





Hats

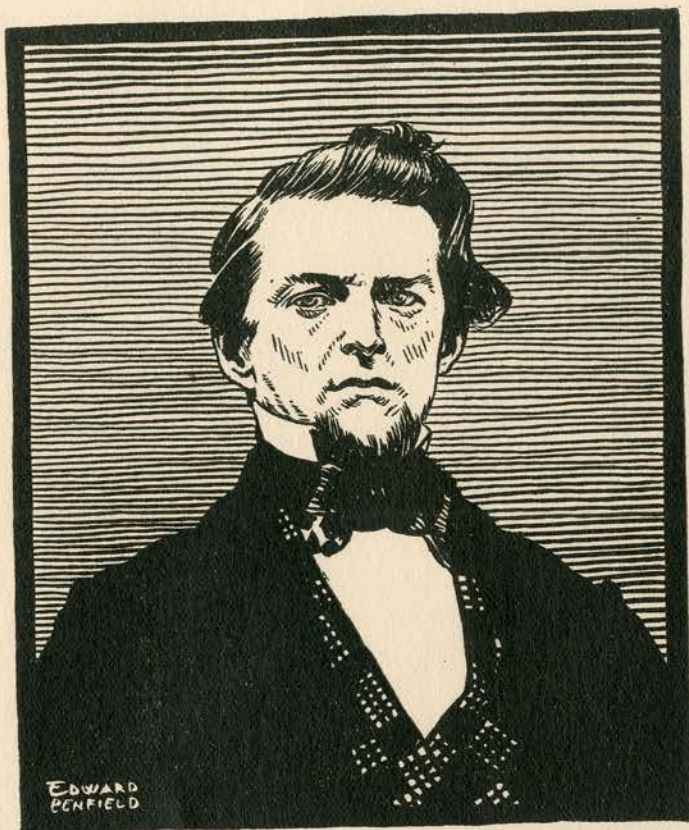
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1923

MATERIALS BUREAU  
STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE  
DANBURY CONN.







EZRA MALLORY

*A Century of Hats*  
*and*  
*The Hats of the Century*

By EDWARD MOTT WOOLLEY

*Text Illustrated by*  
EDWARD PENFIELD

A book issued in the year 1923  
in commemoration of the history  
of the MALLORY family and  
its continuous service of making  
hats for One Hundred Years.

THE MALLORY HAT COMPANY, INC.  
DANBURY, CONN.



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The Mallory Hat Company, Inc.  
Danbury, Conn.  
Reprinted November, 1927

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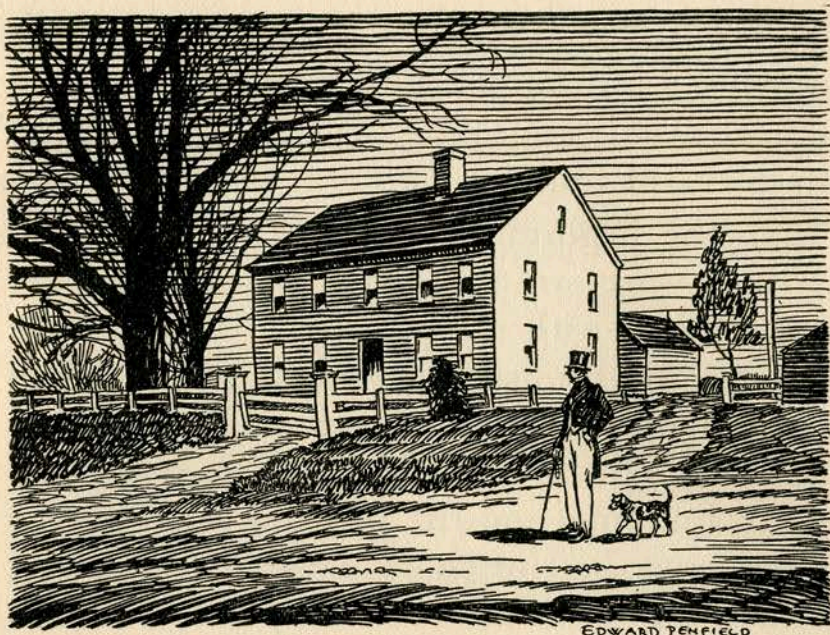
## FOREWORD

This narrative aims to contribute to the history of industry something worth preserving. More than an account of The Mallory Hat Company on its hundredth birthday, it is a story of Danbury, and of early and modern New England.

## FORWORD

The Committee on the Study of the  
History of the United States  
with a view to the establishment  
of a National Historical Society  
has the honor to announce that  
it has been organized and is now  
in the process of organizing a  
National Historical Society.





ONE day in 1823, a hundred years ago, Ezra Mallory stood in the dusty Great Plain Road a few rods from his farmhouse and selected the site for a hat-making shop. After long contemplation, for he was then thirty-eight, he had resolved to essay forth into manufacturing.

All-important to him was this adventure, though little could he foresee the future, or know that when a century had rolled into the past, his enterprise, begun so obscurely, would be a great institution—his name a power in industry. Ezra Mallory is an outstanding figure today in the history of invention and manufacturing achievement, and now from the summit

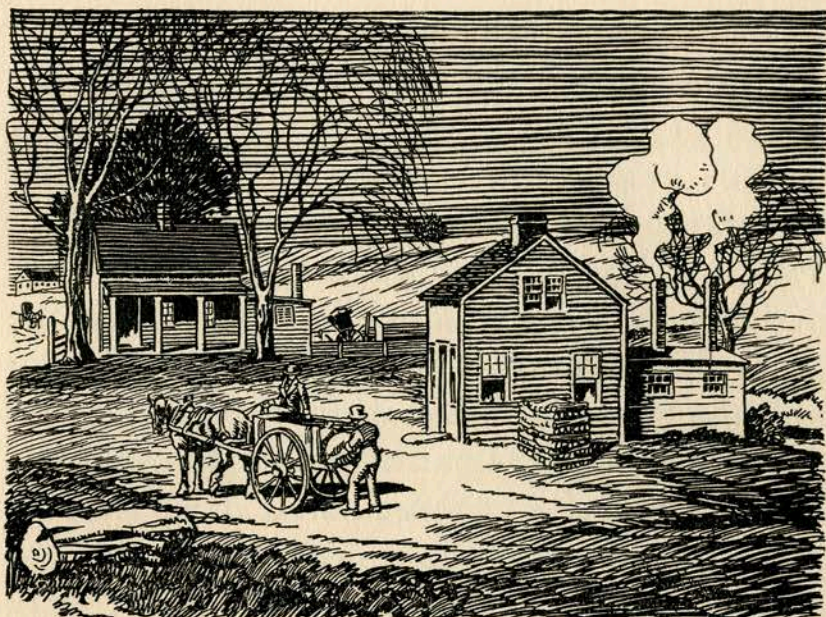


of a hundred years a sentimental glamour hangs over him; and no part of the present narrative is more keenly appealing than the story of Ezra Mallory, the founder.

In the beginning, and always, his characteristics were strongly flavored with the finer sensibilities—with a love for the true and the better. And probably his inclinations toward the refinements of life moved him to choose for his first product—though made in a poor little frame building and the shed back of it—the high beaver hats of those days; the dignified “stovepipes” with their bell-shaped crowns and heavily-rolled brims. In all this region the beaver was commonly seen on dress occasions, though mostly imported from England.

