



THREE WOMEN
OF TASTE AND STYLE:
THEIR HATS FROM THE 1870S
THROUGH THE 1940S

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THE CHARLES HOSMER
MORSE MUSEUM
of American Art

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

THIS INSTALLATION of 22 hats includes bonnets, cloches, and flowery straws bearing labels from Chicago, New York, and Paris, all representing the best of the milliner's art. Setting off the wearer's face and complimenting her dress, a hat was, until the middle of the 20th century, a way for a woman to express her senses of style, beauty, artistry, and occasionally, frivolity.

The hats, all from the Morse's permanent collection, were purchased and worn by women whose lives are integral to the museum's own history and mission.

Martha Owens Morse and Elizabeth Morse Genius were the wife and daughter, respectively, of Chicago industrialist and Winter Park philanthropist Charles Hosmer Morse for whom the Museum is named. Jeannette Genius McKean, his granddaughter, founded the Museum in 1942. They were women of education, taste, and talent, who though always fashionably dressed, were never slaves to the latest fad. As this selection of hats shows, they took joy in choosing styles they felt best suited them.

Martha Owens Morse (1840 – 1903)

Martha Owens Morse was the daughter of a prominent Cincinnati family. Born in 1840, she married Charles Hosmer Morse in 1868 and played her role as the wife of the successful Chicago industrialist with elegance and high style.

Fortunately for posterity, Martha saved in a trunk three bonnets that may have been part of her trousseau or purchased in her first years of marriage.

First is a purple silk bonnet with a

Paris label (FIG 1). Very similar in shape and construction are a green silk bonnet and one of blue silk spangled tulle. Two such bonnets were illustrated in *Journal des Demoiselles* in December of 1867, only one example of this flattering, face-framing shape appearing in the fashion plates of the many popular ladies' magazines.

The fashionable silhouette of the 1870s started as a skirt with its fullness swept to the back over a puffy bustle. As this shape slimmed through the



Charles Hosmer Morse and Martha Owens Morse on their honeymoon, 1868.

decade, hats perched higher and higher on hair that was swept to the back echoing the bustle.

From the first years of the 1880s, Martha saved a pale green straw milliner's confection. It sat high on her chignon of braids, covered with spring flowers, and trailing long streamers of black velvet ribbon down her back. The bustle was now replaced by a style that gave a curving silhouette from shoulder to hip, ending with a little train.

Then the bustle returned, reaching its largest proportion in the mid-1880s. Numerous hat shapes were popular, but Martha preferred beautifully crafted small bonnets, worn high on the crown of her head.

Two of these bonnets were import-

ed from Paris by Brown, Importer, at the Palmer House in Chicago. One is a delicately braided straw with tiny pink blossoms, black velvet ribbons, and a wired bow of *point de gaze*, the last of the great handmade needle laces. Another is made of dark brown velvet and gilt beads, a pouf of beige velvet rising in front of a dark brown velvet bow at the top of the crown. A tailored chin strap does not actually fasten the bonnet, but makes an oval frame for the face.

By 1890 the bustle had disappeared, and ladies' skirts assumed the graceful shape of an inverted lily. Sleeves were growing larger, and hats—with or without a brim—sat on top of the head with trimmings rising ever higher.

Martha still liked the bright colors she had chosen as a bride as reflected by the ruched, or ruffled, ruby red velvet hat from Louise & Co. in New York (FIG 2).

Throughout the years represented by Martha's hats, there were many fashionable shapes at any one time, but in each era she chose certain styles that she judged to be the most becoming. All of her hats are crafted of luxurious materials and are high expressions of the milliner's art.



FIG. 1

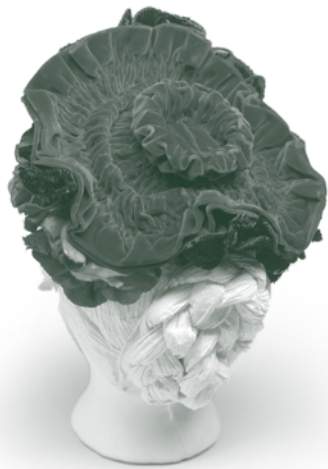


FIG. 2

OBJECT GUIDE:

1) **Bonnet, 1869-72** (FIG. 1). Purple ribbed silk trimmed with velvet foliage. Label: Moreau Didsbury, Modes, Parures 23 Boulevard des Capucines, Paris, en face l'entrée du Grand Hotel. (NY 012-010).



