

A Young Lady's Guide
to Dressing the Hair,
1850s-1860s



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*Thanks to Malinda for the idea
and Marna for the additional photos.*



Godey's Lady's Book, 1863

Coiffure

A very graceful style of coiffure for a young lady,
suitable for the new side combs.

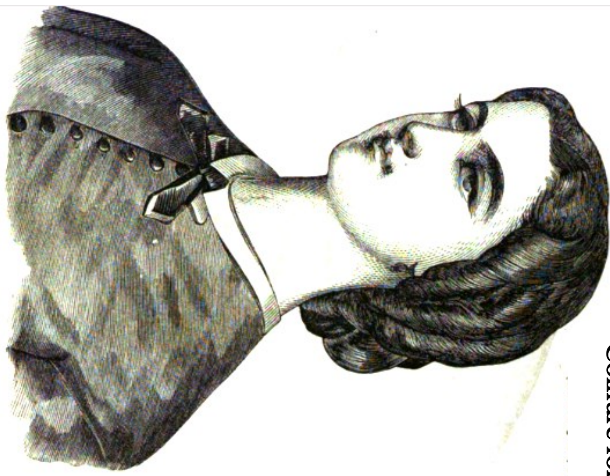


The 1850s-1860s “Look”

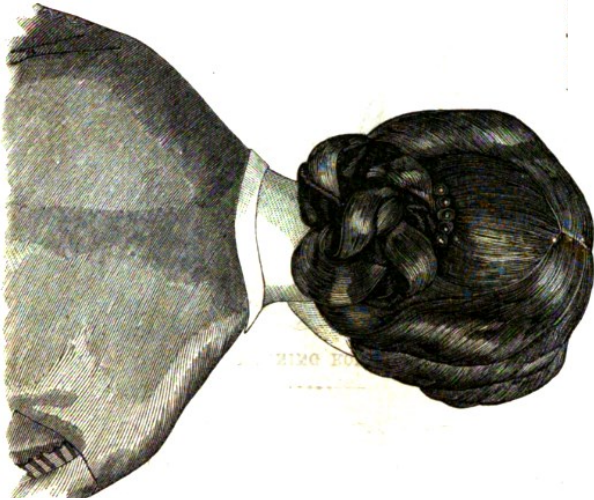
The most common coiffure for women in the 1850s through mid-1860s arranged hair low at the bottom of the head, just above the nape of the neck. The part was smooth down to the ears, occasionally with braids or rolls of the hair at the sides. Photos show hair was worn both tuck behind and placed over the ears. The arrangement at back can include a twisted bun, a braided bun, layered braids, or loops of braids.

For daily wear, a hair net can be added for security. Other everyday adornments you may also choose include a simple ribbon band around the hair or a ruched/plaited ribbon atop a hair net.

For social occasions, such as dancing, dinners, theatrical events, etc. curls, either at the sides of the head (1850s) or at the back of the head (1860s) can be added to your coiffure. More elaborate adornments of ribbon, lace, flowers, and beads can be considered. Look at original images to help select these.



Godey's Lady's Book, 1863
Coiffure for a Young Lady



Your Hair Kit

Select a container based on your needs. If you will be dressing solely at home, an open basket or box with drawers may work well. If dressing while traveling or away from home, a small, portable container that closes securely may better suit. This could be a small box or rolled work pocket.

In either case, select something that is easy to organize and keep the small necessities easy at hand. This can be done with compartments, pockets, or small bags within.

Filling Your Hair Kit

Fill your hair kit with the items you use most. Remember to keep extra of each in case of loss or loaning here-and-there. Get in the habit of checking your kit's completeness either before or after each event.

- ♦ Steel hair pins
- ♦ Faux tortoise hair pins
- ♦ Hair elastics
- ♦ Faux tortoise or gutta percha hair comb
- ♦ Plain hair net
- ♦ Pomade

Godéy's Lady's Book, 1862
New Style of Coiffure
for a Young Lady



Hair Nets

Hair nets aide in holding the arranged hair in place.

A hair net should be fine like hair or silk thread and mimic the color of your hair. Modern “invisible” hair nets found in most haircare sections are suitable. They can be worn alone or with a ribbon headdress. The net should sit at the top of your head, roughly where a line from ear to hear would pass. Some nets fit solely over the arranged bun.

For social occasions, decorative hair nets such as those made from ribbon, silk chenille, or beaded were worn. These would be considered an adornment item.



Hair Pins

Steel hair pins are strong and durable with straight sides. They come in three sizes. The largest works well for securing braids. The middle size holds small to medium size buns well without sticking out the other side. The smallest holds problem strands and adornments in place. These are available from Amish merchants and can be found online.

Beauty supply stores offer a similar hair pin that can be purchased in quantity. These are lighter weight, yet still strong. The metal is ridged rather than smooth. They come in two shades of brown and two lengths.

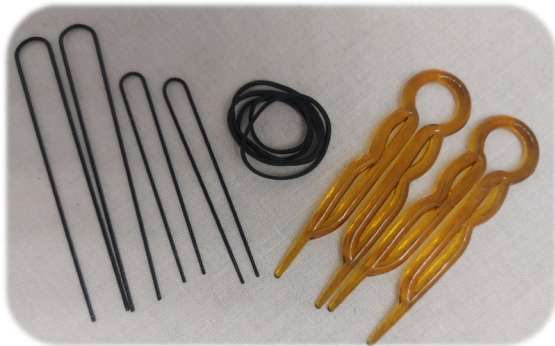
Faux tortoise hair pins are a brown marbled plastic made to look like tortoise. These work well for securing braids in place. They tend to be more secure than straight hair pins, which can be advantageous to more vigorous activities such as dancing or horseback riding.



Hair Pins & Elastics



Left: Steel hair pins found at Amish stores. Right: Vintage faux tortoise hairpins. Top: Elastics



Left: Straight hair pins, Right: Modern faux tortoise hairpins. Both found at beauty supply stores. Top: Elastics

Pomade

Pomade helps hold your hair in place, including the fly-aways around the face and ends of braids.

To use, rub your fingers on the solid pomade. It will soften on your hands. (If your hands are quite cold, run them under warm water or breath on them.) Comb through your hair with your fingers to distribute some, particularly in areas you anticipate needing it. Keep a thin coating of pomade on your hands as you arrange your hair. Smooth a small amount along the hair framing your face when finished.



Note: Pomade can help smooth bangs and shorter hair in place.

Note: If you will be outside, apply sunscreen to your part and forehead prior to using pomade.