Great Plain, two miles from Danbury, Conn., is not much different today. The old Mallory homestead still stands—and children play in the yard that borders Great Plain Road. Most of the scattering houses in the neighborhood were there a century ago. The graveyard where Ezra Mallory sleeps is not over-populous. Cornfields and meadows are still undisturbed, though the ox-cart that hauled the lumber for the little hat shop is rotted and the shop itself has succumbed and disappeared. Great Plain Road is still dusty and winding and gently hilly, and it runs, as it did then, into Danbury—now





EDWARD PENFIELD-FROM OLD PRINTS

FIRST FACTORY ON GREAT PLAIN ROAD

the very center of hat-making in America. But the great Mallory hat factory at Danbury, in which are now merged the third and fourth generations of Ezra Mallory's direct descendants, has kept pace with the giant strides of the world.

By comparisons we may judge the long growth of this business. Ezra Mallory was born at Redding, Conn., in 1785, when Stephenson, later linked with locomotive fame, was four years old. Fulton, of steamboat invention, was sixteen. When Ezra Mallory opened his little hat factory in 1823, Stephenson had not yet made his traveling engine possible for actual traffic.

Ezra Mallory as a youth lived on the home



farm, and, like all the boys around him, hunted and trapped; he knew how to judge furs. In the village of Danbury a market for pelts already existed; here many trappers exchanged their beaver, muskrat and rabbit skins for food and clothing. And here back in 1780 Zadoc Benedict's small red hat shop—long afterward the site of the Danbury & Norwalk Railroad depot on Main Street, now the site of the post office—employed a journeyman hatter and two apprentices and turned out three hats a day. Indeed, the first hat made in the United States came out of Danbury. As long ago as 1808 there were fifty-odd makers of hats in the Danbury region, employing from three to five men each. Many of these "hatters" were farmers who made a crude product and worked irregularly.

So it was natural that Ezra Mallory should choose the hat-making business when finally he made up his mind to quit agriculture and cattle.

In his primitive shop at Great Plain, Mr. Mallory began with one hatter and an apprentice. Indeed, he was an apprentice himself, and learned the composite trade. There were no skilled specialists, as now. Today the fur is bought detached from the pelt and partly prepared, but in that dark industrial era, Ezra Mallory began with the raw pelts themselves. One fertile source of skins lay in the sand dunes





FUR TRADER'S STORE

of Coney Island. This famous resort owes its name to the coney rabbits which lived there.

Ezra Mallory bought many of his pelts from the Indians, and sometimes went up into Canada to buy beaver, muskrat and otter skins. He and his two workers cut the fur from the pelts with long handled shears, and with their fingers separated the fur from the hair. And then they did the forming with a device resembling a violin bow, though five or six times as big. One old bow is now a treasured relic at the Mallory plant. By snapping the catgut string upon a pile of fur on a bench, the particles separated, scattered, and gradually deposited in a smaller and finer sheet, free from other



substances. Each sheet represented one hat only. With further manipulation, the fibres hooked themselves together into what ultimately became the fur fabric of the hat.

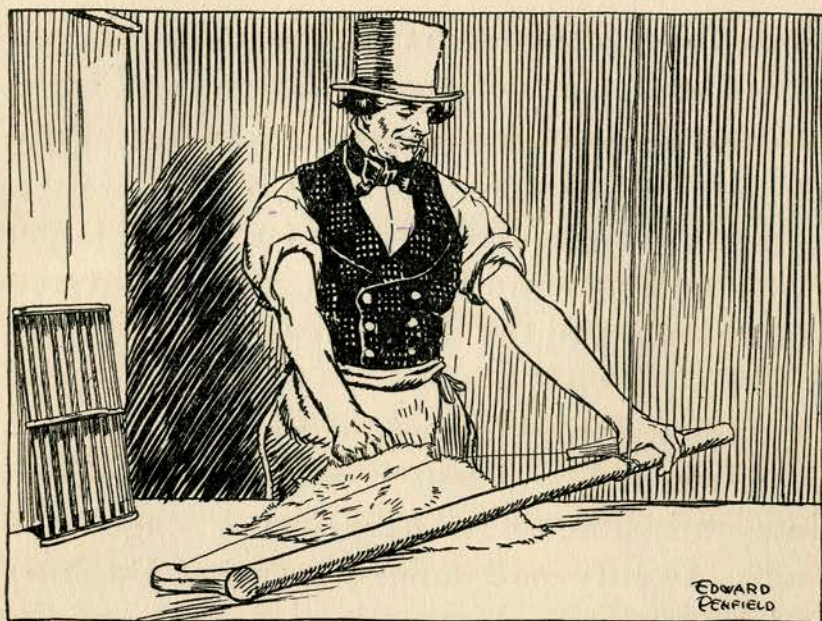
Ezra Mallory himself used such a bow, and with his own hands dipped the bowed fur which he had fashioned into a large cone shaped form, into boiling water, and by alternately rolling and dipping, succeeded in shrinking and felting the fur into a cone shaped body about quarter the original size, which ultimately, under his skilled and laborious manipulation, was fashioned into a hat.

In a safe at the Mallory plant is carefully preserved the original ledger of Ezra Mallory, in the bold handwriting of the founder himself. Some of the entries are quaintly humorous, and give graphic pictures of life a hundred years ago. Thus in 1823 Jedediah Jones was credited, "By your old hat, \$1." Apparently Jedediah bought a new hat and turned in his old one. Ezra Mallory sold hats at retail or wholesale, or in any possible way.

In another item a Danbury store was credited with a bill of groceries "In part exchange for a hat." A shoemaker received similar credit.

In 1823 the Astors received various credits for packets of furs. At that time beaver sold at \$4.75 a pound, though today it brings around





THE "BOW" TREATMENT OF FUR

\$45. Ezra Mallory bought twelve sealskins at \$2 apiece which today would bring \$100 each. In Danbury a hundred years ago beaver "plug" hats sold for \$8; plain hats for \$1.50 and up.

In 1825 James Woodward, an apprentice, was credited with services for two years and three months at \$50 a year—\$112.50. M. Benedict, another apprentice, evidently was boarded out at Mr. Mallory's expense, for the latter credited the landlady with \$12 for a month's "keep." Another woman was credited with "washing and mending, May 1 to Dec. 6, \$10." During this epoch, and indeed for twenty-five years, workmen were paid mostly in orders on Danbury stores, while Mr. Mallory



himself accepted merchandise whenever necessary in settlement of accounts.

Very early in the career of the Great Plain hat shop came an event of supreme importance. Ezra Mallory secured a contract from a larger hat manufacturer in Danbury. Other contracts came along, and the shop force grew to five or six men.

At first Mr. Mallory sold his hats mostly in Danbury and adjacent towns, for travel was slow and difficult. There was a stagecoach route—twenty-odd miles—between Danbury and Norwalk, on Long Island Sound, and the present generation of Mallorys treasure a printed notice once carried in the pocket of their ancestor. The post-coach left Danbury at seven in the morning, and the company, having bought a new vehicle, announced: "We flatter ourselves on the ability to give general satisfaction to all who may be disposed to favour us with their custom."

