

Latvian Mittens and other Mitten Traditions

A presentation to GSLKG, February 13, 2010

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Bibliography:

Here is a list of the books and publications that we used to prepare this presentation. Mittens were knitted from some, others were just mentioned as a source of projects for you to knit or design. Please check them out.

Latvian Mittens: Traditional Designs and Techniques by Lizbeth Uptis. Published by Schoolhouse Press. Beautiful color photos, detailed directions and historical and cultural information. A great book to add to your knitting library even if you are only planning to READ it.

Mostly Mittens: Ethnic Knitting Designs from Russia by Charlene Schurch. Published by Martingale Press. Sock knitters will be familiar with Ms. Schurch's Sensational Knitted Socks series. This book features designs from the Komi region of Russia, east of the Ural Mountains. Design suggestions as well as instructions on how to convert the mitten designs into a few different styles of hats are offered, as well as a brief history of the Komi people. These mittens would be a good first stranded colorwork project.

Piecework Magazine, published by Interweave Press. If you are not familiar with this magazine, run to your local yarn shop or bookseller and get a copy. Each issue features several articles about textiles of various cultures and historical eras plus lovely patterns for knitters, crocheters and other needleworkers. Beautiful photography and exhaustive research make it a resource to save and enjoy. We referenced the current issue, Jan/Feb 2010, but other recent issues have featured mittens.

Magnificent Mittens and Socks: The Beauty of Warm Hands and Feet by Anna Zilboorg. Unique construction (Fingertip down) and intricate colorwork are the main attributes of these beautiful mittens. Most feature gauntlet-style cuffs that are simply too pretty to tuck into your coat. Instructions to custom-dye yarns and make matching socks are also included.

A Knitter's Handy Book of Patterns by Ann Budd. Published by Interweave Press. Dozens of sets of numbers allow a knitter to make garments and accessories in several different sizes and gauges. If you are planning to design anything, it's invaluable. If you just want a basic pattern for mittens or a hat, it's here, along with variations to keep things interesting.

Vogue Knitting Stitchionary published by Sixth & Spring Books is another great tool for the budding designer. The three volumes of knitting stitches (Vol. 4 is crochet stitches) will provide great ideas for patterns, lace, cables and colorwork designs for mittens or any other garment you wish to design. Many patterns are shown with both text and charted directions.

Folk Mittens: Techniques and Patterns for Handknitted Mittens by Marcia Lewandowski. Published by Interweave Press. Mittens from several cultures along with excellent directions for creating them.

Poems of Color: Knitting in the Bohus Tradition by Wendy Keele. A great story of women pulling together to help each other during the Great Depression and making fashion history at the same time. No, it's not a great novel, it's the true account of the Bohus Stickning program. This is another great book to have even if you are only going to READ it. The sweaters and matching accessories are gorgeous and have stood the test of time. Check out the patterns for mittens and gloves.

This is by no means a complete list of books on mittens. Check the Guild's library, your local library branch or bookseller. Many cultures have their own knitting traditions or have but their own stamp on the traditions of their ancestors or conquerors. The Internet is, as always, a valuable resource for patterns, historical information and instructional video.

Here are a couple of websites used for this presentation.

www.rigasummit.lv. Dedicated to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit that was held in Riga, Latvia in 2006. Information on the mittens is plentiful as is information about Latvia in general. Much of the cultural information on the mittens was found on this site. There are links to the Latvian Museum which will show you many other aspects of a rich culture.

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections>. One of the many sites of the Smithsonian in Washington DC. This is the source of the historic knitted poetry mitten in the slideshow. Visitors to the site can leave a comment that may rate a response from one of the curators of the museum. After checking out the mittens, you could get lost for a couple of hours exploring ever imaginable aspect of our rich American history and culture.

This is not, of course, a complete list of websites about knitting mittens.

Thank you for coming today. We enjoyed preparing and presenting this program and hope you did too. Happy knitting!

Ginny and Nancy