

KNITTING, BUFF MITTENS AND SLIPPERS

OVERVIEW OF THE OBJECTS

Repository: Crandall Public Library.
Folklife Center
Glens Falls, NY.

Creator: Katie Cross

Title: Knitting, Buff Mittens and Slippers

Dates: 1990

Quantity:

Identification: Folk Art

FOLK ART NOTE

Buff mittens were made with a special type of knitting done in the Adirondack North Country. The mittens were very thick, made by knitting and extra loop on the outside, that was clipped to produce a shaggy outer layer. They were very warm and often used by men driving teams of horses in sub-zero weather. Knitting was more than a hobby years ago. Girls learned to knit so the family would have socks for the men, long stockings for the women and children, and mittens, gloves, scarves and caps for everyone. Girls were taught to knit as soon as their hands could hold the knitting needles, sometimes when they were only four years old.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Katie Cross remembers her mother knitting buff mittens at the family farm in Thurman (Warren County), New York. A man by the name of Joe Blair used to come by and buy mittens, socks and other woolens from local women, load them into his pack basket, and walk from Warrensburg to the lumber camps in Speculator (Hamilton County).

“Oh, yes. She was knitting all the time. Lots of the time during the day, you know, if we weren’t making quilts or something like that. We didn’t have the pleasures that we have now. We’d knit or sew something. I guess I was always satisfied to take that as my pleasure because it was fun. I enjoyed doing it.”

Cross is an active member of the Johnsburg United Methodist Women, making and selling tied quilts to raise money for her church. She also makes and sells buff mittens, and has modified the tradition by designing buff slippers. Traditionally, her mother used wool for her buff knitting; but Cross often uses acrylic yarns, believing her mother would have approved of the bright colors. Katie Cross participated in the Folklife Center’s early festivals, children’s workshops and other events in the 1980s and 1990s.

INDEX TERMS

Topics: Knitting
Buff mittens

Places: Thurman, Warren, New York
Johnsburg, Warren, New York

Important People: Cross, Katie

Form/Genre: realia

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation: Knitting, Buff Mittens and Slippers
Folklife Center
Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, NY.

Accession Information: Donated to the Folklife Center by Todd DeGarmo, circa 1990

Processing Information: Arranged and described by Erica Gonyea, 2019

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECTS

1. Buff mittens, acrylic yarn, brown with red trim, 12 inches long
2. Buff slippers, acrylic yarn, brown with orange heel and toe, 12 inches long
3. Buff slippers, acrylic yarn, blue, 10 inches long