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4TH ANNUAL *Historical Knitting Issue*

A Knitting Tale: Ice Harbor Compass

17TH CENTURY Circling Purls Pattern p. 30

Mitts with Tongues p. 38

Who was Miss Money?

EXCLUSIVE! *NEW* Barbara Walker Stitch Pattern

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010




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PIECEWORK®

Volume XVIII Number 1

Features / Projects

Columns/Departments

NOTIONS

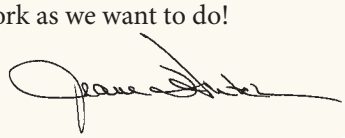
Welcome to our fourth annual historical knitting issue! We've selected articles and projects that provide glimpses into the rich, centuries-old, and sometimes poignant history of this beloved craft. Even if you're not a knitter, I hope you'll find the articles and techniques enlightening. A heartfelt thank-you to our generous contributors: they have provided the threads that connect today's knitting and knitters with those of the past.

Our website, pieceworkmagazine.com, is bursting with free projects and articles, the *PieceWork* index, available back issues, and more. Look for new additions, outlined in the box below, beginning December 18.

Also check out *PieceWork* contributor Annemor Sundbø's website, www.annemor.com; click on "English" at the top, then on "Ragpile" to view her new Internet museum with examples from her collection of traditional knitted Norwegian mittens, sweaters, and stockings. Annemor lives in Ose, Setesdal; from 1993 to 2006, she owned and operated the last remaining shoddy (wool recycling) factory in Kristiansand.

The Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, Scotland, will host In the Loop 2, a four-day conference on the origins and evolution of knitting, September 1–4. The conference has issued a call for papers (abstracts up to 300 words) for new and recent research from knitters, historians, conservators, theorists, educators, and curators. The deadline is February 1; contact J.A.Horgan@soton.ac.uk.

Enjoy this special issue and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2010 that allows each of us to do as much needlework as we want to do!



ONLINE EXTRAS

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com for:

- Punchinello Caps for Knitting Needles to Knit by Ann Budd

These colorful needle protectors adapted from a Victorian publication are fun and practical.

- A Profile of Rowan Yarns and A Kaffe Fassett–Inspired Scarf to Knit

Explore the history and the people behind this British yarn company. Kaffe Fassett is a longtime Rowan associate; this project takes its inspiration from a striped sweater and scarf he designed for *Rowan* magazine 42.

ENTER TO WIN

See the box at the end of the Kaffe-Fassett–inspired scarf project for details on how to win one of three kits with all the Rowan Kid Classic yarn necessary to make the scarf—compliments of Rowan.

No Purchase Necessary. The giveaway of 3 kits of Rowan Kid Classic yarn to make *PieceWork*'s "A Kaffe Fassett-Inspired Scarf to Knit" starts on December 18, 2009, at 12 midnight MST and ends on March 1, 2010, at 12 midnight MST. Giveaway is open to residents of the 50 United States (and D.C.) 18 years and older. For entry and official rules go to piecemagazine.com, click on "A Kaffe Fassett-Inspired Scarf to Knit." Void where prohibited. Sponsor is Interweave Press, LLC, 201 East Fourth Street, Loveland, CO 80537.

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Subscriptions: (800) 340-7496. E-mail piecework@pcspublink.com, or visit pieceworkmagazine.com.

Advertising: Stephanie Griess (877) 613-4630, e-mail sgriess@interweave.com, or visit pieceworkmagazine.com.

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-Margaret Mead

the dream rocket

the power of global collaboration

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By Post

Share Your Memories

For a dissertation on needlework during World War II, textiles student Lynn-Kimber Openshaw would like to hear from anyone who remembers doing needlework during that period. Contact Lynn at Flat 10B Clovelly, 20 Blackwater Rd., Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 4JQ, England; lynnopenshaw@btinternet.com.

Send your comments, questions, and ideas to "By Post," c/o PieceWork, *201 E. Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537-5655; e-mail piecework@interweave.com. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.*

A Miniature Lace Tablecloth to Knit from the September/October 2009 issue.

Correction

In the instructions for "A Miniature Lace Tablecloth to Knit" (September/October 2009), Round 41 should read:

Rnd 41: *Ssk, yo, ssk, yo, k2, sl 1 k2tog psso, k2, yo, k2tog, yo, k2tog, yo, k2, k2tog, yo, k1, yo, k7, yo, k1, yo, ssk, k2, yo; rep from * to end. A corrected chart is available on our website, showing the two additional knit stitches in the second-to-last cluster (reading from right to left): pieceworkmagazine.com; click on "Corrections" in the list on the left, then on "*PieceWork* magazine corrections."

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MAGAZINE PRESENTS THE

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2010 Heart Ornament Contest

Create a beautiful, eye-catching or whimsical heart ornament and WIN!

From the Warmth of Your Heart

Send us your handmade heart ornaments incorporating knitting/crochet, needlework (embroidery, cross-stitch, bead embroidery, needlepoint) lacemaking/tatting, or quilting and you could win $500 in cash or $200 worth of needlework supplies provided by our generous contest sponsors.
Entries must be a maximum of 4" in size.

Deadline: April 1, 2010

Each year the awards, an annual cooperative effort between *PieceWork* magazine and industry sponsors, showcase the best work of needlecrafters. The Excellence in Needle Arts Awards Heart Ornament contest winners will be announced and on display at the June TNNA trade show. They'll also be featured in the July/August issue of *PieceWork*.

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Connecting Threads — quilting

For the complete rules and entry form visit pieceworkmagazine.com

Heart Ornament by Ann Budd • Photograph by Ann Swanson

Metamorphosis by Jane Sassaman. 2000. The New England Quilt Museum, Lowell, Massachusetts. *Photograph courtesy of the artist.*

Detail Victorian crazy quilt by Flora Ellen Jenkins. 1887. Ellene Sumner donation, San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles, San Jose, California. *Photograph courtesy of the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles.*

CALENDAR

EXHIBITIONS

Call for Entries. June 19–July 17. Fiberworks 2010, 706 W. Sheridan, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Entry deadline for actual work: June 12 and 14. (405) 831-0245; www.fiberartistsok.org.

San Francisco, California. April 22–September 28. Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life, at the Contemporary Jewish Museum. (415) 655-7834; www.thejcm.org.

San Jose, California. Through February 7. Still Crazy, at the San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles. (408) 971-0323; www.sjquiltmuseum.org.

Torrance, California. February 20–21. South Bay Quilters Guild's Quilt Show: Thirty Years of Quilting, at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center. (310) 372-3945; qshow@southbayquiltersguild.org.

Lowell, Massachusetts. Through February 25. Masters: 40 Contemporary Art Quilters, at the New England Quilt Museum. (978) 452-4207; www.nequiltmuseum.org.

Manchester, England. March 7. The Textile Society's Manchester Fair, at Armitage Centre, Fallowfield. 077193 47512; www.textilesociety.org.uk.

SYMPOSIUMS, WORKSHOPS, CONSUMER SHOWS, TRAVEL

Aurora, Nebraska. March 26–27. Nebraska Mennonite Relief Sale Quilt & Craft Auction, at the Hamilton County Fairgrounds. (402) 627-7655; tomars@windstream.net.

New York, New York. January 21–24. The American Antiques Show, sponsored by *The Magazine Antiques*, at the American Folk Art Museum. (212) 265-1040; www.folkartmuseum.org.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. March 4–7. Ladies & Gentlemen of the 1860s Conference: Clothing and Culture of the Civil War Era, at Camp Hill. (717) 337-0283; www.genteelarts.com.

Lancaster, Pennsylvania. March 24–27. American Quilter's Society Quilt Show and Contest, at the Lancaster County Convention Center. (270) 898-7903; www.americanquilter.com

Bolivia and Peru. February 8–22. Carnival & Crafts with Cynthia LeCount Samake. Behind the Scenes Adventures. (707) 939-8874; lacynthia@vom.com; www.btsadventures.com.

Guatemala. November 11–20. Art Workshops in Guatemala: Weaving, Textiles and Craft Tour. (612) 825-0747; info@artguat.org; www.artguat.org.

Myanmar (Burma). January 20–February 7. Traditional crafts, temples, archaeological sites. Craft World Tours. (585) 548-2667; www.craftworldtours.com.

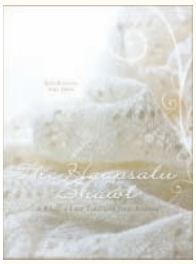
Peru. April 16–May 7. Fair Trade Textile/Folk Art/Market Tours. Puchka Peru. textiletours@puchkaperu.com; www.puchkaperu.com.

Please send your event information at least four months before the month of publication. Listings are made as space is available; we cannot guarantee that your listing will appear.

CALENDAR ONLINE

This issue's listing of events is also available on our website. Visit piecework magazine.com; click on Inside This Issue.

BOOK MARKS



The Haapsalu Shawl: A Knitted Lace Tradition from Estonia

Siiri Reimann and Aime Edasi

English edition, Türi, Estonia: Saara kirjastus, 2009, distributed by Lacis, Berkeley, California, and Unicorn Books, Petaluma, California. Hardbound, 187 pages, $60. ISBN 978-9985-9925-9-3.

Haapsalu, Estonia, is home to a lace tradition that spans nearly 200 years. In addition to tracing the evolution of that tradition, Siiri Reimann and Aime Edasi, both teachers and knitters in Haapsalu, offer 120 center and 9 lace-edge patterns collected by the knitters of Haapsalu, during a lifetime of knitting. Charts with easy-to-read symbols supplement clear color photographs of the patterns. The detailed instructions for the traditional method of constructing a Haapsalu shawl—rectangular in shape and always finished with a lacy edge that is knitted separately and sewn onto the completed center—are superb. Tips from five of Haapsalu's master knitters further help ensure successful completion of a shawl.

The lace tradition and the story of Haapsalu are intertwined: the lovely town, located on a bay on Estonia's west coast, filled with wooden houses themselves decorated with lacy ornaments and watched over by a medieval castle, became a tourist destination in the early nineteenth century; it was the tourists who inspired the women of Haapsalu to knit and sell lace shawls and scarves. More than forty color photographs—images of Haapsalu from historic archives as well as in modern times and of knitters past and present—illustrate the text and tell a story of their own. If you love knitting lace and have an interest in tradition, this book will offer you many happy hours, days, and—dare I say—years of fascinating knitting.

—Nancy Bush

Twisted-Stitch Knitting: Traditional Patterns & Garments from the Styrian Enns Valley

Maria Erlbacher

English edition, Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press, 2009. Softbound, 204 pages, $28. ISBN 978-0-942018-30-1.

In twisted-stitch knitting, knit stitches are "worked into the back loop, producing twisted stitches which are more pronounced. . . . Motifs are created by crossing twisted knit stitches to the left or right over other stitches." The twisted-stitch patterns presented here are ones that knitters in the Styrian Enns Valley of Austria have been passing down since the eighteenth century. One of those knitters, Thekla Zeiler (1883–1960), is responsible for about 150 different motifs, many of which are included here. Laying her needles aside, Zeiler also worked as a farmhand, day laborer, and ski instructor. Author Maria Erlbacher, who has herself taught the technique, has dedicated herself to furthering the work of Zeiler and the other knitters who created this Austrian folk art.

The book's Techniques section offers clear illustrations, black-and-white photographs of swatch details, and directions for reading the charts. Following are charts and detail photographs for 174 patterns, including Burning Love in a Triangle, Alpine Path, and Pieced Chain with Plum Pit. Projects for men's, women's, and boy's stockings, a vest, and cardigans for men, women, and children are accompanied by step-by-step instructions, charts, schematics, and process photographs. The author's tips and encouragement are invaluable.

This is a substantive must-have for knitters who love traditional patterns. They will find the possibilities for utilizing the technique nearly endless.

—Andy MacKenzie

Alice Starmore's Book of Fair Isle Knitting

Alice Starmore

Mineola, New York: Dover, 2009. Softbound, 208 pages, $24.95. ISBN 978-0-486-47218-8.

At last, Alice Starmore's seminal book, originally published in 1988, is back in this reprinted edition complete with revised supplier information, an updated biography of the author, and photographs of some of her recent work. You'll find a meticulously researched and beautifully illustrated history of Scotland's Fair Isle knitting; pattern charts; detail photographs in color; a substantial technique section with color illustrations that is almost like having a personal workshop with Alice; and fourteen projects with step-by-step instructions, each imbued with Alice's signature style. Alice Starmore's affection for and interest in Fair Isle knitting is contagious. If you are interested in stranded-color knitting, this is the book for you.

—Alexandra Eastman

feminine details

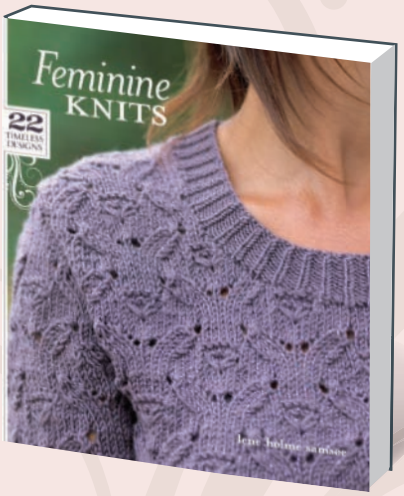


lace, bobbles, and bows



enjoyable knitting





Feminine Knits: 22 Timeless Designs

by Lene Holme Samsøe

This intriguing pattern collection blends 22 captivating designs with flattering, feminine silhouettes that you'll be eager to start and delighted to finish. With skirts, jackets, tanks, pullovers, and accessories, *Feminine Knits* showcases texture, lace, and unusual pattern construction. Inspired by current and vintage fashion and the mathematical aspect of design, Danish knitwear designer Lene Holme Samsøe features projects for every season, skill level, time commitment, and occasion.

$24.95

ISBN 978-1-59668-140-8

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Barbara G. Walker's Diamond Basketweave pattern shown with knitting direction rotated.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

A New Pattern Stitch *from a* Knitting Legend

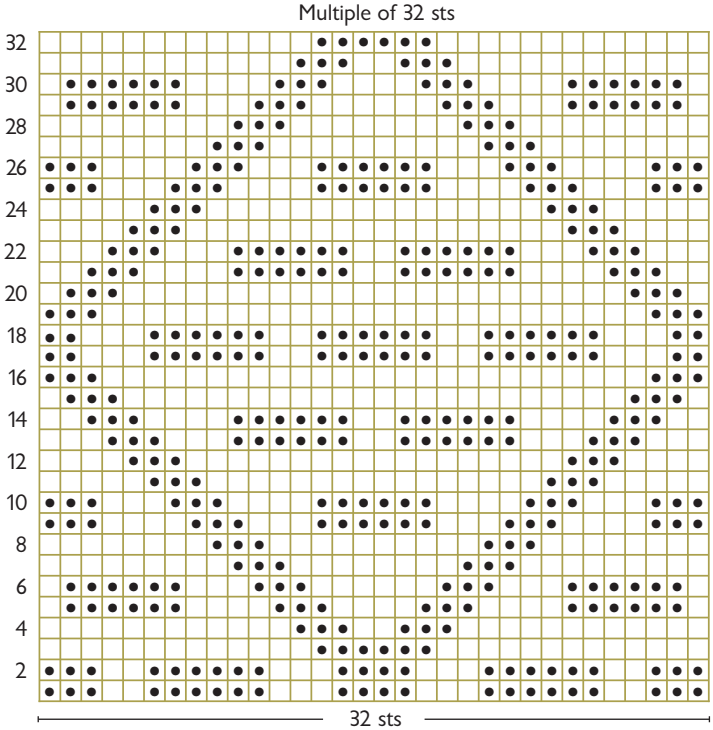
Diamond Basketweave

BARBARA G. WALKER

This brand new pattern stitch uses nothing but basic knit and purl stitches. It is 32 stitches wide and 32 rows high. The pattern looks taller on the chart, which shows the right side of the fabric, than it looks in actual knitting because the purled rows flatten the design and add width. Follow the chart from right to left on right-side (odd-numbered) rows and from left to right on wrong-side (even-numbered) rows. Blank squares indicate stitches that are knitted on the right side, purled on the wrong side; dotted squares indicate stitches that are purled on the right side, knitted on the wrong side.

ABOUT THE DESIGNER. *Barbara G. Walker is the inventor of more than a thousand original pattern stitches. Her knitting books, reprinted by Schoolhouse Press in Pittsville, Wisconsin, are:* A Treasury of Knitting Patterns *(1968; reprint, 1998),* A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns *(1985; reprint, 1998),* A Third Treasury of Knitting Patterns *(formerly* Charted Knitting Designs, *1986; reprint, 1998),* A Fourth Treasury of Knitting Patterns *(formerly* Sampler Knitting, *1973; reprint, 2001),* Mosaic Knitting *(1976; reprint, 2006),* Knitting from the Top *(1972; reprint, 1996), and* Barbara Walker's Learn-to-Knit Afghan Book *(1974; reprint, 1997). In addition, Barbara has written eleven nonknitting books, mostly on feminist themes, including the 1,100-page* Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets *(San Francisco: Harper, 1983), which received a Book of the Year award from London's daily newspaper* The Times. *She also created original paintings for the "Barbara Walker Tarot Deck" and the "I Ching of the Goddess" cards. She has done professional designing for yarn companies, and Barbara personally knitted every one of the hundreds of swatches shown in her books as well as the one shown here.*

Diamond Basketweave
Multiple of 32 sts



Key
- ☐ k on RS, p on WS
- ⊡ p on RS, k on WS

Who Was Miss Money?

In Search of a Victorian Knitter

June Hall

Miss Money's Fly's Body pattern with original sample knitted in cotton. *Unless otherwise noted, all photographs courtesy of the author.*

PUBLISHED INSTRUCTIONS for knitting were not plentiful before about 1840, although by that time knitting had a centuries-old place in both domestic and commercial production. Young knitters learned by example; skills were passed down from mother to daughter. Beginning in the sixteenth century, schools had been established in English towns to provide knitting instruction for poor girls to train them for useful work.

The Ladies' Cabinet of French Designs for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Edgings and Collars by A Parisian Lady (London: Sherwood, 1846), with nine patterns for knitted lace edges and insertions, is an early example of its kind. Lace, for trimming both dress and household linen, was fashionable in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901). Bobbin lace probably was the most common form, but knitted lace also was popular. By the late 1840s, lace knitting was evolving from a simple edging using knit and purl stitches to more complex designs with patterns of holes and other features.

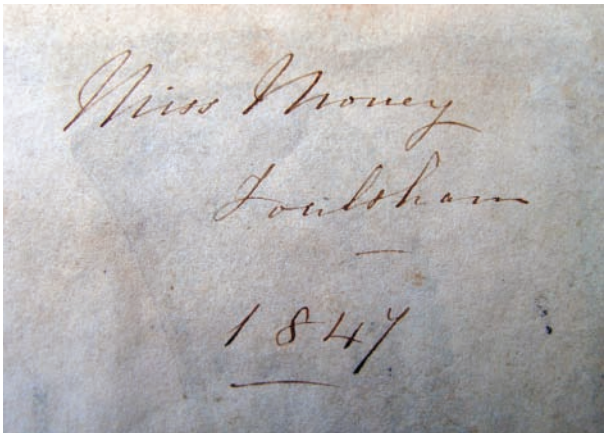
The owner of a secondhand bookshop in Yorkshire, England, discovered a copy of *The Ladies' Cabinet* in the 1970s and gave it to one of my friends, a keen knitter, who in turn gave it to me. On the flyleaf in faded ink is the inscription

Miss Money
Foulsham
1847

Within the pages of the book, I was excited to find four pages, each measuring just under 6¼ by 4 inches (16 by 10 cm), which had been torn from a notebook. On these pages, in the same handwriting as the inscription on the flyleaf, are "Instructions for knitted Lace & Insertion" with directions for fourteen edgings and insertions. Small knitted samples stitched onto the paper accompany six of them. None of the patterns appears in *The Ladies' Cabinet*. I call these pages "Miss Money's Patterns."

Perhaps the most intriguing feature of these pages is the way in which the patterns are written. The directions in *The Ladies' Cabinet* are explicit, written in prose; even the numbers are written as words, not numerals. Miss Money's Patterns, in contrast, are written in what can only be described as a code with a few words among the symbols; I had never seen lace knitting instructions written in this code. The pattern for the Saxon Edging from *The Ladies' Cabinet* in the sidebar on page 13 well illustrates the difference between published patterns and Miss Money's manuscript code although Miss Money does use the traditional word "loop" for "stitch."

