

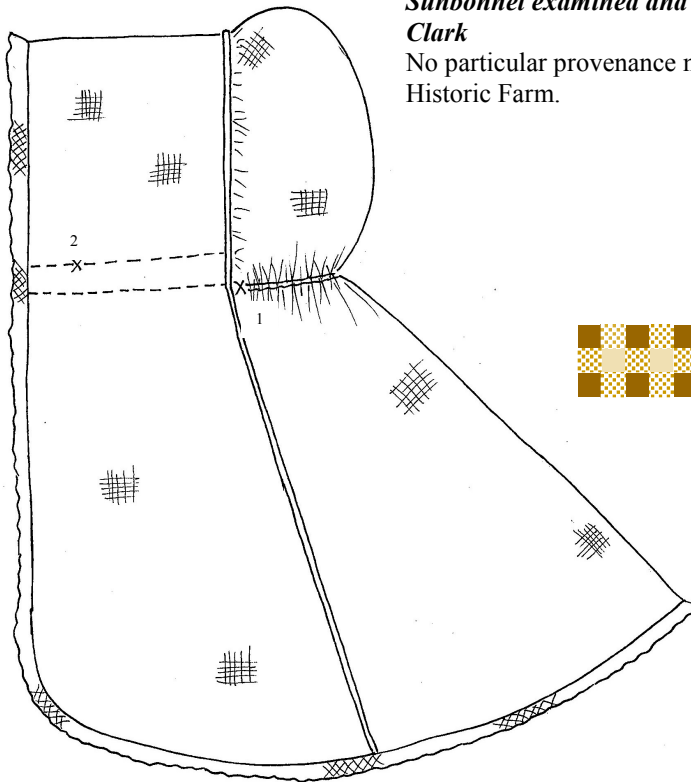
BROWN CHECK COTTON SUNBONNET

From the Mahaffie Stage Stop & Historic Farm Collection, Olathe KS

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Sunbonnet examined and described 15 Feb 2018, Elizabeth Stewart Clark

No particular provenance noted; purchased by Mahaffie Stage Stop & Historic Farm.



TEXTILES

Light, smooth-woven fine weave, moderate body; most likely cotton. No microscopic exam or burn test conducted.



1/8" check, medium honey-brown, mixed cream/brown, natural cream. Very fine threads, firm light weave; good body, no evidence of starch. Used for main body, brim facing, frill, ties (colored chart to scale)

1/16" check, same coloration, one-half scale of the main textile. Two variations used as the 3/8" (finished) bias facing where the main body and frill join, hiding all seam allowances.

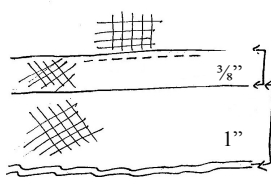
CONSTRUCTION FEATURES

Entire front piece, brim and curtain sections together, *cut as one* without a seam; 52" run of fabric required. Backs (left and right) cut with selvages seamed up the center back to the join with the brim.

Exposed seams to join the sections of the bonnet, and sections of the frill, are run by hand, seam allowances (fairly narrow, 1/4" or less) whipped by hand to finish.

Narrow self-fabric **bias piping** between brim/front curtain and crown/back curtain sections, seam allowances whipped. 1/16" diameter cord.

Brim facing in the main body fabric, only in the slatted area of the bonnet. Cut as one 7" x 21" piece (plus seam allowances); the right-most 7" edge is on a fine selvedge.

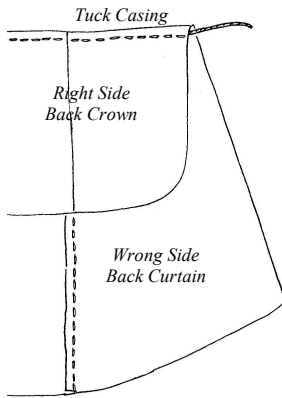


Detail edge frill construction, interior

3/8" (finished) **bias facing** from half-scale check fabric covers the seam joining the main bonnet and frill; in the faced brim section, the overall facing covers the seam. The narrow bias facing is present only below the brim facing area. See diagram to the left for frill and bias facing detail.

1" wide (finished) **bias frill** seamed and bias-faced on interior; 1/8" turned hem on free edge. Minimal fullness (bonnet measures 123" around entire brim/curtain edge; frill measures 155"; frill is slightly over 23% more full than the base bonnet, and appears "wrinkled on" versus full-gathered; the bias cut gives it a better show than straight-grain frills with the same fullness ratio); pieced in 5 sections.

Brim is **stabilized by 15 slat channels**, varying from 1-1/4" to 1-1/2" wide with no pattern to the variations. Visible small knot at the face edge of each channel row (on the interior brim facing).



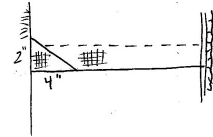
Back neck adjustment is handled through use of a **tuck casing** on the outside of the neck area. This clever casing keeps any bulk from the shirred bonnet fabric and cord on the outside of the bonnet.

After seaming the center back selvages, the crown portion of the back bonnet was folded horizontally 10-1/2" down the seamed center back, wrong sides together, and a 1/16" diameter cord stitched snug into the fold, forming a small tuck casing.

