CHAPTER 4

STITCH SELECTION GUIDE

What is the secret of creating the special custom touch in millinery? One of the first techniques a custom milliner acquires is that of mastering the basic hand stitches. We could say that a custom made hat is a hand stitched hat.

The following illustrations will help to explain the fundamental stitches needed to create professional-looking millinery. It will be easier to make the right stitches for the job is you choose the appropriate needle size and kind of thread. For best results, buy quality steel needles and use thread which is suitable for the fibers in your fabric. Review Chapter 3 for thread and needle selection.

The BASTING STITCH is a temporary stitch that is removed after the seam is completed. Work from RIGHT TO LEFT. Use a single thread. Make the stitches about 1/4 inch apart. Do not pull the thread too tight.

The BACK STITCH is used for permanent stitching. It gives the appearance of machine stitching on the upper side. Work from RIGHT TO LEFT. Use a single knotted thread. Bring needle to upperside of fabric. Take a stitch 1/8 inch back and bring needle forward and out 1/8 inch to the left of where thread came out. To continue, insert needle in end of last stitch and then bring needle out one stitch length ahead. Keep a straight line. The stitches on the underside will be twice as long as those on the upper side. Make stitches through all layers of fabric.
The SLIPSTITCH is used when the stitches must be almost invisible on the right side. The stitch is usually used on an area with one edge turned under. It is also used to sew headsize (headband) ribbon inside the crown of a hat. Baste or pin the folded edge in position. Work from RIGHT TO LEFT. Using single knotted thread, insert your needle just under the folded edge. Directly beneath and just under the folded edge, catch a few threads of the fabric. Then directly above and in the folded edge, insert the needle along the fold for about 1/4 inch. Pull thread through the fabric. Repeat. Try not to have the stitches show on the right side of the fabric.

WIRE STITCH (a variation of the BUTTON-HOLE STITCH) Used to hold wire in place on the brim edge of a foundation frame. Work from RIGHT TO LEFT. Hold wire in place on brim edge with your thumb and first finger of left hand. Start by taking two or three stitches over the wire to fasten the thread. Make your stitches about 1/2 inch apart. Insert the needle from back to front into the foundation frame edge just below the wire. Pull thread until a small loop remains. Insert the needle through the loop from back to front and draw thread tight.

The STAB STITCH is made by "stabbing" the threaded needle through the fabric and back again, one stitch at a time. Work from RIGHT TO LEFT. A variation of the BASTING STITCH, it is used when covering the wired edge of a foundation brim with crinoline bias binding, when attaching crown to brim, for holding folds in place when covering a turban, or for attaching trim.