

Martha's Mob Cap?

A Milliner's Hand-Sewn Inquiry into Eighteenth-Century Caps ca.1770 to 1800

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to answer the question: “how can the act of hand sewing enable us to contextualize the cap Martha Washington wears in *The Washington Family Portrait*?” The project reconsiders a style of cap Mrs. Washington wears in the Edward Savage portrait *The Washington Family* in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Oversimplification of this cap, often thought of as a “mob cap,” highly discredits the quality of materials, workmanship, and cultural meanings that surrounds it. To reassess visual representations of eighteenth-century women in the southern American colonies/states in the last quarter of the eighteenth-century, portraits of Mrs. Washington are investigated and cap styles produced based on primary sources. Using a reflexive auto-ethnographic methodology to mine the making process of eighteenth-century caps, this paper puts forth a new method entitled, “hand-sewn inquiry.” Through a hand-sewn inquiry three facsimile caps were made inserting the researcher’s embodied experience into the study to more holistically understand the cap Mrs. Washington wears. This method brought forth bodily connections to eighteenth-century makers, construction techniques of eighteenth-century caps intended for the maintenance of clothing, and a “sewing literacy” perspective to read the skills of an enslaved seamstress working for Mrs. Washington, as attested in historical documents. The study contextualizes caps observed in portraits of Mrs. Washington, from a historical and material culture perspective reconsidering the significance of these caps through the eyes and hands of a maker.

PREFACE

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This thesis is dedicated to the late Jay Gaynor.

Jay was a champion of the preservation of trades and this thesis was made possible through his encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to answer the following research question: “how can the act of hand sewing enable us to contextualize the cap Martha Washington wears in *The Washington Family Portrait*?” This project will reconsider a style of cap Martha Dandridge Custis Washington (1731-1802) wears in the Edward Savage portrait entitled *The Washington Family* in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (Appendix A, Figure 1).¹ Many people in the twenty-first century associate the type of headwear Mrs. Washington wears in this portrait (if not all her portraits) as a “mob cap.”² This cap style is often perceived as an unflattering “folksy” and dowdy style. It is my hypothesis that such over simplification highly discredits the quality of materials, workmanship and cultural meanings that surrounded this object.

Visual depictions of Mrs. Washington are most typically in elaborate fashionable caps and modern interpretations are invariably using a simplified cap, which is now part of the Martha Washington meme in popular culture. These depictions of Mrs. Washington that coincide with a fashion for elaborate caps may have skewed American cultural memory to create a dowdy visual myth of what this eighteenth-century woman looked like. This visual misunderstanding erases all complexity conveyed through dress, and fails to take into account the wide range of dynamic and rich experiences in Martha Washington’s and other eighteenth-century women’s lives. The cap, a product of the milliner or seamstress, was not an “accessory” relegated to the periphery as we conceive of it today. It was a central garment, necessary for a complete fashionable appearance. Contextualizing this cap means exploring this complexity from a historical, fashionable, social, cultural, and geographic perspective. Furthermore, putting this cap in context means considering how it came into being. Therefore this research will reconsider the significance of the cap that crown’s Mrs. Washington’s head through a maker’s perspective, and work towards a more accurate understanding of this object and other cap styles in order to reassess visual representations of eighteenth-century women in a specific place and time.

¹ Edward Savage (painter), American (1761-1817), *The Washington Family*, 1789-1796 Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1940.1.2), <https://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg62/gg62-561.html> (accessed May 10, 2015).

² See for instance merchandise offered to a wide audience in Mount Vernon, the home of George and Martha Washington. “Martha Washington’s Mob Cap,” George Washington’s Mount Vernon, “Apparel” tab, “Hats” category, <http://shops.mountvernon.org/martha-washington-mob-cap.html> (accessed May 10, 2015).

The study seeks to answer the research question from a material culture perspective and from an embodied approach drawing from a hand-sewn inquiry methodology to situate the cap Mrs. Washington wears in the Edward Savage portrait. This thesis agrees with Maureen Daly Goggin's viewpoint of using "the power of the needle as an epistemic tool,"³ and seeks to use this approach to gain a more holistic understanding of eighteenth-century caps and their makers. Goggin explains that "there are several kinds of epistemologies in the praxis of needlework and textiles: a bodily knowing, a cognitive know-how, and a resulting epistemology."⁴ Textual, visual, and practice-based material culture analysis will be employed to answer the research question. Placing the discussion of Martha Washington's cap at the center of the research, this study is divided in three distinctive sections which correlate with three different styles of caps: a French night cap, round cap, and a mob cap. Furthermore, all of these caps have three distinct components: a border (A), a headpiece (B) (often covered by a ribbon), and a caul (C)⁵ (Appendix A, Figure 2). These three terms will be used throughout this thesis to explain the style and construction of these three different caps while contextualizing Martha Washington's cap seen in the family portrait.

Each of these caps will be manufactured using a hand-sewn inquiry approach. This practice-based component will explore making as a form of research and knowledge production. Using a practice-based approach, this paper will explore cut and construction to dispel the stereotypical understanding of the mob cap. Looking at caps through a makers' perspective will illustrate a complexity in the development of the cut and construction and what certain styles of caps worn during Washington's life may have been like. Furthermore, this thesis makes production knowledge explicit to understand how eighteenth-century caps were made. This approach into Mrs. Washington's caps will lead to an understanding of how such objects came into being, how they were made and who might have made them. In so doing I aim to give agency to the anonymous hands of eighteenth-century cap makers.

This cap-making approach will build on an earlier research project I have completed to develop a hand-sewn inquiry methodology, which explored research from a sensorial and embodied perspective. This reflexive research practice will be applied to all three caps that are

³ Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds., *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750-1950* (Surry: Ashgate, 2009), 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ Unknown, *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor; Principally Intended for the Assistance of the Patronesses of Sunday Schools...* (London: sold by J. Walter, Charing Cross, 1789), 64, https://books.google.com/books/about/Instructions_for_Cutting_Out_Apparel_for.html?id=485bAAAAQAAJ (accessed December 11, 2016).

made as part of this project. An in-depth discussion of this methodology and its development can be found in Chapter 3.

The findings of this research are reported on in Chapter 4. This chapter discusses a variety of written and visual primary sources coupled with findings from object-based study of caps. The interpretation of this research is organized in Chapter 5 in three sections. The first section focuses on a French night cap worn in the John Singleton Copley 1775 portrait of *Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)* from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (Appendix A, Figure 3).⁶ The fashionable cap worn by Mrs. Izard is that of a wealthy woman from Charleston, South Carolina, immortalized in London in a style that endures and is seen into the next decade in a portrait of Mrs. Washington.⁷ This section defines the French night cap style. Through an auto-ethnographic, hand-sewn inquiry, this section situates the hand as an intelligent tool used in the hand-sewing process. Furthermore it suggests an embodied link between modern and eighteenth-century makers while exploring the cap-making process. This section also explores London makers of caps who might have stitched together caps imported to Virginia before the American Revolution. This section delves into the fashionable nature of certain caps, their position at the center of fashion, and their power to communicate the social identity of the wearer.

The second section focuses on the aforementioned Edward Savage portrait. This section discusses the dating of the family portrait and how this affects our understanding of Martha Washington's sartorial choices. The hand-sewn inquiry will focus on a French night cap held by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (Appendix A, Figure 4). This cap has several features that are similar in style to the cap worn in the Savage family portrait. The making process explores the value of establishing what this paper calls a "hand-sewn literacy" to become a highly skilled researcher of historic clothing. This section investigates the possible maker of this cap, an enslaved seamstress named Charlot owned by the Washington family, and delves into the complexity and diversity of sewing skills needed to produce the piece. This section seeks to re-visualize and reconsider the styles of caps Mrs. Washington wore during the mature phase of her life to give agency to the skill of the original maker and re-cast Washington and her cap in a more favorable and fashionable light.

The third section addresses the definition of a mob cap around 1789-1796, and whether or not Martha Washington wore this style. The mob cap nomenclature refers to a simpler, more

⁶ John Singleton Copley (painter), (American, 1738-1815), *Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)*, 1775 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (03.1033), <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mr-and-mrs-ralph-izard-alice-delancey-31228> (accessed May 10, 2015).

⁷ Ibid.

utilitarian style that was worn in more conservative contexts by working women and those advanced in age. Evidence suggests that, in her widowhood, Martha Washington adopted a more conservative style of cap that fit close to the head and had ties under the chin. This section will address conservative styles and their connection to age and Quaker dress, using this less elaborate style as a foil to the more decorative and fashionable first two caps. The hand-sewn inquiry component of this chapter will study a cap held in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's collection (Appendix A, Figure 5). This Quaker cap, cut similarly to a mob cap, will help me to investigate mob cap styles. Choosing a simpler style of cap as my third facsimile will aid in dispelling the myth that Mrs. Washington is wearing a "mob cap" in the Savage portrait. This conservative cap can allow for a deeper understanding of cap wearing, not just from a fashionable perspective but from a functional perspective as well. This section will also address the laundry practices used to maintain caps.

This investigation pertains to the study of eighteenth-century dress and is focused on southern American colonies because Washington's home was in Virginia. As the Washington's purchased fashionable goods from England,⁸ British styles will also be part of the research. The approach is both experiential via its hands-on reproduction focus and traditional through its use of visual and written primary sources. Several dress scholars laid the foundation for object-based studies that aimed to understand cut and construction, such as Janet Arnold and Norah Waugh. Historians such as Giorgio Riello, Beverly Lemire, Marla Miller, Sophie White, John Styles and Amanda Vickery have used textual sources to illuminate the rich story of eighteenth-century clothing. These scholars have told the story of consumption, gender, global trade and class using garments as illustrative examples in their historical narrative. These historians' rigorous approach to articles of dress is an inspiration for my own project. They see the fluidity and complexity innate in history. My own research builds on this body of knowledge to address one specific artifact that is seldom investigated and is central to eighteenth-century womanhood: the cap. In the next chapter I explore the literature that helps to situate this project as well as illustrate the gaps in the literature showing the need for caps to be researched further.

⁸ "Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772," National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CAPS

Amongst eighteenth-century clothing scholars few have focused on articles of dress that we label as accessories and even fewer have observed the multifaceted dimensions of the cap. The word “accessory” will not be used in this thesis to define an article of dress used in conjunction with clothing that covers the body, because this nomenclature suggests a hierarchy that places accessories as secondary in importance. Primary source research conducted thus far has not come across the word “accessory” to describe an eighteenth-century article of clothing. An 1756 dictionary entry defines “accessory” as “a person who encourages, advises, or conceals an offender, who is guilty of felony by statute.”⁹ Therefore, the meaning of the word as we use it today is not accurate to eighteenth-century dress vocabulary and its current suggested lower status skews our understanding of history in general and dress history in particular. This literature review seeks to understand caps and to contextualize why and when eighteenth-century women wore them in Britain, the southern American colonies, and Euro-American society as a whole. Current knowledge on this front is sparse and must be pieced together through general works on eighteenth-century dress. Moreover, no scholar has really mined the sensorial, empathetic maker’s perspective to understand how caps were made and how they were understood. While some limited research has been done to understand cap changes in eighteenth century Europe, a maker’s perspective could help better understand varying styles, the taxonomy of produced objects and issues of mass-productions in eighteenth-century women’s dress. While this thesis will not cover all of these facets that require further study, it could potentially inform readers on cap styles and vocabulary, the complexity of production and why caps were worn.

Linda Baumgarten, Curator of Textiles and Costume at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, in her book *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America*, uses historical garments as significant sources to study the past. She comments that “clothing is the most intimately human of the surviving decorative arts. In some ways, old clothing brings the

⁹ Nathan Bailey, *The New Universal Etymological English Dictionary: Containing an Additional Collection of Words (Not in the First volume) With Their Explications ...* (London: s. n., 1756), 11.

original wearers back to life.”¹⁰ Her geopolitical focus is of immense help to my own study, as is her object-based approach. Using the Colonial Williamsburg Collection, Baumgarten explores why certain artifacts have been collected. Using these objects, she tells the story of eighteenth-century clothing in Virginia. The author does not focus heavily on one specific object but uses many types of artifacts to tell a larger story. The book explores the history of connoisseurship and the history of Virginia through clothing. Baumgarten sets the Colonial Williamsburg Collection against the backdrop of the southern American colonies/states and their history using visual and written sources to contextualize the garments. While *What Clothes Reveal* looks at the entirety of the man’s, woman’s and child’s wardrobe, the author does not focus on one specific item of dress in particular and divides her book along broader thematic issues, including common dress, life passages and tailoring practices. Baumgarten’s approach can inform a study of the cap’s use and a focus on production and trade guilds. She uses individual garments to tell a richer story, underscoring the value of object studies within a geopolitical context similar to my own.

While Baumgarten’s work looks at a variety of objects to tell the story of Virginian fashion, certain scholars have used one object as a locus for their study. These micro-based histories are of interest to this project, as I seek to take one object and contextualize it. Historian Giorgio Riello presents provides three different ways to consider objects in his chapter “Things that shape history: Material culture and historical narratives” in Karen Harvey’s book *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*. Riello presents three different perspectives historians have used when combining history with material culture research. These he labels as “history from things,” “history of things,” and “history and things.” To illustrate these categories Riello presents three case studies: a concealed stomacher found in a home, a Wan Li porcelain wine cup dug at Jamestown, Virginia, and a print entitled, “The Aerial Steam Carriage.”

Using the example of the concealed stomacher Riello illustrates how this one article of dress has many stories to tell, from the English printed linen industry to the baleen trade. A seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain wine cup illustrates how while one cup cannot tell the bigger story of the global economy, but connecting many objects together can illustrate that the seventeenth-century economy was global and complex. Finally, in Riello’s discussion of ‘The Aerial Steam Carriage’ he directly critiques the rigidity and subsequent limitations of the

¹⁰Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg, Virginia: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in association with Yale University Press, 2002), 52.

historical narrative using the “Industrial Revolution” storyline as an example. Riello suggests that there are no hard facts in history and the use of narratives as a paradigm for historical thought is an overly rigid practice that needs to be re-conceptualized. All three categories Riello addresses can be considered in an inquiry into caps, allowing these objects to tell a larger, more complex story of the eighteenth-century without being limited by a modern historical narrative.

Historian Michael Kwass and dress historian Sophie White have succeeded at using one element of dress to tell a larger, more complex story in a manner Riello writes about. Kwass’ article “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France” looks at eighteenth-century Frenchmen’s fashion for wig wearing to address the consumption of this type of goods, something that is arguably seen in English and Colonial contexts as well. His attention to the head and the framing of the wig within the cultural landscape of the last half of the eighteenth-century provides one example of a way to analyze the head to understand how the ubiquitous use of wigs paralleled fashions in French philosophical thought, delving into their layered meanings. Perhaps most useful to his argument is the concept he puts forth of the “intermediate zones of consumptions”¹¹ placing the wig between luxury and necessity. This theory can be applied to eighteenth-century women’s caps as well.

Sophie White’s work on handkerchiefs in “Wearing Three or Four Handkerchiefs around His Collar, and Elsewhere about Him’: Slaves’ Constructions of Masculinity and Ethnicity in French Colonial New Orleans” exemplifies further this approach to micro object-based clothing research. White places one object, the handkerchief, at the center of her study, and uses it as a powerful example of racial identity amongst black, enslaved men in New Orleans. While White’s rich article is not about caps, it illustrates the significance of using one element of dress seen as peripheral as the locus of a research project, which helps to underscore why looking strictly at one type of gendered head covering has the potential to illuminate valuable information about eighteenth-century womanhood. This example of the handkerchief pushes scholars to reconsider accepted historical narratives. Taking this as a leaping off point, my research seeks to reconsider the accepted visual historical narratives that have been crafted around caps.

Few dress historians have touched on specific aspects of caps and cap-wearing within larger works discussing eighteenth-century clothing. John Styles in *Dress of the People* describes servants’ caps as “a highly visible accessory.”¹² Amongst the eighteenth-century clothing inventories, I have found thus far that inventories typically list more caps in a woman’s

¹¹ Michael Kwass, “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France,” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 631-659, 657.

¹² John Styles, *The Dress of the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 338.

wardrobe than any other article of clothing, and that this state-of-affairs is substantiated by Styles' research. For example Styles' discusses how, after a fire in May 1789 in Suffolk, England, four out of the five women reported having more caps destroyed by the fire than any other elements in their wardrobe.¹³ The author acknowledges that servants, accustomed to wearing functional caps, also purchased caps with their decorative potential in mind, perhaps as a way for displaying a level of taste and style.¹⁴ Style's work can lead one to further investigate the importance of caps in an eighteenth-century woman's wardrobe and the consumption of this element of dress. Further study could include an analysis of inventories to understand the significance of caps in relation to other articles of dress. Moreover, Styles' focus on the working poor encourages a consideration of the use of caps throughout social classes.

Anne Buck, former Curator/Keeper of the Gallery of English Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester, in her book *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England*, does touch on caps within the larger context of the English women's wardrobe. She includes passages from eighteenth-century primary sources, such as letters and diaries, that provide descriptions of caps but refrains from noting the importance placed on this element of dress. For instance Buck notes that Samuel Bamford in 1850 recalled the work dress of women in South Lancashire, England. Interestingly, the first thing Bamford describes about the married women is the "mob caps of a thorough clear whiteness."¹⁵ While caps are part of a larger discussion about clothing for different levels of society such as "the gentry" and "the common people," Buck—and many other rigorous authors like her—fail to dwell on the primacy of caps conveyed in quotes such as the one previously cited. Arguably, the order in which Bamford described the articles of dress suggests a significance of hierarchy among the garments he observed. Nonetheless, Buck acknowledges and occasionally annotates a variety of sources that describe different cap styles and uses specific examples as well. For instance she describes a woman who suggests to her daughters that they ought to dress as "Country Girls come to see the fair" to a masquerade.¹⁶ The mother describes the ideal costume and states that they should wear "round-eared caps (or no caps)."¹⁷ Buck's inclusion of such primary quotes presents the reader with a nice selection of written sources that can potentially be used to help me answer my own research question.

Like Buck, Baumgarten in *What Clothes Reveal* does not delve into the cap's immense diversity and their deep cultural and social meanings, such as the issue of age appropriateness.

¹³ Ibid., 338.

¹⁴ Ibid., 286.

¹⁵ Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 148.

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Baumgarten does acknowledge that caps were used by older women who, in many eighteenth-century portraits, have a tendency to cover more of their bodies than their younger counterparts. She hypothesizes that this may be “in response to changes in the appearance of their skin...Sensitivity to cold or ideas about propriety.”¹⁸ Her findings are of interest to my research and need to be explored and analyzed further. By concentrating on Virginia native Martha Dandridge Custis Washington to address caps in fashion, I indirectly address issues of age but also caps within a specific geopolitical focus. My investigation into Mrs. Washington’s life is a way in which I can focus on caps as the main focus of my study. The public perception of this individual is strongly linked to cap-wearing in popular culture and serves to address the complexity of caps in the late eighteenth-century, including that of age appropriateness.

Overall, many authors acknowledge caps with some social contextualization but they do not acknowledge the variety and complexity of styles that existed and how this was understood by eighteenth-century viewers. Instead, the term cap is used as a general term that seldom deserves attention. Observing portraits of Mrs. Washington and reproducing specific caps depicted in selected visuals will help bring greater precision and understanding of the subject. One notable exception of authors who go beyond mere generalization lies in the book *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* by Cecil Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington. These authors present a basic taxonomy of cap styles from 1700 to 1800 based on eighteenth-century visual and textual primary sources. However, the reader is often left to question what is the authors’ interpretations and definitions compared with information found in primary sources. A separation between findings and interpretation of findings would be needed for scholarly research.

Madeleine Ginsburg, former Curator of Costume at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, in her book *The Hat: Trends and Traditions*, looks strictly at the head across time. She distinguishes between different types of headwear such as hats, bonnets and caps. In the chapter on the eighteenth century, Ginsburg discusses the fashion for English and French women to wear caps. In so doing, the author acknowledges the political and social significance of headwear. She describes the fashion for French women to wear “poufs.” Are these poufs a type of caps? The author does not provide a definition that would help readers distinguish between both. Poufs appear to be mostly made of white fabric and similar in some ways to caps. They also possess a similar decorative quality—and excesses at times—and are heavily discussed in this and other articles and publications. From Ginsburg to the most current

¹⁸ Baumgarten, 176.

publications on eighteenth-century dress, such as Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell's *Fashion Victims*, the pouf is prominent and has been heavily discussed in terms of political semiotics. Ginsburg's discussion about caps is limited to a short three sentence paragraph. She describes them as "simple fitted caps which most women wore within the house."¹⁹ This short quip leaves a large chasm of information concerning these arguably significant elements of dress.

Caps have also been explored by object-based dress researchers. Sharon Ann Burnston, in her book *Fitting and Proper*, included images, diagram, and construction techniques of a cap in the Chester County Historical Society's Collection. Nonetheless more work needs to be done to highlight other extant examples of various styles. The book *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing* also documents extent eighteenth-century caps on the American continent but the caps published in both publications require more inquiry to situate them in their socio-cultural context. Both of these texts are thus useful to address the geopolitical context of my work. Moreover, the visual presentation of the caps in these books leads one to hope for the creation of a taxonomy that would include line drawings and construction notes that could be of immense use to scholars.

In conclusion, literature pertaining to eighteenth-century caps is sparse. Most scholars looking at women's dress have focused on the understanding of original garments such as gowns with a focus on the construction of these objects. The Cunningtons have looked at cap styles in the eighteenth-century but their work is not exhaustive and it lacks information as to what information is rooted in primary sources and what is an interpretation. Some scholars have focused on specific elements of dress such as wigs and handkerchiefs to dwell on dress behavior of the period with success. These and other scholars who focus on artifacts inform my work and methods. In the next section I will explore additional authors and other experiential learning methods to address ways of doing history through hands-on research.

HANDS-ON RESEARCH IN DRESS STUDIES

In the previous section, I brought forth the authors that frame the general aspects of my exploration of caps within history and dress studies. In this second half of the chapter I will expand my survey to include authors who also work within the framework of anthropology and design and inform my specific practice-based approach. This formal literature review on my

¹⁹ Madeline Ginsburg, *The Hat: Trends and Traditions* (Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's), 1990.

approach will create the foundation needed to illustrate why doing hands-on sewing research is a key component to my study.

Specialized Knowledge Perspective

I bring to this research project specialized historic sewing knowledge. I am conducting this project to situate my practice in an academic framework. Since June 2007 I have been working at Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum in Williamsburg, Virginia, that interprets life in the 1770s. Since September 2008 I have been employed as an apprentice at the Colonial Williamsburg's Margaret Hunter Milliner Shop. I have been learning eighteenth-century millinery (accessories) and mantua-making (dressmaking) in a way that is similar to apprenticeships of the period. The purpose of the apprenticeship program is to research the production of eighteenth-century milliners and mantua-makers which informs the current making of facsimile garments to enhance our understanding of the period, and to preserve pre-industrial hand skills.

My apprenticeship has led me to acquire and value embodied knowledge. I was taught how to sew with eighteenth-century techniques using a thimble to stitch quickly and efficiently. As a result of my training, I understand the properties of different fabrics, what type and size of stitch is best for certain types of materials and specific garments. My apprenticeship has also enabled me to cut millinery, like caps and aprons, without the use of paper patterns. I have been trained to look at an image to produce different styles using some basic measurements and pin or pencil marks to guide my actions directly on the fabric. I have also been trained to replicate extant garments using surviving examples in museum collections as points of reference to imitate the shapes that are required to produce certain styles. Existing garments have also taught me to scrutinize ways of cutting, stitching and constructing garments out of a variety of fabrics and using different instruments and notions.

The knowledge I have is tacit and experiential and was shaped through seven years of practice. The tacit nature of this slowly gained knowledge that guides my brain and my body is not one that is easy to recognize. Therefore this research project aims to make my embodied knowledge and thought processes explicit. The goal is to understand if, through my own making process, I can learn more about eighteenth-century milliners and the caps themselves.

Material Culture Scholarship and Clothing

Humanity may be held within the objects of the past. Linda Baumgarten advances that, "the human spirit has long connected with its past through the legacy of surviving material culture by

collecting, categorizing, and studying antiques.”²⁰ To connect with the objects of the past is to connect with the people of the past. Indeed, material culture scholar E. McClung Fleming frames object-based study as “a primary humanistic study,” and adds that “if a basic wonder about man is his capacity for building culture, [then] the next wonder is his astounding capacity for making things as part of his culture.”²¹ This admiration surrounding made objects ignites a strong curiosity in researchers of material culture who have a desire to access the past through people’s belongings.

To begin to unravel the mysteries of objects, material culture scholar Jules Prown’s wonders: “How does one extract information about culture, about mind, from mute objects?”²² While there are diverse answers to this question, I am interested in examples of empathetic and holistic approaches to studying material culture and am particularly motivated to understand how scholars of material culture have gleaned information about eighteenth-century clothing. This section of the literature review intends to cover authors who seek to understand eighteenth century garments through the labor which brought them into being, namely through making explicit the production of elements of dress, as in the case of the handwork of eighteenth-century milliners, mantua-makers (dressmakers) and seamstresses.

As a key scholar within the field of material culture, Prown provides a framework for the discipline. He attempts to give researchers a guideline to study original objects. Prown breaks down the steps of research into description, deduction, and speculation. The first two steps are of particular interest. As part of descriptive analysis, Prown acknowledges that the construction techniques and materials should be noted and, within the deduction stage, he argues for the observation of the object with an empathetic perspective, which encourages the researcher to connect the objects with their intended environments, and to consider how the object would interact with the world.²³ Dress scholars have used Prown’s method and adapted it to clothing artifacts, as in the case of Valerie Steele in her article “A Museum of Fashion Is More Than a Clothing-Bag.” The same three stages used by Prown as applied to the study of dress and this demonstration serves to inform the structure of my research.

It can be reasoned that, as an object (any kind of objects, including clothing artifacts) came into being, it “interacted with the world.”²⁴ Therefore, there is knowledge to be gleaned

²⁰ Baumgarten, 204.

²¹ E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 153-173, 153.

²² Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1-19, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

from studying the production of objects and their makers. Philip D. Zimmerman, highlights the skills of makers in his article, "Workmanship as Evidence: A Model for Object Study," which looks at the work of furniture makers in early America. While this article is concerned with furniture, certain terms and parts of the discussion can be applied to the study of historic dress. Building on Fleming's model of study, Zimmerman underscores that, by considering how an object came into being, a researcher can address the context of production, such as the economic and social conditions of the time.

By putting workmanship in the spotlight, Zimmerman gives agency to the makers. His approach encourages a student of material culture to note the details of construction. His method has different priorities as "the workmanship approach stops short of examining conceptual matters and focuses instead on the worker's performance."²⁵ This can be used to visualize the technology that was employed to bring objects into existence, be it a tool or the skill of a maker's hand, to potentially identify the tradesperson. While Zimmerman drew certain conclusions about industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that have been refuted since the article was published in 1981, his work remains useful in highlighting object studies through the lens of the producer.

While Fleming, Prown, and Zimmerman focused on a variety of objects, their work can be applied to studying historical clothing. Several dress historians have adapted these authors' methodologies to study costume. This includes Joan Severa and Merrill Horswill whose methodology is broken down into three different properties: material, design and construction, and workmanship.²⁶ Each section is examined through identification, evaluation, cultural analysis, and interpretation and intuitive analysis.²⁷ This method is well rounded as it addresses the blending of descriptive analysis with cultural analysis.

Severa and Horswill analyzed three dresses to illustrate their method. A large portion of the analysis was a description of the clothing and detailed notes about the construction techniques. What was missing from their conversation was an explicit recognition of their knowledge of sewing that was required in order to analyze the artifacts. Their descriptions are detailed enough that, with the addition of patterns and drawings, someone would have enough information to make a reproduction of the pieces. Their work emphasize that practical sewing knowledge is essential when studying clothing, yet curiously enough, it is not addressed in their

²⁵ Philip D. Zimmerman, "Workmanship as Evidence: A Model for Object Study," *Winterthur Portfolio* 16 (Winter 1981): 285.

²⁶ Joan Severa and Merrill Horswill, "Costume as Material Culture," *Dress* 15, no. 1 (January 1989): 50-64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

methodology. Is this because it is just assumed that a researcher carrying out this work would know how to sew? Through their painstaking description, they make the dressmakers' work explicit, yet they are mute about their own sewing intellect.

Within the field of dress studies many scholars have used clothing artifacts as centerpieces of their research. Dress historian Nancy Rexford urges scholars to be open to a variety of different research approaches, illustrating that openness to other colleagues' perspectives will promote a dynamic field of study.²⁸ In her discussion Rexford highlights three types of dress scholars: the connoisseur, the antiquarian, and the historian. She notes that the connoisseur and the antiquarian place the garment at the centerpiece of the research, while the historian uses garments to illustrate or answer their research questions.²⁹ The author acknowledges that the work of the connoisseur and the antiquarian is about "imagining life as other people lived it..." and states that these are "not verbal activities but sensory and imaginative activities."³⁰ She goes on to recognize that sensory experiences are quite difficult to make explicit and can only be understood through practice. Rexford highlights that there are valid ways to produce knowledge beyond reading and writing. Her discussion provides support for sensory research and therefore helps to validate the framework of my thesis, which strives to understand the past through the tactile process of using one's hands.

To understand the tactile and sensory nature of history, one has to experience it. Therefore the dress historian interested in the work of historical dressmakers should place the product of this labor as the centerpiece of the research. Naomi E. A. Tarrant, former Curator of Costume and Textiles at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, published in 1998 a plea to researchers to remember the garments held within costume collections for their studies. She noted that "to study how a piece was made is to understand the skills of craftsmen and women of the past."³¹ Nonetheless, yesterday's tactile and sensory knowledge, while at the root of today's practices, may be quite different than contemporary experiences and researchers must be vigilant to acknowledge differences.

Arnold's and Waugh's publications excel through their use of object-based research and their corpuses have become references in the field of dress and costume studies. Through the use of line drawings (depicting both the inside and outside) and/or patterns of surviving artifacts,

²⁸ Nancy Rexford, "Studying Garments for Their Own Sake: Mapping the World of Costume Scholarship," *Dress* 14, (1988): 68-75, 73.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

³¹ Naomi Tarrant, "The Real Thing: The Study of Original Garments in Britain Since 1947," *Costume* 22, no. 1 (January 1999):12-22, 18.

they highlight the cutting and construction process of historical garments. Line drawings can allow a knowledgeable reader to see what the clothing might have looked like as flat patterns. If Arnold adds notations on construction techniques, Waugh does not. Yet, while the “how to” descriptions give the readers the opportunity to try their hand to reproduce garments, it is not a historically accurate understanding of the cutting and construction process because eighteenth-century garments would have been draped in three dimension for a particular customer. Despite their aim for precision and their ability to convey the silhouette, the line drawings used by Arnold and Waugh are interpretations of the objects, making it hard to visualize the colors and patterns of the fabric, the sewing techniques, and details that can only be gleaned from seeing the original object.

The use of more contemporary techniques for costume documentation is employed in Baumgarten’s *What Clothes Reveal* and Susan North’s and Jenny Tiramani’s *Seventeenth-century Women’s Dress Patterns* (books 1 and 2). These publications build on the work of Arnold and Waugh and use such tools as Computer Aided Design (CAD) software, color photographs and x-rays. The inclusion of colored photographs of seam lines and hem stitches highlight the skilled work of the human hand which brought the garments into existence. These details represent an embodied knowledge and tacit understanding of sewing techniques of the pre-sewing machine era and are a reminder of the skills that went into producing these garments, making the labor of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century makers explicit. While Arnold, Baumgarten and other “connoisseurs” acknowledge the value of making by highlighting original garments and making construction methods explicit, they do not acknowledge making alone as a form of research. The recreation of the objects within their books has been left to the practitioner, working for theater or historical re-enactment without an explicit connection of theory and practice.

Authors such as Waugh, Arnold, Baumgarten, John Watson, Florine Carr, North, and Tiramani have placed historical garments at the core of their research, which aligns with Tarrant’s advocacy for object-centered study. It can be argued that, by positioning historical garments as the core of their work, they inherently place makers and their output as focal points.

From a more theoretical perspective, the labor of women stitched into eighteenth-century garments has been difficult to see in written historical records. Beverly Lemire, in her article “‘In the Hands of Workwomen’: English Markets, Cheap Clothing and Female Labour, 1650-1800,” illustrates that “the hands which made bales of shirts, drawers, waistcoats, caps, gowns,

bodices and petticoats were equally obscured.”³² Additionally, Marla Miller, in *The Needle’s Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution*, acknowledges that women’s lives “are notoriously hard to document” and therefore difficult to accurately represent the work they did.³³ These scholars employ a more traditional historical methodology to answer their research questions, focusing on written documents and using historical garments to illustrate their work. Miller’s main contribution is the creative use of account books, finding women’s work written within the pages of male transactions. This clever reading allowed her to tease out the diverse work of female quilters, tailors and mantua-makers within the Connecticut River Valley in period documents. Miller’s work demonstrates the variety of sewing trades which applied a range of needle skills in their work.

Of specific interest to this review is Lemire and Miller’s work to re-situate the female makers back into the historical narrative of paid artisan labor. Both tackle the problem of why women’s sewing hands have been marginalized. Lemire writes that “many elements of this field were not readily apparent. This industry lacked the visible distinguishing context of shipyard, factory, mine or smoke-filled workshop.”³⁴ Suggesting the significant contributions of the female gender can also be observed through the marks left not just in written documents but by the product of their needles.

Lemire and Miller’s work followed the scholarship of several curators: Anne Buck, former Curator of Dress at Gallery of English Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester, and Madeleine Ginsburg, former Curator of Costume at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Both women published books or articles that brought to light the work and skills of eighteenth-century tailors, milliners and mantua-makers. Arguably, the exposure these curators had to original garments through their positions made them more sensitive to the labor and skill that went into producing clothing.

Buck, in her article “Buying Clothes in Bedfordshire: Customers and Tradesmen, 1700-1800,”³⁵ used archival records to synthesize information about the consumption of clothing in Bedfordshire, England. Through her research she made the labor of milliners and mantua-makers explicit by acknowledging the maker-customer relationship. While Buck focuses on the exchange of the marketplace, Ginsburg, in her article “The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades,

³² Beverly Lemire, “In the Hands of Workwomen’: English Markets, Cheap Clothing and Female Labour, 1650-1800,” *Costume: Journal of the Costume Society* 33 (1999): 25.

³³ Marla Miller, *The Needle’s Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 9.

³⁴ Lemire, 23.

³⁵ Anne Buck, “Buying Clothes in Bedfordshire: Customers and Tradesmen, 1700-1800,” *Textile History* 22, no. 2 (January 1991): 211-37.

1700-1850,"³⁶ recognizes the life experience of dressmakers. Within her article she aims to contextualize the paid work of trained tailors and dressmakers to dispel the myth that most clothing was made in the home by housewives. She acknowledges that it is difficult to see the work of these women because the trades were "almost as numerous as they [were] inarticulate."³⁷ Ginsburg's article discusses the skills and experiences of dressmakers to fit clothing to the body through their "skill in cutting out and manipulation of large scale patterned fabrics so that they were symmetrically disposed on garment and wearer without undue waste."³⁸ Yet, Ginsburg underestimates the skill put into sewing these garments together and does not champion the sewing seen in the construction of some gowns. She describes "jagged unmatching armholes and unevenly hanging skirts" observed on surviving garments and she sees this as a sign "that most of them were, rather hurriedly made."³⁹ Ginsburg cites this as an example of women receiving minimal training in construction while, on the other hand, she recognizes the advanced sewing skills present in other aspects of women's wardrobes. This suggests that Ginsburg may not have had the sewing literacy to 'read' the stitches left behind in eighteenth-century women's clothing in all their altered complexity. Ginsburg posits that the labor of dressmakers has been largely invisible because "the hand that plied the needle hardly ever held the pen."⁴⁰ Marla Miller suggests that "some care must also be taken to recognize those women who had less need for pens, and whose livelihood depended on their needles."⁴¹ If the day to day existence of these women's lives is mostly recorded, not in text but in the garments they stitched, this calls for researchers to cultivate a way of 'reading' the garments they produced.

An alternate form of 'reading' to analyze the sewing produced by eighteenth-century needlewomen is demonstrated by Carolyn Dowdell in her master's thesis, "The Fruits of Nimble Fingers: Garment Construction and the Working Lives of Eighteenth-Century English Needlewomen." In this work, Dowdell builds upon Lemire, Ginsburg and Buck's work on the mantua-making trades, and addresses the theme of visualizing eighteenth-century women's labor as paid labor versus housework. Dowdell's contribution is in her rich analysis of original garment construction. She is a champion for garment study and understands the value of using original artifacts as data to assess the work of mantua-makers, which can be applied to other

³⁶ Madeleine Ginsburg, "The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades, 1700-1850," *Costume* 6, no 1 (June 1972): 64-71.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴¹ Miller, 230.

garments like caps. She notes that while “we have no specific *documentary* means of assessing needlewomen’s skills; however, we have actual products of the mantuamaker’s needle.”⁴² She rebuts Ginsburg’s comment about garments looking “thrown together” by considering why women’s gowns were stitched together in this manner. Dowdell comments that “although the process of constructing a woman’s bespoke garment was more organic...this does not mean it required less skillful hands.”⁴³ Dowdell’s analysis suggests it is important to pay attention to the application of stitches in the context of the garment. For example, the types of construction used in an eighteenth-century cap will likely be different than an eighteenth-century gown. This variation of construction also suggests a range of goals towards production that could lead to a more diverse view of the types of sewing eighteenth-century women undertook.

