

DISCOVER THE RICH HISTORY AND TRADITIONS OF NORWAY'S ICONIC BLACK AND WHITE MITTENS



What started as a dare became an icon of Norwegian knitting and started a snowball of knitting traditions across the North Atlantic. *Selbuvoetter* : Biography of a Knitting Tradition follows the story of these beautiful mittens and gloves, from folk tradition to major regional industry to national symbol, and passes the tradition on with over 30 patterns taken from actual antiques. Every aspect of business today can be found in the story of Selbu knitting. And above it all, thousands of women and men, using spare moments to create spectacular designs that are as fresh today as they were 150 years ago.

Terri Shea's detailed research into the art of Selbu mittens offers an exciting account of this beloved tradition. Her interesting history of this knitting symbol of Norwegian knitting, the clear and detailed discussion of mitten and glove construction techniques, and the selection of beautiful patterns to knit, are a tribute to the creative genius of the knitters who brought this cottage industry to life. I am looking forward to adding this book to my personal knitting library!

Nancy Bush, author
Folk Knitting in Estonia

"This book is long overdue! Now mitten knitters everywhere can indulge in the rich patterning and engaging construction of these wonderful mittens. In *Ms. Shea's* encouraging, easy-to-read style of writing, she introduces the knitter to the fascinating history, construction basics, and glorious patterning that evolved as a part of the folk culture of Selbu. It won't take long for most knitters to grab their yarn and needles, anxious to begin a pair; but there are plenty of patterns here to keep one comfortably busy for a long, long time."

Both Brown-Rained, author
Knitting Garneys

"Selbu mittens belong to a cottage industry tradition, based on designs from a ancestral language of symbolic a way of communicating independent of mother tongue, dialect, or the limits of fabric. To offer a mitten was a gesture like giving your hand. In this book, Terri Shea passes on these hands and a rich pattern treasure by presenting mittens from Norwegian folk tradition, plus 14 mittens that crossed the sea to find home at Seattle's Nordic Heritage Museum.

Annetta Sundha, author
Everyday Knitting



Terri Shea lives and designs knitwear from Seattle, WA. Her work has been seen in magazines and books such as "Knitter's Magazine" and "Big Girl Knits." This is her first book, and she's pleased as punch to be here.

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Selbuvoetter



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Biography of a Knitting Tradition

Biography of a Knitting Tradition

SHEA

Sprayingbrook LLC



TERRI SHEA

Sweden as a separate state ruled by Sweden's monarchy. Political independence gave the people new pride in their nationality. Newspaper articles advocated the use of locally produced goods as an act of patriotism, and in 1839 new laws were enacted that struck down the old guild systems and allowed women to legally sell knitted items produced from their own wool. (Sandbo *Søndst/Søstern* 32-33) Knitting took on a political and economic importance, like the role horse span and hand made goods played in the American Revolution, as described in "No Idle Hands" by Anne L. Macdonald. Local manufacture of goods to be used locally from local materials, would provide independence from foreign nations; Norwegians meeting Norwegian needs. To firmly display Norway's emerging identity new designs would be needed, with a special Norwegian style, and knitters across the country filled the need.

By the nineteenth century knitting was well established as a useful and portable craft all over Europe, and was practiced by both men and women. It was about this time that stranded knitting was blossoming across northern Europe, especially Scandinavia and Britain.

"The Mother of Selbu Knitting"

The district of Selbu is located an hour's drive east of Trondheim, in the mountains surrounding beautiful Lake Selbu and the river Nisa. Just 485 square miles, it's fairly far north even for Norway's standards, about 230 miles south of the Arctic Circle. In the summer the sun dips below the horizon and the sky darkens for only a few hours each night. Deep winter is equally dark, with about six hours of light each day. The Gulf Stream protects the coast from extreme cold; temperatures in nearby Trondheim hover at the freezing point all winter, with dips above and below throughout the season. The countryside is mostly mountain and lake, with forestry, mining, and farming the principal industries for most of its history.

In the summer of 1856, Marit Guldseth worked for a farmer named Jo Kjusnes. Another girl who worked at the farm had made him a pair of stockings with black stitches "making up the leg." Jo asked Marit if she could do the same. Looking at the photo

of Marit, I can see her as a person who would take a tease and turn it into a dare.



