

ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

No. 110, August 2014

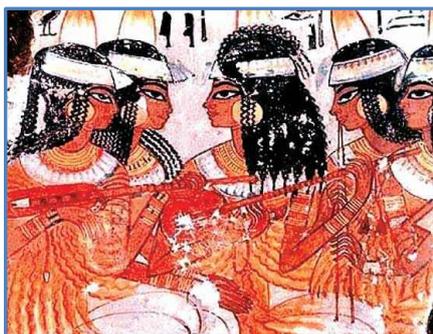
FROM THE COLLECTION



HATS



Hats have been around for a very long time. It's impossible to say when the first animal skin was pulled over a head as protection against the elements and although this was not a hat in the true sense, it didn't take long to realize that covering your head could sometimes be an advantage.



One of the first hats to be depicted was found in a tomb painting at Thebes and shows a man wearing a coolie-style straw hat.

This painting dates back to 3200 BC!

Hat-making has existed since the days of old. Millinery, as an art, has through the years, undergone various changes according to trends and cultures. Schools, sports, industrial plants, bureaus of law enforcement, and food preparation industries have now incorporated hats as part of their uniform. Head coverings still remain an essential part of some religions' protocol as a way of showing respect to their Gods. People also use hats to protect their faces from the hot sun's rays or in winter to keep the head warm. There were times in the past when hats were considered the most important part of the dress. They were not worn merely as a fashion accessory but as a marker of social status.

We have more than a dozen hats and caps in our collection and there are also several items associated with hats.

CAPS

Boudoir caps were popularly worn in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Originally worn over undressed hair, they were designed to be worn in the privacy of the boudoir with nightwear. The fashion was revived in the 1920's to protect short hairstyles whilst sleeping. The boudoir cap gradually evolved into the hairnet.



This boudoir cap is made from cream silk. The sections are crocheted silk thread with an insertion of silk brocade. Small pieces of bone have been inserted into the sides of the cap giving a stiffening effect over the ears of the wearer.

This beautiful cap, made by Mary McKeown (nee Ford), has been passed down through the McKeown family.

Fact: Through the 19th century nightcaps were often used by surgeons to secure bandages applied to wounds of the head.



This is a hand crocheted boudoir cap. It is of light blue thread crocheted with a fine piece of fabric around centre. Wire has been inserted into the cap at the sides.

It belonged to Mrs Clarrie Reynolds of Brodribb River.

Smoking Caps are caps worn by men while smoking to stop the hair from smelling of smoke. They also kept the head warm. They were popular in the period 1840-1880, usually worn by gentlemen in the privacy of their home.



This beautiful velvet smoking cap is lined with silk. The tops and sides are embroidered with tan coloured leaves. It was worn by James Stirling who was the first settler to occupy land in the Marlo township. He took over Corringale Station and later opened a hotel in Marlo. (Read more in Mary Gilbert's book)

Why do we say “mad as a hatter”?



In 18th and 19th century England the process of making felt involved toxic mercury that drove hat makers to madness.

This saying was in common usage at least 30 years before the publication of Carroll's novel.

TOP HATS

The first top hat created an enormous stir when it was worn in public. The hat maker walked along a busy London street wearing a top hat in the shape of a stovepipe. Within a short time, a large crowd had gathered around him. There was such chaos that the 'officer of the law' grabbed him by the collar and summonsed him before the court on 15 January 1797 accused of disturbing public order.

The officer, who dealt with the scandal, described the offence as follows:
"Hetherington had such a tall and shiny construction on his head that it must have terrified nervous people. The sight of this construction was so overstated that various women fainted, children began to cry and dogs started to bark. One child broke his arm among all the jostling."

Fact: Baseball umpires wore top hats in the 1850's.

Below is a 1920's black velour man's top hat with ribbon around base. It has a brown leather and cream silk inner.

Next to it is a bright red top hat keeper used to maintain the shape.

Inside is the inscription: Made expressly for Robertson & Moffat. Burke St East Melb.

The size is marked as 7 1/8 (a medium size)



Fact: London black taxis are made tall so that a gentleman can ride in them without taking off a top hat.

Who was the first person to pull a rabbit out of a hat?



In 1814 a Frenchman, Louis Comte, a celebrated nineteenth-century Parisian magician, may have become the first conjurer on record to pull a white rabbit out of a top hat.

HAT PINS

As far back as the Middle Ages in Britain and Europe pins were used as a device to securely hold the wimples and veils that proper ladies used to cover their hair in place. These small pins and wires were used for hundreds of years. They were generally hand-made. The height of the hatpin era was from about 1890 to 1925. That's when hats stopped using bonnet strings. It was liberating to get rid of the bonnet strings and use the hatpins to secure the hat on your head. Also, hairstyles were more elaborate and upswept, so wearers would use artificial hairpieces in their hair to help anchor the hat and give that upswept do look. If you see advertising from that era, you'll see ads for hairpieces.



This hat pin in our collection is made using a brass shank button possibly taken off a WW1 army tunic. It has the British coat of arms on it.

Suffragettes and Hat Pins

In 1908 an English judge fearing that their hat pins would be used as weapons ordered a group of suffragettes on trial to remove hat pins and hats.

STUART HATS in Stanley Street, Orbost, commenced manufacturing hats in about 1948 and closed their factory in Orbost around 1953 probably because of the high transport costs. The company's main factory was in Melbourne. The hats made in Orbost were sold all over Australia as well as in Melbourne at Myers and David Jones.

The building became first a Dry Cleaners and then a private home.



In our collection is this woven straw hat with a wide brim. It is a natural colour with braid as a hat band. Inside are two sewn on pieces for a pink tie. This hat was made at Stuart Hats.

Fact: In the 1920s there was an odd custom in America that it was common that if people wore straw hats after September 15 they were beaten up.



Aluminium hat stretchers were generally in use from the 1920's. The hat was placed on the aluminium dome shaped piece; when the handle was turned, the dome section split vertically, one section moving away from the fixed half. A graduated scale along the side indicated the size.

Hat sizes are determined by measuring the circumference of a person's head about 1/2 inch (1.3 cm) above the ears. Inches or centimeters may be used depending on the manufacturer. Felt hats can be stretched for a custom fit. Some hats, like hard hats and baseball caps, are adjustable. Cheaper hats come in "standard sizes", such as small, medium, large and extra-large.

Question: Was this hat stretcher used commercially here in Orbost?

HATS AS PART OF A UNIFORM

Hats have become a regular addition to many uniforms for protection against the elements, for ceremonial reason, religious reasons, for safety, or as fashion accessories. In our collection we have band hats, army hats, nurses' caps and school caps.



This black serge cap with a black shade peak on front has a brass lyre insignia badge on the front. The hat band is trimmed in gold braid.

It was part of the uniform of the Orbost Municipal Band. 1937-1975 (circa). It was worn by members of the Wehner family who played in the band. They were Tom, Eric and Max Wehner.

The Orbost Municipal Orbost Band played a major role in Orbost community activities. Charles Spink made sure each soldier returning home from the 1914 to 1918 war was welcomed home in front of the Shire Hall to the music of the Orbost Municipal Band.

The band played in the main street on most Friday nights and in 1929 the band played at the official opening of the Buchan Caves, by Sir Albert Lind.

All Collection Photos taken by Barry Miller