Some of the patterns have names such as Shell Pattern, Precious Edge, and Grecian Not (sic); others are simply descriptive: Lace, Insertion, Edging with 2 Holes. The symbols are 0s, Xs, 1s, 3s, 4s, and 5s. The patterns were written with a steel-nib pen and oak-gall ink on paper with no datable watermark. The handwriting is that of an educated person.



LEFT: Inscription on the flyleaf of the author's copy of *The Ladies' Cabinet of French Designs for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Edgings and Collars* (London: Sherwood, 1846). RIGHT: Foulsham village center showing late-eighteenth-century houses and the tower of the Church of the Holy Innocents.

Who was Miss Money? Foulsham, the place name on the flyleaf of *The Ladies' Cabinet*, is a small village in the county of Norfolk in eastern England. But national census returns for 1841 and 1851 and the county's trade directories of 1845, 1850, and 1854 record no one named Money in Foulsham in those years. Nonetheless, Money was not an uncommon family name in eastern England, and the 1851 census for the county of Norfolk, *excluding* Foulsham (population 1,000 in 1851), contains dozens of entries for single women between the ages of eighteen and thirty with this surname. Any—or none—of them could have been "our" Miss Money.

Norfolk is still largely rural. In medieval times, it was one of the most highly populated and wealthy counties in England; much of its wealth was derived from wool and cloth production. Its long seacoast, once busy with trading ships, is now a haven for seabirds and is popular with visitors.

Driving through the quiet, flat landscape toward Foulsham, I stopped by a field of ripening wheat bordered by wild flowers—convolvulus, hawkbit, and sorrel. The setting, with the woods and pastures beyond, could have been 1847. In the opposite direction, however, I saw a busy main road, an aircraft flew overhead, and my daydream of the past was broken.

A serious fire in 1770 destroyed Foulsham's church and fourteen houses; the flint church tower, however, was saved and the rest of the town rebuilt. In 1847, the fire

The Ladies' Cabinet

The frontispiece of *The Ladies' Cabinet of French Designs for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Edgings and Collars* by A Parisian Lady (London: Sherwood, 1846) shows the design for a collar, Princess Alice Pattern. The following chart and the Saxon Edging are from the book.

Pattern	Pin Size	Thread, Six-Cord
Paris Lace Insertion Collar	16	28
Edge for the Collar	16	28
Open Brussels Lace Cuff	18	30
Edging, Helena Augusta Pattern	19	32
Insertion Lace Cuffs	17	34
The Edge for Cuffs	17	34
Insertion Lace Edging	20	36
German Edging	21	38
Saxon Edging	22	40

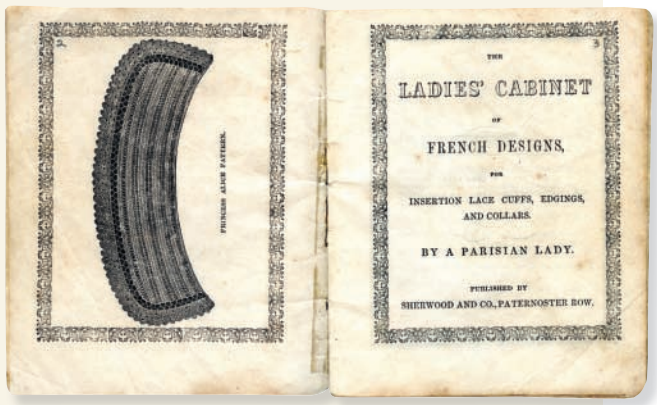
Saxon Edging

Cast on six stitches.

First Row. Slip one, knit two plain, bring the cotton forward, knit two together, make two, knit one.

Second Row. Knit two plain, purl one, knit plain till three remain, make one, knit two together, knit one.

Third Row. Take off one, knit two plain, make one, knit two together, knit plain to the end of the row.



The Ladies' Cabinet of French Designs for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Edgings and Collars frontispiece (London: Sherwood, 1846).

Fourth Row. Cast off two, knit plain till three remain, knit two together, knit one.

Note: The Ladies' Cabinet recommends Barber's six-cord thread. J. L. Barber's company in Norwich, the ancient cathedral city of Norfolk county, was well established by the 1840s.

—J. H.

Miss Money's Patterns

The following material is taken from the four pages discovered in my copy of *The Ladies' Cabinet of French Designs for Insertion Lace Cuffs, Edgings and Collars*, which I have named "Miss Money's Patterns," along with my translation of the symbols. You may use the patterns as intended—to create fine lace—or feel free to find new uses for these directions that were written down more than 160 years ago.

The Symbols
1 = knit
0 = yarn forward
3 = purl
X = knit two together
5 = slip one stitch
4 = pass slipped stitch over
In addition, the number 3 with a vertical line through it means "purl two together," and the word "seam" is a synonym for "purl."

The Patterns
Lace*
Precious Edge*
Edging with 2 Large Holes
Antimacassar
Leaf Pattern
Bread Tray Cover
Grecian Not*
Castleton Lace

Fly's Body*
Shell Pattern*
Pattern for Insertions, Rose Leaf
Open Insertion*
Bead Stitch
Insertion
* indicates those with a knitted sample

Miss Money's Antimacassar Pattern
Cast on 25 loops for each stripe
1st XXXX10101010101010101XXXX
2nd 1 the row
3rd 3 the row
4th 1 the row
[Presumably, the stripes could be sewn together to the width required. In this period, upholstery became vulnerable to soiling by the macassar oil that stylish men were applying to their hair. Thus, the advent of the antimacassar, a decorative panel of fabric laid across the back of an armchair or sofa that could be removed easily for laundering.]

Miss Money's Lace and Precious Edge patterns with original samples knitted in cotton.

Lace
Cast on 7 Loops
1st 110000X00X1
2nd 11131131311
3rd 1 the row
4th 1 the row
5th Take off four, 10000X00X1
Commence again at the 2nd row

Precious Edge
Cast on 11 loops seam 1 row
1st 0154111110X1
2nd 5110X seam the rest
3rd 010X1X110X1
4th 5110X seam the rest
5th 011105X4110X1
6th 5110X seam the rest

Fly's Body
Cast on 8 loops
1st 1110X00X1
2nd 1113110X1
3rd 1110X100X1
4th 11131110X1
5th 1110X111111
6th Take off 2, 11110X1
[The original specifies six knit stitches in Row 5, but this is an error. The pattern works with five knit stitches, as in Miss Money's knitted sample.]

—J. H.

would have been just within the living memory of the oldest residents and would still have been a topic of conversation. The village center is framed by the elegant late-eighteenth-century houses and looks much as it would have in Miss Money's time (if we ignore the road surface and clutter of parked cars). The community was typical of most English villages in the mid-nineteenth century, with farmers, tradesmen, and craft workers using local materials; a dressmaker, basketmaker, brewer, grocer, draper, bookseller, veterinary surgeon, solicitor, and surgeon providing services for the inhabitants.

As an unmarried woman, Miss Money could have been living in Foulsham in the decade between the national censuses. She could have been a governess or nursemaid in one of the Georgian houses near the village center. She may have been staying with relatives, spending time as companion to an aunt or grandmother. Maybe she was teaching young girls needlework and needed samples to show them. Or, more romantically, and quite probably, she was preparing her own trousseau, the clothes and household linen she would need if and when she married. It seems safe to assume, as she was a literate person, that she came from a family with the means to educate her. Perhaps she was quite young—the title of one pattern is misspelled (Grecian Not instead of Knot), and several of the written patterns do not work out without adjustment—and used the title "Miss" to make herself feel grown up.

At the Costume and Textile Study Centre at Carrow House in Norwich, I examined examples of mid-nineteenth-century costume and knitted lace. Much of the lace is undated and the maker(s) unknown, but the examples I saw were comparable with Miss Money's. I envisioned Miss Money in a circa 1845 pink-and-blue shot silk dress from the collection with a satin strip down the front in

The Fly's Body Dare

DONNA DRUCHUNAS

After June Hall distributed the Fly's Body pattern at lunch at the Mile High Lace Conference (held in Denver in 2008), she and I went to a local yarn shop for a fiber break. When I saw some gorgeous Ozark Handspun yarn that I had to buy, June dared me to use it and the Fly's Body pattern to make something to wear to the banquet that night. I bought some size 19 needles, and as soon as we got back to the hotel, I cast on. This capelet is the result, and I wore it to the banquet that evening.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Donna Druchunas is the author of several books, including* Arctic Lace: Knitted Projects and Stories Inspired by Alaska's Native Knitters *and* Ethnic Knitting Exploration: Lithuania, Iceland, and Ireland *(Fort Collins, Colorado: Nomad Press, 2006 and 2009, respectively). Visit her website at www.sheeptoshawl.com.*

Capelet knitted by Donna Druchunas using Miss Money's Fly's Body pattern.
Photograph by Dominic Cotignola.

pink, blue, and white trimmed with ruching of the same material. The double row of buttons has frogging in blue-and-white cord. The pointed bodice has a low V-neck, the long sleeves have cuffs, and the skirt is full, gauged (pleated) at the waist.

At present, we do not know—perhaps we'll never know—Miss Money's first name, her age, or what she looked like; why she wrote her patterns; if she invented her code or used a current convention; or how the pages came to be in a needlework book in a Yorkshire bookshop about 160 miles (257 km) from Foulsham in the 1970s. More research is necessary, and as a local historian, I shall leave no stone unturned. Whoever she was, she has left a fascinating legacy in the early and unusual examples of knitted lace edgings.

At this stage of my search, I am pleased to share my decoding of Miss Money's symbols and some of the patterns with you and hope you enjoy finding new uses for them. Eventually, I intend to produce a complete facsimile of both Miss Money's Patterns and *The Ladies' Cabinet.* ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *June Hall lives in Cumbria, England, where she keeps a flock of rare Soay sheep. She is a local historian, vice chairman of the Eden Valley Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers, and the author of* Henrietta Herdwick *(Cumbria, England: Unicorn Projects, 2004), a children's book about Herdwick sheep, a breed native to England's Lake District.*

Miss Money's Lace pattern knitted by the author in 4-ply Shetland wool.

Knitting *in* Jewish Lithuania

DONNA DRUCHUNAS WITH ANNA VERSCHIK

THE WORD *LITE*, Yiddish for "Lithuania," refers to an area of Eastern Europe that extends beyond the borders of present-day Lithuania to include parts of Poland, Belarus, and Russia where Jewish culture flourished for centuries. Three years ago, I first visited Lithuania to learn about traditional knitting. Online references to Jewish knitters mentioned that in many villages, as well as in some larger cities, Jews—often comprising half or more of the pre–World War II (1939–1945) population—knitted for pleasure and for pay. But when I visited the area, I found little or no mention of Jewish history or culture.

ABOVE: The ghetto library in Vilnius, Lithuania. 2009. BELOW: Memorial in the Paneriai (Ponar) Forest, 7 miles (11.3 km) from Vilnius, Lithuania, where Jews from the Vilna Ghetto were killed in 1943. 2009. *Photographs by Halley Cohen.*

More than 90 percent of Lithuanian Jews were murdered by the Nazis and local collaborators during World War II, but I expected to see at least remnants of the rich Jewish cultural contribution to Lithuania in museums. I was surprised to find only a few mentions of Jews in Holocaust memorials and at mass gravesites. Virtually no Jewish material culture has been preserved in Lithuanian ethnographic collections. I concluded that the only ways to find out what people were knitting in Jewish communities would be to talk to survivors, look at old photographs, and read statistics about trades practiced in each village and city.

As I began to plan another trip, this one specifically to study Jewish history and culture but also of course to learn about knitting, a friend sent me a link to the 2009 Summer Literary Seminar's Jewish Lithuania Program, a seminar for English speakers with "a serious interest in the Jewish literature and heritage of . . . Lite" in Vilnius. I immediately decided to attend.

Personal Stories

During the program, I heard several Holocaust survivors tell their stories. Among them was Fania Brantsovskaya, who was born in Kaunas (Kovno) in 1922 and grew up in Vilnius. During the war, Fania lived in the Vilnius Ghetto, from which she escaped literally minutes before all those who remained—men, women, children, even infants—were taken to the Paneriai (Ponar) Forest and murdered. I don't speak Yiddish so I asked my friend Anna Verschik if she would speak with Fania about knitting; her account is in the sidebar on page 18.

Hidden Nuggets

I felt privileged to be able to learn so much firsthand information from Fania and the other people I met during the program. In many cases, however, all I was able to find about knitting were brief mentions in obscure documents, with few details about the products made. The following are a few examples.

From *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Communities in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, n.d.): At the beginning of the twentieth century, in Nadvirna, Ukraine, "about 100 Jewish women worked in home-based businesses mostly in knitting and spinning."

From shtetlinks.jewishgen.org: In Biržiai (Birzh), Lithuania, "[t]here were also Jewish owned weaving and knitting workshops as well as a flax processing workshop where several Jews were employed"; and in Utena (Utyan), "[t]wo local Jews established workshops for knitting socks, marketing their products mainly in Vilna [Vilnius], but also in other places. These workshops employed poor Jewish girls. . . ."

I found numerous references to knitted socks. According to Nancy Green in "Gender and Jobs in the Jewish Community: Europe at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" (*Jewish Social Studies*, Volume 8, Winter/Spring 2002), women made up about one-quarter of the Jewish workforce in Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century, supporting their families so that their husbands could study at the local yeshiva. "What did the women do?" Green asks. "They sewed, or perhaps knitted. Approximately four out of five Jewish women artisans were seamstresses, knit socks (particularly in Vilna, where it was a veritable specialty), or made hats or gloves."

From *The Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 2006): In nineteenth-century Smorgon, Belarus, ". . . the Jews of the town earned their livelihoods from carpentry, the knitting of socks, the baking of bagels (which were famous throughout Russia), retail trade, and peddling."

On the website, "The Shtetl and I" (www.vishnive.org/e_index.html), in which Dvora Rogovin Helberg has recorded her mother's account of her life from 1915 until after the end of World War II:

> Mother taught me how to knit socks. There were no . . . knitting needles. What did I do? I found an iron wire and Mother helped me cut it into five knitting needles. That way I learned how to knit socks. I used to spend hours undoing the stitches of old woolen stockings and sweaters and then knitting. . . . I used to fix socks with five knitting needles. . . I remember having a little bit of wool. Since I loved cats I knitted socks and clothing for my cat, and then sent it into the snow to see how she "enjoyed" the new dress.

Up until the beginning of World War II, Jewish women and girls were actively involved in knitting and needlework, both for personal use and as a source of income. But normal life for Jews in Eastern Europe ended when the Nazis invaded.

Knitting for Survival

Even in ghettos, in concentration camps, in hiding, and in the forest fighting with partisans, Jewish women and girls continued to knit. Some knitters made things for themselves and their loved ones, others worked on commissions, making garments and accessories for Jews and for German soldiers; still others worked in knitting

Even in ghettos, in concentration camps, in hiding, and in the forest fighting with partisans, Jewish women and girls continued to knit.

A family camped in a forest near Lenin, Poland. One of thirty images of Jewish resistance in the exhibition Pictures of Resistance: The Wartime Photographs of Jewish Partisan Faye Schulman. Photograph from *A Partisans Memoir* by Faye Schulman (Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Second Story Press, 1995). For more information about the Jewish Partisans and the photography of Faye Schulman, visit www.jewishpartisans.org. *Photograph courtesy of Second Story Press.*

"workshops" and factories. Anyone who had a skill, even one as seemingly commonplace as knitting, had a survival advantage.

In *The Disne Book of Remembrance* (Tel Aviv: Mufat Press, 1996), Nina Smushkin describes knitting in the Gluboke Ghetto: "Together with my sister I worked in a knitting workshop. The Germans gave us wool and we knitted socks, mittens, and sweaters for them."

In "The Death of the Jewish Community of Braslav" (online article, www.seligman.org.il/braslav_holocaust.html, 2008), Simon Dubnov writes: "The Jews of the ghetto were forced to do unskilled menial labor, such as washing floors for the Germans, loading logs onto trains, knitting socks and gloves. They received 15 deko (150 g) of bread each day, surviving by bartering with the peasants though it was forbidden to speak or trade with gentiles."

Fania Brantsovskaya's Story

Fania learned to knit at school. The first thing she made was a crocheted jacket worked in the round. "I did something wrong," Fania said, "and instead of a jacket I got a collar! It was twisted. Others had a jacket and I had a collar!" Later, Fania knitted a jacket, but the sleeves were too narrow. "My mother compelled me to unravel and redo it," Fania remembers. "She didn't know how to knit, but she wanted it to be perfect." At school, girls crocheted mittens because knitted mittens were not in style. Fania made a jacket in moss stitch, "a very pretty stitch pattern," that she took to the forest when she escaped from the ghetto. "Unfortunately, before the last action we buried all our things in a hole in the woods, and there it remained!"

Fania's aunt graduated from the Hilf Durkh Arbet [Help through Work] professional school for women, where she learned sewing, hat making, embroidery, and other crafts. She worked in the shop that sold yarn and embroidery accessories, as well as finished pieces. On Fania's birthday, her sisters got "real presents," but Fania got "something started that I had to finish or some yarn." She recalls being dissatisfied: "Everybody got real presents and I had to work!"

Before the war, Jewish knitters bought colorful wool yarn in shops around Vilnius, and "undyed peasant wool" and linen in the market. Shops carried silk yarn and bouclé, which "we bought . . . during the Soviet occupation because we understood that everything would disappear" during war. Sometimes knitters raveled garments to make something new. Fania remembers reusing yarn from a green jacket to make a shawl.

Like all other Jews in Vilnius, Fania was forced to move into the ghetto on September 6, 1941. She was nineteen years old. At first, Fania was "driven to hard labor, to dig ditches and so on," but after a while, she was able to use knitting skills to avoid more difficult work.

Fania Brantsovskaya. Vilnius, Lithuania. 2009.
Photograph by Anna Verschik.

The first thing she made was "something like galoshes; they were put on the shoes or boots. It was not yarn but some kind of plant, I don't know the name. Germans would bring it." Later Fania got orders to make clothes for German officers' wives and vests for the men. They were "nice things with beautiful patterns. I still remember one, the Pepitta color pattern." Sometimes the officers brought the yarn, but "[i]n the ghetto, there was a member of the Jewish police," Fania said. "He was a terrible person. I had some yarn from before, and I had to make a blouse for his bride."

"There were other people who knitted." Fania remembers, "and people had mittens that the Germans gave them for work. We would unravel them and knit. This was night work . . . orders from Jews. Once a girl . . . wanted a dress. I went to my friend's because I knew her mother had knitted her a dress before the war. I took the dress and counted the increases and decreases, how many stitches, and so on, and then I knitted my first dress." Fania also knitted shawls and sold them to peasants.

On September 23, 1943, Fania said goodbye to her parents, put on a winter coat even though it was warm, and left the ghetto with several others who were helped to escape by "a man [who] let us out through a small gate. . . ." Moments later, policemen, who did not recognize the girls as Jews, asked them to cross the street and move away from the ghetto. The liquidation was beginning. Fania and the others met up with previous escapees and Soviet partisans in the forest, where they lived and fought for the remainder of the war.

Fania knitted in the forest when she was with the partisans. Her husband—"at that time he wasn't my husband yet"—had a knitted sweater of "peasant wool." When his hand was wounded, and he couldn't put his arm through the sleeve, Fania raveled the sweater and made a vest. A rifle was easier to come by than knitting needles, as Fania's main task with the partisans was fighting. "There was a girl with long hair and hairpins," Fania remembers. "I straightened the hairpins and made a pair of needles." Fania continued to knit in the forest as well as to sew. "We made blouses from parachutes and colored them with onion peels and herbs to prevent them from luminescence in the dark."

On July 13, 1944, Fania's partisan unit marched into Vilnius, following the Soviet army. The rest of Fania's family had perished. Fania continued to knit a lot, often raveling one article to use the yarn for another. She taught both of her daughters, who were born after the war, to knit, and her grandchildren have learned to knit as well.

