

# Dressing Convention Souvenirs

## New Clothes for Louise

by Susan Sirkis



Today, convention souvenir dolls are presented in adequate clothing to immediately appear on the collector's shelf. However, sewing for dolls is one of the fast growing aspects of the doll hobby and doll dressmakers collect souvenirs for the pleasure of re-dressing them in varying styles. As long ago as 1984, souvenir dolls were being used as mannequins. That year, Joyce Kintner won a blue ribbon for her costuming of the "Rose O'Neill" souvenir. Rose's original outfit was a caftan, made of donated fabric in a rose color. It was designed by Susan Sirkis at the request of the convention coordinator. The challenge was to have it extremely easy to make and with no cost attached. Joyce's outfit was certainly a step up for Rose!

From time to time patterns designed specifically for individual souvenir dolls have been published. In the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, DOLL NEWS has offered a series of patterns for a variety of souvenir dolls available at a nominal fee from the UFDC Central Office. These patterns were designed to be printed and mailed but could easily be emailed today. Unfortunately, they seem to have

Louise, as she looked when she was presented at the United Federation of Doll Clubs Annual Convention in Anaheim, California, in 1997. Louise was named for Patricia Gosh's mother and sculpted by Marilyn Stauber.

disappeared from the UFDC website. Hopefully, with the increased interest in sewing for these special dolls, the patterns will once again be made available.

Most artists consider re-dressing or adding to a souvenir doll to be a compliment. The collector who regards a new souvenir doll as the starting point for hours of creativity pays an enormous compliment to the artist who designed the doll. It is an inspiration to the artist when their souvenir sparks creativity in another



Louise, dressed as she is today, proves that once again "Clothes make the – woman." Her owner, and dressmaker, is very happy with the results.



Louise's back stamp records her details. All souvenir dolls should be identified in this manner.

When seen in this condition, Louise's qualifications to be a sewing model are evident. Here she wears a hairnet to preserve her coiffure during those tiresome fitting sessions!



individual. Lately some dolls are presented fully-clothed and finished with no scope for play time. They are admired and they come home to go onto a shelf with other such souvenirs or are immediately sold.

"Louise," the 1997 Anaheim, California, Convention Souvenir is a good case study of souvenir dolls to dress. Louise, named for the mother of then UFDC President, Patricia Gosh, is an almost perfect doll for which to sew. She was designed by Marilyn Stauber and produced by the U.S. Historical Society. A lovely print of a bride in the 1830s provided inspiration for the doll's design. Her body was designed to provide a slender lady-like shape. Her shoulders are deep and well-shaped. Her head swivels on the neck. Her flat shoes are unobtrusive. Her only drawback as a fashion star is that her porcelain arms reach only to the middle forearm and therefore needs long sleeves to cover the cloth parts. That is a small drawback.

Louise and the 1991 souvenir, "Janette," can wear the same clothing with few adjustments. Janette is a little shorter than Louise and her arms are shorter. Of course, Janette has long arms and can wear short sleeves. As always with ALL doll patterns, make the dress in muslin first, which helps to solve any problems that may arise without wasting good fabric.

When it comes to lingerie, it's nice to keep the lingerie on these little fashion dolls extremely simple unless it is to be displayed alone. The only decoration that really is seen is that which is applied to the bottom of petticoat and skirt. Having no corset or chemise makes a better fit on the dress bodice possible.

Use white batiste to make the drawers and petticoat. Apply a hem, tucks and lace- edging along one long edge of a 43 to 45-inch piece of fabric. The trim may be as elaborate or as simple as you wish.

### To make the drawers:

1. Follow the cutting diagram to make a fold on each end of the trimmed length of batiste.
2. Place the (drawers) pattern on those folds and cut them out.
3. Using a narrow French seam, close center front and back seam. Make a narrow casing in top leaving a ½-inch opening at center back.
4. Run narrow ribbon or cotton tape through casing to secure drawers on doll.
5. Close leg seams with a narrow French seam.

