

SUNBONNETS

Every year the Ithaca City School fourth-grade classes visit the historic Eight Square Schoolhouse at the corner of Route 13 and Hanshaw Road.

At SewGreen, we'll will celebrate by making a classic SUNBONNET.

If you were a girl in the late 1800s, you would wear to school a sunbonnet made of CALICO or GINGHAM, and a simple plaid or checked dress. Over the dress, you would wear a PINAFORE.

Women used to hand stitch sunbonnets from turkey-feed sacks back in the days when grain came in fancy print cotton bags!

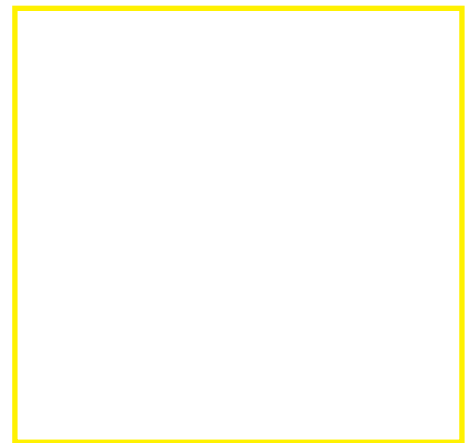


The Eight-Square Schoolhouse was built in 1827.

How many years ago was that? _____



CALICO — a coarse-weave cotton printed with small floral or geometric patterns



GINGHAM — a woven fabric of checks, stripes, or plaid.

LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE SUNBONNET



“She had a clean calico dress to wear and she had shoes. While she hurried to the house, she thought that Ma might let her wear her Sunday hair-ribbon and perhaps Mary’s freshly ironed sunbonnet.” . . .

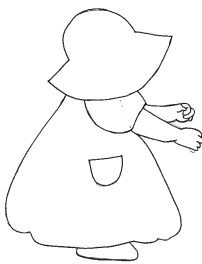
“quickly they changed to fresh dresses and shoes. But Ma saw no reason for hair-ribbons on a weekday and she said Laura must wear her own sunbonnet. ‘It would be fresher’, Ma said, ‘if you took care to keep it so.’ Laura’s bonnet was limp from hanging down her back and the strings were limp too. But that was Laura’s own design.”

~ from *The Long Winter* by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Laura’s sunbonnet — when she ironed it — probably looked a lot like this.



A POPULAR DESIGN



The sunbonnet became a theme used in quilts, often known as **SUNBONNET SUE**. It was probably Kate Greenaway in 1870 who introduced the design — a young girl, usually in silhouette, whose bonnet hides her face.



An illustration from an early reading book called “*The Sunbonnet Babies’ Primer*”

THE VOGUE OF THE SUNBONNET

ONE adjunct to her wardrobe that every other woman gets nowadays before she goes into the country is a sunbonnet. These convenient head coverings, which may be pretty or otherwise, have become a staple in women's wearing apparel and are to be found where other parts of her wardrobe are sold, ready made, in all the shops. They may be had as low as 10 cents and they may cost \$1 or more; they are always useful and may be becoming.

One pretty girl with a Maud Muller style of face wore a sunbonnet in her trip across the ocean. It was undoubtedly agreeable, protecting her eyes from the glaring light and her complexion from the wind and incidentally she was as pretty as a picture in it. However, sunbonnets will not be generally adopted for ocean travel, but they have risen above the fad stage which they occupied a few years ago.

The sunbonnet dates back, no one knows how many years, and it is possible that they were worn by the first ancestress of the race when she began to enlarge her wardrobe. It was never thought necessary to put the evolution of the sunbonnet on record, it has not figured in fashion plates, and its history can never be exact. However, when the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of the present generation were doing more household work than their descendants have found necessary, the sunbonnet was in common use. It was made usually of checked ginghams, blue or pink or brown or green and white, and was made broad in front to shade the eyes, and with an ample cape to cover the neck and shoulders. It was useful to wear in hanging out the weekly wash or in feeding the chickens. It was not made to enhance the charms of its wearer, but to protect them.

Ugliness and the old-time sunbonnet were synonymous terms. It was made without pretense to beauty and might or might not have a tiny frill around the face. Sometimes it was starched stiff, but it was quite as often left unstarched and drooped shabbily around the face. One style of sunbonnet was made with pasteboard slats in the front to hold it out, and there was the funny scooplike Shaker bonnet of flat plait-

ed straw with a little curtain of cloth hanging down at the back. This was a style originated by the Shakers and worn by them.

A few years ago with the introduction of golf there was a rise in the sunbonnet market. It was suddenly discovered that, made in pretty, becoming colors, and if not of exaggerated size, the bonnets might be becoming, and many were ordered. Perhaps with the golf players they were least worn, but the name carried them into popularity. Pretty, new shapes were developed, and the sunbonnet came to stay. The fad is over, but the sunbonnet remains.

In the shops they are made in varieties of plain or striped materials, starched stiff, and with a high polish, with one or two ruffles around the edge, or possibly without them. They are sold in this form at reasonable prices. They are shorter in the front than the old-time bonnet, and the cape in the back is a tiny affair, useful to protect the back of the neck, but not large enough to keep out the breezes. One may both hear and see in the modern bonnet, which is not possible with the old.

Colors vary. There are soft pinks, pale blues, solid reds, dark blues, and a very pretty girl wears a black sunbonnet with her bright-colored frocks and looks like a dream in it. The colors are almost equally becoming when they are suited to the woman who wears them. The old-time sunbonnet, or one very much like it, made of brown and white checked gingham and unstarched can be found for 25 cents, but it is not popular.

More expensive, but not always more becoming, are those bonnets made of lawn in white and all the delicate shades, trimmed with ruffles and lace. These are much cooler than the other bonnets and are more expensive, costing \$1 or more. The woman who is particular makes or has her sunbonnets made to suit herself. A pretty girl may have a sunbonnet of different colors to go with her different gowns, but as a rule she has only one. If she is particular about having things match, she will have a white sunbonnet, which will go with everything.