While the literature review thus far has touched on paid sewing labor, domestic sewing is also significant. As Goggin states, “even if granted that a large portion of needlework and textile production was undertaken in the home, and much was even when that labor was for professional ends, the domesticity of needlework is nevertheless important for recovering women’s myriad creative contributions to lived history.”⁴⁴ Indeed, Miller calls for a “more encompassing”⁴⁵ look at the labor of eighteenth-century women in New England. She uses the example of quilted petticoats “extending our view...to laboring women employed in eighteenth-century London warehouses as well as their consumers on the western fringes of the British empire, rural women who quilted for themselves, and the women whose labor [enslaved women and free-servants] in other rooms within and beyond the house made quilting possible.”⁴⁶ This implies the use of a needle does not mean a universal application of skill. It means a foundation of skill that can be applied in multifarious ways as evidenced in the diversity of types of stitchers in the eighteenth-century from elite white women to laboring mantua-makers, milliners, tailors, and seamstresses. Furthermore, this suggests a host of different intentions for sewing from stitching for leisure, to domestic production, to paid work outside of the home. These different categories and contexts suggest a diversity of application of construction modes and the types of clothing produced by eighteenth-century makers.

One category of seamstresses present in the milliner and mantua-maker trades that has not yet been addressed in this review is that of the enslaved eighteenth-century needlewomen.

⁴² Carolyn Dowdell, “The Fruits of Nimble Fingers: Garment Construction and the Working Lives of Eighteenth-Century English Needlewomen” (master’s thesis, University of Alberta, 2013), 73.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁴ Goggin and Tobin, 2.

⁴⁵ Miller, 230.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

While there is literature addressing the nineteenth-century enslaved needlewoman, there is a chasm that needs to be filled to make the skill of enslaved eighteenth-century needlewoman explicit.⁴⁷ This thesis seeks to begin this process by bringing forth the skill and production of enslaved needlewomen at Mount Vernon during the period of 1780-1800.

Modern Hand-sewing Skills, the Practitioner Approach and Academia

Costume connoisseurs and historians have made the work of women's hands explicit through the written word and through the use of material objects to illustrate the product of their labor but what is missing from this academic work is an embodied understanding gained through modern hand-sew skills. However, some researchers have carried out this work in an informal capacity. Dowdell is one of many examples of researchers with a high degree of hand-sewn intellect making the work explicit but not in a formal, academic way. Dowdell places the spotlight on eighteenth-century makers in her thesis, her analysis of original garments was certainly enhanced with her own knowledge of sewing. To complement her thesis, she recreated parts of an eighteenth-century woman's wardrobe, stitching several outer body garments, petticoats, stays, and hoops by hand. Dowdell's production of these garments was created "authentically" using only hand sewing and eighteenth-century appropriate construction techniques and sewing environment. She documented her process in a blog⁴⁸ and created an exhibition in the Human Ecology Gallery of the University of Alberta in Canada. Arguably, Dowdell's careful consideration of mantua-makers work was made possible because of her own personal sewing experience which gave her the tools to observe the construction techniques in a more empathetic manner and allowed her to ask different questions of the objects. Surprisingly, none of her hands-on experience is included in her thesis. She spent a considerable amount of time, effort and intellect researching how to produce these garments. Reflecting on her labor in her thesis would have given her work greater depth and could have brought the work and world of the eighteenth-century mantua-maker to life.

⁴⁷ Mary Ferrari, "'Obliged to Earn Subsistence for Themselves': Women Artisans in Charleston, South Carolina, 1763-1808," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 106, no. 4 (2005): 235-55. 240. Ferrari states that "this study was not able to identify any know African American female artisans," *ibid.*, 240.

⁴⁸ Carolyn Dowdell, "Rockin' The Rocco," 2008, <https://brocadegoddess.wordpress.com/> (accessed May 11, 2015).

Other researchers, such as Jenny Tiramani, Principal of the School of Historical Dress, the staff at the Margaret Hunter Millinery Shop in Colonial Williamsburg, and Ninya Mikhaila of the Tutor Tailor, practice their craft to produce historical reproductions for educational purposes. This practice-based work, which answers research questions through making, has yet to be acknowledged by the Academy as an intellectual form of knowledge. This type of skill has also been acknowledged at meetings of the Costume Society (UK) and The Costume Society of America. Despite innovative results obtained by those individuals in a variety of venues, this mode of research still exists on the periphery of academic research.

Many practitioners have published books and given lectures on process at scholarly conferences but few have acknowledged what was learned through making, nor have they explicitly acknowledged their sewing as a form of research. For example, Ninya Mikhaila collaborated with other researchers to recreate a man's doublet from the seventeenth-century. Their article tackles the history of the doublet, the description of the garment, and an explanation of the reproduction process. In the conclusion the co-authors state that Mikhaila's reproduction "illustrate[s] the enormous skills of the makers of the original materials and the tailor himself by demonstrating how it would have appeared when new."⁴⁹ While this article concludes with the explicit acknowledgement of the skill of the seventeenth-century tailor, there is no reflexive discussion from Mikhaila about what she learned through reconstructing the doublet.

While Mikhaila's research and skill is acknowledged in the article, most other articles about the reproduction process do not acknowledge the research of the practitioner. Avril Hart's article, "Nelson Remembered: Reproductions of Historical Naval Uniforms" is another example of this lack of process reflection. Within this article she reports on Keith Levett's work to reproduce Nelson's suit for an historical interpreter to wear at an event commemorating Nelson. The piece reads like a newspaper article, acknowledging the reason for the suit's production, the history of the tailoring trade, and the materials needed to make the suit. Yet there is no mention of the details of the research done to create the uniforms, nor any insight or reflection from the tailor's perspective.

Valerie Cumming, Curator of numerous collections in England, in her book *Understanding Fashion History*, addresses the state of the field. She acknowledges that studying a single garment can potentially bring forth the skills that are necessary in its creation,

⁴⁹ Susan Payne, et al, "A Seventeenth-Century Doublet from Scotland," *Costume* 45, no. 1 (March 2011): 39-62, 59.

and how that can be situated into the larger discussion of production and consumption.⁵⁰ While she acknowledges that information can be gleaned about makers, as many dress historians have noted before, there is no discussion about knowledge creating through making. The closest Cumming comes to addressing the practitioner is through the acknowledgement of costume designers in theater and curatorial practices.

Theatrical designers, reenactors and curators spend the most time studying original garments. Many of these individuals are typically professionally situated outside of academia. While many produce scholarly research, they tend not have the same credibility as scholars publishing in academic institutions, journals, and presses. This is in part due to the fact that theater designers, reenactors, curators and other museum professionals are seldom given the time or the incentive to write about their research. The neglect of academia towards their knowledge may also make them feel like outsiders—or worse like imposters—and their employment situations may also impede their entry in the world of scholarly publishing. Cumming suggests that their jobs do not rely on publishing original work like professors in research institutions, and, therefore, their publishing output may be done in their spare time, taking much longer to be completed and, in comparison with the frequency of publication of professors, appearing far less authoritative, and having a harder time competing.⁵¹ Arguably, there is also an intellectual bias towards sources and ontology. The analysis of the written word over objects still holds more weight in an academic context.

Cumming acknowledges that the dress history field “did not find its way into higher education easily.”⁵² Dress historians emerged from other academic disciplines, such as art history and economic history, and this informed the approach in this much younger interdisciplinary field of study. Within traditional academic disciplines researchers were not trained to use their hands: they were trained to read, analyze and write. As a result such individuals are usually not the researchers who have paid the most attention to surviving objects. According to Tarrant, artists and theatrical designers are those most likely to study historical garments.⁵³ If today’s academia does try to address interdisciplinarity, the pull of traditional structures and knowledge still weighs heavily on the types of sources and knowledge that are prized.

There is yet to be an academic publication within costume history literature that acknowledges sewing as an intellectual, knowledge-creating activity. The skills of women plying

⁵⁰ Valerie Cumming, *Understanding Fashion History* (New York: Costume and Fashion Press, 2004), 131.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵³ Tarrant, 16.

their needle 250 years ago represent an embodied form of knowledge. A researcher mimicking their skills by studying the products of their labor can re-generate this skill set to produce a valuable amount of tacit and explicit knowledge, and, in so doing, lead to a greater understanding of these women's lives that only a lived experience could illuminate.

Some individuals within the field of dress studies have the skills to make hand-sewn reproduction garments but, as previously stated, these skills are seldom acknowledged in an academic context. Such concealed knowledge and skills have been left out of the academic conversation and are not acknowledged as a valid intellectual pursuit. Arguably, embodiment of eighteenth-century skills can have many positive implications for the field of dress studies. As cultural historian and material culturist Richard Grassby states, "the meanings of objects become clear within narrative contexts."⁵⁴ Perhaps the stitches that women placed into caps can be considered as an alternate narrative to written histories. Through making reproduction garments a scholar places clothing in a proper context, in the hands of a maker. This sensory and tactile research potentially affords a deeper connection and understanding of these artifacts that "can convey a sensory perception of the past through sight, smell, touch, and texture."⁵⁵ These are increasing the new histories that have yet to be written.

By placing academic weight on the ontology of sewing more people might develop the skill necessary to carry out hands-on clothing artifact research. Being able to approach a garment with an embodied understanding of how it was constructed can allow a richer and more complex understanding of the objects and the people who made and wore them. This is illustrated by the sewing intellect brought to the projects of Severa, Horswill and Dowdell's work. The latter accurately notes that the lack of documentation about female sewing labor "does not mean their histories are all invisible or entirely irretrievable."⁵⁶ It may be that replicating the sewing skills of past seamstresses may retrieve a lost understanding of their lives, knowledge, and output. Grassby reminds us that "the study of objects does not reveal archetypes; the contrary, it suggests how easily a culture fragments."⁵⁷ This fragmentation of skills is punctuated through the lack of academic literature on hand intellect. Placing value on hand skills of the past can encourage the preservation and defragmentation of hand-sewn intellect.

This two part literature review has provided a scholarly context to situate current knowledge on eighteenth-century cap-making and on practice-based scholars within the field of

⁵⁴ Richard Grassby, "Material Culture and Cultural History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2005): 591-603, 594.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Dowdell, 119.

⁵⁷ Grassby, 600.

dress studies. It notes gaps of knowledge in both and, while the first can be addressed through traditional academic methods, practice-based research is a more complex situation to solve. Prown encourages empathic research through positioning objects within their context. Arguably, making a reproduction garment encourages this empathy by placing a version of the object in a seldom-explored context, in the hands of a maker. Rexford encourages scholars to be open to different ways of knowing. This paper illustrates that a practice-based, hands-on way of knowing can be conducted within the Academy and be a respected form of clothing-based research by itself or as an added element to other research perspectives. This literature review suggests a fusion of the traditional historical narrative with the act of making to generate a holistic way of knowing. It illustrates the value of hands-on intellect to illuminate a variety of stories, in particular those of the makers like needlewomen.

A variety of scholars have provided ideas that can result in a new framework to study eighteenth-century caps within a historical, object-based approach. They have helped me situate this project within research that pursues the study of one type of element of dress, eighteenth-century women's caps, to contextualize them within eighteenth-century women's lives. Their work is useful for placing the object, their construction and their meanings at the front of the study. In Chapter 3 I will present the hand-sewn inquiry methodology as a means to access sensorial information about caps and address how hand sewing can be incorporated in the academic literature.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To answer my research question I propose the use of a fluid approach which Giorgio Riello encourages. Riello presents a host of different ways to consider the past through its things, illustrating objects' "multifarious meanings, their innate opaqueness and their difficult heuristic nature."⁵⁸ Encouraged by Riello's discussion I suggest that using many different methods has the potential to encourage thinking beyond an ascribed historical narrative. Therefore I will use a blended methodological approach that integrates material culture scholarship with a practice-based approach.

My research will follow three distinct steps: observation, sewing and analysis. Hand-sewn facsimiles will be made of three caps dated during the life of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington—specifically between 1770 and 1802—to better understand the cut, construction, and style of these eighteenth-century articles of dress. This making process will be united with contextual analysis which will draw on portraits, prints, newspaper advertisements, plays, literature, court records, and periodicals. These three stages of research will be used to answer my research question, contextualizing caps within the context of eighteenth-century makers and wearers, using Washington as an archetype of a wearer. However, as illustrated in Chapter 2, there is no accepted research methodology used by academics to produce facsimile garments. Therefore a methodology needs to be developed; the following presents a new methodology called hand-sewn inquiry which will be used within this thesis.

The glaring absence of practice-based sewing knowledge within the literature calls on academics to accept a different ontology, one that is based in knowledge that can be created through using one's hand. English Professor Maureen Daly Gobbin acknowledges, to understand hand-sewn objects one must "know how to read and write the fabric via the mind and body."⁵⁹ Costume Curator Naomi Tarrant states that "our contemporary skills are based on those of the past; we build on the past and if we do not understand it we fail to appreciate our heritage in its widest sense."⁶⁰ Moreover, design researcher Nithikul Nimkulrat believes that "the process of making material objects by hand can be identified as one way of thinking

⁵⁸ Giorgio Riello, "Things That Shape History: Material Culture and Historical Narratives," in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), 24-45.

⁵⁹ Goggin and Fowkes, 5.

⁶⁰ Tarrant, 18.

intellectually.”⁶¹ Nimkulrat points out that the material nature of objects, specifically ones made out of textiles, can be understood “as a way of thinking through the hand manipulating a material.”⁶² Inspired by these scholars, I am proposing a methodology called hand-sewn inquiry⁶³ to explore how hand sewing can be used as a research tool to explore and understand the knowledge and material objects that are produced during the hand-sewing process. I will address how making can help me access information held within historic garments and use hand sewing to replicate the skills and processes of historical seamstresses.

Archeologist Ian Hodder waves a few red flags when he acknowledges that “material traces and residues [thus] pose special problems for qualitative research.”⁶⁴ One of these problems is the complexity and fleeting nature of culture that objects represent. Indeed, Riello explains, “objects show how [the study of] history is instead a rather loosely woven net that sometimes retains—but often is unable to ‘catch’—concepts, people, events and explanations.”⁶⁵ Perhaps one way to “catch” these complex and incomplete material traces of the past is through practice based research. Anthropologist Tim Ingold states that “to teach anthropology is to practice [sic] anthropology; to practice [sic] anthropology is to teach it.”⁶⁶ Ingold is a strong proponent that to learn about something you have to make it or experience it. Yet, while Ingold discusses the value of making as a legitimate form of knowledge production, Dr. Megan Strickfaden brought up an excellent point during one of our meetings that Ingold never articulates the moments of problem solving or knowledge creation during the making process. Through placing myself as the site of this research, and through breaking down the steps of the making process, “the study of embodied knowledge as deep enculturation of the body can take these practices as research objects themselves, bringing together biological and cultural approaches.”⁶⁷ Furthermore I concur with Richard Sennet’s ideas as I believe that hand-sewn “skill builds by moving irregularly, and sometimes by taking detours.”⁶⁸ Hand-sewn inquiry

⁶¹ Nithikul Nimkulrat, "Hands-on Intellect: Integrating Craft Practice into Design Research," *International Journal of Design* 6, no. 3 (2012): 1-14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶³ Inspired by Jennifer Brady, "Cooking as Inquiry: A Method to Stir Up Prevailing Ways of Knowing Food, Body, and Identity," *International Journal Of Qualitative Methods* 10, no. 4 (December 2011): 321-334.

⁶⁴ Ian Hodder, "The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture," in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 155-175.

⁶⁵ Riello, 43.

⁶⁶ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 13.

⁶⁷ Greg Downey, "'Practice without theory': a neuroanthropological perspective on embodied learning," *Journal Of The Royal Anthropological Institute* no. S1 (2010): S22-S40, S36.

⁶⁸ Richard Sennett. *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 238.

embraces subjectivity and acknowledges the entanglement, fluidity, and complexity of hand-sewn practice in the present and the past.⁶⁹

The goal of this paper is to situate myself as a practice-based sewing researcher within an academic context. As the study of dress is inherently interdisciplinary, my methodology considers the fusion of several disciplines, history, anthropology and design studies, calling on scholars such as Ingold and Juhani Pallasmaa to aid in re-situating the agency of the hand as an important contributor to knowledge production and intellectual growth. Their contributions as well as other practice-based researchers such as Nimkulrat and Jennifer Brady have situated this paper within a community of hands-on academics.

This document discusses my development and implementation of hand-sewn inquiry. This methodological approach is situated in dress studies and material culture and explores how anthropology and design studies are used to as a foundation to support this method. A parallel to this experimental replication study can be found in *The Artisan of Ipswich*, in which Robert Tarule, a historian and modern cabinet maker, studies the life, work, and world of seventeenth-century cabinet maker Thomas Dennis of Massachusetts by replicating his processes.⁷⁰ Again, this type of study is dependent on having a modern day historian with the requisite technical skills to replicate historic methods, in Tarule's case, for woodworking and cabinet making.

Results of studies like Tarule's support the hypothesis that making or reproducing historic objects provides the researcher with the opportunity to ask different questions than those that might be asked by researchers who are focused solely on observing a historic artifact without thinking of the production methods, technology, and skills that led to its creation. A researcher looking at an object in terms of fashion, use, or utility would likely ask other types of equally valid questions. A maker must uncover why an item was constructed in one way instead of another, and will also develop an understanding of the amount of time and skill needed to create the item, and consequently the value that may have been assigned to it.

Through the production of facsimile eighteenth-century caps, I am seeking to demonstrate how hand-sewn inquiry can illuminate the locations of knowledge production and intellectual thought that occurs during the hand-sewing process. Additionally, through this methodological approach, I seek to support my work as a dress historian interested in understanding historic garments and their original makers through a practice-based perspective

⁶⁹ Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), passim.

⁷⁰ Robert Tarule, *The Artisan of Ipswich: Craftsmanship and Community in Colonial New England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), passim.

which cultivates a hand-sewn literacy. The making of caps allows me to explore the speed of production, construction details, the sensory experience of making and the problem solving that potentially can occur in the making process. Furthermore, beyond writing about their work, replicating historical garments is another mode of making the labor of eighteenth-century needlewomen visible.⁷¹

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY AND REFLEXIVITY

To document the cap-making process auto-ethnography, reflexivity,⁷² and hand-sewn inquiry were the blended methodological approaches used in my research (see Appendix B). Reflexive auto-ethnography positioned me as both the researcher and the research participant, placing myself and my skill as central to the research process. Therefore, I had to “be both the gazer and, at the same moment, the one gazed at.”⁷³ As a practitioner who studies the process of eighteenth-century sewing, auto-ethnography has allowed me to draw upon the specialist knowledge I have gained during my apprenticeship. Auto-ethnography offers the opportunity to present “meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in [my] personal experience.”⁷⁴ However, what makes this a research methodology versus a personal story is the hand-sewn production of facsimile eighteenth-century caps was framed in the academic literature.⁷⁵ This exploration allowed me to consider other scholars’ approaches within and outside of dress studies, which informed my thinking of how to frame the caps I will make. Ellis explains that “autoethnographers believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena.”⁷⁶ This inclusion of the many facets of research appeals to me and my ways of learning.

I have accrued many years of experience hand sewing and, if I was collecting data from observing other practitioners, there is a distinct possibility that certain layers of the process would not be captured. Nimkulrat writes that auto-ethnographic practice-based research “enables practitioner’s voices to be heard and the implicit knowledge embedded in the making

⁷¹ The following scholars have done more “traditional” historical and material culture-based works on English needlewomen, making their work ‘explicit’: Buck, “Buying Clothes in Bedfordshire,” 211-37; Dowdell, *passim*; Ginsburg, “The Tailoring and Dressmaking Trades,” 64-71; Lemire, 23-35; Miller, *passim*.

⁷² Hodder, “Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,” *passim*.

⁷³ Maria Mayan, *Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009), 137.

⁷⁴ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview.” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 36, no. 4 (2011), 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

to be reflected.”⁷⁷ As hand sewing is an “embedded,” embodied experience, arguably, so is the bodily understanding of this experience. The goal of this reflexive auto-ethnography is to lay the groundwork so that the “work can be understood, not only in terms of what [I] have discovered, but how [I] have discovered it.”⁷⁸ This implementation of reflexivity, arguably, will allow for more introspection needed to capture the implicit and embodied knowledge that I possess as a maker. Understanding “how I have discovered it” is of great interest to me. Having worked in a practice-based environment during my apprenticeship, I have been busily doing the work and have had less time to document the work.

Because each researcher comes to their work with their own life experiences, it is arguably very difficult to place educational background, life experiences, and skills to the side when pursuing research. Hodder is a champion of reflexive research and explains that each individual will apply different meanings to material culture. He states, “the specific memory traces associated with any particular object (a particular garlic crusher) will vary from individual to individual.”⁷⁹ Therefore being explicit about the individual researchers experience might provide more precise material culture analysis. Reflexivity allows for these influences to be acknowledged during the research process and explicitly used as part of the methodological approach when appropriate. It is not my intent to state that *everyone* who hand sews will have these experiences or produce knowledge in the same manner nor is my own experience allowing the most in-depth inquiries. However, I can use my “personal experience to illustrate facets of [historical] cultural experience.”⁸⁰ My goal is to present a methodology that contributes to what I hope may be a growing trend in academia to acknowledging the value of hand work in research.

Hand-Sewing

While hand-sewing is an embodied skill, it has yet to be applied to historic research in an academic setting. Hand-sewing was chosen as the core of this methodological focus because it is how eighteenth-century garments were put together: it is an integral part of garment production. While masters of cut have begun to be studied, as in the case of Betty Kirke’s exploration of Madeleine Vionnet’s life (1876-1975), however, the specialized hand-sewing skills Vionnet gained as a child apprentice in Parisian Haute Couture have yet to be the subject of

⁷⁷ Nimkulrat, 2.

⁷⁸ Kim Etherington, “Ethical Research in Reflexive Relationships,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 13, no. 5 (2007): 599-616. 601.

⁷⁹ Hodder, “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,” 116.

⁸⁰ Ellis, 273.

scholarly research which would help us understand their centrality in Vionnet's career.⁸¹ Explorations in hand sewing may be the next step to unraveling both creative and derivative works. It can be argued that, to study clothing that was produced with hand-sewn techniques, a methodology that allows a focus on hand-sewing should be employed. It is important to note that the details of this methodological approach will change depending on what type of garment the researcher chooses to make. In any case, this study is situated in a desire to understand historic objects and their makers.

The hand sewing I learned over the years was taught to me by a variety of different teachers. My supervisor at Colonial Williamsburg has scoured a myriad of images of eighteenth-century women sewing and has incorporated the gestures from these images into her own sewing practice, which she has passed onto me. By mimicking the gestures of eighteenth-century seamstresses and by mimicking their stitches and cap-construction, it may be possible that my hand-sewing skills may lead me to an "enculturation of specific bodily systems"⁸² similar to those of eighteenth-century seamstresses.

Bodily Knowledge and Hands-on Intellect

If literature in the field of dress studies has not explicitly supported bodily knowledge and hands-on intellect, other disciplines and fields, such as anthropology and design studies, have published literature to validate this. Previously cited scholars such as Ingold, Nimkulrat and Pallasmaa are champions for the intellectual value of the hand and making as a valid form of academic research. These authors have argued that there is a level of intelligence and knowledge production that is located in the body of hand-sewing practitioners. Nimkulrat writes that "craft is a means for logically thinking through senses. When manipulating a tangible material, a craft artist establishes a rhythmic interplay between bodily and thinking practices. The craftwork of an artist is not secondary to thinking or the intuition of the artist, and they are not separated acts."⁸³ Pallasmaa acknowledges that the "division of body and mind has, of course, its solid foundation in the history of Western philosophy...[which] regrettably continue[s] to separate mental, intellectual and emotional capacities."⁸⁴ This may be why the body, and by extension the hand, has been "undervalued and neglected in its role as the very ground of

⁸¹ Betty Kirke, *Madeleine Vionnet* (Tokyo, Japan: Kyuryudo Art Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991; reprint, San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998), passim.

⁸² Downey, 35.

⁸³ Nimkulrat, 77.

⁸⁴ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2009), 12.

embodied existence and knowledge.”⁸⁵ Re-inserting the body in the narrative—in dress studies as well as other areas of research—is paramount.

Pallasmaa believes that “knowledge and skills of traditional societies reside directly in the senses and muscles, in the knowing and intelligent hands.”⁸⁶ Because hand sewing is a bodily experience it presents a dynamic opportunity to articulate this multi-faceted experience and should be considered in a researching context. There are a host of tactile experiences that influence the end result such as the presence and ultimate negation of the thimble’s presence on one’s hand, the grasp of the needle, the feel of the fabric, the way the needle reacts going through different fabrics, and the pressure the weave structure of the material generates. There is the visual experience of watching a variety of tools engage with the hands and the materials. Additionally there are intellectual, intuitive, emotional, spiritual, and physical experiences that are all wrapped up into the hand-sewing process. As Nimkulrat mentions, these are not disconnected experiences, and I would argue that when seeking a holistic understanding, if one of these components were taken out of the hand-sewing process, the process would not be able to succeed. Why then should the intellectual, emotional or sensorial be separated from one another? If objectivity is the goal, I would suggest that this would make any type of objectivity invalid because it would limit the experience and risk limiting the result. Perhaps, hand-sewn inquiry can be deployed as a subjective tool to access this complex and dynamic bodily way of thinking.

Theorizing Facsimiles Using Material Culture Literature

Ingold, addresses the field of material culture specifically, believing that there has been a bias towards “finished objects and on what happens as they become caught up in the life histories and social interactions of the people who use, consume or treasure them.”⁸⁷ This bias has, arguably, limited an understanding of the making of these objects and the people who produced them.

As an object came into being, it “interacted with the world” and must be contextualized to be better understood.⁸⁸ Therefore, there is knowledge to be gleaned from studying the production of objects and their makers. Philip Zimmerman, highlights the skills of makers through his work on furniture makers in early America. While this article is concerned with furniture, certain terms and parts of the discussion can be applied to the study of historic dress.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁷ Ingold, 7.

⁸⁸ Prown, 8.

Zimmerman underscores that, by considering how an object came into being, it will illuminate the context of production, such as the economic and social conditions of the time.

By thinking about artifacts from the hands that brought them into being, a researcher “identifies a logic based on how the worker use[d] the tools and skills available to him.”⁸⁹ This logic aligns well with the concept of “workmanship of habit”⁹⁰ that may explain how objects can be made with a high degree of knowledge and with exacting regularity without the use of a template or pattern. This concept can potentially be applied to eighteenth-century sewing technique in addition to furniture. This logic and the concept of ‘habit’ both serve to explore the embodied knowledge that historical makers possessed, underscoring the unique intellect of making.

Ingold promotes the idea of making as a form of thinking and this concept can be directly applied to researchers of historic dress who make reproduction garments as a way to better understand the objects and the people who interacted with them. Indeed, it is possible that original garments reflect the original makers’ “knowledge of the properties of materials...[which grew] out of a lifetime of intimate gestural and sensory engagement in a particular craft or trade.”⁹¹ This knowledge can be captured through undertaking similar processes that the hand of an eighteenth-century seamstress would have understood.

Hand-sewn inquiry is uniquely placed to provide another tool to help researchers’ access logic and habit through the production of facsimiles. This process is known to archaeologists as ethnoarchaeology. Hodder states that “on the basis of such knowledge [ethnoarchaeology] the implications of material practices, extending into the social and the moral can be theorized.”⁹² This method blends the agency of the hand with the agency of material objects. Through stitching a facsimile cap by hand, one may create a material object that can stand alone as a data point, which can be used to better understand the history of dress and clothing production, the culture and people surrounding it.

Object Analysis

It may be necessary to add to current methodology to address the depictions of dress in visual sources versus the examination of surviving dress artifacts.⁹³ For example, when studying a

⁸⁹ Zimmerman, 283-307, 285.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 287. Zimmerman cites Benno M. Forman’s term.

⁹¹ Ingold, 29.

⁹² Hodder, “The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture,” 169.

⁹³ For further reading on object analysis of historical objects see, Fleming, 153-173; Hodder, 155-175; Prown: 1-19; Tarrant, 12-22; Zimmerman, 283-307.

physical garment, I have used a Prown model of inquiry. Using this model I can observe the object, describe the object, measure the pieces, take notes on the construction details and touch the object. This engagement with a surviving cap has allowed me to experience the object with my senses, to feel the weight, see the fabric, and imagine it in a proper context.⁹⁴ This I cannot do with a depiction of this cap in a visual source. Looking at an image, I have to draw on my past knowledge of studying original artifacts to conjecture what the cap in the portrait might have looked like in real life. Additionally, when creating the pattern of the cap, I had to mentally scale the pieces up from a smaller representation versus having a life-sized garment. Therefore this approach to visual representations of objects is a blend of past knowledge and present experiential and sensorial research.

Hand-sewn inquiry is an approach developed from my desire to combine several different research avenues: to explore the intellect and problem solving nature of the hand and to explore eighteenth-century caps as objects of material culture through the act of making them. While my focus is on caps, this method of auto-ethnographic hand sewing can be used as a framework and applied to any hand-sewing project. The details of the project, such as the materials, tools and construction sequence, would certainly differ.

The specific methodological approach I take adds to the tool box of knowledge production and the existing methodological literature. Hand-sewn inquiry can help to consider different ways that knowledge can be produced and objects experienced. By acknowledging the intellectual production situated in the body, this method gives me with the opportunity to achieve a more holistic understanding of hand sewing and clothing production. In my years of practice, I was able to notice my mind and body working together towards the end goal of holding, stabilizing, and sewing fabric. This parallels Sennett's mention of a pianist who "used all [his] fingers as true partners."⁹⁵ I believe this bodily continuity underscores that everything is connected and fluid. Perhaps this notion can be used as a metaphor for research. In using this tailored methodological approach, I suggest that research should be diversified to capture a diverse, complex range of data from intellectual to sensorial to spiritual, one stitch at a time.

⁹⁴ Prown, 8-9.

⁹⁵ Sennett, 163.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The following data seeks to place the cap worn by Martha Washington in Edward Savage's portrait *The Washington Family* (Appendix A, Figure 1) in historical and material context from the perspective of a maker. These observations do not ignore traditional source materials, but do acknowledge other perspectives that have been neglected in the academic literature. This hands-on approach to dress research is informed by primary sources including visual resources, written sources, and extant garments. The study of objects such as caps, supplemented by the use of visual and textual sources, leads to many lines of inquiries, some of which can be explained by the context in which these items were created and worn and others by the making process. Many additional questions are beyond the scope of this thesis and provide a fertile field for future research.

Within this chapter, I present the data uncovered about caps from c.1770 to 1800. The current chapter is divided into five sections: "Cap Fashions," "Cap Making," "Cap Producers," "Cap Consumers," and "Textiles." The significance and interpretation of these findings is discussed in Chapter 5.

CAP FASHIONS

This section discusses sources available to trace the shifting sartorial landscape in women's headdresses c. 1770–1800. Eighteenth-century fashion trends often followed and affected economic, social, or political events.⁹⁶ While this paper does not connect caps to these themes in depth, understanding how cap styles changed over time is a first step to provide a foundation to this research. Subsequently one needs to observe what styles would be created, sold, and worn in a given time frame and locale.

As a maker-researcher, I have studied the fashionable changes in caps and women's headdresses of the last half of the eighteenth century very closely for this project. Prior experiences have trained my eye to recognize cap details and proportions that shifted with the fashion cycle. I view these changing styles not just from the point of view of trends, but also as a maker who must consider what the cap pieces may have looked like and how they may have

⁹⁶ Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell advances that, "By the end of Louis XVI's reign, fashion's passive role became an active one; it did not simply record events, but provoked and influenced them." Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, *Fashion Victims: Dress at the Court of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 7.

been sewn together. When I observe prints and portraits of women wearing caps, I aim to understand what kind of fabric the cap is made out of, what that fabric feels like, and the ease or difficulty of working with specific fabrics and styles. The fiber and weave structure can hold a key to the cap's creation and aesthetic. Surface treatments such as starching are also part of a maker's approach to the assessments of caps.

Combining knowledge from a maker's perspective with written and visual documentation informs my analysis of the cap in Savage's 1789–1796 painting (Appendix A, Figure 1). The written and visual resources to be presented in the following section cover the variety of styles from 1770–1800 in England and the Southern Colonies of what became the United States of America. This time period and geopolitical setting must be considered to trace the evolution and context of fashion leading up to 1789 when Martha Washington sat for the family portrait, until the time it was completed in 1796.⁹⁷

Fashion Prints

Images depicting the women of England and the British colonies of North America—the Virginia colony in particular—are important sources for understanding how women adorned their heads during the second half of the eighteenth century. Portraits in a variety of mediums, such as drawings in lead pencil or ink, oil paint, watercolor, pastels, etc. and mechanical reproductions of these works, including copper or steel plate engravings, are an important source of information on dress. Works either from England or the Southern British Colonies can illustrate fashion trends and the styles of dress worn by women across the economic spectrum concerned with a fashionable appearance. The dress behaviors depicted in these images can convey the contexts in which caps were worn.

Some of these prints are satirical and must be acknowledged as such by researchers. Satire uses exaggeration to communicate a point about society and what they focus on can help make it easier for a modern researcher to “read” the images and more easily identify the object being lampooned. Yet the same exaggeration which makes these a useful source to researchers also limits the usefulness. In communicating the extremes, and often illustrating a very black and white scenario, they miss the grey areas of life. If we take these prints at face

⁹⁷ The artist stated that “the copper plate was begun and half finished from the Likenesses which I painted in New York in the Year 1789, I Could not make the aulteration in the Copper to make it Like the Painting which I finished in Philadelphia in the year 1796.” “Letter to George Washington from Edward Savage, 3 June 1798” National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-02-02-0237> (accessed August 15, 2016).

value we run the risk of taking the exaggerations literally and as a realistic interpretation of eighteenth-century reality.

There are numerous prints published in London from 1770 through 1800 that can help us assess the fashionable headdress that Martha Washington wears in the Savage family portrait. For example at the Museum of London, *Twelve Fashionable Head Dresses of 1773*, (Appendix A, Figure 6) illustrates in black and white, four hairstyles (top register), four cap styles (middle register), two hats (left side of lower register), and two bonnets (right side of lower register). These are earlier than the 1789-1796 Savage portrait but provide a touchstone of where the cap in the Savage portrait stylistically came from and can be compared to earlier images of Martha Washington. The Museum of London also owns *Fourteen Fashionable Head Dresses of 1780* (Appendix A, Figure 7), another black and white print depicting a variety of headdresses. By 1780 we see an array of women's headdresses—where high and narrow silhouettes (top register, third from left) coexist with high and wide silhouettes (top register, fourth from left), indicating the presence of concurrent profiles in fashion. If new fashions abound in print sources and proportions change in time, this image can help us understand that previous silhouettes may have remained amongst the fashionable. How long a previous silhouette takes to be deemed out of fashion is a situation to keep in mind. It is also interesting that these fashion prints depict only the head, rather than the full body. This suggests a keen interest in ways of dressing the head, rather than an overall fashion silhouette. This may be due to the fact that hair was able to be re-invented daily at a fraction of the cost of doing the same with gowns, which required expensive material investments. The abundance of “above-the-shoulders” fashion prints suggests a special social value to the head and its place of importance in the time-sensitive world of late eighteenth-century fashion.

This focus on “above-the-shoulders” fashion is also seen in the November 1794 *Gallery of Fashion* (Appendix A, Figure 8). “TWO LADIES AT BREAKFAST IN THEIR DRESSING-ROOM” is a full color plate that illustrates two fashionably informal dress styles situated in the category of “undress” and this print also has its original descriptive captions. While the whole outfit is rendered and described on this plate, the description leads with “HEAD-DRESS,” thus placing the head as the priority in the description. This source is useful in contextualizing Martha Washington's cap compared to what was considered “mainstream” fashion of the 1790s and suggests the potential informal nature of the cap seen in the Savage portrait.

Fashion Periodical Justification

A very useful source for understanding the changes of fashion in England and, subsequently, the Southern American Colonies, is the fashion periodical *The Lady's Magazine; or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, Appropriated Solely [sic] for their Use and Amusement*. Published in London from 1770 to 1847, this women's lifestyle magazine featured short stories, news, and embroidery patterns, as well as descriptions and engravings of the latest fashions throughout the year. While it is not the only periodical Euro-American Caucasian women of status like Martha Washington may have accessed to, this particular periodical is an excellent resource for learning about fashions in dress, including cap styles, their names, and their descriptions. While other life-style magazines existed from the last quarter of the eighteenth-century, this one was selected because of its consistent reporting of fashion. This source is useful to document the rapid changes in fashion from season to season and the proliferation of styles that would have been available on the marketplace. This periodical articulates the fashion culture that Martha Washington lived in. With its London origin, it is probable that the styles reported on came from influential London cap-producers and retailers. These styles, in turn, likely influenced the cap fashions acquired by and sent to Martha Washington from London before the American Revolution.⁹⁸

In March of 1774, *The Lady's Magazine* reported on three new styles of caps:

There are three sorts of new undressed caps. The one a quartered cap almost the same as 2 child's. The other an extremely deep wing, which falls on the hind part of the head; round, or Turkey lappets. This is a very elegant hat-cap. The third, a small, wide, shallow wing, with lappets tied in bunches. This is also a hat-cap.⁹⁹

By April of 1774, they report that "the most fashionable cap is a very wide one, with a deep narrow wing, and triple lappets and an elegant hat cap; the quartered cap wore last month is now almost abolished. Amongst, genteel people diversity of lappets, Italian, French fillagreed lappets."¹⁰⁰ In total, issues of the journal throughout the year 1774 introduced at least eight new

⁹⁸ On September 29, 1772, Robert Cary and Company invoiced George Washington for items from Thorpe's store, which included, "dressd Mi[g]n[onet][t][e] Cap with bla: Hood, A Minionet Cap." "Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772," National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

⁹⁹ Charlotte Stanley, "Ladies Dress for March," *The Lady's Magazine*, March 1774, 126, http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/Ladys_Magazine_Volume_%205/134?searchId=c67da8c6-35fc-4b07-8bbc-8bb3692e28ed#Issues (accessed December 6, 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Unknown, "Ladies Dress of April," *The Lady's Magazine*, April 1774, 212, http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/Ladys_Magazine_Volume_%205/223?searchId=c67da8c6-35fc-4b07-8bbc-8bb3692e28ed#Issues (accessed December 6, 2016).

cap styles. In August of 1781, *The Lady's Magazine* published six new cap styles: *The Devonshire Cap*, *The Rutland Cap*, *The Summer Cap*, *The Windsor Cap*, *The Vestris Cap*, and *The Deshabille Cap*.¹⁰¹ This extensive list of cap designs illustrates the variety from which a woman of fashion might choose if she wished to be *à la mode*. The sheer quantity of cap styles suggests the variety of options seen within cap consumer culture with the nuanced descriptions suggesting creativity in design. While the magazine describes the aforementioned caps, it does not include visuals. In order to know what these caps may have looked like, one requires visuals from the early 1780s to correlate the editorial with specific cap styles. While this cap vocabulary is varied and is significant, correlating these detailed descriptions to images is beyond the scope of this paper. To address the research question, this paper will use general terms instead of changing named caps (*Windsor*, *Vestris*) to describe the caps examined in this document. These general cap styles seen in periodicals and in prints to be addressed are: round caps, French night caps, and mob caps.