### To make the petticoat:

1. Hem raw edges at each end for a length of 3-inches from the top or untrimmed edge.
2. Gather the top edge to measure 5-¾-inches.
3. Cut a batiste waistband measuring 1-¾-inches wide by 7-inches long.
4. Turn under and baste a ¼-inch seam allowance on all edges of the waistband.
5. Lay the gathered edge of the petticoat along one basted edge of the waist band.
6. Fold the other waistband edge over the raw edge of the petticoat.
7. Whip band in place to the petticoat on both sides.

8. Whip waistband edges closed.
9. Close waistband back with cotton tapes or button and loop
10. Finally, close center back seam with narrow French seam. It is always easier to work on a garment if the back isn't closed and it can be placed flat.

Once upon a time we depended upon books, pictures, patterns or actual garments for inspiration when dressing our dolls. Today there can literally be a world of design inspiration in the palm of our hand! Electronic devices such as computers, tablets and phones are widely used to disseminate information from clothing collections around the world. *Google*, *Pinterest* and *Facebook* have many sources of interest to the doll dressmaker. A quiet evening with these sites and a sketch pad will supply enough ideas for a year's worth of sewing. The dress worn by Louise in the sample was first a "shared" picture on *Facebook*. It was later tracked down on *Pinterest* to find a closer view and a back view. A suitable piece of silk came to hand and in no time at all Louise was wearing a small replica of the original dress. The dress may be made of thin silk taffeta or a fine cotton print. The original inspiration was made of a medium shade of gray blue silk.



Simple petticoat and drawers are made lovely when the hems are trimmed with tucks and lace. By keeping lingerie simple, it makes it easier to assure a beautiful fit on the outer clothing.

Right: Louise models her lingerie and she doesn't seem to miss another petticoat, chemise and corset, because she values her tiny waistline.



**To make the dress:**

1. Cut the bodice and lining together.
2. Prepare the bodice front: baste the lining to the bodice front.
3. Sew darts in bodice and lining together around the edges.
4. Cut a bias strip 4-inches by ½-inch. Apply the strip as a facing to the bodice front neckline.
5. Make the bodice drapes by folding the pieces down on the solid lines and up on the dashed line. Turn under the seam allowance and tack in place. When the bottom of each drape forms a straight line and all the zig-zag edges line up, the pleats are correct. Steam press to make sharp folds in the drapes. NOTE: If a softer look is preferred, the drape tops and bottoms may be gathered rather than pleated. Just cut the bottoms on a straight, rather than a zig-zag, line.
6. Tack the drapes to the shoulder seams of the bodice front. The drapes should extend across the bodice front and cross in the middle.
7. Baste the drapes in place along the waist line, crossing them in front.
8. Sew each back lining to each dress back piece along the neck line and the back openings, right sides facing. Turn and press.
9. Sew the shoulder seams. Notice that the shoulder seam is set forward of the shoulder.
10. Prepare the sleeves: Make narrow hems in the bottom of each sleeve and up the sleeve seam edges for 1-½-inches.
11. Sew the sleeve seams.
12. Gather the tops of the sleeves along the double-stitching lines. Draw each sleeve up to fit the arm hole on the bodice.
13. Sew the sleeves to the armholes.
14. Sew the underarm seams.
15. Finally, cut a strip of dress fabric 6-inches by 1-¼-inches along the straight grain of the fabric. Turn under and baste the seam allowance on all sides of the waist band. Sew the waistband to the bodice bottom, enfolding the raw edge of the bodice in the waistband. In effect, the waistband is upside down. This will ensure a smooth edge when it is time to attach the skirt.
16. Cut the skirt 28-inches wide and 11-½-inches long.
17. Make narrow hems in the short edges measuring 4-inches.
18. Sew the center back seam.
19. Make a 2-inch hem in the bottom of the skirt. If there is insufficient depth to make a 2-inch hem (for instance if the fabric is limited) the hem may be faced. Wide hems were a characteristic of this 1830s style.