Mr. Mallory evidently was not so disposed to any great extent, for the ancient documentary evidence reveals partiality for his own horse. Whenever he accumulated a few dozen hats he packed them on the back of his equine, in front of the saddle and behind it, and rode off to Norwalk, from which point sailing vessels departed "with reasonable certainty" for New York.





EZRA MALLORY TAKING THE OUTPUT OF HIS FIRST FACTORY  
TO SOUTH NORWALK ON HORSEBACK

Thus on one such occasion Mr. Mallory, his steed white with foam, arrived at "Uncle Kiah's" tavern in time for supper, where his companions were a dozen other prospective voyagers. After refreshing himself, he went aboard and immediately sought his berth. In its own way, life was strenuous even then, and rest was sweet. The sloop had sleeping accommodations for ten persons.

Some time in the night, when the tide suited, the schooner got out into the Sound and turned her nose toward New York. Mr. Mallory had hoped to pass through Hell Gate the next evening, with his precious batch of beaver



hats for the aristocrats of New York, but a blow interfered and the vessel put into a cove. It was four days before she reached the Metropolis. However, the price of table d'hôte meals was only twenty-five cents—even when they included beefsteak fried with onions. And the price of the passage to New York was a lowly fifty cents.

Sometimes during bad weather on the Sound Ezra Mallory joined other hat manufacturers in chartering a special stage for New York, and they loaded it high with boxes of hats and rattled merrily down the Boston Post Road. There was a daily stage between Boston and New York, but it was always crowded.

Often a week or more elapsed before Mr. Mallory got back to Great Plain from one of these selling trips. Then somewhere about 1825 the first steamboat went into service between Norwalk and New York, with the fare at one dollar. Three years later Cornelius Vanderbilt put on an opposition boat, and a rate-war brought the fare down to a shilling. Crowds always flocked to the wharf to watch the steamboat leave, and in increased numbers returned at night to see the strange apparition come in. It was not uncommon for a thousand persons—on foot or in carriages—to wait in great excitement for the arrival.





SOMETIMES EZRA MALLORY JOINED OTHER HAT MANUFACTURERS IN  
CHARTERING A SPECIAL STAGE FOR NEW YORK

Ezra Mallory made other styles of hats, too, after awhile. For a time he sold his product personally in various parts of Connecticut, going forth on horseback for the selling fray. Later he sent out salesmen. His hats were sold usually on credit, and the process of collecting was slow and dubious because money was scarce. Buyers preferred to settle by trading. The old Mallory ledger shows how all sorts of curious stuff were wished on Ezra Mallory. Indeed, the collecting of actual money was considered at that time to be a calling of adventure and daring. Every small boy hoped some day to be a roaming collector for a hat factory, and to ride about New



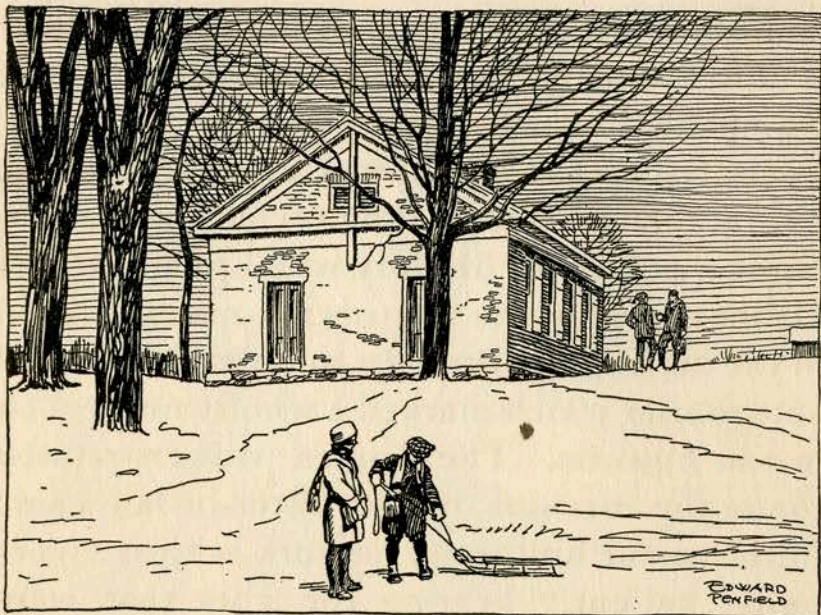
England on a spirited horse, like a knight.

On one particular occasion a Mallory collector was gone many weeks, and on his return from the eventful journey, Mr. Mallory gave him a famous dinner, inviting a dozen men especially skilled in hat-making. The recital of this hero's experiences was given rather flamboyantly to a breathless audience, and the money collected on the journey was sorted in piles on the dinner table. This was a custom—the cash of that era being practically all silver.

Ezra Mallory's son, Ezra A., left school at sixteen and went to work in the little hat shop at Great Plain. Long before this he had really mastered the hatter's trade. As far back as he could remember, the lore of the little fur animals had been part of his life, and he had worked nights, mornings and Saturdays in the shop. Seven years later, in 1845, Ezra Mallory, Senior finished his work and departed this life, while the hat shop was still in that first building at Great Plain. The continuance of the business fell to Ezra A. Mallory, and the enterprise took on bigger aspects though the plant itself was not enlarged.

Even previous to this, reports had been current that a railroad was to come that way, and one of Ezra A. Mallory's neighbors had voiced loud objection on the ground that his pigs





THE LITTLE SCHOOLHOUSE ON THE GREAT PLAIN ROAD

would be in danger. Then one day in the later forties the actual location of the line was made; and not far from that date Mr. Mallory decided to abandon the great Plain shop for the larger town. But the railroad did not go into operation until 1852, and it was two years later before the Mallory plant was moved to the "Montgomery" shop on West Street in Danbury, leaving the little old shop to its memories and the cornfields around it. Yet even after this, Ezra A. Mallory lived at Great Plain; and the house still stands, on the Great Plain Road near the older Mallory homestead. So does the antiquated little schoolhouse where Ezra A. Mallory's elder son, Charles A., went to school even after the



family moved to Danbury. Charles A. Mallory is now President and General Manager of the Company.

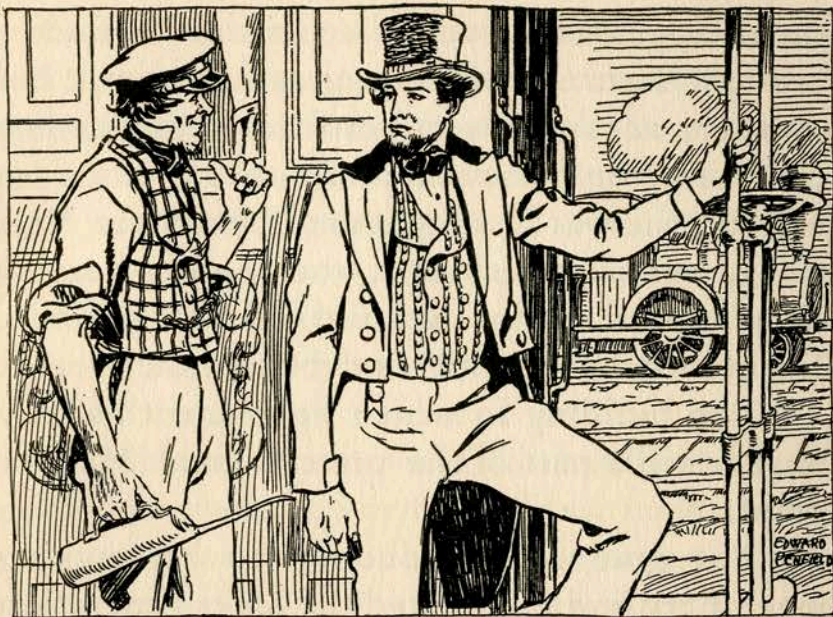
In 1861 the plant was moved from the "Montgomery" shop to the present location.