Round Caps

The term 'round cap' appears in *The Lady's Magazine* as a general term to describe a category of cap fashion with a band that went all the way around the head (forehead to occiput) versus forehead to tying underneath the chin. In 1787 a teenager desperate to fit in at school begs her mother, "I don't care what I learn, nor where I learn, if you will but let me have a plaid fash, and a large round cap, that I may look like the other ladies."¹⁰² This demonstrates the British fashion for large caps in 1787, which is only two years prior to a painting of Martha Washington wearing a very large cap (Appendix A, Figure 9). Perhaps this large cap is what we see in her portrait. It is not clear exactly what this fashion looked like, however, a little over twenty years prior, the description in *The Universal Museum Or Gentlemans and Ladies Polite Magazine of History Politicks and Literature* for 1763 has an "The [O]economy of Dress" section that suggests a round cap was a general category of cap, with many variations: "[a]s to Round Caps, there is a plentiful number made, such as the Mecklenburgh, the Augusta, the Queen's night cap, the

¹⁰¹ Charlotte Stanley, "Dress for the Month of August," *The Lady's Magazine*, August 1781, 407, http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/Ladys_Magazine_Volume_12/210?searchId=c67da8c6-35fc-4b07-8bbc-8bb3692e28ed#Issues (accessed December 6, 2016).

¹⁰² Unknown, "The Danger of Imitation," *The Lady's Magazine*, June 1787, 313, http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/Ladys_Magazine_Volume_18/175#Issues (accessed December 6, 2016).

French night cap, etc, etc, etc.”¹⁰³ This description of the French night cap under the heading of round cap gives us a thread of information to construct a basic working understanding of the cut of a round cap.

French Night Cap

As mentioned above, a French night cap was categorized as a “round cap” in 1763. This enables me to understand the basic components of a round cap along with other sources describing the details of the French night cap. This style is satirically described in the periodical *The Manchester Mercury: Harrop’s General Advertiser* on January 10, 1765:

[b]ut our Ladies in the South [of England], [li?]king so cumb’rous a Fashion, and imaging that something whimsically like it might be the inven-tion of a *new* Fashion, invented this French night cap or *Cheek Wrapper*. A Lady in *this* Dress looks Hooded like a Horse. with Eye -slaps—to keep them from looking one Way or the other: and perhaps that is the Reason why most Ladies in our Day choose to *look forward!*¹⁰⁴

This description can be correlated with the 1772 print *Lady NIGHTCAP AT BREAKFAST* (Appendix A, Figure 10) that is likely satirical. This colored print depicts a Caucasian Englishwoman at breakfast wearing an opaque white cap with a ruffled border that terminates into a point above her forehead. The borders sit on the cheeks and resembles blinders as they limit vision. These written and visual satirical depictions provide the researcher with extreme descriptions meant to poke fun at the French night cap. Despite their humorous intent, key features of the French night cap may be deduced or extracted from such satires. Perhaps the actual French night caps did not cover the face as extensively as described, however this possible exaggeration allows us to understand the key design features of a French night cap which are its borders that curve forward potentially covering a part of the cheeks.

¹⁰³ Unknown, “The Oeconomy of Dress,” *The Universal Museum Or Gentlemans and Ladies Polite Magazine of History Politicks and Literature for 1763*, April 1762, 208, <http://www.18thcjourneys.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/TheUniversalMuseumOrGentlemansLadies17621764volume1/143?searchId=994554bd-985d-46df-88df-d0537cdf816d#issues> (accessed December 7, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ George Alexander Stevens, “Continuation of the Lecture on Heads, exhibited with such Universal Applause, in various Parts of the Kingdom,” *The Manchester Mercury: Harrop’s General Advertiser*, January 10, 1765, http://www.18thcjourneys.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/CHE_HarropsManchestermercury_1764/360?searchId=fd74ebec-3d52-484e-afd8-168daa8b203c (accessed December 7, 2016).

Mob Caps

The Reynolda House Museum of American Art describes Martha Washington in an engraved print of *The Washington Family* portrait in their collection as “dressed in fine lace and satin with a matronly mobcap adorning her head.”¹⁰⁵ This paper questions the use of the terms ‘matronly’ and ‘mob cap’ to describe Martha Washington and her cap. This query led to sources of fiction, newspaper descriptions, and visual depictions of mob caps to get a clearer understanding of what a mob cap was during the time of the Savage family portrait painting and engraving, 1789-1796.

One text suggests the mob cap was the anti-thesis of fashion. This passage from the novel *Selima, or the Village Tale*, illustrates the discomfort the vain narrator felt when donning a mob cap: “You recollect, no doubt, on that fatal day, from which I date the commencement of my troubles, with what pain to my poor vanity I was compelled to confine my flowing tresses under the close restraint of a mob-cap...”¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the key phrases in this line are “restraint” and “vanity,” suggesting a headcovering placed low on the forehead that diminishes one’s fashionable appeal. This concept is illustrated in the 1788 satirical print *The Country Vicars Fire Side* (Appendix A, Figure 11) which visually contrasts a modest cap which covers most of the hairstyle with a fashionable giant confection that may display more of the hairstyle. This contrast in fashionability is also reinforced by the dress styles of the female participants.

In the novel *The Old Woman: a Novel* the mob cap is also used to emphasize the issue of age through its main character, Alice Grundy. The narrator writes that she “is a cheerful neat old woman...she wears...a mob cap tied under her chin and as tight as a drum upon her head.”¹⁰⁷ A similar tying of the cap under the chin is also seen in the 1800 print *My Grandmother*

¹⁰⁵ “The Washington Family,” Reynolda House Museum of American Art, <http://reynoldahouse.org/collections/object/the-washington-family> (accessed October 7, 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Mrs. Margaret Holford, *Selima, or the Village Tale, a Novel, in a Series of Letters, by the Authoress of Fanny. In Six Volumes* (London: Printed and Sold for the Authoress, by T. Hookham, New Bond-Street; and P. Broster, 1794), 193, http://find.galegroup.com/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/ecco/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=Author&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchId=R3&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=13&qrySerId=Locale%28en%2C%2C%29%3AFQE%3D%28TI%2CNone%2C61%29Selima%2C+or+the+Village+Tale%2C+a+Novel%2C+in+a+Series+of+Letters%2C%3AAnd%3ALQE%3D%28BA%2CNone%2C124%292NEF+Or+0LRH+Or+2NEK+Or+0LRL+Or+2NEI+Or+0LRI+Or+2NEJ+Or+0LRK+Or+2NEG+Or+0LRF+Or+2NEH+Or+0LRJ+Or+2NEM+Or+0LRN+Or+2NEL+Or+0LRM%24&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&userGroupName=edmo69826&inPS=true&contentSet=ECCOArticles&&docId=CW3316588754&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=CW3316588754&relevancePageBatch=CW116588754&showLOI=&contentSet=&callistoContentSet=ECLL&docPage=article&hilite=y (accessed December 7, 2016), 33.

¹⁰⁷ Mrs. Carver, *The Old Woman. a Novel. In Two Volumes. By the Author of The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* (London: Printed for the Author, at the Minerva-Press, by William Lane, Leadenhall-Street, 1800), 73,

Knitting (Appendix A, Figure 12) where an elderly woman is depicted with a cap cut close to her head. This ruffled cap frames her face and has a plain band, possibly covered by a black ribbon, that delineates the border of the cap from the caul. Draped fabric falls from the back and side of her cap. The style may suggest the of old age, or its simplicity may serve to convey religious convictions for women of Quaker faith often depicted in such caps.

Martha Washington's Cap in the Savage Portrait

A focus of my research is *The Washington Family* portrait by Edward Savage, begun in 1789 and completed in 1796 (Appendix A, Figure 1) and the cap Martha Washington wears in this painting. To understand this cap, I began by placing it within the context of Martha Washington's dress behavior in this portrait and compared her personae with other portraits of her made in the eighteenth century.

Savage's *The Washington Family* is the only representation of the Washington family together. It depicts George and Martha Washington seated with their two grandchildren George Washington Parke Custis (1781-1857) and Eleanor "Nelly" Parke Custis (1779-1852). Young George holds a compass over a partially covered globe. He is wearing a peach-colored suit with a wide ruffled collared white shirt. He is standing, while the arm of his seated grandfather rests on his shoulder. General Washington wears a white ruffled shirt and neck stock and his military uniform of blue and yellow with gold fringed epaulettes, waistcoat, breeches and riding boots; his black cocked hat with a black ribbon cockade and his sword are placed on the table around which the family is gathered. On the opposite end of the table stands Nelly. She wears a white chemise gown made from a sheer spotted fabric. Her sleeves are gathered at the bicep and again at the elbow, with a small ruffle from the gathered sleeve fabric. Her gown is belted with a blue sash and her red hair is worn loose and parted in the center, an appropriate style for a young woman. She wears no head covering. Behind her stands an enslaved male servant dressed in the Washington livery. He is almost invisible to the viewer, despite his reddish-

http://find.galegroup.com/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/ecco/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=Author&tabID=T001&prodId=ECCO&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchId=R4&searchType=BasicSearchForm¤tPosition=2&qrySerId=Locale%28en%2C%29%3AFQE%3D%28TI%2CNone%2C39%29The+Old+Woman.+a+Novel.+In+Two+Volumes.%3AAnd%3ALQE%3D%28BA%2CNone%2C124%292NEF+Or+0LRH+Or+2NEK+Or+0LRL+Or+2NEI+Or+0LRI+Or+2NEJ+Or+0LRK+Or+2NEG+Or+0LRF+Or+2NEH+Or+0LRJ+Or+2NEM+Or+0LRN+Or+2NEL+Or+0LRM%24&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&userGroupName=edmo69826&inPS=true&contentSet=ECCOArticles&&docId=CW3315856315&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=CW3315856315&relevancePageBatch=CW115856315&showLOI=&contentSet=&callistoContentSet=ECLL&docPage=article&hilit e=y (accessed December 7, 2016).

orange waistcoat with wide lapels and a high rolled-up standing collar. The features of his face and buff-colored close-fitted jacket disappear into the backdrop of the painting. The man's near invisibility is striking, as is the contrast of his dark skin with Mrs. Washington's luminous white cap. This juxtaposition brings into focus the ubiquitous but veiled institution of slavery that produced the Washington's livelihood and economic stability. The portrait does hint at the free labor used by families like the Washingtons to accumulate wealth and buying power to purchase goods such as caps, muslin, silk, and lace. The significant presence of this enslaved servant may suggest the crucial role he held within the household.

Martha Washington, wife, grandmother and guardian, is seated on a red damask chair similar to her husband's and placed next to her granddaughter. Mrs. Washington sits straight-backed and slightly forward in the seat allowing room for her voluminous skirts. She gazes in the direction of her husband and points to the map with her closed fan. Her clothing choices are strikingly different from Nelly's chemise gown. Mrs. Washington wears a structured open gown of champagne-colored silk that drapes to the floor, with a matching petticoat. Both gown and petticoat are trimmed with a box-pleated ruffle of the same material, as is the elbow-length sleeve. One delicately pointed shoe peeps from beneath her petticoat and appears to be champagne or white silk. Mrs. Washington wears a large white handkerchief around her neck, which covers the front part of her gown and is overlaid with a black lace handkerchief. By wearing this black lace piece, Mrs. Washington may be making a political and economic statement by wearing American-made lace in this unique family portrait.

On her frizzed white hair Mrs. Washington wears a full, very tall cap that sits high on her head. The height of the cap is the same as the length of Martha Washington's face. This cap is made from a sheer fabric either woven or embroidered with a small design, creating a spotted effect. A pleated or gathered ruffle frames her face. The cap is trimmed by a formidably large white ribbon bow over the headpiece. The ribbon has a high sheen like silk and the rosette is placed at the center front of the cap. There appears to be a large bow at the center back. The cap ruffles end high in front but sits lower in the back of the head where the bow sits on the nape of the neck. Looking at Mrs. Washington's cap in comparison with evidence presented thus far, it is neither conservative nor particularly extravagant.

This portrait presents us with several questions regarding Mrs. Washington's clothing choices: how fashionable is Mrs. Washington's ensemble? Does age play a role in her clothing choices? Is there a larger political or social statement being made by this portrait? How does her cap fit into the story that is being told by this painting? Furthermore, Mrs. Washington's cap raises a number of specific questions such as: how fashionable is this cap in relationship to the

styles of the day? What kind of material would this cap be made of? Why is Martha Washington portrayed wearing this style? As a maker, I look at this cap and wonder: how was it made? Who made it? Where did Mrs. Washington acquire it or the pattern to have it made? What can I learn about this specific cap—and others like it—by making a facsimile? This is the cap that begins a journey that can lead to a better understanding of Martha Washington in particular as well as eighteenth-century women in general. In chapter 5 we will link her dress behavior in the Savage portrait with others of the same time period and examine her place in society, her economic position, age, gender, and status as a free white woman of wealth and social standing.

Other Portraits of Martha Washington

There are several other visual depictions from Mrs. Washington's lifetime which can provide a context of her sartorial choices when looked at as a whole. These could help us understand her decision to be portrayed wearing the cap in the Savage portrait. The earliest example that is used in this paper is an engraving entitled "M^{rs}. WASHINGTON" (Appendix A, Figure 13) published in 1782. This print shows Mrs. Washington in a 1770s style of French night cap, demonstrating her fashionable choices and, through written primary source contextualization, might tell the story of her connection to London fashion. One of the more important images of Mrs. Washington, besides the family portrait, is a Edward Savage 1790 solo portrait of *Martha Washington* (Appendix A, Figure 9). It is important to pay close attention to her cap and handkerchiefs visible in this image. Most striking, is the very large round cap atop her head. This large cap appears to be a fashionable snapshot in time because she wears a smaller, more subdued, style in the family portrait suggesting a change of fashion between 1789, at the start the family portrait, and 1796 at its completion. Perhaps the most startling shift of style is the cap Martha Washington wears in the 1801 miniature of her as a widow (Appendix A, Figure 14). In this small image she is wearing what appears to be a mob cap tied under the chin. This evidence suggests the adoption of this more conservative style after her husband dies. Through this group of images, this paper seeks to tell the story of Martha Washington's cap consumption. It exposes fashion choices that bring the eighteenth-century cap out of obscurity and, in doing so, provides a better understanding of one the United States of America's founding mothers.

Contextualizing Portraits

While prints illustrate the suggested "ideal" of style, portraits paint a picture of what specific women chose to be immortalized wearing on their heads. Many elegant portraits depict their sitters in what appear to be the latest fashions of the day. The overwhelming majority of these

images portray white women of the higher echelons of society, representative of Martha Washington's social group. The images establish a timeline of changing fashions as worn by this elite group of women in the Southern Colonies in America and in Britain. The 1775 portrait of *Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)* (Appendix A, Figure 3) is used in this thesis to begin the discussion of cap fashions leading up to Martha Washington's cap in the family portrait. Mrs. Izard of Charleston is wearing a 1770s version of a French night cap which can be compared to the 1782 print of Mrs. Washington, presenting the opportunity to discuss the fashion of French night caps among elite Southern women. Furthermore, Mrs. Izard's cap was recreated and documented in an auto-ethnographic study that is part of this research and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The 1790 portrait of *Rachel Leeds Kerr* (Appendix A, Figure 15) provides a nice comparison to the 1790 Savage solo portrait of Martha Washington (Appendix A, Figure 9). This comparison suggests that the large caps these two women are wearing are part of mainstream fashion. Mrs. Kerr's wardrobe, as compared to Martha Washington's outfit in the family portrait, is also of interest. Comparing these ladies' gowns and handkerchiefs, they appear to be wearing very similar styles. It is interesting to note that Rachel Leeds Kerr was painted in 1790 while the family portrait was begun in 1789 and completed in 1796. In the latter Martha Washington's lower body garments may appear to some to be more conservative than her cap but these two portraits suggest a trend for the entire dress behavior (cap, kerchief and gown) that Martha Washington wears in the family portrait. The portrait of the American sitter *Mrs. Richard Alsop*, painted in 1792 (Appendix A, Figure 16), and the British sitter *Mrs. Joseph Priestley*, painted in 1793 (Appendix A, Figure 17), are further evidence of similar early 1790s sartorial trends being followed on both continents. They are wearing caps that have a narrow border at the front and increase in size as they curve along the side of the face like Martha Washington's. The aforementioned portraits link Martha Washington's cap choices to other women of similar social standing demonstrating that her cap choices were connected to a larger fashion system.

EXTANT CAPS IN CLOTHING COLLECTIONS

Martha Washington's Surviving French Night Cap (Collection of Mount Vernon)

One of the most important pieces of primary source materials for this research is an extant cap held at Mount Vernon. This cap has provenance that links it to Martha Washington (Appendix A, Figure 4). This cap comes down through from the descendants of Martha Washington. It is a lightweight, open weave textile with chain stitched polka dots on the surface of the textile. The

fiber is likely to be cotton, however the cap has not had its fiber identified. It has a caul that is gathered over the top of the head piece and left straight along the sides. The headpiece curves slightly to the front and is made out of two layers of plain fabric. Currently there is no border on the cap.

Examination of Construction

The headpiece is hemmed all the way around the piece at 20-22 stitches per inch (spi)¹⁰⁸. Hemming is a stitching technique used to finish a cut edge of fabric that would otherwise fray with wear. Without the correct type of hem, the final product could be aesthetically displeasing or non-functional. A hem is often made by folding the raw edge of the textile once and then once more to encase the raw edge of the textile. The second fold is then stitched down into a **flat hem** (Appendix A, Figure 18). Sometimes caps are finished on the edge by rolling the fabric in and around itself to encase the raw edge and then stitched into place to create a **rolled hem** (Appendix A, Figure 19).

In some sections of the Mount Vernon cap the hem measures 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm); in others, it is 1/8 (0.32 cm). It appears that, in the sections where the hem is broader, the textile is on the **bias**¹⁰⁹ (Appendix A, Figure 20), which might have affected the amount of fabric folded under to keep the curve consistent. Perhaps the open weave structure of the textile makes the fabric stretch easily, contributing to inconsistent hem widths. Additionally, the edge of the hem, as noted above, is a bit wavy, perhaps from the tension of where the border had been stitched (Appendix A, Figure 21).

The edges of the caul were hemmed at 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm). Once the fabric was hemmed, the caul is **whip-gathered**¹¹⁰ (Appendix A, Figures 22-23), starting roughly 5 ¼ inches up from the bottom of the caul along the seam line (Appendix A, Figure 24). The thread to create the whip-gathering was then pulled to draw up the fabric to create fullness and to fit the caul into the dimension of the folded headpiece (Appendix A, Figure 25). The whipped section

¹⁰⁸ Primary sources consulted were in Imperial units. As a result, the metric units will be in parenthesis and no equivalent will be given in the metric system to spi.

¹⁰⁹ Bias refers to the diagonal directions of woven textiles with its grid-like structure composed of the “straight of grain” (warp threads) and the “cross grain” (weft threads). Typically fabric is more stable when cut on the straight of grain or, to a lesser degree, on the cross grain, versus on the bias, as the bias does not correspond to any threads and thus allows for more stretch via the compression and extension of the grid. True bias refers to the 45 degree angle on the grid while all the other diagonal directions are simply referred to as the bias.

¹¹⁰ Whip gathering is a technique where the fabric is rolled on itself and the thread is stitched around the entire circumference of the rolled hem. The thread is then pulled to cause the fabric to draw up and create a ruffled effect. This technique is used for drawing up the fabric over the caul of the cap creating fullness over the hair.

of the caul was then seamed to the headpiece every two gathers using a **whip-stitch**,¹¹¹ amounting to 36 gathers per inch (Appendix A, Figure 26). The section of the non-gathered caul was seamed to the folded headpiece stitched at 28 spi.

The bottom edge of the caul was stitched into a casing for a drawstring which controls the fullness and the fit of the cap to the head. This drawstring was made by folding less than ¼ inch of fabric up and then another ¼ inch of fabric in to cover the raw edge and create a casing, this fold was hem stitched down at 18-20 spi (Appendix A, Figure 27). The small cord used to draw up the back was whipped to the side seam of the cap at each terminus end of the casing to anchor this into place.

Quaker Cap (Colonial Williamsburg Collection)

A cap from the Colonial Williamsburg Collection (Appendix A, Figure 5) dated 1790-1810 was cut close to the head, and has ruffled ties that could be secured under the chin. The object description from Colonial Williamsburg's online collection states: "this cap was worn by a Quaker woman from the Philadelphia Pennock family."¹¹² A similar style is also seen worn by a Quaker woman in the 1791 portrait of Peggy Wilson, also in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection (Appendix A, Figure 28). The study of this cap will be discussed further in the section below "Cap-Making Traditions."

Examination of Construction

This cap was cut in four main sections (Appendix A, Figure 29): the caul (A), the head piece (B), the neck drawstring (C), and the neck ruffle(s) (D). The cut of this cap can be connected to mob cap styles as the design sits low on the head and the headpiece is cut down over the ears with ties that may be secured under the chin. The Quaker connection suggests that a mob cap has multiple meanings depending on the wearer's context during the time of the Savage family portrait's production, 1789-1796.

The construction of this cap is of interest to this thesis, as it demonstrates a range of stitches and varying levels of quality of construction within one garment. When examining this cap there were no raw edges present: all of the edges have all been finished in a very precise

¹¹¹ A whip-stitch is when the thread is carried over from the underside to the face of the fabric thus visibly covering the external edge of the fabric. It is also used in a seaming technique when two pieces of fabric are joined together by stitching over the edge of the seam.

¹¹² "Women's Quaker Cap, Sheer Cotton," Colonial Williamsburg Online Collections, <http://emuseum.history.org>, then type in search box "Quaker Cap," then select "Women's Quaker Cap, Sheer Cotton," (accessed December 12, 2016).

manner. It was made from a very lightweight, sheer cotton that has a stiff hand, as if it had been starched. The pieces appear to have been cut separately and the edges rolled 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) and whip-stitched over at 22 spi (Appendix A, Figure 30). This is thus exceptionally fine finishing comparable to the Mount Vernon cap. While the hemming and whip-gathering was done exceptionally well, the cap was assembled in a very coarse manner, with the pieces joined with a running stitch at 5 spi (Appendix A, Figure 31). The casing at the back of the cap was folded up and stitched down with a running stitch also at 5 spi. Additionally, the seam that connects the head piece and caul was made with a running stitch also at 5 spi. The cap would be adjustable through the drawstring down the side of the cap and by another drawstring at the back of the neck held within a casing. The construction of this cap is curious and leads to me to question why the edges are finished so delicately while the seams are stitched so coarsely.

CAP-MAKING TRADITIONS

This thesis raises the question as to whether there is an unbroken tradition of hand-sewing techniques used in cap making that we would expect most eighteenth-century makers to possess. While cut and hand-construction have evolved over the last 250 years, are there certain hand-sewing techniques that have not changed significantly? And if so, what are they and can we learn from these techniques? Could this knowledge and skills, once acquired by the modern maker, provide a link to seamstresses of the past, making direct intellectual and corporeal connections through hands-on research?

These questions can begin to be answered through a blending of primary documentation and hands-on experiential methods. Because the experimental sewing is being performed by a modern scholar, the product of that intellectual process is an interpretation of primary sources and therefore will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. For this chapter I will present the sources I found that help me interpret caps both from a historical perspective and as a maker interested in experimental archeology.

“How-To” Guides

There are several sources that unlock some eighteenth-century cap-making techniques, including period “how-to” guides and extant articles of clothing. How-to guides print explicit step-by-step instructions for how to cut out the pieces of a cap and the order in which to sew them together. An extant cap, on the other hand, must be “read” in a different way than words on a page and can be “read” differently depending on the skill-sets of the examiner. An

understanding of the language of cut and construction is likely to lead to new perspectives not accessible through written and visual sources alone. A surviving article of clothing is embedded with knowledge in its pattern, hems, and seams and may include information that was deemed too trivial to mention in guide books. In order to take information from a garment or article of clothing, the researcher has to gain specific research skills, such as how to take or make a pattern from an existing article of clothing and a working knowledge of hand sewing in order to identify construction techniques and examine the object holistically.

Accessing eighteenth-century “how-to” sources would be extremely helpful when extracting knowledge about the making process but there appears to be only one English source from the eighteenth century that instructs the user in the how-to of making caps. Luckily for our research, this small guide published in London, *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor; Principally Intended for the Assistance of the Patronesses of Sunday Schools...*, dates from 1789. While we ignore if it was seen by Virginians at this time, the products of the step-by-step instructions were bound to be familiar to this population and, as they pertain to the poor, give us an insight far different than well-off sitters in many surviving portraits. Nonetheless, the paucity of other similar sources may be explained by the nature of the eighteenth-century apprenticeship system. “Making” skills were passed down verbally and kinetically from Master/Mistress to Apprentice with few, if any, trade secrets written down.

The 1789 book includes eighty-five pages of written instructions as well as thirteen pages of reduced-scale pattern diagrams following the index. It was intended to assist in the charitable making of clothing intended to clothe the poor and this must be kept in mind in our study focused on fashionable headwear. Were the structures of caps for the rich and the poor similar but made of better materials and trimmings for the former, or was there a parallel system of headwear according to class at this time? Instructions in the book acknowledge that it could be used to educate the poor and encourage their industry rather than idleness.¹¹³ This guide may thus lead to the making of the described caps for an array of customers, making fashionable attire a possible outcome.

Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor is immensely useful to understand the vocabulary of elements that are parts of a cap c. 1789. The front ruffle of a cap is referred to as the border. The middle piece that goes around the head is called the headpiece, while the full back of the cap is described as the caul.¹¹⁴ The challenge in using this resource is the need to interpret period terms for types of fabrics, measurements and lengths, stitches, and techniques,

¹¹³ Unknown, *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor*, 62.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

some of which are familiar to me, while others are obscure. The author explains how to cut out cap styles of women and children.¹¹⁵ The user of the book would have enlarged and sized the patterns found in the plates at the back of the book and used the written instructions in the text to know what type of fabric to use, the amount of fabric needed, where to place the selvage and seams, and other techniques and suggestions.

The Workwoman's Guide: Containing Instructions to the Inexperienced in Cutting Out and Completing Those Articles of Wearing Apparel, &c. Which are Usually Made at Home... is another helpful “how-to” source that can be of value despite its later publication in 1838. The *Guide* walks the reader, step by step, through how much fabric should be cut out for each section and explains how to sew each cap together. This source helps to articulate how caps were cut out and constructed. While the *Guide* was published in 1838, it is still useful as it was published prior to the invention of the sewing machine and explains cap construction using hand-sewing techniques. It fortunately captures the hand technology that was not generally written down or published—especially in the eighteenth century. If there is an unbroken continuity of certain hand-sewing skills, stitches, and techniques in pre-industrial garment construction, then the *Guide* should be equally applicable to produce a cap style that pre-dates the book's publication by over forty years. Comparing the *Workwoman's Guide* to *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor* will be described in Chapter 5 to address that hypothesis.

In the section “Woman's Day Or Night-Cap” of *The Workwoman's Guide*, a table is included giving the measurements needed for each section of the cap.¹¹⁶ The *Guide* discusses the ideal fabric for certain types of caps and recommends the amount of fabric needed for each style. In its approach to cutting out the sections of the cap, the *Guide* stresses the importance of economy. For a woman's day or night cap, the *Guide* states “it is by far the most economical to cut out 24 at a time, as, if half that number is cut, half the width of the length of cloth from which the puffing is cut, is wasted, whereas the 24 exactly fit in.”¹¹⁷ The two guides, coupled with extant caps, can help a modern cap maker understand the construction techniques as well as textile requirements for eighteenth-century styles.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 76.

¹¹⁶ [Sarah Josepha Buell Hale], *The Workwoman's Guide: Containing Instructions to the Inexperienced in Cutting Out and Completing Those Articles of Wearing Apparel, &c. Which are Usually Made at Home...[by a Lady]* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1838), 62.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Obtaining Patterns

As demonstrated above, eighteenth-century patterns are few and far between and this makes finding patterns all the more significant. The primary source templates may provide the original design, proportions, and style, with the caveat that they do not provide the variety of styles seen in images or described in magazines. Even so, these patterns can reveal something about the skill of the pattern makers and their expectation of pattern users' ability to understanding basic sewing terms, such as a selvage, and techniques, such as backstitching. This expectation of knowledge is different than modern patterns which walk the user through the entire process, while eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century patterns expect the user to have a working knowledge of sewing and cutting.

There are several ways that cap patterns were acquired for this project. The first was searching for surviving patterns from eighteenth-century published sources. In *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor*, I found diagrams for cap patterns for poor women. In *The Workwoman's Guide*, I found scaled-down diagrams drawn for a variety of different styles of caps fashionable in the 1830s. While the *Guide* is presenting 1830s styles, some of those are very similar to the designs of mob caps from the 1790s. While the styles are not identical, the *Guide's* diagrams are a good starting point to visualize what cap pattern pieces looked like before they were stitched together.

I also acquired cap patterns working directly with eighteenth century artifacts. One cap held in the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation was cut in the style of a mob cap with attribution to a Quaker woman. While the second extant cap is cut like a French Night cap and is held in the collection of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, it has provenance to Martha Washington. I measured these extant, three-dimensional caps and converted the measurements into two-dimensional pattern pieces. This technique may not exactly capture the original pattern from which the cap was made: the research approximates the original cut and is filtered through my skill set. This form of reverse engineering has limitations as a fabric's weave structure may be distorted as a result of how a pattern piece is placed on the grid.¹¹⁸ Modern fabrics also cannot exactly duplicate eighteenth-century fabrics and reproductions may thus differ in their ability to fall in the same ways as the originals. Therefore, I would categorize this method as an "interpretation" and classify the outcomes as secondary sources.

¹¹⁸ See Betty Kirke, *Vionnet*, passim; and Anne Bissonnette, "Doing History with Objects: Betty Kirke and Madeleine Vionnet," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 19, 3 (June 2015): 281-314, passim for studies that discuss the distortion of the cloth and patterns that results from the use of bias.

The final way I acquired cap patterns is through a blending of the study of visual sources such as portraits and fashion plates and the examination of surviving caps to conduct trial and error experiments. This presents an opportunity to experiment with manufacturing the diverse styles of caps described in periodicals and documented in imagery. Part of my training has been to look at a visual source and try to replicate the garments seen in the image. Because of the delicate, yet utilitarian nature of many caps, few or no examples survive of some styles in written or visual sources. In order to understand the cut, style, and construction, experimentation is necessary.

Auto-Ethnography

The skills of a maker obviously vary from person to person, but that would also have been true among eighteenth-century makers. The sewing acumen of individuals, whether milliners, housewives, or servants should be seen on a spectrum from most specialized to basic. As such, I believe my skill as a maker should be listed as a resource. While my stitching skills are not a primary source like a diary or extant garment, they are still an essential component to complete the proposed project.

In March and April of 2015, I conducted a pilot study of auto-ethnographic research to further explore my perspective on eighteenth-century clothing research through hand-sewing as part of a methodology course. This project mapped my making process; it examined moments that were potentially similar to those of eighteenth-century makers; it articulated in detail the process of making a cap, including how my hands solved problems as they worked; it recorded my own personal experience as a maker/researcher. During this process I made a cap based on what Mrs. Izard wears in the portrait *Mr. and Mrs. Izard* by John Singleton Copley (Appendix A, Figure 3), (Appendix C, Figures 1-14). I selected this image because I find the style of great interest and it fits into my timeline of inquiry. This exercise required making an article of clothing based on a portrait as opposed to reproducing an extant article of clothing. To record this process, I wrote a twenty minute construction diary entry before and after every making session. At the end of each session, I also was interviewed by my professor, Dr. Megan Strickfaden, for thirty minutes. I video recorded the process, took still photographs as work progressed, and made a voice recording of observations made during each session. For the purposes of this thesis, I am focusing primarily on the findings of the diary. This is only a small component of the project, as the project could be its own thesis.

Hand-sewing Findings

In the auto-ethnography diary process of the cap-making I found that the interface between my hands and the cloth was worth exploring and that many mixed emotions surfaced as I worked. The diary captured the interaction between my body and the fabric; the organic nature of the making process; the mind-freeing repetitive nature of hand stitching; the problem-solving inherent in construction; and the subconscious skill of my hands, and by extrapolation, the hands of eighteenth-century makers.

I found my body played a central role during the making process. I recorded that “my instinct was to move away from the table and use my body as a table, as it was the right height, when I did that I felt less stressed and anxious about how I held the work and therefore was able to find more of a flow of stitching.”¹¹⁹ “It was like my hands were acting like vices,”¹²⁰ suggesting they were a tool in and of themselves. Furthermore I noticed that my tools were used unconsciously, “I am still wearing my thimble while I write this up. I cannot feel it on my hand it really becomes part of my hand when I wear it.”¹²¹ The thimble became like an extension of my hand. “I also noticed that when I needed to solve a problem in the work if I did not really look at it but felt my way through it... with my hands it fixed the problem very easily.”¹²² This suggests a strong link between my mind and my hands, potentially demonstrating a hand intelligence.

Once I completed the project (Appendix C, Figure 14) I had a strong emotional opinion about the end result. I wrote, “well I am done with it. I hate it. It makes me angry.”¹²³ However, once I calmed down I recognized “from a productive perspective this can be used as a tool to learn from, make one as a prototype and then tweak it to make it work.”¹²⁴ Through my emotion I tried to consider how I perceived myself to be a failure could be used to understand the eighteenth-century cap maker’s process in a more empathetic way. The goal of this exploration was to bring the skill of eighteenth-century makers into the foreground, making their work more explicit, and to articulate how making is a form of research through the creation of facsimiles of their work. In the next section I address my inquiry into who some of these historical makers were.

¹¹⁹ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 15, 2015, 4B.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 5B.

¹²¹ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary, March 18, 2015, 5C.

¹²² Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary, March 14, 2016.

¹²³ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, April 13, 2015, 3F.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

CAP PRODUCERS

The people who cut and stitched caps together during the last quarter of the eighteenth century were my guides throughout this project. Knowing who they were and how they fit into the make-up of society contextualizes the work they were doing. Placing focus on cap makers and cap making as the center of the study entails considering the role of both historic and modern cap makers.

Milliners

There are several sources that point to milliners as being the primary producers of caps. Sources that place caps firmly in the hands and on the needles of milliners are trade guides, account books, images, and advertisements. In the 1747 trade guide, *The London Tradesman*, Robert Campbell describes milliners as making caps.¹²⁵ *The London Tradesman* was a guide to educate parents on the variety of trades practiced in London to assist in the placement of their children into apprenticeships. Campbell noted that the milliner “imports new Whims from Paris every Post, and puts the Ladies Heads in many different Shapes in one Month as there are different Appearances of the Moon in that Space.”¹²⁶ In the pre-Revolutionary War period, the Washington papers describe how caps are ordered from milliners. On April 13, 1763, Robert Cary invoices George Washington for a “fashe Knett Cap with pink Ribbn” and “Ditto wt. Blue” from Francis Montague Mill[iner]y.¹²⁷ In addition to written descriptions that place milliners as a source of cap production, there are two specific satirical prints from our period of focus with captions that refer to milliners clearly showing milliners sewing caps: *A Morning Ramble, Or The Milliners Shop* (Appendix A, Figure 32) and *The Pretty Milliners* (Appendix A, Figure 33). Depictions of milliners working are quite rare, so it is very fortunate that in these two examples, the milliners are stitching caps. In the first print the three milliners are behind the counter. The two on the left are working; the one on the right is looking at a masquerade ticket held by a gentleman standing next to her. The milliner in the center is sewing an elaborate cap and all three are wearing different versions of this article of dress. The second print, from 1781 shows a small cap being trimmed by the woman on the left. Millinery is not however the sole domain of

¹²⁵ Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London: T. Gardner, 1747), 207, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=nNoHAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR1> (accessed May 15, 2016).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ “Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 13 April 1763,” National Archives, Founders Online, <http://founders.archives.gov/?q=cap&s=1111311113&sa=&r=59&sr=> (accessed March 17, 2016).

women and other prints portray men behind the counters and men and women as consumers buying other types of articles of dress.¹²⁸ A 1772 satirical print entitled, “A Milleners Shop” (Appendix A, Figure 34) shows a woman milliner with an elaborate cap showing ribbon or lace from a counter where a cap has been placed. While a variety of merchandise is thus for sale, caps are at the center of the story as the customer appears to be trying on an extremely tall and elaborate such article of clothes.

