



JACKSON FOSTER  
HISTORIC SIGN PAINTER & MAKER  
*Hand-crafted signs in the style of  
18th and 19th century artisans*

## Fine Needlework

A milliner was a clothing maker and designer who sold clothes to the rich men and women, the poor, and farmers.

A milliner apprenticeship, usually for girls aged 11-18, lasted about six or seven years, learning how to sew, mend, cut, fit, and iron.

The milliners also made and repaired hats necessary for keeping the hot Virginia sun off of the working women's faces. Milliners used many different types of fabric including cotton, linen, silk and wool.

One of the reported origins of the word milliner was from the word milaner, meaning a native of Milan, Italy or a dealer in goods from Milan, because at that time Milan was famous for its fancy goods.

Millinery shops were one of the only businesses that women were allowed to own and manage in Colonial times. In 18th Century Williamsburg, there were six millinery shops, all run by women who needed to know fashion and business, and who often who sold a wide range of fashionable imported goods from London.

Milliners used several tools in their business including: pins made of brass or tin-plated, irons, scissors (or shears), needles, and thimbles.

“In a word, they furnish everything to the Ladies that can contribute to set off their Beauty, increase their Vanity, or render them ridiculous.”

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