Baker Street Elementary

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



Baker Street Elementary

THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON # 128 - WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR HEAD? - AUGUST, 2023



WELCOME TO TOPIC NUMBER # 128... TODAY WE WILL BE LOOKING HATS AS PART OF FASHION DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.





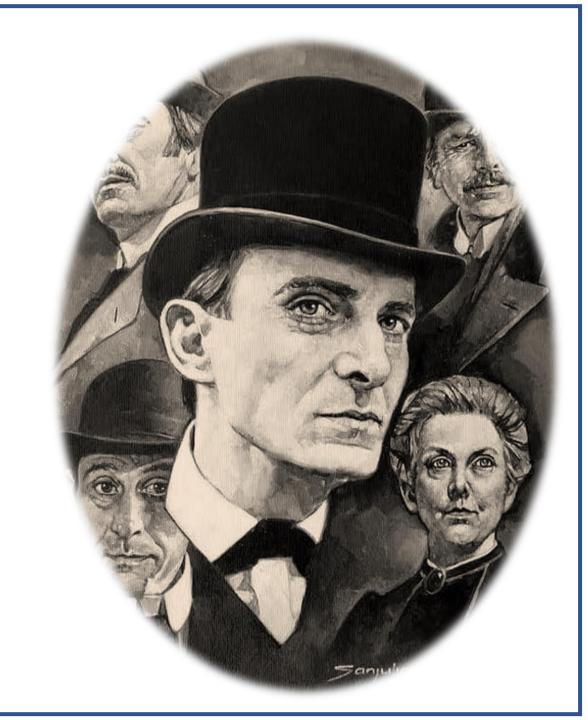
IN FIVE CASES, YOU TELL ME, 'GET YOUR HAT' PRIOR TO US HEADING OUT ON AN ADVENTURE.





EVERY PROPER VICTORIAN KNEW ONE SIMPLY DID NOT GO OUT IN PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE OFFICE, WITHOUT AN APPROPRIATE HEAD COVERING... UNLESS THEY WERE IN THE COUNTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE JOINED ME ON THE STREET WITH A DEERSTALKER.





WHILE MANY OF THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS
INCLUDED YOU IN SUCH ATTIRE, THE HAT WAS
NEVER MENTIONED IN THE CANON, AND WAS NOT
APPROPRIATE FOR THE CITY.





A VARIETY OF OTHER CHOICES EXISTED FOR VICTORIAN MEN, HOWEVER, ONE'S SOCIAL STATUS AND THE FASHION AT THE TIME DICTATED THE EXACT STYLE.







WHILE NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF EITHER THE TYPE OF HAT MENTIONED IN THE CANON OR DURING THE 1800Ss MEN'S HATS INCLUDED THE FLAT CAP, THE TOP HAT (TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE STOVEPIPE AND THE OPERA HAT), THE BOWLER, THE HOMBERG, AND THE BOATER.





THE WOOL CAP HAS PERHAPS THE LONGEST HISTORY. IN 1571, PARLIAMENT DECREED THAT ALL MALES OVER THE AGE OF SIX MUST WEAR A WOOL CAP ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.





THE NOBILITY WAS EXCLUDED, LEADING TO AN ASSOCIATION OF THE FLAT CAP WITH THE WORKING CLASS.



TOP HATS HAVE A LONG HISTORY IN ENGLAND AND WERE ORIGINALLY MADE OF FELT FROM BEAVER OR RABBIT FUR. THE SILK TOP HAT MADE ITS APPEARANCE IN ENGLAND IN 1797.



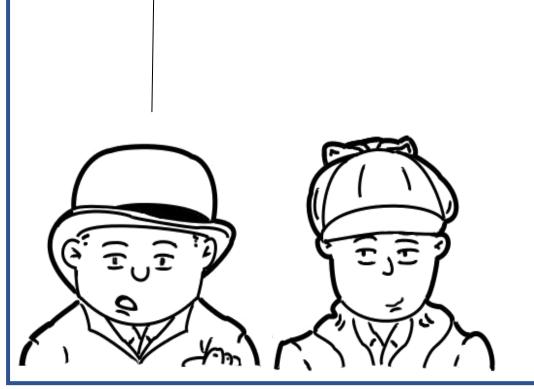


YOUNG MEN WHO MADE THEIR GRAND TOUR IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE RETURNED WITH FRENCH TOP HATS. CHEESECLOTH, LINEN AND FELT WERE ARRANGED AROUND A WOODEN HAT MOLD AND THEN SHELLACKED TO CREATE THE STIFF FORM.

