

Embellishing with Soutache

by Carrie Caldwell



I have always admired the beautiful antique French fashion doll dresses embellished with intricate soutache designs. When I had the opportunity to take a class on soutache application I signed up immediately. The class, in March of 2014, was sponsored by the Carmel Doll Shop and was taught by Louise Hedrick, author and expert doll costumer. Since I had never attempted anything remotely like soutache application I was a bit daunted but once the class was underway, I was hooked. The project for the class was based on an ensemble in the trousseau of Miss Rose Percy. Of course, all the soutache design could not be completed in the 2-½ days of the class but enough progress was made that I could easily finish the ensemble when I returned home. I was very pleased with the completed project and happily signed up for the soutache class the following year.

Once again, one year later, Louise Hedrick was our able instructor. This time the class project was based on an antique dress for an 18-inch Rohmer or Huret enfantine style French fashion doll. The red soutache was applied to the various pieces of white piqué. The contrast was strikingly beautiful. The amount of stitching to produce the dress, cape, belt, and hood was well worth the effort.

In the years since that first soutache class I have completed many garments embellished with soutache for antique and reproduction French fashion dolls. Both the process and the results have been enjoyable. In an effort to inspire other would-be soutache enthusiasts, I have designed a capelet embellished with a simple soutache pattern.

Instructions for Making The Soutache Capelet

Materials Required:

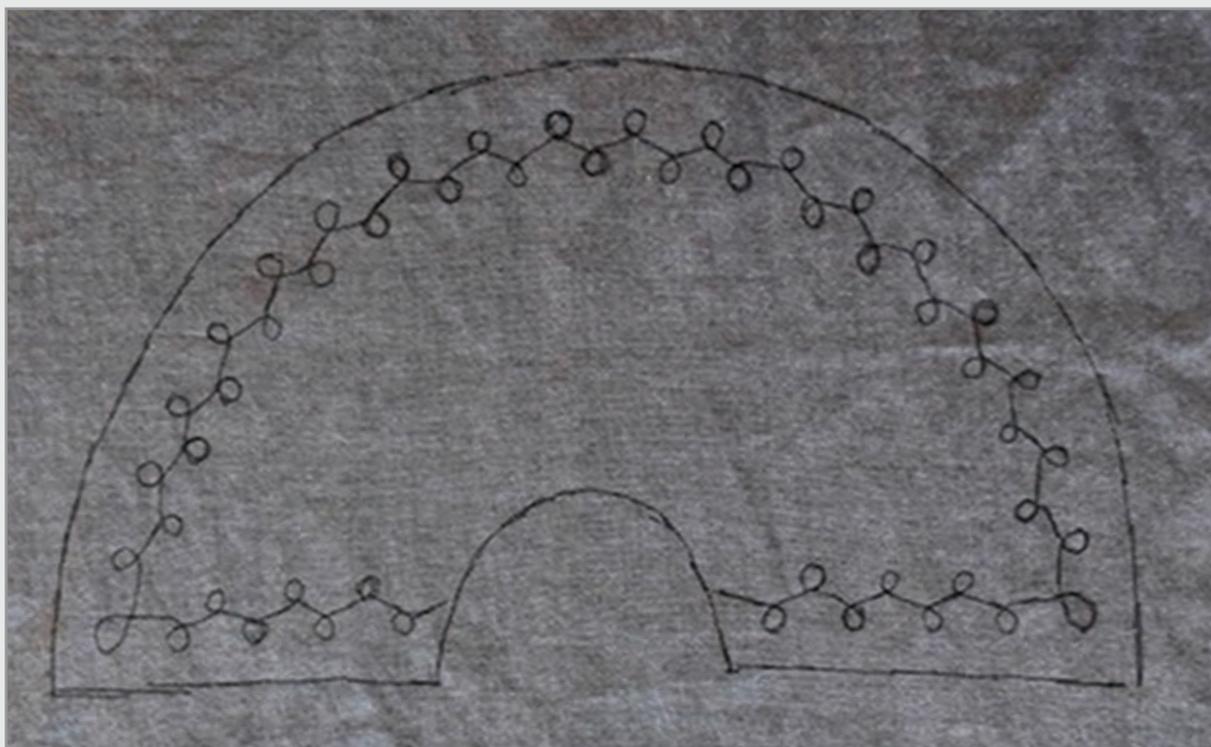
¼ yard fabric for capelet (suggested fabrics: wool gabardine, a medium weight cotton)

