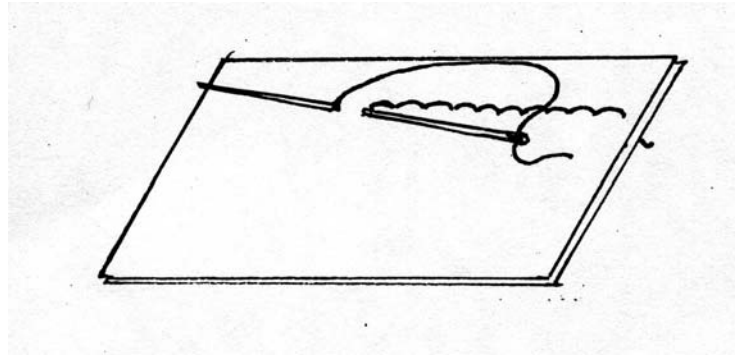


Stitching Techniques for Historic Costume Reproduction

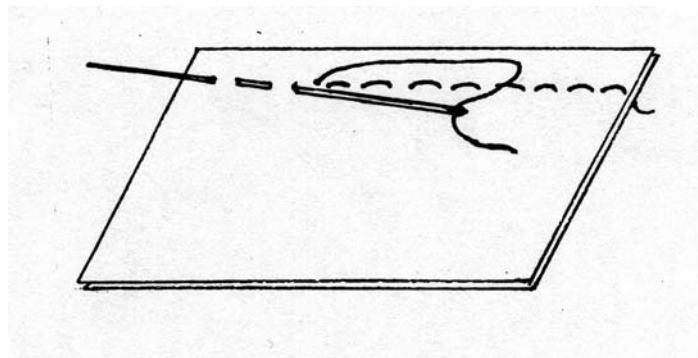
Henry M. Cooke , Historical Costume Services

All clothing produced prior to the Civil War was constructed entirely by hand. Therefore, one should have a familiarity with the types of stitches used to construct them. Coats and jackets, vests and waistcoats, breeches and trousers were largely constructed with four basic stitches, plus the buttonhole stitch. In addition, beginning in the 1790's, coats and outer garments utilized pad stitching to attach interfacing and interlinings to give shape to collars and lapels. If desired, the parts of the garments that were assembled with a backstitch can also be assembled by machine.

Backstitch – Working from right to left, take up (traditionally) six threads of the fabric on the needle, pull your needle through, then carry your needle and thread back from left to right, and insert needle three threads back from the point at which it just emerged. Insert needle and move six threads forward and repeat. In the 18th century, each backstitch met the preceding stitch. That is why machine stitching and backstitching look identical.

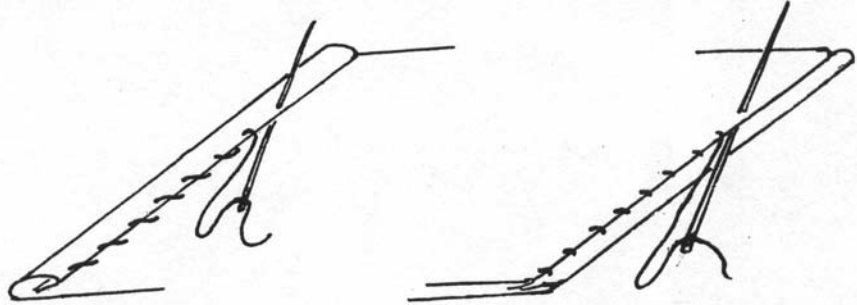


Running Stitch – Pass the needle in and out of the fabric at regular intervals. Draw up thread.



Whip Stitch – Fold edge to be hemmed a little less than 1/8" from cut edge, then fold again 3/16"-1/4" to encase the cut edge. Take stitches, picking a few threads just next to the folded edge and a few threads on the folded edge, draw the needle through.

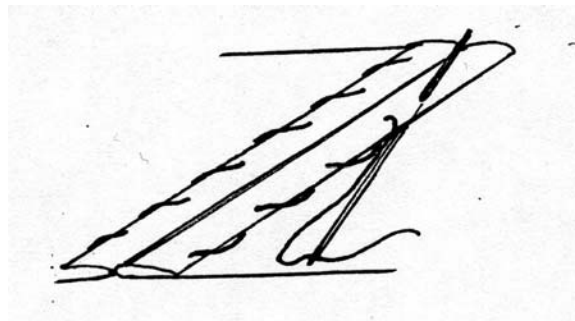
A variation on the whip stitch is used to join facings or linings to the edge of the body. Diderot refers to it as “*point a rabattre sous le main*”, roughly translated as an underhand stitch, though it does not appear by that name in English texts. [Baumgarten, Watson & Carr, **Costume Close-Up: Clothing Construction and Patterns, 1750-1790**, (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1999) p.8].