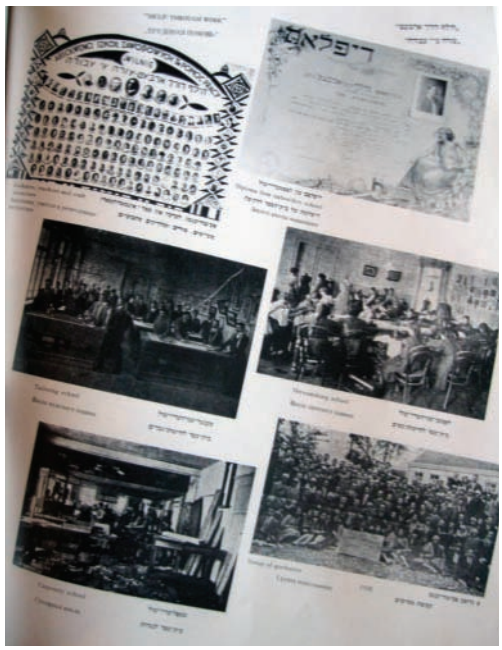
—A. V.

In *Holocaust: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, Volume 4 (Florence, Kentucky: Routledge, 2004), David Cesarani and Sarah Kavanaugh note that in Ukraine, "[i]n the winter of 1942–1943, peasant women were ordered to turn over quotas of knitted apparel designed for German soldiers; they availed themselves of the work of Jewish girls who did the knitting." In addition, "In order to live, prisoners were obliged to seek ways to become part of the economic life of the camp through labor, trade, and services. This activity went on in all Nazi camps. . . . In Skarżysko, the 'Random women' were the first to take up crafts. Although most of them were destitute, they had smuggled in all manner of small items that turned out to be lifesavers—sewing needles and thread, knitting needles, scissors, mirrors . . . even bedding." Yarn had to be pilfered from factories at the risk of death or purchased from locals who ordered the finished products. Guards were bribed to allow yarn into the ghetto.

In *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), Nechama Tec tells of three women who were sent to the Skarżysko-Kamienna camp in Poland, where ". . . they lived in the same barrack but worked in different sections of the factory. One . . . met a Polish woman, an outside laborer, who brought wool to her Jewish co-workers and asked them to knit sweaters for her. The three girls shared the work." According to one of the knitters, "The three of us would make sweaters, and the woman who gave us the yarn paid us with bread. . . . When we had a piece of bread, we divided it; we would not hide it but eat it to prevent it from being stolen."

In "Righteous Gentiles in Belarus Part of Local Jewish Community" (online article, www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/072802JTABelarus.shtml, 2002), Adam B. Ellick writes: "In 1941, [Vanda] Skuratovich was home with her parents in Minsk [Belarus] when four Jews—a father, mother, and two children—knocked on her door. Skuratovich recognized the family as one that had owned a nearby shop before the war. Without hesitation, Skuratovich and her family removed a section of the wood floor and dug a pit below, where the four hid for 18 months. . . In the pit, [the daughter] knitted socks, and at night the father came out to cook."

Lola Hudes Bell, whose memoir *One Came Back* is quoted in "The Bielski Forest" by her son, Y. Eric Bell (online article, www.thenewamerican.com/index.php/history/european/1259, 2009), recalls knitting while with the Jewish Bielski partisan group, which was active in the area of Poland that is now western Belarus, "One afternoon while I was knitting a woolen scarf, gunfire broke the relative quiet and calm of the camp. Germans in retreat from the east who were running for their lives through the woods stumbled upon the Bielski camp. The partisans and the Germans were in battle."



Pages from *Jerusalem of Lithuania*, illustrated and documented by Leyzer Ran (New York: The Laureate Press, 1974), depicting life in Lithuania pre–World War II (1939–1945). *Photographs courtesy of Faye Ran.*

Unimaginable Losses

Eastern European Jewish society virtually was wiped out in World War II, and today it is difficult to find remnants of the material culture of communities that had survived in this part of the word for hundreds of years. The loss of knitted artifacts and other textiles, as sad as it is, is nothing compared with the terror endured by the Jews during World War II and the tragedy of lost lives that ensued. This article is dedicated to all of the Jewish knitters and needleworkers who perished in the Second World

War and to those who survived to tell their stories and pass on their skills. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND DESIGNER. *Donna Druchunas is the author of several books, including* Arctic Lace: Knitted Projects and Stories Inspired by Alaska's Native Knitters *and* Ethnic Knitting Exploration: Lithuania, Iceland, and Ireland *(Fort Collins, Colorado: Nomad Press, 2006 and 2009, respectively). She is writing a book about knitting in Lithuania. Join her on an Alaskan knitting cruise in 2010; visit her website at www.sheeptoshawl.com to learn more.*

She thanks Anna Verschik and Joanne Seiff for their contributions and Dovid Katz, director of the Jewish Lithuania Program and founder of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at Vilnius University, and Fania Brantsovskaya, librarian of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, for their generous spirits and willingness to freely share information. To learn more of Fania's story, visit www.eilatgordinlevitan.com/kovno/kovno_pages/kovno_stories_fania.html.

Anna Verschik is a linguist based in Tallinn, Estonia. She has created several knitting patterns that are available through Ravelry. Visit her blog at kuduja.blogspot.com (in Estonian and English).

Bubbe Shirley's Story

JOANNE SEIFF

Pillows made by Shirley Marcus.
Photograph courtesy of Joanne Seiff.

During and after World War II, Jewish women escaping the Holocaust from throughout Europe relied on their needlework skills to support themselves and their families. My husband's *Bubbe* (Grandma) Shirley Marcus escaped from Poland to the Soviet Union just ahead of the German Army's advance. After a stay in a Siberian work camp, she and her husband found themselves in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where the traditional loose-fitting garments were going out of style in favor of Western-style trousers. Bubbe's sewing skills would serve her well. Working by machine and by hand, she produced trousers, which her husband, Leonard, sold on the black market to returning soldiers. After the war, the family spent six years in Germany in D.P. (displaced persons) camps, where her daughter Barbara learned to knit from another woman at the camp. A raveled sweater became yarn, and some sharpened wires became knitting needles.

After the family arrived in the United States in February 1951, Shirley Marcus supported them with a job in a textile factory. She was able to communicate with a foreman who knew a little Yiddish, but her skill with a sewing machine transcended language. In her spare time, she produced beautiful clothes for her daughters and granddaughters. Until the end of her life, Shirley Marcus took joy in her varied needlework skills, creating pillows for newlyweds well into her eighties. When her grandson Jeff married me, I was the lucky recipient of a set of those pillows, which I cherish.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Joanne Seiff is the author of* Fiber Gathering: Knit, Crochet, Spin and Dye More than 20 Projects Inspired by America's Festivals *and* Knit Green: 20 Projects and Ideas for Sustainability *(Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2009). Visit her website at www.joanneseiff.com.*

A Kippah *to* Knit

DONNA DRUCHUNAS

MATERIALS

Koigu Wool Designs KPM, 100% hand-dyed merino wool yarn, fingering weight, 175 yards (160 m)/50 g skein, 1 skein of #2166 Blue; visit www.koigu.com/news1.asp for a list of retailers
Needles, set of 5 double-pointed, size 2 (2.75 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge
Tapestry needle

Finished size: 8 inches (20.3 cm) in diameter
Gauge: 7 sts and 10 rnds = 1 inch (2.5 cm) in St st

See page 51 for Abbreviations

The kippah or yarmulke (skullcap) is traditionally worn at all times by observant Jewish men and today, sometimes also by women. My version is designed in a lacy stitch that is appropriate for a woman.

Instructions

Note: For a smaller size, CO 6 or 7 sts and work 6 or 7 reps around instead of 8.

CO 8 sts. Divide sts evenly onto 4 dpn and join into a circle, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnd 1: [Yo, k1] around—16 sts.
Rnd 2 and all even rnds: K.
Rnd 3: [Yo, k2] around—24 sts.
Rnd 5: [Yo, k3] around—32 sts.
Rnd 7: [Yo, k4] around—40 sts.
Rnd 9: [Yo, k5] around—48 sts.
Rnd 11: [Yo, k6] around—56 sts.
Rnd 13: [Yo, k7] around—64 sts.
Rnd 15: [Yo, k8] around—72 sts.
Rnd 17: [Yo, k9] around—80 sts.
Rnd 19: [K7, k2tog, yo, k1, yo] around—88 sts.
Rnd 21: [K6, k2tog, yo, k3, yo] around—96 sts.
Rnd 23: [K5, k2tog, yo, k5, yo] around—104 sts.
Rnd 25: [K4, k2tog, yo, k7, yo] around—112 sts.
Rnd 27: [K3, k2tog, yo, k9, yo] around—120 sts.
Rnd 29: [K2, k2tog, yo, k11, yo] around—128 sts.
Rnd 31: [K1, k2tog, yo, k13, yo] around—136 sts.
Rnd 33: [K2tog, yo, k15, yo] around—144 sts.
Rnd 34: K.

Edging

Rnds 1, 3, 5, and 7: P.
Rnds 2, 4, and 6: *K1, yo, k7, sl 2 as if to k2tog, k1, p2sso, k7, yo; rep from * around.

BO very loosely.

Finishing

Weave in ends. Wash and place over a head-sized bowl to dry to shape.

Donna Druchunas's knitted kippah. *Photograph by Joe Coca.*

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Zilā Pasaka (Blue Fairytale)* by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. 1985. *Purvītis (Spring)* (adaptation of a Vilhelms Purvītis painting) by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. 1983. *Photographs by Gunārs Janaitis.*

Latvia's Favorite Knitter: Jette Užāne

BARBARA PLAKANS

Jette Užāne with the November/December 1999 issue of *PieceWork* and the mittens she made from Nancy Bush's project ("Kalev's Mittens") in that issue. A friend in the United States sent her the issue. Although Jette did not read English, she made the mittens from the chart and the photographs. *Photograph by Zaiga Greenhalgh.*

AMERICANS' KNITTERLY OBSESSION with those devilishly tricky but tantalizing color-stranded mittens from Latvia began in the 1980s and continues to this day. Lizbeth Upitis, an American who became an active member of the Latvian émigré community in Minneapolis and the leader of *Adīšanas kopa* (the "Knitting Group") for nearly twenty years, ignited our interest with her book *Latvian Mittens: Traditional Designs & Techniques* (see "Further Reading" below) even before the demise of the Soviet Union and the reemergence of Latvia as a sovereign country.

In spring 2006, while in the capital of Riga with my Latvian husband, I questioned Latvian friends about their traditional folk mittens. Initially, they were surprised that mittens should have stimulated more international interest than weaving—most Latvians consider weaving their premier fiber craft. The Museum of Decorative Arts and Design (Dekoratīvās mākslas un dizaina muzejs) in Riga devotes an entire floor to woven tapestries while mittens are only displayed for sale in the museum gift shop. Knitting is a prosaic, portable pastime as far as the natives are concerned, a skill that every young girl was expected to learn in school. Thus, mittens are nearly as common as pigeons in the streets of Riga's old medieval quarter and have long been a prominent souvenir of pushcart vendors, who sometimes knit as they tend shop.

Nonetheless, my Latvian friends repeatedly directed me to one particular knitter: "The best mittens are made by *Cimdu Jettiņa*" (the affectionate diminutive for Jette Užāne

LEFT: *Bērzs* (Birch) by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. 1982. BELOW: *Papele Sarmā (Poplars Covered in Frost)* by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. 1982. *Photographs by Gunārs Janaitis.*

[1924–2007] meaning "little Jette of the mittens"). After I looked through her biography, *Cimdu Jettiņa*, which contains more than six dozen color photographs of her mittens, I understood that here was a knitter who had moved beyond the folk tradition to "paint her world view in yarn," as she told her biographer, the art historian and writer Māris Brancis. And I understood why, when she died, this severely disabled farmwoman with no formal education was memorialized in Riga's largest newspapers in obituaries befitting a revered author or musician.

A Secluded Life

Jette Užāne rarely left *Lejnieki* (Place down in the Valley), the farmstead that her parents built in the 1920s in the Dzērbene district of the Vidzeme countryside in rural northeastern Latvia. Jette, the second of six children, was born there during Latvia's first independence period, and it was her home until her death.

When she was four years old, her grandmother noticed that Jette was bending over, holding her arms stiffly at her sides. A specialist in Riga diagnosed Pott's disease, an old term for spinal tuberculosis that causes the spine to soften and collapse. Jette spent two years at the sanitarium at Krimulda but fell ill again at home before she could enter elementary school. Within a few days, she couldn't move anything but her fingers. She was taken back to Krimulda, where she stayed until she was twelve, learning reading, writing, and basic sewing skills.

Back home but severely deformed, Jette was confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Nonetheless, her mother soon gave her yarn and knitting needles and showed her how to cast on and turn a heel, saying, "Why are you sitting here without working? Knit something; the other children have bare feet." After completing many pairs of socks, at age thirteen, Jette turned out her first pair of mittens. Soon, it took her only a day to knit a pair. She was knitting for everyone in the family as well as mending their clothes.

Her stern grandmother, whose sharp eyes had first spotted her affliction, received Jette's first pair of mittens. As Jette tells it, "I created a special pair (with unusual cuffs) for my mother's mother and expected her to praise me. 'Well, aren't they beautiful?' I asked. Grandmother replied, 'They are not yet beautiful, daughter. They are colorful.' Then I said with a trembling voice through my tears, '*Lukstiņmāte* (Mother of Lukstiņa [her grandmother's farmstead]), what do the mittens need to make them

LEFT TO RIGHT: *Ziemsvēki (Christmas)* mittens by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. Twentieth century. *Čiekurs (Pine Cone)* mittens by Jette Užāne. Knitted. Wool. Latvia. Twentieth century. *Photographs by Joe Coca. Mittens courtesy of Zaiga Greenhalgh.*

beautiful?' Grandmother answered, 'Beautiful, daughter, is only black, white, and gray.' " Undeterred, Jette continued to experiment with scavenged yarn and a set of five double-pointed wire needles (size 0 or smaller).

The custom in rural Latvia was for young women to prepare a dowry chest containing a variety of woven and knitted articles, including numerous pairs of mittens for members of the wedding party and future in-laws. In 1940 at age sixteen, Jette was asked to knit dozens of mittens for one of the farm's serving girls. The girl's fiancé, a wool dyer, provided Jette with a trunk filled with hand-dyed yarn in shades of red, yellow, green, and blue, a gift that she claimed placed her in seventh heaven.

Following the Second World War (1939–1945) and the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union, Jette's mittens were exhibited at shows in Riga and Moscow. She also knitted a series of dolls in folk costumes. In 1960, she was awarded a Soviet honor, the Master of People's Handcrafts.

As time passed, Jette's siblings moved away. After her parents died, Jette remained on the farmstead and, with the help of caring neighbors, lived alone despite her limited mobility. When she was in her forties, she began to experiment more seriously with her own nontraditional knitted designs.

Developing Craft Into Art

In the 1980s, Jette created the first of her mitten "cycles": *Gadalaiki (Seasons of the Year)* with a pair of mittens for each month; each pair coordinated in tone and ornamentation with the other months in the same season. Other mitten cycles followed: familiar trees; flowers; Latvian folk symbols; characters from the national epic, *Lāčplēsis (The Bear Slayer);* fairy tales; and even copies of paintings by her favorite Latvian artists. Jette created several mitten triptychs, including *Ģimenīte (Family)* where the father has a loop-stitched red beard, and *Papele manā logā trīs pārvērtībās (Three Variations of the Poplar Seen from My Window):* on a sunny day, in late November, and covered with frost. In 1988, on the eve of Latvia's second independence, Jette knitted mittens called *Perestroika*, *Tautas Fronte (Popular Front)*, and *Trīs Zvaigznes (Three Stars).*

Many of the mittens' surface designs look embroidered, but Jette insisted that she knitted everything—limited by whatever yarn was available to her. As she put it, "Sometimes I didn't have enough yarn unless I added my intellect. Shortages have made us more energetic." In fact, she said that a sugar shortage in the 1990s inspired her to increase the number of berry decorations on her mittens.

During the 1980s and 1990s, many visitors came to Jette's home to see her mittens and bring her yarn, books, and flowers. In 1995, Latvia's President Guntis Ulmanis awarded Jette the Three Stars medal, the highest honor for accomplishments on behalf of the homeland; she presented him with a pair of mittens. In her mid-seventies and getting stiffer, Jette would knit sitting or lying in bed, but even this became more difficult as her heart weakened. Yet as recently as ten years ago, she was still experimenting after developing an interest in the relationships among Celtic, Scandinavian, Finno-Ugric, and Baltic folk motifs.

Jette's Reflections

Asked to explain her approach to knitting as a creative art, Jette told an interviewer,

> I soon lost interest in following the strict geometrical patterns of traditional Latvian ethnographic designs and wanted to make something more complicated and original. When knitting those traditional designs I was only moving my fingers. I couldn't knit myself into them. Some knitters are satisfied with repeating these patterns correctly, and they are numerous. But I took on my own designs as a challenge. It gave me satisfaction first to find the right colors, then to go to sleep with incomplete thoughts and wake up (usually around 4 A.M.) with solutions. It was a way to escape my troubles. . . .

Jette readily admitted that designing can be frustrating. "For the fairy-tale mitten series, I needed gray for the bees' wings. It seemed simple enough, but I had difficulty finding the right color. Fitting colors and designs together is always a puzzle."

Often it meant ripping out what she had knitted: "Five times I unraveled the mittens I call *Spīdola* (named for the sorceress in *The Bear Slayer*). I may choose two or three shades of a color and then change my mind a few times depending on the sunlight or shadows and my own mood."

Jette's Legacy

Several of Jette's mittens are on display in the permanent folk collection of the Latvian National History Museum (Latvijas Nacionālais Vēstures muzejs) in Riga Castle. Elīna Apsīte, the daughter of Māris Brancis, Jette's biographer, has plans to create The Mitten Way (Cimdu ceļš), a museum at Lejnieki to memorialize Jette Užāne and her needle art.

Because Jette published no instructions for her mittens, knitters are left to wonder how she accomplished some techniques, particularly the three-dimensional patterns that look embroidered. Since she insisted that everything was knitted, attempts at unlocking her stitch mysteries are fun for those of us who like puzzles. In the process of trying to perfect a dip stitch or wrap a cluster, I feel closer to Latvia's favorite knitter and to her way of approaching yarn and needles—so simple but easily becoming so complex. My adaptation of her *Birch* mittens follows. ❖

Further Reading

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Birch Mittens *to* Knit

Barbara Plakans

I adapted these mittens from a design by the legendary Jette Užāne (see the preceding article). The original mittens are now in the collection of the Latvian National History Museum (Latvijas Nacionālais Vēstures muzejs) in Riga.

Barbara Plakans's knitted Birch mittens. *Photograph by Joe Coca.*

Barbara Plakans's knitted Birch mittens. *Photograph by Joe Coca.*

Stitch Guide

Woven Stitches

Cut a strand of the weaving color to the length given in the directions. The weaving color alternates between being carried in front or back of the work to create the appearance of running-stitch embroidery; it is not used to knit or purl any stitches.

For woven stitches in k2, p1 rib, carefully separate the two plies of the weaving color and weave using a single ply, handling it gently so it does not separate. Work as follows: *K2 with A with weaving color held in front, p1 with A with weaving color held in back; rep from * to end.

For single woven stitches in stockinette, work using an entire strand of the weaving color (do not separate the plies) as follows: *K1 with MC weaving color held in front, k1 with MC with weaving color held in back; rep from *.

For woven stitches on the chart, work using an entire strand of the weaving color, and hold the weaving color to the front or back as shown while working the stitches of the woven section in the background color. On each round after Round 1, bring the weaving color loosely across the back of the work into position to weave the next round of stitches. Use a separate strand of weaving color for the woven sections on the back and palm sides of the hand; do not carry the weaving color all the way around the hand when working the chart pattern. *Note*: The placement of the woven stitches in the chart is a suggestion, and you may work the stitches more randomly, if desired.

Materials

Rauma Finullgarn, distributed by Arnhild's Knitting Studio, 100% Norwegian 2-ply wool yarn, fingering weight, 180 yards (165 m)/50 g skein, 1 skein each of #402 Celery (MC), #436 Black (A), and #498 Leaf Green (B); visit www.arnhild.com/store_listing.htm for a list of retailers

Needles, set of 5 8-inch (20.3-cm) double pointed, size 0 (2 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge (an additional 4-inch [10.2-cm] set of size 0 for working the mitten tops and thumbs is handy)

Cotton waste yarn for holding thumb stitches

Tapestry needle

Finished size: 7½ inches (19.1 cm) hand circumference and 9¾ inches (24.8 cm) long, to fit a woman's size small (palm and thumb may be lengthened, if needed)

Gauge: 8 sts and 10½ rows = 1 inch (2.5 cm) in St st

See page 51 for Abbreviations

Instructions

Right Mitten

Cuff: Make a slipknot using one strand each of MC, A, and B, and place it around 2 needles held tog; this slipknot does not count as a CO st. Holding A on left index finger and alternating between MC and B held on left thumb, CO 46 sts using the twisted method (see the Techniques sidebar on page 28)—46 sts in A on needles. Sl one needle out of the CO sts, and drop the slipknot from the rem needle. Divide sts on 4 dpn, and join for working in the rnd by transferring the last CO st to the beg of the first needle, and passing the first CO st over the slipped st and off the needle—45 sts. Distribute sts as evenly as possible on 4 needles.

