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**DEPARTMENT STORE  
OCCUPATIONS**

**THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE  
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CLEVELAND EDUCATION SURVEY

DEPARTMENT STORE  
OCCUPATIONS

BY

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THE SURVEY COMMITTEE OF THE  
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## **FOREWORD**

This report on "Department Store Occupations" is one of the 25 sections of the report of the Education Survey of Cleveland conducted by the Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation in 1915. Twenty-three of these sections have been published as separate monographs. In addition there is a volume entitled "Wage Earning and Education," which is a summary of the sections relating to industrial education. The final volume, which is entitled "The Cleveland School Survey," tells of the conduct of the entire work and summarizes the findings and recommendations of the 15 volumes relating to the regular work of the public schools. Copies of all these publications may be obtained from the Cleveland Foundation. They may also be obtained from the Division of Education of the Russell Sage Foundation, New York City. A complete list will be found in the back of this volume, together with prices.

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### **SPECIAL DEPARTMENTS NOT ELSEWHERE MENTIONED**

Ecclesiastical Department  
Maternity Department  
Children's Playroom  
Domestic Science Department or Demonstration Kitchen  
Mourning Department  
Foreign Department  
Information Bureau of Travel  
Carpet-making Department  
Shirt Shop  
Corset Shop  
Dry Cleaning Department  
Barber Shop  
Bureau of Home Adjustment  
Fur Making and Remodelling Department  
Manicuring, Shampooing and Hair-Dressing Department  
Shoe Repairing Department  
Tailoring Department  
Dressmaking Department  
Interior Decorating Department

### **UNRELATED OCCUPATIONS OFFERING EMPLOYMENT TO MEN**

Doctor	Linoleum Layer
Dentist	Curtain and Shade Maker
Cartoonist	Chef
Interior Decorator	Barber
Accountant	Cobbler

Bookkeeper	Shoe Shiner
Window Dresser	Fireman
Stenographer	Engineer
Fire Department Man	Electrician
Special Police or Detective	Plumber
Interpreter	Carpenter
Watch and Clock Repairer	Cabinet-maker
Jewelry Repairer	Painter
Optician	Printer
Silver Re-buffer	Paper Hanger
Engraver	Garage Man
Photographer	Watchman
Furrier	Porter
Tailor	Footman
Upholsterer	Advertising Artist
Curtain Draper	Musician
Carpet Layer	Sign Letterer

#### UNRELATED OCCUPATIONS OFFERING EMPLOYMENT TO WOMEN

Domestic Science Lecturer	Lamp Shade Maker
Trained Nurse	Carpet Maker
Kindergartner	Dry Cleaner
Stenographer	Manicure
Detective	Hair Dresser
Interpreter	Telephone Operator
Dressmaker	Cook
Milliner	Waitress
Seamstress	Maid
Power Machine Operator	Laundress
Needlework Designer	Dish Washer
Fur Sewer	Cleaner
Corset Maker	Demonstrator
Shirt Maker	Fashion Artist
Curtain and Shade Maker	Fashion Model
Bow and Novelty Maker	

#### SOME FACTS ABOUT THREE UNRELATED OCCUPATIONS

In the following pages space is given to a brief consideration of three unrelated occupations representing distinct types of employment found in the department store but which were not included in the analysis of the industry given in the body of this report. These occupations are the work of the display

man, that of the waitress, and the milliner. The occupation of display man has been chosen because it is representative of a class, previously mentioned, which calls for the possession of special ability or talent. The waitress in the store restaurant belongs to an independent trade, members of which are employed for the convenience of the customer. This occupation is of interest because it offers part-time employment to the woman who must be a wage earner as well as a home maker. Millinery is another independent trade having its own organization. It has been included here because as a seasonal trade it has its own peculiar problem.

#### THE DISPLAY MAN OR WINDOW TRIMMER

Success as a display man depends upon the possession of that elusive quality variously called talent, gift, and genius, and which is so intangible as to defy analysis. No attempt will be made to dissect and present for inspection the elements of the gift which makes the window trimmer an artist. For this worker must have the artist's imagination and feeling for space, balance, color and line. In addition to this he must know the fundamental rules and principles of color combinations and color schemes. As displays are often changed two or three times a week he must also possess resourcefulness and originality.