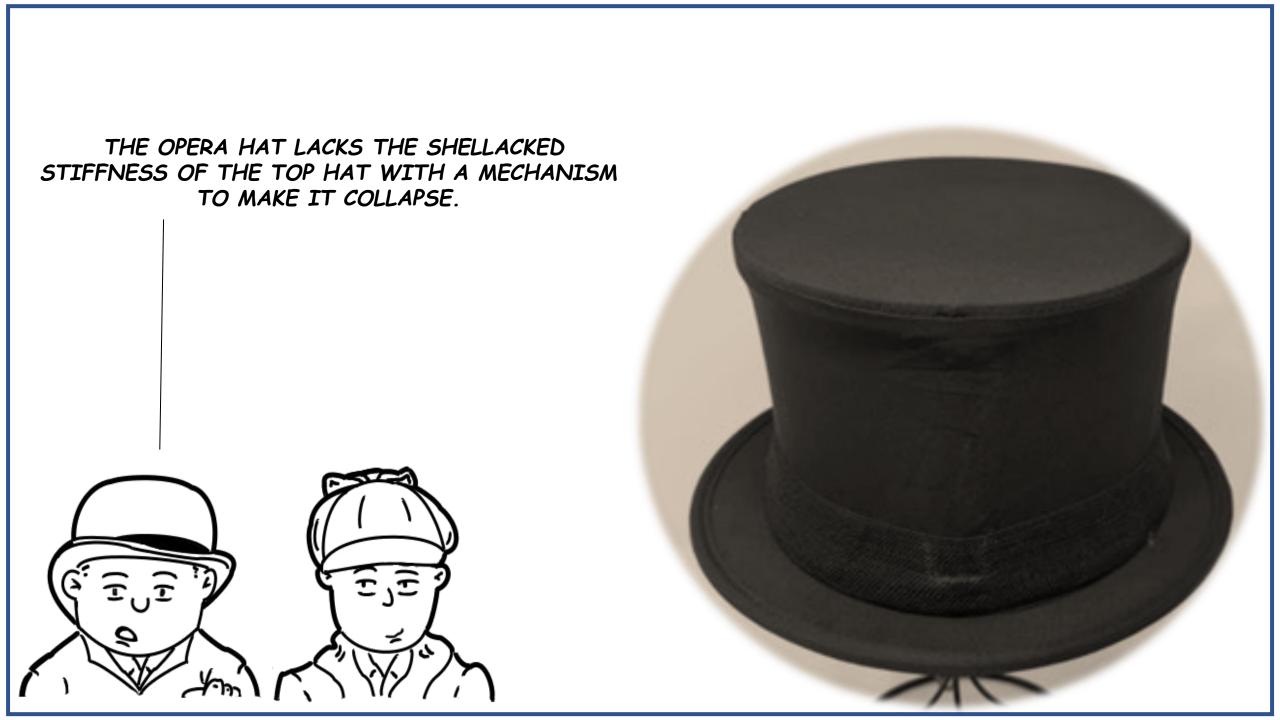




THE FINAL STEP WAS COVERING IT IN FRENCH SILK. THE TOP HAT HAD A DIFFERENT SHAPE FROM THE STOVEPIPE (WORN BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN). THIS TALL HAT WAS STRAIGHT WHILE THE TOP HAT WAS CURVED.







WHILE THE UPPER CLASS INTRODUCED THE TOP HAT, BY MID-CENTURY ALL CLASSES WORE THE STYLE (BECOMING A SYMBOL FOR CHIMNEY SWEEPS), AND THEN IT RETURNED TO THE UPPER CLASSES BY THE END OF THE CENTURY.

