

## Making Clothing



continued from p16 which shows shearing wool from sheep, rabbits or from long hair from other animals such as some buffalo, or horses then spinning it, then using looms to make clothing. At right the drop spindle or spinning wheel were used to spin the wool into yarn. Hand looms were very labor intensive. In other words it took a long time to make cloth. The material was then soaked in water to shrink it, The



strips of cloth were then sewed together to make clothing, bags and other articles.

In Michigan most hand made clothing was made of wool which had been woven or knitted. Cotton and wool were not available in Michigan until the late 1800s. Before that most people wore clothing made of deer skin. This was often too hot in the summer and not warm in the winter. It was also difficult to wash as all washing was done by streams by hand. Wool clothing did not come into wide use until the late 1700s. Clothing made from flax is called linen and was difficult and time consuming to make. Linen was strong and long lasting. Some clothing was made from grasses, reeds, nettle or barks of the linden tree during shortage of deer hide or when weather was hot. Indians often went naked in hot weather. Sometimes they wore a loin cloth. This was a strip of hide or cloth worn over one's privates and secured by a belt. Some other animal firs such as rabbit, raccoon and bison were also used. The process of making clothing from these was a long and difficult time consuming task.

Whenever possible items were traded for cloth and clothing manufactured by commercial means. Clothing of wool, cotton and linen were lighter, more comfortable and easier to wash. Even the Indians soon adopted white man's clothing which they acquired by trading, stealing or killing the owner who was trespassing on their land.

Pioneer families at first lived on a survival basis bring with them the clothing they had purchased or made out east. As fabrics became available it was often cheaper in natural color which was almost white. As general stores opened they offered inexpensive dyes and people dyed their fabrics themselves. Linen did not take well to dying but cotton and wool did.

Later fabrics with many colors and patterns became less expensive. Later on when commercial products were sold in cloth bags they were also offered in cloth bags of cotton fabric with nice colorful patterns. Farmers wives used these bags often to make clothing especially for the children. Many a girl's dress was made from a feed sack. These were available up thru the 1960s.

Before the 1800 people in Michigan often had only one set of clothing which was worn all of the time. During the 1800s machine made fabric and clothing became available and was offered at an affordable price which was less than the time and cost of hand made clothing. By the 1900s people had more than one change of clothing. This meant that the clothing got washed more often.

Just a note on cleanliness. Indians did not bathe except to swine in creeks, ponds or lakes. Settlers complained of the fowl smell of many Indians because of their non bathing life style. Prior to the mid 1800s showers and bathtubs were virtually nonexistent. Washing was done sparingly by swimming or by sitting in a metal or canvas washtub or hand with a wash rag.

Artificial fibers such as nylon and polyester did not come into wide use until after the 1940s. Soon we will have micro and nano fiber clothing or clothing made from the strongest material on Earth Graphene.