But it is as an advertiser rather than an artist that the display man is valuable to the business. The store has two major methods of reaching the outside public for the purpose of attracting its interest. It advertises in space bought of the local papers and it advertises in its own windows. The display man's chance of success is greatly increased if he is able to deal tactfully and fairly with opposing factions as represented by the buyers of the different sections who may all at the same time demand window space to help in selling their goods. Out of the mass of material which the buyer may press upon his attention the window trimmer must be able to select that which has the greatest advertising value and then display it in the window in such a way as to give the desired impression to

the passerby on the other side of the glass. It has been said that one of the greatest assets a window trimmer can have is the ability to put his mind out on the sidewalk and look in at the display as a casual shopper.

The trimmer must expect to have his work always with him. He must be constantly alert for fresh ideas. The ability to find the germ of an inspiration in such sources as theatres, art exhibits and illustrations is invaluable. The Public Library offers him assistance as he needs books—period books, books on draperies, tapestries and architecture. These are particularly helpful if he is to arrange a special setting or temporary background either to attract notice or give variety to the display of merchandise. If he is showing period styles with appropriate settings his attention to detail must be most painstaking as a single incongruous element will detract from the whole display.

He must also be a faithful student of the fashion magazines, both domestic and foreign. Vagaries of style and epidemics of color such as sand, Biltmore red, and midnight blue are featured in the window displays. "Drapes" of different kinds play a large part in the showing of yard goods and the window trimmer must have skillful fingers and a light touch for the execution of these details.

The ability to sketch is invaluable and unless the man has marked talent he will need drawing lessons under a competent instructor. It is also necessary that he understand mechanical drawing, the making of blue prints and the laying out of work to scale, for he must co-operate with the store carpenters in the construction of many of his special effects. The window trimmer is also responsible for displays inside of the store and he sometimes does the show card writing.

The number of trimmers and assistants employed in any one store depends upon the amount of "glass" to be cared for. It is obvious that a corner location or one commanding three streets requires a larger force than the house which has but a single frontage. One head trimmer and three assistants will take care of a large amount of window space and do the inside

work as well. It was stated that there are about 30 well-recognised display men employed in Cleveland. The display man commands a salary according to the size of his job (measured in windows) and the results which he achieves. When special ability or talent are the largest factors in success, as they are in this occupation, there is seldom a wage schedule.

#### THE WAITRESS

The department store is in the restaurant business on a one-meal basis. It serves its patrons with a noon meal and sometimes with afternoon tea. Its activities are confined to the middle of the day and it therefore offers part time work to the majority of its employees. This makes waitress work in the department store an opportunity to be regarded with interest by the woman worker who for domestic reasons must spend part of the day in her own home. A position of this kind requires her services only from 11 until two or three o'clock. To be sure, these hours constitute the "heart of the day" but they are the time at which the housekeeper can best arrange to be away from her home.

A small number of the waitresses are employed during the entire day and to them falls the serving of afternoon tea and various incidental work of maintenance.

The duties of a waitress are much simpler in a position of this kind than those of a waiter in a hotel or large restaurant. The content of her job is comparatively small. An intelligent woman can very quickly learn the routine and the daily practice will soon make her reasonably expert.

Applicants for waitress work in such of these restaurants as draw discriminating trade are carefully scrutinised and selection is made of those who are neat, trim and deft in their movements. Such qualifications are regarded as of more value than previous experience.

The beginner must be taught to lay the cloth and see that the table is properly placed with chairs in position. Essentials, such as salt, pepper, sugar, silver, etc., must be on the table. An abundance of fresh linen, silver and other necessities should

be in reserve on the serving tables. In a large restaurant the supplies of butter and cracked ice are replenished by boys who serve in the general capacity of "busboys." When this is the case, the waitress does not have to remove heavy stacks of soiled dishes as these loads are carried by the boys.

The routine of serving customers is easily learned and is much as follows: As soon as the patron is seated the waitress gives her an order card and leaves her to make a selection while she brings water, butter, napkin, and silver if necessary. By the time these are properly placed on the table the guest should have made her choice and the waitress be ready to take the order. To indicate that she is prepared to do this the waitress stands at the left of the customer with pencil and order blank.

In collecting the different items of the order there is a definite method to be followed in the kitchen and serving rooms. Cold food should be taken up first and hot dishes, properly covered, added at the last moment. After the order has been served to the patron the waitress will have to give her attention to others but must keep all her customers under observation in order to supply further wants.