It was Ezra A. Mallory who brought to the Danbury region the first sewing machine used in the hatting industry. In so doing he aroused antagonism which marked a wholly new epoch in this business. The women workers refused to use the machine, but his sister-in-law came to the rescue and went to work with it vigorously, patiently bearing the jibes that were heaped on her. She was the wife of Samuel Mallory, who for a short time was interested in the hat factory with his brother, Ezra A., but who went to the west and entered the mining business.

The modern era had now finally begun, and the sewing machine was followed by mixing, blowing and forming machines, and later by stretching, blocking and pouncing machines—all of which brought stormy but short-lived protests. Meanwhile the tall-hat fashion was sweeping New England.

Ezra A. Mallory was one of the first to travel on the new railroad, and on his frequent trips always gave himself the distinction of wearing the most aristocratic Mallory hat he could make.





EZRA MALLORY WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO TRAVEL  
ON THE NEW RAILROAD

Even in those days the Mallory hat, in Danbury and outside—in New York, to be sure—bore a certain distinction which was never lacking.

In 1856 E. A. Mallory & Company had a capital of \$20,000. The firm manufactured 8,640 dozen hats that year, employed 95 workers, and made sales of \$155,000.

Exact dates are of small consequence, but somewhere in this era the Mallory Company began the manufacture of soft hats—which had been introduced in America by Baron Kossuth, the Hungarian statesman and nobleman. The demand for this headgear became very great.

The Civil War—and about the same time



the disappearance of a collector and his funds—brought Ezra A. Mallory great disaster. His southern accounts were confiscated and he lost everything he possessed, and more. For a time early in the war he sought employment in New York, but soon returned, and though nearing sixty started again to build up the business. Eventually he paid all his debts in full.

The building in which he made this new start is still a part of the present great Mallory plant.

The gradual introduction of hat-making machinery had eliminated the older generation of hatters, and when Ezra A. Mallory decided to make napped hats for women a new dilemma confronted him. These hats at that time could be made only by hand. Mr. Mallory conducted a country-wide canvas for men who could "bow a bat," offering a bonus of \$10 apiece.

Thus it happened that many picturesque old-timers were rounded up. Some of them, supposing their lifework over, had retired from labor altogether, and others were found in various pursuits elsewhere. When Mr. Mallory brought them back the tables were turned on him. They were the heroes, and their eyes were full of scorn for the machines that had displaced them.

These old hatters worked again at their



trade, at large wages. Secure in their fancied belief that their restoration was permanent, they refused with contumely to teach their art to apprentices. Meanwhile the demand for these hats became clamorous, and soon inventive genius brought new automatic machines; and suddenly the old-fashioned hatters found themselves minus their fine old-fashioned jobs.

The first machines used by the Mallory factory in making naps are still held as curiosities in the plant. They turned out from thirty to forty dozen naps a day, while under the old hand method a fast workman produced only a dozen and a half.

Charles A. Mallory, the elder son, became actively associated with his father in the management of the business in 1872, and the firm name was changed to E. A. Mallory & Son. From this time the growth was rapid. New York was now only a few hours away, and the principal cities of New England were within easy distance. Mallory hats were being made in all the various styles that the fashions of the day demanded.

Inventive genius, too, was at work and machinery continued to replace hand labor in many operations of hat-making. Under the guidance and inspiration of Charles A. Mallory, the place was no longer a shop; it was a factory



in every sense. To his knowledge of hat-making was joined marked ability for handling men and maintaining a high standard of production, with an ever-existing respect for his fairness in all questions that arose from time to time.

In 1886 the enterprise had grown to such proportions that the division of responsibilities became necessary, along with more highly-developed methods of dealing with policy and routine. The reputation of the business had then extended in all directions, and the firm's operations in the large cities of the west were as well founded as in New York and in New England. Traveling representatives were selling Mallory Hats.

It was then that the younger son, William E. Mallory, was admitted to membership in the firm and the name became E. A. Mallory & Sons. Charles A. Mallory continued actively in directing the operations of the factory, while William E. Mallory became the point of contact in the maintenance of relations between customers and the Company. It was his function to hold the Company to its original principle of fair dealing and happy associations under all conditions—to project continually the spirit of fine ideals which had distinguished the first Ezra Mallory. William E. Mallory continues to serve in this capacity today, along with his duties as





EDWARD PENFIELD—FROM AN OLD PRINT

DANBURY IN 1836—FROM AN OLD PRINT

Treasurer, and the fact that the business has many times doubled and redoubled shows how well he has done his part.

Ezra A. Mallory continued to supervise the business in general until his retirement in 1897.

In 1887 Frederick T. Joy had come into the Mallory establishment in a minor capacity, from which he was promoted from time to time to positions of greater responsibility. In the meantime he took every opportunity to familiarize himself with the practical end of hat-making, going into each department and working there. He soon displayed his capacity, and in 1904, when the partnership was incorporated as The Mallory Hat Company, he became a



stockholder and director. Now he is one of the Vice-Presidents, and a strong figure in the administration of the business.