Seamstresses

Historian Beverly Lemire has brought to light the work of anonymous seamstresses in Britain who stitched clothing as part of the cottage industry piecework system. Her work illustrates the scarcity of sources on cap makers on record. Dr. Lemire, in her article “‘In the Hands of Workwomen’: English Markets, Cheap Clothing and Female Labour, 1650-1800,” illustrates that female labor that stitched ready-made items has been left in the shadows.¹²⁹ Lemire writes that “many elements of this field were not readily apparent. This industry lacked the visible distinguishing context of shipyard, factory, mine or smoke-filled workshop.”¹³⁰ Suggesting the home production of sewn goods for wholesale versus for household use. Lemire’s discussion on invisibility of cap makers validates why looking at different sources—such as the fruit of their labor—and using kinetic, skill-based research methods to tease out information about anonymous cap makers, is important to push boundaries of knowledge on these makers who operated in the shadows .

Charlot: Household Enslaved Women, Mount Vernon

Another group of seamstresses who worked on a variety of garments were enslaved women of African descent at Mount Vernon, the estate of George and Martha Washington in Virginia. Several of these individuals are known to us through an inventory taken by George Washington of his enslaved population. On February 18, 1786, he lists three enslaved female “Sempstresses”: Betty¹³¹, Lane Alice, and Charlot. This demonstrates that these women knew how to sew, however the type of sewing they did must be deducted through other means. In

¹²⁸ For further comparison, see for instance “A milliner’s shop” published by S W Fores on 24 March 1787, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1498359&partId=1 (accessed July 28, 2016).

¹²⁹ Lemire, 25.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹³¹ “Diary entry: 18 February 1786,” National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-04-02-0003-0002-0018> (accessed June 6, 2016).

Martha Washington's correspondence there is evidence to suggest that Charlot worked on caps.

On April 19, 1791, Martha Washington wrote to Fanny Basset Washington about an enslaved woman named Charlot who was owned by the Washington family and mentioned the sewing she would like Charlot to do. Martha Washington wrote: "some day last week I wrote to you and inclosed some muslin borders for Charlot to hem."¹³² Charlot, it appears, was responsible for more than sewing. Martha Washington wrote earlier, on June 8, 1789, about Charlot's knowledge of her wardrobe, describing a black handkerchief which, "Charlot knows where it is to be found."¹³³ We also know from her correspondence that Mrs. Washington understood the steps involved in stitching and construction and had opinions about Charlot's work ethic: in a letter dated August 29, 1791, she writes:

I wish you'd had them whipped [i.e. whip-stitched and gathered]--it was but little more trouble for Charlot, they cannot be sewed on the wristbands till they are whipped--she is so indolent that she will do nothing but what she is told she knows how work should be done, I cannot find how it is possible for her and Caroline to be altogether taken up in making the peoples cloths--if you suffer them to go on so idle they will in little time do nothing but work for themselves.¹³⁴

Such a letter documents the spectrum of skills held by enslaved women at Mount Vernon and, most likely, throughout the Southern Colonies. According to Martha Washington Charlot and Caroline knew how to produce caps, cuffs, and other items properly. This sort of document demonstrates the diversity of the home clothing industry of which the Washingtons were a part. The Washingtons did not just purchase their clothing from England (as described by their cap buying of 1763 described earlier), they also had a skilled labor pool of enslaved workers who had the ability to stitch together a wide array of clothing articles at Mount Vernon.

If we are to place Martha Washington's cap in context, we must acknowledge the sewing and clothing production of the enslaved population that supplied Mount Vernon and, very likely, much of the state of Virginia. According to the 1790 census, of the total 747,160 men, women, and children in the state, 292,627 were enslaved.¹³⁵ The enslaved population of Virginia comprised slightly over 39% of the overall population. While a vast number of those enslaved

¹³² Fields, 230.

¹³³ Ibid., 215.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 233.

¹³⁵ "Population of the United States as Returned at the First Census: By States, 1790," in *Heads of Families at the First Census, 1790: Records of the State Enumerations: 1782-1785*, <https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1790m-02.pdf> (accessed June 7, 2016).

individuals where occupied in other activities, 747,160 Virginians wore clothing that were most probably predominantly sewn by enslaved skilled needlemen and women, in addition to free tailors, milliners, and gown makers.

Needlework and Elite White Women: The Case of Martha Washington

Beyond anonymous seamstresses and enslaved needlewomen, there are references to elite Caucasian women possessing advanced sewing skills. One of Martha Washington's letters indicates her involvement in putting her hand to an aspect of cap trimming. Mrs. Washington writes in 1789, "in my closet there were fine net Handkerchiefs which I intended to make cap boarders off- I think I shewed it to you and told you I intended to make a border of them."¹³⁶ The question lies in whether or not Martha Washington intended to sew the borders with her own hands or have one of her enslaved seamstresses do the stitching. However, there are other examples of women with sewing skills who constructed or trimmed caps if the time allowed. Abigail Adams writes to Mary Smith Cranch on May 13, 1798, about some sewing of lace onto borders of a cap: "I have also sent you a narrow lace for to put on them. If you put a double Border there will be enough for only one. Let me know because when I find a pretty Edging I will Send you enough for the other. You will want to run the lace upon a narrow piece of Muslin. Ladies of your age wear Such fine Muslin, with White Ribbons made like the dress close caps, with a little Hair seen at the Ears."¹³⁷ These description of elite white women sewing borders onto caps suggests they are completing decorative sewing tasks that adds beauty, requires a high level of skill to complete, and fulfils a cultural and social expectation of high status but is not completed for pay or to fulfill a prescribed job expectation. This thesis is not able to delve into an in-depth discussion of production sewing in or out of a domestic setting versus sewing for leisure. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of who might have worked on caps and in what context. Depending on their skills, and not unlike modern assembly lines, needlework could be assigned to different workers for specific tasks. This division of labor may be part of the situation described by Mrs. Washington: she may have given the early production steps to others and focused on creating borders only, but her intention "to make cap boarders" may also have been to assign someone else to do this work.

¹³⁶ Fields, 215.

¹³⁷ "From Abigail Smith Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 13 May 1798," National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-0019> (accessed December 3, 2016).

Cap Consumers

The ubiquity of caps in portraits and prints is significant. Many images of woman of English or European ancestry in “undress” and “half dress” attire are depicted as a cap consumer, wearing some variant of a cap. This leads to a plethora of visual sources. Yet few secondary sources discuss this ephemeral item of clothing. The lack of written information by scholars illustrates the need for further study on this topic. On the other hand the abundance of visual sources creates an overwhelming amount of data for researchers to address. One could spend a lifetime categorizing every piece of art depicting women from the eighteenth century to even begin to catalog the types and variations of women’s caps. Since classifying and recording cap style nomenclature in detail is beyond the scope of this paper, I have selected certain visual images which help to illustrate larger themes attached to the consumption of caps and relate to issues of gender, status, fashion, occupation, and race.

Gender

While it is obvious that the caps on which this thesis focuses are styles that are typically worn by women, exploring how caps were a coded element of dress in the eighteenth century is significant for this study. Several satirical prints offer striking uses of the cap to discuss feminine behavior. For example the 1780 satirical print, *A Morning Frolic, or The Transmutation of Sexes*, by John Collet (Appendix A, Figure 35) that communicates how the eighteenth century made visible issues of gender through specific garments. In this case a soldier and a woman have exchanged headwear so that he wears her large, beribboned cap while she wears his gold-laced trimmed cocked hat with a red bow. She also carries at her side his sword while he holds her fan. These items, as well as her assertive standing pose and his seated timid stance, are key signifiers of their assigned gender roles. The cap is thus an extremely important element of dress within the performative aspect of femininity.

The 1782 satirical print, *Starting of Game*, published by Sayer & Bennett (Appendix A, Figure 36) further shows gendered headdress practices that can help us understand the use of the cap in the eighteenth-century’s visual lexicon. The print depicts a woman standing in an active pose wearing a skirted, yet masculine-style riding habit, beside a seated woman who wears a conventional feminine gown and cap. Instead of a cap the woman in the riding habit wears a top hat—similar in profile to the crown of the male hunter’s hat in the background. Once

more the cap is worn by the passive seated conventional woman. This print further reinforces that gender norms are encoded in the placement and meaning of the cap.

Occupational & Fashionable Caps

To help decode the placement and meaning of caps, it is helpful to ask questions such as “Where are women wearing caps?” and “What types of caps are they wearing?” The cap use and style may allow us to better understand the position of a woman in society. Looking at depictions of women in both occupational and fashionable settings helps to answer these questions.

Henry Walton’s 1776 painting, *Plucking the Turkey* (Appendix A, Figure 37), depicts a woman performing the physically demanding task of plucking a fowl. If modern viewers interpret this task as dirty and physically demanding, the subject’s attire is somewhat surprisingly clean as she is dressed a white ruffled cap with a pink ribbon tied in a bow at center front and a purple fitted bed gown with white dots worn with a dark petticoat covered by a sensible checked indigo apron.¹³⁸ This kind of trimmed cap may not be thought suitable for such tasks and yet the portrait does not appear to make fun of an inappropriate use of dress by the sitter. Looking at it from an eighteenth-century viewpoint, this image might give the viewer a sense of what types of caps women of all social classes could have worn in the context of performing physical labor. The image can also convey that fashionable attire, such as caps and ribbons, were worn by the majority of women.

This genre may also be a useful visual for illustrating changing fashions in caps as there are many versions of the *Plucking the Turkey* theme. The original painting of 1776 shows a contemporary style of cap seen in fashion plates (Appendix A, Figure 6) while a later 1797 print made from a painting called *A Cottage Maid*, published by Haines & Son (Appendix A, Figure 38), depicts a similarly dressed woman in an entirely different style of cap—one more fashionable at this time. This appears to indicate that, while certain elements of working dress were static, styles of caps changed more rapidly and could be the working woman’s fashionable token.

Occupational dress can also dovetail with fashionable attire, if a woman’s job was fashion. In the 1782 satirical print *A Morning Ramble, or The Milliner’s Shop* (Appendix A, Figure 32), produced seven years before the Savage portrait, the caps worn by milliners are entirely fashionable. This print provides the viewer with three caps of varying style, all worn in

¹³⁸ The indigo color is sensible as this dye is colorfast and can easily be washed.

the same context. The fashionable attire of the milliners suggests a range of clothing choices for women working in diverse occupations. The prints illustrate that clothing and caps might have been chosen to suit the specific job being done. The *Morning Ramble* communicates that there was no single uniform style of purely utilitarian clothing for these working women. It may be that clothing choices were as diverse as the jobs that women held and this is reflected in the caps chosen by them.

Combining depictions of occupational and fashionable caps can also be seen in the 1780 satirical print *Shop-lifter Detected* (Appendix A, Figure 39) by John Collet. This satirical print displays a broad range of caps worn by women of various strata of society and age. The print illustrates a very well-dressed woman being caught stealing from a shop. This image sketches a host of characters, all of whom would have been instantly recognizable to an eighteenth-century viewer, in varying states of work clothing and caps. To the left is an older woman with tall hair and a large cap, with what appears to be a handkerchief draped over it and a bow to finish it off. Most of her hair is covered, except for the front pyramid of hair visible as the cap cuts away to the side of the face at a diagonal angle. The central character has her hair dressed at the height of fashion. The bright white turban-like cap on her head is festooned with two feathers and ornamented with bows, ribbon, and lace. Perhaps significantly, the eye is immediately drawn to her massive headdress and then down to her hem, where lace is being pulled out of her petticoat. In the doorway, we find a more modestly dressed woman. Her hair and cap are close to her head with subtle wisp of bangs at the forehead. Her cap is much more modest than other ladies and does not appear to be trimmed with lace or ruffles. The bow looks to be the same color as the body of the headdress, suggesting that the item is wrapped around the head and tied into a bow at the top of the head, like a handkerchief. These three types of caps are distinctive and can convey character and/or class.

The 1772 satirical print, *A City Taylor's Wife Dressing for the Pantheon* (Appendix A, Figure 40) by James Wilson contrasts the extravagantly fashionable cap worn by the wife with the modest clothing of her husband. The towering cap is trimmed with two rows of ribbon and decorations. This image suggests a common theme of social satire in the eighteenth century: women who dressed beyond their means. This print provides commentary on women of modest means who dress in an elaborate manner and the possible social anxiety about their sartorial choices. While many other aspects of dress are illustrated in these satirical prints, exaggerated caps are often present to emphasize the point being made. Beyond satire, this grouping of prints might also be used to show the power of the cap to convey a complex social code.

TEXTILES

To understand the materials suitable for cap construction, I looked at “how-to” books, newspaper fashion descriptions, advertisements, letters, and added secondary-source textile dictionaries to secure my understanding of eighteenth-century textile terms. *The Workwoman’s Guide* and *Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor...* clearly specify the types of textiles that would be appropriate for cap making. In *The Workwoman’s Guide*, lawn, cambric, and muslin checks are listed.¹³⁹ Within *Instructions*, “Irish cloth,”¹⁴⁰ and “long lawn”¹⁴¹ are the fabrics recommended for caps. Newspaper advertisements for shops in the Southern American Colonies and England, including those found in *The Lady’s Magazine* and London’s *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* proved useful sources for descriptions of fabrics used for caps. Williamsburg milliner, Catherine Rathell, advertised “fine thick cambrick and clear lawns.”¹⁴² *Cambrick* and *lawn* were noted as being very light weight, fine linens, perfect for caps.¹⁴³ On May 18, 1774, John Eason was indicted in London for stealing a “laced lawn cap” valued at one shilling from Sarah Croker, a spinster. Other items stolen by Eason valued at one shilling were a silk gown, a flowered lawn apron, a pair of linen shift sleeves, and a linen shift.¹⁴⁴ These items, all listed with the same monetary value, give us an indication of the relative worth given to the stolen cap. Although the gown and shift must have used more fabric and taken more time to stitch, the cap is valued equally, indicating the lace and fabric were of reasonable quality.

A wide variety of light fabrics were marketed for cap making. Rathell advertised “...plain, striped, and book muslin.”¹⁴⁵ Book muslin was a lightweight type of muslin, which is a sheer cotton.¹⁴⁶ Gauze, a lightweight open-weave textile made of silk or linen, was also advertised by milliner Margaret Hunter in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1772, where she offered “flowered, spotted,

¹³⁹ Hale, 12.

¹⁴⁰ Unknown, *Instructions*, 64.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁴² Catherine Rathell, “Just imported from London,” *The Virginia Gazette*, October 13, 1768, 2, <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGSinglePage.cfm?IssueIDNo=68.PD.45&page=3> (accessed December 7, 2016).

¹⁴³ Florence Montgomery, *Textiles in America 1650-1870* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 187, 275.

¹⁴⁴ “John Eason, Theft, Grand Larceny, 18th May, 1774,” *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17740518-51&div=t17740518-51&terms=lawn|cap#highlight> (accessed February 22, 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Rathell, *Just imported from London*, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Montgomery, 304.

and plain Gauze.”¹⁴⁷ In August of 1781, “*The Deshabille Cap*” was described in *The Lady’s Magazine* as having “Three wings of French net-gause...”¹⁴⁸ In summary book muslin of cotton and silk and linen gauze were popular light fabrics used in caps.

The prices associated with the textiles were also discussed in letters. Abigail Adams, in a letter to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch, on May 13, 1798, writes of sending her some muslin and notes its extremely high value: “I Send you my dear Sister a piece of Muslin for two Crowns of caps. It must be done up with great care It is calld deca muslin. It does not look well to tell the price of any thing which is for a present, but that you may know its real value I will tell you that it was Six dollers pr yd.”¹⁴⁹ The name “deca” may indicate the fabric’s origins in the city of Dacca (now spelled Dhaka) in the Indian subcontinent (now Bangladesh) legendary for its production of “*ventus textilis*” (woven wind), the highest quality of translucent cotton muslin.¹⁵⁰

Potential Textiles of Martha Washington’s Cap

We cannot precisely identify the fabric from which Martha Washington’s cap is made in the Savage family portrait (Appendix A, Figure 1). Nor do we know the fiber content of the extant cap in Mount Vernon’s collection, which is associated with Martha Washington, because the fiber has not been identified. However, in Mrs. Washington’s frequent correspondence with Fanny Bassett Washington, she often discusses fashions and fabrics. Her accessories are often described as being made from muslin. For example, in one of George Washington’s most famous letters to his wife, telling her that an army has been raised and that he will be commander-in-chief, he notes in a post-script: “Since writing the above I have received your Letter of the 15th and have got two suits of what I was told wa(s) the prettiest Muslin. I wish it may please you – it cost 50/ [shillings] a suit that is 20/ [shillings] a yard.”¹⁵¹ This statement suggests that muslin was one of the fabrics which Martha Washington preferred. This correspondence also suggests the significance of these items, which were worthy of acknowledging even when the letter’s subject matter is very serious. Furthermore this postscript

¹⁴⁷ Margaret Hunter, “Just Imported from London,” *The Virginia Gazette*, July 9, 1772, 3, <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGSinglePage.cfm?issueIDNo=72.PD.31&page=3&res=LO> (accessed December 7, 2016).

¹⁴⁸ Charlotte Stanley, “Dress for the Month of August,” *The Lady’s Magazine*, August 1781, 407, http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/Ladys_Magazine_Volume_12/210?searchId=c67da8c6-35fc-4b07-8bbc-8bb3692e28ed#issues (accessed December 6, 2016).

¹⁴⁹ *Abigail Smith Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 13 May 1798*.

¹⁵⁰ Khademul Islam, “Our Story of Dhaka Muslin,” *AramcoWorld*, May/June 2016, <http://www.aramcoworld.com/en-US/Articles/May-2016/Our-Story-of-Dhaka-Muslin> (accessed December 3, 2016).

¹⁵¹ Fields, 160.

underscores George Washington's surrogate consumption for Martha Washington when he is away from home.

Fabric and materials were also repurposed. Mrs. Washington describes the repurposing of a handkerchief in a previously cited letter to Fanny Bassett Washington from June 8, 1789. By reusing a "fine net Handkerchiefs ... to make cap borders," she may have been referencing "net caps," of which there are at least two held in two in different private collections in Virginia, and one in The Colonial Williamsburg's collection accessioned using this terminology.¹⁵² The textile term "net," may be describing an interlaced structure rather than a woven fabric. This material is of interest for this project because it calls into question the types of materials used to make caps and it forces the researcher to consider materials more diverse than woven textiles.

While these sources give the researcher a written description of what a cap might be made from, we do not have visual confirmation of how the fabrics looked; the modern manufacture of muslin, linen, and netting does not correspond to historical production methods, resulting in very different textiles today. Ideally, the researcher would be able to pair a swatch of eighteenth-century fabric identified by its eighteenth-century name. Some of the textiles listed I have been able to match with historical swatches and others I have not. Having a physical understanding of the textile is important because it enhances an understanding of the textile's hand and how it would be handled when being made into a cap. The length of the fibers staple, its twist with other filaments into yarn, the spin the thread or yarn may have and the kind of weave that would be utilized would affect how the cap would look once it was finished. Understanding the physicality of a textile might explain why one fabric was chosen over another in certain types of caps. This could relate not only to the ability of the maker to construct the cap and its ability to be pleated or gathered, but also the finished piece's drape and ability to maintain its shape. While the cycle of fashion is helpful in understanding the design aesthetic and culture of the eighteenth century, the textiles from which caps were constructed is just as important from an economic, cultural, and fashion perspective. Both maker and user would agree that understanding the cap textile is key in researching its history.

Laundry of Textiles

The selection of fabric for a cap could be tied to the textile's ability to be laundered, ironed, or starched, taking into consideration that most caps would be exposed to perspiration and natural hair oils and dirt, in addition to the possibility of hair-dressing products such as hair pomades

¹⁵² Ibid., 215.

and powder. A style of cap worn in a more utilitarian environment would almost certainly be made from a sturdier, more easily washed textile, otherwise it would begin to disintegrate, lose its shape, or remain stained. All of these results would render a cap unusable to all but the most impoverished wearers. Since the type of fabric affects the design of the cap and how it is sewn, I investigated how cap fabrics were laundered.

In *The Workwoman's Guide*, the author describes a baby cap called "The Full French Cap."¹⁵³ It is described as "rather troublesome to get up at the wash, and sometimes requires unpicking to be neatly done."¹⁵⁴ Unpicking refers to removing all the seams, laundering the flat pieces, and then reconstructing them with new thread. This technique likely affected the original construction method and influenced textile choices. Treatises that include laundry receipts, or recipes, like the 1760 *Servant's Directory*, and the 1758 *The ladies handmaid: Or, A compleat system of cookery* by Sarah Phillips inform the reader about the maintenance of textiles. These books offer methods for brightening white textiles, often made into caps.

This chapter has presented three different cap categories which can be correlated with Mrs. Washington's headdress in the Savage and other portraits, demonstrating the diversity of cap choices available during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. As discussed above, these cap choices existed within an active fashion system. Of specific interest to this paper is how these caps were made and by whom. The findings of extant cap, their study and an auto-ethnographic exploration suggest that a modern connection can be made with historical cap makers. Moreover, findings present a diverse set of cap makers, from enslaved seamstresses to elite white women. This disparity of situation might also denote what cap components a women stitched. This chapter presents findings to aid in a complex understanding of Martha Washington's cap in the Savage family portrait, which will be interpreted in the next chapter.

¹⁵³ Hale, 21.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

When we look at Martha Washington's cap in the Savage portrait (Appendix A, Figure 1) from a maker's perspective, it opens a virtual sewing box of topics: how were caps made? How can facsimile caps be reproduced to better understand originals? Who were the historic makers of caps and what styles did they produce? These are some of the questions I will tackle in this chapter to address my research question: "how can the act of hand sewing enable us to contextualize the cap Martha Washington wears in *The Washington Family Portrait*?" To get some answers, I will try to find out who might have made Martha Washington's cap and how. The goal of this cap-making experiment is to mimic the skills of eighteenth-century makers to produce a product that imitates their work and to gain a bodily understanding of production. More specifically, I will investigate what techniques were used to make Mrs. Washington's cap as this can help explain the nature of this object and the features that made it distinctive to her contemporaries and to present day viewers. In the process, I will explore how the skills of a modern cap-maker can help us contextualize Martha Washington's cap with other cap styles.

Among the most important skills needed to understand Martha Washington's cap, is the sewing technique of hemming. This finishing technique is central to the construction of all extant caps studied in this thesis. A delicate hem seems a small and insignificant detail, but, to a cap maker, it is a critical component in the production process. Eighteenth-century seamstresses who produced functional caps had to be excellent hemmers, capable of manipulating fabric within a range of 1/4th of an inch (0.64 cm) to 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm). Beyond a range of fine hems, a good cap maker had to be able to handle hem edges on the bias (Appendix A, Figure 20) while still maintaining a smooth curve. Stitching on the bias is one of the most exacting in the cap-maker's repertoire because of the way the fabric can stretch in this direction. Hemming sheer fabrics often made of loosely-woven fabrics cut in constantly changing grain lines adds to the maker's challenges and affects the quality of the end product, which could affect its saleability in the eighteenth-century marketplace. The hem's significance will be elaborated upon and examined in greater detail throughout this chapter as it has proven to be a recurrent theme in the research. The narrative of hemming upholds the significant role sewing skills and the production of caps plays in the contextualization of the cap worn by Mrs. Washington in *The Washington Family*.

This chapter is organized into three sections to interpret the main findings obtained through my research. These sections corresponding to three different cap styles studied and the

production of them. Each cap provides a distinct story line and contributes to the discussion on caps and their manufacture while placing Martha Washington's cap in context.¹⁵⁵ In the first section, we examine the cap worn by Mrs. Izard in the portrait completed in 1775 by John Singleton Copley (Appendix A, Figure 3). We will examine this portrait first through an auto-ethnographic research perspective, utilizing the hand-sewn inquiry methodology. This section is placed first to demonstrate that sewing is a form of thinking and to see what can be learned about sewing a cap through hand stitching. We will then investigate the fashionable nature of Mrs. Izard's cap, which leads to a discussion on changing styles during the 1770s. Through the hand-sewn inquiry methodology, the second section utilizes a cap owned by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association that has credible provenance linking it to Martha Washington to underscore the disposable nature of fashionable caps, highlighted by the re-use of lace and other trims. Furthermore, the Mount Vernon cap demonstrates a possible division of sewing labor according to its place as a mandated task or as a leisure activity. The third and final section focuses on a conservative style of cap with a Quaker provenance, held in the Colonial Williamsburg Collection. This Quaker piece enables a conversation about conservative cap styles and, via the hand-sewn inquiry methodology, suggests a connection between the cap's construction, laundering, and cleanliness.

All three cap styles discussed in this chapter were reproduced using eighteenth-century sewing techniques and the act of making was recorded using an auto-ethnographic and reflexive process. As a practitioner who studies the process of eighteenth-century sewing, auto-ethnography has allowed me to draw on the specialist knowledge I possess and gave me the opportunity to present "meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in [my] personal experience."¹⁵⁶ What makes this information methodological and topical findings is the framing of the research with the academic literature¹⁵⁷ and weaving it into a historical narrative about Martha Washington and caps during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

Each of the three cap-making projects was documented using a diary and photos. For Mrs. Izard's cap, an interview session was also included. The photos helped to document not only the sewing process of the cutting and construction process, but also captured the minutiae of the making process and has allowed me to isolate and discuss the questions and ideas that occurred to me while sewing. The goal of the hand-sewn inquiry methodology is to articulate the detailed moments of making, and the value of being aware of these micro-moments of

¹⁵⁵ I am indebted to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's work *The Age of Homespun* in the way it provided a structure based on different pieces of American material culture to structure an argument.

¹⁵⁶ Ellis, 3.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 9.

knowledge production “because [as] one holds the tools in one’s hands and is using one’s body, touch, like hearing, is also gathering information.”¹⁵⁸ These auto-ethnographic projects seek to produce new knowledge about eighteenth-century caps through the lens of a cap maker and seek to support the argument put forth that sewing is a form of embodied thinking.

MRS. IZARD’S FASHIONABLE 1775 CAP

The Copley painting of Mr. and Mrs. Izard (Appendix A, Figure 3) was created during a stay in London, after a tour of Italy with the artist.¹⁵⁹ This portrait depicts Mrs. Izard, a wealthy, Caucasian woman from Charleston, South Carolina, in an English cap style seen in London fashion prints dated 1773 (Appendix A, Figure 6) and 1780 (Appendix A, Figure 7), suggesting this style was the mode for several years. It is unknown if Mrs. Izard wore this style of cap when she was in Charleston. Nonetheless Mrs. Izard’s cap is akin to the one worn by Martha Washington in an engraving entitled “M^{rs}. WASHINGTON” (Appendix A, Figure 13) published in 1782. It is possible that the likeness of Martha Washington in the engraving was taken from an earlier portrait as the style of cap depicted is seen in fashionable London periodicals between 1765 and 1780, which would make Martha a late adopter of this style in 1782. Primary sources mention the fashionability of Martha Washington through her desire for imported caps prior to the War of Independence: George and Martha Washington had a long history of placing orders to London merchants through a factor to ensure their utmost fashionability without the necessity to be abroad.¹⁶⁰ This suggests that this style of cap was worn both in the Southern Colonies and in London, illustrating a cross-Atlantic sharing of cap styles. Furthermore, the importation of caps suggests that the labor to produce these caps was completed in England.

French Night Caps: Mrs. Izard’s 1775 Cap and Mrs. Washington’s 1782 Cap

One style of cap that is depicted in 1770s that resembles the Izard cap of 1775 and the Washington cap of 1782, is satirically described in the English *The Manchester Mercury* as a “French night cap” or “Cheek Wrapper.”¹⁶¹ This 1765 satirical description gives the reader a

¹⁵⁸ Tarule, 137.

¹⁵⁹ “Artwork,” MFA Boston, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mr-and-mrs-ralph-izard-alice-delancey-31228> (accessed November 13, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ See for example “Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772,” National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

¹⁶¹ George Alexander Stevens, “Continuation of the Lecture on Heads, exhibited with such Universal Applause, in various Parts of the Kingdom,” *The Manchester Mercury: Harrop’s General Advertiser*,

strong sense of the style that is akin to the print entitled “*LADY NIGHTCAP AT BREAKFAST*” (Appendix A, Figure 10). While this print presents an extreme version of the style for greater effect, the caricature is actually helpful to identify the precise elements of the cap which make it a French night cap. In conjunction with the 1765 description, the print provides a working definition of how a French night cap was structured and functioned. This is corroborated by two London fashion prints that depict fashionable caps of similar style, cut in a more moderate, wearable manner in 1773 and 1780 (Appendix A, Figure 6 (second row) and Appendix A, Figure 7 (bottom right)). Beyond these fashion prints, many London engravings depict variations of this style suggesting that it was an English favorite during the 1770s and 1780s. It appears that the French night cap provided a basic template, which might be re-trimmed and changed in its proportions to accommodate the changing volumes of hairstyles seen in Appendix A, Figures 9 and 10. While this paper can place the 1775 Izard cap and the 1782 Washington cap in the general category of French night cap, specific detailed categorization is not possible at this time. This paper will use a macro-lens to define caps using general terminology, while mining deeper using a micro-focus of the cap through the sewing process, which follows in the next section.

Hand-Sewn Inquiry of Mrs. Izard’s Cap Via a Pictorial Source

To further understand Mrs. Izard’s French Night cap and other caps like it, I chose to go through the process an eighteenth-century cap maker might have used by hand-stitching a facsimile of Mrs. Izard’s cap. Choosing to replicate this cap using only the image proved to be a reasonable alternate method since no extant French Night Caps in collections were available at the beginning of this auto-ethnographic inquiry.¹⁶² This section is the first in this paper that aims to understand how the act of hand sewing can lead to a greater comprehension of the type of cap Martha Washington wears in the Savage family portrait and aims to contextualize this object through its production.

The act of hand sewing is a physical demonstration of embodied knowledge. There are no written period guides on how to interpret and make a cap from an image. I therefore drew on skills I had learned through my seven-year apprenticeship at the Margaret Hunter Millinery Shop at Colonial Williamsburg where I was taught how to use visual imagery and extant garments as

January 10, 1765,

http://www.18thcjournal.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/CHE_Harrop_Manchester_mercury_1764/360?searchId=fd74ebec-3d52-484e-afd8-168daa8b203c (accessed December 7, 2016). For full reference to passage see page 38 in this thesis.

¹⁶² A year later, in April of 2016, I studied a cap in the collection of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association that I believe is a French Night Cap.

sources to make garments that imitated these images and historic garments. I also drew from the 1789 *Instructions for Cutting Out Wearing Apparel* and my study of extant caps to reproduce caps by hand. These same types of primary sources were used by eighteenth-century cap makers, who also gained their knowledge through a formal apprenticeship setting. This section explores my link as a modern maker to these eighteenth-century makers through the shared sewing technique of hemming. Hemming as a skilled gesture demonstrates the intellect held within the hand.¹⁶³ I utilized this hand and body intelligence to further contextualize Martha Washington's cap.

This reproduction process fits within an exploration of material culture methodology. The standards of material culture analysis, as laid out by scholars such as Jules Prown, had to be altered to translate a two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional object. This project presented me with the opportunity to kinetically engage with the cap style worn by Mrs. Izard. Through making the cap, I was able to access information on the significance of the body as a tool, how the cap might have been made, what the style might have looked like from different angles, and consider the making process as a way to think through the aesthetics of the cap design.

To replicate the cap seen in the portrait, I had to break down each step of the cap-making process (Appendix C, Figures 1-14). Each step presented numerous questions and resulting hypotheses. One question led to another and, even if I did not answer all the questions the making process raised, the practice opened my mind to a variety of queries, thus illustrating the complexities that one object holds. I had to consider the cap's pattern, how many pieces were in the pattern, what the pieces looked like, how the pieces were sewn together, and what size and type of stitches were needed. I also had to make choices as to what type of materials to use. The fabric, trims, thread, needles, and scissors were all part of my decision-making process. Being able to consider these questions raised through the making process helped me to think about the object in a multi-sensorial way.

To create the pattern and produce a scaled working garment based on a visual source, I referenced points on the body where the cap sat on Mrs. Izard's head and used a tape measure to replicate those points on my own head. I then translated those measurements to paper and drew out an approximation of the cap pattern. These pattern shapes and the construction techniques used to assemble the pieces were based on what I had learned through my apprenticeship studies. I believe that cap makers were likely to cut out all the pieces first and

¹⁶³ Pallasmaa, *passim*.

then finish all of the raw edges next (Appendix C, Figures 1-3). The finishing was done either through hemming (Appendix A, Figures 18-19), (Appendix C, Figures 6-7), by creating a casing for a drawstring (Appendix A, Figure 27), (Appendix C, Figure 13), or whip-gathering (Appendix A, Figures 22-23). All of these techniques require the raw edge to be finished, using either a hem or whip stitch, to make a serviceable cap.

During the making of the lizard cap I learned much about the intelligence of my hands and body, particularly during the intricacies of the hemming process. As I stitched, I was aware of how the feel of the fabric and the changing grainlines affected the quality of the hem. The unyielding nature of silk organza resisted staying folded, springing back into its original plane. When I first started the project, I noticed that my hems were not as small or as even as I wanted them to be, nor were my stitches as consistent as was desirable. I initially started hemming while sitting at a table, using that surface to help stabilize the work. It was nonetheless difficult to find a consistent rhythm of hand sewing under those circumstances. Frustrated, I moved my work to my lap and used my legs as support. This provided a better height and positioning for my hands.¹⁶⁴ I further explored this situation in the second day interview with Dr. Megan Strickfaden, explaining that I felt that holding the fabric in this way made me more centered and calm, and generated a better work flow. Furthermore, I found that the interplay between my lap and my hands proved to be a better hold for the fabric as I hemmed: my hands acted like movable vices, holding and stabilizing the fabric grainline, the fold of the hem, and the needle's angle as it was pushed through the fabric.¹⁶⁵ The hands, but also the rest of the body and its positioning, played an important part in the overall process.

This experience was validated by historical images of women stitching, many of whom hold their work in their lap or in their hands. Some of these images depict tools and materials held on a table, but the garments are primarily held on the workers' bodies. In the c. 1800 Swedish portrait by Pehr Hillestrom, *Syende dam* (Appendix A, Figure 41), a woman uses her knees to support the work and to bring it closer to her. In the British print *Domestick Amusement: The Fair Seamstress* (Appendix A, Figure 42) from 1764, the protagonist is using her lap to place her work. While in the c. 1785 French painting by Antoine Raspal, *Un atelier de couture à Arles* (Appendix A, Figure 44), some mantua-makers use the table to hold the fabric of gown skirts, yet the sewing appears to be done above the table in their hands. Others in the picture use their laps, with the aid of a foot stool to lift their knees and create a moveable work

¹⁶⁴ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 15, 2015, 4B. I recorded that "my instinct was to move away from the table and use my body as a table, as it was the right height, when I did that I felt less stressed and anxious about how I held the work and therefore was able to find more of a flow of stitching.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 5B. "It was like my hands were acting like vices."

surface. While these images depict seamstresses and mantua-makers across Europe in the eighteenth century seated on chairs, male tailors traditionally sat cross-legged on a work board while also using their laps as their workspace, as seen in the c. 1780 British painting of an *Interior of a tailor's shop: 1767-1800* (Appendix A, Figure 45). While both sexes use their body as the work surface, we may note a different gendered posture to holding hand work. Perhaps it is because women wear skirted garments in these images, where men do not? Regardless of the reason, it is significant that both men and women placed their bodies as the central work space on which to stitch. As the research aims to contextualize women's caps and, as I have yet to find evidence that men created them, we can thus assume that these eighteenth-century caps were not created in the cross-legged position. Future studies may help explore this gendered approach further. For now this allows me to consider with more empathy the type of position the maker of Martha Washington's caps adopted to create a speedy, stitching rhythm, ideal for production.

An awareness of this posture encourages careful consideration of the entire body as a significant, symbiotic tool for hand stitching caps. I believe the link between my bodily experience and the eighteenth-century visual sources illustrates bodily knowledge and the use of the body as a tool in hand sewing. This points to a link between past and present makers through a bodily skill and the mimesis of historical gestures and processes.

The engagement of the work with hands, eyes and legs working together is a holistic system. Exploring the links between mental acuity, kinetic knowledge, rhythmic patterns and total body involvement could bolster an understanding of past stitchers but this is beyond the scope of this paper. If we consider traditional workshops as research laboratories, we can factor-in the body as a tool just as we would address manufactured equipment such as needles, scissors, thimbles, and pins, which can all be an extension of the body to address different functions. We cannot discount how manufactured tools became more than a means to an end: they often became part of a stitcher's being. As a case in point, I can no longer feel my thimble on my finger when I wear it, I left it on my hand after I was finished sewing my lizard cap and was writing my diary.¹⁶⁶ The point to this finding is that the body can be seen as the ultimate tool, enhanced by manufactured aids. Regardless of living in the eighteenth or twenty-first century, the body becomes the most important tool to sew and stabilize efficiently and effectively. While bodies across time are different, the posture is not, demonstrating an embodied link between an eighteenth-century and a twenty-first century cap maker. My

¹⁶⁶ Sarah Woodyard, *Reflexive Diary*, March 18, 2015, 5C. "I am still wearing my thimble while I write this up. I cannot feel it on my hand it really becomes part of my hand when I wear it."

subconscious posture illustrates an example of mimesis of eighteenth-century cap-making knowledge.