Rnds 1–3: With A, *k2, p1; rep from *.

Rnds 4, 6, and 8: (woven sts rnd) Cut a 16-inch (40.6-cm) length of MC, and work woven sts in k2, p1 rib (see Stitch Guide) using A for rib and 1 ply of MC for weaving color.

Rnds 5 and 7: With A, *k2, p1; rep from *.

Rnds 9–11: Rep Rnd 5.

Rnds 12–27: Rep Rnds 4–11 two more times—9 rnds of woven sts; cuff measures 2½ inches (6.4 cm).

Right hand,

Rnd 1: K 1 rnd with A, inc 15 sts evenly spaced—60 sts. Distribute sts evenly on 4 needles, 15 sts on each needle.

Rnds 2–5: K 2 rnds with A, then k 2 rnds with MC.

Rnds 6 and 8: Cut an 18-inch (45.7-cm) length of A, and k 1 rnd with MC working single woven sts with A.

Rnd 7: K 1 rnd with MC.

Rnds 9 and 10: K 2 rnds with MC.

Cut two 24-inch (61.0-cm) lengths of A, one for each chart. Work 30 sts from Rnd 1 of Hand chart 2 times around, working woven sts of each rep with a separate strand of A (see Stitch Guide). Work Rnds 2–16 of chart.

Right thumb hole: On Rnd 17, work 30 sts in patt for back of hand, work next 11 sts in patt for palm of hand, place the last 11 sts worked (indicated by outline on chart) on waste yarn for right thumb, work 19 sts in patt to end—15 sts each on first, second, and fourth needles; 4 sts after thumb gap on third needle. On Rnd 18 of chart, work in patt to thumb gap, CO 11 sts using the backward-loop method (see the Techniques sidebar on page 28), work in patt to end—60 sts. Work Rnds 1–18 of chart once more omitting the thumb hole, then work Rnds 19–32—piece measures 5¾ inches (14.6 cm) from top of ribbing, and 8¼ inches (21.0 cm) from beg. *Note*: For longer hand, cont in patt until hand measures 1¼ inches (3.2 cm) less than desired length before working mitten top decs.

Mitten top: Work Rnds 33–45 of chart, dec as shown and changing to 4-inch (10.2-cm) needles if using them—8 sts rem. Divide sts onto 2 needles, one for palm and one for back of hand, 4 sts on each needle. With MC, [k1 tbl, k3tog] 2 times—4 sts rem. Cut yarn, thread tail on tapestry needle, draw through rem sts, and fasten off on WS.

Right thumb: Place 11 held thumb sts on 2 needles (shorter needles if using them).

Next rnd: With MC, k11 thumb sts, pick up and k 2 sts from side of thumb opening, pick up and k 11 sts from base of hand sts CO over thumb gap, then pick up and k 2 sts from other side of thumb opening—26 sts. Distribute sts as evenly as possible on 4 needles.

Next rnd: *Work 11 sts in patt from Rnd 1 of Thumb chart, k2tog with MC; rep from * once more—24 sts.

Next rnd: *Work 11 sts in patt from Rnd 2 of chart, k1 with MC; rep from *.

Keeping 1 st after each chart patt in MC, work Rnds 3–9 of chart, then rep Rnds 1–9 once more. With MC, k 2 rnds, or until ½ inch (1.3 cm) less than desired length—thumb measures about 2 inches (5 cm).

Thumb tip,

Rnd 1: [K1 tbl, ssk, k7, k2tog] 2 times—20 sts.

Rnd 2: [K1 tbl, ssk, k5, k2tog] 2 times—16 sts.

Rnd 3: [K1 tbl, ssk, k3, k2tog] 2 times—12 sts.

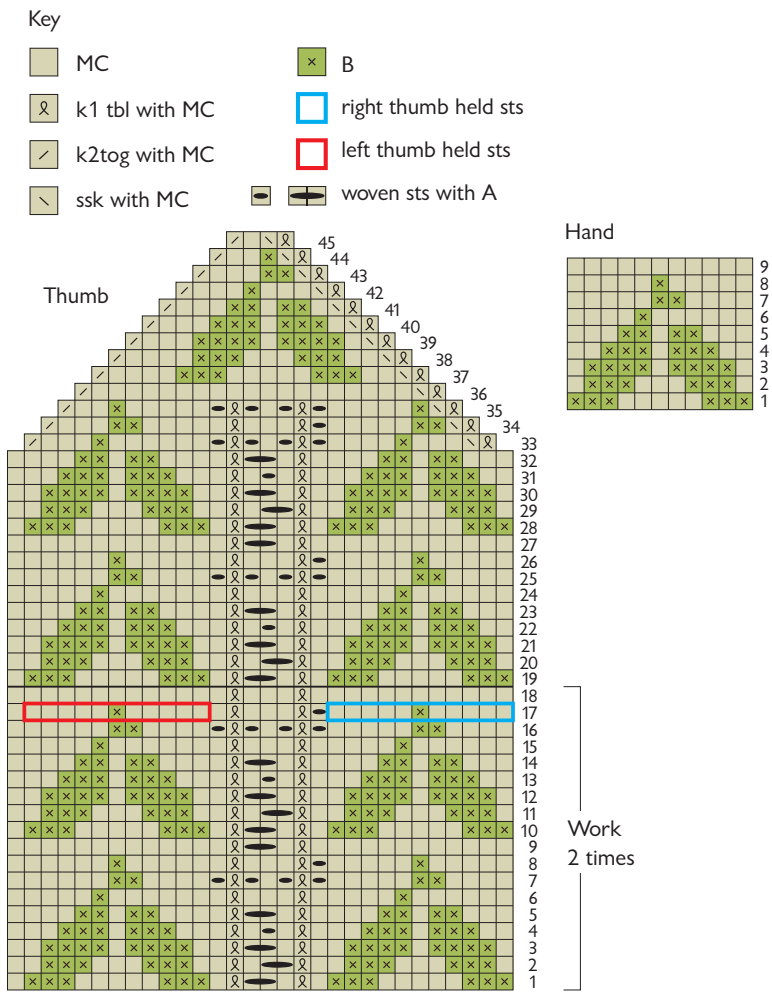
Rnd 4: [K1 tbl, ssk, k1, k2tog] 2 times—8 sts.

Rnd 5: Arrange sts 4 each on 2 needles, [k1 tbl, k3tog] 2 times—4 sts.

Cut yarn, thread tail on tapestry needle, draw through rem sts, and fasten off on WS.

Left Mitten

Work cuff as for right mitten, then work hand as for



Charts may be photocopied for personal use.

Tip

For consistent results in stockinette colorwork, decide which color will be carried above the other color as you strand the unused colors across the back of the work, and which will be carried below, then be sure to carry the colors in the same way throughout.

right mitten until Rnd 16 of chart has been completed—60 sts.

Left thumb hole: On Rnd 17, work 30 sts in patt for back of hand, work next 29 sts in patt for palm of hand, place the last 11 sts worked (indicated by outline on chart) on waste yarn for left thumb, work 1 st in patt to end—15 sts each on first, second, and third needles; 3 sts before thumb gap and 1 st after thumb gap on fourth needle. On Rnd 18 of chart, work in patt to thumb gap, CO 11 sts using the backward-loop method, work in patt to end—60 sts. Complete hand and work mitten top as for right mitten.

Left thumb: Place 11 held thumb sts on 2 needles (shorter needles if using them).

Next rnd: With MC, pick up and k 2 sts from side of thumb opening before thumb sts, k 11 thumb sts, pick up and k 2 sts from other side of thumb opening, pick up and k 11 sts from base of hand sts CO over thumb gap—26 sts. Distribute sts as evenly as possible on 4 needles.

Next rnd: *K2tog with MC, work 11 sts in patt from Rnd 1 of Thumb chart; rep from * once more—24 sts.

Next rnd: *K1 with MC, work 11 sts in patt from Rnd 2 of chart; rep from *.

Keeping 1 st before each chart patt in MC, work Rnds 3–9 of chart, then rep Rnds 1–9 once more. Complete as for right thumb.

Finishing

Weave in all ends. Pin each mitten flat before pressing and make sure the beginning of the rnd for both mittens is exactly at the side crease (to conceal jogs between patt rnds). Carefully pin thumbs to align with palm patts. Steam mittens under a damp towel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND DESIGNER. *Barbara Plakans lives in Ames, Iowa, where she enjoys knitting together her dual passions: words and fiber.*

TECHNIQUES

Twisted Loop Cast-On
(also known as Old Norwegian Cast-On)

This cast-on is worked with two ends of yarn—one that comes from the working ball of yarn and the other that comes from the tail end of that same yarn. Before casting on, determine the length of yarn to leave for the tail. To get a good estimate of the length needed for casting on 10 stitches, measure the length of yarn needed to wrap around the needle 10 times. Multiply this length by the number of times that 10 goes into the number of stitches you'll cast on. For example, if it takes 5 inches (12.7 cm) of yarn to wrap the needle 10 times, and you want to cast on 60 stitches, multiply 5 inches by 6—leave a tail 30 inches (76.2 cm) long.

Step 1: Leaving a tail the necessary length, make a slipknot and place it on a needle held in your right hand. The slipknot counts as the first stitch.

Step 2: Place the thumb and index finger of your left hand between the yarn ends so that the strand connected to the ball is around your index finger and the tail end is around your thumb. Secure the yarn ends with your other fingers and hold your palm upward, making a V of yarn (Figure 1).

Step 3: Bring the needle in front of your thumb, under both yarns around the thumb, down into the center of the thumb loop, back forward, and over the top of the yarn around your index finger (Figure 2).

Step 4: Use the needle to catch this yarn, then bring the needle back down through the thumb loop (Figure 3), turning your thumb slightly to make room for the needle to pass through.

Step 5: Drop the loop off your thumb (Figure 4) and place your thumb back in the V configuration while tightening up the resulting stitch on the needle (Figure 5).

Repeat Steps 3–5 for the desired number of stitches.

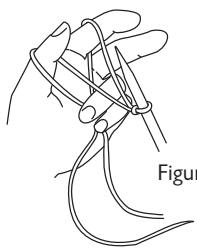


Figure 1

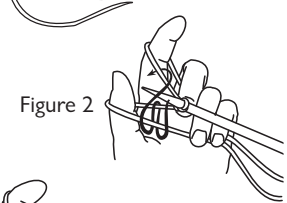


Figure 2

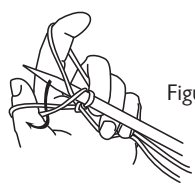


Figure 3

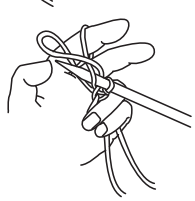


Figure 4

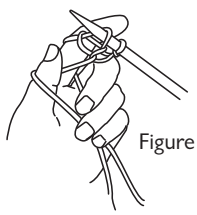
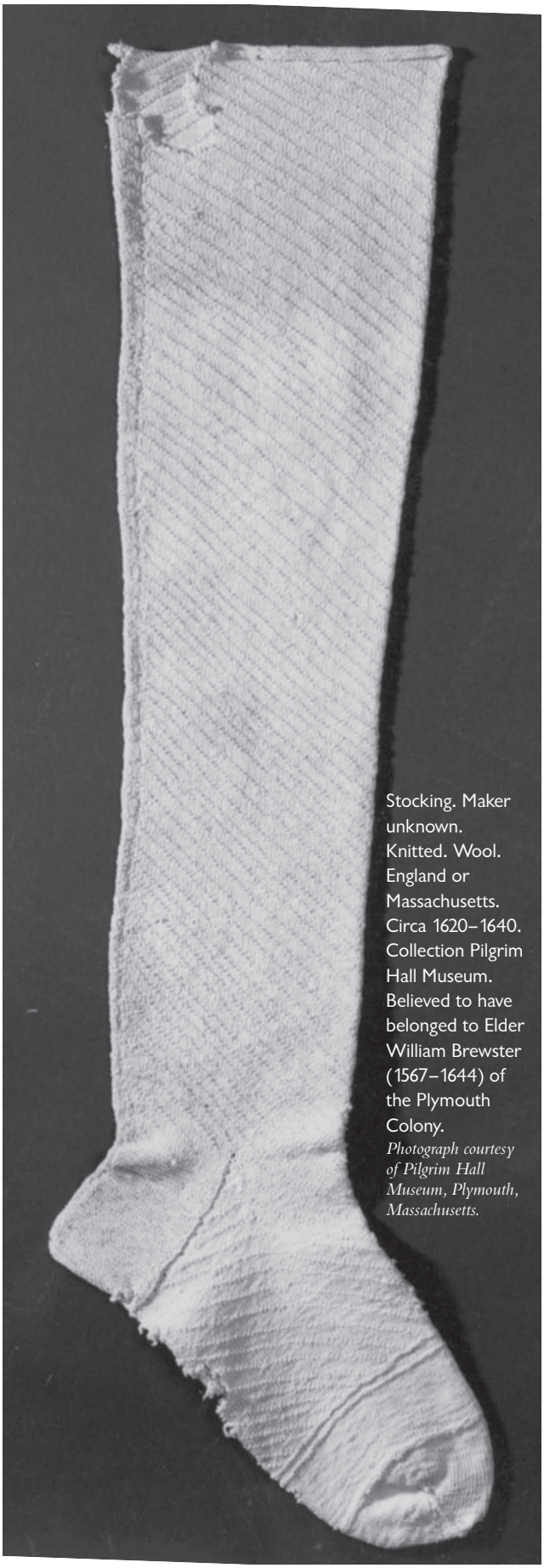


Figure 5

Adapted from Getting Started Knitting Socks *by Ann Budd (Loveland, Colorado: Interweave, 2007).*

Backward-Loop Cast-On

*Loop working yarn and place it on needle backward so that it doesn't unwind. Repeat from *.

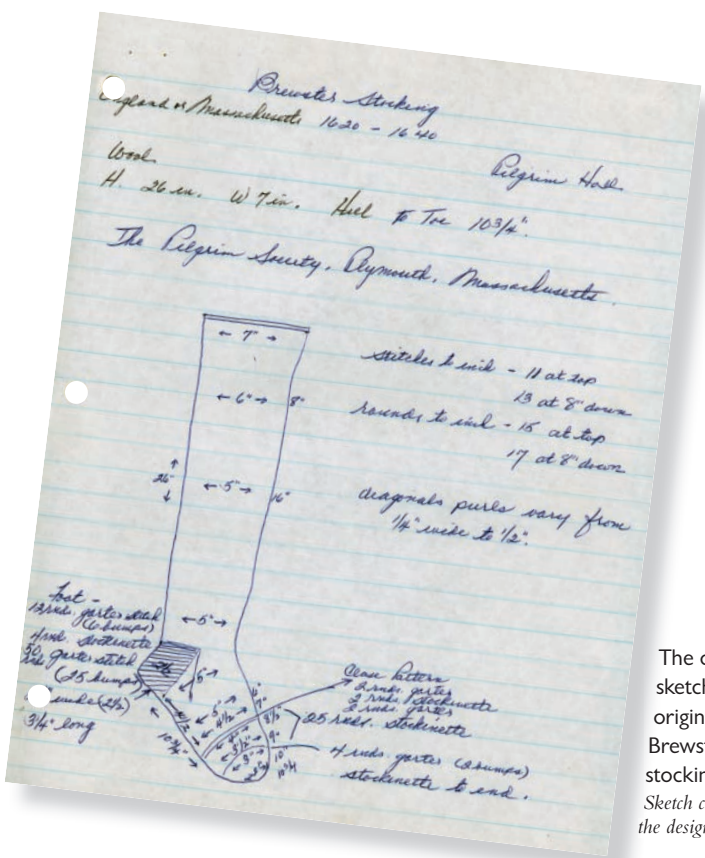


Stocking. Maker unknown. Knitted. Wool. England or Massachusetts. Circa 1620–1640. Collection Pilgrim Hall Museum. Believed to have belonged to Elder William Brewster (1567–1644) of the Plymouth Colony.
Photograph courtesy of Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

THE Brewster Stocking

JACQUELINE FEE

ALERTED to the existence of one handknitted stocking in the textile collection of the Pilgrim Society in Plymouth, Massachusetts, by my daughter, Nancy Cook, who was head of costume at Plimoth Plantation (1981–1985), I immediately went to investigate. Thought to have belonged to Elder William Brewster (1567–1644), the stocking was worked in either England or Massachusetts between 1620 and 1640. Made of wool, it measures 26 inches (66.0 cm) high and would have been pulled up over the knee and secured with garters.



The designer's sketch of the original Brewster stocking.
Sketch courtesy of the designer.

The leg width measures 7 inches (17.8 cm) or 14 inches (35.6 cm) around, and the stubby foot, enhanced by purl rounds, measures 10½ inches (26.7 cm) from heel to toe. The stocking is seamless, and the entire length is worked in a single Circling Purl pattern from below the ribbed top to the beginning of the toe shaping. The pattern is a multiple of 6 stitches with a 6-round repeat.

After taking exact measurements of the original, I worked a reproduction stocking to a gauge of 7 stitches to the inch (about 3 stitches per cm) rather than the original 11 to 13 stitches to the inch (about 4 to 5 stitches per cm) in a Bartlettyarns lightweight 2-ply 100 percent wool yarn, oatmeal in color, on four double-pointed size 2 needles. Giving credence to the dreaded "second sock" syndrome, five years passed before I tackled its match, and that is why I have emphasized the "THE" in "THE Brewster Stocking," as I wonder if it ever had a mate.

The pair of reproduction stockings is shown on page 31. If you would like to work them, I would be happy to provide you with the instructions. You may contact me at sweaterworkshop@msn.com. ❖

Circling Purls

The pattern of "circling purls" lends itself to a repetitive knitting rhythm: one, two, three, four, five, PURL; one, two, three, four, five, PURL; and round and round does that single purl stitch travel.

Written for circular knitting, the pattern is a multiple of 6 stitches and is a 6-round repeat:

Rnd 1: *P1, k5; rep from * around.

Rnd 2: K1, *p1, k5; rep from * to last 5 sts, p1, k4.

Rnd 3: K2, *p1, k5; rep from * to last 4 sts, p1, k3.

Rnd 4: K3, *p1, k5; rep from * to last 3 sts, p1, k2.

Rnd 5: K4, *p1, k5; rep from * to last 2 sts, p1, k1.

Rnd 6: K5, *p1, k5; rep from * to last st, p1.

Rep Rnds 1–6 for patt.

The designer's short socks worked in alpaca yarn, using the Brewster stocking's Circling Purls pattern.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

CONTEMPORARY Brewster Socks *to* Knit

JACQUELINE FEE

MATERIALS

Dale of Norway Baby Ull, 100% merino wool yarn, fingering weight, 180 yards (165 m)/50 g ball, 2 balls of #0020 Cream; visit www.dale.no/dalegarn/index.php?mapping=43&region=us&land=USA for a list of retailers
Needles, set of 4 double pointed, size 2 (2.75 mm)
Stitch holders (optional)
Tapestry needle

Finished size: 7½ (8¼) inches (19.0 [21.0] cm) foot circumference, 8½ inches (21.6 cm) long from CO edge to top of heel flap, and 10¼ (10½) inches (26.0 [26.7] cm) long from back of heel to tip of toe; shown in 8¼ inch (21.0 cm) foot circumference

Gauge: 32 sts and 43 rnds = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in St st

See page 51 for Abbreviations

INSTRUCTIONS

CO 60 (64) sts. Join for working in rnds, and pm st beg of rnd.

Work k2, p2 ribbing for 4 inches (10.2 cm) or desired length, inc 0 (2) sts in last rnd—60 (66) sts.