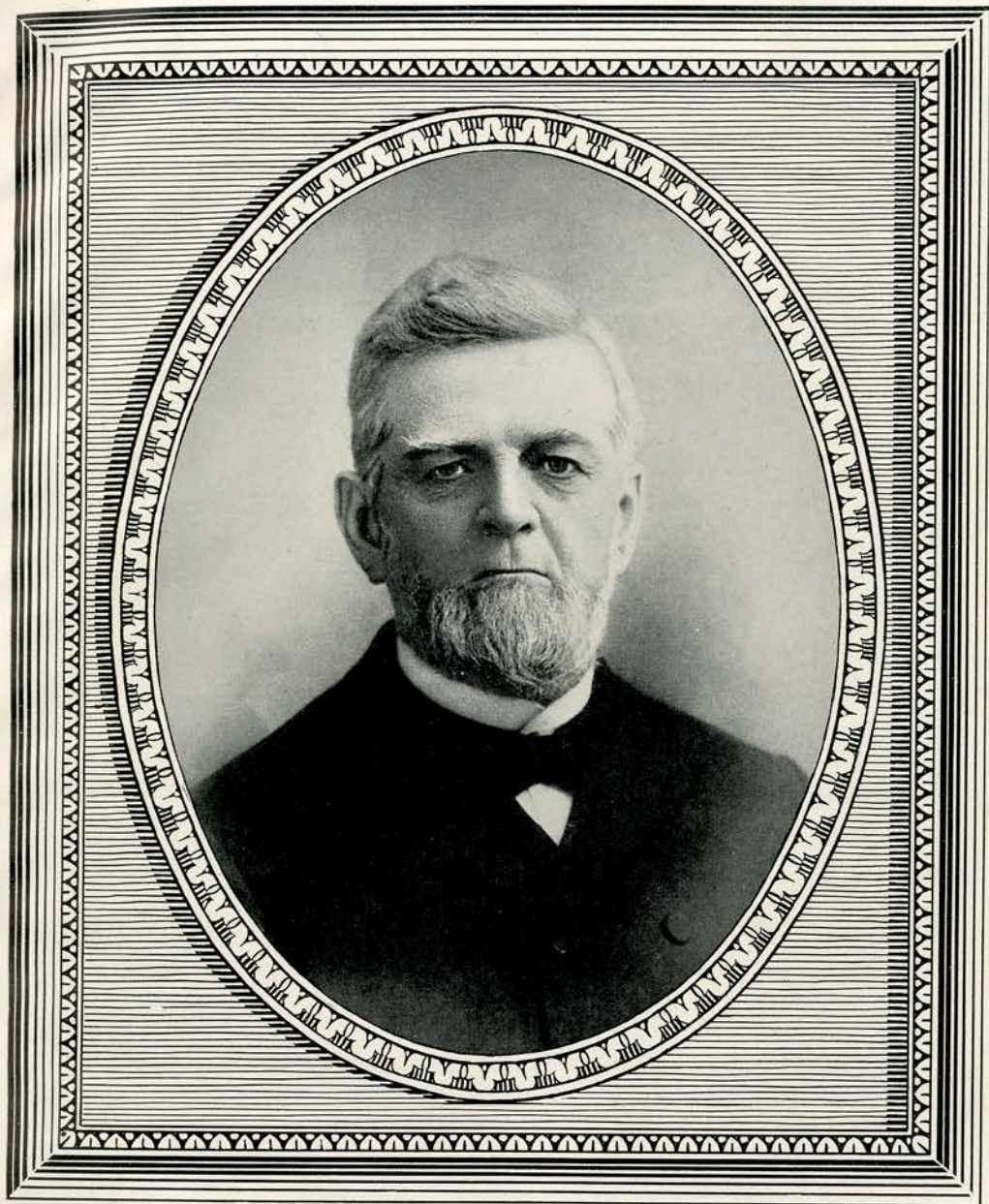
In 1895 Harry B. Mallory, great-grandson of Ezra and son of Charles A., after returning from an engineering college, began his apprenticeship of four years at the Mallory plant. In 1900 he was admitted to partnership. His mechanical ability and his untiring and persistent effort have been large factors in the advanced and economical methods employed in the manufacture of the Mallory product, and since 1904 has been one of the directors and Vice-Presidents.

Mr. Thomas J. Bowen, a graduate of Yale Scientific School and of Yale Law School, entered the business in 1911 to become Credit Manager and Secretary of the Company. He has made himself a valuable member of the firm in carrying out the policies laid down by the founders.

Ezra A. Mallory went on his Long Journey in 1902, but his contribution to the achievements of industry live on.