The cord is permanently secured at the right side as worn, sewn into the front/back seam during assembly.

At the left end of the tuck casing, the cord is not stitched through, but left free-floating on the inside of the bonnet neckline. A slip knot at the interior left end of the casing allows adjustment of fullness, or opening quite flat for pressing.

On the interior brim facing, **pieced triangular patch** at the front/back seam, fairly well-matched to the check pattern of the fabric. 2" tall at the back brim edge, 4" long (see diagram). This may have been a repair or a fabric-frugality measure at the time of construction.



Two **fabric ties** are still with the bonnet; the current attachment points may be a later alteration.

- One exterior at the front/back neck point (see X-1 on overall diagram).
- One interior, 2-3/8" from brim/face edge, along the top of the first slat channel (see X-2 on overall diagram)
- Each has one long edge a selvedge; the other long edge hem and end hem 1/8" turned and running-stitched
- 1-1/8" x 11-1/4" finished size, squared ends.

RECREATING THIS BONNET

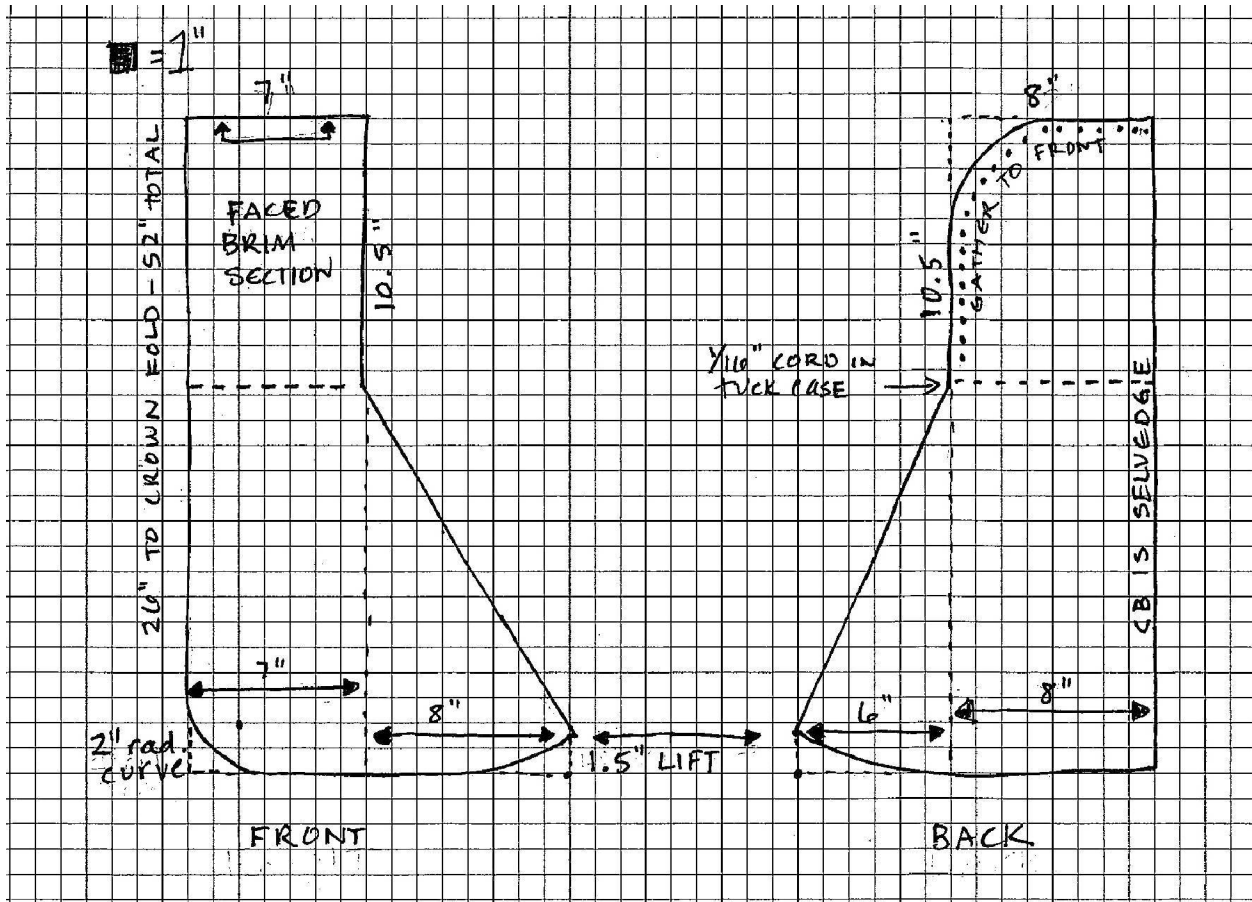
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Choose a fine, light fabric with a stable weave. Woven checks very similar to the extant can be found fairly easily. Allow about 2 yards for this bonnet, with another 1/4 yard in a check about half the scale of the main body check. Wash, dry, and press your fabric before cutting.

Draw up a paper pattern according to the scaled grid given on the next page (1 square = 1" enlarged).

