

Millinery Museum's hats enthrall residents at Heritage House exhibit

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The New Tanner

Until recent times women weren't properly dressed unless they wore a hat.

Linda Francis and Norma Shephard recall those times with their hobby-come-avocation. The two Burlington women operate the Mobile Millinery Museum, Canada's only museum dedicated exclusively to hats.

They set up displays of ladies' hats in museums as well as in historic buildings, like Casa Loma.

In addition to these stationary exhibits, they have taken their collection on the road all over the province to churches, nursing and retirement homes, libraries, schools, and historical societies. On a number of occasions they have been the entertainment at a fund raising event.

They have also been tapped as a source for historical accuracy when costume designers plan outfits for plays or historical performances.

The ladies began by buying their hats. Although they purchased about 1,100 of the 1,600 in their collection, they have received the remainder as donations. They also make their own sometimes, using vintage materials as they come across them.

Francis and Shephard recently held an exhibit at Heritage House, near Guelph where retirement home residents sported their own bonnets of various eras.

In their preamble, Shepard said until the mid 1960s a woman could not appear in court without a hat. In case she did show up improperly attired, the court had a box of old hats for borrowing. Women were not the only one with rules to follow at court. Men had to have a tie and like women's hats, the court kept ties available for males to borrow in an emergency.



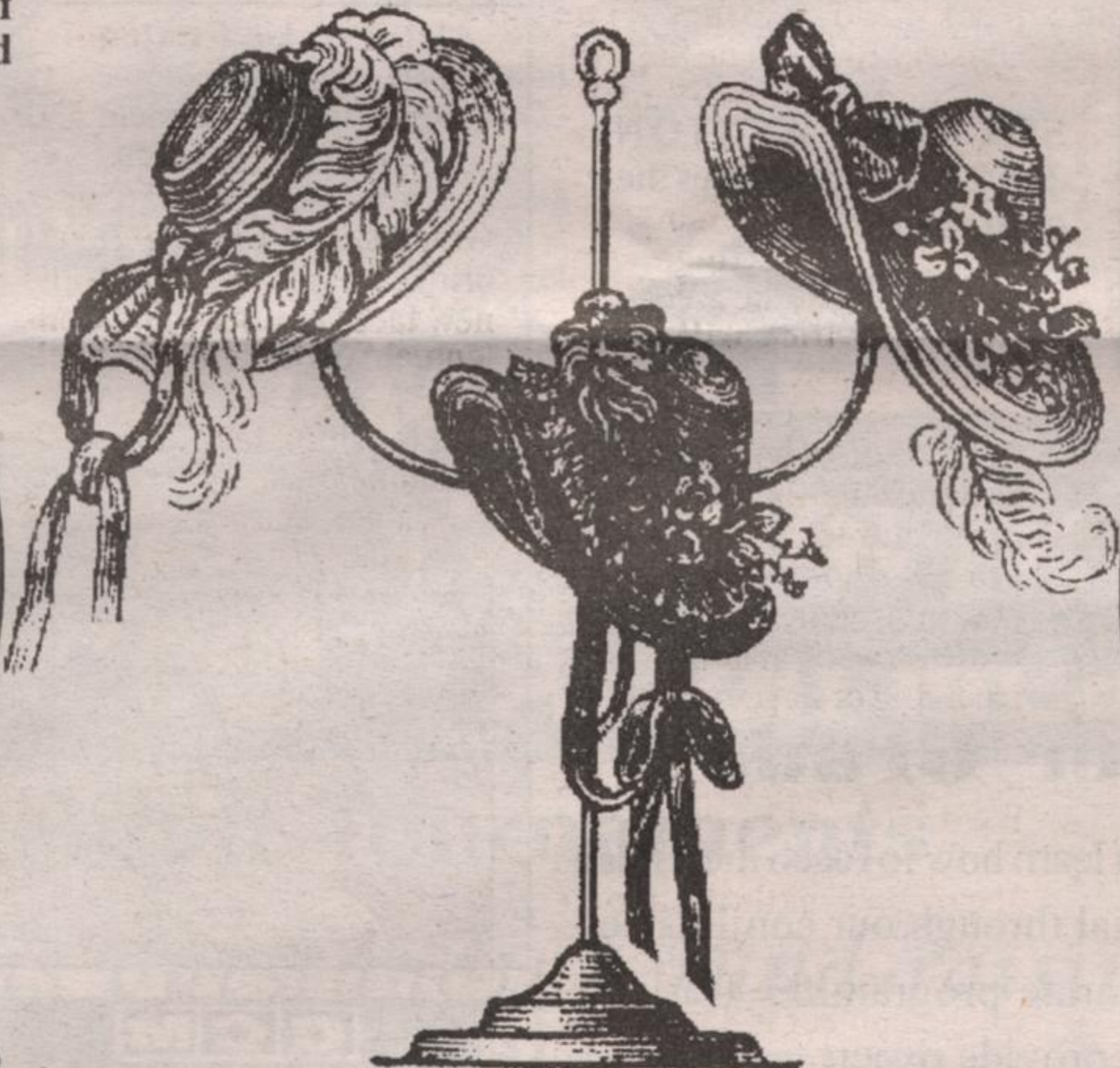
THE TRIMMINGS: Linda Francis, co-owner of the Mobile Millinery Museum, displayed a case full of the trimming which could be added or substituted on a bare Bobby Dowser hat form.



EYE CATCHING COLOUR: Mary Jones prepares to stroll off with a mushroom shaped hat in fuchsia straw with a large silk rose to add back interest.



GOOD SPORT: Robert Jackson, 91, took it all in good part when the lady beside him donated her hat to the first available head and went off to model another chapeau



Photos by Maggie Petrushevsky



I'M OFF: Marjorie King, purse and gloves in place, prepares to model a beige straw of the type popular during the early 1960s.



TURN OF LAST CENTURY: Linda Francis settled a Victorian tricorne for Olive Colling to model for her fellow residents at Heritage House.



FEATHERED DISPLAY: Museum co-owner Linda Francis places a feathered bowler on the head of Heritage House resident Olive Colling.



Linda Francis ties the lace fissure on the lacquered straw cartwheel motoring hat from the 1920s which Mary Jones modelled during the Heritage House show from the Burlington Mobile Millinery Museum.