



SUNSHINE APPEARS, and we either go into hiding or soak up its warmth. The sunbonnet has always been a practical accessory, protecting workers from the blazing sun and hot summer winds. It wasn't until the 1920s that tanned skin became a symbol of leisure; previously, a pale complexion signified refinement. Today's recommendation is to cover up with a functional shade hat to protect ourselves from harmful rays of that bright sun. Yet, sunbonnets, with their face-shielding brims, are both functional and coyly fashionable.

Objects from the Minnesota Historical Society's collections, pictured here, remind us that sunbonnets are not only a protective head covering but also that their simple, iconic shape appears in unexpected forms. A white cotton infant's bonnet, dating from the nineteenth century, offers both protection and playful peeking. A fashion doll with a bonnet tries to be modest but is slightly overdressed by modern tastes. A shirred silk "poke" bonnet from the 1840s offered protection from unwanted gazes as well as the sun. An early-twentieth-century needle case in a "Sunbonnet Sue" silhouette carries a nosegay made of French knots and opens to reveal the needles and thread used to stitch them.

For the story of a Minnesota artist whose distinctive Sunbonnet Babies earned her admirers and imitators—and were transformed into today's Sunbonnet Sue—turn to the article on page 29.

—Linda McShannock, collections curator





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