

A History

Would you believe that, with the entire internet at my disposal, I've only been able to find a few bits of useable information on the history of the hat?! But, rather than simply leave all this good space empty, I'll just improvise!

A hat is a head covering used for several reasons. It may be worn for protection against the elements, for ceremonial or religious reasons, for safety, or as a fashion accessory. In the past, hats were an indicator of social status. In the military, they may denote nationality, branch of service, rank and/or regiment. [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hat>]

The first hats probably evolved from earlier head coverings--i.e., instead of always pulling up your bear skin over your head to protect you from the rain, someone eventually got the idea of a portable head covering...the hat! The classic woven skull cap was the original beanie, in addition to being the earliest hat. Archaeologists have found bodies buried with snug skull caps made from velvet, linen, cotton, and other textiles on almost every continent, but particularly in cold regions, as the beanie would have protected the head. [<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-beanie.htm>]

As time went on, hats began to be more specialized: hats to keep the sun off your head, hats to keep the rain off, hats to keep your head warm, etc. Leather armor is commonly thought of as the first step in long development of better armors. Very early in history people would have discovered the benefits of drying out animal skins they killed for food, and wearing them. At first people would have done little if anything to the skins but as time progressed they would learn how to strengthen the leather by soaking it in wax or using lacquer to harden it. [<http://www.history-of-armor.com/ArmorTypes.html>]



Of The Hat

One of the first pictorial depictions of a hat appears in a Thebes tomb painting which shows a man wearing a coolie-style straw hat. Other early hats were the Pileus, a simple skull cap; the Phrygian cap, worn by freed slaves in Greece and Rome; and the Greek Pestasos, the first known hat with a brim. Women wore veils, kerchiefs, hoods, caps and wimples. Structured hats for women similar to those of male courtiers began to be worn in the late 16th century. The term 'milliner' comes from the Italian city of Milan, where the best quality hats were made in the 18th century. Millinery was traditionally a woman's occupation, with the milliner not only creating hats and bonnets but also choosing lace, trimmings and accessories to complete an outfit. [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hat>]

Probably the earliest hat worn by the American Cowboy was the Mexican Sombrero, with its high crown and wide brim. [<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art56905.asp>]

Although football helmets did not become standard gear until after World War II, some pioneering players wore primitive head covering as far back as the early 1900s. The earliest versions, called "head harnesses," were made of soft leather and were predominantly designed to cover the ears. [<http://www.popularmechanics.com/outdoors/sports/football/4281378>]

In the first half of the 19th century, women wore bonnets that gradually became larger, decorated with ribbons, flowers, feathers and gauze trims. By the end of the century, many other styles were introduced, among them hats with wide brims and flat crowns, the flower pot and the toque. By the middle of the 1920s, when women began to cut their hair short, they chose hats that hugged the head like a helmet. [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hat>]