Work in Circling Purl patt (see sidebar above) for 4½ inches (11.4 cm), until piece measures 8½ inches (21.6 cm) from CO or desired length. Knit the first 15 (16) sts of next rnd, put the last 30 (32) sts just worked onto a single needle for the heel, leaving the end-of-rnd marker in place—15 (16) to the right of the marker, 15 (16) to the left of the marker. Put the rem 30 (34) instep sts on holders or divide on two needles to work later.

Heel

Work back and forth on sts of heel needle as foll,

Row 1: (WS) P across.

Row 2: (RS) *Sl 1 as if to p wyb, k1; rep from *.

Rep the last 2 rows until heel measures 2½ inches (6.4 cm), then work WS Row 1 once more.

Turn heel,

Row 1: (RS) K17 (19) sts, sl 1, k1, psso, k1, turn.

Row 2: (WS) Sl 1, p5 (7), p2tog, p1, turn.

Row 3: Sl 1, k6 (8), sl 1, k1, psso, k1, turn.

Row 4: Sl 1, p7 (9), p2tog, p1, turn.

Cont in this manner, working one more st before the dec in each row until all sts have been worked, ending with WS row—18 (20) sts rem. Turn. With RS facing, k9 (10) to center of heel sts.

Shape gusset,

With another needle—Needle #1—k 9 (10) heel sts, then pick up and k 16 sts along side of heel flap; with Needle #2, work across 30 (34) instep sts in established Circling Purl patt; with Needle #3, pick up and k 16 sts along side of heel flap, then k first 9 (10) heel sts again to end in center of heel—80 (86) sts; 25 (26) sts each on Needles #1 and #3; 30 (34) sts on Needle 2.

Instep shaping,

Rnd 1: On Needle #1, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1; on Needle #2, work across instep sts in established patt; on Needle #3, k1, sl 1, psso, k to end—2 sts dec'd; 1 st each from Needles #1 and #3.

Rnd 2: Work even in patt.

Rep Rnds 1 and 2 nine more times—60 (66) sts; 15 (16) sts each on Needles #1 and #3; 30 (34) sts on Needle #2.

Foot

Working sole sts on Needles #1 and #3 in St st, and cont Circling Purl patt on Needle #2, work even until foot measures 8 inches (20.3 cm) from center back heel, or 2¼ (2½) inches (5.7 [6.4] cm) less than desired foot length, dec 0 (2) sts on Needle #2 in last rnd—60 (64) sts; 15 (16) sts each on Needles #1 and #3; 30 (32) sts on Needle #2.

Toe decreases,

Rnd 1: On Needle #1, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1; on Needle #2, k1, sl 1, k1, psso, k to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1; on Needle #3, k1, sl 1, k1, psso, k to end—4 sts dec'd; 1 st each dec'd from Needles #1 and #3; 2 sts dec'd from Needle #2.

Rnd 2: K.

Rep the last 2 rnds 10 (11) more times—16 sts rem for both sizes; 4 sts each on Needles #1 and #3; 8 sts on Needle #2.

Kitchener Stitch,

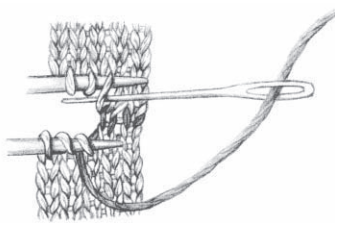
Knit the 4 sts on Needle #1 onto the end of Needle #3—8 sts each on two needles. Join instep and sole sts with Kitchener Stitch (see Technique sidebar at right). Weave in ends.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND DESIGNER. *Jacqueline Fee is the author of* The Sweater Workshop: Knit Creative, Seam-Free Sweaters on Your Own with Any Yarn *(Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 2002). In print for more than twenty-five years, the book has enabled thousands of knitters to enjoy complete freedom to work their own gauge with any yarn, handspun or millspun, to create sweaters of their own design. Jackie splits her time between Hingham, Massachusetts, and Deer Isle, Maine, where sweater weather prevails for a good part of each year.*

Jacqueline Fee's contemporary Brewster socks (top) and her reproduction Brewster stockings.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

TECHNIQUE

Kitchener Stitch



Step 1: Bring threaded needle through front stitch as if to purl and leave stitch on needle.

Step 2: Bring threaded needle through back stitch as if to knit and leave stitch on needle.

Step 3: Bring threaded needle through first front stitch as if to knit and slip this stitch off needle. Bring threaded needle through next front stitch as if to purl and leave stitch on needle.

Step 4: Bring threaded needle through first back stitch as if to purl (as illustrated), slip this stitch off, bring needle through next back stitch as if to knit, leave this stitch on needle.

Repeat Steps 3 and 4 until no stitches remain on needles.

Knitting *for* Income *in* Halland, Sweden

ANNELI PALMSKÖLD

Color illustration of a man and woman knitting woolen stockings. Sweden; they are dressed in clothing typical in Halland in the nineteenth century. The illustration was published in 1863 by Carl Andreas Dahlström. Collection of the County Museum, Halmstad, Halland, Sweden.

FROM THE SEVENTEENTH through the early twentieth century, knitting was a cottage industry in the southwestern coastal province of Halland, Sweden. Official reports and topographical literature describe many of the residents of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Halland as living in poverty. Conditions in the southern parts of the province seem to have been especially rough due to the poor soil—the barren heath was good for pasturing sheep but inadequate for agriculture. Most of the land belonged to a few landowners, and the rest of the population had to depend on the estates' need for labor in order to make a living (some were able to do some work on the side). Conditions were even harder after an intense period of war and plundering in midcentury. It is believed that shortly after this period, an organization for producing and selling knitted garments was established that persisted into the early twentieth century.

Buyers, many from the textile district of Borås, about 155 miles (250 km) from the southern parts of Halland, delivered new wool to the knitters in Halland a couple of times a year, inspected the finished garments (mostly stockings and sweaters), and paid the knitters for their work. The knitted goods were sold at markets all over the country and even abroad. The Swedish army was a major purchaser of stockings: during three years of war between Sweden and Prussia in the mid-eighteenth century, 20,000 to 25,000 pairs of stockings were delivered from Halland.

To prepare the wool for knitting, the Hallanders had to clean, card, comb, and spin it; they also dyed a portion of the yarn red or blue, using dyes distributed by the buyers. They knitted in the round for speed, using five long needles with blunt ends for safety.

The stockings were knitted with undyed yarn; the sweaters were patterned, often in white and red. The finished garments were intended for male workers, and so both patterns and construction were simple: The shoulder seams were sewn together, and the sleeves were sewn to the body. Both sweaters and stockings were fulled—washed and shrunk to a suitable size; they were dried on wooden forms to retain their shape.

Production could involve every member of a household. Children as young as four or five could card and comb the wool. At seven or eight, they were knitting

LEFT TO RIGHT: Stockings with wooden forms used to control the shrinking process. Maker unknown. Knitted. Wool. Sweden. Probably early twentieth century. The gauge and measurements of these stockings are very similar to those noted by Pehr Osbeck in Halland in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Cardigan knitted by Sigrid Johansson (1904–1984). Knitted. Wool. Halland, Sweden. Mid-twentieth century. Child's sweater in the *Bjärbo* (the word denotes a person living on the peninsula of Bjäre on Sweden's southwestern coast) pattern produced by the local handcraft association. Knitted. Wool. Laholm, Sweden. Early twentieth century. *All objects from the collection and all photographs courtesy of the County Museum in Halmstad [Länsmuseet Halmstad], Halmstad, Halland, Sweden. All photographs by Jan Svensson.*

sleeves (one sleeve a day was the norm). Men were as skilled in knitting as women.

The Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus (1707–1778), called the father of modern taxonomy, has a connection to the Halland knitting industry. One of his students at Uppsala University, Pehr Osbeck (1723–1805), traveled to China to study the flora, fauna, and people of the Canton region on Linnaeus's behalf. After returning to Sweden, Osbeck became the parish priest of Våxtorp and Hasslöv in southern Halland. There he continued to record his observations, which now included data on the ever-present knitting needles, yarn, and constantly growing parts of garments. Osbeck once poured 8½ gallons (32 l) of rye into a stocking before it had been shrunk in an attempt to measure its size. He noted that although the stockings tended to be knitted quite loosely, even carelessly, these defects were corrected during fulling. According to Osbeck's notes, 132 stitches were divided on four knitting needles, and 346 rounds were knitted to create stockings measuring about 27 to 31 inches (69 to 79 cm) long.

Osbeck also reported a change in the traditional method of holding the yarn. Some of his parishioners had told him about a woman who had suffered a stroke that paralyzed one of her arms. To continue to knit, she began to hold the working yarn over her left index finger instead of throwing it with her right hand. (When knitting with two or more colors, the different yarns were held parallel over the left-hand fingers.) Other knitters, seeing how the new method speeded production, soon adopted the woman's innovation.

Even though orders from the military decreased during times of peace, the production of stockings doubled in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and the knitters also started to produce mittens. By the turn of the twentieth century, however, machine-knitted articles had begun to replace handknitted products, but then a movement started to preserve old handcraft techniques by developing new products to be sold to wealthy customers. In Laholm, a city in southern Halland, the doctor's wife and the baroness on a nearby family estate inventoried local knitters, their skills, and their patterns, and formed an association to produce and sell modern knitted goods. Knitters no longer turned out utilitarian work clothes with sleeves knitted from the top down so a worn-out edge could be repaired but began producing garments suitable for contemporary, fashionable outdoor life.

Very few examples of the earlier, workaday clothing have survived. A few sweaters were collected by the Nordic Museum (Nordiska museet) in Stockholm and the Museum of Cultural History (Kulturhistoriska museet) in Lund. One of the sweaters in the Lund museum was knitted in a pattern called *Bjärbo* (the word denotes a person living on the peninsula of Bjäre on Sweden's southwestern coast) of white and red wool; the sleeves were knitted from the shoulder to the wrist. The pattern repeat is large, and one of the sleeves was finished in the middle of a repeat in order to be just as long as the other. The surface of the garment is quite uneven. It is believed that a young child who was not yet a skilled knitter knitted the sleeves.

For many, knitting for income in Halland meant life. Yet other than the few examples in museum collections, no traces of the centuries of knitting as a cottage industry in Halland remain. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Anneli Palmsköld researches Swedish weaving and knitting history and contributed an article to Britt-Marie Christoffersson's recent book* Knitting: A Craft to Develop *[Stickning – ett hantverk att utveckla] (Stockholm: Hemslöjden, 2009). She is currently working on a research project at the Nordic Museum (Nordiska museet) in Stockholm on how people reuse textiles.*

Mittens *to* Knit Inspired *by a* Late-Medieval Mitten

Susan Strawn

A sixteenth-century child's mitten now in the collection of the Museum of London and shown in the following article inspired this contemporary mitten design in two sizes. I have chosen knitting techniques known from the sixteenth century, such as the early German fingertip (or Emily Ocker) cast-on (see the "Circular Cast-On for Thumb" sidebar on page 35) and the haphazard placement of knit-two-together decreases. The fragment of remaining cuff edge suggests the use of a standard bind-off.

Susan Strawn's child-size (above) and adult-size (right) knitted mittens. *Photographs by Joe Coca.*

Materials

Debbie Bliss Baby Cashmerino, distributed by Knitting Fever, 55% merino/33% microfiber/12% cashmere yarn, sportweight, 137 yards (125 m)/50 g ball, 1 ball of #26 Seafoam (MC) for mitten body; small amount of #11 Chocolate (CC) for decorative band; visit www.knittingfever.com (click on "Find a Store" in the list at the top) for a list of retailers
Needles, two sets of 5 double pointed, size 2 (2.75 mm)
Tapestry needle

Finished size: 5 inches (12.7 cm) hand circumference and 5¼ inches (13.3 cm) long
Gauge: 13 sts and 19 rnds = 2 inches (5.1 cm)

See page 51 for Abbreviations

Instructions

Notes: Both mittens shown are worked the same and can be worn on either hand. For a larger mitten with a hand circumference of about 6½ inches (16 cm), use worsted-weight yarn and size 6 (4 mm) needles at a gauge of 5 stitches and 7 rounds per inch (2.5 cm), then knit the thumb and body of the mitten to the desired lengths. Remember that proportions differ for child and adult hands. The width to length ratio for an adult hand is about 1:2, while for a child's hand it is closer to 1:1.5. I used 2 skeins of Debbie Bliss Cashmerino Aran (55% merino/33% microfiber/12% cashmere yarn, worsted weight, 98 yards [90 m]/50 g ball) in #502 Pea Green for the mitten body and a small amount of #008 Chocolate for the decorative band on the larger sample shown at left.

Hand

With MC, CO 16 sts. Divide sts 4 each onto 4 needles and join for working in the rnd. If this feels awkward, it may help to place the needles

on a flat surface for knitting the first rounds.

K 2 rnds.

Next rnd: *K1, insert left needle tip underneath the strand between the two needles and lift it onto the left needle, then knit the lifted strand through its back loop (right-slant lifted inc); rep from *—32 sts; 8 sts each on 4 needles.

K until hand reaches to start of thumb, about 2½ inches (6 cm) for smaller mittens shown. Break yarn and set mitten hand aside.

Thumb

With the second set of needles and MC, CO 7 sts. Divide sts 3 each onto 3 needles and join for working in the rnd. Again, place the needles on a flat surface for more control when knitting the first few rounds.

K 3 rnds.

Next rnd: *K1, right-slant lifted inc; rep from *—14 sts.

K all sts until thumb reaches desired length; about 1 inch (3 cm) for smaller mittens shown.

Join Thumb and Hand

Turn thumb and hand inside out. Sl 5 sts from each piece onto separate needles, and hold needles tog with RS touching and WS facing outward. Using another needle, join 5 sts from hand and thumb tog using the three-needle bind-off method (see Technique sidebar below; BO will form a ridge on the WS of the mitten that will not be visible on the public side—36 sts rem: 27 hand sts, 9 thumb sts. Turn mitten RS out, and rejoin MC to beg of hand sts.

Next rnd: K1, right-slant lifted inc, k to last hand st, right-slant lifted inc, k1, k9 thumb sts—38 sts.

Next rnd: K29, k2tog, k5, ssk—36 sts; this will close the small holes on the sides of the join. Redistribute sts equally, 9 sts each on 4 needles.

K 3 rnds.

K 4 rnds, working k2tog a total of six times at random intervals in these rnds—30 sts. *Note*: Interestingly, random decreases may be difficult; the following strategy will create a haphazard effect similar to that of the Museum of London mitten: On the first rnd work [k10, k2tog] three times (33 sts), k the second and third rnds, then on the fourth rnd work [k4, k2tog, k5] three times to center each dec between the decs of the first rnd—30 sts; 6 sts dec'd over 4 rnds.

K 5 rnds or until mitten measures 1¼ inches (3.2 cm) less than desired length for smaller mittens, or 2 inches (5.1 cm) less than desired length for larger mittens in worsted-weight yarn.

Decorative Band

Rnd 1: K with CC.

Rnd 2: *K1 with MC, k1 with CC; rep from *.

Circular Cast-On *for* Thumb

PRISCILLA A. GIBSON-ROBERTS

If choosing to work with a circular cast-on, I use a modification of the old German circular cast-on (often referred to as the Emily Ocker circular cast-on). The traditional way uses a crochet hook to pick up the stitches. I much prefer the modification using a knitting needle, thus eliminating both the round of crochet heads and the transfer of stitches from hook to knitting needle. For this version, make a nickel-sized circle of yarn, leaving a tail to draw it together after you have knitted a few rounds. With a knitting needle, draw a loop up through the center of the circle. Snug this first stitch securely on the needle. Then draw a second loop up from the outside of the circle; pull the third loop from the inside, the fourth from the outside, the fifth from the inside. Continue in this manner until you have the number of stitches necessary. If working an odd number of stitches, the last stitch comes from the inside of the circle; if working an even number of stitches, the last stitch comes from the outside of the circle and looks like a yarn-over. I usually pick up half the necessary stitches, knit one round to divide the stitches on the needles, then repeat "knit one/make one raised" around to reach the full thumb circumference.

—Text and illustrations excerpted with permission from Simple Socks: Plain and Fancy *by Priscilla A. Gibson-Roberts (Fort Collins, Colorado: Nomad Press, 2001)*

(a) Draw first loop through circle. (b) Draw up loop on outside of circle. (c) Loops as they would appear if needle removed.

Rnd 3: K with CC; break off CC.

Cuff

With MC, k for ¾ inch (1.9 cm) after decorative band for smaller mittens, or 1 inch (2.5 cm) for larger mittens. P 1 rnd. BO as to p.

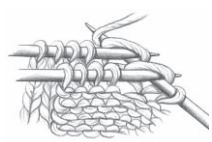
Finishing

Weave in loose ends, using yarn tails to close any holes where thumb joins hand.

TECHNIQUE

Three-Needle Bind-Off

Place stitches to be joined onto two separate needles. Hold them with right sides of knitting facing together. Insert a third needle into first stitch on each of the other two needles and knit them together as one stitch. *Knit next stitch on each needle the same way. Pass first stitch over second stitch. Repeat from * until one stitch remains on third needle. Cut yarn and pull tail through last stitch.



A Child's Mitten from Sixteenth-Century London

Susan Strawn

A PAIR OF wooly handknitted mittens with decorative bands of contrasting wool, rows of purled stitches at the cuffs, and knit-two-together shaping once protected the hands of a small child from the harsh chill of North Atlantic winters. The fate of one of the mittens is unknown; the other lay buried for four centuries until discovered during twentieth-century excavations in the City of London.

Today, the Medieval Gallery of the Museum of London exhibits the solitary mitten as a rare survivor of late-medieval handknitted textiles. Astonishingly well preserved, it raises all sorts of questions: How was it knitted and by whom? What is known about knitting in sixteenth-century England, and how does the mitten contribute to our understanding of knitting history?

The Mitten

The mitten was knitted in the round from fingertips to cuff, a traditional practice in Greece, Turkey, and Armenia but unusual or unknown in other regions. The thumb was also knitted tip downward and then joined to the mitten at the side. The haphazard knit-two-together decreases seen between the base of the thumb and the cuff are similar to decreases seen on other medieval handknitted fragments excavated in the City of London. The wool fiber originally must have been natural white or cream, but it has oxidized over the centuries to a pale muddy brown. The dark knitted band has been described as being of black wool or dyed with purple lichen. Sixteenth-century knitters learned new stitches, patterns, and techniques from other knitters or by examining completed fabrics—or they invented new ones themselves. Published knitting patterns would not begin to appear until the middle of the next century.

Knitting in Sixteenth-Century London

The mitten's creator would have lived among an estimated 50,000 other Londoners within city walls that protected a mile-long stretch of narrow and twisting streets, each filthy, dark, and dangerous. Half the population died before their thirtieth birthday—from disease or another horror. A girl could marry at twelve without parental consent, but her wedding cloth might well serve as her shroud a decade later if she died in childbirth, as so many woman of the period did.

The mitten's simple design suggests that its knitter belonged to the working class. Perhaps she had immigrated from the countryside into the City of London, hoping to find a life that was less grueling and deadly than farm labor. Contemporary records affirm that city women were employed in a wide range of occupations, including the wool trade and textile production.

England's Renaissance and Changing Fashions

The English populace watched as King Henry VIII (1491–1547) married and then divorced or executed five of his six queens, broke with the Church of Rome, and established the Church of England. After the brief reign of the "Boy-King" Edward VI (1537–1553), "Bloody" Mary Tudor (1516–1558) assumed the throne, returned England to the Church of Rome, and freely burned heretics. Under the long and prosperous reign of Elizabeth I (1533–1603), England emerged a world power. Transformations in religion, politics, economics, and the arts must have astounded Londoners, nobility and commoners alike.

Members of the working class flocking to view royal processions saw genteel men and women of the ruling classes wearing rich furs, fine leather gloves, and sumptuous velvets and brocades. Lacemaking and embroidery flourished; many garments were designed with slashes to expose contrasting fabrics beneath. Stiffly starched ruffs pleated or gathered around the neck grew to startling widths. Women exaggerated their contours with boned corsets, hoops, and wheel farthingales, while men did the same by stuffing bombast (horsehair, wool, or linen padding) into doublets, breeches, and trunk hose. Nobility and gentry could afford to indulge in high fashion, but the ordinary working folk emulated their clothing styles as resources (and Tudor sumptuary laws) allowed.

A Glimpse into Sixteenth-Century English Knitting

The cap knitting industry, tightly regulated by town guilds, had been developed in England before the six-

teenth century. In 1571, a new law mandated that people of the higher classes must wear an English-made cap on Sundays and holidays (except when traveling) or risk being fined.

