

Keeping your hands busy; Handiwork and crafts of the 19th century

Whether you are at a weekend battle reenactment or an educational living history, you are likely to have moments where you wish you had something to do with your hands. Here are some basic ideas for you to look into:

Basic sewing – Bring a petticoat, chemise, drawers, cuffs or child's dress to work on. This is a double opportunity for teaching. You can talk about your stitches and fabric or the garment you are working on.

Knitting – Numerous garments can be knitted at an event. Smaller ones include mittens, socks, or a hood; larger ones a shawl or blanket.

Crochet – You can crochet lengths of edging for your under-pinnings.

Netting – Make a net for your hair or net for an accessory.

Lace work – Visitors and other reenactors are always amazed to see lace patterns come together.

Embroidery – Embroidering a handkerchief can be one of the smallest and easiest to transport projects.

Quilting – The great thing about quilting is you can do one or two blocks per event for as long as it takes to finish the front.

Rug making – Hooked rugs, appliqué rugs, sewn rugs, braided rugs

Straw plaiting – This is braiding whole or split straw into usable plaits. You can try to braid enough for a bonnet (15-20 yards) or just enough for a little post-event craft.

Ruching Trim – Pre-cut and press bias strips at home and carry them in a cotton bag with needle and thread.

Further Reading:

“Needle-books, Sewing Cases, and House-wives” by Anna Worden (*Citizen's Companion* Nov. 2007)

Flitting Fingers by Virginia Mescher (Tatting) (available at Ragged Soldier Sutlery)

Knitting A La Mode and *Knit Two A La Mode* by Silvana R. Siddali and Polly D. Steenhagen (available at Ragged Soldier Sutlery)

The Lady's Guide to Plain Sewing and The Lady's Guide to Plain Sewing Book II (available at Ragged Soldier Sutlery) by Kathleen Kannick

Plain Needlework: A Guide to Nineteenth Century Hand Sewing by Melissa Roberts (available at Ragged Soldier Sutlery)

Beadle's Dime Guide to Dress Making and Millinery

Civil War Ladies: Fashions and Needle-Arts of the Early 1860s by Mark Campbell

Ladies' Self Instructor in Millinery & Mantua Making, Embroidery & Appliqué ed. by R.L. Shep

Victorian Needle-Craft: Artistic and Practical ed. R.L. Shep