Marit Guldseth (Source: Photo Courtesy Selbu Regiments)

It was common for girls to take some knitting with them into the hills and work while watching the herds during the long summer days. Set with the challenge of knitting something entirely new, Marit tried alternating stitches of two different colors of yarn. She experimented and practiced all summer, trying different designs. Norway has centuries-old traditions in weaving and needlework, so Marit had studied textiles her whole life; the bridal embroideries and woven tapestries that had been created by her mother, grandmothers, aunts, cousins, and neighbors. She incorporated the 8-pointed rose designs she had seen since birth into her work. At the age of sixteen, Marit created mittens using the "selbuosa", knit in white and patterned with natural black wool.

Marit and her sister were the new mittens to church one Sunday. If her family had been less respected, the other women might have rejected her mittens as outlandish and we would never have heard of Selbu, Norway. Luckily for her, and for them, Marit's mittens were extremely popular, and one by one the girls and women of the district learned to knit in her new way. Each wanted to create a design even more beautiful than the others.

It is an extraordinarily rare occurrence to be able to identify the exact place and time that a cultural advance is initiated. Who discovered fire? Who used the first wheel? Who wove the first textile? Who knit the first garter? Alice Stansmore has stated her belief that the Aran sweater tradition was invented by a single knitter, but the identity of that inventor has been lost. Selbu may be unique in remembering the origin of their best knitting tradition. Marit Guldseth Ernstad, born 1841, deserves recognition for her work. What started as a dare was to become a local tradition.

Bridal Finery

Marit's mittens were so popular that everyone wanted a pair. She and her sister taught their friends and neighbors how to knit in the new way. The white and black patterned mittens passed from an interesting single invention into the folk costume of the area, replacing the old ribbing mittens worn previously. Selbu knitting became *de* knitting to wear for special occasions. Similar to the roles mittens played in 19th century Estonia, Selbu mittens

The story ends well for Marit. She is known in Norway as "The Mother of Selbu Knitting". A Trondheim newspaper published an article about her in 1927 and she was able to enjoy the recognition her invention deserved. Marit died in 1929.

doesn't work for you, don't feel bad—only a few of the mittens I studied had perfectly flowing patterns.



Cut on new palm stitches in pattern as established ...

... and pick up inside thumb in the same colors ...

... for a perfect transition from palm to thumb.

Mittens: Gloves

Simply put, gloves are mittens with fingers.

Once you are familiar with mitten construction, it's easy to take the next step and knit gloves. The cuff, thumb, and hand are the same. When you've knit up the hand to where the fingers separate (after the first size, if you're doing a typical two-silbarous pattern), you'll need to divide for the fingers. The patterns for gloves have all had their finger numbers calculated, but you can use this procedure for converting any of the mitten patterns into gloves.

Look at your chart and count the number of stitches on the back of the hand and on the palm. Leave out the side patterning, the "dancing ants" for now.

Divide the hand back number and palm number by 4. That's for 4 fingers.

As an example, let's say you have 31 stitches on the back and 33 on the palm; you'll have 31/4 and 33/4.

31/4 = three 8 stitch fingers and one 7 stitch fingers on the hand back.

33/4 = three 8 stitch fingers and one 9 stitch finger on the palm.

On your hand back chart, mark 8 stitches for the pointer, middle, and ring fingers, and 7 for the pinky.

On your palm chart, mark 8 stitches for the pointer, ring, and pinky, and 9 stitches for the middle finger. It's the biggest so it needs that extra stitch.

Now that you've calculated the stitches for your fingers, it's time to knit them. Fingers are worked one at a time, starting with the pinky.

Work in pattern across back of the hand until you have knit the pinky fingers, including the palm stitches. Keep the pinky stitches on the needles and transfer all of the rest onto waste yarn. Adjust the needles so that the finger back is on Needle 1, the dancing ants on Needle 2, and the palm on Needle 3. On Needle 4 you will cast on extra stitches, usually from 2-4 depending on the gauge, the size of the fingers, and the pattern requirements. You'll also create a stripe up the hand-side of the pinky finger, opposite the dancing ants. These will form the fabric between the pinky and the ring finger. Then join the pinky circularly and work as charted, centering the pattern on the back of the finger and maintaining the palm pattern as established on the palm side. Feel free to redistribute the stitches on the needle to make it comfortable for you. Finish off the fingertip like a pointy mitten thumb.



Here is the second round on the pinky. Place the rest on waste and the finished top. Cast the fabric between jobs and back.

Next, you'll work the ring finger. Start with the stitches you cast on for the pinky. Pick up one stitch for each cast on stitch, keeping in color pattern so you create a joining stripe between the fingers. Transfer the ring finger stitches from the waste yarn to the needles. Cast on between the ring finger and the middle finger like you did on the pinky. Join circularly, knit the chart as before, and finish off with a nice pointy tip.



