



*Inspired*  
by Empress Eugenie

## The Little Hat by Jill Hupp, Sacramento Capitol A's

In the summer of 1931, despite the worsening Depression, women by the thousands were buying new hats. Specifically, Empress Eugenie hats – tiny chapeaux adorned with an ostrich feather and worn cocked to one side, and pulled down low over one eye. Although rumors of the Empress Eugenie's demise were predicted constantly, the trend showed no sign of flagging as fall rolled around. The Millinery Manufacturer's Association, at its September 1931 meeting in Los Angeles, noted that "for the first time in the history of style evolution," hats set the fashion, and dressmakers were forced to adapt their designs accordingly instead of the other way

around. Both the Empress Eugenie hat and the phenomenon of its extreme, prolonged popularity were much derided by the press, but ladies went right on buying them. Style writers were at a loss to explain. "Ask any woman you know what she thinks of them and she will admit she thinks them hideous, but you will probably see her wearing one the next day," wrote Margaret Mel of the L.A. Times in her article "We Wear Her Hats but Who was She" (September 27, 1931), "Is it a gallant feminine gesture – a whistle in the dark? A frivolous but courageous protest against widespread gloom? Or is it simply another whim of that mysterious and powerful force called Fashion?"



Empress Eugenie of France, 1865.

The Empress Eugenie had been the wife of Napoleon III, who ruled France from 1853 to 1871. She set the original fad for a little perched hat with a plume back in 1860. Seventy years later, another widely influential trend setter, Greta Garbo, was credited with (or blamed for) having revived the fashion when she wore an "Empress Eugenie hat" in the 1930 movie Romance. Felt and velvet were the favored materials, with black, "mascara brown," "kiltie green" and "brandy wine" being the favored colors for fall. The regard for romantic, old-fashioned styles carried over into other accessories that season too – from French Colonial-influenced shoes to Victorian revival jewelry, from "Empress Eugenie" miniatures to cameos. Beauty salons were quick to offer "Empress Eugenie" hair styles, also.



Garbo in the "hat that started it all," 1930.

Then, just as suddenly as it came, Empress Eugenie mania was over. By early December 1931, no woman who wished to be considered chic would be caught dead in one. "We told you so!" the fashion columnists jeered, while the dejected hat manufacturing industry tried to figure out the Next Big Thing. The Mata Hari turban anyone?

All ads are from Los Angeles Newspapers, 1931.



**The New  
Soft  
Swirl  
WAVE**

Expressly created  
for the very new  
Empress Eugenie  
hats . . . .

**\$15**

**Empress Eugenie Jewelry**  
Replicas of fine antique pieces in period jewelry . . . exquisite miniatures mounted in dull rose gold. Pendants, brooches, earrings and bracelets are included. Tiny seed pearls surround the miniature on many pieces. Especially nice when worn in matching sets. **\$1.00**

**Genuine Cameo Jewelry**  
**\$1.00**

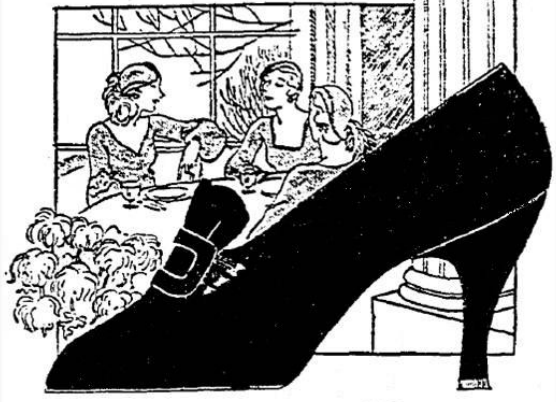


Rings, necklaces, clips, pendants, earrings and bracelets that remind one of the mellowed old pieces in one's grandmother's jewel box. Rose tinted cameos mounted in sterling silver filigree settings and marcasite.  
Genuine onyx rings mounted in sterling with baguette crystals . . . . . \$5.00



COME SATURDAY—  
These Hats Sold Out  
in Two Hours  
After Their Introduction  
Last Week!  
We Rushed This Order Through  
This Week-end!

"Empress Eugenie"  
**Hat of Felt or Velvet**



**Velvet is the Mode  
... Colonials are "In"**

This 1931 advertisement for a (French) Colonial-influenced shoe tries to capitalize on the Eugenie hat's popularity: "Perfect with your Empress Eugenie hat" the copy reads. A lady wearing one is also featured.



**Because---**  
**It's New To Be**  
**"Old-Fashioned"**  
 The woman who enjoys a reputation for being smart will wear over the

**Labor Day Week-End**  
 —a "Tip-Tilt"  
**Empress Eugenie Hat**  
 Regularly \$1.95 and \$2.95  
**\$1.69 and**  
**\$2.69**

**New Arrivals! CHIC FALL HATS!**

Just Unpacked!

**\$2<sup>98</sup>**

The most alluring versions of the new Eugenie and Period hats . . . fine felts . . . novel trims . . . rich fall colors.

• **FREE** •  
 Smart Black and Silver Hat Box With Every Hat Purchased Here!



*The New Empress Eugenie*  
**HAT**  
*for Fall*



**The Tilt of the 1860's Comes Back in the First Fall HATS**

*Special Showing at* **\$5**