Enculturated to historical sewing processes I made a ‘subconscious’ choice to move my work from the table to my lap was, which suggests that my enculturated body can override my conscious mind. There were other moments during the hemming of the cap pieces when my subconscious body outwitted my conscious intentions. On the first day of the project, I found that the sewing transition around a 90 degree corner was causing some difficulty. The fabric grain was off and it was creating a messy lump of fabric just where the corner needed to be smoothly turned and hemmed. This occurred, in part, because I had not worked with that type of fabric for some time. It felt as though I needed to relearn the hand of the textile in order to manipulate it into a desirable outcome. The intelligence of my hands was highlighted during this vexing moment. I finally stopped looking at the fabric, and instead felt my way through the problem. When I let my hands do the work they produced better results than when I was examining the work to find a solution.¹⁶⁷ My hands already knew how to fix the problem because of past experiences sewing with that type of material. My hands have their own form of intelligence and can feel their way through a project, which is supported by Pallasmaa’s theory of the thinking hand. This cultivation of skills allowed my hands to develop a certain level of intelligence on their own, helping them solve problems like an extension of my brain. While the problems I encountered while stitching may or may not have been similar to historic cap makers issues, this experience of problem solving is likely an experience historical makers had. As solving problems leads to faster, more fluid sewing, the production environment could be an important factor in the finished product.

Upon completion of the Izard cap, I was disappointed in my work and disliked the final product (Appendix C, Figure 14).¹⁶⁸ I did not feel it was an accurate representation of the cap seen in the Copley portrait. And yet, these feelings of frustration provided an opportunity to critique the reproduction cap in a constructive manner and acknowledge the negative emotional element that sometimes is part of the making process.¹⁶⁹ I immediately started looking at the portrait and reflecting on the scale and the details of the cap depicted. I thought about proportions and how the reproduction cap looked in relation to my head and hair. These

¹⁶⁷ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary, March 14, 2016, “I also noticed that when I needed to solve a problem in the work if I did not really look at it but felt my way through it... with my hands it fixed the problem very easily.”

¹⁶⁸ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, April 13, 2015, 3F. “Well I am done with it. I hate it. It makes me angry.”

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. “From a productive perspective this can be used as a tool to learn from, make one as a prototype and then tweak it to make it work.”

reflections provided another research tool to consider the style and pattern of the cap. Moreover, it made me reflect on the design and replication processes of an eighteenth-century cap maker.¹⁷⁰ I considered what inspiration an eighteenth-century cap maker might have worked from. It is unlikely that a cap maker would have made a cap just by looking at a print in a vacuum, without having recently made something like it or without having a cap of similar size and style in their workshop. New fashions tend to emerge from older styles rather than venture into completely unknown territories. This suggests that eighteenth-century cap makers were relying on a variety of inspiration sources: caps they had recently made, caps for sale in the shop, caps brought to them by their customers to use as inspiration, as well as written descriptions and print sources. This is where my process and that of an eighteenth-century cap-maker differed; I do not have the first-hand experience of multiple objects and images that came before and informed the maker of new fashionable goods. Fashions in caps cycled very rapidly and, as a result, cap-makers relied on a variety of sources from fashion journals to sample caps, to stay up to date.

The Fashion System's Impact on the Iazard Cap

The names and faces of most of these cap makers have been lost to us, which motivates me to validate their contributions to dress history by uncovering and understanding their skills. Some images do survive of cap makers at work, such as the 1783 print *A MORNING RAMBLE, or_ The MILLINERS SHOP* (Appendix A, Figure 32), and the 1781 print *THE PRETTY MILLENNERS* (Appendix A, Figure 33). These images provide a glimpse into what English milliners may have looked like and the environment in which they plied their needles. There is a dearth of visual record of milliners at work, so it is significant that, among these rare depictions of milliners, two women are depicted sewing caps. As Beverly Lemire observes “female labour was a key component of a flourishing clothing trade.”¹⁷¹ The size of these objects made them easy to make in a piece-work operation since “domestic manufacture in a small room or garret was the usual point of production for many ready-made goods like shirts, waistcoats, caps or handkerchiefs.”¹⁷² Caps were sewn by anonymous seamstresses in London and elsewhere, as well as milliners and enslaved women in the British colonies of North America. As noted by such

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 4F. “It actually allowed me to consider that idea that the milliner is really building from what she already has versus trying to create completely off a print.”

¹⁷¹ Beverly Lemire, *Dress, Culture and Commerce: The English Clothing Trade before the Factory, 1660-1800*, (Palgrave: Macmillan, 1997), 4.

¹⁷² Ibid., 68.

scholars as Beverly Lemire and Marla Miller,¹⁷³ the anonymity of these small-scale production sites and producers has led to their lack of visibility in historical records. The study of caps and cap production can serve to bolster the knowledge on this underrepresented group. While we do not have many names or visual depictions of these women, the two above visual representations depict the women sewing on caps, visually associating these milliners with cap production.

The visual association of milliners and caps may even suggest that the caps in these images were used as a metaphor for the increasingly time-sensitive fashion system. These women's hands were the backbone of the fashion industry and served to put "Ladies Heads in many different Shapes in one Month as there are different Appearances of the Moon in that Space."¹⁷⁴ These small objects that lend themselves to infinite variations and required less fabric and notions than entire garments could not have changed as fast as they did without the milliners' cutting and expert sewing skills as well as their creativity. Moreover, the rapid turnover of cap styles indicates a high-speed transmission of knowledge on emerging styles. Mrs. Izard's cap was produced within a fashion industry where a cap maker needed a discriminating eye and nimble fingers to rapidly adapt the styles of caps as they changed from season to season to be profitable in her business or that of her employer.

This rapid cycle of cap fashions was also occurring in France during the reign of Louis XVI with a head dress called a 'pouf' documented by art historian Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell. This name applied to both a hairstyle and a cap, which could be accented with objects such as fruit, ships and portraits that allowed the wearer to express their interests and/or knowledge of current events.¹⁷⁵ Like typical caps, the pouf was "designed to change frequently, and to go out of fashion quickly."¹⁷⁶ This information demonstrates that the cap represented "fast-fashion" and quick consumption. Milliners, with their ability to quickly translate the latest trends into garments, could be responsible for creating new styles, increasing demand, and/or sharing their knowledge of up-to-date fashions with their clients. Looking at this evidence, it may be deduced that the fun, frivolous and constantly changing nature of women's caps is symptomatic of greater changes occurring in society at this time. The constant discarding of cap styles may

¹⁷³ See Lemire, "In the Hands of Workwomen," passim; Miller, passim.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman* (London: T. Gardner, 1747), 207, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=nNoHAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR1> (accessed May 15, 2016).

¹⁷⁵ Chrisman-Campbell, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

have affected the clothing economy as well as the livelihoods of those who plied their needles in the eighteenth-century fashion industry.

Being provided with the very latest cap fashions was likely on Martha Washington's mind when she purchased goods from a London milliner, Susan Thorpe, during the early 1770s. Prior to the Revolutionary War, the Washingtons ordered their goods through their London factor, Robert Cary. On September 29, 1772, Robert Cary and Company invoiced George Washington for items from Susan Thorpe which included, "dressd Mi[g]n[on]et[t]e Cap with bla[ck] Hood, A Minionet Cap."¹⁷⁷ Minionet was a fashionable type of lace which was made into caps. Susan Thorpe, if she knew her business, would have been abreast of the latest styles for her wealthy clients. She was likely familiar with cap styles reported in London's *The Lady's Magazine*, such as the later issue from March 1774 which describes a variety of cap styles: "three sorts of new undressed caps. The one a quartered cap almost the same as a child's. The other an extremely deep wing, which falls on the hind part of the head; round, or Turkey lappets. This is a very elegant hat-cap. The third, a small, wide, shallow wing, with lappets tied in bunches. This is also a hat-cap."¹⁷⁸ The following month, Thorpe would have quickly had to adapt the styles she offered in her shop because suddenly, "the most fashionable cap is a very wide one, with a deep narrow wing, and triple lappets and an elegant hat cap; the quartered cap wore last month is now almost abolished. Amongst genteel people diversity of lappets, Italian, French fillagreed lappets."¹⁷⁹ A milliner would have needed to interpret these descriptions based on her experience with the previous season's designs. While Thorpe and Washington had many sources to draw from for fashion information, such stylistic descriptions require some translation from a person knowledgeable of the product to understand them today. What, for example, is a "hat-cap" or a "fillagreed lappet"? Interpreting the written descriptions and recreating the caps would be an excellent area for further study. While the interpretation of the written word was part of a milliner's job, visual sources may have been better guides but they were fewer, more costly, and took more time to get produced compared to written descriptions. As such, the newest styles were likely first described in print.

While it was important for a milliner to keep her customers in the latest fashion, a delicate balance had to be struck between excess and fashionable dress. As scholar Amanda Vickery explained about women in Georgian England, "obsession with the superficialities of

¹⁷⁷ "Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772," National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

¹⁷⁸ *The Lady's Magazine*, March 1774, 126.

¹⁷⁹ *The Lady's Magazine*, April 1774, 212.

dress was reprehensible” and yet “compliance with prevailing fashion was inescapable.”¹⁸⁰ This invisible line must have been hard to navigate. A woman was considered immoral if she dressed above her station and yet considered suspect if she was dressed far below it.¹⁸¹ Eighteenth-century commentary warned against the “‘extream of fashions’ and ‘ill-placed finery.’”¹⁸² This gendered concern was directed towards women and rooted in English society’s anxiety that women would be blinded by vanity and lose all restraint while shopping.¹⁸³ While there were social concerns about men’s consumption patterns and sartorial display, that phenomenon is beyond the scope of this paper. A woman’s desire for dress could lead to excessive spending, which could plunge a household into debt and financial ruin. This anxiety was visually depicted in prints, such as “A City Tailors Wife dressing for the Pantheon” (Appendix A, Figure 40). The print depicts a modest tailor in meager-looking clothing looking anxiously at his wife who wears very tall hair and an overly decorated cap with rows of ribbon and lace. This extravagant headdress is the central focus of the print, a symbol of irresponsible spending and vanity. The visual rhetoric of caps at this point in time is easily understood in this engraving but, without the garments of her husband at her side, the narrative may not be as clear. An obsession for fashion could lead to a life of crime, as illustrated in the print “SHOP-LIFTER DETECTED” (Appendix A, Figure 39). The woman at the center of the image is dressed very fashionably, with a towering cap with excessive decor of ribbons and feathers. She has been caught stealing lace, which she hides under her petticoat. Once more the cap is the center piece of the image, suggesting how her sartorial desires have led her down the path of vice. These caps act as metaphors of immoral consumption and suggest that caps could be used as communicators of female identity.

The milliners played a role in creating this identity through the making and sale of caps. For example the beribboned cap in the print “SHOP-LIFTER DETECTED” might have been stolen or purchased from a millinery shop, making the milliner culpable as an accessory to unruly consumption. The image “A MILLINERS SHOP. Mrs. Monopolize, the Butchers Wife, purchasing a Modern Head Dress” (Appendix A, Figure 34) illustrates a milliner wearing a large decorated French night cap and enticing her customer with lace borders and large caps. The customer has placed her more modest cap on the counter, replacing it with a towering

¹⁸⁰ Amanda Vickery, “Mutton Dressed as Lamb? Fashioning Age in Georgian England,” *Journal of British Studies* 52 (October 2013): 869.

¹⁸¹ Jennie Batchelor, *Dress, Distress and Desire: Clothing and the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 9.

¹⁸² Vickery, 870.

¹⁸³ John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 167.

confection. This French night cap, like a metaphorical crown of improper consumption, is intended to make the woman look grotesque to an observer as compared to a more moderate, modest, and thus ideal headdress. This ideal middle ground is depicted in fashion illustrations of 1773 (Appendix A, Figure 6) and, arguably, in the depictions of Mrs. Izard, as well as in the 1782 engraving of Mrs. Washington (Appendix A, Figure 13). Therefore, to recognize excess in proportions and trimming, the viewer needed to be aware of the context of the cap in relation to the social status of the wearer.

Written records of the Washington's purchases suggest that Martha Washington avoided the pitfall of frivolous fashion and over-consumption and was a knowledgeable consumer of fashion. Her orders to London milliner Susan Thorpe point to her concern over the value of millinery goods imported to Mount Vernon before the American Revolution. On 15 July 1772 Martha Washington wrote to Mrs. Thorpe, in a rare example of her authoritative voice in this direct and somewhat stringent letter:

...I now sd for a Suit at the price of £40; wt. Lappets &ca but if you cant afford to sell a much better bargn in these, than yo. did in the last I shl hope that Mr Cary will try elsewhere, as I thk her Custm add. to my own is worth a little pains—Amg the othr things sent last y[ea]r for myself &ca were 5 Gauze Caps wt. Blond Lace bordrs at a G[uine]a each, when the same kd might have been bot in the Country at a much less price—I have now sent for 2 Caps for M. Custis, & 2 for myself of Mi[g]n[onet][t][e] lace & wd have them gentl but not expene...¹⁸⁴

This passage conveys Martha Washington's voice of authority over her own place and power as a consumer. Before her second marriage to George Washington she was one of the richest widows in Virginia¹⁸⁵ and, as such knew the value of goods. Although George Washington legally owned her property when this letter was sent, Mrs. Washington had strong opinions as to what was purchased and by whom. This voice is especially clear when she threatens to take her business elsewhere. Mrs. Washington clearly demonstrates her concerns to the milliner: while she is ordering a suit of lace¹⁸⁶ worth the substantial amount of 40 pounds, getting value for the household money is of the utmost importance. It is worth considering this point from a class perspective since Martha Washington, who is at the top of the Colonial social strata, is arguably safer from ridicule than the tailor's over-dressed wife in figure 40. However, avoiding excessive

¹⁸⁴ "Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772," National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078>, (accessed August 8, 2016).

¹⁸⁵ Fields, xx.

¹⁸⁶ A "suit of lace" was a matching set of millinery to compliment a gown. Such as sleeve ruffles, neck ruffles, and a cap.

spending and garish dressing was still clearly of importance in her aim to reach a societal ideal. Abigail Adams lauds Martha Washington for the careful curation of her wardrobe, describing Washington as being “plain in her dress, but that plainness is the best of article.... Her manners are modest and unassuming, dignified and feminine.”¹⁸⁷ This account of her dress paints an important picture of Mrs. Washington—a woman who could wear a suit of lace worth 40 pounds with grace and refinement and, according to Adams, without ostentation. The same opinion can be applied to her caps, they were likely of the finest materials, yet they were worn in a neat, modest, and graceful way.

Using the French night cap that Mrs. Izard and Martha Washington wore as a locus, this subsection has opened the discussion of who made caps, what a French night cap was, and how this intersects with Martha Washington. Through auto-ethnographic hand-sewn inquiry, this section demonstrated how the hand-sewn inquiry methodology can demonstrate the intellect of the hands, and the significance of the body. This maker-centric perspective encourages an empathic perspective of caps and the experience of production which had to be quick in order to keep up with the rapid change of fashion. The production of French night caps with excessive ribbon and lace, became a symbol of the eighteenth-century anxiety about excessive consumption, if worn by the “wrong” woman. This symbolism suggests that these caps, and other styles, were capable of communicating the identity of the wearer, in Martha Washington’s case, a woman of great means but good taste.

MRS. WASHINGTON'S 1790 and 1789-1796 CAPS

The Reynolda House Museum of American Art has in their collection an engraved print of *The Washington Family* portrait. In the extensive record of the object they describe Martha Washington as such: “Mrs. Washington sits across from her husband, dressed in fine lace and satin with a matronly mobcap adorning her head.”¹⁸⁸ In this section I will argue that Martha Washington is not dressed in a matronly manner, nor in a mob cap, but is dressed appropriately and fashionably for her age, and in such a manner that helps to date the portrait. This second section will explore what type of cap she is wearing, and who might have sewn it. The third and final section will explore what a mob cap was and what connection it had to Martha Washington.

¹⁸⁷ Natalie S. Bober, *Abigail Adams: Witness to Revolution* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 161.

¹⁸⁸ “The Washington Family,” Reynolda House Museum of American Art, <http://reynoldahouse.org/collections/object/the-washington-family> (accessed October 7, 2016).

In 1795 Charlotte Chambers described Mrs. Washington who was in her mid-60s¹⁸⁹ as “dressed in a rich silk, but entirely without ornament, except the animation her amiable heart gives to her countenance. Next to her were seated the wives of the foreign ambassadors, glittering from the floor to the summit of their headdress.”¹⁹⁰ This description has parallels with Mrs. Washington’s attire in the family portrait and presents Mrs. Washington dressing in a subdued manner in a public and official setting. In the family portrait she wears a plain satin opened gown and petticoat with only modest ruffles as embellishments: this is rich yet simple as well as sumptuous yet fashionable for day attire. Her black lace kerchief and sizable white cap draw more attention than the rest of her attire. She keeps up with fashion but is neither too formal nor excessive.

The Washington Family portrait is perhaps the most significant public representation of Martha Washington created in the late eighteenth century. This portrait—and the subsequent prints made from it—were not intended for private family consumption, but, instead, for worldwide, public viewing. In 1798, within about 20 days of Edward Savage advertising the print version of the painting for sale in two Philadelphia newspapers, he had received 331 subscribers for the print.¹⁹¹ In modern public relations terms, this portrait and its subsequent prints were produced to create and reinforce the “brand” of the Washington family. The sitters’ clothing, the setting, and the props placed in the portrait were keys to crafting the depiction of a new political order and the familial image of its ruler. In this portrait, Martha Washington is the first iconic “first lady” and her dress may avoid excess for a political purpose. Because of the popularity of this painting turned print, it is likely that what she is wearing in this painting is how many have remembered her image.¹⁹² From a twenty-first-century cap maker’s perspective, the style and date of the cap are key to understanding the cap’s place in the fashion cycle. Dating the garments in the painting becomes clearer when accessing the correspondence of Edward Savage and George Washington and by paying careful consideration to the cap Martha Washington wears.

The family portrait painted by Edward Savage was begun in 1789 and completed 1796 as described in letters between George Washington and Edward Savage. Seven years was a

¹⁸⁹ Martha Washington was born June 13, 1731. The quote does not have an exact date and therefore it is uncertain if she was 63 or 64.

¹⁹⁰ William Spohn Baker, *Washington After the Revolution 1784-1799* (Philadelphia, 1897), 276.

¹⁹¹ “To George Washington from Edward Savage, 3 June 1798,” National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-02-02-0237> (accessed November 21, 2016).

¹⁹² While it is beyond the scope of this work, more research needs to be done about the visual memory of Martha Washington and how that has influenced the popular culture opinion of eighteenth-century caps.

significant length of time in eighteenth-century fashion and this period is even more significant as it saw the emergence of a new paradigm in women's wear.¹⁹³ Understanding this broad date range is important as it affects our understanding of Martha Washington's fashionability. On June 3rd, 1798, Savage wrote to George Washington about the delivery of four copies of the "Family Print" produced from an engraved copper plate.¹⁹⁴ The artist discussed the likenesses of George and Martha, and acknowledges that, while the Washingtons' would find their own likenesses to be familiar, those of the children have changed because "the copper plate was begun and half finished from the Likenesses which I painted in New York in the Year 1789, I Could not make the aulteration in the Copper to make it Like the Painting which I finished in Philadelphia in the year 1796."¹⁹⁵ The 'likenesses' to which Savage refers are the two companion portraits of "George Washington" (Appendix A, Figure 46) and "Martha Washington" (Appendix A, Figure 9), both completed in 1790. Looking at these inspiration portraits from 1790 provides the researcher with some context of where the style of clothing seen in the family portrait came from. We can thus judge Martha Washington's fashionability by comparing her clothing in the family portrait to her clothing in the inspiration "solo" portrait and other portraits from the time period of 1789-1796.

Comparing the 1790 companion solo portraits to the 1789-1796 family portrait, we see that George and Martha Washington are painted only from the torso upwards, but this is enough for us to observe Martha's cap. They wear almost identical clothing as in the family portrait, except for the color of her gown, the lace pattern of her kerchief, her cap and his hair. The 1790 cap is strikingly distinctive: it may be cut more in proportion with a different hairstyle, is decorated with a different colored ribbon, has a different pleating arrangement above and below the band over which the ribbon lies, and the flounce nearer to her face is the same width from ear to ear. This last feature is thus not the same as the flounce that ends at the center front to create a peak and rounded sections covering the sides of the face (i.e. the "wings") seen in the 1782 engraving, or the continuous flounce that changes width to be narrower at the center front in the 1789-1796 family portrait. These are markedly different caps: the large 1790 cap appears

¹⁹³ For more information on this changing paradigm in silhouette, see Anne Bissonnette, "Dessiné d'après nature: Renditions from Life in the *Journal des Dames et des Modes* 1798-1799," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 2 (June 2015): 213-237.

¹⁹⁴ "To George Washington from Edward Savage, 3 June 1798," National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/06-02-02-0237> (accessed November 21, 2016).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

to be a generic round cap, while the cap in the 1789-1796 portrait is more in sync with a French night cap.

Evidence suggests that the round cap style as seen in the 1790 portrait, while worn in this manner in the 1770s, becomes more prominent and stylish in the 1780s and 1790s. In August of 1781 *The Lady's Magazine* describes “the summer cap” as “a large round cap, with three rows of plaiting, quite round; a lappet pinned loosely on, of crape or gauze.”¹⁹⁶ This description matches the image of the milliner who is seated on the left hand side of the print in “The Morning Ramble” (Appendix A, Figure 32) from 1782. Her cap appears to have three rows of plating of the same width from ear to ear that curve in afterwards, versus the two defined wings of a French night cap. Perhaps one of the definable features of the fashionable round cap style of the 1780s and 1790s is a border which is cut in one continuous piece that goes around the head. This is similar to the style of cap Mrs. Washington wears in the 1790 portrait (Appendix A, Figure 9). That cap has a continuous ruffle which does not create a center front peak at the forehead like a French night cap and its wing components.

Martha's 1790 cap is wider and larger than her 1789-1796 cap, while it is a showstopper, it is not unique to her. Rachel Leeds Kerr, wife of Lieutenant David Kerr, a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, was painted in 1790 by Charles Wilson Peale (Appendix A, Figure 15) wearing a cap of epic dimensions, much like Martha's 1790 cap (Appendix A, Figure 9). In 1790, immense cap styles would not have been “read” as excessive fashions, but, in the late 1790s, it might have been so. In 1788 Martha Washington was described by Olney Winsor as “dressed in a plain black Sattin [sic] gown, with long Sleeves [sic], figured Lawn Apron & Hand[kerchie]f, guaze [sic] French night Cap with black bowes [sic]—all very neat—but not gaudy [sic].”¹⁹⁷ While cap fashions of the late 1780s are perceived as extravagant in the twenty-first century, Winsor's eyewitness account provides a different perspective. This evidence speaks of how her contemporaries might have considered Mrs. Washington's sartorial choices in the 1790 portrait as elegant versus excessive and thus positioning her as dressing in line with fashion. The 1790 Kerr portrait emphasizes the fact that Martha's sartorial choices are in line with other women of her region and social standing.

While there is a resemblance with cap and neckwear in the Kerr 1790 portrait with Martha Washington's 1790s portrait, there is a striking similarity between Kerr's 1790 gown and

¹⁹⁶ *The Lady's Magazine*, August 1781, 407.

¹⁹⁷ Olney Winsor to Mrs. Olney Winsor, March 31, 1788, in John P. Kaminski and Gaspare J. Saladino, ed., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* vol. 8 (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988), 523.

kerchiefs with Washington's in the 1789-1796 family portrait. However, there is one glaring difference, the size and decoration of Martha's cap. The cap in *The Washington Family* portrait may have been painted to deliberately avoid the fashionable excess that was accepted as part of mainstream fashion only six years prior in the 1790 Washington and Kerr portraits. As cap styles changed so quickly, Martha Washington may have requested Savage adapt her cap when the fashions of 1796 shifted to a more subdued style, thus updating her head to the latest mode, but keeping her gown the same. This suggests that Martha Washington and her peers would have looked towards their caps as the first item to change and update among their wardrobe.

The remarkable ability of a cap to update a wardrobe is illustrated further in two pieces of art: the 1774 painting *Girl Plucking a Turkey* by Henry Walton (Appendix A, Figure 37) and the 1797 version of the print titled *A Cottage Maid* (Appendix A, Figure 38). The clothing below their shoulders is identical, except that the cap style was changed in the later version to a more fashionable model. In *A Girl Plucking a Turkey* the woman is wearing a French night cap and in *The Cottage Maid* she wears an updated round cap with a wider border. These illustrations strengthen the argument that a mere cap had the power to bring its wearer in or out of fashion. This also illustrates that Savage was following a larger convention amongst artists: a mere change of the cap and the sitter is brought into the latest fashions, as Martha Washington was between 1790 and 1796. Furthermore, these examples are significant to a modern researcher looking at material culture and artwork, demonstrating that cap identification can be used as a key to dating visual sources.

Further primary source evidence can help us contextualize the cap in Savage's *The Washington Family*. The updated 1789-1796 French night cap seen in this portrait is similar in structure to one in a November 1794 fashion plate from the *Gallery of Fashion* (Appendix A, Figure 8). The seated woman (labeled in the original source as "Fig. 29") is wearing a cap that, although smaller at the crown, is similar in style to Martha Washington's cap in the family portrait. The description next to the plate reads: "HEAD-DRESS. A French night cap, the cawl of worked muslin, with a double border of lace in half plaits; round the head, a broad striped rib and quilled, with a large bow behind, and in the front."¹⁹⁸ This cap style appears to have been a popular design amongst elite white, American and British women during the first half of the 1790s in its taller crown version, as seen in the portrait of the American sitter *Mrs. Richard*

¹⁹⁸ N. Heideloff, "TWO LADIES AT BREAKFAST IN THEIR DRESSING-ROOM. FIG. XXIX," *Gallery of Fashion*, November 1794, <http://digital.bunka.ac.jp/kichosho/file/No.032/032-0001-027.jpg> (accessed December 11, 2016).

Alsop by Ralph Earl in 1792 (Appendix A, Figure 16) and the portrait of the English sitter *Mrs. Joseph Priestly* by Charles Frederick von Breda in 1793 (Appendix A, Figure 17). These works of art demonstrate that Martha Washington's cap style was not unique to her and was a fashion amongst her peers (i.e. women of similar rank and age).

This type of cap is, however, an informal style—as conveyed by the dressing room context of *The Gallery of Fashion*—that is adopted for more formal portraiture, as seen in the Washington, *Alsop* and *Priestley* examples. It is intriguing that these elite, mature, American and British women present themselves in informal cap styles, made out of expensive fine textiles. Perhaps this style of cap was both acceptable and fashion for a mature woman. Abigail Adams wrote to her 58-year old sister on May 13, 1798, describing a similar style of cap: “Ladies of your age wear Such fine Muslin, with White Ribbons made like the dress close caps, with a little Hair seen at the Ears.”¹⁹⁹ It is likely that the cap she describes is the style Martha Washington and her contemporaries are wearing in their portraits. This suggests that there is an informal, mature fashion for caps made out of expensive fabric, trimmed with lace and ribbon, for a woman past her youth. The cap likely denotes a certain age, as Martha Washington's granddaughter does not don this cap style.

Mrs. Washington was aware that her sartorial choices needed to reflect her age, as is immediately apparent in the portrait where her clothing is markedly different from her granddaughter's. Furthermore, Martha Washington consciously acknowledged the fashion age differences in an order to a London milliner in 1772. Ordering a variety of items, she directed the milliner to choose caps that were appropriate for a 16 year old and a 40 year old: “I have now sent for 2 Caps for M. Custis, & 2 for myself of Mi[g]n[onet]t[e] lace & wd have them gentl but not expene; hers to Suit a Person of 16 yrs old mine one of 40.”²⁰⁰ The notion of age-appropriate caps would have been understood by the milliner receiving the order. She would have acknowledged the cultural convention that people were expected to dress their age. However, dressing one's age did not mean dowdy nor out of fashion. While Martha Washington ordered clothing to suit her mature years, those clothes were expensive and fashionable garments, as we see in the type of dress Mrs. Washington wears in the family portrait.

This points to a distinctive and flattering fashion for caps for middle-aged women that, while more conservative than their younger counterparts, was still attractive and made from fine

¹⁹⁹ “From Abigail Smith Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 13 May 1798,” National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-0019> (accessed November 28, 2016).

²⁰⁰ “Invoice from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772,” National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

fabrics. This suggests a shift in age-related cap wearing in a high-fashion context between the 1770s and 1790s. In the 1770s, youthful women wore caps in a fashionable context as evidenced by the rapid change of caps styles and Washington's orders for her granddaughter. By the 1790s the trend for fashionable²⁰¹ cap wearing is maintained by older women, as illustrated in the Ralph Earl portrait of *The Angus Nickelson Family* painted c.1791. Fashionable young women are prescribed uncovered, powdered and pomaded hair, while mature women decorate their hair with fine, fashionable caps.

Not surprisingly, given Martha Washington's French night cap choice and other wardrobe selections, she was described by "an elegant figure for a person of her years."²⁰² Nonetheless there are modern interpretations, such as the catalogue description from Reynolda House, that suggest Martha Washington was dowdy.²⁰³ This lack of smartness or taste misinterpretation of Washington's public image has been taken to task by recent scholarship such as the master's thesis of The Montpelier Foundation's Assistant Curator, Teresa Teixeira, who presents Washington as a fashionable, well dressed, genteel woman.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, Vickery has argued that eighteenth-century English women dressed fashionably and according to their age, thus substantiating that Martha Washington's sartorial statements are in line with her English peers.²⁰⁵

The evidence presented speaks to the necessary viewing of Martha Washington as a mature woman of fashion who updated her wardrobe as the styles shifted. To investigate the French night cap seen in the family portrait further, I observed and reproduced a French night cap with a provenance linking the piece to Martha Washington. By examining, patterning, and stitching cap pieces together, the process revealed further details of importance to understand Washington's cap in the family portrait and the maker behind the mode.

²⁰¹ This discussion is specifically referring to fashion and not servant dress or rural styles where younger women are seen in utilitarian cap styles in the 1790s.

²⁰² Olney Winsor to Mrs. Olney Winsor, March 31, 1788, in John P. Kaminski and Gaspare J. Saladino, ed., 523.

²⁰³ Teresa Teixeira, "Martha Washington: from Fabulous to Frump" (master's thesis, George Mason University in Association with Smithsonian Associates, 2014), 2. Ms. Teixeira conducted an online survey and reported on it in her Master's thesis demonstrating the public opinion that Martha Washington is perceived as old and dowdy.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Vickery, *Mutton Dressed as Lamb*, passim.

Hand-sewn Inquiry into Martha Washington's Extant French Night Cap: Towards a Sewing Literacy

In the collection in the Mount Vernon Ladies Association there is a cap that is attributed to Martha Washington. This cap is very similar in cut and design to the one that Mrs. Washington wears in the family portrait and, like it, the Mount Vernon cap appears to be a French night cap. In order to more fully understand this eighteenth-century garment, I found it necessary, not only to study the artifacts, but to learn from the object and reproduce it. The scholar-maker can read such a historical object for the document that it is, seeing arcane construction details and even recognizing the hands that created it. I propose calling this knowledge "hand-stitching literacy." Seeing an object laid out before you is like seeing a work on canvas in person; there are layers of information to an object that are not revealed in a photograph. Handling and observing original garments brings to life the scale, the textures, and the details of sewing—in short the humanity of the objects—in a way seldom possible by two-dimensional images. The study and sewing of facsimile garments cultivates a different type of literacy than reading does, it cultivates a sewing literacy which provides the skill to read construction techniques in other extant examples and written documents. As Tarule noted about his own process with his sources, "...my work in the shop, and the questions it raised, helped form the questions I asked of the written documents." The following auto-ethnographic study added to my sewing literacy through the study and reproduction of the cap in the Mount Vernon collection.

Observations

Mrs. Washington's cap is simple in its cut: it consists of a caul and a two-layered headpieces (Appendix A, Figures 4, 24, 25). The third piece of the cap called the border, which is the ruffle along the edge of the cap was not present. It appears that the border has been removed, which may suggest it was made of lace, a precious textile often recycled for re-use. There were pin holes along the edge of the headpiece where the stitches had attached the ruffle, which confirms the presence of this component at some point in time. The removal of such a cap ruffle is described in a letter Martha Washington wrote to her granddaughter. Such actions to re-use precious lace pieces could explain a piece of lace which was part of the cap's accession number mentioned by the institution's Assistant Curator as having been the cap's original border.

Stitches with a Purpose

To produce the facsimile of Martha Washington's Mount Vernon cap I followed the construction notes and reproduction pattern I took from the original artifact (see Appendix A, figures 24-25 for the shapes) and paid close attention to the quality of my sewing so that it would closely replicate the original (Appendix C, Figures 23-30). I began with hemming the caul piece independently (Appendix C, Figure 23) and then hemmed the headpiece (Appendix C, Figures 25-27) before joining these pieces together (Appendix C, Figures 28-29). The weave structure of the original fabric was relatively open and I was worried that the meticulous 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm) hem that I needed to do around the caul (18 x18 inches square with rounded corners) would become a mess on the curved sections as this is where we leave the grain and cross-grain and have to deal with the bias. Interestingly, the stability and texture of the textile provided enough friction to hold the folded edge in place and I was able to achieve the desired hem.²⁰⁶ Throughout the piece delicate and small stitches were necessary. To connect the headpiece and the caul, I whip-stitched them together at 20 spi (Appendix C, Figures 28-30). When I looked at my sewing and the weave structure of the fabric, I was sewing every 2-3 threads. I observed in my making diary that this type of sewing looked like darning. Indeed, when I got three-quarter of the way through the assembly of the headpiece to the caul, I was concerned that I had attached the pieces backwards. By then it was too late: if I were to cut the stitches and re-do the section, I would likely destroy the textile because my stitches had become part of the fabric.²⁰⁷ This could indicate that the caul and headpiece were not likely to be taken apart to be laundered and/or re-made.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, the ruffle of expensive lace was meant to be removed and re-purposed.

There is a parallel to this approach in shift-making where all seams are extremely finely stitched to allow for repeated laundering.²⁰⁹ This leads to the question: "was Martha's cap meant to be laundered in the same way a shift was?" Deeper inquiry into the fiber content of the cap would assist in further understanding the connection between the construction techniques and the care of this cap. Beyond the laundering of this cap, the construction of this piece brings into focus the consideration of a diversity of sewing abilities and sewing applications that are linked with the type of object created, the materials used, where the cap would be worn, and by whom.

²⁰⁶ Sarah Woodyard, Martha Washington Cap-Making Diary Entry, June 15, 2016.

²⁰⁷ Woodyard, MW Making Diary, June 20, 2016.

²⁰⁸ The discussion of the picking apart of caps for laundry purposes will be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

²⁰⁹ Linda Baumgarten, John Watson, and Florine Carr, *Costume Close-Up: Clothing Construction and Pattern, 1750-1790* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1999), 57-60.

One hand likely stitched the cap, while another may have attached and detached the lace. This hand-sewn inquiry demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of sewing in the eighteenth-century and even today. Not all who can ply a needle make the same types of garments, or have the same skill level. Not all fabrics and articles of clothing are stitched in the same manner. For example, caps are not stitched in the same manner as gowns. Carolyn Dowdell discusses stitches in gowns that were large and “organic”²¹⁰ because the gown was intended to be re-made. This demonstrates that there are different types of sewing literacy, now and then. The cap at Mount Vernon demonstrates this potential diversity of makers and hand stitched literacy, and how these issues should be factored-in when conducting material culture research on fashion and its production.

Without possessing a certain level of sewing literacy it can be easy to be intimidated by high levels of workmanship seen in surviving artifacts: 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm) hem and 20 spi is remarkable work that can lead a researcher to distance him or herself from attempting the reproduction process. This can lead a researcher to become unwilling to demystify the work that was done and to miss a chance to connect with the past. By maintaining the safe distance of a humble observer looking only at the style and not the production process, it makes it harder to understand caps as commodities. Removed from the making, the use of textiles and the craftsmanship involved, a researcher can miss the chance to see beyond the ethereal quality of these objects. Cultivating an understanding of the skills of the past helps to dissuade a perception that fine sewing was art meant to be cherished and revered. The practice of cap making inserts the human element back into the research. It is unlikely that the maker of Martha Washington’s Mount Vernon cap saw it as a labor of love, meditating over each stitch as they passed through the fabric. The makers were most probably enslaved seamstress with fine needle skills that took pride in their work but were not generally given credit for their contributions. The study and replication of this cap provided me with new information on cap production, which increased my hand-sewing literacy.

Cap Production

There is a lack of post-Revolutionary War primary sources recording Martha Washington’s purchases of caps made by a milliner. Prior to the war, we noted that she purchased caps from London milliners, such as Susan Thorpe.²¹¹ However her consumption of caps post-revolution is

²¹⁰ Dowdell, 77.