Here I've used a small crochet hook to pick up the stitches that are cast on for the ringy.

The middle finger is done just the same as the ring finger; pick up the 18 between stitches, slip the necessary stitches from waste yarn to the needles, cast on between the middle finger and the pointer finger, join circularly, and work the chart. Here I used a small crochet hook to pick up the new stitches.

The pointer finger is worked like a pinky in reverse; the thumb-side "dancing ants" pattern takes the place of the cast on stitches. You won't need to cast on any new stitches.



Here I've slipped the stitches from the waste yarn and cast on the new stitches between the ring finger and middle finger. It's just a matter of adding the finger.

The length of each finger is entirely up to the knitter. Some of the old gloves have all the fingers knit to the same length but wear and time have shaped them to fit the wearer's hand. Others

Lower Hand and Thumb Garter.

Begin Chart A, noting that charts are given for both Right and Left hand. Work the lower hand and thumb garter, increasing stitches as charted. You will have 56 sts on the needles.

Set Aside Thumb

On the next round, knit as charted until you reach the thumb, which is represented in the chart by the grey bar. Slip the 11 thumb stitches onto waste yarn and Cast On 11 stitches using a backward loop method. Work the rest of the chart, and finish the finger tips by cutting the yarn and threading it onto the tapestry needle. Then thread through the remaining stitches and pull tight.



Chart A

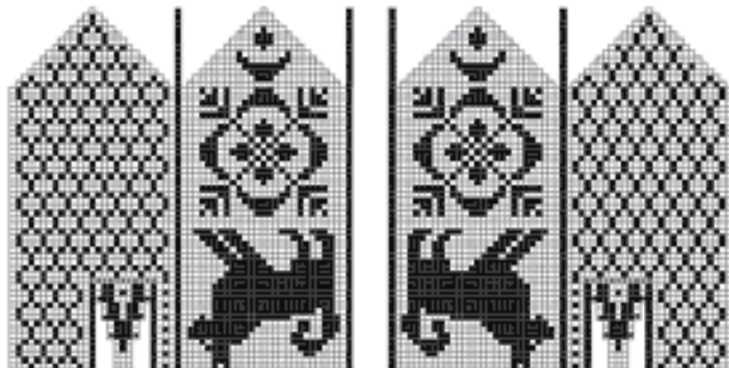


Chart B - Right Hand

Chart C - Left Hand

Thumb

With palm up and fingertip facing you, pick up 11 stitches from the stitches you cast on earlier. Pick up 1 stitch from side of thumb hole. Slip stitches from waste yarn onto needles. Pick up 1 stitch from side of thumb hole. You should have 24 stitches on the needles. Work thumb as charted, using Chart B for the outside of the thumb, and contrasting the palm pattern for the inside of the thumb. (Note you increase 2 stitches on the first Round of the thumb chart, bringing the total thumb stitches to 28.) Finish the thumb tip by cutting the yarn and threading it onto the tapestry needle. Then weave it through the remaining stitches and pull tight.

Finishing

Weave in Ends on wrong side. If a small hole shows where the thumb was picked up, sew it closed using the yarn tail. Wash and block mittens as desired.

Annemor #5

Source
Annemor Mittles
Private Collection

Finished Size

Child Small
Length 4.5" from cuff to fingertip
Width 3.0" measured across palm

Fiber

Dalegon Tux (100% mohair 40% wool, 50g 12mm)
MC 020 Eco, 1 skein; CC 090 Black, 1 skein

Gauge

35 st 36 rounds = 4" (10cm) measured over palm

Needles & Tools

US Size 2/2.75mm DPN needles or size to give gauge
Waste Yarn
Tapestry Needle



IN OLD NORSE MYTHOLOGY THE GOD ODIN HAD TWO RAVENS, MEMORY AND THOUGHT, WHO FLEW ACROSS THE LAND AND BROUGHT HIM TIDINGS OF EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IN MY HOME IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, RAVEN IS A SHAPE-CHANGING TRICKSTER WHO PLACED THE SUN IN THE SKY AND TAUGHT THE FIRST HUMANS HOW TO HUNT AND FISH. I CHOOSE DALE TUX WITH ITS SHINY MOHAIR TO REFLECT RAVEN'S GLEISTERING FEATHERS. KNIT THESE FOR ANY CHILD, A DEEP THINKER OR LAUGHING TRICKSTER, AND BRING ANCIENT SYMBOLS BACK TO LIFE.