CUT:

- 1 bonnet front on a fold of fabric (minimum 52" length of fabric required)
- 2 bonnet backs on the selvedge of fabric (flip the piece to position the top of the back crown near the hem edge of the front bonnet to conserve fabric)
- 1 brim facing 8" x 22".
- 4 ties, about 12" x 1-1/2" (or as long as desired)
- Piece 3/4" or 1" wide bias strips for the piping, 70" total when sewn together
- Piece 1-1/2" wide bias-strips for the frill, 152" total when sewn together
- From a similarly-colored 1/16" check, piece scant 1" wide bias strips for the bias facing, 140" total when sewn together



CONSTRUCTION:

Prepare the Piping: baste 1/16" diameter cotton cord into the fold of the narrower bias strips to create self-fabric piping.

Prepare the Bias Frill: seam the short ends to complete a large loop. Press one long edge to the wrong side 1/4"; tuck the raw edge under and hem with a small running stitch. Alternately, work a narrow rolled hem along one free edge.

Prepare the Ties: Press both long edges and one short end to the wrong side 1/4". Tuck the raw edges under and hem flat with the running stitch.

Prepare the Brim Facing: press both short edges to the wrong side 1/4"; press one long edge to the wrong side 1/4".

Seam Center Backs: stitch with as narrow a seam allowance as the selvages will allow. Press both seam allowances to one side.

Back Tuck Casing: fold the back bonnet wrong sides together at the neckline point. Stitch a 1/16" cord into the fold, leaving about 6" of cord free beyond the casing ends (to be trimmed shorter later). The tuck casing may cause a slight (1/8") offset in a precise match up of the front and back. This is quite insignificant, and will generally evaporate in the back crown gathering.

Prepare Back Crown: run two rows of small running stitches around the curved edge of the back crown, leaving sufficient thread ends to grasp for later gathering.

Pipe to Front Bonnet: with raw edges aligned, baste fine self-fabric piping right sides together with the front bonnet section, along the straight brim/crown edge and slanted front/back curtain edge. You may have a bit extra seam allowance on the piping; maintain a consistent 1/4" seam allowance on the bonnet body.

Join Front and Back: arrange the front and back curtain sections right sides together, and pin. Gently gather the back crown edge to fit the upper portion of the bonnet front. Pin as needed. Seam with a 1/4" allowance.

As you reach the back neck casing, stitch firmly through the cord on one side; do not stitch through the cord on the other side. Knot the secured end close to the stitching and clip off the extra. Leave the free end free-floating for now, but do a test pull to make sure it moves freely within the tuck casing.

Whip the raw edges of the front/back seam as desired.

Add the Frill: work running stitches along the free long edge of the bias frill. Pin right sides together with the edge of the bonnet and draw up the gathers very slightly to fit. Pin as needed.

Lay the brim facing right sides together with the bonnet front, centering it along the fold point marked on the diagram, and sandwiching the frill between bonnet and facing in the faced area. Pin as needed.

Lay the half-scale check bias strip to sandwich the bias frill in all the non-faced areas. Let the bias strip extend about 1/4" into the faced area; this will form a tidy finish very naturally when the facing and bias facing are sewn on.

Sew entirely around the outer edge of the bonnet, 1/4" seam allowance, to secure the frill, brim facing, and bias facing. Press in place, then press all the allowances toward the main bonnet body.

Hem Bias Facing: tuck the free bias edge under, and hem flat with small running stitches, pressing and easing around the curves.

Brim Facing: press the brim facing into place on the inside of the bonnet; hem the short, folded edges flat to the bonnet with a small running stitch. Mark slat casings as desired, making sure one is centered at the fold position from the grid diagram. Stitch slat casings with a small running stitch through all layers. Cut and insert strong pasteboard slats from the crown/brim end, and whip the folded edge of the casing closed with one or two stitches in each section, so they can be easily removed for laundering.

Alternately, quilt or cord the facing section as desired.

Add the Ties: locate the best interior and exterior tie positions for your needs; the interior ties will tie under your chin; the exterior ties will form a neat bow at the back neck. Fold the raw short end to the wrong side about 1/4". Fold a small box pleat at this edge and stitch the tie firmly to the bonnet. Alternately, you could use a woven cotton tape for the interior ties, and skip exterior ties entirely.

Adjust the Neck: tie a small overhand knot close to the casing on the free end of the neck cord. Trim off the excess. Draw up the interior cord to suit you; tie a small slipknot to secure the cord.

CARE & FEEDING OF YOUR MAHAFFIE-STYLED SUNBONNET

Under most circumstances, your bonnet will need laundering only when truly dirty, or when it has acquired scents you deem unattractive. Remove the slats and loosen the back neckline cord before laundering, drying, and pressing.

Between wearings, allow the bonnet to air and dry any perspiration.

Your sunbonnet adds an SPF of approximately 8 for your face, neck, and the back shoulders of your dress. However, be aware of the climate conditions and your own health needs, and add unscented sunblock as appropriate.

Would you like to see your new bonnet featured on The Sewing Academy? Please send us a few good-quality snapshots! Elizabeth@thesewingacademy.org