

Directions for Civil War Socks

19th Century Knitting Instructions:

Directions for Knitting Socks -- From the United States Sanitary Commission Bulletin, Volume, 1, Number 31, 2-1-65, p. 963

1 lb. yarn knits three pair socks

Use No. 13 needles and three threaded yarn.

For small sock, set up 65 stitches -- foot 10 inches long.

For medium sock, set up 70 stitches -- foot 11 inches long.

For very large sock, set up 75 stitches -- foot 12 inches long.

Leg. - Cast on stitches. Rib 3 1/2 inches. Knit plain 6 1/2 inches, keeping one stitch seam.

Heel. - Take half the stitches on one needle for the back of heel. Knit three inches, seaming every other row. Then turn the heel thus: knit three-quarters of your stitches, and slip and bind the first stitch of the last quarter. Turn and seam back, repeating the same on first stitch of the quarter at the other end, and so on, back and forward, till the two end quarters are used up.

Instep. -- Divide the remaining stitches on two needles and pick up on each needle the stitches on that side of the heel. With these and the stitches on the instep needle begin the foot. Narrow at the last stitch but two on the side needles, near the instep needle. Do this every other round until you have reduced the number of stitches on each heel needle to half that on instep needle.

Foot. Knit on plain until your foot is the right length, allowing 2 1/2 inches for the toe.

Toe. Knit one round, narrowing every seventh stitch. Then knit six rows plain. Knit one round narrowing every sixth stitch. Five rows plain, and so on until you narrow every other stitch. Cast off.

Run heels and toes.

To avoid running, and make heel double, follow directions for heel as above, but on seam needle, slip every other stitch.

U.S. Sanitary Commission Socks

Modern Translation Written by Karin Timour

Needles: One set of doublepoint needles 0 or 1 whichever will give you the gauge. I prefer using a set of five needles, though many sock knitters use a set of four needles.

Gauge: 7-8 stitches per inch

Yarn: 4.5 ounces sock yarn (NOT sport or worsted weight), preferably 100% wool so that if reenactors accidentally get their feet in the fire, the wool will smolder, rather than melt onto their skin. Most commercial sock yarns contain man-made fibers which will cause the socks to wear for a longer period, but if the wearer accidentally puts his feet too close to a fire, they will melt onto his skin.

Sizes: Written for 1 pair of small men's socks with medium and large instructions written in parentheses. The amount of yarn quoted above will make all three sizes.

Cast on 65 (70, 75). Rib with knit 2, purl 2 rib for 3 1/2 inches. When you finish the ribbing and start knitting the leg, purl the first stitch, and knit all the rest. This line of purl stitches will run the entire length of the back of the leg of the sock. I find it easiest to keep the purl stitch as the first stitch on one of the needles. Knit the leg until it is 6 1/2 inches long (same length for all three sizes of sock).

Starting the Heel Flap: Divide the stitches into two batches of 32 (35, 37).

One set of 32 (35, 37) stitches, with the purl stitch in the middle, should be shifted on to one needle to begin the heel flap. The remaining 32 (35, 37) stitches should be equally divided on to two needles. These will become the instep, across the top of the foot. Ignore them for the present moment.

Some people find it easiest to take a darning needle with a piece of scrap yarn on it and string it through the instep stitches, and take the needles out of the stitches.

Knitting the Heel Flap: Your heel flap will have a right and wrong side. The side which will be the outside of the sock will be a knit row.

Row 1:

Knit across the row, purling the purl stitch at the middle of the heel. When you are at the end of the row, turn it so that the "wrong" side of the heel flap is facing you.

Row 2: Purl the first stitch, slip the next stitch across without purling it. Purl the third stitch. Continue Purl 1, slip 1 across the flap, remembering to knit when you get to the stitch in the middle of the heel flap. Repeat these two rows until the flap measures 3 inches.

Turning the Heel:

Row 1: Starting with a knit row, knit across the heel until there are 8 (8, 9) stitches left unknit on your left hand needle. Knit the next two stitches together. Now turn the entire piece of work so that you are looking at the purl or "wrong" side of the knitting.

Row 2: From this point begin purling back toward the other side of the heel flap. When you get within 8 (8,9) stitches of the end of the row, purl next two stitches together and "flip" the work again, so that you are looking at the "right or knit" side of the heel flap.

Row 3: From that point begin knitting back across the heel flap until you are within one stitch of the gap caused by knitting two together. Knit these two stitches together (the stitches made by

knitting two together in Row 1 and the first stitch on the other side of the gap caused when you knit two together the last time). As soon as you have knit those together, flip over to the purl side again.

Row 4: Purl back across the row until you get to the last stitch before the "gap" caused by purling two together in Row 2. Purl two together (the stitch you created by purling two together in Row 2 and the first stitch on the other side of the gap). Flip to the other side. Row 5: Repeat Row 3, each time knitting the last stitch to the first stitch on the other side of the gap, then flipping and doing the same on the purl row until all the stitches have been used up on both sides of the heel. Leaving a piece of yarn about three inches to be sewn in later, break your yarn.

Gusset: Now you have the instep stitches either on a piece of yarn or on two needles and the remaining stitches on the bottom of the heel. Put the instep needles back on one needle. Knit across the instep stitches. When you get to the end of the instep stitches, using a small crochet hook reach through the side of the stitch on the edge of the heel flap and loop your yarn through, creating a new stitch. Do this the entire length of the heel flap.

You should create about 20 or so stitches. Knit across the heel stitches at the bottom of the heel, and continue picking up stitches up the other side of the heel flap. When you get back to the instep needle, count your stitches.

You should have 32 (35, 37) stitches on the instep needle, approximately 20 stitches on the right side of the heel flap, 10 (10, 11) stitches across the bottom of the heel, and 20 stitches on the left side of the heel flap.

Row 1: Knit across the instep stitches. Knit the first stitch on the side of the heel, then knit the next two stitches together. Knit down the remainder of the heel side, the bottom of the heel and up the other side of the heel until you have three stitches left on the heel side needle. Then knit two together and knit the last stitch.

Row 2: Knit plain.

Row 3: Repeat Row 1. Repeat these two rows until you have 64 (70, 75) stitches on your needles.

Foot: Knit plain until the foot measures 7 1/2 inches (8 1/2 inches, 9 1/2 inches) at this point start the knitting instructions for the toe.

Toe: Insert a marker so that you know when you are at the end of a row.

Row 1: Knit six stitches, then knit two together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Row 2 - 7: Knit plain.

Row 8: Knit five stitches, then knit two together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Rows 9-12: Knit plain.

Row 13: Knit four stitches, then knit together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Row 14-17: Knit plain.

Row 18: Knit three stitches, then knit two together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Row 19-21: Knit plain.

Row 22: Knit two stitches, then knit two together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Row 23 and 24: Knit plain.

Row 25: Knit one stitch, then knit two together. Repeat this all the way around the row.

Row 25: Knit plain.

Row 26: Knit two together. Repeat all the way around the row. Break off about 3-4 inches of your yarn, thread a darning needle and string through the remaining stitches. Draw tight and weave in the end.

Finishing: Turn the sock inside out. Using the darning needle, weave in the end left when making the heel.

Please feel free to write if you have questions about the instructions above.

Best wishes with your sock project.

Sincerely,

Karin Timour

Atlantic Guard Soldiers' Aid Society