20. The skirt top may be cartridge-pleated, wide-pleated of gathered to the waistband. The skirt on Louise's sample has two double-box pleats, one over each hip. Regardless of how the skirt top is constrained, there should be a 1-inch wide space at center front that remains flat.
21. Turn under ½-inch at the top of skirt, after it is gathered/pleated, and whip the top of the skirt to the bottom of the waistband.
22. Close the sleeve bottoms and the bodice back with small buttons and loops.
23. Make a belt of figured ribbon. Hem the back edges and close with a hook and loop. Glue a doll's shoe buckle to the front. NOTE: when the dress is placed on the doll, the bodice drapes may spread. That's perfectly all right – the sleeves are quite large and may need some cotton puffs for support.

**To make the bonnet:**

The bonnet is designed to be made of velvet and lined with silk. "Bond Instant Grrrip" glue is recommended to use.

1. Cut the pattern pieces of medium weight buckram. Index card may also be used.
2. Glue 24-gauge floral wire to the outside edge of the brim and the top edge of the crown. Dashed lines on the pattern pieces indicate where the wire should be glued. When the glue is dry, trim the buckram away close to the wire along the outer edge of the brim. Do not trim the crown.
3. Slash the crown along the edge above the wire and bend the wire down, away from the wire.
4. Bend the crown into a circle, overlap the back edges and glue together.
5. Overlap the ends of the brim and glue closed.
6. Center the top of the crown on the top and glue in place. Let all the pieces dry completely before continuing with the project.
7. Cut the bonnet silk lining in a color to match or harmonize with the rest of the bonnet. Sew or glue the ends closed.
8. Run a gathering thread along the top or straight edge of the lining. Draw up tightly and anchor the thread securely. Make sure the raw edge turns to the wrong side.
9. When the glue on the two parts is completely dried, slide the brim down over the crown and glue in place to the edge. The curvy bottom of the crown will automatically shape the brim.
10. Using a needle and thread, take several stitches through the top of the crown and the center of the lining. This will anchor the lining to the bonnet.



Louise wears her latest dress, a soft blue dress in mid-1830s style. Inspiration for this costume came in a Facebook post. Inspiration for convention dolls can come from anywhere since style authenticity is not necessarily a requirement, as it would be for an antique doll.

11. Pull the front edge of the lining to the front edge of the brim and glue a narrow seam allowance to the outside edge of the brim. The lining is one piece – it completely covers the inside of the bonnet.
12. Cut velvet by the pattern pieces. Use cotton velveteen, rayon velvet or millinery velvet. Apply a thin line of glue to all edges as you apply them to the bonnet form.
13. Carefully apply the velvet brim to the form. Overlap and trim the pieces at center back so they butt together rather than overlap.
14. Carefully cut away any excess velvet along the outer edge of the brim. The glue will seal the edges and prevent its raveling.
15. When the brim is covered, use the same technique to cover the crown. Trim any excess away at the top edge so that the velvet folds over the top of the crown about 1/8-inch.
16. Cut a piece of baby-batting or a cosmetic puff to fit the top of the crown to pad it out slightly. The puffy piece should be about 1/8-inch smaller than the top of the crown.

17. Cover the puffy bit with a circle of velvet – cut a circle of velvet to fit. Apply glue to edges and press in place.
18. When the top of the crown is finished, and the glue is dry, trim the bonnet as desired with flowers, feathers and ribbon.

A pelerine is a short cape. Pelerines were popular in the 1830s because they accommodated the fashionable wide sleeves. Make the pelerine of velvet to match the bonnet or silk to match the dress.

**To make the pelerine:**

1. Cut the shape following the pattern.
2. Bind the edges with narrow bias strips if it is made of silk.
3. If you are using velvet, apply narrow decorative braid to all edges and to the solid line in the pattern piece.
4. Close front with button and loop. If the pelerine is made of velvet omit the lining and apply trim directly to the velvet. 🧑‍🎨

The inside of the bonnet features a one-piece lining. This pattern, with modifications, can be used as a basic pattern for styles of the 1820s and 1830s.

Shown are a bonnet and pelerine made of cotton velveteen, trimmed with cream silk ribbon and nylon gauze ribbon. It is not necessary to be constrained by having to use all-natural fibers when sewing for souvenir dolls. These dolls are modern and any available suitable fabrics can be used.







