

Crochet Carrage Bag from Peterson's 1858

Designer: Jamie Quick

I was excited to see a simple crocheted handbag in Peterson's 1858 Magazine. Many period hand bags require extensive beading or Berlin work. Then, there is trying to source odd textile materials, frames and locks. It can get complicated and expensive fast!



I was also excited because, in the historical community, we often overlook traveling bags. We recommend pockets, and say that period purses were tiny silk reticules that are nothing like what we carry today. Which is true. Silk reticules were essentially wallets or coin bags. They did not take the place of an actual bag. And while these points keep many of us on the right track... did they have something similar to the modern purse?

Here are four patterns featured in Godey's or Peterson's around 1858-1865. Most are labeled as Carriage or Traveling Bags. As you can see, some have locks and some do not. Some have leather handles, and some have handmade handles that look like twisted cord. And pretty much all of them are in the 10 x 12 inch range, about the same size as a modern purse.



All of these bags are works of art! And a basket is going to look way more accurate than a poorly produced hand bag from non-period materials. But, if you crochet and do some sewing, this is a pattern that isn't that complicated!

I also wanted to say, go ahead and use bright bold colors. The original pattern calls for shaded scarlet, drab brown, and two shades of emerald green. I used hand dyed yarn, dyed with the assistance of two adorable helpers, and using my hand dyed yarn was obviously necessary.

But, generally speaking, the average mid 19th century crafter went to the store and bought yarn! It was manufactured in mills just like fabric. It came in many colors, and they weren't all boring earth tones. Any period pattern will show you how much they loved bold color combinations!

My Changes: As always, I like to be up front about changes. The math of the pattern doesn't add up in the center stripes. I ended up doing fewer rows. I only have 5 green stripes in the center.

I wasn't able to source an accurate lock. Some handbag patterns do not have them, and I figured it was safe to leave it off. I added a hook and eye closure to the center of the bag instead.

I opted for handmade rope style handles. As you can see above, period patterns do show this type of handle. Therefore, I didn't feel that my handles were an overreach.

I didn't take my bag to a Berlin house for the foundation! I, unfortunately, do not have one of those, and you probably don't either! I attempted to mimic the frame with some cheap dowel roads. I do think the structure helped the bag, especially at the top where the handles are. They do sell purse wire frames. I'm not sure if they are anything like period frames, or how to install them. But, that is an option if you want to look into it.

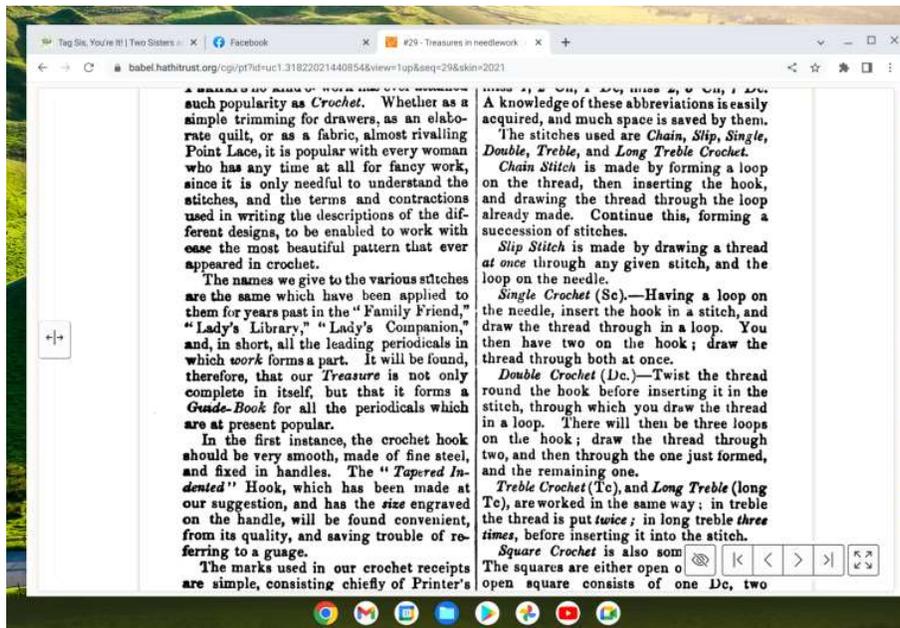
What I would do differently: I made the bag 24 inches long, which resulted in a 10.5 inch bag in

height. But, the base was narrow at 2 inches, and this also created narrower sides. The narrower sides, made my bag 2 inches bigger in width than the original pattern suggested. Ideally, I think the bag should have been made 25 inches, with 3 inch sides and base.

Historical Edit

I have been informed, that this pattern was published several times. The oldest source “that we know about” comes from The Family Friend Magazine, in 1849. It was also published in “Treasures in Needlework” in 1855. Both of the previous sources are British. I’ve been told that in Britain, the double crochet was what we Americans call single crochet. The source I had found, was Peterson’s Magazine, which was published in Philadelphia.

This brought about an entire conversion, on if the bag was intended to be made in single or double crochet. And would the readers of Peterson’s have known that the pattern was British? That was when I looked into the online archives of the Treasures in needlework, and I discovered the following.