FIG. 3

- 2) **Bonnet, 1869-72.** Green silk velvet trimmed with velvet leaves and green silk grosgrain ties. No label. (NY 012-003).
- 3) **Bonnet, 1869-72.** Blue silk tulle spangled with gilt speckles, accented with blue satin cording. No label. (NY 012-012).
- 4) **Bonnet, early 1880s.** Pale green straw covered with spring flowers, trimmed with cascading black velvet ribbons. No label. (NY 012-013).
- 5) **Bonnet, 1884-86.** Dark brown velvet and gilt beads creating a spiral-shaped crown, trimmed with beige velvet ribbon and tailored chin strap. Label: Brown, Importer, Modes de Paris, 171 Wabash Ave. Chicago. (NY 012-014).
- 6) **Bonnet, 1884-86.** Braided straw trimmed with silk flowers, black velvet ribbon, and a wired bow of *point de gaze*. Label: Brown, Importer, Modes de Paris, 171 Wabash Ave. Palmer House, Chicago. (NY 012-016).
- 7) **Hat, 1890-92.** Dark green velvet trimmed with jet and a decorative buckle. Label: Ballenberg, Chicago, N.W. cor. Wabash Ave. & Monroe St. (NY 012-005).
- 8) **Hat, 1890-92** (FIG. 2). Red velvet ruched around a tall crown trimmed with black sequined floral forms.

Label: Louise & Co. Milliners, New York, Trademark Registered, Paris, London, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, (by appointment) New York. (NY 012-001).

Elizabeth Morse Genius (1872-1928)

Born in the Victorian Age, Elizabeth Morse Genius was encouraged to develop her artistic talent through study and travel. At the age of 17, she spent a year living with a Russian family in Moscow and at their summer home in Dresden. Upon returning home, she attended Wellesley College, receiving a diploma in art.

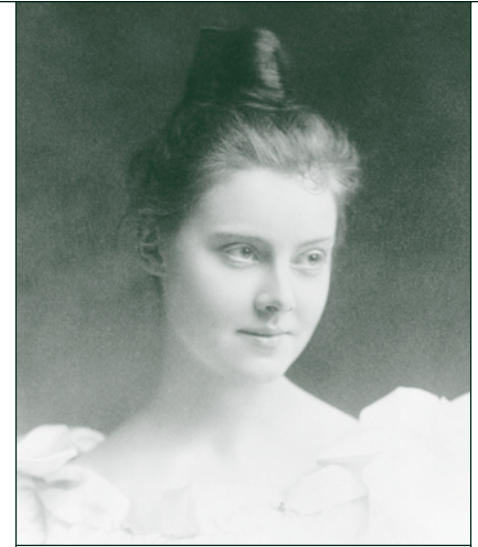
A photograph taken in 1895 when she was 23 reveals a smiling young woman, her hair in the fashionable rolls and topknot made famous by the drawings of Charles Dana Gibson.

Elizabeth married in 1905, and a few years later she wore a large wide brimmed hat from Barbour & Co. in Chicago. These huge hats set off the high-waisted, figure hugging fashions of the years before World War I. Elizabeth's hat is pale yellow silk, its huge brim with a flirtatious tilt, lined in black velvet.

Six years later, Elizabeth wore a brown satin toque trimmed with beige ostrich plumes, its brim low on the brow to emphasize the wearer's eyes (COVER). The toque shape was popular during and after the war, co-existing with other styles, all of them worn just above the eyebrows.

During this period she purchased American Impressionist paintings, many of which are in the Museum collection today.

Elizabeth wore one of the other styles in about 1921, a dramatic black



Elizabeth Morse [Genius], 1895.

straw cloche with a broad brim (FIG 4). A few years later she wore a classic navy blue cloche of straw and felt decorated with diamanté clips, costume jewelry that resembles closely-set small diamonds. She continued, however, to like the toque shape and was photographed in her garden in 1925 wearing the toque shape with a satin dress.

A woman of many interests Elizabeth brought her artistic talent not only to her painting but to other facets of her busy life, including fashion.