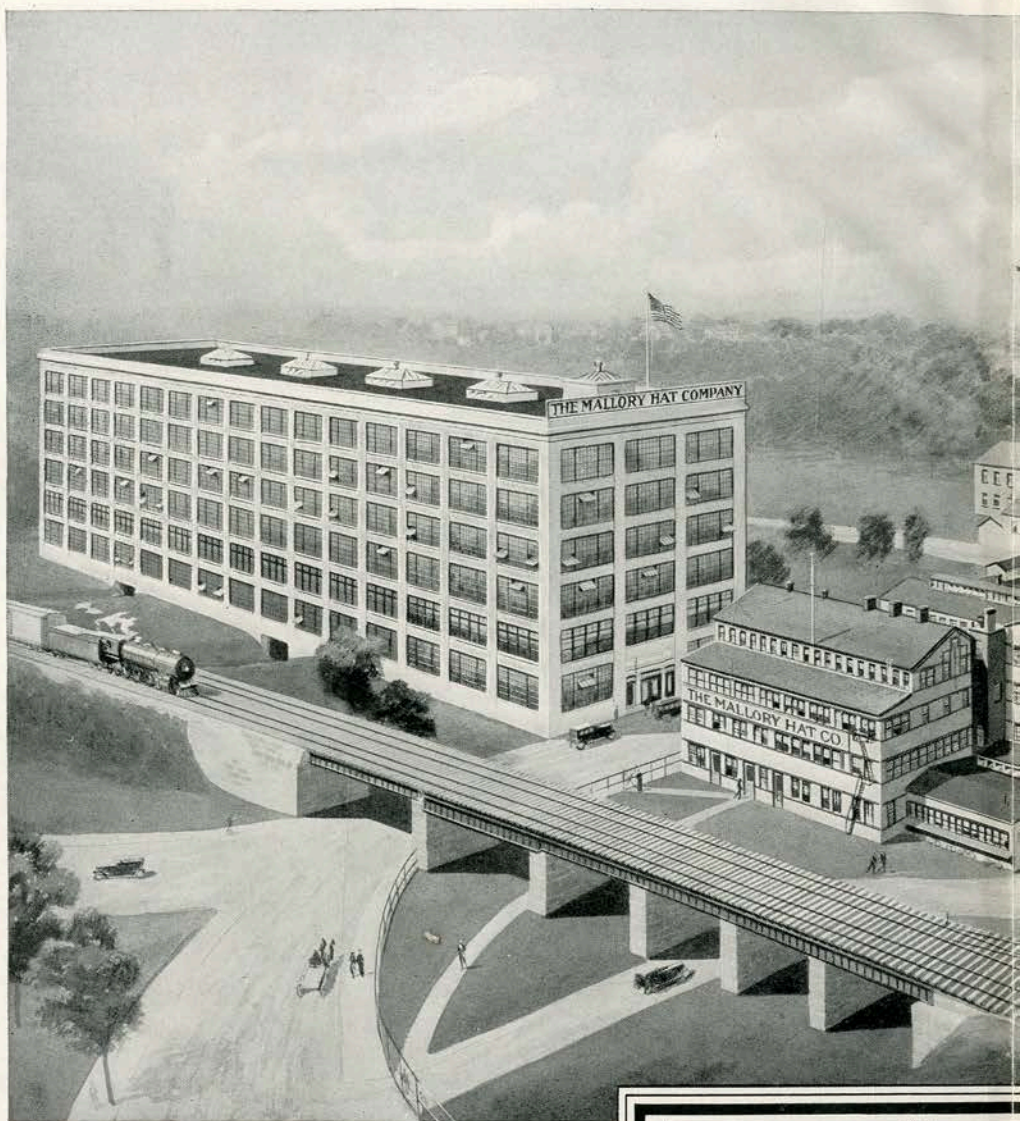
*End of Part One*





*E. A. Mallory*

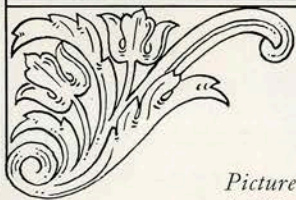
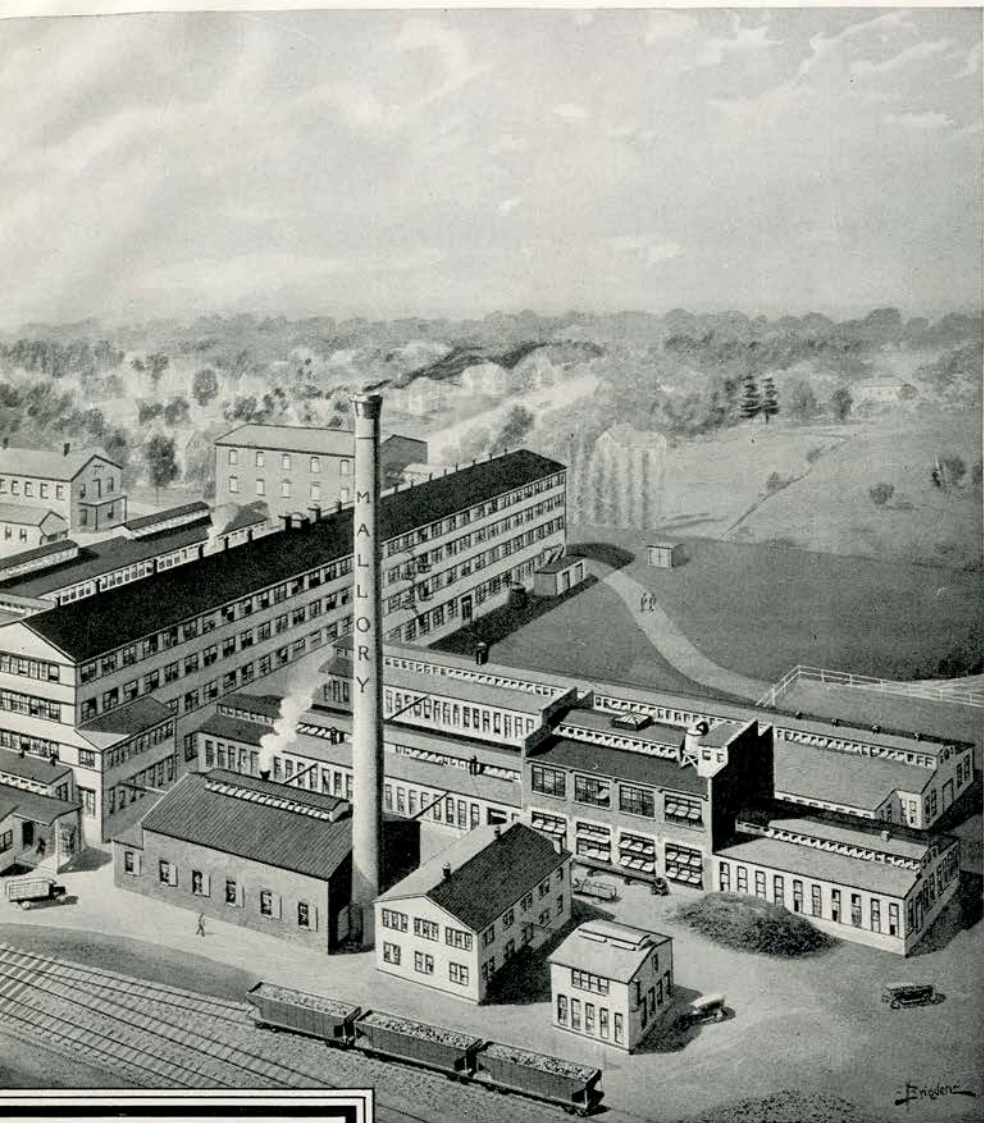




*Picture at right, from an old photograph, shows the factory as it was in 1872. This three-story building is shown in the center of the large picture above.*

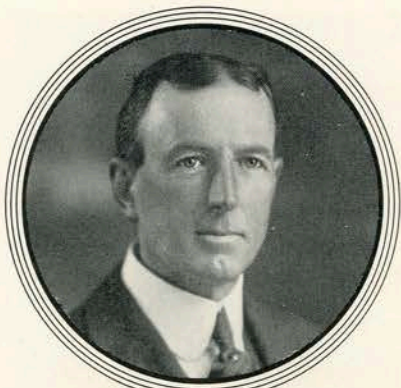






*Picture above shows group of  
buildings, with new addition,  
comprising the plant of THE  
MALLORY HAT COMPANY, INC.,  
at Danbury, Conn.*





F.T. JOY  
*Vice President*



WILLIAM E. MALLORY  
*Treasurer*



C.A. MALLORY  
*President*



T. J. BOWEN  
*Secretary*



H. B. MALLORY  
*Vice President*



## PART TWO

**I**F the original Ezra Mallory could come back out of that shadowy but colorful past into which we have just adventured, he might still find in Danbury landmarks that have stood while he slept in the dreamy old graveyard. But his eager glances would seek almost in vain for familiar things in those far-reaching buildings that have grown out of his experiments in hat-making, a hundred years ago.

Well could Ezra Mallory's eyes glow with astonishment. Yet perhaps he might prefer to go back to that past he knew so well. Coming out of a sleep of seventy-eight years, who could wonder if he stood aghast at the task of adjusting his life to such a metamorphosis?

Ezra Mallory would see today buildings teeming with Mallory workers—hundreds of them, men and women. Far down long aisles, fading into dimness, his unaccustomed eyes would pass from row to row of workmen at benches. Up flights of stairs, and beyond into other buildings, always more workers, making hats.

He would look inquiringly at huge revolving devices telling no familiar story of old-time



hat-making. In another room, groups of hissing steam jets would be quite beyond his experience. Elsewhere he would come upon strange machines on which were hats in formative shapes; and still further on, great vats for dyeing. Again, his curious gaze would meet double and triple files of women working on sewing machines the like of which he never dreamed in those ancient days. Among all the army of workers, not a face would he know. Ezra Mallory indeed could scarcely believe that he himself had set in motion the impulses now driving this great hat plant of 1923.

**D**ANBURY today, though having a population of only 25,000, is one of those highly concentrated communities that stand for definite, intensive things. Just as Pittsburg means steel to most people and Akron means rubber, so Danbury stands synonymous with hats.

Historical records give ground for the belief that among the original eight families who founded Danbury in 1684 was one hatter at least. The eight families trudged the weary trails from South Norwalk. About a hundred years later, one Danbury hat factory employed thirty hands and made seven hundred and fifty dozen hats a year; and this concern was considered very big and powerful. Its hats were



heavy and unfinished, and brought from six to ten dollars apiece at wholesale, to be finished later in South Norwalk or New York. In 1801, Danbury hat manufacturers produced more than twenty thousand hats, mostly for exportation.

Today Danbury perhaps makes more finished hats of all kinds than any other city in the country, and makes a considerable percentage of hat accessories and machinery used in its great factories.

Of the numerous hat factories in Danbury today, only six belong to the group of thirty-three that were there in 1895. This exemplifies the difficulties of the hat-making industry. For one thing, it is a business of such intricate technical requirements that failure follows any relaxation of scientific skill and discipline. And when a hat business can survive and continue to grow for a hundred years, it is evident that unusual influences have been back of it.

A hundred years ago the little Mallory plant made somewhere around twelve hats a week. For half a century the curve of its growth was hesitating and at times erratic; but always it struggled upward, as the composite experience of successive Mallory generations was handed down and woven into the substance of its management.