²¹¹ On September 29, 1772, Robert Cary and Company invoiced George Washington for items from Thorpe’s store, which included, “dressd Mi[g]n[onet][t[e] Cap with bla: Hood, A Minionet Cap.” “Invoice

not clear. Martha Washington's French night cap in the 1789-1796 Savage family portrait is made from a sheer textile, probably a very fine linen or cotton muslin. The Washington family records show orders for specific textiles that may have been used for caps but no finished caps. In the 1780s Washington family orders, George Washington requests fine quality linens and cottons for Martha's wardrobe: in Washington's accounting of the cash he paid between May 9 and September 22, 1787, for instance, he records "Jacanot Muslin @ 12/6 pr Yd." and, on September 3, "By 10 ½ Yds Cross-barred Muslin...9 ¾ yds flowered [muslin]..." Jacanot Muslin and flowered muslin are both fabrics used in the making of caps and other millinery, as well as gowns. "Jacanot" or "Jaconet muslin" must have been a consistent favorite of Martha Washington and her family during the Presidential years. In 1791 Martha Washington wrote to Fanny Washington of her frustrations in trying to procure fine cottons in Philadelphia. On June 5th 1791 Martha Washington wrote, "As to fine muslin I have never been able to find a yard of fine Jaconet muslin in this place. Nor is the Book fine. I will lay the money out the best way I can."²¹² The Washington's Philadelphia factor, Clement Biddle, helped with the acquisition of textiles, but muslin and other textiles could have been acquired through the network of female friends and family members. Other women in Martha Washington's social circle wrote to one another and shared fabrics and pieces of cap patterns. According to a letter from 1780, Martha sent muslin to Mrs. Lewis: "Mrs Lewis joins me in our Love to you & Mrs Washington she is obliged to Mrs Washington for the trouble in sendg her Muslin to Bethlehem."²¹³ On May 13, 1798, Abigail Adams wrote to her sister, Mary Smith Cranch of enclosing muslin for caps. Adams writes, "I Send you my dear Sister a peice of Muslin for two Crowns of caps."²¹⁴ These examples demonstrate a network of elite women who sent muslin to one another suggesting the monetary and social value of cap textiles.

The absence in the records of caps being purchased through Clement Biddle or by Martha Washington while she lives in Philadelphia suggests two things: either Martha Washington purchased caps and these records do not survive or the caps were made by someone in the household. It is likely that Martha Washington's enslaved woman, Charlot, was

from Robert Cary & Company, 29 September 1772," National Archives, Founders Online, July 12, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0078> (accessed August 8, 2016).

²¹² Fields, 231.

²¹³ "To George Washington from Fielding Lewis, Sr., 4 April 1780," National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-01360> (accessed December 3, 2016).

²¹⁴ "From Abigail Smith Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, 13 May 1798," National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-03-02-0019> (accessed December 3, 2016).

employed at making some of the household clothing—including caps—for the family and enslaved individuals. On February 18, 1786 George Washington took an inventory of the enslaved population at Mount Vernon and the surrounding plantations. In the inventory under “Home” he lists three enslaved female “Sempstresses”: Betty,²¹⁵ Lane Alice, and Charlot.

The strongest evidence for the domestic production of caps at Mount Vernon is a letter Martha Washington wrote to Fanny Bassett Washington. While Martha was in Philadelphia she wrote to Fanny Washington requesting clothing items from her closet and issuing instructions as to the sewing she would like Charlot, one of her enslaved seamstresses, to complete. On June 5, 1791, Martha Washington wrote to Fanny: “some day last week I wrote to you and inclosed some muslin borders for Charlot to hem.”²¹⁶ The “borders” she describes are probably the hem of a cap’s ruffle. This sentence illustrates two key components of Martha’s cap consumption and production. Martha has first acquired her muslin and is sending it with the letter so that Charlot might hem the pieces.

To produce Martha Washington’s cap Charlot would have been expected to know several sewing techniques. The principal of these techniques is hemming. In the context of the 1791 quote, the hem would have been small, somewhere between 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) and ¼ of an inch (0.64). If Charlot was capable of hemming a border, she certainly was capable of hemming the caul and whip it to be gathered onto the head piece. Indeed, other letters of Martha Washington discuss Charlot’s sewing tasks, describing the construction details she could carry out. Martha wrote to Fanny Washington concerning boys shirt ruffles she had requested Charlot to hem. Martha Washington was expecting to receive them ready to be stitched onto the wrist-bands of a shirt. Instead Mrs. Washington was sorely disappointed by Charlot’s work. She wrote to Fanny to chastise Charlot: “I wish you’d had [the shirt ruffles] whipped- it was but little more trouble for Charlot, they cannot be sewed on the wristbands till they are whipped- she is so indolent that she will doe nothing but what she is told she knows how work should be done...”²¹⁷ Hemming and whipping are the same methods that are used to assemble a cap. Were it not for the thorough research on caps and cap-making, such details in Martha Washington’s letters might not be readily understood. The term “whipped” might even be misinterpreted by some as corporal punishment versus the skill that Charlot possessed. This specialized knowledge allows us to piece together Charlot’s cap-making abilities as described in disparate letters. Furthermore the cap at Mount Vernon appears to have had a removable

²¹⁵ “Diary entry: 18 February 1786,” National Archives, Founders Online, October 5, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/01-04-02-0003-0002-0018> (accessed June 6, 2016).

²¹⁶ Fields, 231.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

border of lace, like a man's shirt had removable ruffles. The stitching on the Mount Vernon cap is more akin to the way a shift or shirt was sewn. As described above, this is the type of sewing that Charlot was expected to perform. Perhaps Charlot applied her construction methods of shirt construction to the cap at Mount Vernon. This highlights the value of studying material culture through a maker's perspective. Having cultivated a stitching literacy, I am able to translate the sewing described in eighteenth-century writings and link it to Charlot's abilities as described in Mrs. Washington's letters.

There is minimal evidence that Martha Washington stitched her own caps. However the final step of attaching lace trim or ruffles might have been sewn by her hand. In one of her many letters to Fanny Washington, Martha Washington asked Fanny to send handkerchiefs to be repurposed into cap borders. Martha wrote on June 8, 1789: "in my close[t] there were fine net Handkerchiefs which I intended to make cap boarders off- I think I shewed it to you and told you I intended to make a border of them."²¹⁸ This is further supported by her desire to do the final attachment of shirt ruffles on her grandson's shirt: "I sent by Hercules some rufles for my little Boys bosom which I beg you will make Charlot hem- and ship them ready to sew on and send me six at a time as his old ruffles are worne to rags."²¹⁹ These letters show the types of work she expected of Charlot as opposed to herself. Charlot did most of the assembly, while Martha did the finishing touches, which were the most decorative components of the work. One could argue that attaching the final ruffles is the luxury component of the work, while Charlot, as an enslaved seamstress, did the utilitarian work. Washington's attachment of the ruffles likely gave her the satisfaction and ownership of completion.

The same may be said to apply to her caps, particularly the extant cap attributed to her and held at Mount Vernon. As discussed before, the close inspection of the hem of the border suggested the lace ruffle was separately attached after the cap was completed, perhaps by Washington, while the construction of the cap might have been completed by Charlot. Martha Washington's "leisure" time required to complete this decorative sewing was made possible because of the labor of Charlot and other enslaved household servants.²²⁰ Both sewing is done in a domestic setting, however in two disparate labor contexts:²²¹ the cap is likely constructed in

²¹⁸ Ibid., 215.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 231.

²²⁰ Miller, 92, confirms this and adds that "[e]xploring the lives of genteel women and the needlework they produced also reveals how ornamental needlework sustained an elite culture that preserved and advanced authority of the region's [Connecticut River Valley] wealthiest families and how those families were inseparable bound to communities of working women whose labors made elite culture possible."

²²¹ Ibid., 95, discusses the separation of trade sewing done by trades women versus decorative sewing done by elite women.

bondage, as a mandated task to fulfill Charlot's household work obligations, and the lace is probably attached in leisure, as an enjoyable task that fulfills Martha Washington's personal and social agenda.²²²

The depiction of Martha Washington in her cap in the 1789–1796 family portrait suggests that the artist—and probably Martha Washington—desired the sitter to be seen as a fashionably up-to-date woman of a mature age. This may indicate that older women could take part in the fashion system and that their advanced age need not make them dowdy. The study and reproduction of an extant cap at Mount Vernon with provenance to Martha Washington illustrates the importance of a stitching literacy then and now. This sewing literacy leads me to point out the contrasting situations when sewing was done in the eighteenth-century home, made possible by a skilled enslaved work force. Furthermore, Mrs. Washington's French night cap demonstrates the latest fashion rather than a conservative style such as a mob or long-eared cap, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

THE MOB CAP AND MRS. WASHINGTON

If Martha Washington is not wearing a 'matronly mobcap,' then what is a mob cap, and does it have a connection to Martha Washington? This section addresses what a mob cap was during the 1780s and 1790s and who wore this style and why.²²³ Furthermore, a hand-sewn inquiry into

²²² Ibid., 96, talks about a display of "skill, wealth, and leisure."

²²³ This is a complex story like any style of garment worn across many years which changed meaning over time. Through my research I found a majority of women wearing mob caps during the 1760s depicted in art work as rural poor, servants, cooks, or elderly. The 1760s is slightly outside of this thesis' time frame, and, therefore, is beyond the scope of this paper. I am including this footnote to acknowledge the staying power of the symbolism of this popular 1760s style which translated into a popular culture meme during the 1770s and 1780s. However, I removed this discussion from the body of the work because this discussion does not directly address the research question. However, by the 1770s, the mob cap begins to disappear from everyday dress and instead appears in satire and popular culture as a *symbol* of rural and working class women instead of the reality of what they actually wore. Consequently the mob cap could be worn as part of a masquerade costume to denote a particularly rustic costume and ease the cross-dressing activities that could occur in such public festive gatherings. Two men were described in the London newspaper *Morning Chronicle* of 16 January 1777 as dressed in masquerade with one of them wearing the "dress *en femme rustique*; with a scarlet cloak and a mob cap." The men may have donned mob caps simply to conceal their hair. It is more likely that the mob cap was part of a well-known disguise: that of a "femme rustique" (country woman). This situation conveys that the mob cap instantly signaled the unfashionable and rural nature of the character. The extensive coverage of the head that mob caps provided seemed tailor-made for men disguising themselves as working women for masquerade or subterfuge. In the 1787 novel, *Authentic and Interesting Memoirs of Miss Ann Sheldon*, on page 137, the narrator describes a male character "...dressed in a mob cap, tattered bed-gown, and an old petticoat belonging to the cook..." It may be that the mob cap was part of the lowly country woman's meme that helped the wearer fade from view and escape undetected.

this style of cap leads to a discussion concerning laundry and the significance of a clean, white cap.

On December 14, 1799, Martha Washington's husband, George Washington died. A miniature of Martha Washington (Appendix A, Figure 14), held by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, is the only depiction known thus far of Martha Washington after her husband's death. In this representation she wears a different, more conservative, style of cap than she did three years prior in the family portrait. The cap does not sit on top of her head, but the headpiece and ruffle contour her face and tie underneath her chin so that no hair is visible. Evidence in the collection of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association suggests that she did not adopt this style until after her husband died. The French night cap attributed to Martha Washington has a note pinned to it which states: "This cap was given to me by my grandmother when after the General's death she put on long ear'd caps."²²⁴ This note indicates that, from the onset of widowhood, she may have abandoned her fashionable caps for this conservative style. The adoption of this cap appears to be in line with her change in life status of becoming a widow removed from view versus that of a fashionable and public persona. While there is not enough data at this time to make a solid conclusion, this suggests Martha Washington's association of this style of cap with widowed women.

Beyond widowhood this cap also has a strong association with older women, both married and widowed. In the *The Old Woman: a Novel*, the mob cap is used to emphasize the aged character, Alice Grundy. The narrator writes that she "is a cheerful neat old woman...she wears...a mob cap tied under her chin and as tight as a drum upon her head."²²⁵ In the print, *My Grandmother Knitting* (Appendix A, Figure 12), an elderly woman is shown wearing a tightly-cut mob cap with ties under the chin. The "long ears" sections extend to under her chin and this allows the ruffle to frame her face and, in this case, the back and side of her cap are trimmed with draped fabric. The depicted grandmother may be the age of Mrs. Washington but her settings are not comparable. American women of similar status as Martha Washington are painted wearing similar mob cap styles, as in the case of Amelia Heiskell Lauck from

The lower-status meme of the mob cap is reinforced by popular prints, which associate servants in this cap style. The long-eared and mob cap style is used as a symbol of maid servants in the 1784 London print, *Procession to the Hustings after a successful canvass, No. 14*. In this image fashionable dressed women are protesting carrying a pole with an apron and long-eared cap attached to it, on the apron reads: "No Tax on Maid Servants." This implies the ubiquitous association of the long-eared cap and apron with maid servants. The cap had established such a strong association it becomes a symbol of these women and their work, even after the style had been mostly transferred to primarily to widows and elderly women by the 1780s, as is discussed in the body of this final section.

²²⁴ Cap attributed to Martha Washington, Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (W-608).

²²⁵ Carver, 73.

Winchester, Virginia, painted in 1801 (Appendix A, Figure 47). This leads us to wonder if the mob cap transcended a status barrier as a type of cap adopted by older anglo-woman of diverse socio-economic situations.

The containment of the hair as a feature of more conservative caps seems to have characterized the mob and long-eared cap as a foil to fashion. In the novel *Selima, or the Village Tale*, published in London in 1794, the vain narrator describes her dismay at wearing a mob cap: “You recollect, no doubt, on that fatal day, from which I date the commencement of my troubles, with what pain to my poor vanity I was compelled to confine my flowing tresses under the close restraint of a mob-cap...”²²⁶ This young woman’s distress is further understood in conjunction with the earlier discussion concerning the fashion for younger women in the 1790s to no longer wear caps at all. Any cap, let alone a mob cap, which was not cut to sit up tall on the head to display the shape of the hair probably made this young women feel like a snuffed out candle. In a print held at the British Museum, *The Country Vicars Fire Side*, published in 1788 (Appendix A, Figure 11), the image illustrates the contrast in silhouette between a mob cap and the larger hair styles and huge caps fashionable in the late 1780s. The cut of the mop cap did not normally allow it to contour the silhouette of fashionable hairstyles nor did it allow much or any hair to show. It could accommodate the gathering of a woman’s hair in a chignon in the caul but would not provide enough room for more voluminous “dressed” styles dictated by fashion. It could, however, hide short or thinning hair, potentially making hair care much simpler. The ease of hair care that ensued and the modest silhouette of the head in a mob cap becomes devoid of excess and vanity, unlike when the French night cap is worn, as in the family portrait in which the cap sits atop Martha Washington’s head in a manner drawn from the world of fashion.

Links to Quaker Dress

Dressing in a conservative style was typical of Quaker communities in the mainland American colonies. This mindset was demonstrated through the simple styles of caps Quaker women often wore, as in the case of Eleanor Miller (Mrs. Francis Bailey) (Appendix A, Figure 48) and Margaret “Peggy” Custis Wilson (Mrs. John Custis Wilson) (Appendix A, Figure 28) both painted in 1791. There is a surviving cap attributed to a Quaker woman held in the Colonial Williamsburg collection that looks very similar to both of the caps worn in these Quaker portraits (Appendix A, Figure 5). These examples, though not presenting an article of dress identical to

²²⁶ Holford, 193.

Martha Washington's widow's cap, are cut close to the head. They nonetheless display part of the wearer's hair but it is not styled according to fashion and is worn rather close to the head. The cut of the Quaker caps indicates that it would fit closely to the head with room in the back for the gathering of one's hair, and could tie under the chin. The cut of the Colonial Williamsburg surviving cap and its attribution to a Quaker woman affords an opportunity to discuss a style of cap that did not change drastically between the date range that this thesis is considering, 1770-1800, which might help clarify the mislabeling of the cap style Martha Washington wore in the family portrait.

The Quaker appropriation of this conservative and modest cap style makes it an interesting contrast to Martha Washington's earlier elaborate confections seen in the 1782 engraving and both Savage portraits. While the Colonial Williamsburg cap can tell us more about Quaker culture, that study is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, this section is primarily concerned with the conservative cut of the cap style appropriated by Quaker women and its similarity with the mob or long-eared cap.

The hand-sewn inquiry of the Colonial Williamsburg Quaker cap leads me to consider the variation of construction techniques needed for a mob or long eared cap made from an open weave starched cotton. Furthermore, the hand-sewn inquiry leads to questions about laundry and starching. This section focuses once more on hemming technique as key evidence. From this examination we can better understand the maintenance of the cap from the stitches of the eighteenth-century cap maker's work. This leads to further insights concerning Martha Washington's cap in the family portrait from the perspective of laundry.

Interpretation of Observations

When I first examined the original cap I was impressed by the fineness of the hemming at 22 spi and intrigued by the coarse assembly of the seams stitched at 5 spi (Appendix C, Figure 18). The effect of the hemming was like hand-serging with its predictable regularity and closeness of stitches. It was hard to conceive that the cap could be so finely sewn and the curved edges devoid of any warping, which is often a concern when making a fine hem on the bias. While I was able to identify what type of stitches were used, I did not thoroughly understand how the fineness of execution could be achieved or what functions the stitches afforded until I made the cap (Appendix C, Figures 15-22).

I postulate that, like the other caps, once all the edges were hemmed, all the pieces were assembled. I was struck by the contradiction between the somewhat open weave of the textile with the crisp and stable feel of the fabric. I surmised that this was achieved by the

addition of some stabilizing agent, such as starch, because the cap seen in the miniature of Martha Washington stands up on its own when it is worn. Therefore, when sourcing fabric to make a facsimile, I was concerned with copying the texture and stability of the fabric. The textile I chose had a slightly more closed weave structure than the original Colonial Williamsburg artifact, but the hand was very similar. Upon observation I did not know how the original cap maker had achieved a hem stitched at 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm). With my own previous experience I had found that, with other fabrics such as handkerchief-weight linen, cotton muslin, or silk organza, I was able to manipulate the fabric into a hem that measured ¼ of an inch of fabric and, sometimes, if the construction called for it, a hem that measured 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm). However, when I created the facsimile cap I choose to use a pre-sized or pre-starched cotton textile that had a more stable hand. I set to hemming each piece (Appendix C, Figures 15-19). I found that the stability of the textile allowed the fabric to stay in place so that I could “get away with” an 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) hem. Furthermore, the whip-stitching technique (Appendix C, Figures 20) I used drew the raw edge into the roll without much effort so that it stayed in place and did not fray. I was amazed how easy it was to roll and whip the fabric into a 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) hem. I was glad of my decision to prioritize the textile’s hand, when selecting a fabric for the reproduction. I believe the stable nature of the textile, coupled with the whip stitching technique, was critical to achieving very tight and finely rolled hems. This suggests that a cap maker and/or a cap consumer was intentional about selecting a textile that had an airy aesthetic but had the potential to maintain a crisp silhouette, with the aid of starch.

Laundering and Starching with a Purpose

My hand-sewn inquiry led me to explore the starched nature of cap textiles, both for their manufacture and maintenance. Starch was and is important to caps, not only to maintain their neat appearance, but, as I studied and sewed a facsimile Quaker cap, I found that starched material helped to stabilize the fabric for sewing. However, once a starched garment was sewn in the eighteenth century, starching was reapplied during the laundering process to maintain the caps cleanliness and shape. My hand-sewn inquiry of the Quaker cap lead me to question how the manufacturing of the cap, might assist in the later maintenance.

Contemporary laundry receipts described the process by which certain textiles are to be cleaned. The following two receipts describe how the textiles, which are often used in cap making, are cared for. To produce a clean cap, laundresses might have used the following instructions. The first is from *The ladies handmaid: Or, A compleat system of cookery...*

MUSLIN, and very thin or old cambric and lawn require starching, or they will look like rags, and not last clean a moment. Use nothing but the best Poland starch...to prevent them from shining, take a piece of white paper, and lay over them, and rub your iron over that. You must always take this way with laces or edgings, or any thing that is flourished or spotted, to keep the work from being too much flatted.²²⁷

From *The servent's directory, or house-keeper's companion*:

The best thing to make yellow Linen or Lace white, is to take a quarter of a Pound of soft Sope. And a quarter of an Ounce of Powder-blue, mix it well together, and rub it thick on the Linen; then roll it up and put it into cold soft Water, with a Spoonful of Pearlashes, and boiling them well...If in Summer, sope as above, and lay them in the hot Sun, then boil them, and that will fetch out Stains and all.²²⁸

These two laundry instructions explain how to care for specific textiles. The first suggests that lightweight cottons (muslin) and linens (cambric and lawn) will look limp and not hold their appropriate shape unless they are starched. The second laundry instruction highlights the concern of yellowed linens and laces. To counteract this concern the instruction calls for the use of a blueing agent to counteract the yellow and make the white linen or lace whiter. Additionally the first instructions explains that, without starch, it will 'not last clean a moment, and thus implies that starch is not just used to maintain a fashionable shape, but is used to keep the fabric clean by being used as a barrier to keep dirt from impregnating itself into the textile. This implies that starch kept the dirt from the environment out of the textile and, in consequence, out of the wearer's hair. Furthermore, any dirt from the wearer's hair or scalp will be less likely to permeate the fabric. The dirt would only bind to the starch versus into the textile. Therefore the starch was key to maintaining not just the specific shape of a cap but the cleanliness of the textile. When the starch was removed during laundry, so was the dirt. A textile such as muslin, as discussed earlier in this paper, was a favorite of Martha Washington's and likely the textile used to make the cap seen in the family portrait. The starch would have been a protective barrier to keep the fabric from being destroyed and therefore maintain the value of an expensive fabric like muslin. Moreover the use of a blueing agent would have restored the yellowed textile to its original white appearance.

²²⁷ Mrs. Sarah Phillips, *The ladies handmaid: Or, A compleat system of cookery; on the principles of elegance and frugality. Wherein the useful art of cookery is rendered...*(London: s.n., 1758), 472.

²²⁸Hannah Glasse, *The servent's directory, or house-keeper's companion: Wherein the Duties of the Chamber-Maid, Nursery-Maid, Landery-Maid, Scullion...* (London: s.n., 1760), 13.

Some caps required special considerations before starching could begin. In *The Workwoman's Guide* the author describes a baby cap called "The Full French Cap"²²⁹ as "rather troublesome to get up at the wash, and sometimes requires unpicking to be neatly done."²³⁰ This demonstrates that, through "unpicking" (i.e. unstitching) before the washing process, the flat pieces of the cap could be re-starched and reassembled back to its fashionable form. Perhaps the Quaker cap's large running stitches at the seams would have expedited the unpicking and re-stitching. Furthermore, *The servant's directory, or house-keeper's companion* encourages the flat, air drying of starched muslin and gauze items that would otherwise yellow if pressed with a hot iron.²³¹ They suggest starching the garment then pinning it flat to a frame to dry to address this danger.²³² Both laundry techniques suggest the importance of finishing off the raw edges very finely, so that they do not fray during laundry, and using larger running stitches on the side seams to make unpicking and re-stitching a breeze.

The Quaker cap is a more recognized archetype compared with the changing silhouette and treatment of French night caps. If the assembly of the Quaker cap suggests reuse, other construction methods found in the course of my research may explain the disposable nature of some elaborate caps, which would have taken an immense amount of time and skills to unstitch, launder, starch, re-stitch and trim. These observations also explain the "fast fashion" nature of many types of caps and their quick renewal and abundant coverage in print. If a person had to re-trim a laundered cap frequently, they may as well do so in a new style. With the use of sheer, open-weave fabrics for caps, such as the one seen in the Savage family portrait, one may wonder how often such fabrics could be laundered, especially if the needlework was extremely fine, whereas the lace was intended to be taken off for re-use. If such a cap was meant to be ephemeral, the sheer nature of the fabric and its bright white color—as in the one Martha wears in the family portrait—could be a sign of sartorial conspicuous consumption. The Quaker cap could exemplify what historian Kwass calls "the intermediate zone of consumption,"²³³ suggesting this piece was both fashionable through its textile selection and functional through its maintenance. This "the intermediate zone of consumption" may apply to the cap Martha Washington wears during her widowhood.

²²⁹ Hale, 21.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Glasse, 9.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Kwass, 657.

Caps, Dirt and Immorality

The careful maintenance of a bright, white, and starched cap versus the slovenly presence of a floppy, yellowed cap spoke volumes to a viewer. The short story, “*One of the LEADING CAUSES of PROSTITUTION The DRESS of SERVANT GIRLS above their Stations,*” published in *The Lady’s Magazine* in 1785 addresses societal anxiety that working women’s vanity will lead them to covet expensive clothing which they cannot afford. Naturally they will then turn to prostitution to satisfy their sartorial desires. This story uses a cap as a character illustration for the servant girl, Mrs. Becky. The story describes her dress:

Mrs. Becky was not a wit inferior to her mistress: the cloaths of the latter might probably be more costly, but they were both made after the same fashion; and the soiled gauze cap sat as smartly on the powdered head of the former, as it could possibly have done some weeks before on that of its pristine wearer.²³⁴

The dirty gauze cap is an example of a garment handed down from mistress to servant, suggesting the cap had not been washed, an example of ‘fast fashion’ as suggested above. The adjective “soiled” turns the cap into a symbol for tainted fashion and a blighted character. While the “pristine” mistress may wear the cap and look well in it, the commentator clearly sees the servant inclining towards vice, and uses the description of a dirty cap as a metaphor to describe her lowered state of decency. This example illustrates how maintaining a clean and neat appearance was of the utmost of importance to decency, morality, and gentility. The bright, white, and starched cap was vital to presenting oneself as a respectable member of society. Cleanliness was associated with morality, and, since dirty or yellowed caps were to be avoided if one were not to be assumed to be a dissipated woman of low moral or social standing, numerous laundry manuals informed their readers on how to mask yellowness of fabrics to produce a snowy white effect. Laundry manuals called for using a bluing agent to counteract the yellow tint, or to make a white fabric a brighter white. The bluing would not remove the dirt, but merely make a yellow cap white.

Bright white starched caps had multifold meanings. Starch was key in allowing textiles to hold their shape and maintain a clean, crisp silhouette. Starch was also vital to the aesthetic of caps, as was the bright white color that was sought—a hue that spoke of the nature of the

²³⁴Unknown, “*One of the LEADING CAUSES of PROSTITUTION The DRESS of SERVANT GIRLS above their Stations,*” *The Lady’s Magazine*, March 1785, 126, http://www.18thcjournals.amdigital.co.uk/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/Documents/Images/The_Ladys_Magazine_Vol_XVII/69?searchId=6f74903e-8bfa-4835-8c70-312acd00e158#Issues (accessed 29 November 2016).

wearers themselves. I would surmise that a fine coating of starch would have also prevented dirt from penetrating the cap and soiling the wearer's hair while also blocking hair oil from soiling the cap. A bright, white, and crisp cap was a visual metaphor for physical and spiritual cleanliness and the wearer's moral purity. Martha Washington's caps within the images that have been discussed in this chapter are all bright, white, and stand on their own, indicating that the silhouette of the cap was maintained through the use of starching.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This thesis answers the question: “how can the act of hand sewing enable us to contextualize the cap Martha Washington wears in *The Washington Family Portrait*?” To do so, it presented and used a hand-sewn inquiry methodology. Through the cap-making process, I demonstrated that knowledge is produced during the act of sewing. This research project recreated three caps dated between 1770 and 1802 and demonstrated that replicating a historical object can allow a researcher to address an artifact through a different lens and to ask different questions. As a practitioner who studies the process of eighteenth-century cap making, using an auto-ethnography approach has allowed me to draw on the specialist knowledge I possess and allowed me to be reflexive in the process of analysis.

The examination and reproduction of a cap worn by Mrs. Izard in a 1775 portrait by John Singleton Copley, *Mr. and Mrs. Izard* (Appendix A, Figure 3) was an opportunity to explore the French night cap and to make parallels to the one worn by Mrs. Washington in a 1782 print (Appendix A, Figure 13). This hand-sewn inquiry demonstrated three things: how, in certain instances, the hands were able to problem-solve more efficiently than through intellectual evaluation, how the author’s body can be a link to the past, and how the cap-making exercise can connect the researcher to the eighteenth-century cap makers’ own process. The sewing of the facsimile thus presented me with the opportunity to kinetically engage with the cap style worn by Mrs. Izard and explore not only the construction, but also the physical connection to the eighteenth-century maker.

The act of hemming became a leitmotif throughout the research. It demonstrated the significant role the hem played in the production of caps in general and, in consequence, in the one worn by Mrs. Washington in *The Washington Family* portrait (Appendix A, Figure 1). The hem was a key component in how a French night cap may have been constructed. The hemming process illuminated the intelligence of the maker’s hands and led me to consider the significance of the whole body as a tool. A variety of eighteenth-century images of female makers demonstrate the centrality of the body in the sewing process. Many elevate their knees in order for their laps to act as flexible support that is privileged over the use of a table. During the auto-ethnographic inquiry I subconsciously did the same to create a speedy, stitching rhythm, ideal for production. Through the mimesis of historical gestures and processes, I let my body be a link to the past. While seamstresses’ bodies across time are different, their posture of choice remains. The end product, though not an identical reproduction of the Izard cap, led to a

deeper understanding of the eighteenth-century cap maker's posture, diagnostic tools, and design process.

This first experiential exercise led to a formal exploration of who eighteenth-century cap makers may have been and how the French night cap fits in the fashion system. Caps were sewn by anonymous seamstresses in London and elsewhere, as well as milliners and enslaved women in the British colonies of North America. While we do not have many of these milliners' names, visual records of women in this trade exist that present them during the cap-making process. Mrs. Izard's cap was a product of a rapidly changing fashion industry. The cap maker needed a discriminating eye and nimble fingers to rapidly adapt cap styles as they changed from month to month and this product was thus a profitable one in her business or that of her employer. Being provided with the very latest cap fashions was likely on Martha Washington's mind when she purchased goods from a London milliner, Susan Thorpe, during the early 1770s.

During the 1770s numerous satirical prints depicted the eighteenth-century link between excessive fashion use and moral corruption. Large, overly decorated caps became used as a metaphor for immoral consumption if worn in the wrong social context and social classes. Excessive caps thus had a power that could communicate the morality of the certain wearers. Martha Washington successfully circumvented these concerns by dressing in a neat and modest manner, adorning her head with fashionable yet tasteful caps.

While written primary sources describe Martha Washington as dressed in fashionable and age appropriate caps, modern authors often misidentify the style of cap she wears in portraits as a mob cap, and describe her as matronly and/or dowdy. My research has demonstrated that this is a modern misinterpretation of Martha Washington's sartorial choices. To understand how fashionable Martha's cap was in *The Washington Family Portrait*, it is important to consider the start and end dates of this portrait and its sources of reference. While the family portrait was begun in 1789, Edward Savage used a solo portrait of Mrs. Washington (Appendix A, Figure 9) to help him complete the family portrait. The solo portrait from 1790 depicted Martha Washington in an enormous round cap, and yet the family portrait, which was completed in 1796, has a cap that is smaller and more modest in size. Comparing the 1790 Washington solo portrait with a portrait of Martha's contemporary, Rachel Leeds Kerr (Appendix A, Figure 15) demonstrates that this large cap was considered the accepted mode in the same geographic settings and also echoed cosmopolitan styles. However, this large confection waned in fashion and, by 1796, the smaller French night cap was a preferred fashionable choice for a woman in Mrs. Washington's position in the context of this family portrait (Appendix A, Figure 1). Mrs. Washington's choice of cap was heavily coded to convey to the viewer fashionability and

respectability. At the time of the Savage family portrait Martha Washington is not a mob-cap wearing matron, but a polished and poised lady of fashion.

An extant cap similar to the French night cap Martha Washington wears in the family portrait is held in the collections of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. The study and subsequent auto-ethnographic hand-sewn inquiry into the manufacturing of such a cap added to my sewing literacy on the subject. This French night cap (Appendix A, Figure 4) was made out of two pieces of fabric, a caul and the headpiece. Paying close attention to the hem of the headpiece suggested that a border had been detached at one point during its life. The sewing of the cap was done with stitches placed every 2-3 threads, suggesting the seam was done almost like darning to reweave the fabric together. This minute level of sewing may indicate that the cap was strong enough to be laundered many times, while the lace would have been taken off. The cap can also speak of the multiple hands that might have sewn this cap.

Primary evidence suggests that Charlot, one of Martha Washington's enslaved seamstresses, may have stitched the Mount Vernon cap. Charlot—along with two other women—was described as a seamstress in the 1786 inventory George Washington took of the enslaved population at Mount Vernon and the surrounding plantations. Post-war documents indicate Mrs. Washington was purchasing fabrics suitable for cap making. The current records make no mention of caps being purchased ready-made and thus suggest that either an unknown Philadelphia milliner produced her caps or an enslaved seamstress such as Charlot was put to the task. Charlot's connection to the Mount Vernon French night cap was made through a careful reading of letters written by Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett Washington describing the types of sewing Charlot was expected to perform. Through the hand-stitched literacy cultivated through practice and my hand-sewn inquiry I was able to identify key phrases in the text that correlated Charlot's sewing expectation with that of cap making. This same careful reading of Mrs. Washington's letters produced a conclusion that, while Charlot was likely the producer of Martha Washington's cap, it is possible that Mrs. Washington stitched the lace herself. This underscores the value of using a hand sewing as a method of inquiry into eighteenth-century garments.

This separation of labor demonstrates the two women's hand abilities applied to different social and cultural contexts, all the while being done in the domestic sphere. The initial production of the cap was likely done in bondage as a requirement of Charlot's household obligations. It was unlikely a labor of love. On the other hand, the sewing of the lace was likely stitched for leisure, an activity that fit Martha Washington's position as a gentlewoman of the

elite and one that provided the satisfaction of completion. This demonstrates the variance of work that was done in a domestic setting during the eighteenth-century, by a diverse labor pool.

The research demonstrated that Martha Washington was not wearing a mob cap in the family portrait. The mob cap, which was cut to fit the head closely and could have extensions that tied under the chin, was a common style of cap worn by elderly women during the last twenty years of the eighteenth-century. This cap was also called a long-eared cap and was considered a conservative style of cap. While Martha Washington is not wearing this style in the family portrait, she does adopt a long-eared cap after her husband dies in 1799. The mob cap is also worn by Quaker women who are known for their adoption of conservative dress styles. A Quaker cap in the Colonial Williamsburg collection was the focus on my third hand-sewn inquiry. This artifact was cut with in pieces: a caul and a headpiece. The hem was once again a focus of attention. While it was very finely done, the side seams were stitched coarsely. My hand-sewn inquiry lead me to explore how the manufacturing of the cap might be related to its on-going maintenance. Laundry receipts suggest the importance of finishing off the raw edges very finely, so that they do not fray during washing. As such the larger running stitches used on the side seams made it easy to unpicking the seams for laundering and these stitches were also useful for quick reassembly.

The cap was likely unpicked for laundry because of the application of starch. Starch was a key component used in the laundry of caps. Starching the pieces of a cap before re-assembly allowed a cap to adhere to a specific shape but also protected the textile from dirt. Starch would have been a protective barrier to keep the fabric from being destroyed and, therefore, it maintained the value of expensive fabrics like muslin, which George Washington purchased to please his wife. *The servant's directory, or house-keeper's companion* encourages the flat, air drying of starched muslin and gauze items that would otherwise yellow if pressed with a hot iron.²³⁵ They suggest starching the garment then pinning it flat to a frame to dry to address this danger.²³⁶ This suggests that the Quaker cap was manufactured with the intent of being laundered and worn over a longer span of time. Perhaps this is how Martha Washington's long eared cap was cared for during her widowhood.

Beyond conservative styles, a bright, white, and clean cap was a symbol of morality in the eighteenth-century. If an excessive cap could communicate conspicuous consumption, a clean white, starched cap could be a visual metaphor for physical and spiritual cleanliness and suggested that the wearer was morally pure. The style, color, fabric, silhouette and proportions

²³⁵ Glasse, 9.

²³⁶ Ibid.

of Martha Washington's caps spoke volumes to her peers: they communicated her position of respectability and gentility non-verbally yet effectively.

The ability of a cap to convey purity through cleanliness or immorality through excess suggests the power of this object as a signifier of eighteenth-century female identity. My research demonstrated that, through her careful choice of caps, Martha Washington did not position herself as a matronly mob cap wearer in *The Washington Family Portrait*. Instead her bright, white, French night cap designates her as a respectable, genteel, elite woman of fashion. Through my hand-sewn inquiry, the hemming of caps has demonstrated an embodied connection to the skills of past makers, the benefit to having of a sewing literacy when studying historical dress, and the connection stitches used during the manufacturing process can have with the use and maintenance of caps. This study has made the cap making labor of Charlot, an enslaved seamstress at Mount Vernon, explicit. Charlot's skillful, seamstress hands were likely responsible for producing a cap which upheld Martha Washington's respectable image on display for the world to see in the *Washington Family Portrait*.

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APPENDIX A: FIGURES



Figure 1: Edward Savage (American, 1761-1817), *The Washington Family*, 1789-1796, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Open Access Image Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1940.1.2).