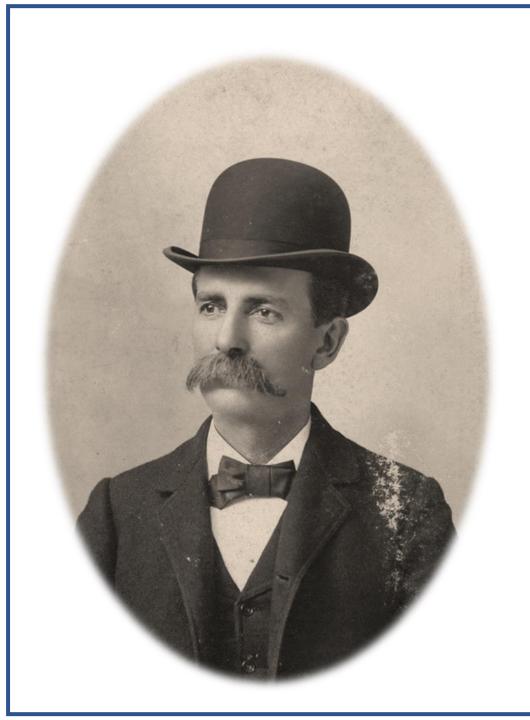




THE BOWLER (SUCH AS THE ONE SHOWN IN THE ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS ON YOUR HEAD) WAS INVENTED IN 1850 AND WAS ORIGINALLY USED BY GAMEKEEPERS BUT WAS ADOPTED BY THE UPPER CLASSES AND THEN MOVED TO THE CITIES WHERE THE LOWER CLASSES USED IT AS WELL.







THIS PARTICULAR HAT EVEN MADE IT TO SOUTH AMERICA WHERE A SHIPMENT TO BRITISH RAILWAY WORKERS IN BOLIVIA FOUND THEM TOO SMALL FOR THEIR HEADS.



THE BRITONS SHIFTED THEIR SALES APPROACH TO WOMEN, CONVINCING THEM THE HAT WAS THE LATEST FASHION IN EUROPE.







THE HATS FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE TRADITIONAL DRESS OF THE CHOLITA, INDIGENOUS BOLIVIAN WOMEN.



THE HOMBERG APPEARED IN 1870 AND WAS POPULARIZED BY THE PRINCE OF WALES.





THIS WAS CONSIDERED AN INFORMAL HAT.

THE STRAW BOATER ALSO MADE ITS

APPEARANCE IN 1870 WITH A MACHINE THAT

COULD SEW STRAW.

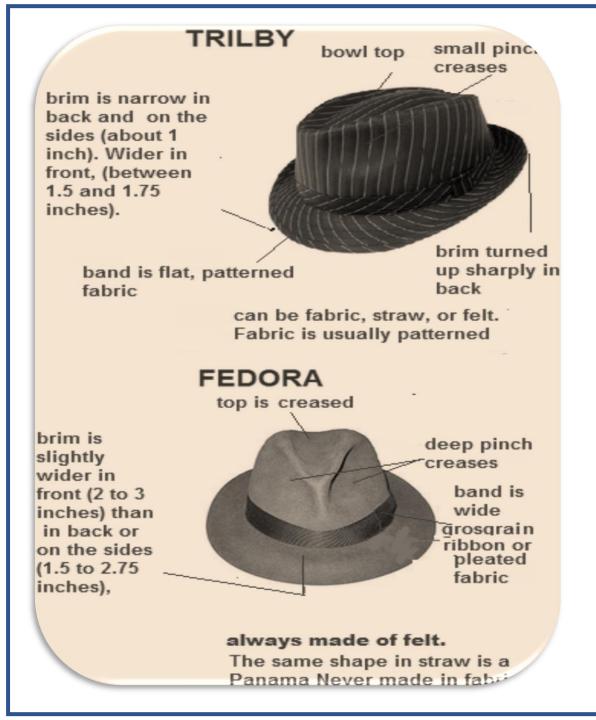






AS NOTED, SEVERAL HATS WERE MADE WITH FELT. THIS PROCESS INVOLVES USING STEAM TO DRAW FIBERS FROM RABBITS, BEAVERS, OR WOOL INTO A CONE MOLD.





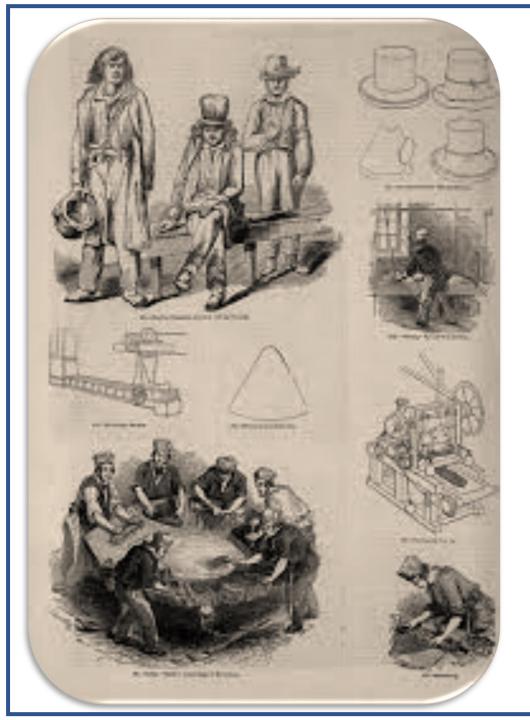
THIS MATERIAL IS THEN WASHED IN HOT WATER SEVERAL TIMES TO MAKE IT SHRINK TO THE APPROPRIATE THICKNESS FOR HAT-MAKING.