During the second half of the century, how-



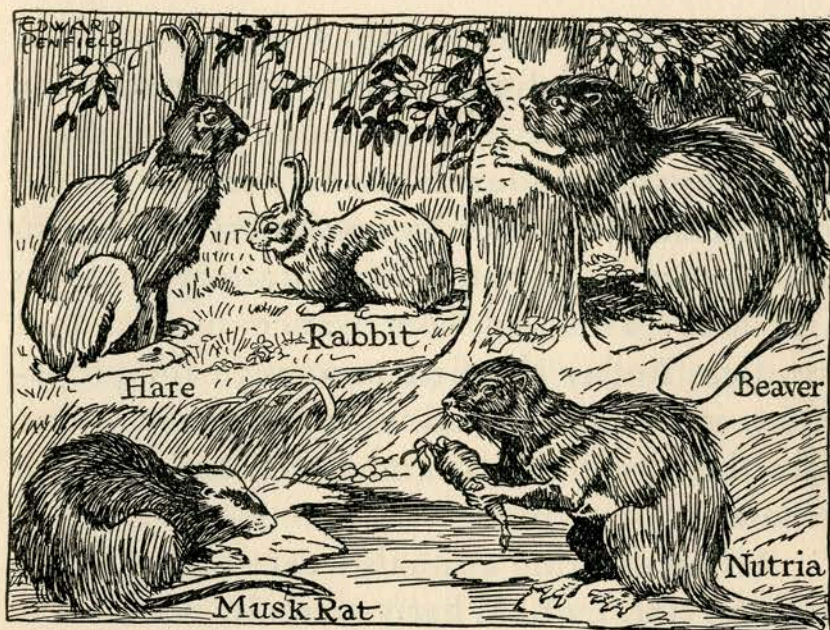
ever, the curve has risen sharply; and while so many hat manufacturers have succumbed to obstacles, The Mallory Hat Company now rounds out its hundred years by building great new extensions to its factory, and has the second largest Quality hat business in the United States.

Within the present generation, the growth has been extraordinary. For example, between 1888 and 1905 the output multiplied fifty-six per cent, while between 1905 and 1923 the increase has been two hundred and sixty per cent.

Before looking in on the scenes Ezra Mallory would behold today at Danbury, let us reflect that the great majority of men's hats seen in a typical crowd are made of fur. Figuratively speaking, your own hat may have been roaming the wilds of Australia or Russia a year ago. By what vast and complicated system did the fur come out of Australia or Russia and shape itself into a hat, here in America? Surely it was no accidental occurrence.

No; a hat bought so easily stands for organization of the most exacting kind, beginning with the men who hunt and trap, and ending only when the hat goes out of the retailer's store. This intricate organization is scattered over the earth. Many thousands of men have contributed their share toward the hats sold today over the counter.





DIFFERENT ANIMALS WHOSE FUR IS USED IN MAKING HATS

UNTIL you see the inside of a great hat factory you have no conception of the countless handlings and multiplicity of operations in hat-making; nor have you any concept of the art's progress since Ezra Mallory with his hand slowly shaped the old-style hats.

Neither can you grasp the composite brain work that has gone into hat-making machinery. The Mallory Hat Company, with its century of contribution, perhaps typifies more than any other concern the history of hat-making.

The animals contributing chiefly to Mallory hats are the beaver, nutria, muskrat, coney, and numerous varieties of the hair. The skins come mostly from abroad—Russia, Australia, South



America, Scotland, and many other countries. These imported furs, brought to America by pelt dealers, come in great bales holding from two thousand to four thousand cured skins.

The cutting of fur by machinery was begun at Danbury shortly after Ezra Mallory made his first hat. This old contrivance used a foot treadle. Today the first process in fur preparation is to shake the skins clean in huge drums. After being slit and trimmed, they are ready for dehairing.

All fur-bearing animals wear coats that are both fur and hair. What you really see on the living creatures is the hair, which overtops and hides the soft and dense crop of fur. Before the latter can be used for hat-making, the hair must be taken out.

In the eighteenth century, Danbury made hats of fur from which the hair had not been wholly removed; and the women of the village, in their homes, were employed to pull out the hairs with tweezers.

Modern mechanical processes remove both hair and fur from the skin, and usually each animal gives only an ounce or two of the fur itself. It may be imagined that the hunting and trapping of hat-fur animals is a calling in itself. Yet our sympathy for these furry creatures is assuaged when we know that if markets did not



exist for pelts the little animals might over-run whole countries and cause untold damage to crops, trees, and things in general.

The casual observer would never guess that every fiber of these furs is set with many infinitesimal barbs or hooks. Before the fur goes to the hat factory these hooks are further developed by chemical treatment, called carroting, which alone makes possible the later felting, or making of the hat fabric. Carroting was discovered accidentally when a little acid got into a batch of fur.

The fur finally goes to the hat factory in paper bags of five pounds each.

Ezra Mallory in 1823 mixed his furs by hand. Quite different is the rather spectacular mixing at the Mallory plant today, for in a big room are conical machines within which cyclonic winds play an exciting game with great quantities of fur. The hatters graphically dub this stormy device the "Devil."

Cylindrical blowers then take the mixed fur and eliminate all foreign substances. The fur, beautifully soft and fine, is now ready for the first process of actual hat-making. In an adjoining room, operators sitting before delicate scales separate to a fraction of an ounce the quantity of fur for each hat.

Next the fluffy stuff is taken to the forming



room. Here too, is melodrama, upon which those old hat makers would look with awe. Set on a platform along the room are the hat-forming machines, enclosed in wood and glass cabinets several feet high, having hinged doors. Each cabinet or box holds a removable copper cone, hollow and perforated with minute holes.

The cone, having been removed at the end of the preceding operation, is moistened and replaced in the machine. It begins to turn when the door of the cabinet is shut, and underneath a rapidly-revolving fan creates a vacuum inside.

On a high stool back of each cabinet a girl now feeds into it the fur for one hat at a time, and the flurry of fibers falls on the cone softly and evenly.

Thus is made a fabric without spinning or weaving. The barbs seize each other with a grip that never lets go, once the process is complete, though at first the felt is very fragile.

When the workman stops the machine and opens the door, the cone wears the embryo hat—merely a limp and loosely-knitted “dunce cap” two-and-a-half feet high. We are talking now chiefly of soft hats, and derbies. However, the earlier processes apply generally to all fur hats.

The workman now takes out the cone. Working on a bench across a narrow aisle, he



slips off the new fabric, which immediately begins its adventuresome trip through the plant.

These mechanisms indeed bring memories of long inventive struggle, one epoch of which had its climax in 1845 when a man named Wells secured a patent for a hat-forming machine. Many regarded it as grotesque and impossible, for it eliminated altogether the cat-gut bow, for decades considered the last word in hat-making. Ezra Mallory as a small boy had stood in the doorways of the little Danbury hat shops and watched with deep fascination the curious performances of the bow.

Quite a time elapsed before the strange new hat-forming machine was firmly established among the great inventions of industry. Of course numerous improvements followed. In 1857, according to an old account, G. E. Cowerthwaite purchased an interest in one such machine and was then sued by H. A. Burr for infringement. The tale has it that when Cowerthwaite won he sold his machine to Burr for \$100,000.

