship

In the early 1800s aspiring dressmakers and milliners obtained trade skills through apprenticeships. In dressmaking and millinery three distinct types of apprenticeship evolved. The first was an apprenticeship with tuition. In this situation, the apprentice paid a fee to the Madame, received room and board and presumably learned the entire trade.<sup>192</sup> The parties drew up indenture papers and either party could be held responsible for not keeping to the agreement.<sup>193</sup>

The second type of apprenticeship was an unpaid apprenticeship. No money exchanged hands, but the apprentice worked in exchange for room and board. This apprenticeship was less comprehensive and lasted for a shorter period.<sup>194</sup> The last type of apprenticeship occurring primarily during the progressive era was the small weekly wage apprenticeship. The apprentice worked for her pay and the other workers acknowledged

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<sup>192</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 155-156.

<sup>193</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 105. *The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia: A Study of Women in Industry*, by Lorinda Perry, will be referred to in the dissertation as the Boston and Philadelphia Millinery Study.

<sup>194</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 155-156.

that until trained, the apprentice had little to contribute to the shop. Tasks would have included running errands, sweeping, answering the door and telephone.<sup>195</sup>

Each of these three styles of apprenticeship could last several years and young dressmakers presumably learned plain sewing, pinning, draping, fitting and cutting. A millinery apprentice studied the cutting, shaping, and trimming needed to create elegant hats, bonnets, and caps. The best apprenticeships including teaching girls how to read and write, keep accounts, and collect bills.<sup>196</sup>

One beneficial apprenticeship experience was that of Hannah Adams. She worked as a millinery apprentice in New Hampshire from 1834-1838. Hannah wrote in her letters home “I get along pretty well in my Millinery business making drawed bonnets & calashes. I have lined some straw bonnets which my mistress says I begin to do very well.” After her four-year small weekly wage millinery apprenticeship, Hannah started her own business with her sister that prospered until they retired more than forty years later.<sup>197</sup> Her story serves as an example of successful apprenticeships held before the progressive era.

### Changes in the Apprenticeship System

The successful apprenticeship experience Hannah Adams had in the 1830s would soon become less and less common. While it is outside the scope of the research period, it

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<sup>195</sup> Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade for Women,” 155-156.

<sup>196</sup> Simon, “She is So Neat and Fits So Well,” 59; Preston, “Learning a Trade in Industrializing.”

<sup>197</sup> Preston, “Learning a Trade in Industrializing,” 34. **calash**-a hood made on hoops that could be pulled over the head or folded back. Copied from the folding hood of a carriage.

is included here as a strong example of how an apprenticeship could and did work for many women training for the trade. Despite a stronger past, dressmaking and millinery apprenticeships were not stable by the start of the progressive era. The apprenticeship system began to disintegrate in the mid nineteenth century. An article published in the New York Tribune in 1848, asserted that dressmakers taught apprentices nothing until the day their apprenticeship expired.<sup>198</sup>

Shop owners and their workers used the apprentice for errands or low-end work but neglected to spend any time teaching them.<sup>199</sup> Experienced tradeswomen had become especially unwilling to teach apprentices how to cut. Cutting was the most difficult and important part of dressmaking, without this skill an apprentice could not fit or make a garment.<sup>200</sup> Hannah Adam's sister Mary, who apprenticed with a tailor, wrote in her letters home of her two-year struggle to force her employer to teach her how to cut.<sup>201</sup>

As the number of dressmakers and milliners grew, competition increased. In 1860, sixty thousand dressmakers and milliners were active in the United States, but by 1880, the count had increased to 285,000.<sup>202</sup> Growth in business and competition from other shops led to a division of labor in the workroom. By the 1880s, astute tradeswomen understood the value of using the labor of others, including apprentices. Newly created

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<sup>198</sup> Sumner, *Report on Condition*, 117.

<sup>199</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 85.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>201</sup> Preston, "Learning a Trade in Industrializing," 27.

<sup>202</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 233.

specialists performed a series of tasks.<sup>203</sup> Shop owners set up different stations for sewing, embroidery, and various activities. Seamstresses could specialize on sleeves, collars, or cutting, as opposed to working on one dress from start to finish.<sup>204</sup> The work became more systematic.

As the trade evolved in this way, the apprenticeship made less sense to both the apprentice and shop owner.<sup>205</sup> The new division of labor meant less chance to learn the trade as a whole for the apprentice. These new divisions of labor, and shop hierarchies came at a cost to the apprenticeship system.<sup>206</sup> Accomplished dressmakers and milliners found it less cost effective to attempt to teach and run a busy shop at the same time.<sup>207</sup> Dressmakers and milliners in charge of a certain area in a shop had budgetary requirements and were not willing to spend time on an unskilled worker who also wasted costly material. As the pace of business increased, dressmakers preferred to pay a higher wage to skilled seamstresses, as opposed to having an unskilled apprentice.<sup>208</sup> Additionally as more women were earning wages, girls became unwilling to serve without pay.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Fales, "Organization and Management, 112. Agnes Perkins the editor of *Vocations for the Trained Woman* was complimented in Hoerle's & Saltzberg's text *The Girl and the Job*.

<sup>204</sup> Trautmann, "Portrait of a Minneapolis Dressmaker," 73 -74; Vocation Office for Girls, "Millinery," and Jerde, "St. Paul's Extraordinary Dressmaker," 95.

<sup>205</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 149.

<sup>206</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 14.

<sup>207</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 51.

<sup>208</sup> Hinds, "Dressmaking," 108; Higgins, "Millinery," 115; Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 105.

<sup>209</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 148.

The emergence of trade schools contributed to the collapse in the apprenticeship system as well. Trade schools, discussed in chapter 3, taught beginning dressmaking and millinery skills to girls after grammar school in preparation for trade work. Girls with trade school education behind them, in theory, entered the workrooms ahead of apprentices.<sup>210</sup> Trade schools however, recognized the importance of field training and often placed students in apprenticeships as a final part of the program. While the progressive era saw a decrease in the popularity of apprenticeships, trades people never entirely abandoned the system.<sup>211</sup>

Other trades during this period experienced an increase in the use of machinery and subsequently minute subdivisions of labor. Dressmaking and millinery were still exempt from that fate. The knowledge, skills and steps necessary to make fashionable clothing and hats allowed the apprenticeship system to hang on, even at a degenerated state.<sup>212</sup>

### Progressive Era Apprenticeships

By the progressive era, apprenticeships in both millinery and dressmaking were unpredictable. Writings from the period refer to apprenticeships as a nuisance, a farce, non-formal, and only ‘errand girl’ positions with little chance of learning the trade.<sup>213</sup> However, some placements were better than others were. It depended on how the

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<sup>210</sup> Leake, *The Vocational Education of Girls*, 231.

<sup>211</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 14.

<sup>212</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 105.

<sup>213</sup> Hinds, “Dressmaking,” 107-108; Sumner, *Report on Condition*, 117; Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 145 and Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade,” 148.

proprietress ran her shop and how the other employees treated the apprentice. If the individuals in a shop were willing to communicate in a way that benefited the apprentice, she could obtain training.<sup>214</sup> Additionally, the attitude of the apprentice made a difference on how much she learned.

An apprenticeship, even if only as an errand girl could have its advantages.<sup>215</sup> Errand girls delivered finished garments, which put them in close proximity to customers. This task could provide an opportunity for small talk, and recognition from the customer of the young worker. Sometimes upon delivery, the customer would try on the dress, hat or other garment. Errand girls by way of delivering an item could then experience the customer's reaction to a final piece. This would provide the opportunity to receive praise for the shop or return with a concern. Additionally these exchanges allowed the apprentice to try her hand at customer service.

Errand girls through shopping expeditions became familiar with fabrics, design, color combinations, trade terms and the retail market. All valuable experience and necessary information, if a girl was to become successful in the field. Errand girls also spent hours in the shop watching the more experienced women, waiting on them, bringing them supplies, and learning the acceptable from the unacceptable.<sup>216</sup> Attitude played a role in the benefits of an apprenticeship. For the girl able to see the value in

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<sup>214</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 146; Vocation Office for Girls, "Millinery," 7.

<sup>215</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 149; Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 79. The *Cleveland Educational Survey Dressmaking and Millinery* by Edna Bryner, will be referred to in this dissertation as the Cleveland Dressmaking and Millinery Survey.

<sup>216</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 63; Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 107.

these tasks, and recognize the information gained, the errand girl position was an opportunity and not a waste of time.

In addition to attitude, girls who entered apprenticeships with a natural aptitude for needlework had an increased chance of a successful apprenticeship.<sup>217</sup> According to the Massachusetts Dressmaking Study, successful apprenticeships in the progressive era would have offered a number of skills. “She has the opportunity for adaptation to the discipline of shop hours, learns the necessity for strict application, acquires the art of working with others, and has a chance to develop initiative.... an appreciation of business methods, a realization of the necessity of prompt and efficient service, and a sense of values is cultivated.”<sup>218</sup> Therefore, despite the challenges discussed earlier, a girl could achieve a successful apprenticeship in the progressive era. In the best-case scenario, girls entered the apprenticeship with strong sewing skills, a willing attitude and the good fortune to land in a shop with helpful women.

### Function of Apprentices

Millinery shop owners took in apprentices in order to secure labor for entry-level work and in order to keep workroom expenses down. In contrast, dressmaking shop owners used apprentices as a trying out period to see if the apprentice could do enough work while observing / learning. The 1916 Labor Bulletin found one apprentice for every twelve dressmakers and one apprentice for every three milliners. These numbers indicate

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<sup>217</sup> Vocation Office for Girls, “Millinery,” 7.

<sup>218</sup> Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade for Women,” 149.



that in millinery many of these apprentices were filling the role of low paid workers.<sup>219</sup> More of an effort was made in dressmaking to keep apprentices on as workers after the apprenticeship ended.<sup>220</sup>

### Millinery Hierarchy

The varied steps involved in millinery and division of labor within the shops, meant an extended period of learning. Girls who started out as apprentices, made bandeaux, the bands tacked under the crowns and brims of hats to give them the correct tilt or lift. If they were not let go by the proprietress after the apprenticeship, they could move to improver, making frames and working with chiffon, lace and velvet. The third position was preparer or maker (also called milliner). This person covered the hat and sorted out the trimmings. The copyist reproduced import models for sale in the shop, and trimmers were experienced enough to create original designs. The final position in the hierarchy was buyer. Buyers had a through understanding of the trade, commercial instincts, and the knowledge of what to buy on trips abroad.<sup>221</sup>

After approximately two seasons, the apprentice became an “improver,” (the first position above apprentice) and after four seasons, she was trained as a “maker,” (the second position above an apprentice). Only after five years, did the apprentice become competent in millinery.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 78-83.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>221</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 100-103.

<sup>222</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 146.

Stages in Millinery
Apprentice
Improver
Preparer/ Maker
Copyist
Trimmer
Buyer
Proprietress

The term improver indicated someone who had completed her apprenticeship. It was not necessarily a separate set of tasks but rather it identified the workers level of experience or inexperience.<sup>223</sup> Millinery required two types of ability. The making of a hat required skill while the designing and trimming of a hat required artistic ability.<sup>224</sup>

### Millinery Supervision

Trimmers did the creative work in millinery and supervised the other women who sat at their table in the workroom of a shop. A table typically seated anywhere from three to eight apprentices and makers, with the trimmer at the head. Trimmers planned the work and were responsible for the quality produced. The final touches by skilled trimmers, even the simple act of tacking on a velvet bow, could counterbalance the poor workmanship done at her table by her less experienced apprentices.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 20.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

## Dressmaking Apprenticeship and Processes

Apprentices in dressmaking establishments, in addition to errand girl duties, and holding a box of pins for the fitter, performed minor sewing tasks such as hems on the inside of garments and hook and eyes on linings. Additionally they worked on sachet bags, shirrs coverings on buttons, rolling hems on ruffles, overcast seams, cut folds, putting in shields, making small bindings, putting hems in dresses and embroidering.<sup>226</sup> Dressmaking work, after the apprenticeship, required more sewing skill than millinery. Dressmaking entailed more types of stitches and there was more material to sew. Once a girl had completed her apprenticeship, if asked to stay on in the shop, she became a helper. In order to move out of an apprenticeship girls would have needed to know all the basic hand and machine sewing operations. Additionally, they needed to be able to perform the different stitches on various parts of a gown and on a variety of materials.<sup>227</sup>

Dressmakers performed a myriad of hand sewing that required speed, accuracy and neatness. Before a new shop girl was trusted with garments she would have to prove herself by creating dress linings. Even, straight, seams had to be made in order to sew the lining together. Hook and eyes had to be sewn firmly and spaced perfectly. Just in creating a dress lining, girls needed to be able to perform overcasting seams, rolling hems, small folds, bindings, trimming and hemming.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 79; Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 63. **shirr** To make three or more rows of gathers. **shields** crescent shaped pieces of fabric or paper worn to protect clothing from underarm perspiration.

<sup>227</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 105, 79.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-106.

The steps in dressmaking shops frequently progressed from apprentice, to helper, to finisher, to waist draper, to maker and to cutter. There were also expert machine operators. Makers put together the parts of the waists, skirts, and sleeves. Some shops combined the making and finishing positions.<sup>229</sup> When a worker progressed in her creative abilities, such as design, planning, material combinations and cutting, the work became more interesting and her pay would increase.<sup>230</sup> Mastery of the technical, artistic and business end of dressmaking enabled a women to go out on her own and open a shop.<sup>231</sup>

Stages in Dressmaking
Apprentice
Helper
Finisher
Waist Draper
Maker
Cutter
Proprietress

In addition to the technical skills, dressmakers needed to understand human proportions, take measurements accurately, measure by the eye, apply the necessary arithmetic, and consider fractions of yards of material needed. An understanding of materials was considered “essential” in a young dressmaker. “The manipulation of the material in respect to their grains to produce certain effects is one of the commonest needs of these workers.”<sup>232</sup> Successful dressmakers needed to be skilled in color

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<sup>229</sup> Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade,” 157.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

combinations and the balance of colors in an entire outfit. Additionally a constant study of the latest styles and fashion was required of dressmakers.<sup>233</sup>

### Exploitation and Challenges

Instances of child exploitation occurred in the apprenticeship system.<sup>234</sup> One shop elevated an apprentice to a sewer after five months but kept another child in her apprentice role for six years before elevating her to a sewing position. A young Italian teenager worked for a year after school until 9:00 p.m. without pay.<sup>235</sup> Documentation on child exploitation is readily available in the research. Apprentices needed to advocate for themselves and stipulate upon accepting a position that they would receive training and under what circumstances.<sup>236</sup> Young and/or naïve apprentices were more likely taken advantage of by shop owners, not knowing how many errands were appropriate or what sort of training should occur. Older girls or girls with a better idea of their rights and the confidence to speak up about their apprenticeship to the shop owner were less likely to be exploited.<sup>237</sup>

At times, young and inexperienced girls were subjected to conversations at the work-table that made them uncomfortable. The sewing performed in shops allowed for almost constant conversation and documentation during the period notes immoral

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<sup>233</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 108.

<sup>234</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry* 148; Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 149.

<sup>235</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 148 -149.

<sup>236</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, 86; Campbell, *Women Wage-Earners*, 214-215.

<sup>237</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 107.

atmospheres could exist that were injurious to young girls who had not developed the moral stamina to resist crude remarks.<sup>238</sup>

### Wages and Length of Apprenticeships

To a lesser degree than exploitation, arbitration plagued the apprenticeship system. Wages and length of apprenticeship varied greatly. Data spanning from 1909 to 1919 record apprenticeship wages at no pay, no more than two dollars a week, or as much as nine dollars a week.<sup>239</sup> Dressmaking apprenticeships ranged between six weeks, three months, six months, or a year.<sup>240</sup> Millinery apprenticeships ranged from between two seasons of twelve weeks each, four seasons, or eight months.<sup>241</sup> There was no correlation between the work performed and the rate of pay. Shop owners demanded high quality whether they paid high or low wages.<sup>242</sup>

### Seasons

Adding to the inconsistencies, both the dressmaking and millinery trades had on and off seasons. In dressmaking, the season ran from October 1 through February 1 with little to work on until March 10 where it picked up and was busy until August 1.<sup>243</sup> In

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<sup>238</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 107.

<sup>239</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 63; Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 85; Hourle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, 87 and Hinds, "Dressmaking," 108.

<sup>240</sup> Bryner *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 85; Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 148.

<sup>241</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 145; Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 85.

<sup>242</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 81.

<sup>243</sup> Manson, *Work for Women*, 112.

millinery distinct fall and spring seasons existed. The fall season ran from August 15 to November 1 and spring started on February 1 and ended on May 30.<sup>244</sup>

### Shop Size

Girls considering apprenticeships could consult instruction books. These vocation advice books circa 1900, already discussed in chapter 1, had advice about apprenticeships. The texts often directed girls to choose an apprenticeship in a small dress shop rather than large. Small shop work ensured constructive criticism and a chance to work on every part of a gown. This atmosphere provided many spare moments when girls in training could practice sewing.<sup>245</sup>

Larger dress shops employed several errand girls, and the staff specialized, thus providing fewer opportunities to sew. Large shops often delegated apprentices to sleeves or panels and therefore girls did not gain the skills necessary to be a dressmaker.<sup>246</sup> However, for the gifted apprentice, large shops had high-class work and better wages. Large shops specialized in superior creations and fancier materials than a small dressmaker did. There was more opportunity to work and to learn different styles and gain a variety of skills in large dress shops once an apprentice had acquired dressmaking / sewing skills.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 101.

<sup>245</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 149.

<sup>246</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 66.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

### Trade School Apprenticeships

Despite the inconsistent experiences of apprenticeships in the early 1900s, trade schools, discussed in more detail in chapter 3, continued to place students in apprenticeships. Trade schools, including the renowned Manhattan Trade School, viewed the apprenticeship as a necessary part of training for the trades and placed students in apprenticeships after they completed their classroom work.<sup>248</sup> Before students could earn their diploma, a successful trade experience of several months was required. Generally, schools kept records of each placement including, dates, wages, name and address of each firm, and the type of work done. School data noted that seasonal lay-offs were frequent and made it difficult for girls to adjust to the industrial conditions without assistance from the school.<sup>249</sup>

A successful apprenticeship experience required a satisfactory report from the employer to the trade school. In the case of the Manhattan Trade School, if after three months the employer could not give a satisfactory report, the school could extend the apprenticeship.<sup>250</sup> Similarly, millinery apprentices, not tied to a school program, who failed to have a good work record, could repeat a season working on the same tasks.<sup>251</sup>

According to school policy, staff made a concerted effort to ensure these apprenticeships benefited the girls. Students were told that if their placement was unsatisfactory not to walk out but to report it to the school and wait for the schools' reply.

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<sup>248</sup> Department of Education, "Manhattan Trade School Report," 36.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>251</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 102.



The school stated it was their intention... “To see that you get as fair a chance to *earn* and to *learn* as your trade offers and your ability permits.”<sup>252</sup>

### One Dressmaker’s Experience

Successful dressmaker Clara Simcox published an article about her early experiences in her apprenticeship and the trade in the *Delineator* in 1912.<sup>253</sup> Her sewing lessons started at home. “Even as a little tiny tot I used to study the lines and colors of my dolls clothes with the greatest care. From dolls’ clothes I early graduated to my own, and at ten was practically making all of them, and generally bossing my mother and sisters on the subject of theirs.”

When Clara was approximately 18 years old she wanted to go to the nearest large town and learn dressmaking but her father said no one would take an inexperienced girl to learn the trade. Eventually she convinced him to let her go and she rode her horse ten miles to Bedford and took a train to Chillicothe.

“My temerity of offering myself, alone and unrecommended, met with suspicion and unbelief.” Finally, the last establishment in town she approached was receptive. The shop was run by a Miss Maguire and her brother who furnished every variety of women’s attire except shoes. Clara arranged an unpaid apprenticeship with them. She promised to work for three months, and in return was to have her board and what knowledge of the business she could pick up. Clara had had enough discouragement to make her regard this

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<sup>252</sup> Department of Education, “Manhattan Trade School Report,” 36.

<sup>253</sup> Simcox, “Why I Refused,” *Delineator*, 79 (February 1912): 87-88.

as a remarkable opportunity, and she plunged energetically into the work with ambition and confidence. The shop used a chart system for cutting, and her interest in clothes from childhood served her well.

I found I already knew fundamentals of the system, and after a day of experiment acquired the knack of it. After two weeks the major part of the cutting was trusted to me. I began to acquire the assurance of knowledge in my trade. In less than two months my apprenticeship began to pall, and I made up my mind to start for myself.

Clara moved to a nearby town, Avalon, feeling there was no room in Chillicothe for her. There she hired a small shop even though she did not know where the rent was to come from. She sat and waited for customers and they came. "I made every effort to please. More came, and were pleased. Soon I had a good little business." Clara used the old system of cutting she had learned in Chillicothe, which served her well in the beginning. After a year or two in business, she began to cut and fit according to her own ideas.

Clara stated the real reason she was successful in business was that she was not afraid to take up new designs and that she adapted the designs to the needs of her customers. "I just worked-worked hard." Clara traveled to New York, learned how shows selected their gowns, met with a show buyer, and got one of her gowns in a New York show the following year. "My vocation interested me. I absorbed everything that had to do with it. I read, studied, lived in it."

## Chapter 3. Public School

### Dressmaking and Millinery Training in the Public School

#### Kindergarten, Primary, and Grammar School

The importance of instruction in sewing in the Public School is now generally recognized.

-Olive Hapgood, *School Needlework*, 1892

Children started school in kindergarten, then primary school for grades first, through third, and then grammar school, for the grades between fourth and eighth. Including kindergarten, most primary and grammar schools taught sewing to female pupils by the 1880s.<sup>254</sup> Vocational and manual training programs/schools as well as regular elementary schools, incorporated sewing lessons into the curriculum.

The Baltimore Public Schools introduced sewing as a branch of manual training into the female grammar grades in 1892. Educators extended this coursework in 1894 into the primary grades.<sup>255</sup> School districts commonly separated girls and boys in order to teach sewing to the girls and woodworking to the boys.<sup>256</sup> School sewing lessons generally covered both hand and machine sewing and taught the basics of simple sewing.

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<sup>254</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 136.

<sup>255</sup> Davis, "Sewing in Baltimore," 23.

<sup>256</sup> Mead et al., *Report on Vocational Training Chicago*, 105.