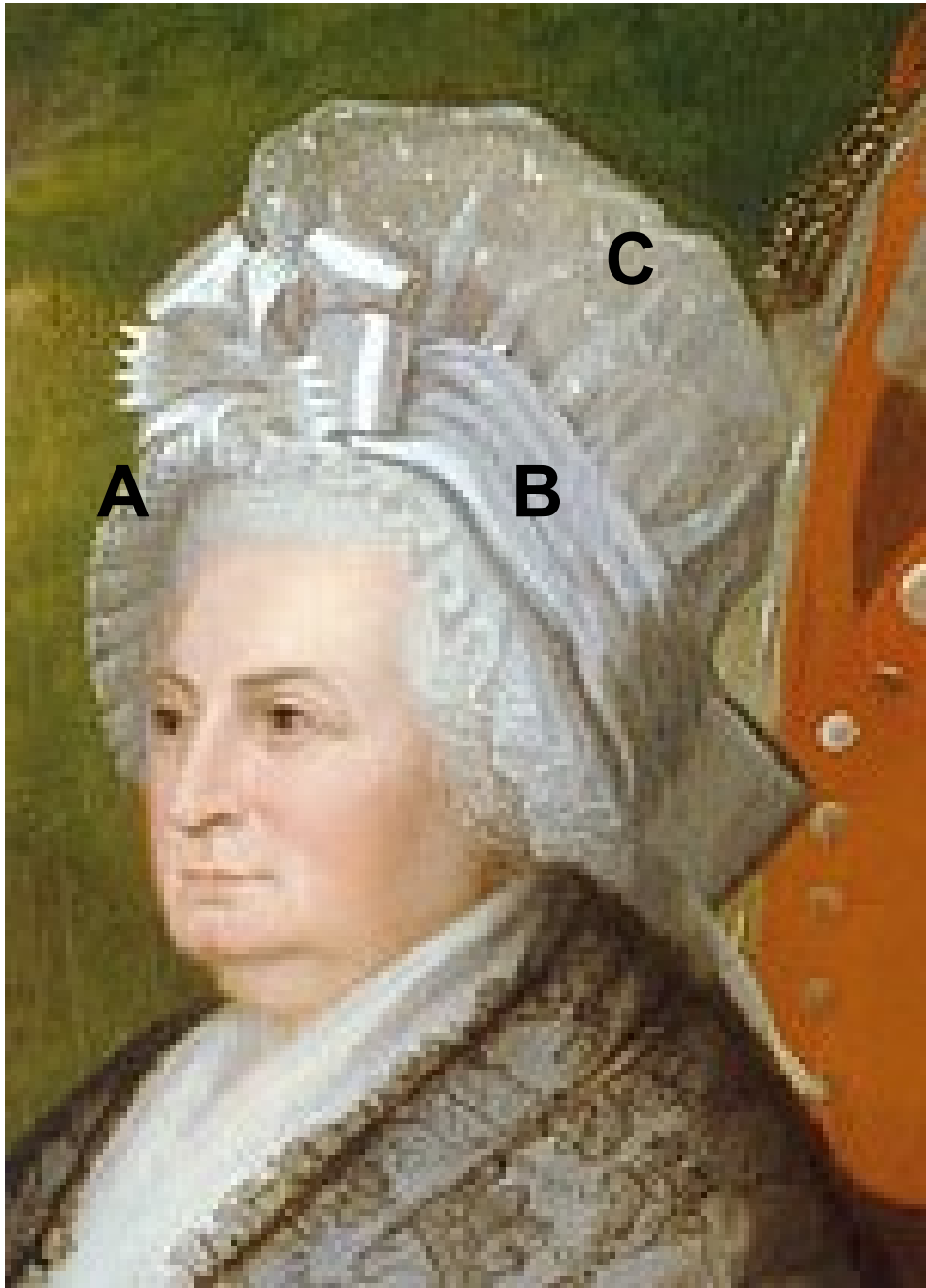


Figure 2: Edward Savage (American, 1761-1817), *The Washington Family* (Cap detail), 1789-1796, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Open Access Image Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (1940.1.2).

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<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mr-and-mrs-ralph-izard-alice-delancey-31228>

Figure 3: John Singleton Copley (American, 1738-1815), *Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)*, 1775, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts (03.1033).



Figure 4: Cap, Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (W-608).
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

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Figure 5: Anonymous (American), Woman's Quaker Cap, 1790-1810, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (2009-43,8).
Photograph by Linda Baumgarten©.

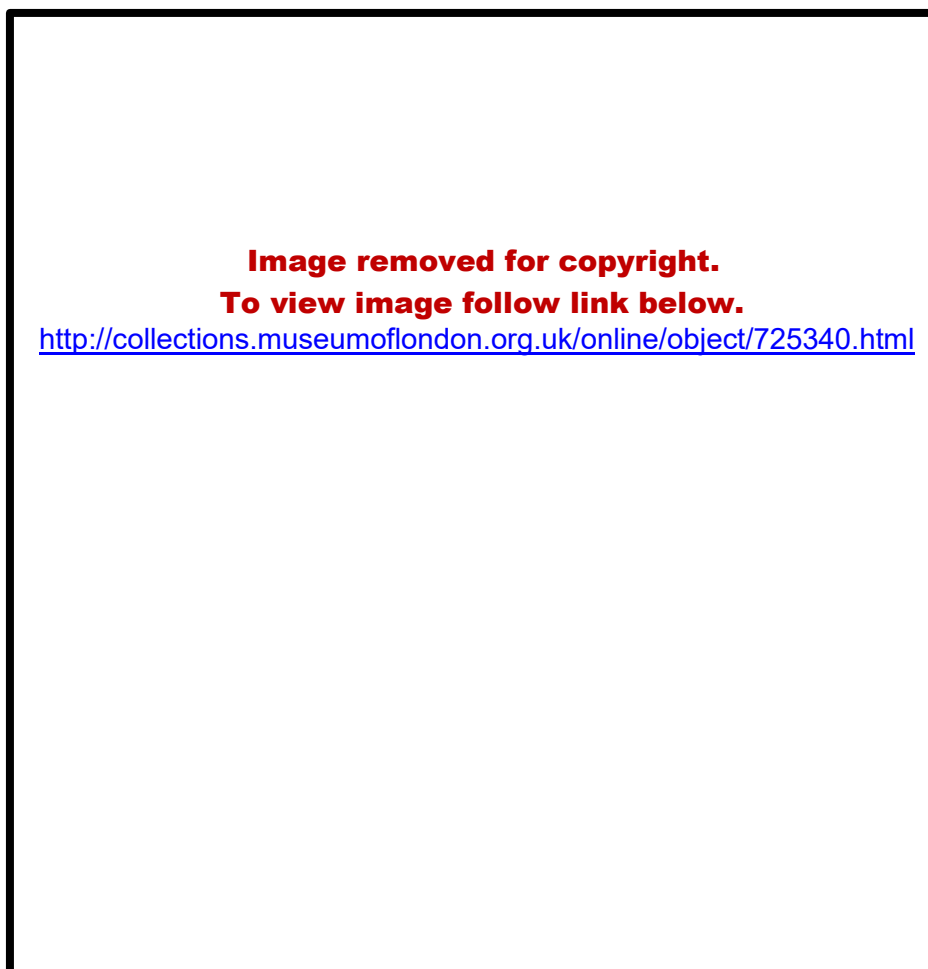


Figure 6: Anonymous (British), *Twelve fashionable Head Dresses of 1773*, 1773, Museum of London (2002.139/489).

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<http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/732569.html>

Figure 7: Anonymous (British), *Fourteen fashionable Head Dresses of 1780*, 1780, Museum of London (2002.139/661).

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<http://digital.bunka.ac.jp/kichosho/file/No.032/032-0001-027.jpg>

Figure 8: Anonymous (British), *Two Ladies at Breakfast in Their Dressing-Room*, *Gallery of Fashion*, November 1794, Bunka Gakuen Library, Tokyo, Japan (SB00002307).

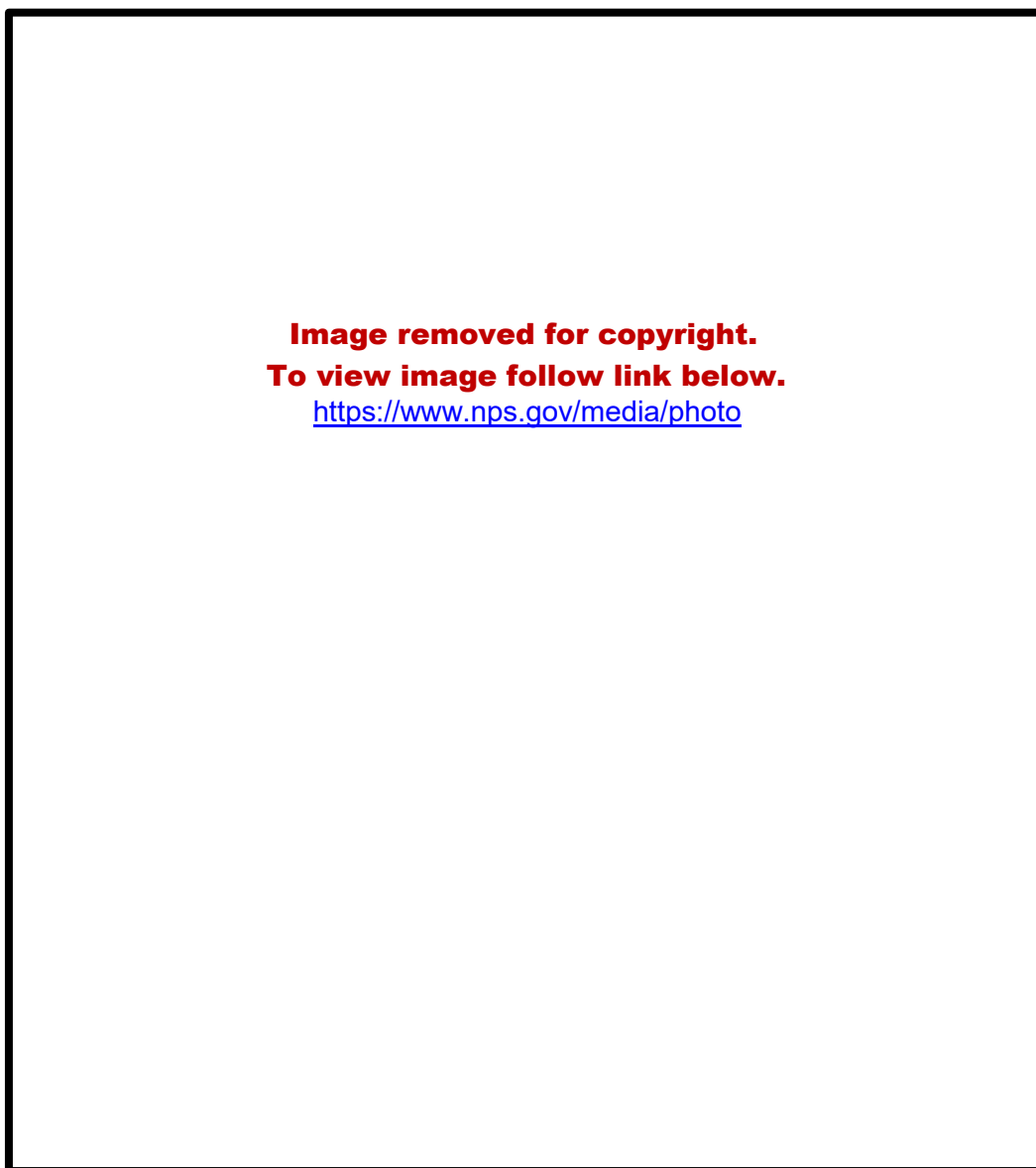


Figure 9: Edward Savage (American, 1761-1796), *Martha Washington*, 1790, The Old House, Adams National Historical Park, Quincy, Massachusetts.



Figure 10: Anonymous (British) *Lady cap At Breakfast*, 1772, The British Museum, London (2010,7081.1223).

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http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

Figure 11: Anonymous (British), *The Country Vicar Fire Side*, 1788, The British Museum, London (1868,0822.7119).

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http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

Figure 12: Robert Mitchell Meadows (British 1763-1812), *My Grandmother Knitting*, c.1780-1812, The British Museum, London (1992,U.22).

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<http://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/JCB~1~1>

Figure 13: Anonymous (American), *M^s. Washington*, 1782, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island (66-210).

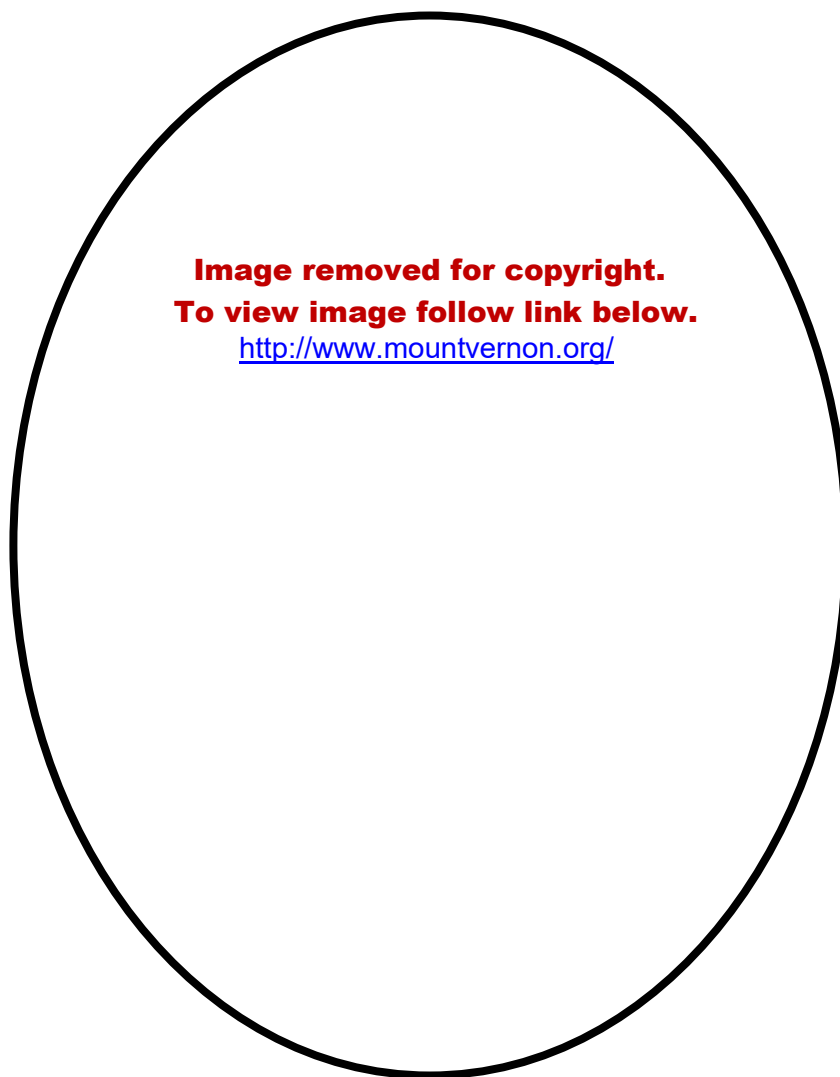


Figure 14: Robert Field (American, 1769-1819), *A miniature of Martha Washington*, 1801, Mount Vernon Collections, Mount Vernon, Virginia (W-2137/A-B).

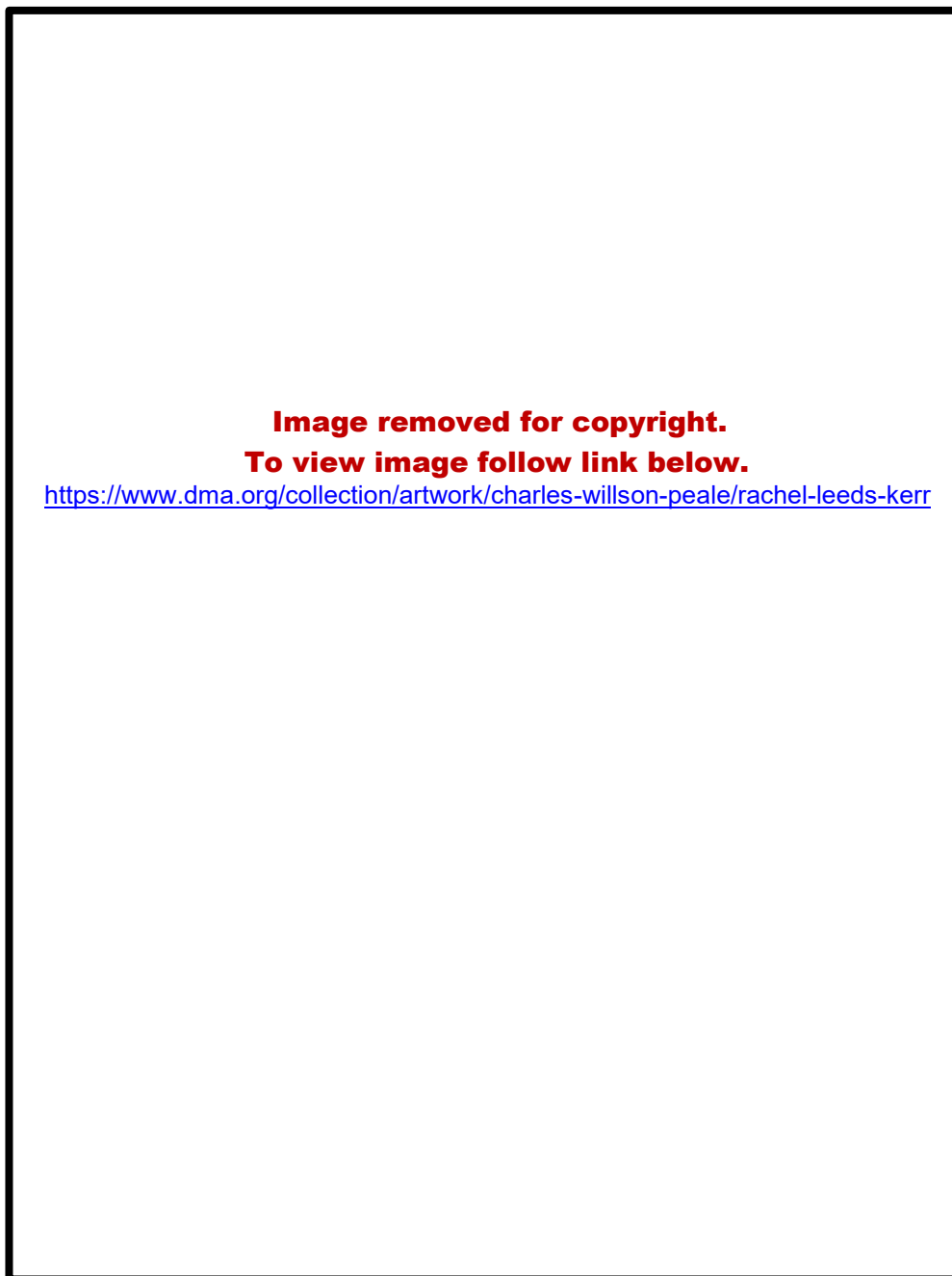


Figure 15: Charles Willson Peale (American, 1741-1827), *Rachel Leeds Kerr*, 1790, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas (1989.23).

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<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=7714>

Figure 16: Ralph Earl (American, 1751-1801), *Mrs. Richard Alsop*, 1792, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. (1975.49.1).

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<http://www.bmagic.org.uk/objects/1906P31>

Figure 17: Charles Frederick von Breda (Swedish 1759-1818), *Mrs. Joseph Priestley*, 1793, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham (1906P31).



Figure 18: Flat hem.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 19: Rolled hem.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

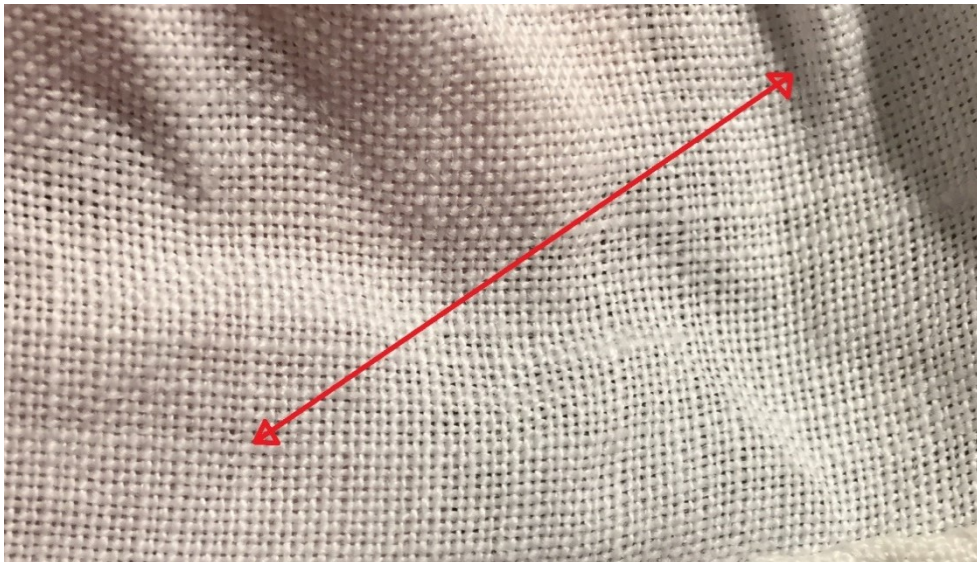


Figure 20: Red arrow illustrates direction of bias.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

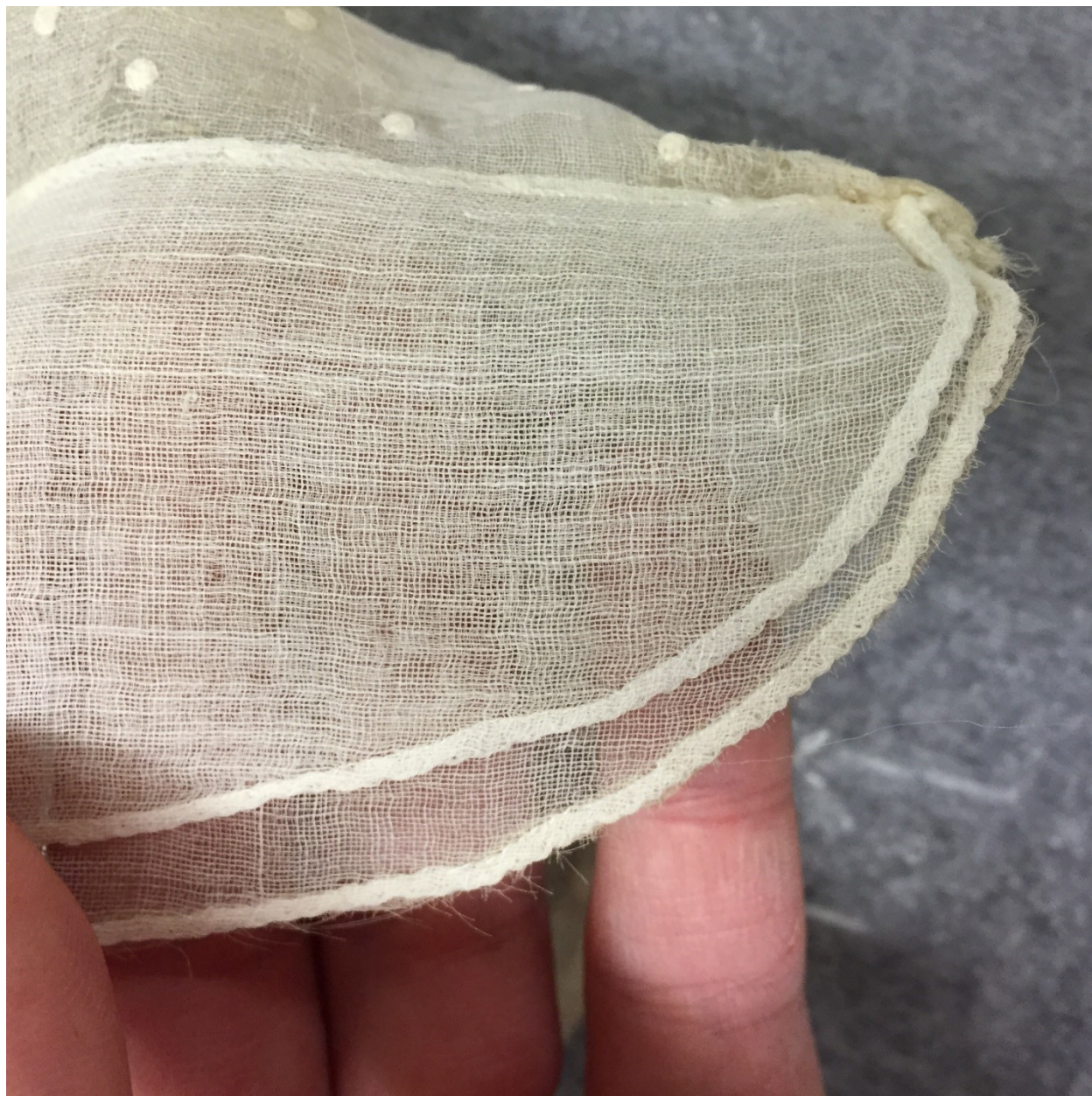


Figure 21: Headpiece hem detail, Cap, Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (W-608).

Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 22: Whip-gathering: thread stitched around the hem.
Photograph by Stephanie Huolt©.



Figure 23: Whip-gathering: thread is pulled to create gather. Photograph by Stephanie Huolt©.

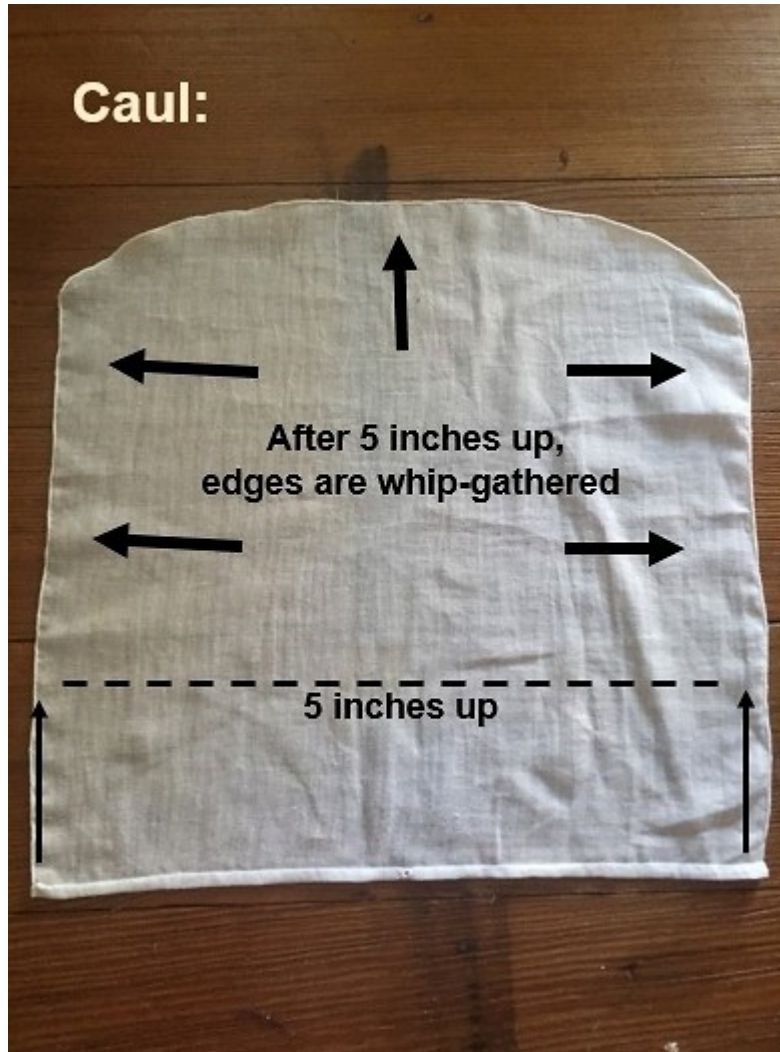


Figure 24: Illustration of where whip-gathering begins on caul.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 25: Illustration of where whip-gathering caul is attached to headpiece. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 26: Caul attachment to headpiece detail. Cap, Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (W-608).
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 27: Caul drawstring detail. Cap, Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (W-608).

Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

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Figure 28: Charles Willson Peale (American, 1741-1827), *Margaret "Peggy" Custis Wilson (Mrs. John Custis Wilson)*, 1791, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (2014-46,A&B).

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Figure 29: Anonymous (American), Woman's Quaker Cap, 1790-1810, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (2009-43,8).
Photograph by Linda Baumgarten©. Graphic by Sarah Woodyard.

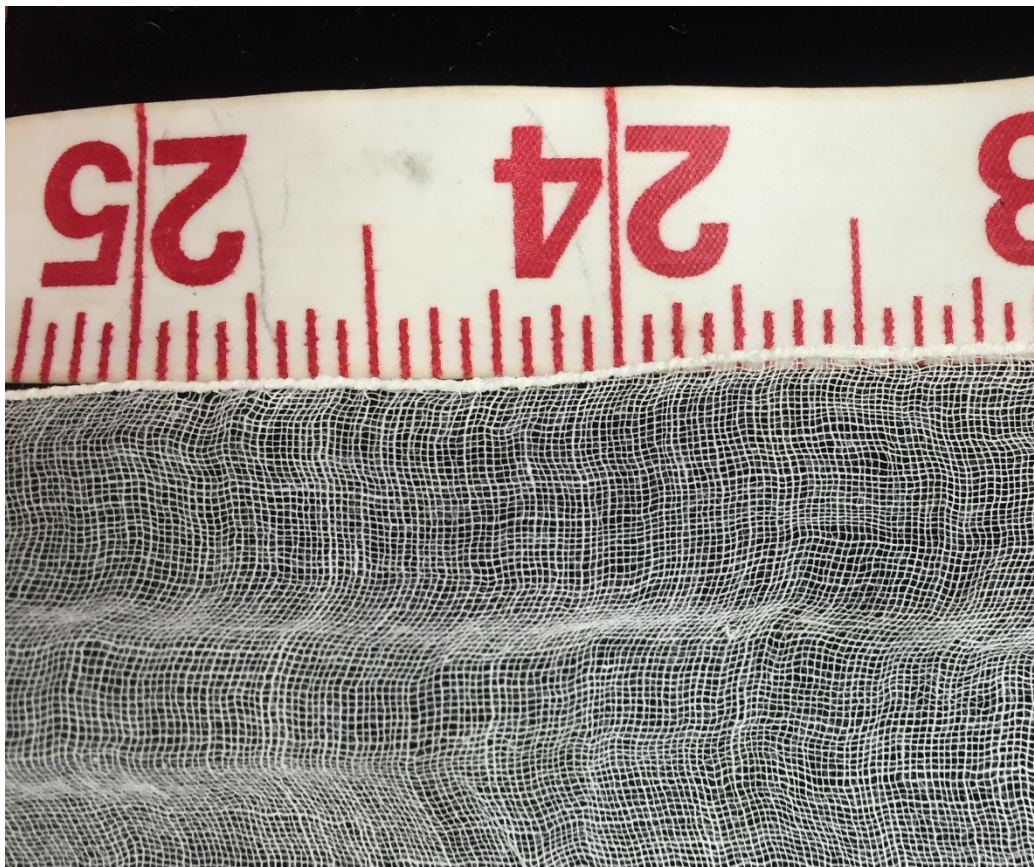


Figure 30: Anonymous (American), Woman's Quaker Cap, hem detail, 1790-1810, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (2009-43,8). Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

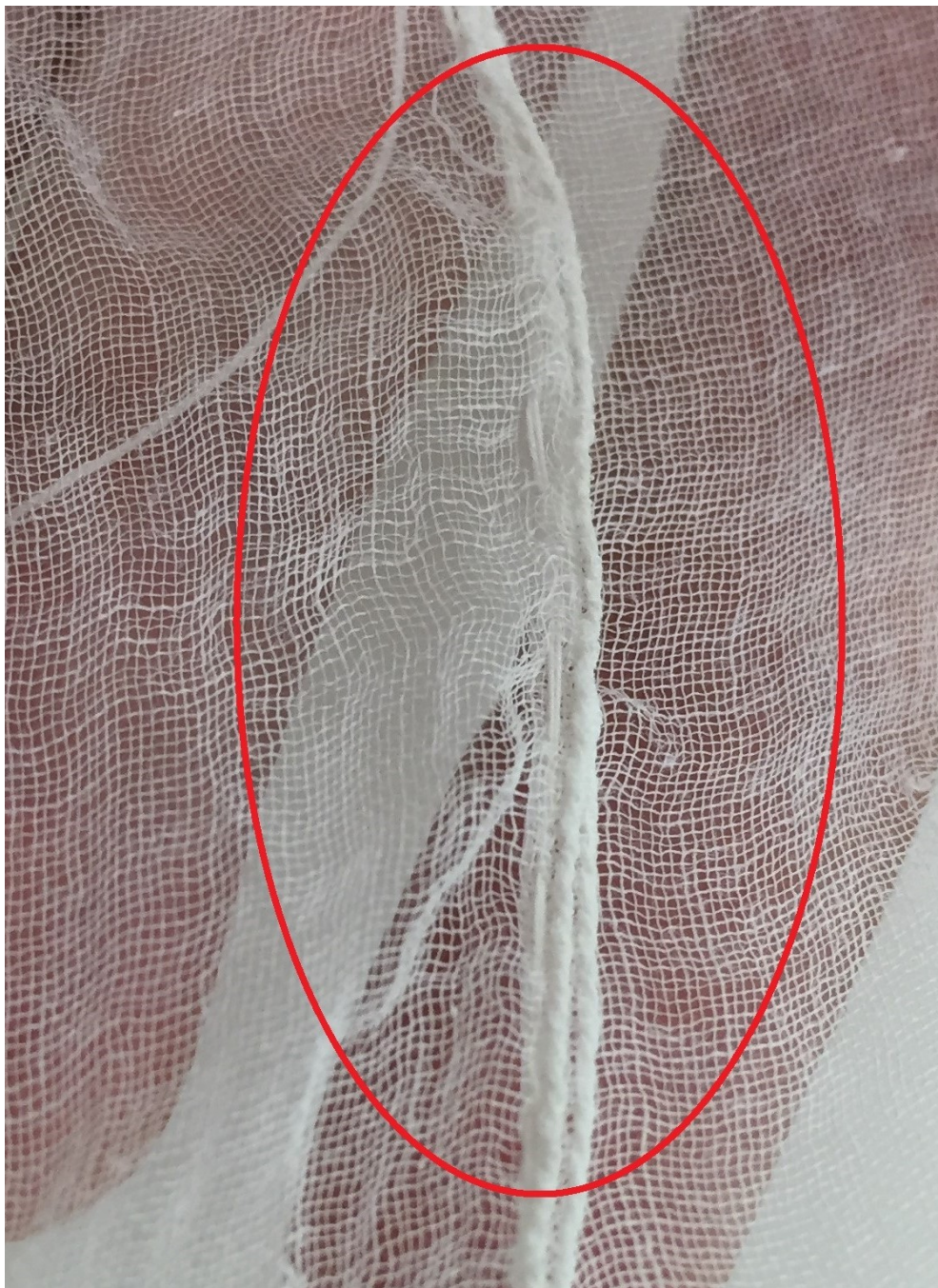


Figure 31: Anonymous (American), Woman's Quaker Cap, seam detail, 1790-1810, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (2009-43,8). Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

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Figure 32: Carington Bowles (British, 1724-1793), *A MORNING RAMBLE, OR The MILLINERS SHOP*, c. 1782, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (1975-135).

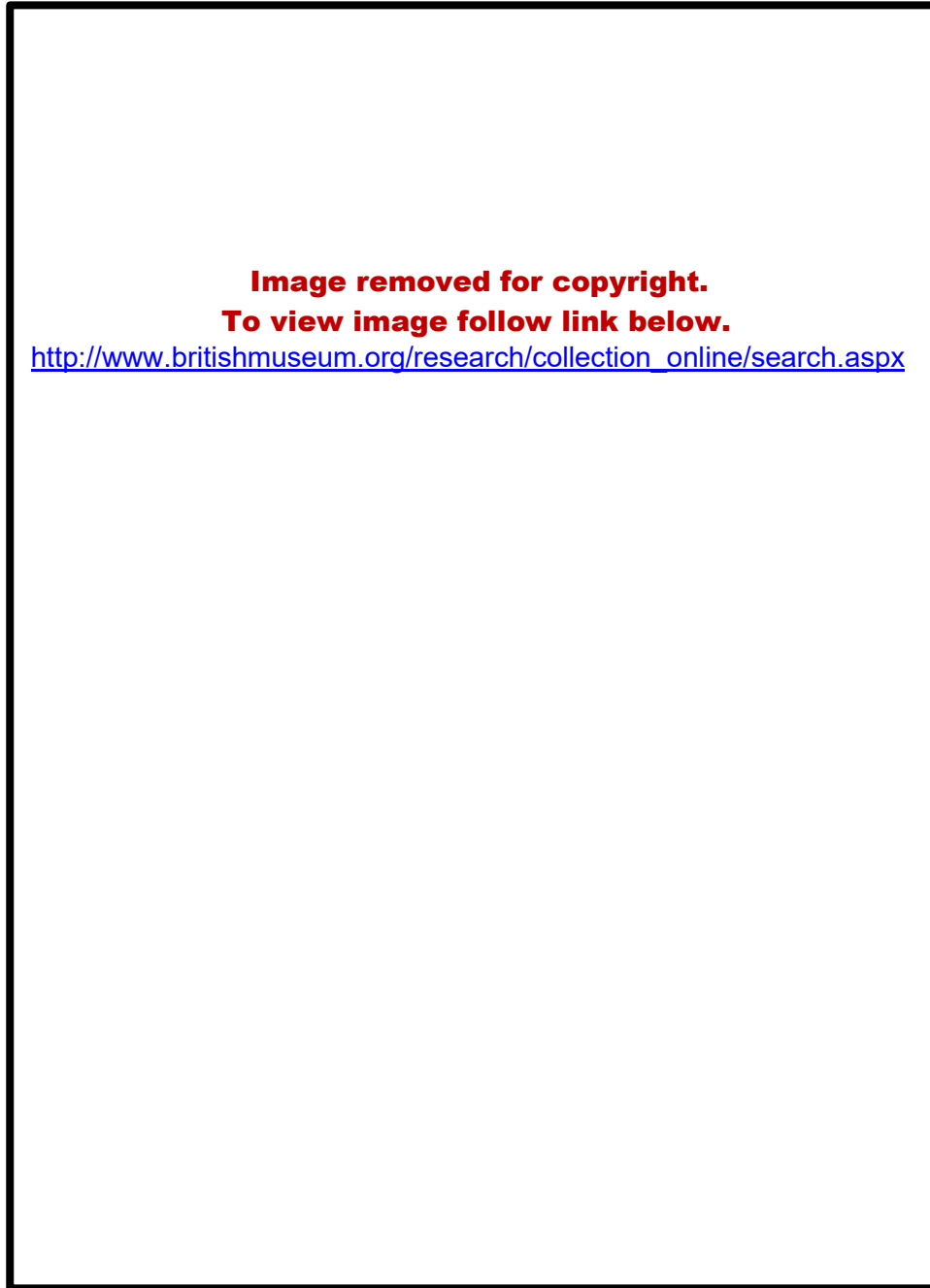


Figure 33: Sayer & Bennett (British), *The Pretty Milleners*, 1781, The British Museum, London (2010,7081.3135).