When long cloth hose were passing out of style in the mid-sixteenth century, wealthy and poor alike embraced the new fashion for knitted stockings. Fine worsted English stockings became a major Elizabethan export to European nations. The market for knitted stockings, which fit and kept their shape better than cloth hose, seemed insatiable.

Unlike the cappers, English stocking knitters were not controlled by town guilds; stocking knitting became a cottage industry that did not require standardized skills in shaping and finishing. There was variation in quality and styles, depending on differing characteristics of the wool of different sheep breeds and differences in knitting tools.

The handknitting industry spread quickly throughout England. Knitting could be taught easily; country people, including children, took to knitting as they walked and tended livestock. Farmers embraced knitting as a way to eke out a living on ever smaller parcels of land.

The Evolution of Mittens in England

The London mitten, deceptively plain and simple, suggests that the development of knitted coverings for hands followed a similar path to that of knitted stockings—stockings for the hands, if you will. The earliest mittens for the poor were made of coarse rags, similar to early foot coverings. Later ones or those intended for wealthier wearers were sewn of cloth and had a thumb and sometimes one or two fingers. A fourteenth-century manuscript illumination shows prosperous plowmen and shepherds wearing particolored cloth gloves—sewn from two different colors of cloth like the contemporaneous particolored men's hose.

The London mitten tells us that medieval knitters understood that knitted mittens had the same advantages as knitted stockings. Knitting was faster and easier—and certainly more portable—than weaving cloth and tailoring bias-cut cloth to fit either hands or feet.

The London mitten seems an intriguing blend of medieval working-class knitting and the inventive spark of the English Renaissance. It was practical, not fashionable, yet we can imagine that the purely decorative motif was a nod to the fashion-conscious times and the purled stitches at the cuff and the shaping, indications of English Renaissance invention and learning. Whatever the anonymous knitter's actual intention, knitters today immediately appreciate the special care taken to create the child's mitten in sixteenth-century London. ❖

Further Reading

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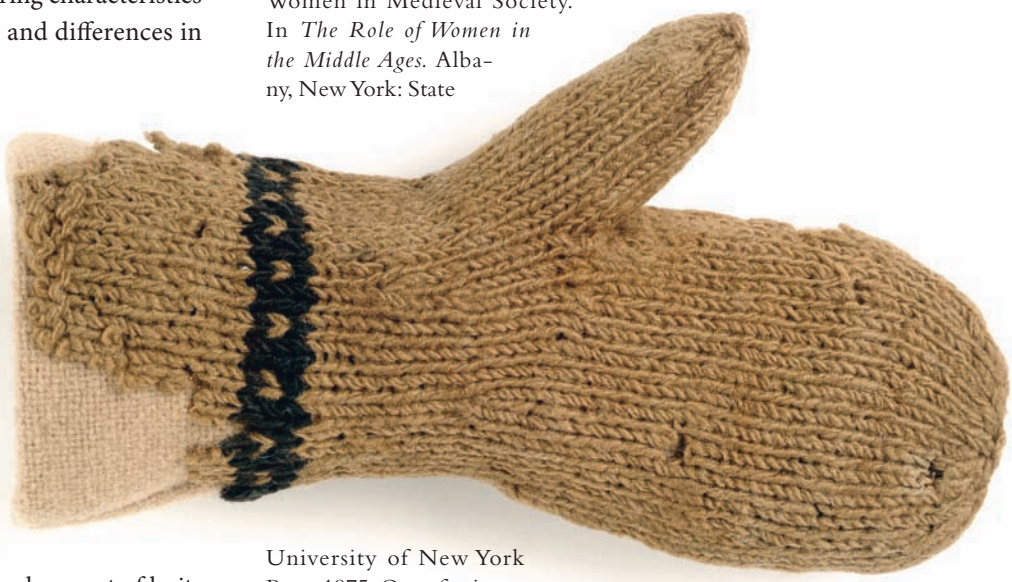


Mitten. Maker unknown. Knitted. Wool. England. Sixteenth century. Collection of the Museum of London. (A1989). *Photograph © the Museum of London, London, England.*

About the Author and Designer. *Susan Strawn, an associate professor at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, teaches classes about textiles, including the history of costume and cultural perspectives of dress. She is the author of* Knitting America: A Glorious Heritage from Warm Socks to High Art *(Minneapolis, Minnesota: Voyageur Press, 2007) and a member of* PieceWork*'s editorial advisory panel. She was formerly an illustrator and photostylist for Interweave. She thanks Priscilla Gibson-Roberts, an advocate of Eastern-style fingertip-to-cuff mitten knitting, for her assistance. Read more about Priscilla's mitten knitting techniques in* Simple Socks: Plain and Fancy *(Fort Collins, Colorado: Nomad Press, 2001).*

Offering Mitts *to* Knit

NANCY BUSH

These offering mitts, also known as "mitts with tongues," "church mitts," or "stubby mitts," were a traditional hand covering in rural Norway. They are a variation of the fingerless gloves or mitts that are popular today.

This project was inspired by a photograph in *Handakledet og den seremonielle tildekning av hendene: En drakthistorisk studie knyttet til Hordaland* [Hand Clothing and the Ceremonial Covering of the Hands: A Costume Historical Study Related to Hordaland] by Gunvor Ingstad Trætteberg (Oslo: Johansen & Nielsen, 1944).

Watercolor drawing by Ann Swanson inspired by the mitts featured in *Handakledet og den seremonielle tildekning av hendene: En drakthistorisk studie knyttet til Hordaland* [Hand Clothing and the Ceremonial Covering of the Hands: A Costume Historical Study Related to Hordaland] by Gunvor Ingstad Trætteberg (Oslo: Johansen & Nielsen, 1944).

Nancy Bush's knitted offering mitts. *Photograph by Joe Coca. Yarn courtesy of Nordic Fiber Arts.*

& Nielsen, 1944) that Laurann Gilbertson, textile curator at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, sent me. The information from this book about these mitts with a "tongue," which she translated for me, said that women wore this style of mitt to *høgmesse* (morning service or, perhaps, holy days). One's best clothing, usually worn to church, would have included decorative hand coverings in cold weather. Having her fingers free enabled a woman to turn the pages of the psalm book and discreetly place coins into the offering basket while keeping her hands relatively warm. The caption in the book translates to "Church mittens from Aga, Ullensvang." Aga, Ullensvang, is in the province of Hordaland. We have been unable to find any additional information on these mitts.

Mitts such as these and half-gloves made of embroidered satin or knitted of linen or wool were fashionable in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Norwegians were inspired by the fashions they encountered from abroad and adapted them for their own use.

After seeing this project, my friend Beth Brown-Reinsel had a great suggestion: add a small crochet loop on the inside of the top of each "tongue" on the hand to attach this piece to the middle finger in order to keep the tongue from falling away from the hand.

Materials

Rauma Gammelserie Strikkegarn, distributed by Arnhild's Knitting Studio, 100% wool yarn, fingering weight, 175 yards (160 m)/50 g ball, 1 ball of #GL401 Off-White; visit www.arnhild.com/store_listing.htm for a list of retailers
Needles, set of 5 double-pointed, size 0 (2 mm)
Markers

Finished size: 8½ inches (21.6 cm) hand circumference above thumb and 8 inches (20.3 cm) long
Gauge: 15 sts and 24 rnds = 2 inches (5.1 cm) in St st

See page 51 for Abbreviations

Instructions

Notes: If you have a yarnover after a purl and before a knit, simply let the yarn drape over the right-hand needle to make the yarnover, then knit the next stitch. If you have a knit, then a yarnover, then a purl, knit the stitch, bring the yarn to the front between the needles, take it over the top of the needle to the back between the needles to the front, then purl the next stitch.

CO 54 sts. Divide sts evenly onto 4 needles. Join into a circle, being careful not to twist sts.

Cuff

Work 2 rnds in k1, p1 rib. K 1 rnd. Work Rows 1–14 of Cuff chart. P 1 rnd for turning ridge. K 14 rnds. Turn work inside out and begin working back over the rnd you just completed; to diminish the small hole you will get at this point, sl the st on the right-hand needle onto the left-hand needle, bring the working yarn (attached to the st to the left of this slipped st) to the back between the two needles (wrapping around the sl st) and then replace the sl st onto the right-hand needle. Your working yarn will now be in the back of the work and you are ready to cont.

Hand

K 3 rnds.

Right mitt: Adjust sts so there are 16 sts on needle #1, 17 sts on needle #2, 11 sts on needle #3, and 10 sts on needle #4—54 sts total. Work Row 1 of Back of Hand chart over needles #1 and #2, work in St st over needles #3 and #4. Work 1 more rnd in patt.

Shape thumb: Work Row 3 of Back of Hand chart across needles #1 and #2, then k2, pm, work Row 1 of Lower Thumb Gusset chart, pm, k to end of rnd.

Left mitt: Adjust sts so there are 10 sts on needle #1, 11 sts on needle #2, 16 sts on needle #3, and 17 sts on needle #4—54 sts total. Work in St st over needles #1 and #2, work Row 1 of Back of Hand chart over needles #3 and #4. Work 1 more rnd in patt.

Shape thumb: K to last 3 sts of needle #2, pm, work Row 1 of Lower Thumb Gusset chart, pm, k2, work Row 3 of Back of Hand chart across needles #3 and #4.

Both mitts: Cont working both charts in patt through Row 26 of Back of Hand chart.

Next rnd: (Row 27 of chart) Work in patt to thumb gusset sts, place 13 thumb gusset sts onto holder or waste yarn, pm, CO 10 sts behind these held sts, pm, work to end of rnd—63 sts. Adjust sts on palm needles so there are 15 sts on each needle.

Cont in patt through Row 30 of chart.

Next rnd: (Row 31 of chart) Work in patt to 10 marked CO sts, work Row 1 of Upper Thumb Gusset chart, work in patt to end of rnd. Cont working both charts in patt through Row 39 of Back of Hand chart—57 sts rem; 24 sts on palm and 33 sts on back of hand. Remove ms.

Right mitt: Cont in patt through Row 43 of chart.

Next rnd: (Row 44 of chart) Work in patt to last 2 palm sts, k2tog—56 sts rem; 23 sts on palm and 33 sts on back of hand. Work palm sts in k1, p1 rib and back of hand sts in charted patt through Row 49 of chart. Work Row 50 of chart across back of hand, BO 22 palm sts—1 palm st rem on right needle. Sl first st of next rnd to right-hand needle, pass last palm st over it, binding it off, then replace the sl st onto the left-hand needle—33 sts rem.

Left mitt: Cont in patt through Row 44 of chart.

Next rnd: (Row 45 of chart) Work in patt to last 2 palm sts, k2tog, work in patt to end of rnd—56 sts rem; 23 sts on palm and 33 sts on back of hand. Work palm sts in k1, p1 rib and back of hand sts in charted patt through Row 50 of chart. BO 22 palm sts—1 palm st rem on right needle. Sl first st of back of hand to right-hand needle, pass last palm st over it, binding it off, then replace the sl st onto the left-hand needle, work Row 51 of chart across back of hand—33 sts rem.

Both mitts: Cont in patt through Row 80 of chart. Fasten off last st.

Thumb

Place 13 held thumb sts onto needle. With RS facing, join yarn and work Row 1 of Outside Thumb chart across these 13 sts, then pick up and k 1 st at side of hole (before CO sts), 1 st in each of 10 CO sts, and 1 st at side of hole (after CO sts)—25 sts total. Join into a circle.

Next rnd: Work Row 2 of Outside Thumb chart, sl 1, k1, psso, k to end of rnd—24 sts rem. Cont in patt through Row 10 of chart, keeping first 13 sts in charted patt and last 11 sts in St st.

Next rnd: Work Row 11 of chart, work 11 sts in k1, p1 rib. Cont in patt through Row 15 of chart.

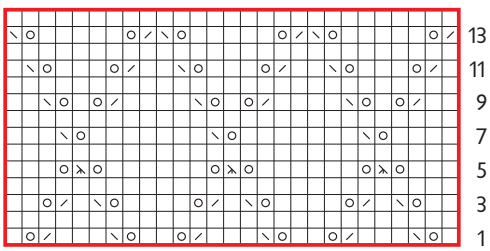
Next rnd: Work Row 16 of chart, BO 10 rib sts—1 rib st rem on right needle. Sl first st of next rnd to right-hand needle, pass last rib st over it, binding it off, then replace the sl st onto the left-hand needle—13 sts rem. Cont in patt through Row 26 of chart. Fasten off last st.

Finishing

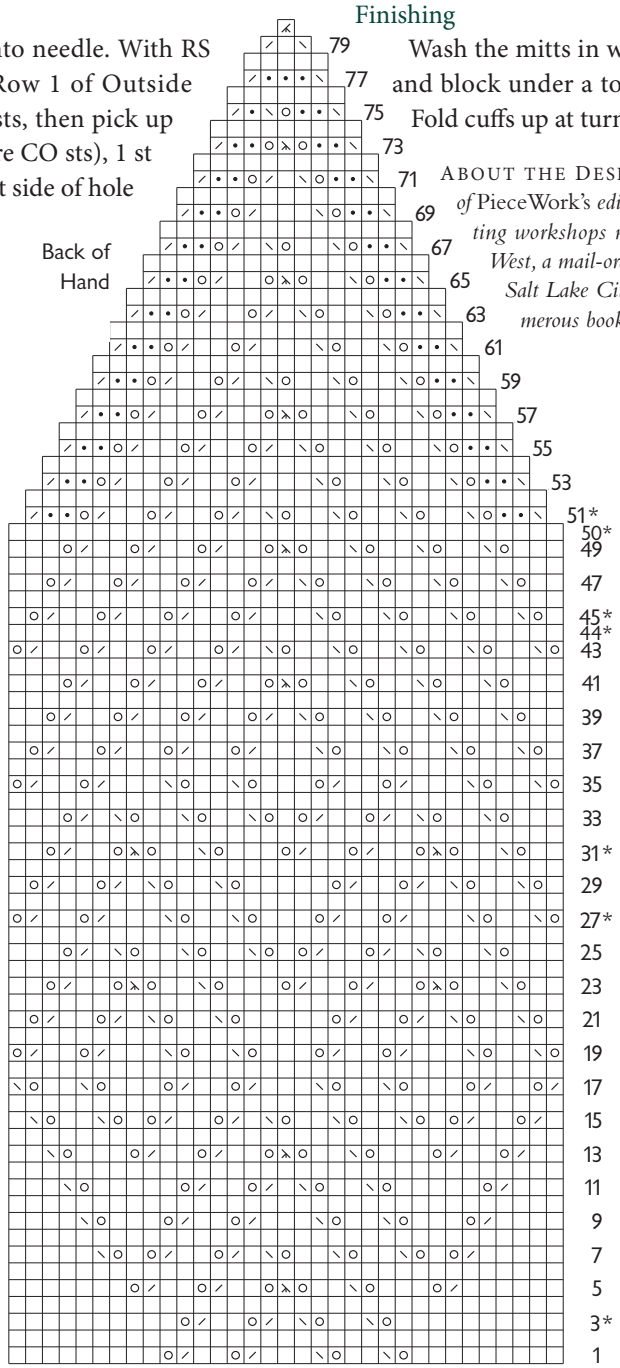
Wash the mitts in warm water with mild soap and block under a towel. Weave in loose ends. Fold cuffs up at turning ridge.

ABOUT THE DESIGNER. *Nancy Bush, a member of* PieceWork's *editorial advisory panel, teaches knitting workshops nationwide and owns the Wooly West, a mail-order source for knitters. She lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, and is the author of numerous books.*

Cuff



Back of Hand



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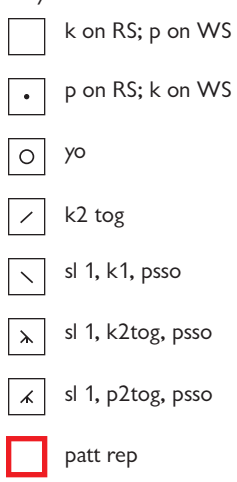
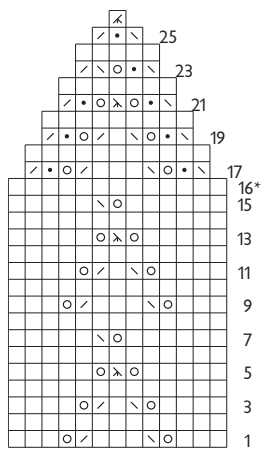
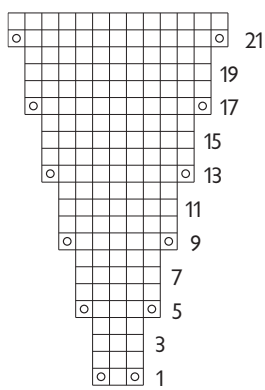


Outside Thumb

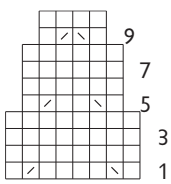


*Work as given in directions

Lower Thumb Gusset



Upper Thumb Gusset



Charts may be photocopied for personal use.

*Work as given in directions

Ice Harbor Compass

Robin Lynn Scott

Eleven-year-old stern man Josy Eldredge wants red and gray Sawtooth mittens like his lobster boat skipper, but the village knitter, Aunt Agnes, makes him old-fashioned, too-big Compass mittens with black lines that point the directions. When the lobster boat gets lost in a thick fog, Josy and the skipper both find out the old-time mittens hold the key to getting them home safe. There might even be magic knitted into them.

Lobster Boat in Fog by Rob Havemeyer. Digital Capture (Canon DSLR). Acadia National Park, Maine. 2007.
Photograph courtesy of Rob Havemeyer.

"If you're going to be stern man on Sam Eldredge's boat this winter, you're going to need a pair of Compass mittens," Aunt Agnes told Josiah when she stopped by for a load of crab to pick.

Josy grinned proudly. All the men who worked on boats in Ice Harbor had Compass mittens knitted by Aunt Agnes. The design on the Compass mittens was little overlapping wheels, with spokes that pointed north and south and east and west. If Josy was getting his own Compass mittens, he must be getting to be a man.

Aunt Agnes put her hand palm flat against his to see how long his fingers were on hers. They were the same length, although Josy was eleven and Aunt Agnes was probably as old as the rock her house stood on. She grabbed his hand around to see how fat it was too. Josy was a little scared when she did that with her hand dry and skinny as an osprey's claw.

The day the mittens were ready, Josy went to Aunt Agnes's little house on the rock overlooking the bay.

He put on the mittens, and his hopes slid out the scuppers into the bay. "They're too big," he whispered, afraid that she would take them away and he wouldn't be able to work on Sam's boat when it turned cold.

Aunt Agnes's dark eyes crinkled, "They'll shrink up in the salt water and fish gore. If they're still too big by next Sunday,

you bring them back, and I'll make you a new pair smaller."

The next morning, when Josy met his big cousin Sam walking down to the wharf, he waved at him with one of the new mittens. He thought Sam would say something like "Oo, growin' up now are you?" But he didn't.

"Hmp," Sam said instead. "Got yourself a pair of Aunt Agnes's old-time Compass mittens, do you? Look what I got." He held up his hands, and Josy saw his mittens had a pattern of little red triangles, all pointing the same way, and the opposite way on Sam's other hand. They fit his hands perfectly.

"Woman over to Woolwich made them for me. I paid her five dollars," Sam said. "They're the best, and they've got red on them, so's you can find them easy. And the saw teeth all point into the center. Like the way you want to go."

"Awesome," said Josy. He wished he had a pair like Sam's instead of too-big, old-fashioned black and white Compass mittens. Aunt Agnes's mittens had only cost a quarter.

"Awesome," said Josy. He wished he had a pair like Sam's instead of too-big, old-fashioned black and white Compass mittens. Aunt Agnes's mittens had only cost a quarter.

Sam showed him how to dunk the compass mittens in the cooling water from *Lily Mae*'s engine and to wring them half dry before putting them on. "Then clap your hands around your body, like this, to get your blood flowing," and he slapped himself on the shoulders and danced around a little. "That way, your hands'll stay warm when they get wet."

That day the mittens rubbed on the wood of the traps and they rubbed on the hauling lines, and they warmed up on the engine at lunch, and when Josy took them off in the afternoon, they looked like the mittens worn by men on boats, kind of rubbed and fuzzed and matted. They were even a dight smaller. But they didn't have bright red saw teeth.