### Length of Lessons

Generally, a small portion of the school day was devoted to sewing lessons. One and a half hours a week was typical for elementary school grades. A teachers' guide recommended no longer than thirty minutes at a time for kindergarten sewing lessons.<sup>257</sup> Fifth graders at one school spent an hour a week in sewing class and made a workbag and a small outing flannel petticoat.<sup>258</sup> Other schools taught sewing for up to four hours a week in the upper grades of elementary school.<sup>259</sup> Records from a school in Chicago showed girls spent as much as two thirds of their school day in the household arts which covered sewing, cooking and drawing.<sup>260</sup>

### Teachers

Discerning elementary schools employed specifically skilled women to teach the sewing classes. In most schools, the sewing lessons were the responsibility of the regular classroom teacher, whose skills could range from above to below average. Highly qualified teachers were less common in the sewing classroom than average-skilled teachers. The Cleveland Dressmaking and Millinery Survey credited teachers who had no aptitude for sewing, for trying to do their best to teach sewing, despite not knowing what they were doing.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Hapgood, *School Needlework*, 197.

<sup>258</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 87.

<sup>259</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 150.

<sup>260</sup> Mead et al., *Report on Vocational Training Chicago*, 105.

<sup>261</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 94.

Sewing classes varied greatly between schools, even within districts and from city to city.<sup>262</sup>

### Aims Kindergarten and Elementary School

Kindergarten and elementary classes aimed to give pupils training in the fundamental principles of sewing and knowledge of practical sewing for the home.<sup>263</sup> Lessons taught the very basics starting with how to hold and thread a needle, however progressed rapidly to more advanced work. A kindergarten curriculum from 1892 consisted of sewing over outlines, elements of form, sense of color, control of muscles, acquiring dexterity, mental powers of observation, exactness, patience, and care.<sup>264</sup> Elementary school girls sewed on buttons, eyelets and loops, and created straight, bias, and French fills. Later lessons taught ornamental hemming and stitching and a wide variety of stitches.<sup>265</sup>

While the majority of public school lessons focused on sewing skills that were beneficial for girls to use at home, a few elementary school curricula claimed to be for both home and trade. The author of *Goodwin's Course in Sewing* described her school lessons as fitting for the trades or household sewing. The curriculum included miniature

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<sup>262</sup> “It is difficult to describe clearly the amount and kind of training in sewing given in the public schools. This is because of the wide variation in the aims and methods of the work in the different grades and schools, and the differences in equipment of the teachers engaged in it, the time devoted to it, and the amount accomplished.” Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 87.

<sup>263</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 87; Davis, “Sewing in Baltimore,” 23.

<sup>264</sup> Hapgood, *School Needlework*, 197.

<sup>265</sup> Davis, “Sewing in Baltimore,” 23.

patterns created by McCall's claiming these patterns were the most reliable and easy to understand and use.<sup>266</sup>

Some elementary school programs incorporated design into the sewing classes while others did this to a very small extent. Data from Chicago Public Schools describes girls making mechanical drawings the same as the boys in one school while in another school all coursework drawings were related to sewing design and home furnishings.

### Projects and Curricula

By the end of elementary school, girls would have made a number of completed simple garments in sewing class. In Baltimore for example, in the sixth grade, girls made uniforms for the kitchen and cooking. In seventh grade girls worked on tea towels and napkins.<sup>267</sup> In Cleveland sixth grade girls made a cooking outfit consisting of an apron, cap, cuffs, dish cloth and dish towel.<sup>268</sup> In Massachusetts, eighth grade girls spent a year making a kitchen apron and acquiring numerous processes such as cutting, basting, hemming, buttonhole making.<sup>269</sup> Additionally elementary girls mastered items such as nightgowns, drawers, princess slips, kimonos, middy blouses, gingham dresses, gymnasium suits, corset covers, and Christmas articles in their sewing classes.<sup>270</sup>

Some curriculum offered assistance with classroom management. *School Needlework* suggested that as a reward teachers allow girls to dress dolls. Rewards were

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<sup>266</sup> Goodwin, *Goodwin's Course in Sewing*, 5. See Appendix B. 10

<sup>267</sup> Davis, "Sewing in Baltimore," 23.

<sup>268</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 87.

<sup>269</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 150.

<sup>270</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 88.

not always appropriate however and the text also stated “Poor work may be excusable in some cases, especially from pupils who have come from homes of ignorance and poverty.” Lastly, the text also advised teachers to watch out for dark days when poor lighting made sewing difficult and the text recommended taking girls on shopping excursions on dark days.<sup>271</sup>

### Benefits of Sewing Lessons

Sewing classes in the upper grades of elementary school served to keep girls in school longer. The research indicates that both girls and parents saw the benefit of elementary school sewing as it related to home needlework and to a lesser degree trade work. Articles and texts from the turn of the century advised that staying in elementary school and acquiring sewing skills could help a girl obtain work in a dress or millinery shop. If a girl chose to work from home, sewing skills gained from elementary school potentially added to the income a girl could earn by sewing for others. Types of sewing done at home for a wage by girls included sewing on buttons, hemming, and overcasting seams.<sup>272</sup>

According to the Cleveland Dressmaking and Millinery Survey, elementary sewing classes did not prepare girls for trade work. The report documented the lessons taught in elementary school as meager in amount of both time and quality. The survey concluded that if anything the sewing experiences in elementary school turned girls against sewing. Most of the educators lacked the proper experience and the girls found

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<sup>271</sup> Hapgood, *School Needlework*, 186-187. See Appendix B. 11-13.

<sup>272</sup> Davis, “Sewing in Baltimore,” 23-24. **overcasting** A basic stitch.

the lessons boring. At an hour a week, it took months to complete a garment. While the girls needed to master hand sewing, students experienced spending thirty-six hours on a project they could have completed in two hours, if the teacher allowed them the use of a sewing machine.<sup>273</sup> Research documents both beneficial experiences for girls in sewing classrooms and negative ones. Girls who later found their way into trade work could have brought skills they gained in the public school sewing classes with them.

### Trade Schools

Trade schools represent another form of training for girls seeking dressmaking and millinery skills under the public school umbrella. Trade schools taught specific vocations to working class youth solely for the purpose of making a living.<sup>274</sup> Trade schools for girls began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century, mainly in large metropolitan areas. Cities such as New York, Boston, Albany and Milwaukee led in trade school development. Urban centers, especially on the East Coast, had a high demand for skilled workers.<sup>275</sup>

This demand generated the development of trade schools. The industry welcomed the possibility of more skilled workers, but critics were dubious about the ability of trade schools to properly prepare most girls. Trade schools, developed not only in response to a demand for more workers but also in relation to the changing role of women, served a

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<sup>273</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 93-94.

<sup>274</sup> Leake, *The Vocational Education*, 231.

<sup>275</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 153-154.



specific population, and fulfilled a specific need within industry. These schools were structured in a similar fashion to one another with similar curriculum. Although historical literature is controversial regarding trade school “success,” the debate on both sides is of interest in understanding the topic.

The Manhattan Trade School for Girls opened in 1902. Boston Trade School for Girls followed in 1904. Public school systems assumed both private institutions less than ten years later. The Manhattan Trade School model was widely touted as the pioneer. Other trade schools that followed, including the Boston Trade School, had similar programs. Trade schools commonly admitted girls around the end of grammar school but before high school, around thirteen years of age. Trade schools typically taught dressmaking and millinery, as well as general academics, health courses, and home economics.

### Training Women for Wage Work

Early twentieth century America debated whether a woman working for wages was beneficial to society. This cultural debate related to women’s contribution to the workforce as well as their socially proper role. Training women to make a living was a new and controversial social paradigm.<sup>276</sup> Training women for work other than homemaking was incongruous to popular customs. Never before had schools recognized girls might be something besides a homemaker. Trade schools represented change. The idea of women having financial independence, less need to marry and being absent from

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<sup>276</sup> Powers, *The ‘Girl Question,’* 27; Leake, *The Vocational Education,* 229-230.

the home threatened the status quo. Middle class society perceived these concepts as both threatening and exciting, both revering women's professional achievements and mourning women's presence in factories and industrial settings.<sup>277</sup>

Educators and advocates of the working class designed trade schools in an effort to keep young girls in school<sup>278</sup> and to train working class girls in a specific trade, so they could demand decent wages. See Appendix Table A5. Young girls were leaving grammar school with virtually no skills to enter the work force making wages that barely enabled them to survive. Trade school advocates chose to focus the curriculum on needlework (i.e. dressmaking and millinery), since virtually all girls sewed at home and in grammar school.<sup>279</sup>

Typical working class students of trade schools, out of necessity, were entering the work force at a young age. Because of their difficult financial situations and need to earn a living, these students could not afford to spend much time in school. Trade schools, cognizant of their student's situation, generally designed two-year programs. In some states, this bridged the gap between grammar school and the age at which girls could legally work.

Trade school educators were not exempt from struggling with the shift in women's roles from homemaker to wage earner<sup>280</sup> and in an ironic dual purpose, trade schools inserted homemaking courses. Even though educators created trade schools for the sole purpose of helping girls gain employment, in a counterintuitive move, the

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<sup>277</sup> Powers, *The 'Girl Question,'* 29.

<sup>278</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 153.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

schools also prepared girls to stay home. Inclusion of home economics is evidence of school's leadership to grapple, like the rest of society, with what was appropriate for young girls and women. Deciding to educate women to earn a living was a progressive leap. Insertion of home economics into trade schools' curricula represents insecurity on the part of the schools. Homemaking courses within a trade school represent doubt and concern over women working for wages outside the home.

The addition of homemaking curriculum in trade schools took time away from training girls to work in the trades and added to the confusion about the purpose of these new schools.<sup>281</sup> As stated earlier, most programs were intentionally two years long for financial viability. The fact that trade schools taught both for vocation and for homemaking caused confusion in society about the aim of these schools<sup>282</sup> and represented the difficulty society had in celebrating women's growing experiences.

### Students at Trade Schools

Founders of trade schools understood working class girls would comprise the majority of their student body. Advocates saw poor girls entering the work force after grammar school and being unable to earn a living wage. Trade schools rose from the need for the financial protection of working class girls. Trade schools specifically identified working-class girls as the intended audience in their written mission and aims

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<sup>281</sup> Leake, *The Vocational Education*, 170.

<sup>282</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 154.

of the schools.<sup>283</sup> Middle class girls could afford to attend high school and seek teaching careers or stay home.<sup>284</sup>

Generally, first or second-generation immigrants filled trade school classrooms. Records from 1914 of the students enrolled at the Manhattan Trade School found 142 of the 532 students were Italian (twenty-seven percent). Documentation on the Boston Trade School noted almost sixty-three percent of the students were either foreign born or native white of foreign-born parents.<sup>285</sup>

Working class trade school students typically were young, poor, and in bad health. Their families needed them to start contributing wages. Therefore, these girls could not devote a great length of time to schooling. Often this period of education came at a great sacrifice from the girl and her family.<sup>286</sup> Trade schools aimed to furnish young female workers, in a short time, with basic skills before they entered the trades. Additionally, trade school attendance enabled girls to compare different trades and working environments with one another.<sup>287</sup>

### Preparation for Shop Work

Trade schools needed to not only teach sewing skills but also prepare girls to work in shops. Educators strived to identify and adopt workshop conditions. Some ways in which schools accomplished this was to maintain a long day, often from 8:30 a.m. to

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<sup>283</sup> Department of Education, "Manhattan Trade School Report,"; Leake, *The Vocational Education*, 231.

<sup>284</sup> Powers, *The 'Girl Question,'* 28.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 104

<sup>286</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 240.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

5:00 p.m. with an hour for lunch, use shop terminology, conduct order work for the public, and require an apprenticeship.<sup>288</sup>

### Order Work

As a revenue generating activity, trade schools took orders from the public for goods and services. This process, termed ‘order work’ provided the students with an unpaid opportunity to practice filling orders. This allowed girls to handle expensive materials such as silks and chiffons and encouraged them to increase the quality of their work.<sup>289</sup> Order work exposed students to a fuller understanding of the business transaction side of the needle trades while contributing to the fiscal health of the schools.

### Field Placements

For the final stage in the program, students often took part in a school provided placement or apprenticeship. Successful completion of this field experience was a requirement to receive a diploma or certificate. Because trade school students were young and inexperienced, these placements were fraught with difficulties. The Manhattan Trade School through trial and error came up with the following requirement of their students in placements. “In case your position proves unsatisfactory – DO NOT ‘WALK OUT’ Instead, REPORT your complaint to us, and WAIT FOR OUR REPLY before

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<sup>288</sup> Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade,” 152.

<sup>289</sup> Department of Education, “Manhattan Trade School Report,” 42.

leaving.”<sup>290</sup> In spite of the difficulties encountered at times with placements, the program intentions were admirable, literally allowing girls a foot in the door.

### The Manhattan Trade School for Girls

Mrs. Mary Schenek Woolman founded the Manhattan Trade Schools for Girls.<sup>291</sup> Woolman was on the faculty at Columbia in the Teacher’s College and an expert in textiles. As an educator, Woolman saw training as the best way to keep girls out of poverty. She wanted girls to have the same advantages as boys through schooling that could prepare them to enter the workforce ready to demand a decent wage. However, Woolman did not envision women crossing over into male dominated professions. Her ideas for girls centered on the female pursuits that began in the home.<sup>292</sup> The Manhattan Trade School accepted students who had completed grammar school or who had obtained their working papers.<sup>293</sup>

The Manhattan Trade School offered a comprehensive approach in preparing girls for a life of wage work. The school taught dressmaking, millinery, power sewing, cooking, hygiene, physical training, and general academics. Additionally, a class on industrial conditions acquainted students with the laws, regulations, and conditions relating to trade work.<sup>294</sup> In addition to sewing skills, girls learned how to keep accounts,

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>291</sup> Powers, *The ‘Girl Question,’* 104.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.; Allinson, “Dressmaking as a Trade,” 152.

<sup>293</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women’s Education,* 242.

<sup>294</sup> Department of Education, “Manhattan Trade School Report,” 25.

use wages, buy clothes and food, and save money.<sup>295</sup> To help students improve their physical well being the school taught proper exercise, hygiene and diet. A mother reported that because of the school her daughter took a bath everyday and walked to work.<sup>296</sup>

With the exception of the particularly gifted pupil, the Manhattan Trade School shared reservations about millinery with their students. Millinery for many girls equated to low beginning wages, irregular seasons, and slow advancement. For girls who must earn their own living this was a discouraging situation and therefore the school sometimes advised girls against this course of study unless a student showed advanced promise towards millinery.<sup>297</sup>

### Boston Trade School for Girls

The Boston Trade School was modeled after the Manhattan Trade School and had many similarities. The Boston Trade School curriculum lasted for two years, at the end of which girls were old enough to work in Massachusetts. In their first five years of existence, the Boston Trade School experienced remarkable growth. The school opened in 1904 with fifteen students. By 1909, when city management took over the school, almost two hundred students attended.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Leake, *Vocational Education of Girls*, 173.

<sup>296</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 153.

<sup>297</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, " 126-127.

<sup>298</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 153.

### Albany Vocational School

The Albany Vocational School in New York provided a four-year course for girls thirteen and up. Most students entered at thirteen or fourteen years of age after completing sixth or seventh grade. Instructors taught household arts, general academic work, as well as dressmaking and millinery. Students performed order work for items such as curtains, aprons, and children's clothes.<sup>299</sup> The program ran for six hours a day, five days a week. Half the day focused on shop work; students spent the other half in academic classes such as math, English, and geography.

The Albany Vocational School gave priority to housework over trade work. Students spent twice as much time on housekeeping, 450 minutes a week compared to dressmaking or millinery at 225 minutes a week.<sup>300</sup> Based on the school schedule, educators in Albany prioritized the home over the trade, but acknowledged a changing reality for girls and did in fact prepare girls for employment. The school's stated aim supports the changing times, "Giving better elementary school provision for the vocational needs of those likely to enter industrial pursuits."<sup>301</sup>

### Hebrew Technical School for Girls of New York

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<sup>299</sup> Leake, *Vocational Education of Girls*, 176.

<sup>300</sup> Mead et al., *Report on Vocational Training Chicago*, 173-176

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.



The Hebrew Technical School for Girls of New York only admitted students who had graduated from grammar school. This policy was unlike the Manhattan Trade School that admitted girls who had obtained their working papers but had not completed the eighth grade. This graduation requirement led to a more academic student body at the Hebrew Technical School. Comparisons from a 1911 research report reflect that this program held higher quality instruction than other trade schools. Girls at Hebrew Technical spent two-thirds of their time on technical work including design. Additionally, they received business experience by taking sewing orders from the public.<sup>302</sup>

#### Milwaukee Public School of Trades for Girls

The Milwaukee Public School of Trades for Girls opened in 1910 teaching dressmaking and millinery in two years to fourteen-year-old girls who were not going on to high school. The school intended girls to be able to command a higher wage once they had received training. Admitted students needed to be able to read and write in English and perform basic math. The school identified the development of the girls' character as one of their goals. By the fifth anniversary of the school, in 1915, four hundred girls enrolled and an additional one hundred names were on the waiting list.<sup>303</sup>

Dressmaking students spent both years in the classroom while millinery students spent a year and a half in the school and two seasons in the trade. Dressmaking students at the Milwaukee Public School of Trades for Girls began with elementary sewing, unless

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<sup>302</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 241-242.

<sup>303</sup> Scott "A Girls' Trade School Course," 188-191.

students had previous training. After completing all the dressmaking classes, students made garments without supervision as a final exam.<sup>304</sup>

In addition to the trade classes, all girls at the Milwaukee Public School of trades were required to take academic and household arts classes. In household arts, girls learned cooking, serving and housekeeping. One of the purposes of this course was to “make a better homemaker out of a trade worker.” The course purpose expresses a popular social thought during the progressive era, if a girl needed to work, let it only be until she married.<sup>305</sup>

### Avoiding the Apprenticeship

Girls considering needle trades often hoped to avoid lengthy apprenticeships and looked to trade schools as the solution. Seasoned dressmakers and milliners doubted girls could obtain the gleanings from an apprenticeship any other way.<sup>306</sup> Advice books from the progressive era usually suggested trade schools or an apprenticeship, almost interchangeably.<sup>307</sup> See Appendix Table A3. The literature of the day did not clarify if trade school could take the place of an apprenticeship. This appeared to reflect society’s view that the value of trade school, and even the purpose, was still undetermined.

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 189

<sup>305</sup> Leake, *Vocational Education of Girls*, 174.

<sup>306</sup> Higgins, “Millinery” 115; Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 104.

<sup>307</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, 86; Candee, *How Women May Earn a Living*, 230. Helen Churchill Candee was a titanic survivor and the inspiration for the Character Rose in the 1997 James Cameron movie.

### Trade School Outcomes

The New York Millinery Study acknowledged disconnect between what trade schools taught and what millinery shops required in their workers. “Trade schools are not successful because they do not deal directly with the business.”<sup>308</sup> Schools could not keep up with the constant changes within the trade, and therefore the girls’ preparation was lacking.

The Manhattan Trade School touted that nearly one hundred percent of its graduates went to work in the trades.<sup>309</sup> However, studies conducted in 1914 could not locate Manhattan Trade School graduates through their school placements or early positions. Girls were frequently let go due to the seasonal nature of the work.<sup>310</sup>

In some instances trade school instructors withheld constructive criticism from students, in order not to hurt their feelings. They were hesitant to discourage, even considering it harmful. This lack of honesty prevented students from obtaining the high standards expected in a shop.<sup>311</sup> The Milwaukee school was careful to give girls simple garments to make and accept imperfect work as opposed to expecting perfection and discouraging pupils, which educators considered “positively harmful”.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 158.

<sup>309</sup> Department of Education, “Manhattan Trade School Report,” 37.

<sup>310</sup> Rury, *Education and Women’s Work*, 155.

<sup>311</sup> Scott, “A Girls’ Trade School Course,” 190; Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 105.

<sup>312</sup> Scott, “A Girls’ Trade School Course,” 190.

Neither the needle trades nor society ever came to an agreement as to the value of trade Schools. Documentation during the time showed evidence supporting<sup>313</sup> and denouncing<sup>314</sup> the worthiness of attending a trade school. This polarity represented the greater controversy around the issue of women working outside of the home as well as complexities of needle trades and confusion caused by trade schools also teaching home economics. Trade schools at the same time were hailed in one article and denounced in another; the middle class celebrated women's achievements but bemoaned the loss for the home and family.<sup>315</sup>

Contemporary research has found fault with trade schools and considered them unsuccessful.<sup>316</sup> For their time and place in history, they were innovative. Placing blame on trade schools is difficult; they had a complex situation to manage. Constant change in the trades made it unrealistic for schools to keep up. Trade school students came from dire situations and struggled with a host of issues related to age, poverty, and lack of education. Educators and students faced controversy in regards to women working for wages.

## High School - Household Arts Education

### Introduction

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<sup>313</sup> Bishop, "Bettering of Taste in Dress," 284; The Vocation Office for Girls. "Millinery", 7 and Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 119-122.

<sup>314</sup> Barrows, "The Training of Millinery Workers," 45; Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 158.

<sup>315</sup> Powers, *The 'Girl Question' in Education*, 29.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

In the 1800s when female students first entered schools, they sat side by side with their male classmates and pursued the same academic courses. Around 1880 vocational education for boys emerged and cooking and sewing classes appeared for girls. The emphasis of this coursework for girls was on academics and not homemaking or trade/vocation. During the 1880s and 1890s, vocational programs for boys grew but few existed for girls. Household arts education came into existence for girls around 1900.<sup>317</sup>

In 1908, the American Home Economics Association formed, formalizing the female equivalent of vocational education for boys. The focus of cooking and sewing classes changed from academic to homemaking despite the fact that in the United States, six million women by 1909 were working for wages outside their homes.<sup>318</sup> By 1910, boys and girls separated to attend their prospective programs of vocational education for the boys and household arts, also referred to as domestic arts or home economics, for the girls. Vocational education became a school standard by 1920.<sup>319</sup>

### Family Values

The industrial revolution brought with it poverty, disease, overcrowding, and a

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<sup>317</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 248. Anna Cooley thanked Mary Schenk Woolman founder of the Manhattan Trade School in her book's preface. Cooley stated on page 208 that educators created the household arts with high school aged girls in mind, however sewing was usually taught in both the seventh and grades with the knowledge that sewing skills would be needed to in the high school domestic arts courses. Recommendations for this course of study had existed earlier. One example is *The American Woman's Home* by Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe written in 1869. In the book's introduction, the authors recommend training for women, just as men received trade training.

