



Vermont Carriage Mittens

Donna Druchunas

Originally published in PieceWork January-February 2016

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Joe Coca

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DONNA DRUCHUNAS

Stopping by woods on a snowy evening, a lady riding in a carriage would need something especially warm to protect her hands from the bitter cold of winter. In 1850, the St. Johnsbury railroad station in Vermont was a stop on the new line that was built from Boston to Montreal. The town of St. Johnsbury was small but home to several new industrial businesses. It was the center of what would come to be known as the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Less than 50 miles (80 km) south of the Canadian border, it was also cold.

Last year, when I stopped off for a latte at the Freighthouse Coffee Shop in Lyndonville, about 3 miles (5 km) north of St. Johnsbury, I discovered that a small gift shop and museum was tucked away upstairs from the restaurant. I found myself looking at a small collection of nineteenth-century items from the local area. Among them was a pair of mittens with a shaggy surface made of individual pieces of yarn.

The description of the mittens, handwritten on an index card, didn't explain anything about their unusual construction. "During the winter when women came into the [St. Johnsbury, Vermont] station and had to take a carriage to another town they were given these mittens to keep their hands warm."

I asked the shop clerk if it would be possible to look at the mittens more closely. But the glass case was closed, and, even after asking the manager, it was not possible to open it. I took a few photographs and left.

Later, after the inevitable Google search, I found a simpler pair for sale on eBay. Of course, I bought them. Looking inside the pair I bought, I determined that the tufts were made by precutting yarn into short pieces and placing them between the stitches as the stitches are knitted. You use two different yarns in this type of knitting: a smooth, strong yarn for knitting and a plush yarn to make the shag.

In 1854, *Godey's Lady's Book* included instructions for knitting a shag rug with fabric strips to create a similar surface: "Hearth rugs are sometimes made by cutting cloth into strips $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch [1.3 cm] wide and 2 inches [5.1 cm] long, and knitting them together with string. This is done by inserting the piece of cloth exactly at the middle, in the loop of the knitting, and drawing it very tight; it is rather hard finger-work, and some make the rug by sewing



The vintage carriage mittens Donna Druchunas purchased on eBay.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

the strips of cloth on to a piece of old carpet or any other strong material that may be at hand."

If you want to try this technique for mittens, cut the yarn that you will use for the shag into 2-inch (5.1-cm) long strips and set them aside.

Rnd 1: K.

Rnd 2: *K1, insert 2 strands of the shag yarn next to the st so half of the strand is in front of the knitting and half is in back. K1, fold the pile strands over the new st so both ends of the pile are on the RS. Rep from * to last st. Rep Rounds 1 and 2, using different colors following a charted pattern if desired.

I have used this technique to knit shag rugs before, but I decided to try a different vintage technique to make shag mittens, knitting loops with a second strand of yarn carried along as the knitting is worked, then cut, brushed, and trimmed to create the finished texture. Keep in mind, however, that at least twenty-five years of wear also are needed to create the felted patina that makes these mittens so special!



Donna Druchunas knitted loops with a second strand of yarn carried along as the knitting was worked, then cut, brushed, and trimmed them to create the finished texture in her warm and fuzzy Vermont Carriage Mittens.

swatch in circular stockinette stitch to test needle sizes before beginning the mittens.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Keep all yarn tails on RS of mitten, except for tails near CO edge of cuff.

Loop Stitch (even number of sts)

K with 1 strand of MC and make loops with a double strand of MC or color indicated on chart or in text. Loops are made every 3rd rnd on a background of St st.

To Make a Loop

K next st but do not drop it from left needle. Bring 2 strands of loop yarn to front between needles, wrap around your thumb, and bring yarns to back between needles. K into same st again, then drop st from left needle, leaving thumb loops hanging on RS of mitten—each loop st is now 2 sts. (Do not worry, loops will not come loose.) On next row, 2 sts will be k tog to lock loops in place.

Rnd 1: With MC, k.

Rnd 2: *With MC, k1, with MC or specified color, make loop; rep from * to end.

Rnd 3: With MC, *k1, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Rep Rnds 1–3 for patt.

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes: See above and page 5 for Abbreviations and Techniques. Increase and decrease rounds are worked on the first round of loop stitch.