But go back to the freshly-made fur fabrics from the modern forming machines in the Mallory plant. After a process or two they reach a room where long rows of men wearing leather aprons stand at machines. Their task is to dip the queer-looking dunce caps, four at a time,



repeatedly into tanks of boiling water, rolling and kneading them, wrapped in cloths, between immersions. This heavily shrinks the still primitive hats, and when they have been through this process, they begin to look as if some day they might bear resemblance to headgear.

Many operations ensue, in which hand and brain still play a big part despite the near-human machines. Inferior hats can be jammed through automatic machinery to a large extent, but the fine art of the hat maker and real distinction in fashion are attained only through individual skill and seemingly endless work with human fingers.

Machines and fingers, indeed, work together. There are rolling machines, for instance, and a hat "barber shop," where the felt fabric gets a shave. Some one introduced this clever contrivance in 1878. Thus the brains of many men were constantly groping. Nearly all of these marvelous machines at the Mallory plant are evolutions that began in the days when journeymen hatters performed the processes wholly by hand. Numerous inventions came out of the brains of the old-time proprietors who worked, as Ezra Mallory did, at the bench in their own shops.

Following the shave and other processes come treatments with various solutions, and



pouncing machines work with sandpaper. There are blocking and ironing machines, and complexities of hat-making up and down the long reaches of Mallory buildings, from the sixth story to the ground.

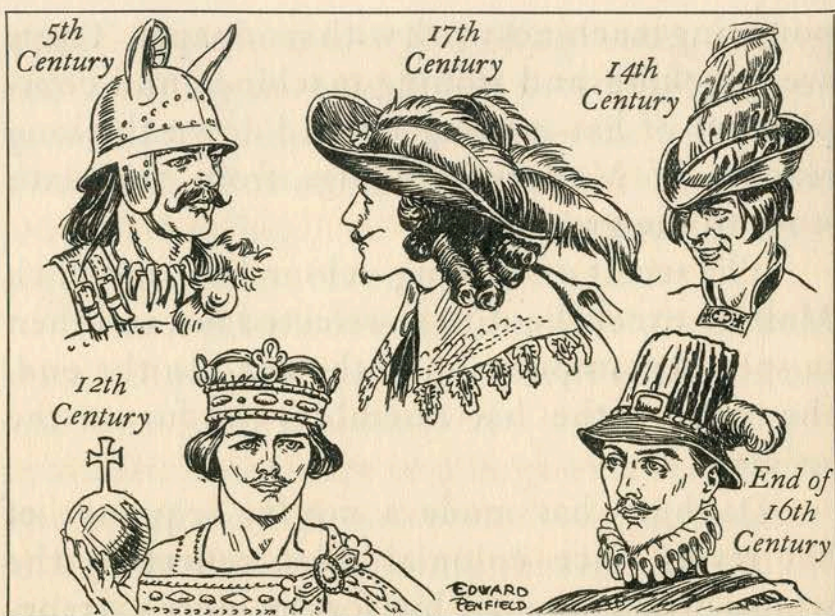
The secret of making velour hats, in which Mallory excels, lies first in selected fur, and then in special manipulation of the felt. In the end, the nap of the hat resembles the fur on the animal.

Danbury has made a motley sequence of hat styles since colonial days, reflecting the whims of passing eras; but for the more extraordinary flights of fashions we must go back into earlier history.

Hats were worn in bible days, chiefly by men, and later became exceedingly ornate—far more magnificent than any hats worn by women today. They were of queer shapes and sizes and colors, and were decorated with plumes, silks, gold and silver ornaments, and insignia of endless kinds. The jeweled hats of royalty were famed, and often so costly that when not in use they were kept in heavy iron boxes in a special hat room of the palace. Some of the royalty of France had functionaries known as the Keeper of the King's Hats.

There were wonderful horned hats, reminding one of the headpiece of a bull, and gloriously





HATS WORN IN BYGONE DAYS

draped; there were hats built after the fashion of a corkscrew wound with garish embellishments; heavily-feathered hats designed to be carried in the hand in courtly fashion; head-gear like the modern silk hat but twice as high, and sometimes shaped like a church spire cut off near the top.

Gay indeed were those medieval people, scarcely content two days at a time with their hat furs, wools or velvets; or with the colors or fashions. Hats played tag with their vanities.

Hats of beaver fur were worn even in the twelfth century. Some six hundred years later Sir Walter Scott observed: "I have always been known for the jaunty way in which I wear my



castor," meaning beaver hat. The modern silk hat, though not made of beaver, is a relative of that famous old style.

The origin of present hat fashions can be traced here and there to individual conceits and inventions of sovereigns or perhaps the nobility. One tradition has it that the forerunner of the derby first appeared on the head of a fashionable young English bachelor. He had ordered his hatter to make him a top-piece that would draw the arch eyes of more girls than any hat known, and yet be severely plain and outstanding among "the silly ribbon-and-rosette-bedecked head trash of lady hunters."

The hat styles of past ages have been indicative of caste; the peasant would not have dared to wear the headgear of the gentry. Here in America the most lowly man wears the everyday hat of the millionaire, so far as general shape is concerned. The people as a whole follow pretty much one vogue, yet in many sections of the country variations are more or less permanently in fashion. The hat of the western ranchman does not fit in on Broadway; nor that of the southern planter. Mallory hats are not limited to the current eccentricities of style, but are designed to meet the needs of all men. The clever young woman who checks headgear in the big hotel instinctively associates the styles



of hats with types of men. In their hats she reads perhaps dignity, frivolity, conceit, or vanity. She can often divine their very pursuits.

The Mallory organization, with its corps of skilled designers, has placed its hats in a class by themselves.

The Mallory product, embracing fine hats only, is subjected to the most minute inspection at every stage of manufacture, and all precautions are taken to insure the best for Mallory hats.

The Company's raw products are all of the highest grade. The best markets of the world are searched for fur and the most careful selections made. The shellac for stiffening comes from India; the skins for sweatbands from France; the silks for hatbands and linings from Japan and Italy. Dyestuffs are partly German and partly the high-quality dyes now made in America. The Company forever stresses its reputation for keeping up Quality. Its aim since the days of Ezra Mallory has been to satisfy the most critical hat buyers and dealers, and give everybody a square deal.

Mallory growth over a period of a hundred years is attributed to undeviating ideals of manufacture and to a code of ethics that has marked the Company since it was founded. In contact with the trade and with competitors the prin-



ciple of fairness has always been one of its fundamentals.

The large additions to the Mallory plant, completed in 1923, are designed to maintain and improve the Quality rather than the quantity of output. The actual increase in production is about thirty per cent, though the increased floor space is the equivalent of two-thirds of a city block. These additions also house the Mallory straw hat department, a new and important branch of the business.

Three years ago the Company built a great three-story concrete building to supplement its other large factory facilities and to provide new quarters for the general offices. This building was scarcely completed before the need became apparent for still more room. So in 1922 work was begun on the three additional stories covering the whole building, and on a sixty-foot extension of six stories—all of concrete.

In connection with these building activities was the installation of an entirely new system of handling fur in the blowing room, and other processing in the forming and sizing departments, located in the older sections of the plant. The Company has always had a definite policy of discarding machinery and methods in order to take on the newer and better.

This narrative does not purport to be com-



plete; it aims merely to characterize in some degree The Mallory Hat Company on its hundredth birthday, and to contribute something worth preserving to the history of industry. More than an account of the Mallory Company, it is a story of Danbury and of early and modern New England.