<sup>318</sup> Bishop "Bettering of Taste in Dress," 282.

<sup>319</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 135-136.

social turbulence, not seen before. More women turned to wage work and left the traditional roles of caring for their family. During this time, people understood good values came from a strong family unit.<sup>320</sup> Home economics advocates hoped that by bringing focus back to the importance of the family, because of the basic services the family provided and the values instilled, they could off set these new industrial revolution problems. The household arts movement elevated the importance of women's role in the family. The purpose of home economics after the 1890s was to prepare women for their roles in sustaining the American family. Advocates of home economics believed homes run by well-trained women would decrease social decay.<sup>321</sup>

### The Issue of Women Working

Household arts turned out to be a solution for educators struggling with the notion of women working for wages. Providing coursework, that took girls away from their families, troubled high school educators. The increased number of women in the workplace was a threat to the family. The answer became the development of a field of study that gave women an occupation, but an occupation in the home.<sup>322</sup> High school educators facing pressure from society, as well as one another, stripped academics from domestic art programs and simply taught the domestic arts themselves. The focus became preparing a women for her rightful role as wife and mother.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 250.

<sup>321</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 250; Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 135, 139, 140-141.

<sup>322</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 139.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

Household arts programs typically aimed to prepare girls to be efficient homemakers, and to be better prepared to take their place in society, to cultivate an appreciation of home, and to dignify housework by improving the method of work as well as the articles made.<sup>324</sup>

Making clothing in the home for private trade became a transitional option between homemaker and trade worker. It enabled young women to remain at home but do something useful that provided an income. Society did not consider private trade out of one's home to be working for wages, so women operating under this option were exempt from any negative stigma associated with working.<sup>325</sup>

### Terminology and Subjects Taught

Numerous terms appeared at the turn of the century to describe this developing education around women's work introduced in the high schools. Educators used the term 'domestic arts' interchangeably with 'home economics'. A valuable clarification to the various terms identified the umbrella term 'household arts' to include all the arts and sciences that were concerned with homemaking. Further classification lists three areas of arts and sciences; "Domestic science", "household management", and "domestic arts." Table 2 illustrates the individual subjects taught under each of the three a particular arts and sciences heading.

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<sup>324</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 200.

<sup>325</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 238.

**Table 2. Household arts education curriculum structure**

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Household Arts

*Domestic Science*

Physics and chemistry  
Physiology and hygiene  
Chemistry of food and dietetics  
Bacteria and biology  
Laundering  
Economics and sociology  
History of foods, preparation, and manufacture

*Household Management*

Home nursing and invalid cookery  
Keeping household accounts, of food, shelter, and clothing, etc.  
Domestic service  
Household sanitation and decoration  
Institutional and home shopping  
Repairing and renovating  
History of home, sociology, economics, and business law.

*Domestic Arts*

Art, especially in relation to the home, its furnishings, and dress.  
Sewing, dressmaking, millinery, embroidery, crocheting, and knitting.  
Study of textiles, their history, manufacture, and properties in relation to  
use.  
Repairing and care of clothing  
Physiology and hygiene of clothing  
History of architecture and dress  
Economics and sociology

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*Source:* Data from Anna M. Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 4-5.

Indeed the domestic arts incorporated a wealth of information for female students. According to the listed classification, the domestic arts encompassed hand sewing, machine sewing, drafting of patterns, millinery, embroidery, crocheting and knitting,



repairing and care of clothing, textiles, hygiene, art, women's relation to the social field, history, and economics and simple business law.

**Table 3. Domestic arts education subjects and their definitions**

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Hand sewing –

The direct application of stitches to articles of interest to the pupils.

Machine Sewing –

The use of foot-power and electric-power machines, the latter especially in schools of trade type, in garment making, dressmaking, and other articles.

Drafting of Patterns –

Some form of simple rule drafting or system drafting, pattern modeling, and use of bought patterns.

Millinery –

The making, designing, and trimming of hats of various styles of all seasons.

Embroidery –

The use of stitches in decoration of garments, household articles or other furnishings.

Crocheting and Knitting –

The making of simple articles – forming foundation for more advanced work.

Repairing and Care of Clothing –

Patching, darning, remaking; economy in relation to planning for one's wardrobe – or for family wardrobe; adaptation of garment to use.

Textiles –

This may include the study of the textile arts of weaving, netting; properties of textiles in relation to use; history of the evolution and manufacture of textile industries; dyeing and cleansing; study of widths, prices, and qualities of materials, as well as adaptation to use.

Hygiene –

In relation to dress and furnishings

Art -

In relation to design and color for use in the home and for dress; arrangement of interiors of houses; suitability of line and color in relation to dress; study of general principles of design.

Women's Relation to the Social Field –

Discussion of sweatshop labor; leagues for social betterment, as Consumers' and Municipal League; bargains; ethics of shopping; development of social consciousness; training in accuracy, neatness, foresight, and responsibility.

History –

Industrial history; history of architecture; history of costume; development of household art, and history of handicraft.

Economics and Simple Business Law –

Economics of the home, relation of expenditure to income. Household management, especially in relation to purchase and care of clothing and furnishings.

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*Source: Data from Cooley, Domestic Art in Women's Education, 7-8.*

Household Arts curriculum encompassed a thorough knowledge base. Girls gained relevant information in these courses, which was necessary in order to become a successful dressmaker or milliner.<sup>326</sup>

### Manual Training High Schools

The primary aim of the domestic art departments in Manual Training High School was improved homemaking ability or the ability to continue with schooling in the same specialty. Despite this homemaking purpose, graduates did enter the dressmaking and

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<sup>326</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 161.

millinery trades.<sup>327</sup> Students were able to obtain work in the trades with the skills they had acquired in Manual Training High Schools. This path can be viewed an unintended consequence of the curriculum, but probably was not much of a surprise to educators. Girls would have found in the dressmaking and millinery classrooms that they were well suited for the trades. Even though the schools intended to prepare girls for home or further school they also prepared them for trade work and wages.

Manual training high schools usually required domestic art courses for female students. The elective structure of these programs allowed girls to choose a specialty. Students at manual training high schools generally came from the middle class. One estimate stated that twenty-five percent of manual high school graduates went on to higher education or into the trades. The other seventy-five percent remained at home and generally, eventually married.<sup>328</sup>

Table 4 illustrates coursework from a Manual Training High School. As students worked on a sewing project, educators had specific skills they were teaching. They went beyond the sewing of the garment. The articles made in domestic arts classes would increase in difficulty and high school teachers chose articles for their specific processes, thought content and allied subjects, as illustrated in the chart above. Schools purchased

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<sup>327</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 198.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid*, 208. In 1910, the School of Domestic Science and Domestic Art in Rochester, New York found themselves having to restructure their program. Dressmaking and millinery became the dominant purpose while homemaking became nonessential. Before this change, families criticized the school, for training their daughters to be domestic servants. High school students in the early 1900s were generally middle class and well-off enough that the idea of working as a domestic servant was offensive. Leake, *Vocational Education of Girls*, 178.

materials for sewing and students kept the articles they made so domestic arts classes often had small fees associated with them. Parents appreciated the utilitarian value of dressmaking and millinery classes. As discussed in Chapter 1 girls played a valuable role with the family sewing needs. The schools often included children's clothing in the lessons as a way to appease parents.<sup>329</sup>

**Table 4. First year course in domestic art in a manual training high school**

<u>Article</u>	<u>Process</u>	<u>Thought Content</u>	<u>Allied Subject</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Workbag. To be used during the year.	Hand sewing. Basting, hemming, overcasting.	Orderliness, cleanliness, neatness.	Art	\$0.25
Pin-Cushion	Overhanding, cross-stitch, initials.	Suitability of material.		\$0.03
Cooking - Apron	Hand and machine.	Machines: Use; care of; value.	Physics	\$0.25
Short Kimono	Drafting pattern. Hand and machine.	Economy in cutting. Appropriate use.	Mathematics	\$0.35
Christmas Presents. Making and fitting out a work-basket.	Weaving of baskets. Stenciling and hand-sewing.	Originality and unselfishness. Indian basketry.		\$0.25 – \$0.30
Skirt, corset-cover, drawers	Drafting of pattern. Hand and machine sewing, buttons and button-holes, tucking, setting in lace.	Study of textiles. Properties of cotton, fibre, history, manufacture.	History. Geography. Physiology. Hygiene.	\$5.00 – \$6.00
Darning, patching. (Articles brought from home.)	Stockinet and clothing darns, hemmed patch, flannel patch, etc.	Suitability to purpose. Linen and cotton composition, simple tests, collection and mounting of samples with widths and prices. Economy, care of clothing, to bring home and school in close		

<sup>329</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 201.

relation.

Source: Data from Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 202.

### Technical High School

Comprehensive and manual high schools did not train women for wage work through domestic arts education but rather for home sewing. In contrast, technical high schools existed in larger cities that specialized in training women for a vocation.<sup>330</sup> Domestic arts programs in technical high schools offered more opportunity for concentration than manual training schools. Technical schools domestic art departments centered on dressmaking and millinery.<sup>331</sup> Technical schools had two sets of aims. One set was for girls going into the trades. The second set was for girls going on to further education or family life. In a teacher's guide trade aims of technical high school domestic arts programs included, training in the fundamentals of shop work, special trade instruction, care and use of utensils, economy of time and materials, interpretation of drawings, some knowledge of business transactions, identification and care of tools and

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<sup>330</sup> Rury, *Education and Women's Work*, 153. Lessons for trade students in these high schools frequently took place in the same classes as non-trade sewing lessons. Trade work had a positive influence on home sewing, by raising the bar on quality. The joint class atmosphere led to an environment that did not accurately replicate a trade workroom because home sewing had so few requirements. This combination class was a disservice to trade students but an advantage to girls who would not sew professionally. Students who sought trade training in the high schools needed to be determined and gain what they could from a less than ideal learning environment. Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 97-98.

<sup>331</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 222.

materials used.<sup>332</sup>

The general aims from the same teacher's guide of technical high school domestic arts programs included practical training, encouraging girls to become self-supporting, and to lead useful, happy, dignified, and progressive lives, to form the right habits, and to encourage honesty. Aims also included neatness, love of work, speed, economy of time and material, development of good taste, and to promote a desire for beautiful, harmonious, simple, and restful surroundings.<sup>333</sup>

While the technical high schools aims for the trade portion of the domestic arts program appear practical for would be dressmakers and milliners, it should be noted, that there were almost twice as many general aims as trade aims in the teacher's guide and the general aims had no academic emphasis. Educators in technical high schools prioritized homemaking over trade training.

### Chicago Schools

In response to a less than satisfactory classroom environment, the Chicago High Schools started a new form of industrial instruction in 1910. The changes included the introduction of two-year vocational courses as well as the regular four-year. The two-year course enabled students to enter the work force sooner.

In an effort to better prepare students for trade work, these courses included an increase in shop-work and drawing, and students received an industrial angle in regards to academic subjects. Additionally the household art classes increased by two additional

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<sup>332</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 227.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 226. See Appendix B. 14.

periods a week under the new industrial instruction. Critics of trade had schools claimed the schools were not effectively preparing girls for trade work. These curriculum additions in Chicago intended to correct this faultfinding.

In comparison to Boston, Cleveland, and Cincinnati high schools after the changes, the Chicago high schools still provided less time on the household arts per week. High schools in Boston, Cleveland, and Cincinnati also provided for specialization in the last two or three years of the course, in order to prepare girls for trade work.<sup>334</sup>

#### Lucy Flowers High School

The Lucy L. Flower Technical High School for girls opened in Chicago in September 1911 offering a four-year course and a two-year course. Domestic arts were a part of the four year course and included plain sewing, dressmaking, millinery, embroidery, lacemaking, infants' and children's clothing. The program included general household science so students practiced cooking, laundry, house sanitation, and household accounts. The four-year program also included science (taught in regards to daily life), art with specialized work in costume, millinery and embroidery, English, math, geography, physical education and music. Students spent the last two years of this four-year program in the specialization of a particular trade.

The two-year course prepared students for industrial work. Girls specialized in a particular trade for the second year. In November of 1911, the high school had sixty-five students enrolled. Flower Technical High School aimed to give direct industry

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<sup>334</sup> Mead et al., *Report on Vocational Training Chicago*, 84-90.

preparation so girls could enter the trades upon graduating.<sup>335</sup>

### Cleveland Technical High Schools

In Cleveland, the technical high schools taught sewing to female students in all four years. The program required plain and machine sewing in both the first and second years. Students studied millinery and dressmaking in the third and fourth year with special work for girls interested in going into the trades. Sewing classes in technical high schools in Cleveland in the early 1900s aimed to prepare girls for family sewing or to lay the foundation for further study. When students exceeded three hours a week on advanced sewing it was considered trade work. Students also filled orders for customers as a part of trade preparation.<sup>336</sup>

Beginning millinery students took the same classes as trade millinery students in Cleveland high schools. The advanced students spent more time in class and made a greater number of hats. Order work would begin once a girl had made more hats that she could wear. Generally, this early order work consisted of selling to family and friends. Some students did enter the trades in Cleveland after completing advanced sewing classes in high school.<sup>337</sup>

### High School Course Timing

Domestic arts classes taught in the high schools arrived too late in the educational

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<sup>335</sup> Mead et al., *Report on Vocational Training Chicago*, 102-103.

<sup>336</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 88-89.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.



journey for most of the women who entered the needle trades. The majority of women who went into dressmaking and millinery entered the trades after completing grammar school or after only one or two years of high school. The majority of domestic arts education for trade work generally occurred in the last two years of high school, so for many students this curriculum arrived too late to be valuable.

In regard to training for vocational purposes, high school domestic arts programs received criticism from trade's people during their time due to the low numbers of girls entering the trades after high school.<sup>338</sup> However, girls did enter the trades via this path. In piecing together the ways in which girls obtained training for dressmaking and millinery, all the varied types of high schools can be included.

The Cleveland Dressmaking and Millinery Survey showed that some girls did successfully move from high schools into the trades<sup>339</sup> despite the fact that the majority of high schools' purpose in teaching the domestic arts was for homemaking and not for trade. Girls who could afford to focus four years of high school obtaining dressmaking and millinery skills were able to enter the trades above the ground level industrial worker, if they chose to do so. Young women from middle class backgrounds, with a high school diploma and needlework skills, were able to seek out advanced positions in shops.<sup>340</sup>

High School was an avenue for training that led to trade work, albeit not for large numbers of women. The fact that some girls could wield their high school domestic arts classes for trade preparation shows that these classes provided value to both home and

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<sup>338</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 97.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>340</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151.

trade. Girls would have learned the basics of sewing, about different textiles, and the importance of color and design. This is evidence of the need for determination and self-promotion in order to be a successful dressmaker or milliner.

### Evening School

In many cities and towns, the municipal public school system provided evening school. These classes also referred to as night school, night technical school, evening classes, and night classes were another vehicle for girls and women to obtain dressmaking and millinery skills. Educators designed and geared evening school courses for either home sewing needs or for trade sewing, but not for both simultaneously. Classes ranged from beginning to advanced work.

#### Aims of Evening School

Based on the intended audience, cities provided these classes citing a variety of different aims. In one case, the home-sewing program's aim was social as well as educational, namely to make the pupil a more efficient producer and consumer in the home.<sup>341</sup> Another aim for an evening school that provided instruction for home sewing was to show girls how to make and repair their own clothes and hats.<sup>342</sup> The aim of one

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<sup>341</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151.

<sup>342</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 91-92. Evening schools that directed their instructions based on the needs of the home had not clearly defined what home sewing ought to be. Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 102.

program for wage earners was to provide for a better worker and more decently clothed woman.<sup>343</sup> Lastly, the aim at another evening school was to teach girls already working in the shops and factories a better understanding of color and line, supplementing the practice, which they would be gaining at the same time in the workroom.<sup>344</sup>

### Evening School Management

In New York City in 1910, girls and women could learn millinery at one of forty-five evening schools.<sup>345</sup> In 1913 in Worcester, Massachusetts there were five-hundred women registered for evening classes in dressmaking and millinery.<sup>346</sup> Frequently evening school classes took place in elementary or high school buildings. ‘Principals’ ran evening schools, many of whom were teachers in the elementary and high schools during the day.<sup>347</sup> In some cities, evening school instructors worked as dressmakers or milliners during the day.<sup>348</sup> Principals and instructors concerned themselves with the quality of instruction. Evening schools held teachers’ meetings where they carefully planned each lesson. This was especially critical for evening schools that catered to women already working in the trades. The classes had to provide useful and timely information for these wage earners.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Hildreth, “What the Evening Schools Can Do,” 213.

<sup>344</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 161.

<sup>345</sup> Barrows, “The Training of Millinery Workers.” 47.

<sup>346</sup> Hildreth, “What the Evening Schools Can Do,” 213.

<sup>347</sup> Barrows, “The Training of Millinery Workers.” 47; Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 128.

<sup>348</sup> Hildreth, “What the Evening Schools Can Do,” 214-215.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

Cities kept the cost of evening school affordable. “An errand girl may find it possible to take a course in dressmaking at a night school and so get her tuition free. This is the best course for a girl to pursue if she must earn money while learning.”<sup>350</sup> Fees could be a dollar, which the school refunded upon successful completion of the program<sup>351</sup> or five dollars with a three dollar and fifty cent refund. Successful completion generally required that that student maintained an average attendance of seventy-five percent or better and that her needlework received marks of ‘good’ or better from both the instructor and principal.<sup>352</sup>

In some locations, students supplied all the materials necessary to make the assigned garments with the exception of thread and scissors.<sup>353</sup> In other towns, the board of education supplied the materials, such as fabric and trimmings. Regardless of where the materials came from, students kept the garments they made in evening school.<sup>354</sup>

### Evening School Population

A variety of girls and women made up the student population of evening school classes. In Massachusetts, state law allowed women at the age of seventeen to attend evening household arts classes. However, these evening schools excluded women who could afford to pay tuition. The Massachusetts Dressmaking Study identified evening school students as heads of families or women with other occupations who were trying to

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<sup>350</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, 87.

<sup>351</sup> Hildreth, “What the Evening Schools Can Do,” 213.

<sup>352</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 128.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>354</sup> Barrows, “The Training of Millinery Workers,” 48.

maintain a respectable wardrobe on a scanty income.<sup>355</sup> According to the Cleveland Dressmaking and Millinery Survey, only a small portion of the women attending classes in Cleveland made their living by any sort of sewing in a factory, shop or home. Less than fifteen percent were engaged in sewing during the day, while nearly half were commercial, clerical, or professional workers. Unemployed women comprised one third of the women in evening schools in Cleveland.<sup>356</sup>

### Schedule

Worcester, Massachusetts provided dressmaking and millinery classes in order to make better workers out of the women who already worked in shops, factories or out of their homes. Evening school in Worcester provided two sets of eight lessons from September until December 1 for working milliners. Administrators experienced that women did not sign up for millinery in December and January so the schools offered lessons beginning again in February. In the first unit, the student bought a block hat and put the facing on. In the second unit, students made a velvet hat. In the spring, women learned how to trim a spring hat in the first unit and a fancy hat in the second unit.<sup>357</sup>

Dressmaking evening school in Worcester Massachusetts consisted of a six weeklong course of twelve lessons, that ran six or eight times a year. Women already working in the trade but with few sewing skills started with the Plain Sewing Class while

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<sup>355</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women," 151.

<sup>356</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 128.

<sup>357</sup> Hildreth, "What the Evening Schools Can Do," 213-214.

working women with some experience entered into the Plain Skirt Class. In the plain skirt class, students were given simple patterns for a skirt and shirtwaist.<sup>358</sup>

### Curriculum

Evening schools also held courses in Fancy Waists and Dressmaking. Women progressed as rapidly as they could. More advanced classes utilized more complicated patterns, materials that were more difficult to work with, and more difficult methods of construction.<sup>359</sup>

In the West Technical Night School in Cleveland, dressmaking students, who worked in the trade during the day, attended four courses in one term. Students made an apron and four undergarments in the first course, a simple house dress, lingerie waist, tailored wash skirt, and simple afternoon or party dress in the second course. For the third course, students created a woolen dress and a silk dress and progressed by the fourth course making an original design silk or party dress, studying textiles in relation to dress.<sup>360</sup>

The West Technical Night School offered three courses in sewing for trade workers; elementary, intermediate, and advanced. The elementary sewing course gave the beginner instruction in the fundamentals of sewing through demonstration and individual work. Each pupil was required to make four undergarments, a lingerie waist, a simple

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<sup>358</sup> Hildreth, "What the Evening Schools Can Do," 213-215.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>360</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 128-129.

dress, and was taught to use and alter patterns correctly. Instructors held discussions on suitable materials and trimmings for undergarments, and focused on simple styles.

For admission to the intermediate course, one term of night school training in elementary sewing or its equivalent was required. Students made kimonos, silk waists, woolen skirts, lingerie dresses, and woolen dresses. Instructors taught the elements of fitting and altering.

In the advanced work, instruction was individual. Students made a woolen dress, a silk dress, a suit, a separate long coat, or an evening coat or cape. The course included the making of tailored buttonholes, the alteration of patterns, cutting and basting, fitting, pressing, and finishing. The school also provided a millinery course for trade workers designed to give the manipulation of millinery tools and materials. It included selecting, making and covering of frames and trimming.<sup>361</sup>

### Student Health

Attending evening school while working in the trades could tax a girl's health. Advice books recommended that only girls of exceptionally strong constitutions should attempt to do both due to the strain of working all day and then again at night.<sup>362</sup> One way for workers not to be over-taxed was to attend evening school during slack seasons. An advice book recommended that young dressmakers take this opportunity to improve their understanding of design.<sup>363</sup> Another book advised "If a girl is obliged to begin her

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<sup>361</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 129-130.

<sup>362</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, 87.

<sup>363</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 65.

millinery apprenticeship at fourteen she should continue her studies in English, arithmetic, and design at evening school.”<sup>364</sup>

Evening schools that reached out to trade workers received positive feedback. According to the New York Millinery Study, milliners welcomed the opportunity for additional training during the wage-earning period and supplementary classes met with instant approval by employers and pupils.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Vocation Office for Girls, “Millinery,” 8.