When they sold their lobsters that day, Josy saw that some of the other older boys had new Sawtooth mittens too and were showing them off.

Josy went to Aunt Agnes's house up on the rock. Aunt Agnes gave him a cup of warm cocoa and teased him a little. "Your mittens still too big?"

The cocoa felt good in his hands and stomach after being out in the cold all day. "A little. But they're working at shrinking."

"Are they too cold? You work a hole in them already?" Aunt Agnes asked smiling.

Josy didn't know what to say. "No. They're warm. But, Aunt—"

"Yes? But what?"

"I wondered—" Josy didn't want to say it, but he did want red and gray Sawtooth mittens that fit his hands, and he couldn't go to Woolwich, and he didn't have five dollars. "I wondered if you could make me mittens with little red triangles instead. Sawtooth mittens." There. He had said it.

Aunt Agnes's osprey sharp eyes seemed to shrink him into a little kid. He couldn't even mention the quarter he had in his pocket to pay for the new mittens. "Like Sam Eldredge's," he added in a tiny voice.

"Sawtooth, is it?" She asked finally in a quiet, hard voice worse than Mom's when she was angry. "Sawtooth!" she spit out, and her anger was a cold wind in the warm, little house. "Sawtooth is for farm boys. You're a fishing boy, about to be a fisher man, Josy Eldredge. You go get yourself Sawtooth mittens from Amelia Perkins over to Woolwich if you want, but don't you trust them like Compass mittens that shrink and mold to your hands, that have lines that point north and south and east and west."

Josy felt hot all over and was glad when Aunt Agnes told him to get on home.

When he got home, Josy said to his mom, "That mean old Aunt Agnes won't make me a pair of Sawtooth mittens."

His mom said, "She already made you Compass mittens, didn't she?"

Josy stuck out his lower lip.

"Didn't she? With lines that point north and south and east and west?"

"But—"

"Did you thank her for them?"

He hadn't. He had never said thank you for his new mittens. "I paid her a quarter," he said.

"You didn't thank her?" his mom asked again. "I'll make her a lobster stew tomorrow while you're out with Sam. That's her favorite. You take it to her tomorrow afternoon, and you say thank you."

"Okay. But—"

"No buts, mister," his mom said. "She made those mittens for you because you're an Ice Harbor boy, commencing to fish. Not for your little quarter. Ice Harbor men wear Compass mittens. To bring them home safe. They're our good luck."

Josy thought that was stupid, but he didn't dare say so.

The next morning, when Sam and Josy walked down to the wharf, Sam lugging two buckets of bait herring and Josy carrying their lunch and a thermos of coffee, a fog bank lay offshore like a gray whale lolling on top of the water.

"It'll burn off," Sam said to Uncle Ed Prower, who was repairing net in his dragger *Miss Ellie,* tied up to the wharf.

"I don't mind you should head out until then," Ed Prower said.

"We'll be okay," Sam said. "I was born at night, but not last night."

"Maybe. How much you going to catch? Since you know everything?" Ed Prower snapped back. "You oughtn't to head out 'til it burns off." Josy knew he meant, "I don't want to have to come out after you."

Sam and Josy climbed into the dory and loaded in the herring. Josy stood in the stern and sculled with one long oar. It was hard, but he leaned into it. He wanted to show Sam and Ed Prower that he could do it. Sam nodded to him and smiled and pretended he didn't see Ed Prower scowling after them. "Old man," Sam muttered under his breath when they were out of hearing.

Lily Mae set out in the harbor on a mooring. From the wharf, Josy saw only her shadow in the fog, but when they got to her,

she was clear enough. Josy looked back at the wharf and could see only fog.

But Sam wasn't born last night, after all. He knew when to go out and when not to. Still, it was a little scary not being able to see the wharf or the shoreline.

As he climbed onboard *Lily Mae,* he saw his hands and the fuzzy compass mittens. Luck, Mom said. To bring them home safe.

He could hear gulls over to the fish processing plant, and he could hear the generator chugging by the store, and he could hear Ed Prower's dragger bang lightly against the pilings in the rising tide. It was like being in bed at night. You couldn't see anything, but you could tell just where everything was.

They chugged out, and Josy filled bait bags with chopped herring, then got out the banding elastics and the jig to fit them on the lobsters' claws. The crisp, cold air blowing back along the deck took most of the old fish smell overboard.

Sam slowed, and the hydraulic winch screamed as he hauled in a trap, opened it, and tossed fish and too-small lobsters back. He hooked his gauge over the carapace of another and another, and put them, flopping and wiggling, on the table for Josy to band.

Another burst of engine and a rooster tail wake, another trap, one lobster, four crabs. Another. And another. Josy was keeping up okay when Sam slowed *Lily Mae*.

Josy looked up. Sam was peering into the fog from side to side.

"Should be one right here. Don't know where it's got to," he said thoughtfully. He gunned the engine and *Lily Mae* circled large loops in the water. Looking out from the inside the boat was like trying to see out of a milk jug. There was nothing but white.

"Fog's thickened instead of burning off," Sam commented uneasily. "It's getting colder too."

Something banged and scraped the bottom of the boat, and they lurched and had to catch the rail to stay on their feet. "Drat!" Sam said. "We're too close in." He listened, and Josy could hear water clucking on stone to the starboard side of the boat. Sam swung the wheel and headed away from the sound.

Lily Mae hadn't gone too far when Sam slowed her. The fog was still thick but the sound of water on rocks was behind them. "Looks like I should've listened to old Ed," he said to Josy.

Josy felt an uneasy lost feeling crawl around the back of his neck, and Sam said sharply: "Crack out a sandwich, would you?" He leaned back against the deck housing as if he wasn't worried at all.

Josy reached into the dinner pail and pulled out a lobster sandwich in a plastic bag. They split it and chewed. Josy thought it was a big mouthful of food he didn't want just then.

Sam poured a cup of coffee into the lid of the thermos and handed it to him.

Josy looked at it. "I'm a kid."

"Hey. This one time." Sam pushed it at him. "Tastes awful, but it warms you through."

Josy sipped at the coffee, thick with milk and sugar. It tasted like coffee ice cream—not his favorite ice cream, but awful good hot. It wet down the glob of lobster sandwich some, and the cup warmed through his wet mittens.

"Gotta think," Sam said and took another bite of lobster sandwich.

"Are we lost?" Josy asked.

"Kind of. But I'll sort it out."

"Can't we use a compass to get home?"

"Could," Sam answered. "Or a GPS. If we had one. Never needed one before."

An osprey chirped overhead, wheeling unseen above them, up there in the fog. Josy thought the ospreys had moved south already, and for no good reason, he thought of Aunt Agnes.

Compass mittens, to bring them home safe.

He looked over at Sam's Sawtooth mittens. They looked fuzzed and matted like his Compass mittens. But they too had shrunk and didn't even cover Sam's wrists.

He looked at his own mittens. They had shrunk to fit and molded exactly to his hands. Compass mittens with lines that pointed north and south and east and west.

A movement caught his eye on the mittens. One set of lines was shiny, in just one direction. He moved his hands cattycorner and the shiny part shifted to the diagonals.

"Sam," he said. "Look at my Compass mittens."

"Yeah, I know. Aunt Agnes made them for you, and all that. Shut up. Okay?"

"No, for real. Check them out." He put his hands out toward Sam, and the shiny part moved again, as if each little fiber of the wool was a skinny little diode. "They're pointing. That way. See the light?"

Sam looked and looked, then shook his head. "For real," he said softly. "I'd heard, but I thought it was tales."

"What's it mean? Are we supposed to go that way?"

"Don't know. Might mean that." He wiggled one of Josy's hands side to side and the shiny lines flickered around some more.

Off the stern, Josy could hear the water chuckling on the rocks again. He bit his lip to forget about the idea of crying, then said, "A compass needle points north."

"Might mean north." Sam agreed, looking at him. "So, where are we?" he asked, and stared out into the fog.

Josy said, "I heard an osprey just now."

Sam nodded. "Me, too. And that osprey hangs around Bateman Ledge. In summer, anyhow. But the tide is full, and we wouldn't run onto that, so that ledge we nearly fetched up on is probably the shoreline of Sabino. That would make that—" he pointed toward the stern of the boat "—east. Let's see your Compass mittens again."

Josy held them out, pointing the tips toward where they'd come from. The shine in them was on the sideways lines.

He looked at his own mittens. They had shrunk to fit and molded exactly to his hands. Compass mittens with lines that pointed north and south and east and west.

"Okay. Point them that way." He turned Josy's mittens to the left, and the lights lined up lengthwise on the mittens. "It's north. They're telling us north." He laughed, and gunned the engine. "And we need to go south to get home. Without running onto Bateman Ledge or the Sabino shore.

"You go up on the bow, stern man," Sam told him, "and hold on. Keep a listen and a lookout for rocks, in case we're too close in. The shore bulges out near here. Leave me one of them Compass mittens. You take one of mine. They're too small for me any ways."

The osprey chirped again overhead as they began carefully chugging into blind fog.

Josy perched on the bow, legs hanging on either side, trying to make his eyes cut through the fog, through the green-black water below.

He heard a chainsaw not far away, but far enough away. To the east, someone was cutting trees at Sabino. A dog barked. A Sabino dog. He glanced at his Compass mitten. It looked like an ordinary mitten again, rubbed and matted and molded to his hand. Then it flickered just a dight and went out.

He shivered in his rain gear and tried to see through the fog.

Gong, gong! The buoy off Bear Island to the south southeast. They were going the right way.

It seemed a long time with no sound but the bell buoy and the engine.

Then he heard the gulls over to the fish processing plant.

And the chug of the generator at the Ice Harbor Store.

He looked back. Sam was grinning like a dolphin and flicked him a little wave with Josy's mitten.

He'd go thank Aunt Agnes. Right off. Soon's he got his other mitten back. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Knitting writer Robin Hansen writes children's fiction as Robin Lynn Scott, honoring her father Linscott A. Hall's contribution to her knowledge of wildlife and a desire that it continue to prosper on the planet.*

Robin Hansen's Compass mittens.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

Ice Harbor Compass Mittens to Knit

ROBIN HANSEN

In Maine and Nova Scotia, there really is a tradition of knitting shrinking Fishermen's mittens and Compass mittens such as Josy's, but they aren't always called "Compass" mittens. People in some villages call them "Fox and Geese" and remember games played in the snow with a circle crossed by lines. Some call them "Naughts and Crosses" and think of Tic-Tac-Toe. Others call them "Fox and Geese and Fences," and knit them in three colors to strengthen a perception of foxes peering through a fence and geese running in flocks behind the fence.

In coastal communities where the design is called "Compass," knitters and villagers are adamant: "I like them because the lines point north and south and east and west," they say. Is there a reason for this? Is there magic in the mit-

Detail Robin Hansen's Compass mittens.
Photograph by Joe Coca.

tens? Since Josy, Ice Harbor, and Aunt Agnes are fictitious, we will never know.

There is other magic in these mittens that real people who wear them will tell you about: When it's time to increase at the thumb, all six stitches of a pattern element are put on at once. In one round, there is one element; in the next, there are two. Look for this at the base of the thumb. And when it's time to narrow down at the end of the fingers, pattern elements disappear in a single round. Like magic. How can that be? Knit them and find out!

They are knitted big—a man's mitten may be 12 inches (30.5 cm) long—but by the time they've been in use for a day or two, they are fulled and shrunk and "molded to your hands." Maine fishermen shrink their mittens on board their boats, wetting them in the engine's cooling water, walking on them on the fishy deck as they work, and heating them on the engine manifold—turning them to keep them from scorching. Lacking a family fisherman, a lobster boat engine, and bay water, you can shrink wool mittens at home.

Three factors cause (untreated) wool to shrink: the shock of abrupt temperature changes (cold to hot, hot to cold), oil (fish slime or soap), and agitation, whether on a washboard or in a washing machine. Simply boiling mittens in a pot of water probably won't shrink them.

Fulling by hand may take up to 45 minutes of hard work but will probably take less. You can start with the washer, preferably with a full load of clothes, and brush the mittens afterward; it will be easier, but you may end up with a less nappy, less luscious mitten. There are many such tradeoffs in life.

Compass mittens made in North America are traditionally black or navy and white. If you knit them in colors other than plain sheep's black and white, I guarantee that they will not begin to glow and point north in a fog.

Materials

The samples were made in Bartlettyarns 2-ply Fisherman 100% wool yarn in Blue Loch (MC) and Natural (CC); Bartlettyarns 2-ply Fisherman often is used in Maine for mittens designed to shrink; other worsted-weight wool yarns will work; in Canada, Briggs & Little 2-ply medium weight (with no nylon) or MacAusland's 2/12; Superwash treated wools and synthetics do *not* shrink and cannot be used for these mittens

Needles, set of 4 double-pointed, size 8 (5 mm), or size needed to obtain gauge

Tapestry needle

12 inches (30.5 cm) of waste yarn to use as a holder

Supplies for fulling: 2 large dishpans, 2 to 3 gallons (7.6 to 11.4 l) of boiling and cold (tap) water, washboard or felting board, stiff brush, Murphy's Oil Soap or other natural soap, paper large enough to trace around the mittens, permanent marker

Sizes and Yarn Requirements: See the box below.

Sizes	Child's 6–8	Adult Medium	Adult Large
Hand			
Length	5½ " (14.0 cm)	7" (17.8 cm)	8½" (21.6 cm)
Circumference, including tip of thumb	7" (17.8 cm)	9½" (24.1 cm)	10" (25.4 cm)
Mitten, before shrinking			
Length of mitten hand	7½" (19.1 cm)	9⅜" (23.8 cm)	11¼" (28.6 cm)
Mitten thumb length (⅓ hand length)	2½" (6.4 cm)	3⅛" (7.9 cm)	3¾" (9.5 cm)
Mitten Width	4" (10.2 cm)	5" (12.7 cm)	5½" (14.0 cm)
Mitten, after shrinking			
Length of mitten hand	6" (15.2 cm)	7½" (19.1 cm)	9" (22.9 cm)
Mitten thumb length	2" (5.1 cm)	2½" (6.4 cm)	3" (7.6 cm)
Mitten width	4 (10.2 cm)	4¾" (12.1 cm)	5¼" (13.3 cm)
Note: Expect about 20 percent shrinkage lengthwise and about 6 percent widthwise			
Yarn Requirements	**Child's 6–8**	**Adult Medium**	**Adult Large**
Dark color	2 oz (56.7 g)	2½ oz (70.9 g)	3 oz (85.0 g)
Light color	1½ oz (42.5 g)	2 oz (56.7 g)	2½ oz (70.9 g)

Gauge: Before shrinking, 10 sts and 13 rnds = 2 inches (5.1 cm) in Compass patt; after shrinking, 10½ sts and 14 rnds = 2 inches (5.1 cm) in Compass patt

See page 51 for Abbreviations

Instructions

Notes: This mitten is knit large and rather loosely, and must be shrunk before wearing. It can be worn damp—dip in water and wring out—or dry, and is nearly watertight for a few seconds in water.

Pattern notes: When knitting pattern, carry MC below CC. Changing to MC, pick it up from under and in front of CC. Changing to CC, bring CC above and from behind MC. Continental knitters: carry both colors on the index finger, MC to the left of CC. Two-handed knitters: carry MC in left hand, CC in right. This keeps the fabric smooth and even and here emphasizes the lines of the compass.

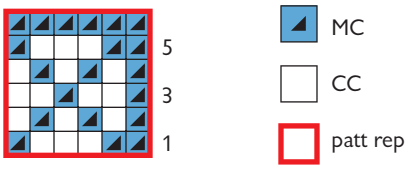


Chart may be photocopied for personal use.

Cuff

With MC and using the Maine method (see the Techniques sidebar on page 47), CO 33 (36, 42) sts. Distribute sts as follows: Needle #1, 9 (12, 12) sts; Needle #2, 12 (12, 12) sts; Needle #3, 12 (12, 15) sts. Being careful not to twist the sts, join into a triangle.

Work in k2, p1 rib until cuff measures 3 (4, 4) inches (7.6 [10.2, 10.2] cm).

Hand and Thumb Gore

Change to St st.

Next rnd: [K1, M1, k2] 9 (12, 12) times, k to last 6 sts, join CC by k over and under CC on back of work while k6 MC—42 (48, 54) sts.

Work Rows 1–6 of Compass chart across all sts.

At beg of next rnd, work (magical) 6-st inc to create two blocks of patt above one block as foll: k1 MC, (k1 MC, k1 CC) into 1 st, yo with CC, (k1 CC, k1 MC) into 1 st, k1 MC, (k1 MC, k1 CC) into 1 st, yo with CC, (k1 CC, k1 MC) into 1 st, work Row 1 of chart to end of rnd—48 (54, 60) sts.

Work rem 5 rnds of patt rep even.

Work 6-st inc rnd 0 (0, 1) more time, centering it above the first inc. Start with St 4 of the chart—the center CC st of the rep—k1 CC, (k1 CC, k1 MC) into 1st st, yo with MC, (k1 MC, k1 CC) into 1 st, K1 CC, (k1 CC, k1 MC) into 1st st, yo with MC, (k1 MC, k1 CC) into 1 st—48 (54, 66) sts. Work even in patt until thumb gore measures 2½ (3⅛, 3¾) inches (6.4 [7.9, 9.5] cm), ending with any row of chart except Row 5.

In any but the solid color rnd, take off thumb sts: Work 1 (0, 2) st(s) in patt, thread next 11 (13, 15) sts onto waste yarn. Using twisted M1 (see Techniques sidebar on page 47), CO 5 (7, 9) sts in patt above held sts, work in patt to end of rnd—42 (48, 60) sts rem. Work even in patt until work above cuff measures 5½ (7⅜, 9¼) inches (14.0 [18.7, 23.5] cm). This allows about 2 inches (5 cm) for closing the mitten tip in all sizes.

Shape Tip of Hand

In patt, work (magic) decreases: [k2tog] 6 times above 2 blocks of patt on 1 needle (2 needles, 3 needles)—36 (36, 42) sts rem. Work rem 5 rnds of patt band even.

Next rnd: In patt, [k2tog] 6 times on all 3 needles, maintaining same MC vertical lines—18 (18, 24) sts rem.

Work 1 rnd even in patt.

Next rnd: *K2tog MC, k1 CC; rep from * to end of rnd—12 (12, 16) sts rem.

Size Adult Large only:

Next rnd: *K1 MC, k1 CC; rep from * to end of rnd.

Next rnd: *K2tog MC, k1 CC; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2tog MC—11 sts rem.

All sizes:

Break yarn, leaving 6-inch (15.2-cm) tails. With tapestry needle, thread one tail through rem sts and draw up firmly. Thread this tail through drawn-up sts again, then fasten off both tails on WS.

Thumb

Secure both working yarns by darning into WS, starting at right corner of thumb hole. On 2 needles, pick up 11 (13, 15) held thumb gore sts. On 3rd needle, pick up 5 (7, 9) CO sts and pick up *and twist* 1 (2, 1) sts from *each* edge of thumb hole—18 (24, 26) sts total. *Next rnd:* Matching patt to thumb gore, work 11 (13, 15) sts, [k2tog] 0 (0, 1) time, work in patt to last 2 sts, [k2tog] 0 (0, 1) time, work 2 (2, 0) sts in patt—18 (24, 24) sts rem. (Patt might not match hand patt on inside of thumb. It's okay.)

Work even until thumb measures about 2 (2¾, 3¼) inches (5 [7, 8] cm), or ¼ (½, ½) inch (.6 [1, 1] cm) less than desired unfulled length.

Shape Tip of Thumb

Next rnd: *K2tog MC, k1 CC, k2tog CC, k1 MC; rep from * to end of rnd—12 (16, 16) sts rem.

Next rnd: *K1 CC, k1 MC; rep from * to end of rnd.

Adult sizes only:

Next rnd: *K2tog MC, k1 CC; rep from * to last st, k1 MC—11 sts rem.

All sizes:

Break yarn, leaving 6-inch (15.2-cm) tails. With tapestry needle, thread one tail through rem sts and draw up firmly. Thread this tail through drawn-up sts again, then fasten off both tails on WS.