Mitten

Cuff

With smaller needles and CC1, CO 36 sts. Pm and join in the rnd.

Work 1 rnd in k2, p2 rib.

Change to MC. Work even in rib until piece measures 3 inches (7.6 cm) from CO.

Thumb Gore and Opening

Change to larger needles.

Set-Up Rnd: *K6, M1; rep from * to end—42 sts.

Change to Loop Stitch. Work 3 rnds even.

Right mitten only,

Inc Rnd: Work 2 sts, pm, M1, work 2 sts, M1, pm, work to end—44 sts.

Left mitten only,

Inc Rnd: Work to last 4 sts, pm, M1, work 2 sts, M1, pm, work 2 sts—44 sts.

MATERIALS

- ♦ Peace Fleece Worsted, 75% fine wool/25% mohair yarn, worsted weight, 200 yards (182.9 m)/113 gram (4.0 oz) skein or 25 yards (22.9 m)/14 gram (.5 oz) mini-skein, 2 skeins of Antarctica White (MC), 1 mini-skein each of Ukrainian Red (CC1), Poashja Hemlock (dark green; CC2), and Shaba Green (medium green; CC3); www.peacefleece.com
- ♦ Needles, sizes 1 (2.25 mm) and 4 (3.5 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge
- ♦ Markers
- ♦ Stitch holders
- ♦ Tapestry needle
- ♦ Cat/dog brush or hairbrush with metal bristles

Finished size: 8 inches (20.3 cm) interior circumference and 10 inches (25.4 cm) long

Gauge: 24 sts and 32 rnds = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in St st on larger needles

Note: It is just about impossible to measure gauge accurately in loop stitch, so be certain to make a

Both mittens,
 Work 2 rnds even in patt.
Inc Rnd: Work to m, sl m, M1, work to m, M1, sl m,
 work to end—2 sts inc'd.
 Work 2 rnds even in patt.
 Rep last 3 rnds 2 more times—50 sts; 10 sts in
 thumb gore.
 Right mitten only,
Next Rnd: Work to m, sl m, M1, work to m, M1, sl m,
 work to last 18 sts, pm, work Flower Chart over
 18 sts—52 sts; 12 sts in thumb gore.
 Left mitten only,
Next Rnd: Work Flower Chart over 18 sts, pm, work
 to m, sl m, M1, work to m, M1, sl m, work to
 end—52 sts; 12 sts in thumb gore.
 Both mittens,
 Work 2 rnds even. Rep Inc Rnd—54 sts; 14 sts in
 thumb gore. Work 4 rnds even, ending with Rnd 2 of
 patt.
Next Rnd: Work to thumb gore, place thumb gore sts
 on holder, CO 2 sts, work in patt to end—42 sts rem.