<sup>365</sup> Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 155, 160,



## Chapter 4. Private Schools and College

### Dressmaking and Millinery Training in Private Schools and College

#### Private Dressmaking and Millinery Schools

Another avenue of obtaining dressmaking and millinery skills rested with the private schools. Around the turn of the century, an abundance of private schools appeared in large in cities. A proprietress generally headed of these schools with the focus being on her abilities and achievements in the trade. Usually the proprietress was a successful milliner or dressmaker in her own right who saw teaching as an entrepreneurial outlet. Private school programs were several months long, schools always charged tuition, and intentionally located themselves in busy city centers where they attracted the most students. Often private schools claimed to teach to the latest dressmaking or millinery system.<sup>366</sup>

Private schools charged anywhere between fifteen to seventy-five dollars for a course.<sup>367</sup> Courses frequently were three to six months long.<sup>368</sup> The schools encouraged girls to board in the city for the time during which they would attend and often made

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<sup>366</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 65; Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151; Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52 and Drysdale, *Helps for Ambitious Girls*, 429.

<sup>367</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 104; Northwestern Dress Cutting School.

<sup>368</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52; Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 104.

boarding arrangements for the students.<sup>369</sup> Private schools made claims of watching over girls while in the city, commenting in their literature that mothers could rest assured.

Private schools also attracted girls with promises. Some schools promised graduates could skip the apprenticeship and secure a high paying position in a shop, even promising job placements. Other schools promised girls simply could not fail to be successful in the trades with all they would learn from the school. Virtually all private schools promised to catapult their best girls towards high wages in a short period.<sup>370</sup> Advice books from the period reiterated these promises, recommending private schools to girls as a way to gain training for the trades. One book noted that private schools as a rule were not advisable for young girls, but were appropriate for older girls and women who had prior knowledge of sewing and handling materials.<sup>371</sup>

The success of students from these schools is unknown. According to the Bureau of Labor, few girls who graduated from private dressmaking or millinery schools were working in the trades.<sup>372</sup> Private schools in many instances, did not supply girls with the preparation they needed to obtain positions in shops.<sup>373</sup> This report also noted that while attending a private school girls spent a few hours a day working on a hat or garment for themselves with their own material. By contrast, a shop girl worked for eight hours a day

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<sup>369</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52. See

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.; Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 104. See Appendix B. 15-16.

<sup>371</sup> The Vocation Office for Girls, "Millinery," 8.

<sup>372</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 101; Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 65, 104.

with material provided by her employer or the customer. Shopkeepers could not afford to tolerate waste and mistakes, but at private school, they were acceptable.<sup>374</sup>

Possibly, the tuition schools charged got in the way of a proper education that would have prepared girls for trade work. Some teachers in private schools did not want to offend paying students, students that might recommend the school to their friends. Some private school teachers overlooked poor work and gave praise regardless. Girls then gained bad habits that would only serve to hurt them in the trade.<sup>375</sup>

Private millinery schools typically advertised that girls would learn in a few months how to make all styles of hats including children's hats and seasonal hats through the coursework in designing, drafting, frames, trimming, and sketching.<sup>376</sup> Private schools for aspiring dressmakers held classes in hand-sewing, hemming, over-casting, blind-stitching, cutting-out, measuring, basting, fitting, draping, buttonholes, machine stitching, trimming and entirely finishing a suit.<sup>377</sup> The course work offerings were all relevant and girls could have obtained valuable information that would help them in the trades. However, given the breadth of knowledge required to work as a dressmaker or milliner private schools could not deliver all that they promised in a matter of weeks.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 104-105.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 65, 104-105.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>377</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52.

<sup>378</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 108.

### The Northwestern Dress Cutting School

In 1886 Madame J. Buchane, proprietress, of the Northwestern Dress Cutting School, opened her doors at 728 Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis. The school's circular published in 1903 stated, "It is easy to learn when taught by Madame Buchane, who has started hundreds of young ladies on the road to success."

The Northwestern Dress Cutting School claimed to be superior to the other private dressmaking schools in St. Paul and Minneapolis by location and facilities. In addition, the school claimed to rank higher and have more advantages than any other school of dress cutting in the world. The circular employed a strong sales message, including future guarantees and mild warnings.

There is never any trouble for a graduate of ours to find work; they are wanted and people are willing to pay more for them when recommended by us. It must be remembered that many times a woman is thrown on her own resources. If she knows this trade she need never fear, as she can easily get work and support herself and family if necessary. If you don't try, you won't succeed. Enter the school now and you will soon appreciate what we can do for you.

Madame Buchane offered three separate courses at her school in Minneapolis, seventy-five dollars, fifty dollars, and forty dollars. For the seventy-five dollar course, pupils paid fifty dollars in cash and twenty-five dollars was worked out at the rate of two dollars per day for dressmakers and one dollar a day for beginners. Skills taught included drafting, cutting, basting, boning, sewing, designing, and trimming. This course description stated instructors trained young women to be cutters upon graduation and they guaranteed situations for one year free of charge.

The school granted diplomas "after careful examination under guidance of the faculty." Students could enter the school at any time; lessons continued throughout the

entire year. For girls interested in millinery, the school offered connections in Minneapolis. Additionally, the school offered training by mail, with a money back guarantee. Madame Buchane presented herself in the circular as someone with connections and knowledge of the city.

### Browning Millinery College

Edna Browning located her Browning Millinery College in the business center of Chicago on Wabash Avenue. In 1901, students paid twenty-five dollars in tuition and completed the millinery course in four to six weeks. Browning Millinery College also had a correspondence component already discussed in Chapter 1. Unlike Northwest Dress Cutting School, Browning Millinery College advertised that the school was appropriate for both trade and home sewing. The school's pamphlet stated that every woman should have knowledge of millinery. "It enables them to be self-supporting, should it be necessary, saves money in the home, and gives women something to do and think about."

### Private School Attendance

Private school attendance included both young women who hoped to enter the trades and those who only needed to sew for their families.<sup>379</sup> Some private schools identified themselves as only teaching girls to be capable home women and not work for wages. These schools trained young women to be economical and make their own hats or

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<sup>379</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52.

garments.<sup>380</sup> Other schools identified themselves as for trade work only and finally some private schools identified themselves as having value for both trade work and home sewing simultaneously.

Another form of private schooling around the turn of century encompassed the individual dressmaker or milliner who taught a handful of girls in her home or small shop. Sometimes these tradeswomen advertised their teaching in city directories.<sup>381</sup> For private lessons, these instructors charged a small fee often around five dollars for a handful of lessons.<sup>382</sup> The value of this training would have depended on both the instructor and the girl. No research was found that documented the experiences of these types of arrangements. However, it is probable that this arrangement was beneficial in some instances.

For girls seeking wages, attending large private schools taught the necessary courses, but in many instances, left many of them ill-equipped to compete. For the outcome of home sewing, private schools were appropriate. Individual private lessons with a dressmaker or milliner at times could have been a way that girls did accomplish appropriate trade training.

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<sup>380</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 107.

<sup>381</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151; Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 52 and Gordon, "Make it Yourself," 52.

<sup>382</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151.

## College

As stated in chapter 3, girls generally entered the trades towards the end of grammar school. An article from 1910 described how a college educated woman could enter the dressmaking business at twenty-two years of age but stated that she would probably not be willing to begin with the fundamentals. Few dressmakers and milliners had a college education behind them. For those that did, the degree was not a hindrance, but it carried no value.<sup>383</sup> Advice books for girls from the end of the century did not identify college as a way to learn the trades.

Colleges generally did not prepare women for careers with the exception of teaching. After the turn of the century educators decided girls needed training specifically geared towards their role as wife and mother. In order to fulfill this mission household art departments found their way onto college campuses. Household arts at the college level included education on clothing. Common subtexts were history of clothing, economics of spending, materials, alterations, bargain sales, wages of professional dressmakers, budgeting and the care and cleaning of clothes. Additionally colleges held sewing classes where young women made their own clothes and studied color, line, and form.<sup>384</sup>

A review of college curricula reveal dressmaking millinery taught with great frequency around the turn of the century. However, these lessons existed to draw on girls' natural interests in fashion and clothing and were a practical outlet since college girls made the majority of their own clothing. The college educators taught needle skills with

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<sup>383</sup> Fales, "Organization and Management," 110-111.

<sup>384</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 257.

home sewing in mind. Instructors did not intend the coursework to prepare young women to enter the dressmaking and millinery trades. Colleges taught these subjects in order to prepare young women for practical things in life. For young women attending college to become a teacher, the domestic arts coursework prepared them to teach these subjects to children.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> Cooley, *Domestic Art in Women's Education*, 263-265.



## Chapter 5. Community Education

### Dressmaking and Millinery Training through Community Education

Use your brains; adapt, modify, utilize, invent. That is what makes one dressmaker an artist and another a drudge.

-Miss White, *Speaker at the 1902 Dressmaker's Convention, New York*

#### Community Education

Professional tradeswomen and aspiring dressmakers and milliners had opportunities to obtain skills through community education including clubs, associations, conventions, exhibits, fairs, and other educational sewing programs. Girls and women participated in these activities during their own free time and generally paying the expense with their own money. The extent to which the lives of women revolved around sewing can be seen through popular and numerous community educational organizations.

#### Clubs and Associations

Between 1860-1920 women entered clubs in large numbers. A coalition of approximately 200 clubs in 1890 formed the General Federation of Women's Clubs.<sup>386</sup> By 1914, there were over one million women involved in clubs.<sup>387</sup> Clubs formed for a variety of reasons ranging from societal needs, such as education, literacy and poverty, to social clubs. Girls and women frequently participated in sewing clubs, societies and

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<sup>386</sup> Heinemann, *Timelines of American Women's History*, 34.

<sup>387</sup> Wilson, *The American Woman in Transition*, 6.

associations. Sewing clubs for girls were so commonplace they were referenced in home economics textbooks.<sup>388</sup>

Both girls and women's clubs sewed for charitable purposes. Girls and women made practical things like clothing, blankets and diapers to give directly to families in need. Fancier items, such as embroidered linens were sold at charity fairs and supported the needy through the proceeds.<sup>389</sup> An upper class philanthropic group, the Cambridge Sewing Club, stated in 1915 that each member was required to make one woman's nightgown, one child's nightgown and as many diapers as possible for charitable causes.<sup>390</sup>

The Needlewoman's Friend Society formed just before 1850 in Boston and fifty years later had a strong presence and membership. The society existed for the purpose of helping women in lines of purely feminine work, and work which they could do in their homes. The society had a salesroom at 149 Tremont Street where they sold household linens made by their members and took in work on infant and children's clothing. The society paid out more than five thousand dollars to their sixty sewing members in 1897 and had \$41,000 in invested funds.<sup>391</sup>

The New York Association of Sewing Schools was one of the largest organized bodies of women in the country at the turn of the century. In 1897, the association had eighty-nine school members. Participants included schools from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, and New Haven. "The object of the association is to act as a

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<sup>388</sup> Gordon, "*Make it Yourself*" 19.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> *New York Times*, "Women's Organized Work," 14.

centre of information for sewing schools and to bring together various organizations that they may compare experiences and exchange ideas.” The association organized classes for teachers in sewing and gave lectures, and organized exhibits for their members. The association held elaborate exhibits. Teachers from all over the country attended and at times would telegraph home to extend their absence so that they might have longer opportunity to study the different lines of work exhibited.<sup>392</sup>

### *Young Women’s Christian Association*

The Young Women’s Christian Association provided training for girls and women in dressmaking and millinery.<sup>393</sup> In 1895, the Brooklyn Young Women’s Christian Association described their sewing classes as turning careless, untidy and indifferent sewers into painstaking, neat and dexterous ones.<sup>394</sup> This same association in 1900 had 1,367 students between sewing, dressmaking and millinery.<sup>395</sup>

Dressmaking and millinery teachers at the Young Women’s Christian Association were from the trades, and the agency was proud of their educators’ professional accomplishments.<sup>396</sup> The purpose of the coursework was twofold, first to help prepare workers for the trades and second to help individuals make clothes for themselves and

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<sup>392</sup> *New York Times*, “Women’s Organized Work,” 14. Mary Schenk Woolman was on the auditing committee of the New York Association of Sewing Schools, she was also the founder of the Manhattan Trade School for Girls and an author.

<sup>393</sup> Candee, *How Women May Earn a Living*, 230.

<sup>394</sup> YWCA of Brooklyn, “Annual Report 1894,” 40.

<sup>395</sup> YWCA of Brooklyn, “Annual Report 1900,” 31.

<sup>396</sup> YWCA of Brooklyn, “Annual Report 1894,” 40-41.

their families.<sup>397</sup> Pupils in the 1902 Brooklyn Young Women's Christian Association dressmaker's training classes included seamstresses, domestic servants, office workers, homemakers, and one college graduate who wanted to do something with both her head and her hands.<sup>398</sup>

According to the records from 1902, the Brooklyn Association had a larger proportion than ever before of pupils that were supporting themselves. Women employed in the trades took the courses in order to do better work and command higher wages. Additionally the courses helped the students earn money since they could sell the hats and clothing made in class to the public. Through order work from the public, some students produced enough high quality work to pay for their Young Women's Christian Association tuition.<sup>399</sup>

Similar to the Young Women's Christian Association programs, school districts and extension departments started offering clubs for girls. Club tasks frequently centered on sewing and included teaching girls to use a sewing machine. Popular needlework tasks included making and re-making clothes, mending, style and design. These clubs in rural areas later became the 4-H program.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>397</sup> Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade," 151; YWCA of Brooklyn, "Annual Report 1900," 29.

<sup>398</sup> YWCA of Brooklyn, "Annual Report 1902," 33.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> Connolly, "The Transformation of Home Sewing," 362-364.

*Girls Scouts Inc.*

The premiere girls' program sprang into existence in 1912. Girls Scouts was a milestone for girls and women and emphasized both skills and values. Needlework was one of the skills recognized and taught through Girl Scouts. Through their sewing, girls could make a difference in their families and community. The 1913 Girl Scout Handbook lists needlework under the Home Life section. "Needlework is good for all of us; it rests and calms the mind."<sup>401</sup> A photo of Girl Scouts sewing was included in the book. Recommendations to the reader included using pins in order to get straight lines and smooth corners and threading the cotton into the needle before cutting it off the reel.

The Handbook demonstrated how sewing was a valuable tool for fixing things, creating items and helping others. The text included detailed instructions for patching a hole in a dress or table linen. Moving away from repairs to thinking of others, the text suggested Girl Scouts make presents for others such as cretonne covered blotters or frames, mittens, warm felt slippers, pen-wipers, pincushions, and needle-books. Girls Scouts also had the responsibility of making articles for hospitals including night-clothing, soft caps, handkerchiefs, pillowcases and dusters.<sup>402</sup>

In order to earn the Needlewoman Badge, Girl Scouts had to know how to cut and fit, know how to sew by hand and by machine, and know how to knit, embroider or crochet. Troop leaders required the Girl Scout to bring two garments made and cut out by

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<sup>401</sup> Hoxie, *How Girls Can Help Their Country*, 78.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

herself along with examples of darning and patching. She had to know how to sew on hooks, eyes, and buttons, and make button holes.<sup>403</sup>

### Conventions

Both dressmaking and millinery conventions appeared with strong frequency around the turn of the century. Associations often held semi-annual events in large cities like Chicago and New York, and at large hotels or venues. Conventions typically lasted several days, were open to the public and the fee to attend generally affordable. Newspapers covered these conventions, adding weight to the events. The Chicago Daily newspaper reported on a dressmaker's convention in New York on September 12, 1902. The speaker, Miss White, advised her audience "It's my place to give you the tips, it's your place to make use of them."

The Chicago Dressmaker's Club held a Semi-Annual Convention at the Stratford Hotel in September 1906 for four days. Dressmakers discussed autumn styles including the princess gown style, opting to leave it behind for the empire. The convention promised their audience the lectures and demonstrations would explain "the why and wherefores as well as many other mysteries of the art."<sup>404</sup>

The 1906 convention included talks on the purposes and organization of the Dressmaker's Club itself. Additionally the convention held a symposium on practical tailoring, an address on sewing in the public schools, and lectures on laces, imported dress models, ribbon trimming, and fashion. Attendees learned the fashionable materials

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>404</sup> *Chicago Record-Herald*, "Princess Gown is Out."

of the season were chiffon, broadcloth, and velvet. The colors were all shades of brown and grey, gooseberry red, wedgewood and gobelin blues, sage and leaf green. Lantern slides and living models were used in the lectures.<sup>405</sup>

The president of the club made herself available for questions through a designated ‘question box.’ A Professor Emerson from the Art Institute lectured on the dress of ancient Greece. Models wore peplums, an ancient Greek close fitting gown that ran from the neck to the feet and chlamys (cla miss) short loose mantles wrapped around the body, fastened in front or on one shoulder, worn by men in ancient Greece.<sup>406</sup>

The week before the Chicago Dressmaker’s convention, the National Milliner’s Association held their Eighth Semi-Annual Convention also in Chicago. The four-day millinery event took place in the Drill Hall of the Masonic Temple. The convention included an extensive display of feminine headgear, from every style, shape, size and color. Attendees picked up critical fashion changes including the idea that full birds were no longer permitted on hats but that fruit was, especially grapes. Commentary included the caveat that the fruit adorning hats should be smaller than a watermelon. There were contests at the convention and attendees entered their own designs for judges to evaluate and award medals.<sup>407</sup>

Milliners from all over the United States had exhibits at the convention. Girls modeled the hats for the attendees. The convention included talks all afternoon and evening, and provided opportunities to ask questions. Speakers advised that if a woman

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<sup>405</sup> *Chicago Record-Herald*, “Princess Gown is Out.” See Appendix B. 17-19.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> *Chicago Record-Herald*, “Fall Hat Show is On.”

could only have one hat it should be of medium size and inconspicuous. “A black and white hat, once seen, is forever known.” The convention was open to the public and ran from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The Association held their previous convention in March of 1906 in the same location.<sup>408</sup>

In 1911, the Chicago Dressmaker’s Club held one of their Semi-Annual Conventions at the Palmer House. The Convention lasted for four days from March 13 through March 16. The membership fee for the Chicago Dressmaker’s Club was five dollars, the annual dues were five dollars and a single admission to the Convention was one dollar. Convention goers received a convention program with information on the lectures and presentations as well as sewing related advertisements.<sup>409</sup>

### Fairs

Women showed their enthusiasm for sewing through county and state fairs, regional exhibitions and most notably the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. The World’s Fair was a landmark event for women. For the first time women were visibly present, played an active role and provided leadership. Within the Women’s Building, among a vast array of achievements, women displayed their needlework skills, took part in competitions, and provided education to one another.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> *Chicago Record-Herald*, “Fall Hat Show is On.”

<sup>409</sup> Chicago Dressmaker’s Club “Convention Pamphlet,” cover page.

<sup>410</sup> Amnéus, *A Separate Sphere*, 39.



Exhibits and awards in the women's building also featured the tools used in dressmaking such as drafting systems and cutting machines.<sup>411</sup> The Buddington Dress Cutting Machine won first prize at the World's Columbian Exposition. A review of this popular system's other awards documents the numerous events celebrating needlework. They include the 1882 Exposition Minneapolis, 1882 State Fair Sacramento, 1884-1885 World's Fair New Orleans, 1886 Exposition St. Joseph, Missouri, 1889 American Institute Fair New York, and the 1889 State Fair Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Through clubs, conventions and fairs, all microcosms of the rest of the female society, girls and women came together through needlework and increased their sewing knowledge and abilities through these clubs, conventions, and fairs. Both professional and home sewers participated in community education. Classes connected with the clubs for girls taught skills for home use<sup>412</sup> but girls seeking to enter the trades would have obtained relevant sewing skills through these club participation. A review of community education opportunities displays just how infused sewing was into the daily lives of girls and women. Needlework allowed women and girls to help others, to better themselves, and to connect with other women.

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<sup>411</sup> Kidwell, *Cutting a Fashionable Fit*, 83. See Appendix B. 20.

<sup>412</sup> The Vocation Office for Girls, "Millinery," 8.

## Chapter 6. Implications

### Implications for Progressive Era Women Training to be Dressmakers and Milliners

#### Leaving School

As in almost everything, the longer a girl can remain in school for general training, the better chance she has for success.

- Vocation Office for Girls. "Millinery," 1911

Educators after the turn of the century documented that although children were leaving grammar school to work for wages; this was not in the child's best interest. In 1910, many young millinery workers lacked the general education that would have given them the power of adaptation.<sup>413</sup> Jobs children could obtain in the dressmaking and millinery trades immediately after grammar school paid poorly and had no room for advancement.<sup>414</sup> When a child left school and entered the work force, only unskilled work awaited them. The prevalence of this problem was evident in the numerous books advising girls to stay in school. Authors and educators tried to deter girls from leaving school, which happened frequently, before graduating from both grammar and high schools to spare them the experience of only being able to obtain unskilled work.<sup>415</sup>

Data from the early 1900s show children started to leave school in the fifth grade and dropped out with increasing frequency as they progressed to sixth, seventh and the eighth grade. Many children left grammar school before graduating. The majority of girls

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<sup>413</sup> Barrows, "The Training of Millinery Workers," 50.

<sup>414</sup> Grey, "Vocational Training for Girls," 493.

<sup>415</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, x.

who left school to enter the trades did so before completing high school.<sup>416</sup> The following tables illustrate this exodus from school. Also see Appendix Table A2.

**Table 5. Milliners age at leaving school, New York, 1917**

<u>Milliners Age at Leaving School</u>	<u>Number of Women</u>
Under 14	48
14	95
15	53
16	24
17	6
18 or older	2
<i>Total</i>	228

*Source:* Data from Mary Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917), 153.

**Table 6. Milliner's age at leaving school Boston and Philadelphia, 1916**

<u>Age at Leaving School</u>	<u>Boston %</u>	<u>Philadelphia %</u>
Under 14	6.8	13
14	22.7	33.1
15	20.5	26.1
16	29.5	13
17	11.4	5.2
18	5.7	8.7
Over 18	3.4	.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

*Source:* Data adapted from Lorinda Perry, *The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia: A Study of Women in Industry* (Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou, 1916), 100.

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<sup>416</sup> Barrows, "The Training of Millinery Workers," 50; Leake, *The Vocational Education of Girls*, 173 and Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 99.