The method by which payment is made and saleschecks are stamped is a matter of store system and varies in the different restaurants. The waitress has a fixed "stand" with a given number of tables to serve. These are assigned to her by the head waitress or the manager of the restaurant. The head waitress with her aides or "captains" has general charge of the whole room and is particularly responsible for the seating of the guests and the promptness of the service.

The wage is partly governed by the attitude of the store towards the question of tips or gratuities. From \$3.00 to \$3.50 is the common wage where the waitress is expected to increase this by tips. Five dollars is an average wage where no fees are permitted. In addition to this payment the noon meal is supplied to the workers. In some of the stores bonuses are paid which correspond to commissions or P. M.'s. The waitresses who are employed on full time receive a higher rate of pay.

The woman who undertakes this kind of work should be well and strong as she is on her feet almost the entire time and in addition must carry loaded trays for a considerable distance.

No attempt has been made to cover the work of waitress in the numerous all-day restaurants, tea rooms, and boarding houses as this discussion is purposely limited to the woman who is "on part time" in the department store restaurant.

#### MILLINERY

Millinery is an "unrelated" occupation and one which is frequently carried on as a separate business. It differs from any of the trades which have as yet been considered in that it is distinctly a seasonal trade. As such it has problems in regard to the worker which are not present in occupations already discussed.

It is commonly remarked that the "bottom has fallen out of the millinery business." This is probably due to certain marked changes which have occurred during the last eight or ten years. These changes have affected both makers and trimmers and the result has been a relative decrease in the number employed as well as shortened season. This has been largely due to the following conditions:

1. Decrease in the number of "made hats" both velvet and straw in the construction of which a certain sum was always charged for "frame and work" exclusive of material. This falling-off is due to the continued popularity of the blocked hat in felt, beaver, leghorn, panama, hemp, etc., and also to the increase of superior ready-made hats which are turned out by the wholesale houses.

2. The comparatively simple styles of trimming in vogue give makers little work in constructing decorations which require shirring, wiring, etc. It also reduces the work of the trimmer. This simplicity tempts the amateur to various efforts in her own behalf.

3. The increased favor of the tailored hat.
4. Free bow-making service which most stores offer their ribbon trade.

Millinery is so seasonal a trade that some firms will not promise more than 12 weeks' work in each of the two seasons of the year. The problem of the employer is not only to secure a satisfactory workroom force but to keep these workers together from season to season. The girl has to face the question of some other means of support during the remainder of the year.

There are a few girls drawn into the trade because the seasonal character of the work gives long vacations. The dull season has no terrors for them as they live at home and are not entirely self-supporting.

At the end of the busy seasons when the workroom force is reduced, it becomes necessary for many of the makers and some of the trimmers to find temporary employment of some kind. The stores themselves endeavor to help good workers over the dull period and in this way retain their services by giving them selling positions. They are used to supplement the regular sales force during the Christmas rush and at special sales, and also as substitutes for saleswomen who are on their vacations.

Millinery is a trade in which an unpaid apprenticeship is often exacted. This apprenticeship formerly included both a spring and fall season. The practice of the department stores in regard to apprentices has changed somewhat. Some stores will not employ a girl until after she has learned her trade. Others take beginners and pay a small wage during a part of the learning period.

The girl who has finished her apprenticeship may become a maker, frame maker, or eventually an improver. The trimming positions depend upon the organization of the workroom and the kind of patronage which this department has. The workroom is usually under a head trimmer who has as aides the stock trimmer, order trimmer (who carries out the customer's wishes as they are transmitted to her by the saleswomen), children's trimmer, and a trimmer of hats and toques for elderly women. Each of these trimmers has as many assistants as the work requires. Some of the assistant trimmers

may be copyists who can reproduce accurately but are not able to create. The ability to trim, like other forms of artistic expression, is a gift and no amount of teaching can create this talent where it does not exist. A maker often fails to succeed as a trimmer because, while able to do the exact and painstaking work necessary for good making, she cannot acquire the style and dash necessary for effective trimming.

The subject of millinery is treated extensively in the volume of this series entitled, "Dressmaking and Millinery" by Edna Bryner.

## CLEVELAND EDUCATION SURVEY REPORTS

These reports can be secured from the Survey Committee of the Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio. They will be sent postpaid for 25 cents per volume with the exception of "Measuring the Work of the Public Schools" by Judd, "The Cleveland School Survey" by Ayres, and "Wage Earning and Education" by Lutz. These three volumes will be sent for 50 cents each. All of these reports may be secured at the same rates from the Division of Education of the Russell Sage Foundation, New York City.

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