

Working Woman's Guild & Sons - Flat Lining

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What is Flat Lining?

Flat lining was the prevalent method of lining dress bodices that were constructed during the Romantic and Civil War periods, 1840 – 1865. Flat lining is when a fashion bodice fabric piece and a lining bodice fabric piece are laid on top of each other and sewn together, as one bodice piece.

Why Use Flat Lining?

Flat lined garments are stronger than bagged or unlined garments. Flat lining can increase lightweight fabric to a heavier weight and correct the drape. Flat lining allows the inside of the garment to be marked and bones to be attached and without visible markings on the outside of the garment.

Flat lined dresses are easier to alter or re-make because the lining and fashion fabric piece are sewn together as one piece.

How is it Done?

The methodology of flat lining is described in the *Workwoman's Guide*, "In making up, after cutting out your tight lining, lay each part of the gown upon each piece of the lining and begin to stitch strongly together all the pieces, laying a piping up every seam, and over-casting the rough edges inside, to make them wear well and look neat" (A Lady 110).

Normally, I only line the bodice of my garment, leaving the sleeves and skirt unlined. To flat line your garment:

- Prepare the fabric. Pre-shrink fashion and lining fabrics. Press fabrics.
- Cut garment pattern pieces out of both fabrics.
- For each pattern piece, place the wrong side of the lining piece exactly atop the wrong side of the fashion piece. Smooth out combined pieces and pin together around edges.
- Using a slightly larger/looser stitch, sew the combined piece together near edge of fabric.
- Remove pins and press piece.

- Use the flat lined pieces to complete the construction of your garment.
- Optional: Overcast-stitch the exposed seam edges on the inside of the bodice.

Examples of Flat-Lining

“Vintage Victorian Civil War Corset Lacing Swiss Waist, Auction No. 270109605322” (eBay). Bright blue striped silk evening bodice, boned and flat-lined with natural cotton. Note overcast sewn seam edges.

“1850s Fringed 3 Piece Silk Dress, Auction No. 140109182186” (eBay) Prussian blue/light blue/gold striped gown flat lined in brown cotton and sleeves lined in white polished cotton.

“Early Evening Bodice Circa 1860, Auction No. 200086231707” (eBay). Black silk taffeta with brown linen lining, flat-lined and boned.

“1860 Civil War Era Pale Green Silk Taffeta Gown NiceCon, Auction No. 330109694772” (eBay). Silk taffeta dress flat-lined with four bones in front bodice.

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