FIG. 4



FIG. 5

OBJECT GUIDE:

- 1) **Hat, 1909-12.** Yellow silk with large brim lined in black velvet. Tulle trimming replaced.
Label: Barbour & Co., 42 E. 43rd St. Chicago. (NY 019-001).
- 2) **Hat, 1915-17 (COVER).** Toque shape of brown satin trimmed with beige ostrich plumes.
Label: Blackstone Shop, Gowns, Millinery, Chicago. (T-M-004)
- 3) **Hat, 1920-22 (FIG. 4).** Wide-brimmed cloche of fine black straw, trimmed with black velvet and diamanté costume pins.
Label: Leschin Inc., Importers, Chicago. (T-M-024).
- 4) **Hat, 1924-25.** Navy blue straw cloche with turned-back felt brim and diamanté pin.
Label: Carson Pirie Scott & Co., Chicago. (T-M-010)

Jeannette Genius McKean
(1909–1989)

A generous philanthropist, effective businesswoman, and founder of the Morse Museum, Jeannette Genius McKean was also an accomplished artist and designer. Her selection of hats well reflects her marvelous sense of color and proportion.

While Jeannette was a young teenager, all girls and women wore hats for any outdoor activity. From her teen years are two draped cloches, violet and pink. Another hat, a cloche in delicate blue horsehair, softly sets off a young woman's face.

As the decade progresses, Jeannette—and her hats—become more sophisticated. In the mid-1920s Jeannette liked the head-hugging cloche draped to one side or the other, hiding all of her bobbed hair. A cream-colored ribbed silk hat is trimmed with folds of fabric, ribbon, and a dagger-shaped rhinestone pin. From this same time is a sleek asymmetrical navy blue felt cloche trimmed with a band of navy blue straw (FIG. 3).

Not all Jeannette's hats hugged the head, and a very sophisticated design is a beige felt trimmed in a scrolling shape of dark brown furred hide.

At the end of the 1920s, softer outlines began to prevail, represented by a cocoa-brown cloche shaped, a bit off the face, with a sculpted brim decorated with three white fabric gardenias.

Skipping forward a bit more than a decade is Jeannette's "going away" hat from her wedding day June 28, 1945. From the custom millinery salon of Bergdorf Goodman, New York, innocent daisies tilt dramatically over one eye.



Jeannette Genius [McKean], 1926.

In the same year, Jeannette visited The Gloria Hat Shoppe in Orlando and came away with a confection of cream horsehair and lilacs, with that same arch tilt over one eye. Juxtaposition of different textures make a hat from the very end of the 1940s a striking accessory. Creamy-white silky plush covers an asymmetrical brim with just one red rose trembling on the edge.

Jeannette's personal choices, from her wardrobe to her approach to life, reflected her considerable artistic talent.

OBJECT GUIDE:

- 1) **Hat, 1923-25.** Blue ruffled horse hair braid with turned-back brim, trimmed with a blue velvet bow.
Label: Jane Parker, Paris, New York. (T-M-013)
- 2) **Hats, 1923-26.** Draped felt cloches with soft turned-back brims and crescent shapes.
Label in both hats: G. Toy. (Violet, T-M-014), (Pink, T-M-016)
- 3) **Hat, 1925-26.** Cream ribbed silk cloche trimmed on the right side with matching grosgrain ribbon and a long rhinestone pin.
No label. (T-M-005)
- 4) **Hat, 1925-26 (FIG. 3).** Navy blue felt cloche with asymmetrical drape trimmed with a band of navy blue straw. No label. (T-M-021).
- 5) **Hat, 1927-28.** Beige felt, asymmetrical draped cloche trimmed with dark brown furred hide.
Label: Blackstone Shop, Michigan Boulevard South, Chicago. (NY-024-003)
- 6) **Hat, 1929-30.** Cocoa-brown straw cloche with turned-back brim trimmed with three white fabric gardenias.
No label. (T-M-022)
- 7) **Hat, 1945 (FIG. 5).** White textured fabric trimmed with white daisies and green grosgrain ribbon.
Label: Bergdorf Goodman, on the Plaza, New York. (NY-018-004)
- 8) **Hat, 1945-46.** Ivory horsehair braid trimmed with mauve lilacs, black velvet ribbon and veiling.
Label: The Gloria Hat Shoppe, Inez Thomas, Orlando, Florida. (NY-018-005).
- 9) **Hat, 1947-50.** White plush with a wide, shaped brim, trimmed with a single red rose and black veiling.
Label: Custom-Made Hats by Rochelle, 531 Madison Ave., New York. (NY-016-009).

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On the Cover: *Hat, 1915-17*. Toque shape of brown satin trimmed with beige ostrich plumes.
Label: Blackstone Shop, Gowns, Millinery, Chicago. (T-M-004)