IN ADDITION TO HOT WATER, MERCURY NITRATE WAS OFTEN USED TO INCREASE THE BINDING PROCESS.







THIS LED TO MERCURY POISONING FOR WORKERS IN THE HAT FACTORIES, AND THE TERM 'MAD AS A HATTER.' THE PROCESS DID NOT END UNTIL THE 20TH CENTURY.



WHILE THE CANON INCLUDES MORE THAN SIXTEEN TYPES OF HAT AND EIGHT TYPES OF CAP WORN BY HOLMES AND VARIOUS CLIENTS, I INCLUDED FEW DESCRIPTIONS OF WHAT WOMEN WORE ON THEIR HEADS.





THIS LACK OF DISCUSSION OF WOMEN'S HEADWEAR MOST LIKELY RESULTED FROM SHIFTING FASHIONS AND SEASONS.





AN APPROPRIATE HAT FOR SUMMER—USUALLY MADE OF STRAW—WOULD NEVER DO FOR WINTER ATTIRE MADE OF SUCH MATERIALS AS VELVET.





OVER TIME, BRIMS WOULD CHANGE LENGTH, OFTEN ADAPTED TO THE CURRENT HAIRSTYLES. ADORNMENTS FROM FEATHERS TO WHOLE BIRDS APPEARED. HAT PINS ARRIVED TO HOLD THE ITEM IN PLACE.

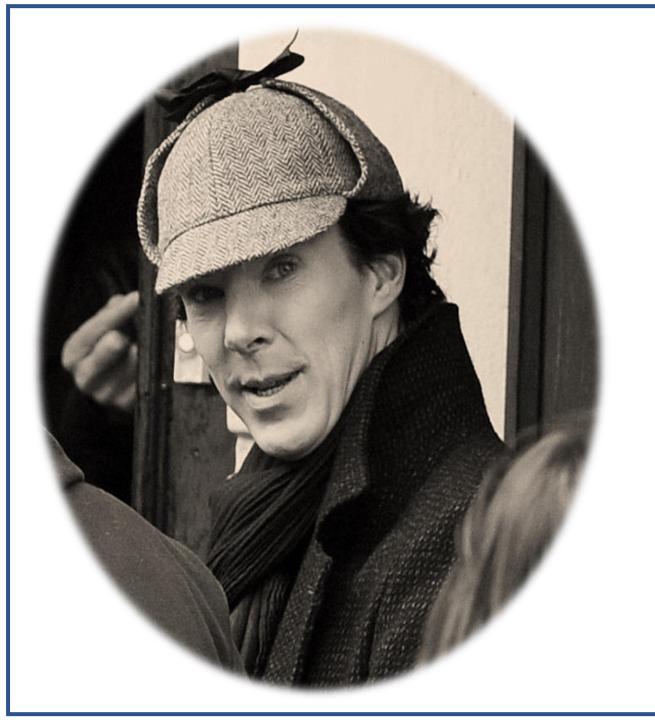




ALTHOUGH YOUR SUPERIOR OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE CHANGES, I MIGHT SIMPLY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DO THE SAME.







IN ANSWER TO THE DIRECTIVE, 'GET YOUR HAT,'
BOTH OF US HAD A VARIETY OF CHOICES, BUT
RARELY THE BELOVED DEERSTALKER.



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 128 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 129, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT MATHEMATICS DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.





ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR FOR THIS TOPIC:

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- HTTPS://TRAVELANDKEEPFIT.COM/EN/2018/06/29/BOLIVIAN-CHOLITAS-AND-THE-VERY-WEIRD-STORY-OF-THEIR-BOWLER-HATS/
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- HTTPS://WWW.HATREALM.COM/WHY-WAS-MERCURY-USED-IN-HAT-PRODUCTION/
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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

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