**Table 7. Milliner’s level of schooling, Boston and Philadelphia, 1916**

<u>Highest Schooling</u>	<u>Boston / Percent</u>	<u>Philadelphia / Percent</u>
High School Graduate	8.7	1.8
Some High School	20.2	12.8
Grammar School Graduate	33.6	24.8
Some Grammar School	37.5	60.6
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: Data adapted from Perry, *The Millinery Trade in Boston and Philadelphia*, 99.

Often children made the decision to leave school on their own. Once they had dropped out, girls rarely returned later to complete their grammar or high school education.<sup>417</sup> Families considered upper grades of elementary school as preparation for high school and high school was preparation for college. Young women not planning to continue onto college did not see a reason to stay in school.<sup>418</sup> Girls also left school because they did not see it as preparing them to earn a living.<sup>419</sup> Additionally parents and students viewed high school as preparation for a career in teaching. Girls who did not want to be teachers considered themselves ‘graduated’ at the end of grammar school.<sup>420</sup>

The school day could not compete with the excitement of wages, albeit small wages. For a fifteen year old who dropped out of school to be an errand girl in a shop this

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<sup>417</sup> Leake, *The Vocational Education of Girls*, 236. In chapter 1 data was presented that showed sewing classes kept students in school. That was primarily for home sewing skills not trade sewing. Girls who needed to earn wages were compelled to go out and earn as soon as possible and public school sewing classes for them were not enough to keep them in grammar or high school.

<sup>418</sup> Gray, “Vocational Training for Girls,” 493.

<sup>419</sup> Barrows, “The Training of Millinery Workers,” 51.

<sup>420</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 99.

might have been the first time she had any money of her own. School in comparison to working would have seemed trite.<sup>421</sup>

The majority of girls surveyed for the Boston and Philadelphia Millinery Study left school because they were tired of it or because of problems with the teachers. In addition to having a natural inclination and appreciation of the millinery trade the survey found girls also left school to work because they thought it would be easy, refined work and because of the social prestige associated with milliners. Some girls reported their families had chosen the field for them.<sup>422</sup>

The Boston and Philadelphia Millinery Study found girls left school to enter millinery primarily because they liked the trade. While many cited economic reasons for working, the reality of low pay for beginners and long periods in-between seasons proved they could not have survived financially on their own if necessary. Many of the girls in this study came from families who could support them financially and encouraged their working for wages.<sup>423</sup> The following table identifies some of the reasons girls cited for leaving school.

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<sup>421</sup> Gray, "Vocational Training for Girls," 493.

<sup>422</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 99-100.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

**Table 8. Milliner's reasons for leaving school**

Reason for Leaving	Percent
Had to work	35.5
Dislike for school / no interest	29.5
Belief school not worthwhile	14.2
Desire to earn money	8.2
Ill health	5.7
Trouble with teacher	3.1
Opportunity to keep vacation work	2.6
Failure to pass	1.1

*Source:* Data adapted from Albert H. Leake, *The Vocational Education of Girls and Women* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), 236.

In many cities and towns, the age at which children dropped out of school coincided with the age a child could legally start working.<sup>424</sup> In Cleveland, many girls illegally dropped out of school and went to work. Children needed to complete the seventh grade and be at least sixteen years of age. Yet, authorities found girls working in the trades who did not meet these requirements.<sup>425</sup> In some instances considerable time intervened between leaving school and beginning work. During this in-between period, some girls worked in other fields, but the majority had not gained other work experience and presumably had been at home.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Grey, "Vocational Training for Girls," 493.

<sup>425</sup> Bryner, *Dressmaking and Millinery*, 114-115.

<sup>426</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 100.

## Marriage

Around the turn of the century, married women were the property of their husbands; therefore, a relationship with similarities to slavery could exist. Husbands could legally beat and imprison their wives. Courts sided with men in cases of divorce and custody. For some women, the trades were a better option than marriage. A career in dressmaking or millinery was socially acceptable for unmarried women and provided them with the opportunity for economic independence and avoidance of a potentially subordinate and abusive relationship.

Overwhelmingly, women in the trades were unmarried. This seems to have been a conscious decision for many of them. Workers who did marry rarely returned to work.<sup>427</sup> *Demorest's Monthly Magazine* quoted one successful dressmaker "The fact is, when women have once tasted the charm of an honorable independence achieved by themselves it is very difficult to persuade them to marry."<sup>428</sup> Marriage in the minds of many tradeswomen threatened their freedom, independence, and financial security. The idea of the lifestyle of a successful proprietorship drew ambitious girls to the trades and kept marriage at bay.<sup>429</sup> The following table shows that over seventy percent of tradeswomen identified were unmarried. Being divorced or widowed represented only a small percentage.

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<sup>427</sup> Perry, *The Millinery Trade*, 95.

<sup>428</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 43.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

**Table 9. Marital status of dressmakers and milliners, 1890**

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Single %</u>	<u>Married %</u>	<u>Widowed %</u>	<u>Divorced %</u>
Dressmaker	74.9	12.1	11.6	1.4
Milliner	71.8	17.3	9.6	1.3

*Source:* Data adapted from Helen L. Sumner, *Report on Condition of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 248. Also see Appendix Table A4.

Unmarried women in dressmaking and millinery comprised both young girls and single, middle-aged women.<sup>430</sup> Some of the women wage earners were in the trades due to financial necessity, but many seem to have actively chosen entrepreneurship and worked incredibly hard to have it.

#### Health

Cool and pleasant. Worked from five o'clock in the morning until after midnight to finish that dress. And got it done. It is for Miss Wickis who is to marry Elias Moser.

-Abbie T. Griffin, *from her diary, August 8, 1882*

Dressmaking and millinery work was physically demanding. Only girls and women with great stamina and certain physical attributes could accomplish all that was required in a day. Certain physical conditions could keep girls out of the trades from the beginning. Educators considered issues such as poor eyesight, flat feet, weak pelvises, and stressed nerves problematic for the trades.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Gamber, *The Female Economy*, 42.

<sup>431</sup> Department of Education, "Manhattan Trade School Report," 26.



The Manhattan Trade School employed a physician to examine students twice a year. Not only was good health necessary for trade work, but girls seeking wages out of financial necessity were often in poor health. If the physician found concerns with a child's health, the school sought parental permission for local clinics and hospitals to provide treatment. The following table illustrates work done in cooperation with the clinics, hospitals, and a dental college during the year 1914-1915:

**Table 10. Medical attention given to Manhattan Trade School students**

<u>Number of Manhattan Trade School Girls</u>	<u>Work Done</u>
295	Teeth filled and cared for
108	Still being treated for teeth
87	Eyes treated
23	Ears treated
190	Spine treated
12	Tonsils or adenoids removed
2	Treatment for feet
8	Treatment for fingers
7	Treatment for skin
9	Treatment for nose
65	Cured of bitten nails
35	Still being treated for bitten nails

*Source:* Data from Department of Education, *Seventeenth Annual Report of the City Superintendent of School* (New York: Department of Education, 1915), 27.

The Manhattan Trade School helped girls identify remedies to any of their health concerns, when appropriate. Additionally, the school informed students if they could not be successful in trade work due to their physical deficiencies. A school inspector directed trade schools to include health and hygiene in the lessons and pay close attention to the

health of the students. The inspector also recommended that schools conduct home visits in order to assess the child's welfare in terms of health and sanitation.<sup>432</sup>

Trade work took a toll physically and emotionally on the worker. The confining nature of the work, led to difficulties. In busy seasons, tradeswomen remained in unsanitary workrooms. This led to headaches, digestive disorders, neuralgia, and nervous prostration.<sup>433</sup> Women and girls working in these daytime conditions and attending night school were especially in a position to suffer if they lacked stamina.<sup>434</sup>

Tradeswomen could obtain information on how to guard against ailments via books and magazines since there were a number of common difficulties experienced in the work. An advice book told young women to guard their health and recommended brisk walks at night and in the morning, proper ventilation in the workroom, regular hours for meals, and relaxation, and downright fun after work.<sup>435</sup> For a women to achieve success in the trades she had to be fortunate enough to have good health and smart enough to maintain it.

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<sup>432</sup> Leake, *The Vocational Education of Girls*, 171.

<sup>433</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 66.

<sup>434</sup> Hoerle & Saltzberg, *The Girl and the Job*, 87.

<sup>435</sup> Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns*, 66.

## Conclusion

The girl who has it in her to succeed will do so whether she starts as an apprentice at nothing a week, or spends her father's money at a high priced school for dressmakers.

-Anna Steese Richardson, *The Girl Who Earns Her Own Living*

Dressmakers and milliners fought against their gender-determined roles. Instead of being homemakers they developed self-identity through their connections to their fellow workers, tradeswomen and customers. They became embedded within a social network together and felt included. Working in the trades they picked up the appropriate social conventions, language, customs, mores and manners. Additionally dressmakers and milliners learned to conform their behavior to the group. This group identity protected them from the ostracism that faced women who earned wages and remained single.<sup>436</sup>

Dressmakers and milliners obtained a sense of self-worth by working. They mattered to their fellow seamstresses and customers. Working provided an avenue for tradeswomen to know the joy of feeling needed and sought-after. Additionally through trade-work women were able to satisfy their natural desire to help one another. Through their work-identity, they located themselves.<sup>437</sup> These powerful experiences provided motivation to continue along their path as tradeswomen.

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<sup>436</sup> Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*.

<sup>437</sup> Josselson, *Finding Herself*.

The purpose of this study was to identify training and educational opportunities available for girls and women to participate in during the years 1860-1920. Although we cannot know how they learned to be dressmakers and milliners, we do know the possible avenues of training. Girls and women would have had access to one, two, or a few of the pathways discussed based on where they lived, family structure, and resources.

Women identified more than one way to acquire the necessary practice and skills. Opportunities available were not always ideal and several challenges existed within each area of training. Many women overcame these obstacles and secured the essential skills through hard work and dedication. There was a confidence involved, a determination, and risk taking. Successful pupils pushed past their fears of failure and became highly skilled.

A potpourri of experiences existed for girls to obtain the skills necessary to become successful dressmakers and milliners. Girls had access to sewing instruction through home sewing, magazines, books, correspondence schools, apprenticeships, public school, trade school, high school, evening school, private school, college, clubs, conventions, and fairs.

Almost every woman took her own route. Girls picked up information informally from girls, other women, society, and had exposure to formal lessons, from a number of sources. Although the focus of information and instruction was often on home sewing, aspiring dressmakers and milliners used these same skills to forward themselves in trade. They discovered what was necessary to add to the medley of knowledge in order to be successful in business.

Girls between 1860-1920 grew up sewing; inundated with encouragements and reasons to sew from the time they could hold a needle. Starting within the family, women taught the girls. This sharing of sewing continued for their entire lifetime. Women sewed together and taught each other from childhood through old age.

Written materials on sewing increased dramatically during the second half of the nineteenth century due to improved literacy rates. Girls and women poured over magazines, books, pamphlets, instruction manuals, and circulars gaining valuable ideas to improve their needlework, remake their clothes and consider everything related to garments from the latest styles to shopping and budgeting.

Girls choosing a more proactive role in their learning participated in correspondence schools, following lessons and communicating with teachers through the mail. Correspondence school lessons started with the foundations such as making a wire frame for a hat and ended with making fancy facings and edgings. Instructions often provided advice to girls as to how to be successful from creating a study time, to the importance of careful measurements, and even how to send items through the mail.

Through correspondence instruction, girls seldom encountered their instructor. The exact opposite was true for learning through an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships provided girls with real world experience, working in a shop daily, surrounded by seamstresses and customers. Apprentices ran errands, observed the more experienced sewers, and took on needlework tasks beginning with the most simple.

The errand girl apprenticeship, sometimes frowned on by girls, had value. Perceptive girls picked up useful trade knowledge through activities such as delivering

garments to customers and shopping for fabric. Working as an apprentice, girls acquired habits that would serve them throughout their wage-earning period such as the discipline of a long workday, how to handle off-season times, conscientious treatment of customer materials, and perfection in their work.

In the hopes of a successful experience, girls and their families put a lot of thought into an apprenticeship including considering the town, shop size, and length of time, room and board, and tuition. Good communication between the shop workers and the apprentice was necessary in order to have a functional experience. The best apprenticeship experiences occurred when the tradeswomen were willing to teach and the girl had an open mind.

Girls moved up in the hierarchy of both dressmaking and millinery only with practice and training. In dressmaking, they typically moved from apprentice, to helper, to finisher, to waist draper, and maker and then to cutter. In millinery, apprentices hoped to move up to improver, milliner, copyist, trimmer and then buyer. Being a proprietress, owning a shop and employing seamstresses, was the final and most coveted position in both trades. It was also the person whom the apprentice ultimately reported to and needed to please.

Whether girls entered into an apprenticeship or not, they were exposed to sewing lessons first thorough the public school experience starting with kindergarten. Since it fell to girls and women to make and repair many of the garments and linens at home, sewing was a necessary skill. The public schools taught sewing in every grade. Educators used

sewing as a vehicle to teach their objectives because many girls enjoyed sewing and all were familiar with it.

Although sewing lessons in elementary school varied from district to district, what was constant was the existence and perceived value of this classroom work. Common early lessons incorporated girls' interests and home responsibilities such as doll clothes and cooking outfits. Families saw the value in sewing instruction and often cited sewing as the only reason girls remained in school in the upper grades of elementary school.

Sewing classes in elementary and high school focused primarily on home sewing skills. In contrast, trade schools, also a product of the public school system, prepared girls for wage-work. Trade schools provided girls with their first experience of working with customers through order work. Community members dropped off sewing projects which students completed under instructor supervision.

Trade schools sought to mimic a real shop experience and prepare girls, after two years, to be able to earn a living. Everything about the trade school day from the long hours, lunch-break time, and focus on health in a workroom environment was intended to shape young girls to be successful workers. Poor and unskilled girls had been dropping out of grammar school in order to work in dress and millinery shops. Educators developed trade schools in response to this crisis in the hopes of better preparing these young girls for work.

Girls who stayed in school and attended high school gained additional sewing and needlework instruction. Around 1900, household arts education came into the classroom.

Girls participated in sewing coursework that focused on the family and values. The notion that women should work and that their true profession was homemaking, for which she needed to be educated, was born. The domestic arts education in high schools occurred too late for most girls entering the trades because they left school for work during grammar school.

Girls completing high school and going onto college often continued with classes in dressmaking and millinery at the college level. A college education was not necessary for success in the trades. The classes in dressmaking and millinery at the college level provided young women with information on making garments for themselves.

While colleges provided a venue for home sewing lessons, private schools taught girls trade sewing. Around the turn of the century, private dressmaking and millinery schools existed in almost every city owned by successful tradeswomen. These schools attracted girls who felt they needed this education in order to gain employment. The private school environment catered to their students and the atmosphere was typically less stressful than trade school.

Outside of school programs, or after their completion, professional sewers and home sewers still sought out an environment of learning with one another. Such an environment was found in community education. Through local classes, clubs, conventions and fairs, women maintained the connection they had all their lives of talking, sharing, learning and improving their needlework.

#### Commonalities of Dressmakers and Milliners



An examination of the lives and choices of dressmakers and milliners reveals many of the women appear cut from the same mold, sharing common attitudes and beliefs. They were ambitious and dedicated to their success. They valued independence, financial security, and had a strong self of self-worth. However, they treasured and guarded their reputation above everything else.

Circumstances may have influenced their outlook on life. For example a number of women entered the trades out of necessity and not by choice. They had been failed by a male authority figure, a father, uncle or brother who could not or would not care for them financially. They found themselves suddenly thrown on their own resources. This experience of being failed by a male caretaker could have increased their need for independence.<sup>438</sup>

In rare cases female proprietress' who achieved out and out prosperity suffered from "Queen Bee Syndrome."<sup>439</sup> They abused the apprentices and seamstresses in their shops. Even though the accomplished tradeswomen had come up from the ranks as well, they were threatened by other women who might take their place. They instead became the oppressors, ensuring no one else around them succeeded.<sup>440</sup>

### Lessons for Today

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<sup>438</sup> Croly, *Thrown on Her Own Resources*, 5.; Candee, *How Women May Earn a Living*, 1.

<sup>439</sup> Terborg et al., "Organizational and Personal."

<sup>440</sup> McShannock "The Business of Dressmaking," 69; Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry*, 147-148.

Unveiling the variety of training opportunities that existed for girls helps to better understand how they accomplished their success. Girls and women presented in this research have a valuable lesson to share that is still relevant today. To be successful, they set their sights on a goal, studied, practiced, and learned everything they could about their trade. They did not follow one path, but instead learned what they could from a variety of sources and made their way in the world. Their training experiences happened in external locations yet successful women were motivated internally.

How these women navigated the world is applicable today, even if our challenges are different. Historical writers before the mid-1950s have ignored the participation, influence, and triumphs of women in societies worldwide – thus doing a disservice by not acknowledging their contributions. This dissertation is an acknowledgement of that wrongdoing. Researching the challenges, approaches, and outcomes of women, such as these aspiring dressmakers and milliners from the past help us to know them better and to better understand ourselves.

This research project, like other women's history endeavors, has value because accurate depictions of women's experiences and accomplishments is an active fight against those disparities. A belief system that allows one to refuse to acknowledge contributions from half of the people in society is a belief system that condones other kinds of oppression as well.<sup>441</sup> We must attempt to undue the damage and continually point out the wrong. Taking on a history project, such as this, is part of the solution.

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<sup>441</sup> Lerner, *Why History Matters*, 137.

Being a woman living between 1860-1920 meant submission to laws they had no part in creating. However, women set the rules within the needle trades and were mostly free from male competition. Dressmakers and milliners, while suffering inequality in society because they were women, were entrepreneurs that benefited from capitalism and the division of labor. Within the dressmaking and millinery trades, the tradeswomen were the powerbrokers. Curiously, women in the trades were not feminists seeking systemic change. For them, uniquely, the current system worked. They operated in separate sphere, within female economy, free from some of the inequalities other women experienced.

The laws barred women from working in law and medicine, and many other occupations were unwelcoming to them. Dressmaking and millinery were not only trades where they could work but they were occupations where they could flourish and be socially acceptable at the same time. For women the decision to enter the trades related directly to their class and gender. Between 1860-1920, women could not escape or overcome the fact they were women and therefore second-class citizens. They had fewer legal rights than men in regards to education, employment, voting, inheritance, property, marriage, custody, and divorce.

Women were considered tender, frail, and inferior to men both physically and intellectually and unable to take care of themselves. Girls believed through their upbringing that it was their duty to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their relationships to others, their parents, husband and children. A portion of society circumvented some of these unpleasant circumstances by entering the dress and millinery trades. The trades

offered a shield from much of the rest of society and included the rare opportunity for independence.

Many of the education systems explored in this dissertation focused on sewing for the home, reinforcing the societal systems that oppressed women and kept them under the control of men. However, some women took this instruction and adapted it to wage work. Through dressmaking and millinery, tradeswomen improved their status in a society that oppressed women under patriarchy. The societal structure of the trades allowed these women an arena that was less restrictive, and shielded them from being dependent on men and restrained in their choices. Obtaining wages provided control for women outside of the imposed social structure. These women uniquely had the power to resist the status quo.

Be it for home or trade, sewing education provided a safe, nurturing environment for women. This connected environment helped aspiring tradeswomen develop and view themselves first as recipients of knowledge and later as providers of knowledge. This nurturing environment precipitated the ability to attempt trade work. Women gave one another confidence and reinforcement to value themselves and want something more. Through supportive sewing education and needlework accomplishments women gained identity, voice, and had their life experiences valued. Through education they became emancipated, in a personal psychological sense.

### Educators in the Sewing Trades

The favorable circumstances allotted to dressmakers and milliners were the direct result of the women who took a leadership role in providing training in the trades. These educators warrant further research. This would include women who wrote instruction books and magazine articles, founders of correspondence schools, employers who took apprentices, public school teachers and trade school organizers, private school owners and women involved in community education. How did these women come to see themselves as educators for trade specifically? What were their motivations and experiences?

One of the gleanings I have taken away from this research project is the importance of women helping girls and other women. There is an interdependence in a family; teaching one person helps everyone. Women throughout the centuries have provided guidance, instruction and support to one another in terms of sewing education, in many instances without any personal reward. Only this connection and willingness, allows so much sharing and learning. Through an attitude of inclusion, women passed on great needle skills from one another. The unselfishness of women and their desire to be helpful shaped our culture for the better.



## Appendix A. Supplementary Tables

**Table A1. Dressmakers and Milliners in the United States, 1860-1930**

Year	Dressmakers	Milliners	Total
1860	35,165	25,722	60,887
1870	-	-	92,084
1880	-	-	285,401
1890	290,308	60,653	350,961
1900	347,076	87,881	434,957
1910	449,342	127,936	577,278
1920	235,855	73,255	309,110
1930	158,380	44,948	203,328

*Source:* Data from Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 233

**Table A2. Grade at leaving school for millinery workers in New York**

Grade at Leaving School	Number of Women
4 <sup>th</sup> grade or lower	1
5 <sup>th</sup> grade	5
6 <sup>th</sup> grade	22
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	30
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	18
Elementary School Graduate	40
High School Non Graduate	13
High School Graduate	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>130</i>

*Source:* Data from Mary Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917), 154



**Table A3. Workers who entered the trade via apprenticeship or trade school by age**

Age	Apprentice	Trade school
Under 11	4	-
14 and under 16	22	19
16 and under 18	19	51
18 and under 21	8	13
21 and over	2	1
unknown	5	-
Total	60	84

Source: Data adapted from May Allinson, "Dressmaking as a Trade for Women in Massachusetts." PhD diss., (Columbia University, 1916), 15

**Table A4. Percent of Tradeswomen who were single, married, widowed or divorced in the years 1890 and 1900**

	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced
Milliners 1890	72%	18%	10%	1%
Dressmakers 1890	75%	12%	12%	1%
Milliners 1900	80%	12%	7%	1%
Dressmakers 1900	70%	14%	15%	2%

Source: Data adapted from Helen L. Sumner, *History of Women in Industry in the United States*, (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 248

**Table A5. First weekly wages received in millinery establishments**

<b>First Weekly Wage</b>	<b>Retail</b>	<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>All Women</b>
No Wages	52	16	68
Less than \$2	38	9	47
\$2 and < \$2.50	19	11	30
\$2.50 and < \$3	9	3	12
\$3 and < \$3.50	14	13	27
\$3.50 and < \$4	3	2	5
\$4 and < \$5.00	2	6	8
\$5 and < \$6	3	5	8
\$6 and < \$7	3	5	8
\$7 or more	1	1	2
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>215</i>

*Source:* Data from Mary Van Kleeck, *A Seasonal Industry A Study of the Millinery Trade in New York*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917), 150.