SAMPLE KNIT BY KAREN CAMPBELL

Cuff

Using MC, Cast On 40 stitches. Divide stitches evenly onto 4 needles and join circularly, taking care not to twist stitches. Work in K2P2 ribbing for 2 Rounds. Knit 2 Rounds in MC. Work Chart A.

Next Round in MC, increase as follows: *K5, M1; repeat to end of round. 48 stitches. Knit one round in MC.

Lower Hand and Thumb Garter.

Begin Chart B, noting that charts are given for both Right and Left hand. Be sure to work one

palm and the back for each mitten; if the "other" palm gets distracting, try photocopying the page and folding over the side not in use. Work the lower hand and thumb garter, increasing stitches as charted. You will have 54 sts on the needles.

Set Aside Thumb

On the next round, knit as charted until you reach the thumb, which is represented in the chart by the grey bar. Slip the 11 thumb stitches onto



Original Mittens, Annemor Mittles Collection

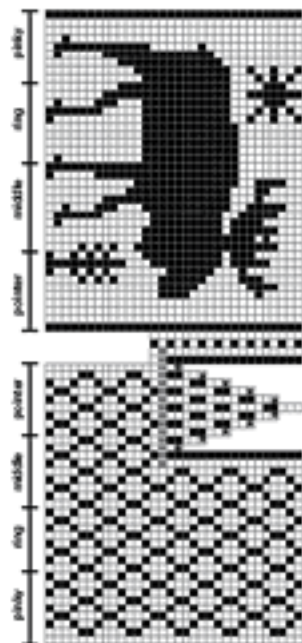


Chart B - Right Hand

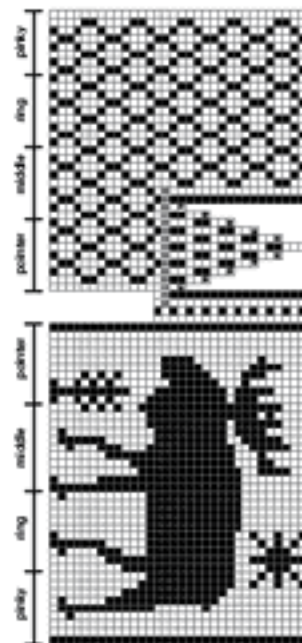
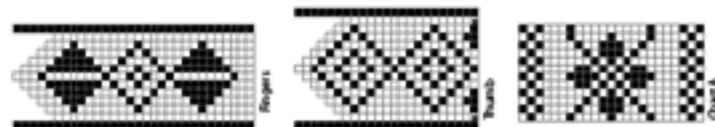


Chart B - Left Hand



Annemor #8

Source
Annemor Sundin
Private Collection

Finished Size
Women's Medium or Men's Small
Length 4 1/2" from cuff to fingertip
Width 4 1/2" measured across palm

Yarn
Jamieson & Smith 100% wool, 25g Worsted
MC 1A Ecru, 2 skeins, CC 93 Red, 1 skein

Gauge
33 st 34 rounds = 4 1/2" (11cm) measured over palm

Needles & Tools
US Size 2/2.75mm DPN needles or size to give gauge
Waste Yarn
Tapestry Needle



I LOVE THE UNUSUAL DESIGN OF THE CENTRAL STAR SEEN HERE; UNLIKE MOST, IT IS NOT BASED ON THE SELBURGSA BUT HAS IT'S OWN MATHEMATICAL PATTERN. THE LINES THAT COME OUT FROM THE CORNERS ARE PINE BOUGHS, AND THEY ARE SEEN AGAIN ON THE FINGERS. THE CUFF MIGHT BE A LITTLE SHORT FOR A MAN'S WRIST - IT'S COMMON TO JUST ADD ANOTHER BAND OF PATTERN TO LENGTHEN; SYMMETRY NOT NEEDED. MAKE THE FINGERS AS LONG AS YOU LIKE, BUT BE WARNED THAT THIS SAMPLE USED ALL BUT ONE YARD OF A SINGLE SKEIN OF CC.

SAMPLE KNT BY KAREN WALKER.

Cuff

Using MC, Cast On 60 stitches. Divide stitches evenly onto 4 needles. Join circularly, taking care not to twist stitches. Work in K1P1 ribbing for 4 Rounds. Knit 1 Round. Work Chart A. Knit 2 Rounds.

Lower Hand and Thumb Garter.