Finishing

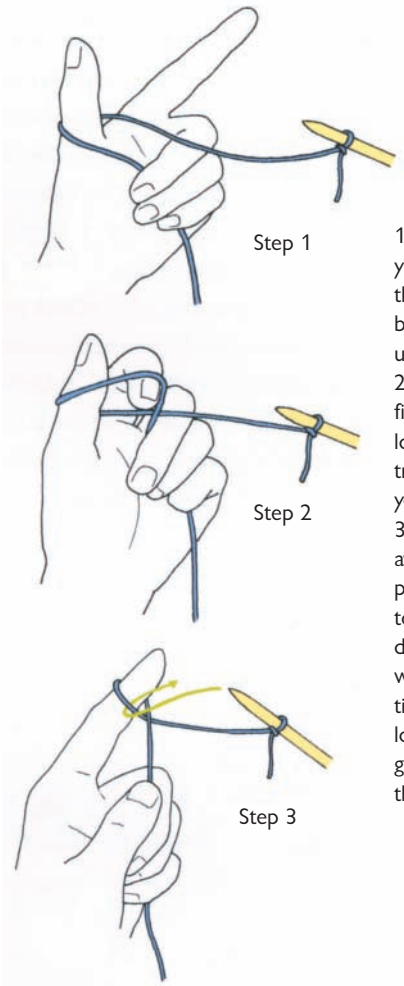
Close any holes at corners of the thumbhole using nearby tails. Weave in loose ends on WS. Trim ends closely.

This mitten may be worn on either hand. When both mittens are completed and finished, shrink them according to the fulling directions below until they shrink about 20 percent lengthwise.

Fulling

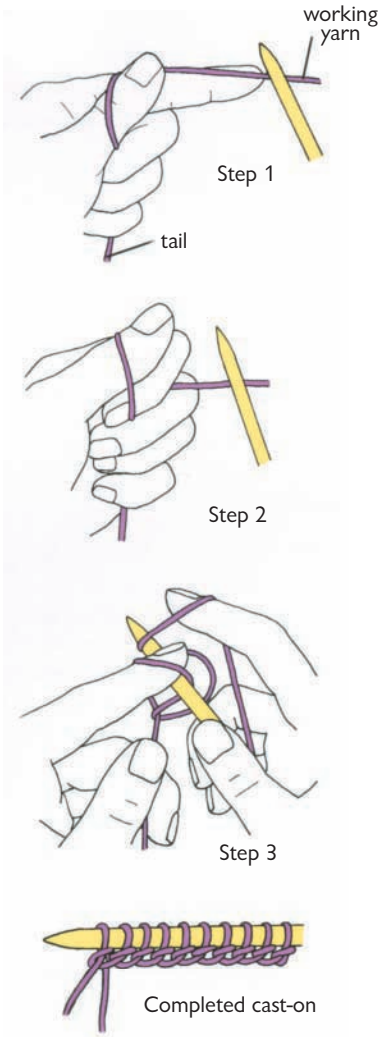
Notes: This process works well outdoors, where water can be splashed or poured onto the ground as you work. Otherwise, do it in a laundry tub or the kitchen sink.

Twisted Make One



1. Wrap the working yarn around your left thumb from front to back. Point your thumb upward.
2. Insert your left index finger down into the loop on your thumb and transfer the loop onto your index finger.
3. Turn your index finger away from you, as if pointing a pretend pistol. Insert the right needle into the loop as if it were a stitch on a knitting needle. Slide the loop off your index finger and tighten it onto the right needle.

Maine Cast-On



1. To cast on about 10 stitches, start about 18 inches from the end of the yarn, holding the end closest to the ball in your right hand and the short end in your left hand. Anchor both, ends downward, with your lesser fingers. Then, scoop your left thumb over, under, and up toward you, catching the yarn on the back of your thumb (this gives it a half twist).
2. Slide your index finger down into the loop, alongside your thumb, and transfer the loop to your index finger, pointing your finger away from you, like a pretend pistol (this gives it another half twist).
3. Insert the right needle into the loop knitwise, as if your index finger were the left needle. Use the long end of yarn to knit the loop off your finger onto the needle. Pull up firmly, first with your left hand, then with your right. Settle the stitch comfortably but firmly on the needle.

—Text and illustrations for both techniques excerpted with permission from Knit Mittens *by Robin Hansen (North Adams, Massachusetts: Storey, 2002).*

1. Heat a large pot of water to boiling. Prepare two large dishpans, one of very cold water (tap water can be cold enough, but add ice if you wish) and one of hot water (a mix of boiling water and tap water) as hot as your hands can stand. The hot water will be the wash and rub water; the cold water will be the rinse.

2. Before you start, carefully trace around the dry mitten with the permanent marker on the piece of paper. (Avoid getting marker on the mitten, of course.) This way you can check the amount of shrinkage as you work and stop when it seems right.

3. Work both mittens of a pair at the same time, alternating throughout the process. Wet the mittens thoroughly in the hot water, apply soap lavishly, then scrub and rub each on the washboard, dipping it frequently in the hot water.

4. After a minute or two, plunge the mitten into cold water and squeeze cold water through it quickly to shock the wool fibers. Get the mitten cold through and through.

5. Repeat back and forth between hot, soapy water and cold rinse water. The fabric will relax in the hot water and pull together in the cold until the mitten suddenly gives up, shrinks, and doesn't relax. Keep refreshing both baths, keeping the hot water very hot and the cold very cold.

6. When the mittens have shrunk to your satisfaction, rinse once more in clear cold water, then brush thoroughly toward the tip on both sides (and optionally, widthwise on the inside). Put in the washer on "spin" (only!), then brush again and spread in a warm spot to dry.

ABOUT THE DESIGNER. *Robin Hansen of West Bath, Maine, is the author of several books on traditional knitting. For more traditional north Atlantic mittens and some true stories, see her books* Favorite Mittens *(Camden, Maine: Down East, 2005) and* Knit Mittens *(North Adams, Massachusetts: Storey, 2002). See also Alison Kolesar's superb technical drawings, some shown here in the Techniques sidebar, in* Knit Mittens.

Fredric Stone (left) as Jamy, Michael Littig as Williams, Roderick Peeples as Fluellen, Drew Shirley as Gower, Brian Vaughn as King Henry V, and Ian Durrant as Macmorris in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2009 production of *Henry V*. All are wearing knitted chain mail. *Photograph by Karl Hugh. Photograph courtesy of and © Utah Shakespearean Festival.*

Knitting *for the* Stage

ELIZABETH COBBE

AS SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH* draws to its violent close, actors clad in chain mail heave swords at one another in a battle for succession to the Scottish throne. Macbeth taunts his adversary: "Before my body I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff, and damn'd be he that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'" Any knitters sitting down front are in for a treat.

Though it may look heavy and fierce from the mezzanine, costume chain mail is one of the most common examples of knitting in contemporary stage costume design: Knitting can show up onstage in costume pieces ranging from plain socks to a giant spider's web. While the close schedules and tight budgets of professional theater mean that handknitting is not always an option, the knitting craft still provides the ideal solution to many challenges of stage costume design.

In the case of chain mail, the idea of using knitted fabric came as a welcome alternative to the use of "real" chain mail fabricated from aluminum or steel links. Not only is metal chain mail difficult and expensive to make, it's supremely uncomfortable for an actor who must wear it for hours on end and risk injuring himself if he falls on his knees or an elbow, even with padding under the metal links. And steel mail can rust.

By the mid-twentieth century, knitted mail in various designs had become common. Materials included cotton or jute cord, rayon ribbon, shoe cording, and rug yarn, each of which has drawbacks. Some lack durability; others feel rough when worn next to the skin or resist painting or dyeing.

Jeffrey Lieder, costume director at the Utah Shakespearean Festival and associate professor in the Department of

Theatre at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, is not a knitter but has collaborated with knitters and costume designers to devise a widely used template for building stage chain mail (see the sidebar below for the instructions for a chain-mail hood). The "yarn" is a white nylon cord used in making fishing nets. After the cord has been skeined and dyed black, knitters (who in the past have been volunteers—among them, Lieder's mother) knit the garments as flat pieces, sewing in the ends and then stitching over them to secure the slippery cord. Next, the knitted fabric is treated with a textile adhesive, and Mylar foil is heat-set on the surfaces. (Alternatively, the fabric may be coated with a metallic paint.) The fabric then is seamed into its final form with the purl side out. In some cases, the garment is attached to a spandex base for a closer fit. It is the exposed purl stitches that give the garment the appearance of chain mail. "It's not authentic; it's not real chain mail," says Lieder. "Purists wouldn't stand for it, but it suits our purposes perfectly."

Lieder and others have learned from experience. Once, hoping to bypass the dyeing process, Lieder's shop ordered black nylon cord, not realizing that it had been coated with tar to help maintain the knots in fishing nets. "I sent the tarred cord to the volunteers without unwrapping the

Fredric Stone (below) as Jamy in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2009 production of *Henry V*, showing detail of the knitted chain mail. *Photograph by Karl Hugh. Photograph courtesy of and © Utah Shakespearean Festival.*

Chain-Mail Hood–Short Version

MATERIALS

Size 15 (10.0 mm) knitting needles or size needed to achieve gauge
½ pound (.23 kg)/230 feet (70.1 m) #36 twisted nylon cord, dyed black
Stitch holders, 3

ABBREVIATIONS

k–knit
p–purl
psso–pass slipped stitch over
sl–slip
rep–repeat
st(s)–stitch(es)
tog–together
inc–increase
dec–decrease
bo–bind off
Gauge (taken in stockinette stitch): 2½ stitches = 1 inch (2.5 cm); 3 rows = 1 inch (2.5 cm)

General Information

Pattern is reverse stockinette st (purl one row, knit one row, with purl as right side of garment). Join new cord at the ends, not in the middle, of the row. Measurements should be taken while garment is laying flat. There is a center front seam.

Beginning at lower edge, loosely cast on 78 sts.

Row 1: Purl (right side).
Row 2: Purl.
Row 3: Purl.

Cowl Shaping

Row 4: (K3, k2tog)*, rep from * across, end k3 (63 sts).
Rows 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25: Purl.
Rows 6 and 8: Knit.
Row 10: (K3, k2tog)*, rep from * across, end k3 (51 sts).
Rows 12 and 14: Knit.
Row 16: (K3, k2tog)*, rep from * across, end k1 (46 sts).
Rows 18, 20, 22, 24, and 26: Knit.
Row 27: P7, place these 7 sts on holder. P32 and leave on needle. Place last 7 sts on 2nd stitch holder.
Row 28: K32 sts from needle.
Rows 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, and 41: Purl.
Rows 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, and 40: Knit.

Head Shaping

Row 42: K20, sl 1, k1, psso. Turn.

Note: In directions below, * = pull cord tightly while slipping stitches.

Rows 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, and 61: Sl 1*, p9, p2tog. Turn.
Rows 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, and 60: Sl 1*, k9, sl 1, k1, psso. Turn.
Row 62: Sl 1*, k9, sl 1, k1, psso (11 sts remain). Cut cord, leaving a 3- to 4-inch (7.6- to 10.2-cm) tail. Tie a knot in end of cord. Place these 11 sts on the 3rd stitch holder.
Row 63: From right side (purl side), attach cord and p7 sts from 1st stitch holder. Pick up and p13 sts from finished face edge. P11 sts from next stitch holder. Pick up and p13 sts from second face edge. P7 sts from last stitch holder (51 sts).
Row 64: Knit.
Row 65: Purl.
Row 66: Loosely bind off remaining sts.

Finishing

Knot ends of cord, otherwise they will ravel. Stitch the ends of the cord into the piece after weaving them in place to prevent raveling. After work has been foiled and set, stitch the center front seam by butting the edges of the seams together and overcasting or zigzagging together by machine.

—Instructions courtesy of Jeffrey Lieder.

prepackaged balls," recalls Lieder. "They started knitting, and everything stuck together. . . . The knitters had to throw out their needles." Since then, the company purchases only white cord when the shop needs new knitted chain mail.

Chain mail for a large cast poses the challenge of producing many pieces of a similar style rather than a single garment that only one actor will wear. In these cases, the participation of knitters from the community can greatly help the theater company.

Original rendering of sketch with yarn swatch for Prospero's "everyday robe" designed by Janet L. Swenson for the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2001 production of *The Tempest*. *Sketch courtesy of Janet L. Swenson.*

Carol Colburn, professor of theater in costume design at the University of Northern Iowa, recalls recruiting several handknitters from the Cedar Falls community to create about thirty pieces of chain mail for the university's 1983 production of *Henry IV, Part 1*. The volunteers knitted the pieces in stockinette stitch out of white nylon cord, which they then dyed gray. But, says Colburn, "the first set of nylon headpieces had shrunk and were child-sized." The knitters went back to work, this time using cord that already had been dyed and preshrunk, and eventually filled Colburn's shop with a supply of chain-mail pieces that could be reused in future shows.

More recently, Colburn recruited volunteers to knit several pairs of gray knee-length socks for child actors portraying Nazi youths in the University of Northern Iowa's 2001 premiere of James DeVita's *Rose of Treason*. "Getting the community involved is a good thing," Colburn says: volunteers help publicize a show, and enlisting a group of volunteers is often preferable to paying employees overtime or taking up hours of student workers' time.

Parsons-Meares, Ltd., a New York City costume shop, creates costumes for Broadway shows, circuses, and other large-scale live performances. Kristian Kraai, workroom manager for Parsons-Meares, describes the challenge of costuming the giant pigs in *Shrek: The Musical*. "With the pigs, one of them had a Fair Isle vest that had to be in pig colors, and the actors' bodies were padded to be like a 500-pound person, only in a big pink pig suit so he could still do all the active choreography."

Maria Ficalora Knitwear Ltd. received the contract from Parsons-Meares to knit the vest, designed by Tim Hatley to barely cover the pig's huge belly. Owner Maria Ficalora charted the Fair Isle pattern, and one of her experienced knitters completed the vest in about a week.

But further measures were needed to meet the demands of the production. "The *Shrek* vest was 100 percent wool," notes Ficalora. "We alter and reinforce a sweater when the actor needs to make a quick change. For the

LEFT TO RIGHT: Michael Kevin as Prospero and Mary Dolson as Miranda in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2001 production of *The Tempest*. Prospero's "everyday robe" is knitted. Michael Kevin as Prospero and Rachel Mabey as Ariel in the Utah Shakespearean Festival's 2001 production of *The Tempest*. Prospero's robe has a knitted collar and sleeve tops; Ariel's leggings, vest, and belt are knitted. *Photographs by Janet L. Swenson.*

Shrek vest, the buttons were sewn down the placket with snaps underneath to open quickly without damage."

Although Hatley, the designer, had specifically requested wool yarn, knitting costumes of wool is unusual in Ficalora's experience: Costumes are worn night after night under hot, bright lights. Actors perspire, and the actor portraying the *Shrek* pig also had to wear a hefty bodysuit under his wool vest. Choreography can place extra strains on a knitted costume. Reblocking a wool sweater night after night is additional work for those who care for the costumes used in a large-scale production.

Sometimes a design may require a novelty yarn that a knitting machine can't handle, and then handknitting is the only option. Adele Recklies typically uses a knitting machine for knitting costumes for stage and film, but when her machine couldn't handle a fuzzy novelty yarn, she ended up handknitting a series of intarsia leg warmers for the musical *Cats*. Eyelash yarn highlighted costumes designed by Brigham Young University professor of theater Janet Swenson for a Utah Shakespearean Festival production of *The Tempest*. The novelty yarn proved to be ideal for the company's outdoor stage. "It was a play centered around magical things," Swenson says. "There's something about that eyelash yarn that doesn't hold still in that breeze, being outdoors."

In still other cases, knitting may prove the only means to achieve a design. Yvette Wesley works backstage at Chicago's Goodman Theatre cleaning and maintaining costumes, but on occasion, she puts her knitting skills to use creating original pieces. For the theater's 2008 production of *Turn of the Century* by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, when no store-bought equivalent could be found, Wesley knitted an entire woman's coat modeled on a man's coat supplied by director Tommy Tune. She used three yarns held together and size 17 needles in a seed-stitch pattern and completed the coat in about three weeks.

Most knitting for the stage must address the harsh conditions that stage costuming presents. Quick changes result in jerking a piece of clothing this way and that in the rush to meet one's cue. Like the snaps that make the *Shrek* pig's vest placket easier to open, other tricks of the costumer's trade don't often appear in fashion-knitting patterns. For example, when the 1970s-style vest she made for Playmakers Repertory Company's (Chapel Hill, North Carolina) production of Lisa Kron's *Well* ended up misshapen at the end of each show because of multiple quick changes, costume crafts artisan Rachel Pollack threaded ¼-inch (6-mm) elastic through the loops of the back of the vest to give it extra structure.

Costume design entails creatively matching a unique set of demands with the right materials and techniques. Where knitting is concerned, it can involve combining a knitted fabric with other materials, seeking out unusual yarns and fibers, or devising new methods of garment construction. Viewing knitting from the costumer's perspective reveals fascinating ways of thinking outside the box about a familiar craft. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Freelance journalist and writer Elizabeth Cobbe is a theater critic and arts writer for* The Austin (Texas) Chronicle. *Formerly assistant editor of* Dramatics *magazine, she learned to knit as a publications intern at American Conservatory Theater in 2001 and hasn't put down the needles since.*

FURTHER READING

Barton, Lucy. *Historic Costume for the Stage*. 1935. Reprint with new material added. Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1961.

Brockett, Oscar G., with Franklin J. Hildy. *History of the Theatre*. 9th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003.

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ABBREVIATIONS

beg—begin(s); beginning
BO—bind off
CC—contrasting color
ch—chain
cir—circular
cn—cable needle
CO—cast on
cont—continue(s); continuing
dec(s) ('d)—decrease(s); decreased; decreasing
dc—double crochet
dpn—double-pointed needle(s)
foll—follow(s); following
hdc—half-double crochet
inc(s) ('d)—increase(s); increased; increasing
k—knit
k1f&b—knit into the front and back of the same stitch—1 stitch increased
k2tog—knit 2 stitches together
k3tog—knit 3 stitches together
k5tog—knit 5 stitches together
kwise—knitwise; as if to knit
lp(s)—loop(s)
m(s)—marker(s)
MC—main color
M1—make one (increase)
p—purl
p1f&b—purl into the front & back of the same stitch
p2tog—purl 2 stitches together
p3tog—purl 3 stitches together
p7tog—purl 7 stitches together
patt—pattern(s)
pm—place marker
prev—previous
psso—pass slipped stitch over
pwise—purlwise; as if to purl
rem—remain(s); remaining
rep(s)—repeat(s); repeating
rnd(s)—round(s)
RS—right side
sc—single crochet
sc2tog—insert hook in next stitch, yarn over, pull loop through stitch (2 loops on hook); insert hook in next stitch, yarn over, pull loop through stitch (3 loops on hook); yarn over and draw yarn through all 3 loops on hook; completed sc2tog—1 stitch decreased
sk—skip
sl—slip
sl st—slip(ped) stitch
sp(s)—space(s)
ssk—slip 1 knitwise, slip 1 knitwise, knit 2 slipped stitches together through back loops (decrease)
ssp— slip 1 knitwise, slip 1 knitwise, purl 2 slipped stitches together through back loops (decrease)
st(s)—stitch(es)
St st—stockinette stitch
tbl—through back loop
tog—together
tr—treble crochet
WS—wrong side
wyb—with yarn in back
wyf—with yarn in front
yo—yarn over
*—repeat starting point
( )—alternate measurements and/or instructions
[ ]—work bracketed instructions a specified number of times



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Spin·off – features everything about making yarn by hand, in-depth fiber information, and basic-to-experienced projects and techniques

Crochet – features original crochet patterns for all skill levels, tips and techniques, and inspiring fiber stories

Handwoven – the go-to source for weaving, supplies, patterns, tips, and techniques for handweavers

Knitscene – combines the latest trends with technique to create easy-to-knit patterns that are fresh and unique

Knits Holiday Gifts – unique projects for all levels with gift ideas for everyone on your holiday list

Television

Get started with the world's most beautiful fibers, yarns, and tools; meet trendsetting designers; improve or learn new skills; and knit along with us. *Knitting Daily TV* covers knitting, crochet, stitching, felting, spinning, and other fiber crafts. Make time for yarn every day! Check out your local listings or order Knitting Daily TV on DVD.

Books

Numerous fiber titles offer inspiration and in-depth explorations into popular topics and techniques.

Online

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Knitting Daily reaches out to fiber crafters every weekday with engaging columns, fun contests, free downloadable patterns, guest bloggers, and more. Log onto KnittingDaily.com today to check out what's going on, buy patterns, register for events, and be a part of a growing online fiber community.

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