## **Appendix B. Illustrations and Images**

1. The ‘First Lesson’ Singer Sewing Machine ad.	155
2. Sewing woman and child.	156
3. ‘A Sewing Room’ from Annie Myers <i>Home Dressmaking</i> .	157
4. Buddington Dress Cutting Machine instruction book.	158-159
5. Ladies Street Costume from the “Voice of Fashion.”	160
6. <i>Delineator</i> February, 1886.	162-163
7. <i>Peterson’s</i> 1888	164
8. <i>Helps for Ambitious Girls</i> .	165
9. Browning Millinery College	166-170
10. <i>Goodwin’s Course in Sewing</i>	171-174
11. <i>The Sewing Book</i> by Anne Jessup	174-178
12. Young sewers, Libby School, Chicago, 1912.	179
13. Eighth grade girls sewing, Evanston, Illinois.	180
14. High School students sewing, Chicago.	181
15. A private dressmaking school, Long Prairie, Minnesota.	182
16. Snow’s School of Dressmaking, Lamberton, Minnesota.	183
17. Chicago Dressmaker’s Convention pamphlet.	184
18. Women at a dressmaker’s convention Chicago, 1905.	185
19. Student’s work displayed at a dressmaker’s convention, Chicago.	186
20. Little girl knitting in Duluth, Minnesota, Red Cross event, 1918.	187



UNITED STATES.







A SEWING ROOM

**INSTRUCTION BOOK**

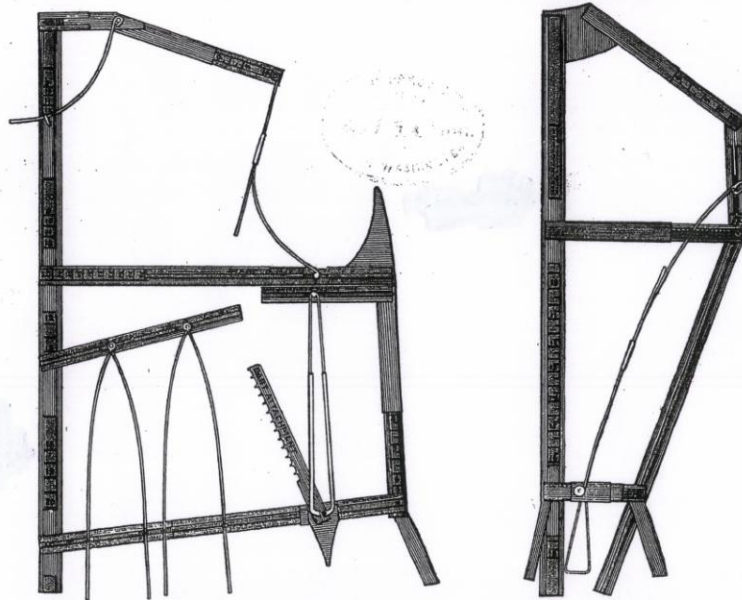
..FOR USING..

*The Buddington Improved*

**DRESS CUTTING MACHINE**

WITH DART ATTACHMENT

For Cutting French Bias Basque, Enlarging Darts, etc.



*A Perfect Fit Without Change of Seam.*

UNRIVALLED IN PERFECT FITTING, EASE OF HANDLING, QUICK ADJUSTMENT,  
GREAT SIMPLICITY AND GENERAL CONVENIENCE.

AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE.

**MR. & MRS. F. E. BUDDINGTON,**

**2327 INDIANA AVENUE,**

**CHICAGO.**

*FIRST EDITION.*

Entered According to Act of Congress, February 10, 1896, by F. E. Buddington, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D. C.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.



## You Take the Measure

### WE DO THE REST.

Be careful in taking the measures. Remember the machine will reproduce just what you call the measure, whether it is right or wrong. If you doubt this set slide **4** to any back measure and try the tape. Again set back and front of machine to any bust measure, lay front of machine on table, place back of machine with back bar against the under arm bar, with bust bars of front and back in line, now measure with tape along the bust bars from outside of front to outside of back and you find just one-half inch more than one-half the bust measure. This one-half inch comes out at top of under arm wire, all the other measures are the same. There is no guess work about the machine. Keep taking measures until you become an expert. Remember that what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well.

### THE ARM'S EYE MEASURE.

The measure you are sure to get wrong, unless you are very careful, is the arm's eye, on account of the large sleeves now worn. This measure is more difficult to get than formerly. (It would be better to remove large sleeves when taking this measure.) There is no danger of getting it too small, the only danger is in getting it too large. It must not under *any circumstances* be larger than neck measure; if it is, you may be sure it is wrong. This measure not only regulates slide **5** at arm hole, but a slide of still more importance and that is the bust bar at slide **4**, and the bust bar regulates the waist bar at under arm. Move slide **4** up and down and you will see it change the whole machine at these points. The arm's eye is never larger than neck and is usually smaller. Be careful about the front, under arm and back measures. Always use a cord or belt around waist and push it down as far as you wish waist of dress to come and measure to lower edge.

## TAKING THE MEASURE.

Buckle a belt tightly around the waist as low down as you wish the waist of dress to come.

1.—**Neck Measure** is taken around neck, inside collar tight. (See measure 1 in Fig. 1 and 2.)

2.—**Arm's Eye** is taken around arm, about one inch below point of shoulder bone *very tight*. (See 2 in Fig. 1 and 2.) N. B.—This is a very important measure and if taken too loose will not fit, when taken correct is *never* larger than neck measure and usually smaller. (See further instructions Page 2.)

3.—**Bust Measure** is taken smoothly around fullest part of bust and raised slightly in back. (See 3 in Fig. 1 and 2.) N. B.—Care should be taken that tape line is not allowed to slip down and thus bust measure taken too tight.

4.—**Waist Measure** is taken around lower part of waist *tight*. (See 4 in Fig. 1 and 2.)

5.—**Front Measure** is taken from prominent bone in back of neck to waist line in centre of front. (See 5 and 6 in Fig. 1 and 2.)

6.—**Height of Darts**. While taking front measure, and before moving tape, notice where tape strikes fullest part of bust. (See 6 in Fig. 1.)

7.—**Back Measure** is taken from prominent bone in back of neck to waist line in centre of back. (See 7 in Fig. 2.)

8.—**Width of Back** is taken from exactly centre of one arm's eye, across back to centre of other. (See 8 in Fig. 2.)

9.—**Under Arm Measure** is taken from high up under arm (while arm rests naturally by side) to waist line at side. (See 9 in Fig. 1 shows measure a little too far front, it should be directly under the arm.) N. B.—It is a good plan to have a loop sewed in end of tape, and with a lead pencil thrust through, hold the pencil *crosswise* under the arm and push it up as far as you can.

10.—**Shoulder Measure** is taken from side neck where neck joins body, to one-fourth inch below point of shoulder bone. (See 10 in Fig. 1 and 2.)

11.—**Hip Measure** is taken four inches below waist, *loose*. (See 11 in Fig. 1 and 2.)

12.—**Arm's Eye For Sleeve** is taken around arm half way between shoulder and elbow *easy*.

13.—**Shoulder to Elbow Measure** is taken from point of shoulder to elbow—hand resting on front waist.

14.—**Length of Sleeve** is taken from shoulder bone, to one and one-half inches above joint at wrist, around outside point of elbow—hand resting on waist.

15.—**Elbow Measure** is taken around elbow with arm bent; *easy* measure; not tight.

16.—**Wrist Measure** is taken around wrist; *tight* as you can draw tape.

17.—**Skirt Measure**. Take skirt measure from waist line at front and back to floor.

LADIES' STREET COSTUME.  
Spring 1895



Use the scale corresponding with the bust measure to draft the entire waist, which consists of two fronts, back, vest front, waist trimming, and three sleeve portions. Draft same as all others. Cut the French back double, take up the darts in the large front (which may be made of the lining only) close down the center with hooks and eyes. The back and small front may be made of velvet, also the trimmings. Lay pleats to form a cascade. The vest front is given on page 66. Make of perforated cloth or velvet. Lay the sleeve puff in three double box pleats; interline with Tarletan or Fibre Chamois. Gather the bottom and sew to the sleeve lining on the dotted lines. Draft the drapery and skirt by the waist measure.

The drapery or cascade is given on page 66. Face all around with the same material as the skirt. Lay the pleats to form a cascade; join to the front seams. The skirt is given on page 67. Is in three pieces—front, back breadths, and side-gore. Gather or pleat the back. Face the bottom with hair cloth 13 inches deep. Bind the bottom with velvet. Regulate the length with the tape measure.



skirt. The jacket pattern, which is No. 736 and costs 1s. 3d. or 30 cents, is in thirteen sizes for ladies from twenty-eight to forty-six inches, bust measure, and may be seen in two views on page 95 of this DELINEATOR. The skirt and over-skirt patterns are each in nine sizes for ladies from twenty to thirty-six inches, waist measure. The over-skirt pattern, which is No. 735 and costs 1s. 3d. or 30 cents, is pictured in other goods and simply finished on page 98. The skirt pattern, which is No. 9867 and costs 1s. or 25 cents, is shown untrimmed on its accompanying label.

For travelling, promenade or general street wear, this is a very jaunty and stylish toilette. It is here represented as developed in *frisé* dress goods, with velvet for the collar, facings and bands. The skirt is of the round, four-gored style, and is trimmed with a deep, triple box-plaited flounce of the material. The over-skirt is noticeably handsome in its style of drapery, which is quite deep and very full. The back-drapery is very *bouffant*, its draping being made by deep, downward-turning plaits in its front edges and simple but effective loopings at the center. The front-drapery comprises two sections, that at the left side being quite narrow and overlapped by the other, which is quite broad and has its left side turned over in a wide graduated *revers*. The smaller section is draped by plaits in its back edge near the belt, and the other section is beautifully cross-wrinkled by a cluster of plaits above the *revers* and deep upturning plaits in its right back edge. The *revers* is faced with velvet and decorated at the lower part of its front edge with three large metal buttons upon simulated button-holes. Three bands of velvet trim the lower part of the narrower drapery.

A very jaunty mode is illustrated by the jacket, which is close fitting and has its fronts lapped diagonally to the waist-line, below which they flare stylishly. At the top and bottom of the overlap the jacket is closed with a trio of bound button-holes and large metal buttons, and if necessary the closing between these may be made with hooks and loops. The overlap slopes from the collar, which is of the high standing style and is made of velvet. The adjustment of the jacket is made by single bust and under-arm darts, side-back seams that disappear at the top of coat-plaits, and a well-curved center seam that closes to the lower edge. The coat-plaits are surmounted by buttons, and two buttons arranged upon simulated button-holes decorate the coat sleeves at the wrists.

All kinds of suitings in vogue are adapted to toilettes of this kind, and the tailor mode of finish may be adopted on all wool textures. Combinations of two or more materials may be stylishly achieved in such toilettes, or a single material may be used throughout, with braid fancifully or simply applied as garniture. The jacket may be made to match special toilettes, or it may be of corduroy or any

preferred variety of coating and worn as an independent wrap. Cuffs of velvet may be added to the sleeves to harmonize with the collar, and the edges may be finished with binding or machine-stitching. The velvet hat is handsomely trimmed with ribbon, two pretty birds and a fancy aigrette.

FIGURE No. 2.—LADIES' TOILETTE.

(For Illustration see Page 83.)

FIGURE No. 2.—This consists of a Ladies' basque and skirt. The



FIGURE No. 7.—LADIES' *Négligé*.—This consists of Ladies' Petticoat No. 719, price 1s. or 25 cents; and Dressing-Sack No. 740, price 1s. 3d. or 30 cents.

(For Description see Page 91.)

basque pattern, which is No. 724 and costs 1s. 3d. or 30 cents, is in thirteen sizes for ladies from twenty-eight to forty-six inches, bust measure, and is differently portrayed on page 96 of this DELINEATOR. The skirt pattern, which is No. 744 and costs 1s. 6d. or 35 cents, is in nine sizes for ladies from twenty to thirty-six inches, waist measure, and may be seen in a pretty combination of materials and without trimming on page 97.

In this instance the toilette is developed in a stylish variety of fancy cloth, which is attractively enriched by the use of velvet for the standing collar and for the garniture. The round, four-gored skirt has its gores covered nearly to the belt with a drapery that is plain across the center and laid in two deep, backward-turning plaits at each side. This drapery is deeply trimmed between the plaits with four graduated bands of the velvet, the deepest being at the bottom. The right side-drapery descends in a point nearly to the edge of the drapery beneath it, and is plaited high up at its front and back edges, its front edge being included in the left side-front seam as far down as the lowest plait and slightly overlapped by the left side-drapery, which is caught to it at the lowest plait and then flares sharply from it. Plaits in the back edge drape the left side-drapery beautifully, this drapery being very much shorter than the right side-drapery, but similarly pointed. The back-breadth is entirely covered by the back-drapery, which is draped high and puffy at the top and falls in straight kilt-plaits below. The *bouffant* draping is the result of deep, downward-turning plaits

high up in the front edges of the drapery and effective loopings to the skirt, and the fulness at the top is gathered up suitably. The lower front-drapery is hemmed, and all the edges of the other draperies are plainly finished.

The basque displays a novel and jaunty fashion and is double-breasted, the lap decreasing gradually toward the lower edge and producing an attractive diagonal outline. Hooks and loops make the closing, and a velvet facing is applied to the overlapping edge to suggest an added gore or graduated *revers*, with very ornamental effect; two fancy clasps also appearing to close the garment above



the bust. A clasp also closes the standing collar. Double bust darts, under-arm gores and center and side-back seams make the graceful adjustment of the basque, and an underfolded double box-plait at the end of the center seam renders the back stylish over the *tournure*. In outline the basque is very attractive, being pointed at the end of the closing, shortened with a pretty curve over the hips and pointed also at the side-back seams. The coat sleeves fit prettily, and are completed with fancy cuff-facings of velvet that are very shallow along the under side of the wrist and deepened to a point at the outside seam.

Oftentimes the skirts of such toilettes will be entirely of velvet, velveteen, corduroy, silk or some novelty goods, and the draperies and basque of wool goods. Platings or ruffles may trim the skirt, if such garniture be preferred to a plain finish or to flat trimmings. Braid or velvet ribbon may be used for the skirt, basque and draperies, with stylish effect. All varieties of dress goods in vogue may be stylishly fashioned into such costumes, and the decoration may be as simple as the taste desires. Woollen lace may be effectively used for the draperies or to trim the gores, with handsome effect.

The velvet walking-hat has a binding on the edge of its brim, and is simply trimmed with ribbon and plumage.

FIGURE NO. 3.—LADIES' POLONAISE COSTUME.  
(For Illustration see Page 84.)

FIGURE NO. 3.—This consists of a Ladies' polonaise and skirt. The polonaise pattern, which is No. 734 and costs 1s. 6d. or 35 cents, is in thirteen sizes for ladies from twenty-eight to forty-six inches, bust measure, and may be seen made of other material and differently trimmed on page 93 of this magazine. The skirt pattern, which is No. 9867 and costs 1s. or 25 cents, is in nine sizes for ladies from twenty to thirty-six inches, waist measure, and is differently portrayed on its accompanying label.

Simplicity is a noticeable attraction of this handsome costume, which is here shown in plain silk united with novelty silk displaying velvet-bordered India stripes, the striped goods being used for the round, four-gored skirt. As the material is handsome and very decorative in itself, no garniture is applied to the skirt.

The polonaise has its fronts closed to a little below the waist-line with button-holes and buttons and then drawn apart with a stylish flare by deep plaits laid high up in the back edges, the fronts falling in handsome points a little below the knees. The adjustment is made by double bust darts, single under-arm darts and gracefully curved center and side-form seams, the seams terminating below the waist-line at the top of extra widths, which at the side-back seams are

disposed in underfolded plaits. At the side edges the back-drapery is deeply hemmed and draped in two full loops, and the center extra width is draped in full bow fashion, a deep looping at each side completing the stylish *bouffant* effect. The back-drapery falls in deep, oval outline, and a plain finish is observable at all the edges. The coat sleeves have a band of the fancy stripe in the skirt material at the wrists, completing them with a cuff effect. The standing collar is overlaid with beaded net, and zouave jacket-fronts are simulated with the net, adding much to the elegance of the garment.

While rich textures have been selected for illustration in this instance, both patterns are equally suited to the least expensive textures; cashmeres, serges, flannels, cloths and dress goods of all reasonable varieties making up handsomely in this way. Corduroy, velvet, velveteen and plush will often be used for skirts with polonaises of woollen goods, and as often the skirt will be of the same material as the polonaise and trimmed with platings, ruffles, rows of braid or velvet ribbon or contrasting bands. *Frisé*, striped, fancy and plain goods are all appropriate, and for washable textures that are to be made up into Summer costumes the garments are especially pretty. The loopings of the polonaise are so simple that the laundering will not be troublesome. Sateens, foulards, ginghams, piqués, lawns, etc., will be much used for such costumes.

The bonnet is elaborately trimmed with the plain silk and flowers, and has ties of ribbon.

FIGURE NO. 4.—LADIES' COSTUME.  
(For Illustration see Page 85.)

FIGURE NO. 4.—This illustrates a Ladies' costume. The pattern, which is No. 742 and costs 1s. 8d. or 40 cents, is in thirteen sizes for ladies from twenty-eight to forty-six inches, bust measure, and is shown in a combination of velvet and broadaced goods on page 90 of this publication.

Plush and Sicilienne are united in this instance, the Sicilienne being used for the round, four-gored skirt, which is plainly finished at the bottom. The back-drapery is in waterfall style, being gathered at the top and falling in easy folds to the edge of the skirt. The front-drapery falls in straight folds quite to the edge of the skirt a little back of the left side-front seam, and is draped very high at the right side by deep plaits that turn to the left at the belt. The plaits at the left side turn to the right at the belt and are stayed in their folds nearly to the lower edge, where they are drawn out with a pretty flare by the plaits in the right side. Between the back-drapery and the left side of the front-drapery the skirt is exposed with a pretty panel effect, and crossing this side are five



FIGURE NO. 8.—LADIES' WRAP.—This illustrates Pattern No. 741, price 1s. 6d. or 35 cents.

(For Description see Page 92.)





QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

B R O W N I N G  
M I L L I N E R Y C O L L E G E



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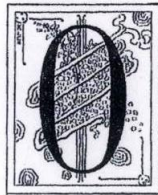




## BROWNING MILLINERY COLLEGE

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OUR College is located in the business center of the city and convenient to all street car lines and railway stations. Our school rooms are well lighted and well ventilated, handsomely decorated and homelike and inviting in every way. The charges for personal instructions at the College are \$25.00, including material with which to work. The entire course can be completed in from four to six weeks' time. To be successful, pupils must be in earnest, have a desire to learn, practice faithfully and devote themselves conscientiously to their work. By so doing you cannot fail to become a first-class milliner in every respect. Every woman should have a knowledge of millinery. It enables them to be self-supporting, should it be necessary, saves money in the home, and gives women something to do and think about. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀



## What You Receive.

The Lessons are as follows, and will be sent on receipt of \$10.00.

1. The foundation of a hat.
2. How to cut, make and trim a shirred hat.
3. How to make a wire frame.
4. How to make and trim a straw hat.
5. How to make a chiffon hat.
6. How to make a lace hat.
7. How to make and drape mourning bonnets.
8. How to make mourning hats.
9. How to make and trim small turbans and toques.
10. How to make all styles of bows.
11. How to make and trim small velvet bonnets.
12. How to mirror velvet.
13. How to clean ribbons, silks, satins, laces, chiffon and velvet.
14. How to clean and curl plumes.
15. How to cut and reshape all styles of hats.
16. How to make all styles of bandeaus, wiring ribbons, tying bows and milliner's folds.
17. How to make fancy facings for hats and fancy edging for all styles of hats and bonnets.
18. How to clean all kinds of hats.
19. How to combine colors and arrange trimmings.
20. How to color hats.
21. Our handsome diploma when the course is completed.

Each article is made and packed in a box and sent by express, with full printed instructions and material for you to work with; however, you must follow our instructions carefully and make each article as stated.

How are we to know when your work is done correctly? After you complete the entire course, we send material (at our expense) for you to make a hat and return to us for inspection. You will not know which hat we will select; therefore you must be able to make each and every hat perfect. If your work is satisfactory we will forward diploma. However, there should be no reason for your not doing the work perfectly, as our lessons are thoroughly explained.



## Some of the hats we teach you to make

4

BROWNING MILLINERY COLLEGE.



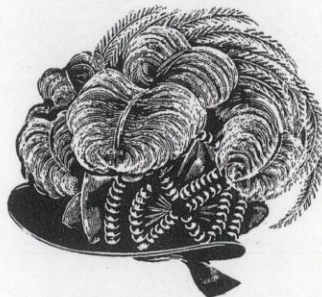
No. 1.

Large Black Velvet Hat, trimmed in black silk, with two birds and aigrettes, bandeau trimmed with loops of black silk.



No. 2.

Black Velvet Hat, with draping of chenille and paradise aigrettes; small bandeau in back with loops of ribbon.



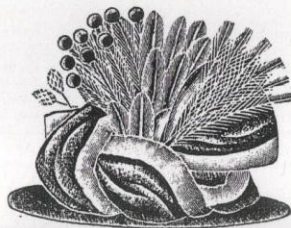
No. 3.

Royal Blue Hat, trimmed with black plumes and paradise aigrettes, with blue taffeta ribbon bow and jet buckle.



No. 4.

Black Velvet Bonnet, with chenille edging, fancy black ribbon loops, with small plumes and buckle.



No. 5.

Black Felt Sailor Hat, with trimming of black and white stub aigrettes with black and white silk.



No. 6.

Large, High Crown, Gray Velvet Hat, with puff of gray silk, dotted with large black dots, with four black angel wings and two fancy pins in puff of silk bandeau of gray and black silk.

## Price List of Material.

We furnish Material at lowest wholesale prices.