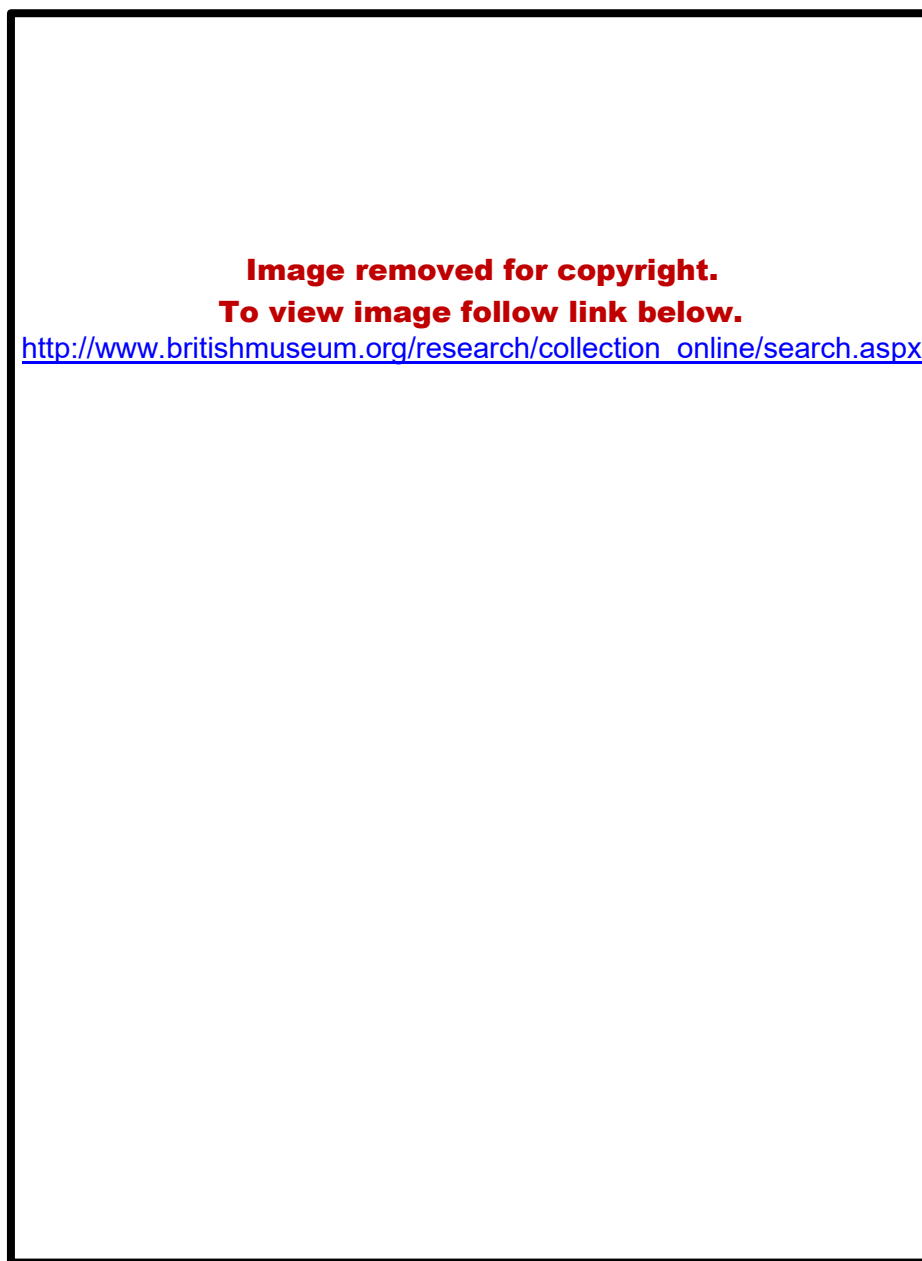


Figure 34: William Humphrey, Publisher, (British) *A MILLINERS SHOP. Mrs. Monopolize, the Butchers Wife, purchasing a Modern Head Dress*, 1772, The British Museum, London (J,5.103).

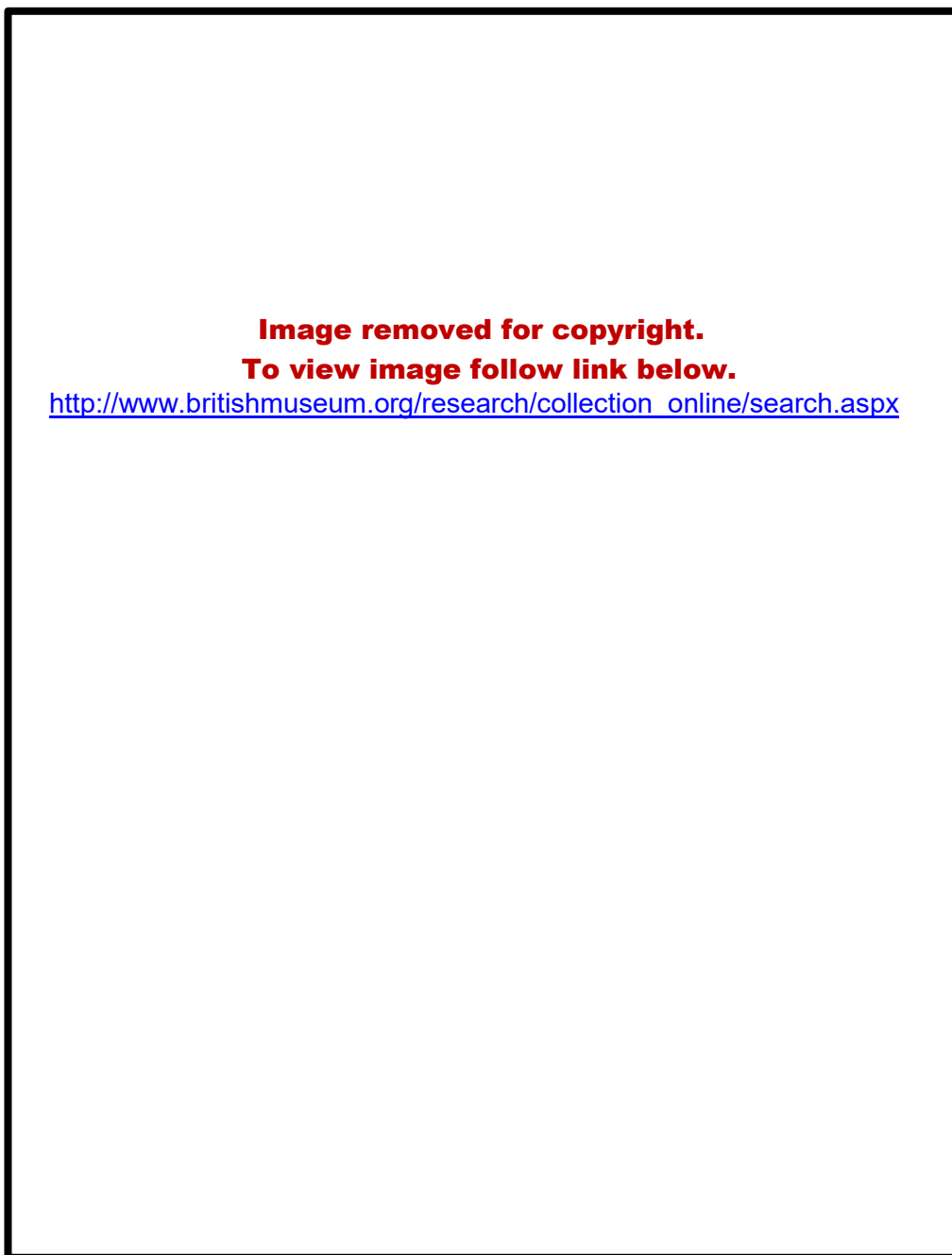


Figure 35: Carington Bowles (British, 1724-1793) after John Collett (British, c. 1725-1780), *A Morning Frolic, or The Transmutation of Sexes*, c.1780, The British Library, London (2010,7081.3029).

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http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

Figure 36: Sayer & Bennett (British), *Starting of Game*, 1782, The British Museum, London (2010,7081.1316).



Figure 37: Henry Walton (British 1746-1813), *Plucking the Turkey*, 1776, Tate Gallery, London (N02870). Available under a CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported) license. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/walton-plucking-the-turkey-n02870>

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http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

Figure 38: Haines & Son (British), *A Cottage Maid*, 1797, The British Museum, London (2010,7081.915).

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<http://emuseum.history.org/>

Figure 39: After John Collet (British, c. 1725-1780), *SHOP-LIFTER DETECTED*, 1778, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, Virginia (1974-134).



Figure 40: James Wilson (British, 1735-1786), *A City Taylors Wife dressing for the Pantheon*, 1772, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (772.02.05.02+).

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<http://auktionsverket.com/auction/fine-arts/2016-12-07/3023-pehr-hillestrom-syende-dam/>

Figure 41: Pehr Hillestrom (Swedish, 1733-1816), *Syende dam*, 1800, Stockholms Auktionsverk, <http://auktionsverket.com/auction/fine-arts/2016-12-07/3023-pehr-hillestrom-syende-dam/>.



Figure 42: James Watson (British 1740-1790), *Domestick amusement: The fair seamstress*, 1764, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (764.00.00.09+).

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To view image follow link below.
<http://www.museereattu.arles.fr/lentourage-du-peintre.html>

Figure 44: Antoine Raspal (French, 1738-1811), *Un atelier de couturières à Arles*, 1785, Musée Réattu, Arles.



Figure 45: Anonymous (British), *Interior of a tailor's shop*, c. 1780, Museum of London, London (2002.179).

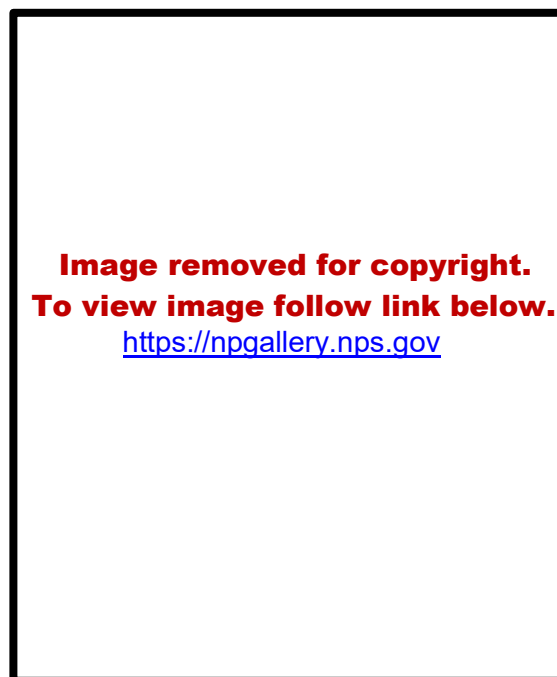


Figure 46: Edward Savage (American, 1761-1796), *George Washington*, 1790, The Old House, Adams National Historical Park, Quincy, Massachusetts.



Figure 47: Jacob Frymire (American, 1770-1822), *Amelia Heiskell Lauck*, 1801, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, (3406).

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<http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org/art/explore-the-collection?id=11296900>

Figure 48: Charles Willson Peale (American, 1741-1827), *Eleanor Miller (Mrs. Francis Bailey)*, 1791, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio (1957.147).

APPENDIX B: HAND-SEWN INQUIRY METHODOLOGY

The “hand-sewing inquiry” methodology is an auto-ethnographic and reflexive methodology that places a hand-sewing practitioner’s skill and individual experience as central to the research. This method can be used by a variety of fields such as: material culture, fashion design, dress history, history, art history, anthropology, and design. This method, while developed to research eighteenth-century caps, can be used to research hand-sewn objects from any time period and culture. In order to successfully use a hand-sewn inquiry methodology, a level of sewing skill has to be cultivated. The skill of sewing is used as a research tool and is viewed as a valid way to study and analyze hand-sewn material culture. However, the type of sewing (ex. plain sewing, embroidery, etc.) will vary depending upon the object that is at the center of the project.

Hand-sewn inquiry methodology is not intended to be a replacement for other models of material culture analysis. Hand-sewn inquiry is intended to fill the gap of a lack of methodology for practice-based researchers studying hand-sewn material culture. It is meant to be another tool in the tool box used as an add-on to other models already in place. Fleming, Prown, Severa and Horswill, Steele, and Zimmerman are all authors to consider when doing an object-based study. These authors’ models can be considered alone or blended together for object study depending on the research design.

Using auto-ethnography and reflexivity to place the researcher at the center of the investigation and employ their skill as a research tool is part of a hand-sewing inquiry methodology. Hand sewing produces a lot of tacit and implicit knowledge, therefore a researcher needs to be very attentive to their making process in order to make implicit experience explicit. Being reflexive acknowledges the significance of the maker at the center of this process. To carry out hand-sewn inquiry the researcher must be mindful of the physical construction process but also their bodily process which involves physical, emotional, and spiritual responses to the making. Several external data collection methods can be employed as nets to catch these tacit experiences. For this thesis I used data collected through a diary. However, for the lizard cap making process, I also collected data through interviews, photos, sound recording, and video. The following is an explanation of how I went about making the lizard cap using hand-sewn inquiry methodology.

Data Collection

To answer my research question data was collected through multi-model means. To capture a very diverse data sets the lizard cap project used written, audio, video dairies, digital photos and

an additional 30-minute interview session. The data was collected by me as the researcher. At the beginning of my making sessions I spent twenty minutes writing my thoughts with pen and paper. I typically covered how I was feeling that day, what I hoped to accomplish during the making session, and how I was feeling about the project overall. I noted the date and the time at the beginning and end of the diary entries. I also assigned a letter and numbered the diary entries for the day numerically with the corresponding letter.

Once I began to make the cap I turned on an audio recorder and videotaped my progress. Because sewing is an embodied process, documenting my work through film captured the way my hands and body interacted with the cap and materials as I worked and thought through the process. Keeping an audio recorder on during the entire making session allowed me to narrate my work as it progressed. I did not narrate the entire process but, instead, spoke when I felt I had something significant to say. I found myself speaking up more at the beginning of the process than towards the middle and end of the making sessions. At the beginning I felt inclined to talk my way through most of the process hoping to capture more insight that way. However, I felt that speaking got in the way of finding the flow of my work. In the next session I experimented with speaking only to document each major step of the process or to note moments where I had a personal epiphany.

I also captured the making process through photographing my progress. I took photos using a point and shoot digital camera. These photos were taken either during breaks of the making process or if there was a specific step that I wanted to document. These photos allowed me to document the process of cutting and sewing. These photos also allowed me to show the details of the pieces I was sewing that the video was unable to focus on.

The final step in data collection was to be interviewed by my professor, Dr. Megan Strickfaden, for thirty minutes after each making session. She would ask how the session went and then go into a variety of questions she had written based on my research proposal. These questions were created by her and I was not aware of them until the interview. This question and answer period enriched my opportunity for reflection, as her questions encouraged me to contextualize the work I had done and the information I was learning during my making sessions.

The choice to use such a diverse array of data was encouraged by Dr. Strickfaden with the hope that it would lead to the collection of a diverse group of data. Hopefully, these diverse data sets will reference one another and provide information that the other types of approaches leave out. Writing a reflexive diary allowed me to make some of the implicit, physical, emotional, and spiritual process of stitching explicit. Audio recording allowed me to document my ideas as I

sewed, while videotaping the process captured my physical engagement with the work. The photos illustrate the details of cut and construction of the cap. The final thirty minutes interview with Dr. Strickfaden provided additional opportunity for me to reflect on the making sessions and to explore deeper the experience through Dr. Strickfaden's questions.

Environment

The space where I worked was the living room of my two bedroom apartment. I needed an accessible and consistently private place to work. Additionally, my apartment has a big south facing window which was appealing to me as a natural light source for hand sewing and filming the process. I did my research in the moderately sized front room of the apartment. This room is an open concept space with an entry space, living area and open kitchen. I worked along the east wall with the south facing window to my left. I set up my round dining room table with a purple sheet as a table cloth as my work table and sat in my desk chair. The camera was set up on a tripod in front of the table.

I laid out all my sewing tools and materials that were needed for that day of making on the work table. I also had a chair and table next to me on which I kept other materials such as extra paper, pens and my schedule to reference. While I used the round table to hold my tools and materials, most of the work I did took place in my lap. Using my lap as a table was made easy by the happy accident of having a foot stool in my living room. Even though I had not originally intended to use this stool for my project, it ended up being a very useful piece of furniture which aided me in my research.

Sewing

To make the cap (see Appendix C, Figures 1-14) I divided my work into different making sessions. I originally thought the cap making would require three making sessions from Saturday, March 14, 2015, to Monday, March 16, 2015. However I ended up doing six making sessions: Saturday, March 14, 2015, Sunday, March 15, 2015, Wednesday, March 18, 2015, Sunday, March 22, 2015, Sunday, April 12, 2015, and Monday, April 13, 2015.

The construction methods used to stitch this cap together were based on extant eighteenth-century caps I had studied for past research projects. Because I was using a hand-sewn inquiry methodology to produce a cap based on a portrait, I had to rely on other cap studies I had done previously. Before a hand-sewn inquiry can begin, a researcher must have enough information about the object in order to produce it. This is normally achieved through object-based study. The hand-sewn inquiry is intended to be the next step in material culture

analysis after design and construction information are recorded from the object(s) studied. The hand-sewn inquiry methodology seeks to extract the hidden moments that the maker encounters while sewing.

The order of sewing construction was based on an educated conjecture based on the construction methods noted in extant pieces. To construct the cap I decided to finish the raw edges of all of the cap pieces first and then assemble the pieces. I began with hemming all the long-straight pieces with the intent of getting into a making rhythm (Appendix C, Figures 4, 7, 8). For these pieces I finished the edges off by rolling the hem at 1/6th of an inch and stitching it with a hem stitch (Appendix C, Figure 7). I hemmed the edges on the caul and then the headpiece (or wings as they are listed in the diary entries). I used a broader hem at 1/4th of an inch for the headpieces and running-stitched the hem into place (Appendix C, Figure 6). I pleated the borders onto a ribbon and applied them to the headpiece (Appendix C, Figures 10-11). The caul was whip-gathered around the curved section of the top to fit the dimension of the headpiece and then all the pieces were whip-stitched together (Appendix C, Figures 13-14).

RECORDED MAKING SESSIONS

The following is a summary of each day's making session, annotated with highlights of my diary entries to highlight the narrative of my making session.

Day 1: Saturday, March 14, 2015

On my first making day I worked from 4:40-11:00 p.m. At the beginning I started with my diary session and, at the closing, I conducted my interview with Dr. Strickfaden. The first day I cut out the pieces of the cap and began sewing on the trim. I printed out an enlarged copy of a section of Mrs. Izard's head and cap. This was printed in color in a small scale: 4 11/16" (12 cm) by 4 7/16" (11.3 cm). The following are excerpts from my reflexive diary for Day 1:

"I wanted to note how much panic I have felt about the organization of filming and recording for this project as it is completely new to me. The structure as well as the notion of reflexivity—especially the reflexivity makes me feel a bit exposed and open because hand sewing is meditative and grounding, focusing and therapeutic."²³⁷

²³⁷ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 14, 2015, 1A.

“My expectation of this project is that I will learn a lot about this style of cap. I expect that it will not look exactly like the print but in those mistakes I would be able to make a second one that looked identical.”²³⁸

“I did a blend of experimenting with measurements on me and as I went along drew out the pattern pieces. It was a back and forth of looking and trying to translate the image of a 3D garment onto paper but using my body as a mediator.”²³⁹

“The sewing was like a dream I felt so relaxed and grounded. I noticed that when I started to think about other think besides the hemming that my better work was done.”²⁴⁰

Day 2: Sunday, March 15, 2015

“I cut some more trim for the sides and back of the caul, hemmed all the trim except for the two back lappets, hemmed the bands and got the caul ready for attachment.”²⁴¹

“I love this—why? It’s so human. There is so much humanity, it is people centered and positive.”²⁴²

“I think that embodiment and tactility were really highlighted to me today. My instinct was to move away from the table and use my body as a table—as it was the right height, when I did that I felt less stressed and anxious about how to hold the work and therefore was able to find more of a flow of stitching.”²⁴³

Day 3: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

“Today I only have 1.5 hours to sew and I need to fix the curve of the wings and I need to finish hemming the two small pieces and then I need to pleat.”²⁴⁴

“It is all about the flow. That is something this project is really helping me embrace is the flow of the work and how everything is really connected.”²⁴⁵

²³⁸ Ibid., 3A.

²³⁹ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 14, 2015, 5A.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 7A.

²⁴¹ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 15, 2015, 4B.

²⁴² Ibid., 2B.

²⁴³ Ibid., 4B.

²⁴⁴ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 18, 2015, 2C.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 3C.

“Well I go the two lappets hemmed and that was good because it really felt smooth and I felt like my hands had learned how to talk with the fabric.”²⁴⁶

Day 4: Sunday, March 22, 2015

“I am beginning what I hope to be my last session of making this cap. I just grabbed the picture to take a look at it and think about where I am headed for the day...Today I am going to pleat the ruffle at the front and sew it to the ribbon...”²⁴⁷

“This making session was very frustrating because I felt like I was all thumbs. Everything was catching on itself and I realized that when your hands are not in fluid motion it is epically annoying it feels like you are not thinking straight and the world is falling down around you.”²⁴⁸

“I initially was pleating on the table and pinning to the tablecloth...so I thought wait, why don't I just pin directly to the ribbon?...So I took the ribbon and pinned it to my leg and laid the gauze over top of it and pleated it down to fit.”²⁴⁹

Day 5: Sunday, April 12, 2015

“It has been several weeks since my last cap making session. I had to put the work on hold in order to focus on other school work.”²⁵⁰

“I have the caul pinned to the band however the curve is not quite right and the caul is very small after looking at the portrait.”²⁵¹

“I wish I could have gotten it done. Yet again—working for three hour spurts gets progress done but not finished. Whenever I stop it feels premature even if I am at the stopping point.”²⁵²

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 3C.

²⁴⁷ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, March 22, 2015, 1D.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 3D.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, April 12, 2015, 1E.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., 3E.

“Once I got the puffs pinned in place I had a minor euphoric moment because it just looks so damn pretty...also very close to the print.”²⁵³

Day 6: Monday, April 13, 2015

“I think this is very exciting when you can finally see an object become what you set out for it to be.”²⁵⁴

“I feel like a milliner, a modern milliner, but one that has a connection to 18thc style, proportion and the skill set of an 18thc milliner.”²⁵⁵

“Well I am done with it. I hate it. It makes me angry.”²⁵⁶

“From a productive perspective this can be used as a tool to learn from, make one as a prototype and then tweak it to make it work.”²⁵⁷

INTERVIEW SESSIONS WITH DR. STRICKFADEN

After each making session I had a thirty minutes interview session with Dr. Strickfaden. The questions were about 1) my bodily experiences; 2) my making process; 3) the aesthetics (look and fit) of the cap; 4) my perceived views around the eighteenth century; and, finally, the conceptual ideas (e.g., agency and performativity) I encountered during my hand-sewn inquiry methodology. The following is an example of expanded questions from Day 3, 18 March 2015.

- What are your impressions of the day?
- What is the relationship of the pieces you cut today to mimic the volumes or shapes you are trying to achieve? Are these attempts working out?
- How does this cap compared with caps that you have made in the past?

²⁵³ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, April 12, 2015, 3E.

²⁵⁴ Sarah Woodyard, Reflexive Diary Entry, April 13, 2015, 1F.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 3F.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

- What is the relationship of the cap you are making with to the visual of the cap seen in the painting? What is the relationships between the body, fabric, needle, thimble, and setting, such as the table and chairs?
- How is the flow of your work? Is your body part of the communication? Is your body working in synch with your mind? Is there a disassociation between your hands and your brain? Are you registering sensorial experiences? Have you experienced an intuitive way of working?
- What are your emotions around the process? What are your emotions around the cap? How do these emotions differ from other times when you have done this type of work? Are you experiencing the same emotions?
- What might your personal biases be? What might your expectations of yourself be?
- Do you thing you replicated the skills and processes of the past? Have you considered the influences of the lighting, the setting, and your dress? Do you think there is a disassociation with the past taking place?
- What are your personal memories versus your cultural and/or historical memories?

These questions mined a variety of perspectives during the making process. Dr. Strickfaden helped me to explore different facets of making I would not have otherwise considered. Having an outsider ask questions helped to draw out implicit thoughts that were not fully formed. I would encourage the use of an external questioner during a hand-sewn inquiry methodology to help mine the research process

Conclusion

A hand-sewn inquiry methodology proved to be an important facet of my practice-based inquiry into eighteenth-century women's caps. It gave me the opportunity to do historic sewing research in an academic environment. Using a hand-sewn inquiry I was able to place the cap maker (myself) as a significant component within the research design and extract a rich amount of data about cap making. Most importantly the hand-sewn inquiry methodology brought to light implicit

knowledge that would have otherwise been unexplored. This served to demonstrate the value of reflexive research and to underscoring the power of hand-sewing as a form of thinking.

APPENDIX C: CAP MAKING

This appendix is a visual journey that documents the making on the three caps described in my thesis.

MRS. IZARD'S CAP



Figure 1: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: work table and materials ready to be cut.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

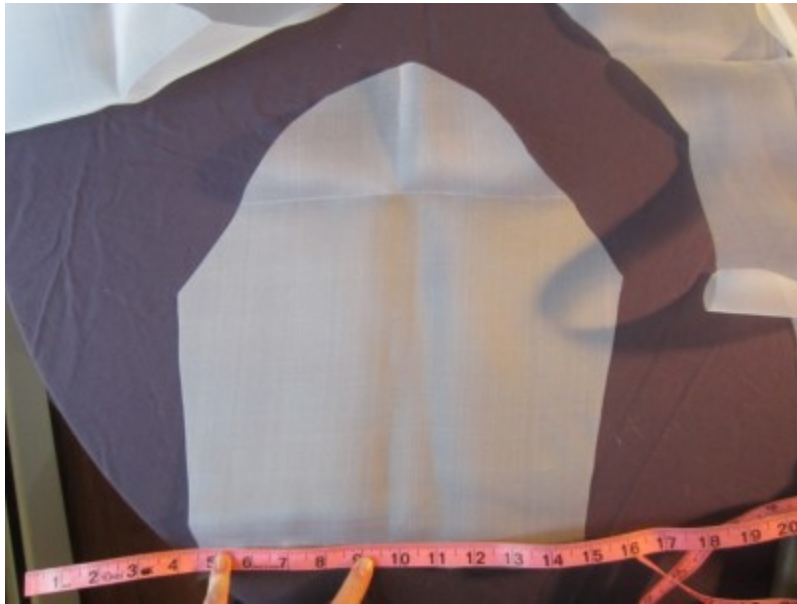


Figure 2: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: caul cut out.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 3: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: headpiece cut out.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 4: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: borders and trim cut out.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 5: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: top of the headpiece hemmed on the straight of grain with $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch (0.64 cm) seam allowance and running stitched at 6-8 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 6: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: bottom curve of the headpiece hemmed on the bias with $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch (0.64 cm) seam allowance and running stitched at 6-8 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 7: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: detail of the rolled hem with a 1/16 of an inch (0.16 cm) seam allowance stitched at 8-10 spi.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 8: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: borders and trim hemmed.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 9: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: border box-pleated to make the ruffle.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

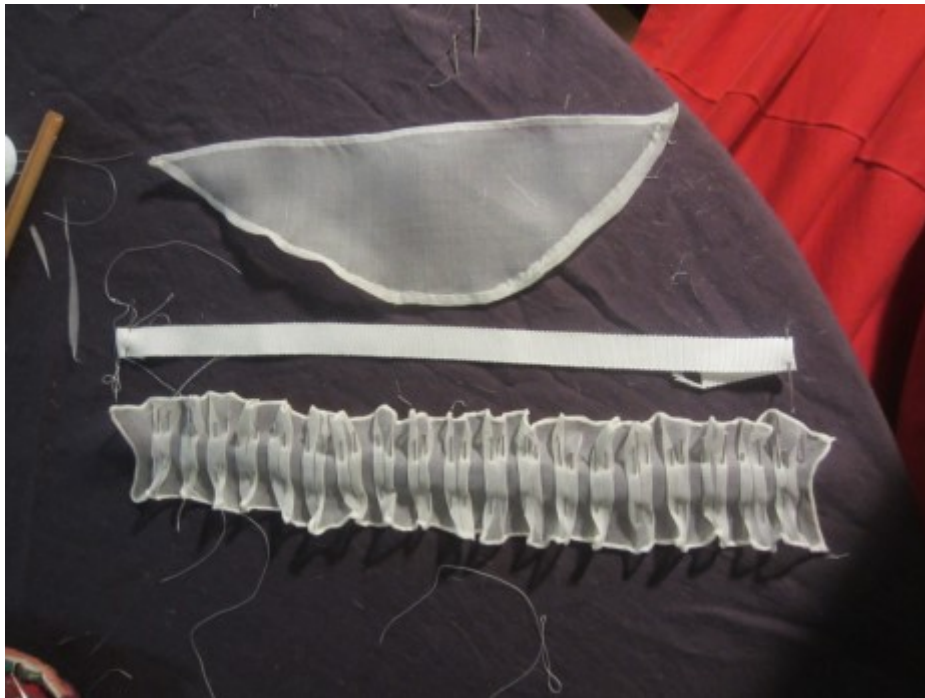


Figure 10: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: headpiece components that consist of the hemmed headpiece, ribbon on which the pleated border will be applied, and the pleated border.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 11: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: headpieces with pleated borders attached. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 12: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: ribbon trim to be gathered across the width of a base ribbon every 2 ½ inches (6.35 cm) in order to create puffs for a decorative trim. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 13: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: caul with drawstring straight-across the bottom, while the top of the caul is whip-gathered in preparation to be seamed to the headpiece.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 14: Making Mrs. Izard's cap: finished cap after the caul was whipped stitched to the headpiece, and the trim with puffs applied.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

QUAKER CAP

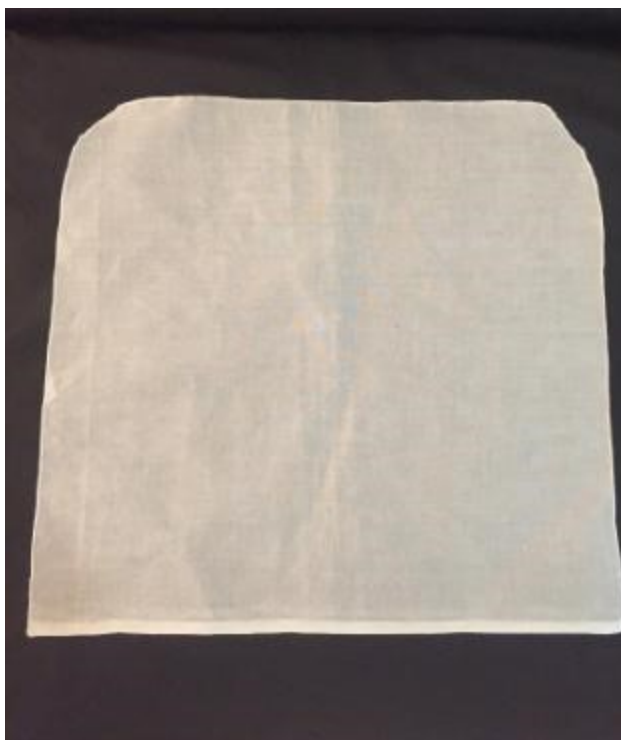


Figure 15: Making the Quaker cap: caul is cut out. The hem was rolled with a 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) seam allowance and whip-stitched at 22 spi.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

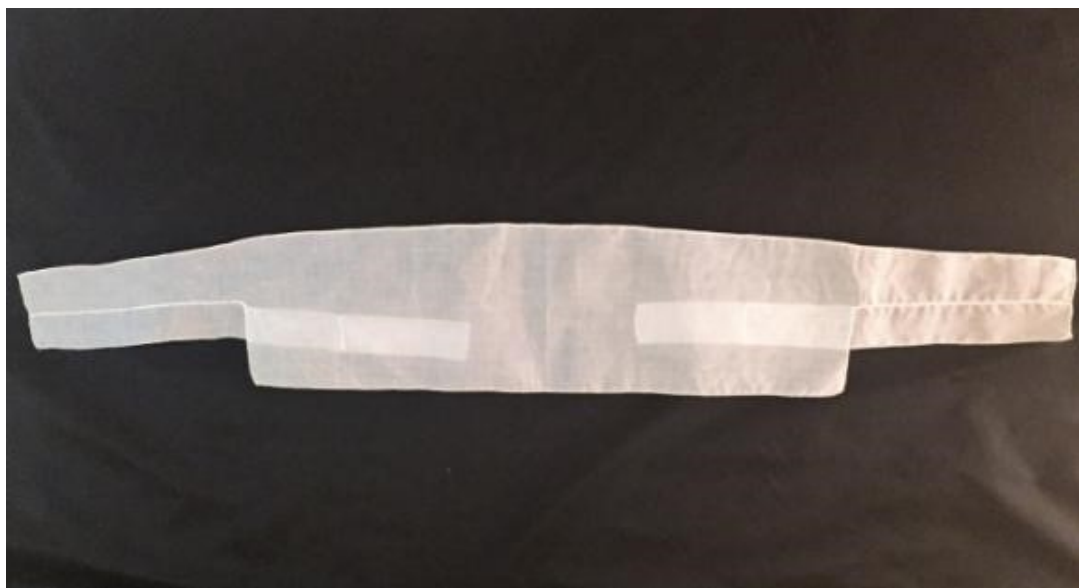


Figure 16: Making the Quaker cap: headpiece. Each piece was cut out, rolled with a 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) seam allowance, and whip-stitched at 22 spi.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 17: Making the Quaker cap: ear piece drawstring in detail. Each piece was cut out, rolled with a $\frac{1}{32}$ of an inch (0.08 cm) seam allowance and whip-stitched at 22 spi. To create the drawstring, I put the right sides together and whip-stitched about four stitches clustered every $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch (.95 cm). Between each of these clutters of stitches is a space for the drawstring to be passed through.
 Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 18: Making the Quaker cap: side seam in detail. Edges of the side seam were rolled with a $\frac{1}{32}$ of an inch (0.08 cm) seam allowance and whip-stitched at 22 spi. The side seam was stitched with a double thread in a running stitch at 5 spi.
 Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 19: Making the Quaker cap: detail of the caul casing and neck ruffle. The edges of the seam were rolled with a 1/32 of an inch (0.08 cm) seam allowance and whip-stitched at 22 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 20: Making the Quaker cap: caul attachment to the headpiece. Edges were hemmed with a whip-stitch at 20-22 spi and then whip-gathered before the section was stitched to the headpiece. The seam was sewn with a double thread using a running stitch at 5 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 21: Making the Quaker cap: finished front view.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 22: Making the Quaker cap: finished side view.
Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.

MARTHA WASHINGTON'S FRENCH NIGHT CAP



Figure 23: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: caul is cut out. The piece is hemmed on all sides (including the curved sections) with a $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch (0.16 cm) seam allowance at 20-22 spi.

Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 24: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: caul casing in detail. The casing is made by folding the raw edge at $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch (0.64 cm) seam allowance. A small eyelet is then stitched at the center back. Once the eyelet was stitched and the piece was folded up again another $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch (0.64 cm), I stitched it down with a hem-stitch at 18-20 spi.

Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 25: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: headpiece. The edges were finished by rolling the raw edges under. This created a seam allowance which measured between $\frac{1}{8}$ (0.32 cm) and $\frac{1}{16}$ of an inch (0.16 cm). The piece was hem stitched at 20-22 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 26: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: headpiece hem detail. The edges were finished by rolling the seam allowance under. This created a hem which measured between $\frac{1}{8}$ (0.32 cm) and $\frac{1}{16}$ (0.16 cm) of an inch. The piece was hem stitched at 20-22 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 27: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: folded headpiece. The headpiece was folded wrong sides together along the length to off-set the curves. This created the appearances of two pieces in the final cap.
 Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 28: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: detail of the headpiece attachment to the caul. The folded headpiece was placed wrong side to wrong side and whip-stitched to create the seam, counting over every 2 to 3 threads at 20 spi.
 Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 29: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: detail of the headpiece attachment to the caul. The folded headpiece was placed wrong side to wrong side and whip-stitched to create the seam, counting over every 2 to 3 threads at 20 spi. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.



Figure 30: Making Martha Washington's French night cap: finished side view. Photograph by Sarah Woodyard©.