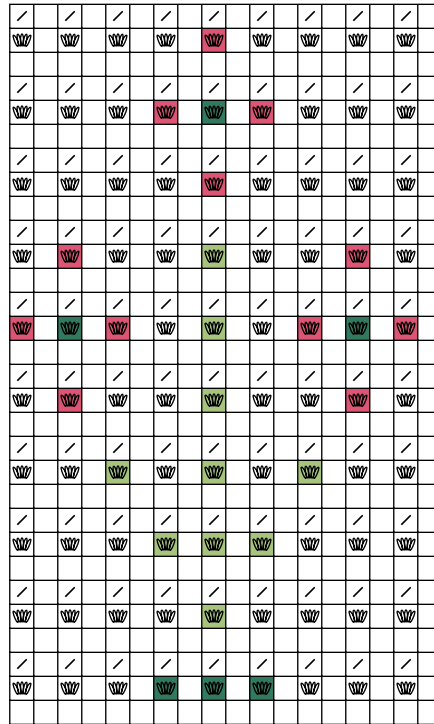
Hand

Work even in patt until chart is complete.
 With MC only, work Rnds 1–3 of Loop Stitch
 once more, or until piece measures 1½ inches
 (3.8 cm) less than desired finished length, ending
 with Rnd 3 of patt.
 Shape tip,
Dec Rnd 1: *Work 5 sts, k2tog; rep from * to end—
 36 sts rem.
 Work 2 rnds even in patt.
Dec Rnd 2: *Work 4 sts, k2tog; rep from * to end—
 30 sts rem.
 Work 2 rnds even.
Dec Rnd 3: *Work 3 sts, k2tog; rep from * to end—
 24 sts rem.
 Work 2 rnds even.
Dec Rnd 4: *Work 2 sts, k2tog; rep from * to end—
 18 sts rem.
 Work 2 rnds even.
Dec Rnd 5: *Work 1 st, k2tog; rep from * to end—12
 sts rem.
 Work 2 rnds even.
Dec Rnd 6: *Work 1 st, k2tog; rep from * to end—8
 sts rem.
 Change to CC1 for loops, work 2 rnds even.
 Cut yarn, leaving an 8-inch (20.3-cm) tail. Thread
 tail through rem sts, pull tight to gather, and fasten
 off. Weave tail in through sts on RS and cut to ½
 inch (1.3 cm).

Thumb

Place held thumb sts onto needles. Pick up and k
 4 sts along crook of thumb. Pm and join in the rnd.
Next Rnd: Work Rnd 3 of Loop Stitch to last 4 sts,

Flower



18 sts

Key

- k2tog with MC
- loop with MC
- loop with CC1
- loop with CC2
- loop with CC3

Chart may be photocopied for personal use.
 The chart for this project is available in PDF format at
www.needleworktraditions.com/charts-and-illustrations.

[k2tog] 2 times—16 sts rem.
 Work even in Loop Stitch until thumb measures
 2½ inches (6.3 cm) or desired length, ending with
 Rnd 3 of patt.
Next Rnd: *K2tog; rep from * to end—8 sts rem.
 Changing to CC1 for loops, work Rnds 2 and 3 of
 Loop Stitch.
 Cut yarn, leaving an 8-inch (20.3-cm) tail. Thread
 tail through rem sts, pull tight to gather, and fasten
 off. Weave tail in through sts on RS and cut to ½
 inch (1.3 cm).

Finishing

Weave in loose ends on cuff. Trim other tails to
 about the same length as loops. Cut open all loops.
 *Flick mitten gently with brush to fluff fabric. Use
 scissors to trim. Repeat from * until you have an
 even fabric and pile is about ¼ inch (6 mm) to
 ⅓ inch (8 mm) long.

DONNA DRUCHUNAS is a knitwear designer, author, and co-
 creator with Ava T. Coleman of *Stories in Stitches*, a book
 series featuring stories about knitters and their lives, tradi-
 tions, history, and travel, all tied together with knitting
 patterns and projects. Visit her website at [www.sheep-
 toshawl.com](http://www.sheep-

 toshawl.com).

ABBREVIATIONS

beg	beginning; begin; begins	M1R (L)	make one right (left)	sl st	slip stitch (sl 1 st pwise unless otherwise indicated)
bet	between	p	purl	ssk	slip 1 kwise, slip 1 kwise, k2 sl sts tog tbl (decrease)
BO	bind off	p1f&b	purl into front and back of same st	ssp	slip 1 kwise, slip 1 kwise, p2 sl sts tog tbl (decrease)
CC	contrasting color	p2tog	purl two stitches together	st(s)	stitch(es)
cm	centimeter(s)	patt(s)	pattern(s)	St st	stockinette stitch
cn	cable needle	pm	place marker	tbl	through back loop
CO	cast on	psso	pass slipped stitch over	tog	together
cont	continue(s); continuing	p2sso	pass two slipped stitches over	WS	wrong side
dec(s)	decrease(s); decreasing	pwise	purlwise	wyb	with yarn in back
dpn	double-pointed needle(s)	RC	right cross	wyf	with yarn in front
foll	following; follows	rem	remain(s); remaining	yo	yarn over
g	gram(s)	rep	repeat; repeating	*	repeat starting point (i.e., repeat from *)
inc	increase(s); increasing	rev St st	reverse stockinette stitch	**	repeat all instructions between asterisks
k	knit	rib	ribbing	()	alternate measurements and/or instructions
k1f&b	knit into front and back of same st	rnd(s)	round(s)	[]	instructions that are to be worked as a group a specified number of times
k2tog	knit two stitches together	RS	right side		
kwise	knitwise	rev sc	reverse single crochet		
LC	left cross	sc	single crochet		
m(s)	marker(s)	sk	skip		
MC	main color	sl	slip		
mm	millimeter(s)				
M1	make one (increase)				