¼ yard fabric for lining (batiste, silk or light weight satin) 3 yards soutache (1 mm)

Thread that is the same color as the soutache thread to assemble the capelet

A fine needle for hand sewing pencil or Frixion erasable pen

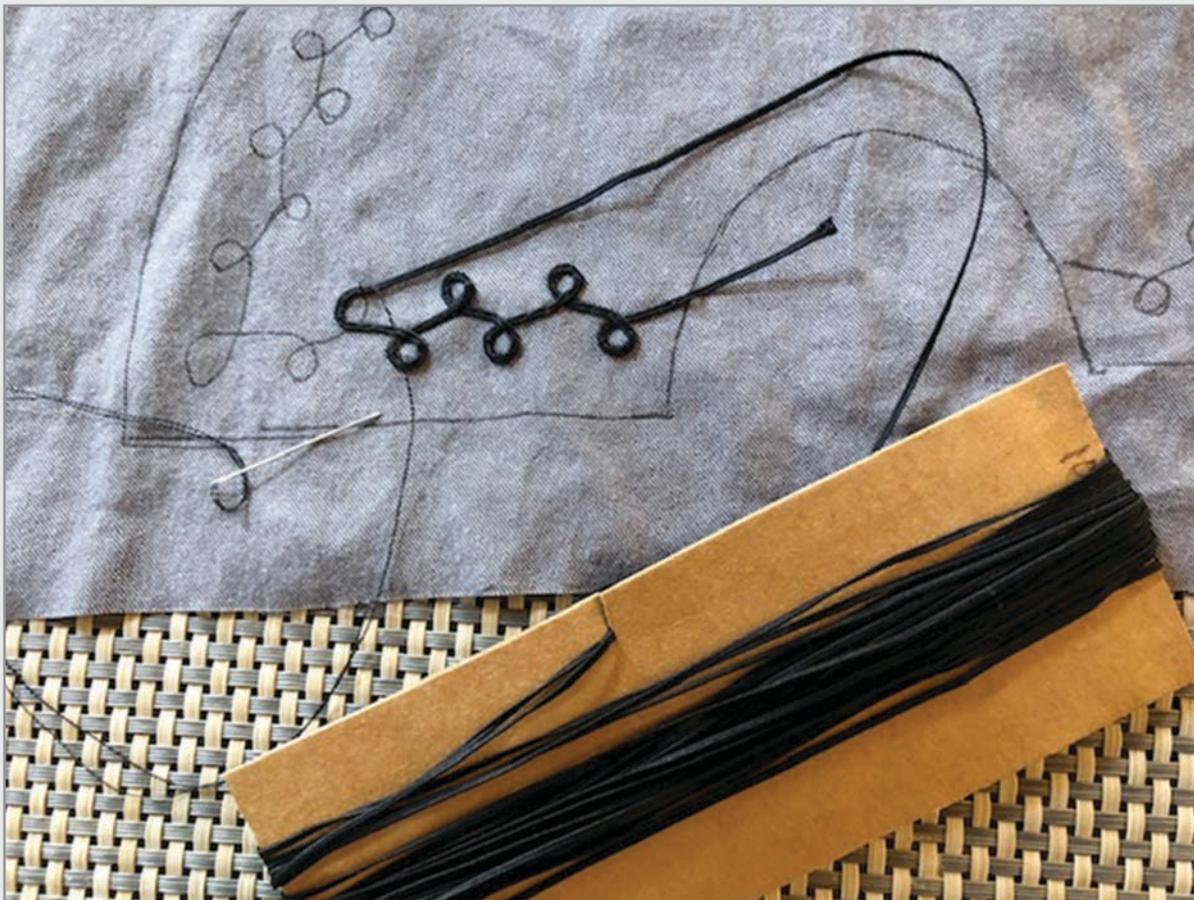
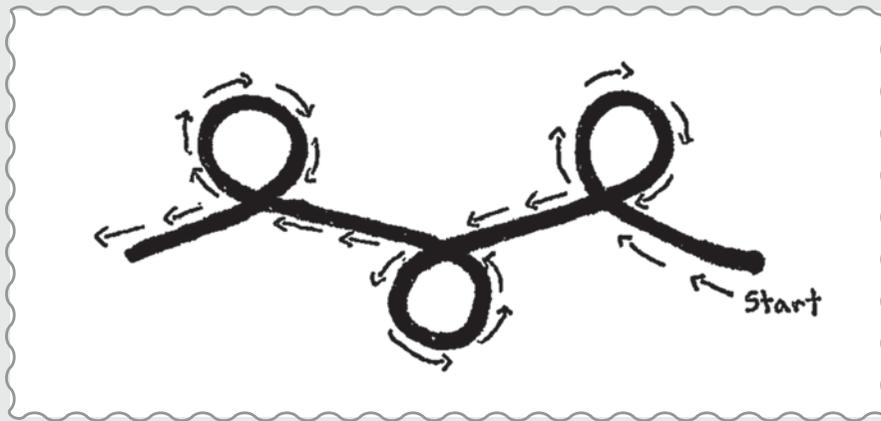
A hook and eye