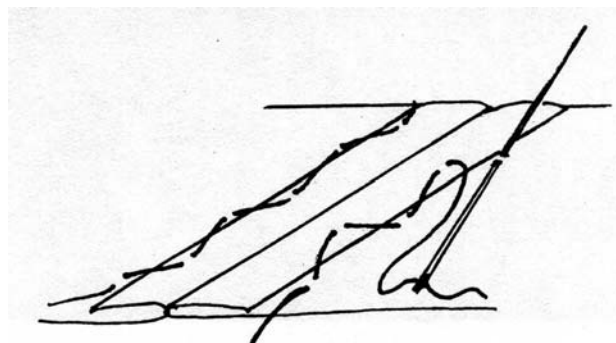
Whip Stitch

Point a Rabattre Sous le Main

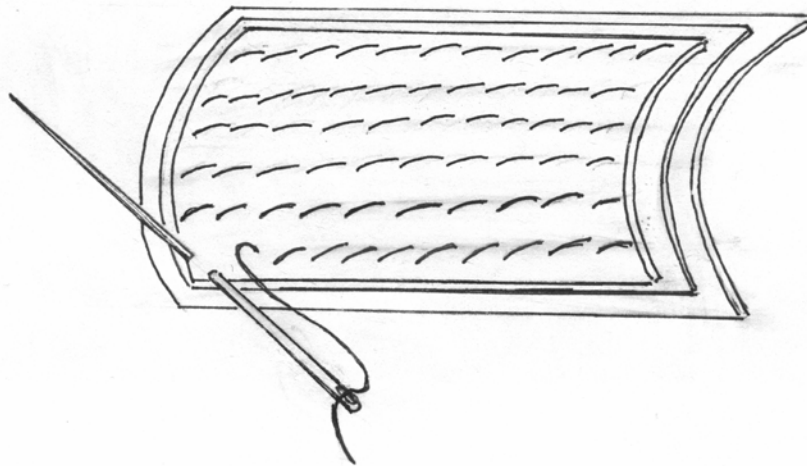
Overcast Stitch – This stitch is used to bind the cut free edges of a piece of cloth, or to bind the cut edges of two pieces of cloth together to prevent shifting or raveling, as in a buttonhole.



Ladder or Zigzag Stitch – Working from right to left, pass needle through a thread or two of body of garment. Move diagonally to the left across the cut edge of the seam allowance approx 1/8”, and take a second stitch, then move diagonally to the right back across the cut edge of the seam allowance and take another stitch. The resulting row of zigzag stitches will fasten down the seam allowance and preserve it from raveling.



Pad Stitching - Working from right to left, take a short diagonal stitch upwards through all layers of interfacing and cloth, just catching into the lowermost layer. Move over to the left about $\frac{1}{4}$ "- $\frac{1}{2}$ " and take another stitch as before. Repeat this process to the end of the area you wish to stitch down, then reverse and repeat. Alternately, you can work one row of pad stitch, then return and start a new row. Spacing between the rows is between $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{1}{2}$ " – the closer together the rows, the more firmly the finished roll will be. If you are using this stitch to shape the layers of cloth, make sure that you roll the cloth over your fingers as you are applying pad stitches. The end result is that you will have a herringbone pattern or a row of angled stitches visible on the interfacing side, inside the garment, and rows of tiny picks showing on the outside of the garment.



Buttonholes – Mark the location of the buttonholes on the outside of the coat. Using a running stitch, outline the buttonhole approximately $\frac{1}{16}$ " from the line. Slit or cut the buttonhole open, and overcast the cut edges of the buttonhole. Using a single thread of waxed 20/2 linen or similar weight of cotton, run a couple of stitches along the edge of the buttonhole to the back end, then begin to make buttonhole stitches, one alongside the other, drawing each stitch up to form a small knot or purled edge.

- To make the buttonhole stitch, form a counterclockwise loop of thread flat against the surface of the garment. Run the needle under the cut edge of the buttonhole and bring it up just beyond the row of stitching, then draw it back towards the slit. This should cause the loop to close and form a loop with a small knot along the edge of the slit.

Work the buttonhole stitch along one side of the slit. Then run the needle across the end of the buttonhole one stitch and take a couple of loops over the end, bringing the needle up at the start of the opposite side of the buttonhole, then bar tack over the stitch and bring the needle back up to where you began the bar tack. Work buttonhole stitches along the remaining edge of the buttonhole and return to your starting point, taking a couple of looping stitches across the end and finish with a bar tack, running the needle and thread up inside the buttonhole and clip it close to the stitching.