Begin Chart B, noting that charts are given for both Right and Left hand. Work the lower hand and thumb garter, increasing stitches as charted. You will have 76 sts on the needles.

Set Aside Thumb

On the next round, knit as charted until you reach the thumb, which is represented in the chart by the grey bar. Slip the 17 thumb stitches onto waste yarn and Cast On 17 stitches using a backward loop method. Work the rest of Chart B.

Divide for Fingers

Notice the basel line at the top of Chart B. These lines show which stitches will be used for each finger. Work the back of the hand stitches in MC. Work across the pinky fingers on the



NHM #9

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|---|
| Source Nordic Heritage Museum Accession Number 1995.061.002 |
| Finished Size Women's Medium Length 9.5" from cuff to fingertip Width 3.75" measured across palm |
| Note Jamieson's Double Knitting (100% wool, 21g 175m) MC 104 Natural White 2 skeins, CC 210 Gorsea 2 skeins |
| Gauge 28 st 32 rounds = 47.5cm measured over palm |
| Needles & Tools US Size 2/2.75mm DPN needles or size to give gauge US Size 1/2.35mm DPN needles Waste Yarn, Tapestry Needle |

I LOVE THE FLEXIBILITY THE SELBUYOTTER METHOD. THESE MITTENS WERE ORIGINALLY KNIT IN THE SMOOTH IRREGULAR WHICH IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND. I PLANNED TO USE SATAKIILE AS A SUBSTITUTE, BUT ACCIDENTALLY SENT DENISE, MY TALENTED TEST KNITTER, THE WRONG YARN FOR THE CONTRASTING PATTERN COLOR. YIKES! DENISE GRACIOUSLY OFFERED TO USE SOME YARN FROM HER STASH, AND CHOSE SOMETHING I HADN'T THOUGHT OF - JAMIESON'S DOUBLE KNITTING. DENISE BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED HOW CHOOSING YOUR OWN YARNS CAN MAKE MITTENS THAT ARE UNIQUELY YOUR OWN. WHILE THE STRANDED CUFF IMPLIES THESE ARE A MAN'S MITTENS, THEY WORKED UP TO FIT MY HAND PERFECTLY. SAMPLE KNIT BY DENISE SATTERBLUND.

Cuff

Using MC and smaller needles, Cast On 60 stitches. Divide stitches evenly onto 4 needles and join circularly, taking care not to twist stitches. Work in K1P1 ribbing for 4 Rounds. Change to larger needles and work Chart A. Knit one Round in MC.

Lower Hand and Thumb Gusset.

Begin Chart B, noting that charts are given for both Right and Left hand. Be sure to work one palm and the back for each mitten; if the "other"

palm gets disorienting, try photocopying the page and folding over the side not in use. Work the lower hand and thumb gusset, increasing stitches as charted. You will have 66 sts on the needles.

Set Aside Thumb

On the next round, knit as charted until you reach the thumb, which is represented in the chart by the grey bar. Slip the 15 thumb stitches onto waste yarn and Cast On 13 stitches using a backward loop method. Work the rest of the chart, and finish the finger tips by cutting the

yarn and threading it onto the tapestry needle. Then thread through the remaining stitches and pull tight.

Thumb

With palm up and fingertip facing you, pick up 15 stitches from the stitches you cast on earlier. Pick up 1 stitch from side of thumb hole. Slip stitches from waste yarn onto needles. Pick up 1 stitch from side of thumb hole. You should have 30 stitches on the needles. Work thumb as charted, using Chart C for the outside of the thumb, and continuing the palm pattern for the inside of the thumb. Finish the thumb tip by cutting the

yarn and threading it onto the tapestry needle. Then weave it through the remaining stitches and pull tight.

Finishing

Weave in Ends on wrong side. If a small hole shows where the thumb was picked up, sew it closed using the yarn tail. Wash and block mittens as desired.

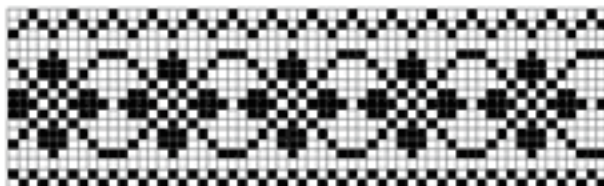


Chart A

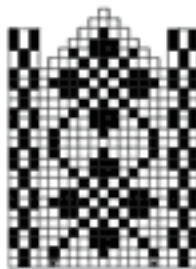


Chart C



Original pattern: Nordic Heritage Museum
Accession Number 1995.061.002