The first step of this project will probably be the most difficult because you will need to transfer the soutache pattern onto your fabric. First, trace the capelet pattern and soutache design onto a plain piece of paper. Then trace this pattern onto your fabric. There are a couple of ways you can do this. If you happen to have a light box this will be the easiest. I have had success taping the pattern to a window and then taping the fabric over the pattern. There is enough daylight coming through the window that allows for easy tracing. Another way I have accomplished this is by placing a light under a glass table and then tracing the pattern. Use a pencil or erasable pen to trace the

pattern. I traced the capelet and the soutache pattern onto the fabric because I find that it is easier to stitch down the soutache pattern before cutting out the capelet. I think that it is easier to sew the soutache if there is more fabric to hold while stitching. If you like to use an embroidery hoop, waiting to cut out the capelet will be a must. See figure 1.

Once you have the pattern traced onto your fabric you can begin stitching down the soutache. You will begin at the neck opening and stitch the soutache to the fabric by taking small stab stitches in the “ditch” of the soutache. (If you look closely at the soutache you will see that there is a rut or ditch running through the



center.) You will need to keep your stitches in this ditch so that they don't show. I am right-handed so I like to work from right to left so that I can hold the soutache in place while I stitch it to the fabric. Once you get started you simply follow the pattern line with the soutache. See figure 2. Refer to the soutache diagram to see how the loops are made. Make the loop, hold it with your free hand and stitch it down.

Once you have finished stitching the soutache, cut out the capelet and stitch the darts. Using the cape

pattern cut one of lining fabric, mark and stitch the darts. With wrong sides together, baste the capelet and lining together around the edge of the capelet.

From the lining fabric, cut two pieces of bias 1 inch wide: one 6 inches long and one 27 inches long (if you have only $\frac{1}{4}$ yard of lining fabric you will probably need to splice two pieces of bias). Beginning at the neck opening, using the 27-inch piece of bias and with right sides together stitch the bias strip around the sides and bottom of the capelet and lining with a



An example of a more elaborate soutache design.

¼-inch seam allowance. I always round off the corners of the capelet sides to make it easier to stitch around from the side to the bottom of the capelet. When you have finished sewing the bias, press it flat around the right side of the capelet. Then turn the capelet over and fold the bias twice toward the lining and press. Then blind stitch the bias around the inside of the capelet.

Take the shorter piece of bias and sew it around the neck opening the same way you sewed the bias around the capelet. Fold in each end before folding the bias twice and blind stitch the bias around the neck of the cape.

Finally, sew a hook and eye at the corners of the neck opening. See figure 3. Instead of a hook and eye, you can also sew an 8-inch piece of ribbon at each corner of the neck opening if you would like to have a bow at the neck. 🎀

Soutache Capelet
Pattern