### Velvets.

Velvets, all colors, per yard.....	\$.69 to \$2.49
Velveteens, all colors, per yard.....	.40 " 1.00
Panne Velvet, all colors, per yard.....	1.45 " 4.00
Mirror Velvet, " " .....	1.00 " 3.00
Velvetta, " " .....	.50 " 1.00

### Silks.

Taffeta Silk, all colors, per yard .....	.85 " 2.00
Liberty " " " .....	.55 " 2.00
Surah " " " .....	.70 " 2.00
China " " " .....	.69 " 2.00
Mourning Silk, per yard.....	.98 " 2.00

### Chiffon.

Chiffon, all colors, per yard.....	\$.45 to \$1.49
Mousline de Soie, " .....	.39 " 1.49
Brussels Net, " .....	.40 " 1.25
Bridal Illusion, " .....	.75 " 2.00

### Satins.

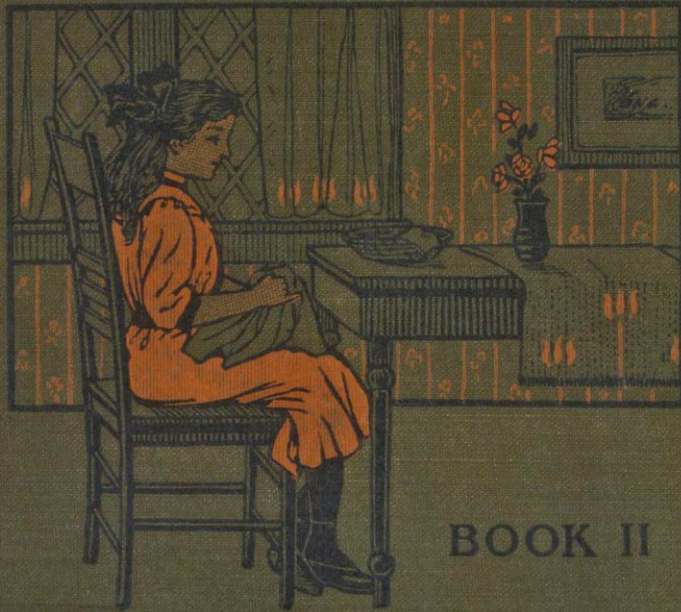
Satin, all colors, per yard.....	\$.75 to \$2.49
Liberty Satin, all colors, per yard.....	.75 " 2.00
Plisse Satin, " " .....	.60 " 2.00

### Mourning Goods.

Mourning Veils.....	\$.50 to \$1.00
Grenadine " .....	3.00 " 10.00
Nun's Veiling, per yard.....	.50 " 3.00
Crepe.....	.50 " 4.00
Mourning Silk.....	.98 " 2.00



GOODWIN'S  
COURSE IN SEWING



BOOK II

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v.2

FRANK D. BEATTYS & COMPANY

GOODWIN'S  
COURSE IN SEWING

Practical Instruction in Needlework for  
Use in Schools and at Home

BY  
EMMA E. GOODWIN

*Book I*



FRANK D. BEATTYS & COMPANY  
225 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

## XV. SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME WORK

Pupils having finished the work shown in this book should be able to make the following articles:

- Hemmed towels.
- Hemmed dusting cloths.
- Laundry bags.
- String bags.
- Wall pockets.
- Slipper cases.
- Dusting caps.
- Sleeve protectors.
- Children's bibs.
- Kitchen aprons, and other simple  
and useful articles.



THE  
SEWING BOOK

CONTAINING

Complete Instructions in Sewing and  
Simple Garment-Making for Children  
in the Primary and Grammar Grades

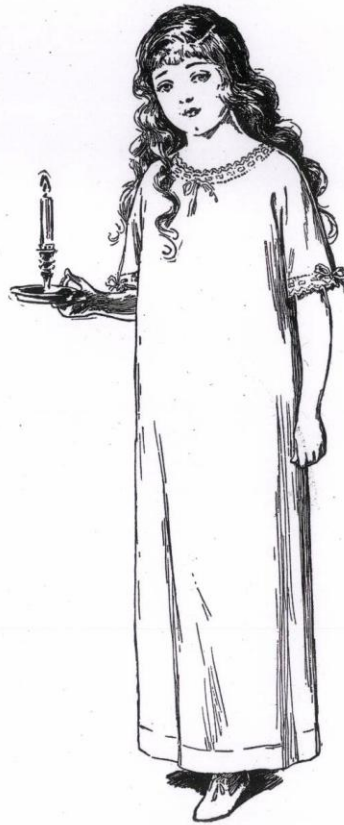
EDITED BY  
ANNE L. JESSUP

*Director of Sewing, Boroughs of Manhattan, The Bronx and Richmond, New York City  
Public Schools—Director of Domestic Art, New York University*



THE BUTTERICK PUBLISHING COMPANY  
NEW YORK LONDON PARIS TORONTO





**Illustration A.** The nightgown in the lesson is made with a high neck and long sleeves, and is trimmed with feather-stitching. You can use the round neck and short sleeves, if you like, and trim the nightgown with hand embroidery (Chapter XLIII) or lace or embroidery (Chapter XL).

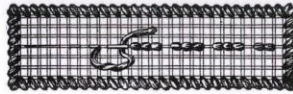
## THE SEWING BOOK

## CHAPTER XXXI

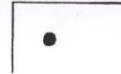
## THE NIGHTGOWN

## COMBINATION STITCH—SMALL SINGLE PERFORATIONS

SUPPLIES—*Thimble; Needle, No. 7 Sharps; No. 60 Sewing Cotton; Marking Cotton; Basting Cotton; Pins; Emery; Scissors; Tape Measure; Material; Pattern; Note-book.*



III. No. 1. The combination stitch consists of one backstitch and two or more small running stitches. It is used on seams requiring less strength than the backstitch. Practise it on a sampler.



III. No. 2. A small single perforation (actual size). In this pattern small single perforations are used to mark the round-neck outline, the pattern itself being cut with a high-neck outline.

**THE PATTERN**—The nightgown pattern comes in different ages. A child should use the pattern for her age, unless she is unusually large or small for her age. In that case the pattern should be bought by the bust size, which is given on the pattern envelope.

**Materials**—After the proper size pattern has been decided on, buy your materials, first consulting the table of quantities on the envelope so that you will know how many yards of muslin, long-cloth, nainsook, cambric, Scotch or outing flannel will be needed.

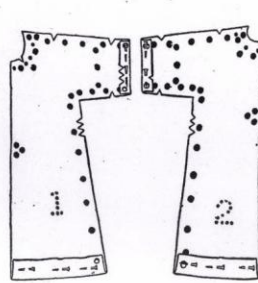
**The Length of the Pattern**—Read the directions on the envelope carefully and examine the illustration of the pieces so that you will know where all the perforations and notches are and what they are for.

The length of the back of the finished nightgown is given on the envelope. Have the measure taken of your own back from the center of the collar seam to just clear of the floor. The measure should be taken at the center back of the pattern from the collar seam to the bottom of the hem. Write down the measurements and compare your measure with the measurement of your pattern. The pattern allows for a two-inch hem.

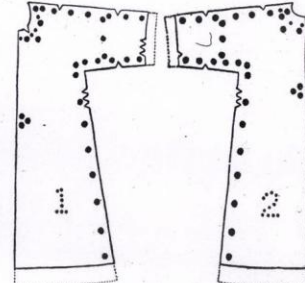


III. No. 3. Measuring the back and bent arm

This nightgown has a kimono sleeve, so you must take your arm measurement like this: Have some one measure from the center of your back just below your collar, straight across your back and down the outside of your arm to your wrist with the arm bent. (III. No. 3.) Write down the measurement in your note-book.



III. No. 4. Shortening the pattern



III. No. 5. Lengthening the pattern

Measure the back of the nightgown (piece 2) from the center back to the wrist edge of the sleeve. Add the width of the wristband minus one and one-eighth inches (the seams) and compare it with the length of your arm.

If the pattern is too long or too short for you, alter it at the lower edge. If it is too long, turn up the lower edge. (III. No. 4). If it is too short, add to it in cutting, marking the new line for the bottom with pins. (III. No. 5). Use your tape measure and be careful to keep the new line even with the lower edge of the pattern. If the sleeve is too long or too short for you, alter it at the lower edge of the sleeve, turning up the lower edge (III. No. 4) or adding to it in

cutting (III. No. 5), marking the new line with pins. If you want the round neck (III. A), cut out the neck of the pattern at the line of small single perforations. (III. No. 2).

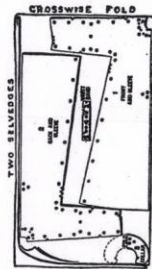
**Cutting Your Material**—Cut the selvages off your material. Illustration No. 6 shows the way to lay your pattern on muslin thirty-six inches wide. In material of this width the nightgown with the long sleeve will have to have a piecing seam at the center front and back. The collar must be cut double. (III. No. 6). The second collar lines the first. The wristband is cut twice, for there are two, and both are lined. This piece is cut with its large double perforations lengthwise.

Cut your nightgown out, following the edges of the pattern carefully, and clip all the notches so that you can see them easily.

Join the piecing seams at the center front and back.

**The Tailors' Tacks**—Mark the triple perforations in the front and the perforations at the outlet seams of the nightgown and wristbands with tailors' tacks in colored cotton. (Chapter XXI, Ill. No. 8, on page 46.)

**The Front Opening**—If you are going to make the nightgown and feather-stitch it like Illustration No. 9, slash the front (piece 1) a half an inch



III. No. 6. The pattern laid on muslin thirty-six inches wide ready to cut. There will be a piecing seam at the center of the front and back



to the left of the center. Slash it from the neck edge as far down as the triple perforations. If you are going to make a plain nightgown without the feather-stitching, slash it at the center of the front from the neck edge to the triple perforations. Cut it on a straight, clean line.

**The Facing**—Measure the length of the opening from the neck edge to the bottom of the slash and write it down in your note-book.

Cut a facing for the right edge of your opening. It should be one and three-quarter inches wide, and three-eighths of an inch longer than the opening. Cut it lengthwise of the material.

Lay the facing on the right side of the nightgown, with one long edge of the facing even with the edge of the slash. (Ill. No. 7). Baste the two together three-eighths of an inch from the raw edges. (Ill. No. 7). Sew the seam with combination stitches. (Ill. No. 7).

Turn the facing to the wrong side of the nightgown and fold it so that the sewing comes exactly on the crease. Baste it again an eighth of an inch from the crease. (Ill. No. 8).

Turn under the other long edge and the lower edge of the facing three-

eighths of an inch and baste them to the nightgown. Sew them to the nightgown with hemming stitches.

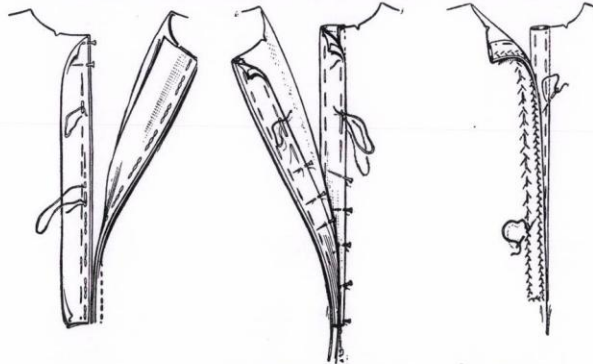
**The Underlap**—Cut an underlap for the left side of the front two and three-quarter inches wide and three-eighths of an inch longer than the opening. It should be cut lengthwise of the material.

Join one long edge of the underlap to the wrong side of the left front just as you joined the facing to the right front. (Ill. No. 7).

Turn in the other long edge and the lower edge of the lap three-eighths of an inch and baste the long edge to the right side of the front with its fold edge just covering the seam. (Ill. No. 8).

Hem the fold of the underlap to the nightgown with small hemming stitches. (Ill. No. 9). Overhand the lower fold edges of the underlap together.

The front of the nightgown may be trimmed with feather-stitching along the opening. (Ill. No. 9). Baste the transfer design along the edges of the lap (Ill. No. 9) and work the feather-stitching. (Chapter XXIII). The lower edge of the opening must be feather-stitched through both facing and underlap to hold them in position.



Ills. Nos. 7, 8 and 9. Finishing the opening of the nightgown

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

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decompressor  
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# Chicago Dressmakers' Club

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## Semi-Annual Convention

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PALMER HOUSE,  
CHICAGO

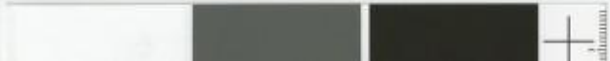
March 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th,  
1911



MEMBERSHIP FEE—FIVE DOLLARS  
ANNUAL DUES—FIVE DOLLARS  
SINGLE ADMISSION—ONE DOLLAR

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
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### Appendix C. Dressmakers, Milliners and Sewing in Art

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Year Painted or Artists Lifespan</u>
Jean Béraud	La Modiste sur les Champs Elysées, Paris, Rue du Havre,	(1849-1936) 1882
Mary Cassat	Young Woman Sewing in Garden,	1886
Alexandre Charpentier	The Milliner,	1898
Edgar Degas	At the Milliners, Chez la Modiste, The Milliners, The Millinery Shop,	1882 1905-1910 about 1882–before 1905 1885
Charles Webster Hawthorne	The Dressmaker,	1915
Josef Mánes's	The Dressmaker	(1820-1871)
Hugo Oehmichen	The Sewing Lesson	(1843-1933)
Pierre-Auguste Renoir	At the Milliner's, Mademoiselle Marie-Therese Durand-Ruel Sewing,	1878 1882
	The Milliner,	1877
James Tissot	The Milliner's Shop,	1885
Henri Toulouse-Lautrec	Le Modiste Renée Vert La Modiste,	(1864-1901) 1899

## Glossary

**aigrette** Upright tuft of feathers or plumes of egret, or heron. Something resembling feather aigrette, as a cluster of jewels.

**antimacassar** (ant i ma *kass* er) Covering or tidy, used to protect back, arms, and headrest of sofas, chairs, etc. Originally, to prevent soiling by macassar hair oil, used during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**appliqué** Materials and decorations cut out and sewed in geometric or representational shapes, embroidered or pasted on other materials to create a design or picture. Used on lace, fabric and leather.

**armscye** Opening for sleeve; armhole.

**astrakhan** Heavy fabric knitted or woven with a deep-pile surface of curled loops to resemble caracul fur.

**atelier** Large dressmaking establishment, particularly one of the famous dressmakers. French word meaning workroom or studio.

**back-stitch** an embroidery and plain sewing stitch used for strength that creates a fine line and appears continuous. Second in importance of stitches. Mentioned in John Taylor's 1631 poem *The Praise of the Needle*.

**bandeau** or **bandeaux** Strip usually made of covered buckram or wire, attached to side or back of hat to adjust size or fit or to give height. 2. Narrow band or fillet encircling head, as diadem of flowers.

**basque** bodice closely fitted by seaming from shoulder to waist, with or without short skirt-like continuation. Typical of bodice worn by Basque peasants. French word meaning short skirt , as on bodice or jacket; originally on doublets.

**basting** large, loose stitches used to hold fabric in place while the seamstress sews the actual seams. They are a preliminary step in the process and should be removed when the garment is finished.

**batiste** Soft, sheer fabric with a plain weave.

**Berlin work** Ancient, durable, allover type of embroidery or fancy work in which principal stitch is cross-stitch. Done on canvas.

**bertha** A ruffle sewn around the neckline and shoulders of a dress.

**bias** Cloth cut "on the bias" is cut at a 90-degree angle to the grain of the fabric. Designs that have the seamstress intentionally cut on the bias drape in a way that is attractive but difficult to sew. Fabric unintentionally cut in this way will not hang correctly.

**bloomers** Baggy shorts or pants. They were often knee-length but could be shorter, especially when worn with a bathing suit. The name comes from Amelia Bloomer, a nineteenth-century dress-reform advocate who suggested women wear loose, ankle-length pants under a knee-length skirt instead of long skirts.

**bodice** Waist of a women's dress.

**boning** Whalebone, featherbone or steel, covered or uncovered. Used for stiffening seams and edges, especially in corsets and dress bodices.

**bouffant** Puffed-out, full, flaring, as in bulging drape of a skirt or sleeve.

**box plait** or **box pleat** A double fold or plait formed by folding the cloth alternately in opposite directions so as to form a plait from each side.

**breadth** Width – opposite of length; measurement of fabric from selvage to selvage.

**brocade** Jacquard-weave fabric having interwoven all-over design of raised figures, usually flowers, foliage, etc. with pattern emphasized by contrast of surfaces in weave or by contrasting colors. Made of various foundation materials, in varying weights; often having silk, silver, or gold threads, sometimes all three.

**bustle** Pad or frame worn below waist at back to distend skirts. Began about 1870 as connecting link between panniers.

**calash** a hood made on hoops that could be pulled over the head or folded back. Copied from the folding hood of a carriage.

**calico** Plain-woven, fine cotton cloth printed with a pattern on one side. Used for house dresses and aprons.

**cambric** Fine, closely woven, white or yarn-dyed warp cotton fabric in plain weave, with gloss on right side. Used for aprons, underwear, shirts. 2. Thin, stiff, plain-woven, glazed cotton fabric in white and solid colors; loses glaze in laundering. Used for linings, fancy dress costumes, dressmakers' trial models, inexpensive chintz. 3. Fine smooth fabric of linen in plain weave. Used for blouses, collars, cuffs, shirt bosoms, napkins, doilies, etc.



**candlewicking** Tuftings of threads, or raised stitches, to give a napped surface to fabric, usually in the form of a design used for bedspreads, draperies, robes, etc. 2. Thick, soft, cotton thread used chiefly for tufting.

**canvas** A plain-woven cloth of cotton, linen, hemp, wool, silk, etc. which often has sizing for stiffness, or can be soft-finished. Used as the foundation for evenly stitched designs, interlinings, and art needlework.

**canvas work** The art of filling square spaces in canvas or other evenly woven background fabric with yarn to make needlework designs. Any embroidery worked on a canvas. Also as *tapestry work*, *Berlin work*.

**casings** A narrow passage or tunnel for a rod or cord, as in a curtain or the waistband of a garment, made by folding over a small strip of fabric at its edge along its width and sewing it in place.

**chambray** Gingham of fine quality, having colored warp and white filling. 2. A similar but heavier corded yarn fabric used for work clothes and children's play clothes.

**chemise** Loose combination undergarment for women, hanging straight from shoulders covering torso. Originally with or without sleeves, worn next to skin, formerly called shift, also smock.

**chenille** French word for caterpillar. Silk, rayon, cotton, wool or worsted cord having tufted, velvet-like pile protruding all around, similar in appearance to fuzzy caterpillar. Used for filling in cloth; for embroidery, fringes, tassels, etc. 2. Fabric made with filling of this cord. Used for draperies, couch covers, etc.

**cheviots** Heavy, rough, serge with pronounced diagonal weave.

**coquilled** Fanned or fluted trimming.

**corset** Smoothly fitted undergarment extending from or below the bust down over the hipline; often stiffened by strips of steel or whalebone, limbered by elastic goring; sometimes tightened by lacing. Worn by women for support and figure molding. Originally made in two pieces laced together at front and back. Formerly called *stays*.

**costume** Complete dress or apparel including all outer garments and accessories worn at one time. Also dress in general; but incorrectly used for a dress.

**counterbook** Catalogue issued by pattern manufacturers of patterns available for purchase, available in pattern departments of stores.

**counterpanes** Bedspread.

**couture** French word meaning sewing or needlework; work business, or products of a seamstress; seam; dressmaking. 2. As a collective term, used to denote French dressmaking houses.

**crinoline** Fabric of horsehair or heavily stiffened linen, cotton or silk, used as a foundation to support the edge of a hem, top of a sleeve, brim of a hat, etc. Used to extend skirts into bell shape. 2. Hoopskirt. 3. Steel springs or featherbone forming hoop.

**damask** A fabric with flat figures formed by contrast between warp and filling surfaces.

**dart** Shaped tuck taken to fit garment to the figure; as body dart, hip dart, shoulder dart, etc. Material in tuck sometimes cut away to eliminate bulk. Also, to take such a tuck.

**delineator** One who forecasts the fashions. Name of a woman's magazine published for many years by the Butterick Publishing Company.

**dolman** Woman's short or full-length wrap, open in front, that gave the appearance of a cape from the back but was sleeved in the front.

**draft** Outline drawing of a pattern, made usually with a ruler, tape and pencil.

**drafting square** Tailor's square modified with measurements and curves; used for drafting patterns for women's garments.

**drape** To hang fabric in folds; also to design garments by this method.

**draper** In a shop one who sells yard goods. In dressmaking one who designs by draping.

**drawers** Trousers like undergarments worn by both men and women.

**Dresden** A small unobtrusive design. Adopted from Dresden china.

**dress** Clothes required by custom or etiquette for certain occasions or times of day 2. **evening dress** Conventionally correct dress for evening wear at formal or semiformal social affairs, or at the opera, theatre, etc. 3. **Formal dress** Dress worn on full dress occasions. Evening dress with low décolletage and no sleeves, worn when men wear tuxedo or white tie and tails. 4. **house dress** Dress suitable for morning wear at home. Usually of gaily printed, washable cotton fabric. Often perky in silhouette, smartly made and trimmed. Also called home or morning dress.

**dress form** Papier-mache frame in the form of woman's figure. Used for fitting and draping garments.

**dress goods** Fabrics suitable for women's and children's clothing.

**dressmaker** Woman who cuts, fits and sews garments, especially for customers.

**écru** Light tan or beige; the natural color of unbleached linen or hemp.

**edging** Narrow embroidery, lace or the like, used to finish an edge.

**embroidery** Ornamental needlework consisting of designs worked on fabric with silk, cotton, wool, metal or other threads, by hand or machine.

**emery bag** Small cloth bag filled with powdered emery; an essential for every sewing basket. Used for keeping needles bright and clean.

**eyelet** a small hole or perforation.

**fabric** Material from which garments are made. Any cloth, knit, woven, or felted from any fiber, as wool, felt, hosiery, lace, etc. Most fabrics have a right side or face; wrong side or back. Right side usually folded inside on roll or bolt, for protection in handling.

**face** To finish an edge by applying a fitted piece or lining of the same or a different fabric, braid, ribbon, lace, leather. Used in place of a hem on parts of a garments that are turned back. The facing conceals the seam and serves as a finish.

**facing** Fabric applied to garment edge, often on the underside. Used as a substitute for a hem; also, for lining on parts of garment that are turned back, such as collars and cuffs.

