

## Restyling a Vintage Fur Hat

Many ladies had a mink hat to match their mink coat and they wore them both to church every Sunday. The hat was not designed for warmth, but the style of the day. It sat up on top of their hairdo and didn't actually help their head stay warm.

The photos below show one such hat – then and now!



This hat was originally folded with tucks sewn into the crown (below left) and so when it was taken apart, there was more hat there, than the original suggested. The lining was also



constructed to keep the hat shallow and maintain the folded look. The lining of this hat, made by Hurtig Furs, was red satin, covered with black lace. An interesting idea in itself! But the main formation was caused by an incredibly stiff netting sewn next to the fur, and included in the tucks. I've never seen any material like this, but it may be used by milliner's even today.

Once the netting and tucks were removed, the hat was shaped somewhat like a bowl (below left). The only seam is from the middle to the bottom edge. It's likely that this was a large farmed mink and that the pelt was folded in half and then a big V cut out where the seam is. (see the middle to about 6-o'clock for the faint seam line) (the green bit of silk is the reinforced area where I sewed on a snap).



I dampened the hat areas where the tucks and creases occurred, and then pulled it over the glass head, and let it dry 24 hours. One could potentially wet it more and pull it over a larger pot or bowl to make it slightly larger. I had tried it on and it seemed to fit, so didn't try to make it larger. BUT I made the classic mistake of forgetting what room the lining and turned under edge take, so the finished hat is a size small, not a medium – the size I need.



I choose 100% silk with subtle stripes in it for the lining. I used a very simple pattern but added a very thin wool batting as interlining. It is typical to use interlining against the pelt, but isn't necessary. Since fur is a natural fibre and biodegradable, I wanted to use natural fibre lining and interlining too.

The lining/interlining was placed into the hat "bowl" and a narrow edge of fur was turned inwards and over the bottom edge of the lining. Every few stitches, a stitch was made through the turned in fur edge, the lining, and the outer fur of the hat. This helps secure the edge to stay turned inward. The other stitches are just between the lining and fur edge.



The hat could be left as is at this stage. Or some decoration added to it. The decoration on the original hat was fastened at the center top, and made of brown satin. For this hat, I added a natural red fox pom that can be snapped onto the side, or not. One could even have other decorations that snap on instead. Pom poms are currently fashionable additions, although they were not used on vintage hats.

- Sheila Schmutz, Wear Our Heritage, Saskatoon, Canada  
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