

# *Anatomy of a Straw Bonnet*

**General construction** – Straw bonnets were sewn by hand in the round. Plaits ranged from 1/8” split straw to 3/4” whole straw.

**Tip** – The back section of the crown is the tip. On a straw bonnet, this can be either domed or slightly flattened at the back curving to the side of the crown. It should not have a sharp angular transition from the back to the sides. (this is different than a buckram bonnet.)

**Crown** – The crown of a straw bonnet should create a smooth transition from the crown to the brim. Much of the shaping in the bonnet will be created on the top by adjusting the overlap of the straw plait or by using additional shorter layers of straw. The slope at the top should not have drastic curve.

**Brim** – The brim of a straw bonnet will vary according to fashion. The brim’s edge should be a single or double row of straw plait. It should not have raw edges needing to be bound.

**Cheek-tabs** – The cheek-tabs should have a gentle curve coming from the neck edge of the crown along the side of the bonnet dropping down to roughly your jaw line meeting the brim edge. This is a very graceful line, not a straight edge or a angular transition.

**Binding** – The binding on a straw bonnet should also be straw plait. Raw edges can be sandwiched between two rows of plait. Multiple layers of plait can be used to create a more decorative edge.

**Lining** – A lining is functional layer of light weight, open-weave cotton covering most of the interior of the bonnet. It is necessary inside a straw bonnet to keep the straw from snagging the hair underneath. The lining can not be seen when the bonnet is worn.

**Ruche/frill/cap** – This decorative layer of gathered cotton or silk covers the inside of the brim deep into the bonnet. The cap is full through-out the inside of the brim, including in 1860s bonnets which have flowers focused at the top and a full cap at the sides. The gathered layers can help the bonnet stay on your head.

**Curtain/Bavolet** – The curtain or Bavolet is attached to the binding on a straw bonnet along the sides and crown. This silk piece can be lined with net or crinoline to give it more body. It helps protect the neck. A curtain can be a single piece of fabric on the grain or bias. It can also match the ribbons used.

**Functional Ties** – The functional ties are attached to the interior of the cheek-tabs. These ties of narrower ribbon hold the bonnet in place.

**Decorative Ties** – Decorative ribbons are wide, 3”-8” silk. They are cut on the grain not the bias. They can be tied but do not take the stress of holding a bonnet in place.

**Exterior Decoration** – Exterior decorations can include ribbons, fabric, feathers, flowers, lace, and greenery. These were often pinned in place to enable easy adjustment. The position of the exterior decoration depends on the fashion of the year.

**Interior Decoration** – Interior decorations, most often flowers, also help keep your bonnet in place. During the 50s, the interior decoration is placed throughout the interior of the brim. During the early 60s, most decoration is found at the top of the brim’s interior.