**fagoting** Thread, yarn, ribbon, braid, etc. used straight or crisscrossed in open seams to form openwork trimming.

**faille** Untwilled slightly glossy silk fabric in rib weave with light, flat, crosswise grain or cord made by heavy filling yarns. Sometimes faille is stiff; other times limp with a draping quality. Used for dresses, suits, blouses, children's coats, wraps, slippers, millinery linings, trimmings.

**fancy goods** Yard goods of needlework and embroidery

**fancy work** Hand embroidery and decorative needlework requiring a great level of skill.

**fashion** Prevailing or accepted style; often embracing many styles at one time.

**fashion bulletin** Special information about significant new fashions, sent from fashion centers or authorities to individuals or firms, or published in newspapers and magazines.

**fashion delineator** Fashion writer or forecaster.

**fashion dolls** Dolls dressed in latest styles sent around for display before styles were shown in publications. 2. Miniature mannequins dressed in the newest fashions, on display in piece-goods departments, store windows, etc.

**fashion plate** Illustrations representing prevailing fashions in wearing apparel.

**fell seam** Flat sturdy seam constructed to seal all raw edges.

**fichu** Draped scarf or shawl worn around the shoulders and tied in a knot at the breast, allowing ends to hang loosely. Also ruffles draped on bosom of a blouse or dress.

**filling** yarn running crosswise of woven fabric, at right angles to warp, or lengthwise yarn. Yarn carried by shuttle.

**findings** Threads, tapes, buttons, bindings, hooks and eyes, slide fasteners, featherbone, belting, braids, and other sewing essentials used in garment making; carried in notions department.

**finishing** Any of various processes affecting appearance and weaving qualities of fabric. Many fabrics pass through a finishing room for steaming, glazing, pressing, or shrinking.

**fluting** Plaited ruffle or ruche, sometimes inserted as a band usually at neck or sleeve

**flounce** A gathered or plaited strip sewn to a garment., lower edge often being left free. Generally worn at the bottom of a garment, especially on a skirt, sleeve or cape.

**frise of frize** Pile fabric with uncut loops, sometimes patterned by cutting some of the loops, by printing, or by using colored yarns.

**gaiter** Cloth or leather covering for leg or ankle, buckled or buttoned at the side; often secured by a strap under the foot. 2. Ankle-high shoe.

**gather** To draw up, as cloth on a thread; to full on; also fullness. Technically, one or two rows of gathering in fabric to draw fullness. More than two rows is called shirring.

**garniture** Decorative trimming, as on apparel or other articles.

**gilet** (zhee lay) Sleeveless bodice with decorative front in imitation of blouse. Chiefly worn with suits.

**gingham** Firm, light, or medium weight, washable cotton fabric, yarn-dyed in plain or fancy weave. Woven in solid colors, stripes, checks or plaids.

**Godey's Lady's Book** Periodical dealing largely with fashions, needlework, and etiquette; founded in 1830 by Antoine Godey; published for fifty years; edited until 1877 by a most able woman Sarah Josepha Hale. Famous chiefly for beautiful, colored fashion plates; also for being first American woman's magazine.

**gore** A shaped set in section, narrowest at top and widening along the length extending in skirt from waistline to hem. Eliminates the need for much gathering at the waist in order to have fullness in skirt.

**grain** Direction of woof and warp in fabric.

**grosgrain** Having heavy crosswise ribs. 2. Stout silk fabric or ribbon, sometimes having cotton filling, corded from selvage to selvage. Cords heavier than in poplin, rounder than faille. Used for dresses, coats, trimming.

**gusset** A gusset is a triangular or diamond-shaped insert added to a garment, for example, in the crotch or underarms, which allows for more ease of movement.

**haberdasher** One who keeps a retail shop selling men's furnishings. 2. Dealer in small wares, as needles, pins, thread, dress trimming; formerly also hats.

**hand** Texture or feel of cloth, especially of silk; as, fabric of quality has a good hand, meaning that you can feel the quality or that it will work well in the making.

**head size** Number of inches around crown of head at brow; measurement taken for fitting hats. Most women's hats made in half-inch head sizes, from 21 to 23 ½.

**hem** Finish provided by turning the raw edges under from 1/8 to ½ inch, and then making a second turn to conceal the first. Hem may secured by hand or machine.

**henrietta** Fine, twilled, fabric, with silk warp and fine worsted filling. Like cashmere but lustrous and slightly harder and courser. Used for dresses and children's wear.

**home economics** Science of home management and its relation to family and community life, including the domestic arts and sciences, planning of meals, clothing, housing, budgeting of income, care and education of children, standards of living.

**homemade** Made at home; implying also, poorly or carelessly made. People who sewed were eager to avoid the homemade look.

**Java Canvas** Coarse, open fabric used as foundation for embroidery.

**jupon** Short petticoat or underskirt. 2. Fabric with cotton warp and woolen filling, woven on plain loom.

**kimono** Negligee cut in manner of Japanese kimono. 2. Garment typical of Japanese costume, made as loose, wide-sleeved robe, fastened around the waist with a broad sash.

**knitting** Process of making fabric by interlocking series of loops of continuous thread or yarn.

**krimmer** Grey fur resembling Persian lamb but coarser in curl.

**lambrequin** A short ornamental drapery for the top of a window or door or the edge of a shelf. 2. Scarf-like covering worn over helmet as protection from sun and rain.

**lawn** Fine, soft, sheer fabric, usually cotton, in plain weave, filled with starch or sizing. Often printed after it is woven. Used for handkerchiefs, baby clothes, dresses, blouses, aprons, curtains.

**lingerie** Women's lace trimmed underclothing made of linen or dainty silks. 2. Collars and cuffs, made of linen, cambric, or muslin and lace.

**lisse** Type of fine gauze used for trimming, frills, ruching, etc.

**loop** Doubling of a thread, so as to pass through it a needle, hook, or another thread, as in crocheting or knitting. 2. Fold or ring made of ribbon, braid, etc., used as trimming.

**mantilla** Women's light-weight shawl or cape of silk, velvet, or lace that hangs long in back and front.

**mantle** Cloak, usually without sleeves, worn over other garments.

**mantua** A robe or overdress, usually with a split front that exposed contrasting underdress or petticoat beneath.

**mantuamaker** A tailor or dressmaker who made women's garments.

**marking** adding an identifying device, with the cross-stitch, such as a letter or number on fabric articles, such as socks in a large family to help with household organization.

**Medici collar** Large, standing fan shaped collar.

**mending** Repairing damaged garments or other articles. In sewing mending includes darning, patching, reinforcing worn sections, restitching, etc. 2. A collection of articles to be mended.

**middy** Middy blouses were loose shirts modeled after sailor suits, with a square back

collar and a front tie. The word comes from "midshipman." Middies were popular for both boys and girls but were also worn by adult women.

**midriff** Part of the body between chest and abdomen.

**milliner** A woman that makes, trims, designs, or sells hats.

**millinery** Hats, bonnets, and headdresses of all types worn by women and sold by milliners. 2. The business or trade of a milliner.

**mode** Formal synonym for fashion. 2. Short for *à la mode* a light, glossy, silk fabric.

**modiste** Woman who makes or sells fashionable articles of dress. A milliner.

**moiré** (mwar) Watered or clouded fabric, especially silk. Used for coats, dresses, suits, and trimmings.

**mousquetaire** Having real or fancied resemblance to costume worn by French musketeers or royal bodyguards from 1622-1815. Applied to various articles of dress such as; cloth coat with large buttons; turnover collar; deep, flared cuff; glove with long, loose wrist; large hat with trailing plume; long, tight shirred sleeve.

**needle** Small, slender pieces of steel used for sewing or embroidery; pierced at one end with a hole or eye for carrying thread; pointed at opposite end to facilitate passing through fabric.

**negligee** Soft, feminine, decorative dressing gown, generally with flowing lines, worn indoors by women. May be held in at the waistline with ribbon or sash. Sometimes called kimono, which has distinctive features of its own. Also any informal attire.

**notions** Small useful article or clever device; any of the items included in a notions department of a store; buttons, pins, fasteners, sewing accessories, such as thread, needles, findings, etc.

**nun's veiling** Thin, soft, loosely woven, woolen fabric, in plain weave. Used for veiling, dresses, infants' coats and caps.

**octavo** The page size of a magazine or book composed of printer's sheets folded into eight leaves.

**order work** Sewing tasks performed by students for customers. Customers save money, students receive practice and both parties understand this is a learning experience.

**overcasting** Basic stitch, third in importance. Slant stitch used mainly to protect raw

edges from raveling or to hold two edges together.

**overskirt** Short drapery worn over skirt or dress.

**paletot** (*pal e toe*) Close-fitting jacket of contrasting material, worn by women to complete their costume. Can also be a loose overcoat. French word meaning overcoat.

**panel** Usually the front gore of a dress or skirt, or the center front or back of a dress. May be part of the garment, a full-length gore, as in a princess dress; or it may be applied or allowed to hang free. Used generally as a feature of design.

**patchwork** Patches or pieces of fabric of varying colors, put together to form designs. Used for the tops of quilts, coverlets, cushions, etc.

**passementeries** (*pass men tri*) Trimmings, heavy embroideries or edgings of rich gimps, braid, beads, tinsel, or silk.

**patterns** Model for making things, especially clothes. Specifically, a guide for cutting all pieces of garments. **2. commercial pattern** Tissue paper pattern or guide for cutting garments. Made by a pattern company. Sold at pattern counters in stores. **3. drafted pattern** Pattern drafted, usually for an individual, by means of tailor's square, ruler, or like device, according to a combination of measurements based on rules of proportion. **4. foundation pattern** Drafted or commercial pattern of simplest type, with normal seam lines and no fullness or design lines. **5. master pattern** Basic pattern of a style from which other sizes are made. **2.** Pattern of simple design made as a guide for correct size, as a foundation pattern.

**pattern book** Book of selected pattern designs issued periodically. Sometimes called fashion quarterly.

**peignoir** (*pay nwahr*) Dressing gown or cape of terrycloth. Used in France in place of a towel after a bath. Also used to describe dressed up negligees.

**peplum** Small ruffle, flounce or flared extension of the dress around the hips, usually at the waist of a dress or jacket.

**petticoat** Woman's underskirt, usually just slightly shorter than outside skirt, ruffled or trimmed.

**picot** One of a series of loops along selvage of fabric forming finish on one or both sides; also one of small loops decorating edge of pattern lace. **2.** Finished edge having tiny points, produced by cutting machine-hemstitching in half. **3.** Runrest loops often finishing top of hosiery.



**piece** To repair, renew, or add to.; to join the parts of; to mend by joining.

**piece goods** Fabric sold in pieces of fixed length or by the yard. 2. Name of the department in a store where piece goods are sold.

**pipng** Narrow bias fold or cord used to finish on edges; any edge extending from another. Extensively used in dressmaking.

**placket** Opening in upper part of skirt, in waist part of dress, in neck or sleeve, for convenience in putting garment on. 2. A petticoat or a skirt pocket.

**plaiting** Braided fabric or process of braiding. Also called plating.

**plain sewing** Stitching, hems, buttonholes, knitting, etc.

**plastron** Separate or attached front of a woman's dress, extending from throat to waist; so called because of its resemblance to original breastplate of armor. 2. Shirt bosom, especially one without pleats.

**plush** Rich fabric of various fibers, in pile weave, with longer pile than velvet; and coarse back made of cotton, silk, wool, etc. Used for coats, capes, neckpieces, muffs.

**polonaise** Short overcoat, often fur trimmed.

**pongee** Thin, soft, undyed fabric in plain weave, made of irregular yarns of silk, cotton, etc. smooth or slightly rough in texture; ivory or brownish in color. Originally made in China of silk from wild silkworms. Used for summer suits and coats, dresses, shirts, linings, art needlework

**poplin** Densely woven fabric. Swimsuit did not drain water because of this tight weave. Made of cotton, silk, or wool.

**quilt** To sew several thicknesses of fabric and padding together, through and through; to outline a design in thickness of by running-stitches or machine-stitches; to use stitches to block off squares or diamonds in fabric. 2. Bed covering quilted by hand or machine, through top, filling, and lining; often done in beautiful designs or following the pattern of the quilt top.

**raw seams** A "raw" seam would show where the fabric was cut and might unravel. A more polished way to finish a seam would be to make French seams, which entailed sewing up the same seam twice to enclose the raw edges inside. Most modern seams are "serged," which means that a special machine sews thread along the edge of the fabric to prevent unraveling.

**revers** Wide, shaped lapel or lapels. Used on coats, suits, dresses.

**ruche** Strip of silk, crepe, chiffon, lace, or other fabric, pleated or gathered. Used as dress trimming, usually at neck or waist. Also *rouch*.

**running stitch** basic stitch that is the first in importance. Made in a series of short stitches of the same length, several run on the needle at one time. Used for seaming, gathering, tucking, quilting, etc.

**sachet** dainty ornamental pad or small bag, containing perfumed substance usually sachet powder or scented cotton. Hung or laid among garments or other articles to be scented.

**sacque** Loose blouse-like garment, often in a light color worn with a dark skirt.

**sateen** Cotton fabric in close satin weave with lustrous, smooth, satin-like finish. Used for underskirts, linings, dresses, slip-covers, etc.

**seam** Joining line where parts of garment or edges of material are sewed together.

**seam allowance** The extra quarter- to half-inch of fabric needed on all sides of the cut fabric to allow sewing up the seams. Without such an allowance, the garment will be too small for the original measurements. Before the patterns included allowances, one had to remember to include them when cutting the fabric.

**seamstress** Sewing-woman, a woman who stitches and finishes, rather than a dressmaker, who cuts, fits and makes.

**season** Fashion season of several weeks in early spring and early fall when fashions for spring and fall and being promoted. 2. Spring and summer season when clothes promoted in the spring showings are worn; fall and winter season when clothes promoted in the fall showings are worn.

**selvage** Lengthwise edge of woven fabrics., finished so that it will not ravel. Usually cut away in making of a garment. Also spelled selvedge.

**serge** Popular, soft, durable, woolen fabric; made in great variety. Woven with clear finish in even-sided twill, which gives flat, diagonal rib. Best grades made of worsted warp and worsted or woolen filling. Silk and rayon fibers also used to manufacture serge. Used for tailored apparel such as suits, dresses, coats, shirts, middy blouses.

**sewing machine** Any machine for stitching; worked by hand, foot or electric power. The sewing machine revolutionized the making of apparel and has made it possible for all civilized people to have more and better clothing.

**shears** Cutting implement at least six inches long, heavier than scissors, having two blades pivoted on a screw so that the sharp edges face each other, and having small ring handle for thumb and bow handle large enough to admit several fingers for greater leverage.

**shields** crescent shaped pieces of fabric or paper worn to protect clothing from underarm perspiration.

**shirtwaist** Waist or blouse similar to a man's shirt in plainness of cut and style. A tailored blouse usually worn with a tailored skirt.

**shirr** To make three or more rows of gathers.

**slash** To cut a slit, as in a garment, usually to show a contrasting color beneath; also, ornamental slit so made. 2. Another name for warp sizing.

**stays** Corsets or the pieces of stiffening used in corsets.

**stitch** Single turn or loop of the thread, yarn, etc. made by hand or machine in sewing, crocheting, embroidery, knitting, lace-making. 2. Particular method or style of stitching. All eye-needle types, whether for embroidery, tapestry, lace, or sewing, are based approximately upon the seven basic stitches; running, back, overcast, cross, blanket, chain, knot. Type of design, weight and kind of fabric and thread, length of stitch, and position of thread at right or left of needle provide the many variations.

**stroked gathers** another name for cartridge pleats, which are measured folds obtained by folding rows of stitches in parallel lines to make rounded pleats. Stroking between each pleat gave them a cartridge belt effect.

**surah** Soft, light-weight, twilled fabric of silk or wool. Heavy grade called silk serge; high-luster grade called satin surah. Used for dresses, blouses, etc.

**surplice** Garment with a neckline with a diagonal closing, similar to "wrap" styles of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. 2. Ecclesiastical vestment.

**tablier** Apron-like part of a dress. Apron-like over-dress, open down the back.

**tatting** Knotted lace made by hand with single thread and small shuttle.

**thread count** or **fabric count**. Number of threads or picks, per inch of fabric.

**tidies** Doilies or pieces of needlework used on upholstery. Singular is tidy. See antimacassar.

**tissue paper** Thin, almost transparent paper, used for patterns.

**toilet** Act of personal grooming, usually including bathing, hairdressing, applying cosmetics, dressing. Also called toilette.

**tournure** Petticoat bustle. 2. Poise; graceful manner or distinguished carriage.

**trade** Manufacturers of garments or accessories, wholesalers, retailers, and all who make their living through the creation or marketing of clothing or allied lines.

**trade cards** Small, colorful images, usually three by five inches, chromolithographed onto card stock popular and appealing form of advertising, used to promote a wide range of products, including sewing machines.

**train** Extended part of dress or skirt which trails at back; cut in one with dress, or separate section attached at waistline or shoulders. For very formal occasions, carried by attendants. For regular social occasions, carried by hand or thrown over arm of wearer while dancing and or walking.

**triad pattern** Uncut pattern, with three or more designs differentiated by different systems of dots and dashes in printing the lines. Used widely abroad.

**tricoat** Fabric of various yarns, either knitted, or woven so as to give knitted appearance. 2. Soft, ribbed dress fabric of wool or mixture. From French tricoter, to knit, derived from a town in France where cloth and knitted stockings were first made.

**trimmings** Decorations or ornamental parts includes ribbon, braid, cording, tassels, buttons, etc. Women frequently change the trim on a dress as part of a renovation.

**tuck** Fold of fabric, as in a garment stitched in place. Used as decoration, means of holding fullness, or means of shortening or shaping garment. 2. To form tuck or tucks.

**tucked seam** Seam finished with a tuck.

**tuft** small cluster, as of fibers, or feathers, etc. close at base and free at top ends; as tufts of thread used to finish mattress or quilt.

**tulle** Fine, small-meshed net, made of silk or cotton.

**unfinished** Term applied to fabrics. Not processed or subjected to any type of finishing treatment; left as it came from the loom.

**uni** (oo ni) French word for plain weave.

**vigogne yarn** Cotton yarn with mixture of wool or wool waste.

**vigoureux** Fabric having dark and light effect produced by the process of printing fibers of worsted before spinning yarn.

**vogue** Mode or fashion.

**voile** Plain, fine transparent or semi-transparent sheer fabric used for making dresses, blouses, curtains, etc. Made of cotton, silk, rayon, or wool. Similar to batiste.

**waist** Garment or part of garment covering the body from shoulders to waistline. Usually called blouse or bodice.

**waistcoat** Garment, usually sleeveless, buttoning in front, extending just below the waistline. Worn under a jacket or coat. Also called a vest. Sometimes worn by women in place of a blouse.

**warp** Lengthwise threads of fabric that form the foundation between which the weft, or filling of crossthreads, is woven. 2. Selvage way of fabric.

**willow plume** Ostrich feathers, the flues of which are tied or pasted together to make them longer – in imitation of the foliage of a willow tree.

**woodcut** a block of wood with a design cut into it; used to make prints. 2. a print made from a woodcut.

**worsted** Firm, strong, smooth-surface yarn spun from long-staple, evenly combed, pure wool. Also, loosely twisted yarns for knitting. 2. Any fabric woven from worsted yarn, as gabardine or serge.

**yarn count** Number of hanks per pound; also size of fiber. 2. Same as thread count.

**yoke** Fitted portion of a garment, usually over shoulders or hips, to which the rest of garment is sewed.

**zenana** Light-weight striped fabric with quilted appearance. Used for women's dresses.

**zibeline** A dress material which to a greater or less extent imitates the fur of an animal; often the hairy effect is lessened by shearing the surface.

**zouave** Full skirt tucked up at bottom and attached to the inside lining. Resembles baggy trousers of uniform worn by French Zouaves.

**zouave jacket** Women's short jacket with rounded front, made in imitation of jacket of Zouave uniform. Sometimes sleeveless.

The definitions included in this glossary were culled from the following sources;  
Marguerite Connolly *The Transformation of Home Sewing and the Sewing Machine*  
Nancy Page Fernandez, "If a Woman Had Taste"  
Sarah Gordon, *Make it Yourself*  
Annie Myers, *Home Dressmaking*  
Mary Brooks Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary*  
Susan Burrows Swan, *Plain & Fancy*  
Anna Ben Yusuf, *The Art of Millinery*  
[www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)

The meaning of many of these terms has changed. The definitions given here represent the meaning to nineteenth century women's dress and relevant period terms.

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### Progressive Era Periodicals

*Title, Start Date – End Date, City*

American Journal of Fabrics and Dry Goods Bulletin / Merchant World 1871-1888 NY

American Dressmaker 1910-1912 NY

Delineator 1873-1937 NY

Demorest's Monthly Magazine 1865-1899 NY

Designer 1894-1926 NY

Domestic Monthly 1873-1895 NY

Dressmaker and Milliner 1895-1896 NY

Fabrics, Fancy Goods, and Notions 1875-1920 NY

Fashion Bazar 1879-1889 NY

Frank Leslie's Lady's Journal 1871-1881 NY

Godey's Lady's Book / Magazine 1830-1878

Harper's Bazar 1867-present NY

Home Needlework Magazine 1899-1917 Florence, MA

The Illustrated Milliner 1900-1926

Ladies Home Journal 1873-1887 San Francisco, 1883-present Philadelphia

Ladies Quarterly Report of Broadway Fashion 1867-unknown NY

McCall's Magazine 1897-2001 NY

Metropolitan Fashions 1868-1899 NY

Milliner 1912-1916 NY

Milliner and Dressmaker 1870-1881 NY

Millinery Herald 1907-1910 NY

Millinery Trade Review 1876-1938 NY

Mirror of Fashion 1860-1865 NY

Peterson's 1850-1892 Philadelphia

Pictorial Review 1899-1939 NY

Quarterly Report of Metropolitan Fashions 1881-1896 NY

Sewing Machine Advocate 1879-1913 Chicago

Style 1880-1894 NY

Toilettes 1881-1914 NY

Vogue 1892-present NY

Woman's Home Journal 1878-1909 Boston

Women's / Home Companion 1873-1938 Cleveland/Springfield, OH

Women's World 1887-1896 NY

### Specific Issues

The American Modiste July 1, 1907

The Delineator February 1886

Demorest's Monthly Magazine July 1883

Metropolitan April 1871

The Milliner and Dressmaker May 1876



The Millinery Herald Spring 1907

Annual Reports / Circulars / Instructions / Courses of Study

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