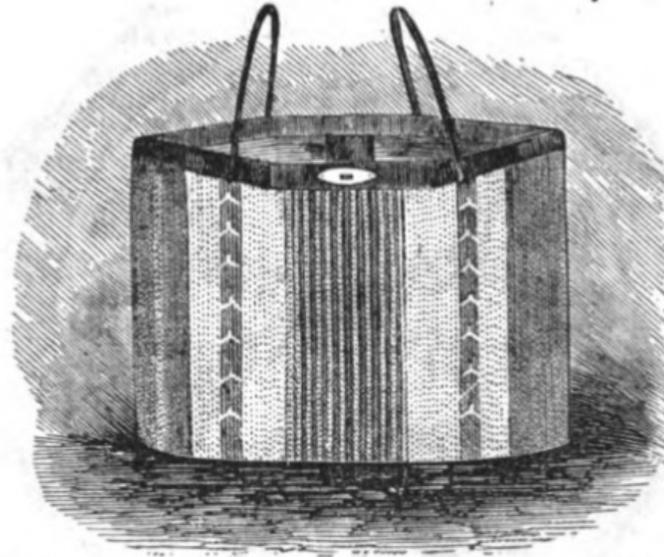


The London published book, of 1855. This is their given instructions on how to create the double crochet stitch... and it is the same as the American double crochet. That is a head scratcher, and I will let you know if I find more!

Anyway, onto the pattern!!

DESIGN FOR A CARRIAGE-BAG.

BY MRS. JANE WEAVER.



MATERIALS.—Two oz. of shaded scarlet. 1 oz. each of 2 shades of bright emerald green; one to be 3 shades darker than the other. 1 oz. light drab or stone. All 8 thread wool. No 1 Penelope hook. A foundation bag with clasp, 12½ inches wide, 10 inches in depth, from the top of the clasp to the bottom. This bag is worked entirely in dc or double crochet.

Make a chain a trifle longer than the bag, measuring from the clasp on one side, round to the opposite side.

Now work 9 rows of Ridged Crochet, in scarlet, which is worked thus:—

1st Row.—After the chain, turn, and work a

row of dc, then after the last stitch, make 1 chain; this is to turn, and must never be worked into.

2nd Row.—Turn back, and work into the back loops instead of the front; do this 9 times.

Now work the following rows in plain dc, without turning back, beginning at one end every time.

† One row of dark green.

One row of light.

One of dark green.

Three rows of drab.

One row of 7 stitches scarlet, 1 stitch light green.

One row of 6 stitches scarlet, (the first time only,) 3 stitches dark green; afterward, 5 scarlet stitches instead of 6.

One row of 7 stitches scarlet, 1 light green.

Three rows of drab.

One row dark green.

One row light green.

One row dark green. †

Four rows of scarlet ridged crochet.

* One row green ridged.

One row scarlet ridged.

Work from * 4 times more, that is, 6 rows of green, and 6 rows of scarlet, using the two colors alternately.

Four rows of scarlet ridged.

This forms the centre stripe. Now work from † to † again; then nine rows of scarlet ridged. Damp, and lay between linen, under a heavy weight; then make up on the foundation, which may be procured at any Berlin house.



Materials

- 3.5 oz Fingering Weight Wool in Shaded Scarlet
- 1.75 oz grams Fingering Weight Wool in Dark Emerald
- 1.75 oz Fingering Weight Wool in Lighter Emerald
- 1 oz Fingering Weight Wool in Drab Brown
- Size E or D crochet Hook, whatever gives you a nice tight gauge
- Cotton cord for the handles, I used regular sport/worsted cotton yarn
- 3 Dowel Rods
- 1 yd sturdy cotton upholstery like fabric, duck or canvas.

- Gauge: In Double Crochet 7 stitches x 4 rows = 1 square inch

Size of Finished Purse: Mine was 14 x 11. I did give tips on how to make it 12.5 x 11, which was the size given in the original pattern, but of course with gauge, it is going to vary a bit in sizing.

Let's Start Crocheting

Create a chain that is 24-26 inches long, chain 4 more. (I made mine 24 inches long, and wish it was an inch or two bigger on the bottom. As it is a bit narrow.)

Row 1: Dc in each chain across, chain 3 and turn

Row 2: Chain 3 counts as the first dc, dc across in the back loop. This will create a ridge on the front side. Chain 3, turn

Rows 3-9: Repeat row 2 till you have 9 rows of scarlet worked in the back loop. This will create a ridge on the front side. The front loop will always be open, and the back worked into. Break off yarn

Note: When you stop working the ridge stitch, you may notice your gauge increase. If so, go down a needle size.

Row 10: Tie Dark Emerald yarn onto the other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off.

Row 11: Tie Light Emerald yarn onto the other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off.

Row 12: Tie Dark Emerald yarn onto other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off

Row 13 – 15: Tie on Drab brown yarn onto the other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off. (Break off every row even with the drab)

Row 14: Tie on Scarlet onto other end. Chain 3, work 6 dc, tie on light emerald, 1 dc in light emerald. Work down entire row doing *7 dc in scarlet, 1 in light emerald.* Break off.

Row 16: Tie on Scarlet onto the other end. Chain 3, work 5 dc, tie on darker emerald, 3 dc in emerald. Work down entire row doing * 5dc scarlet, 3 dc emerald* end as needed in the pattern to keep the look.

Row 17: Repeat row 14

Rows 18 – 20: Repeat rows 13 – 15

Row 21: Tie on Dark Emerald yarn onto other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off

Row 22: Tie on Light Emerald onto other end. Chain 3, dc across. Break off

Row 23: Tie on Dark Emerald onto other end. Ch 3, dc across, Break off.

Row 24: Tie on Scarlet onto other end. Ch 3, dc across. Do Not Break. Ch 3, turn

Row 25-27: Dc across in the back loop to create the ridge. Ch 3, turn.

Row 28: Break off Scarlet and tie on green. Ch 3, dc across in back loop.

Row 29: Break off Green and tie on scarlet. Ch 3, dc across in back loop.

Rows 30 – 35: Alternate between Row 28 & 29, until you have the desired number of stripes. For me, I had five rows of green. The original pattern called for 6 rows, but I found the bag was getting a bit large, and I was also afraid that I was going to run out of green.

Rows 36- 40: Break off green and tie on scarlet. Work 4 rows of scarlet in the back loop.

Mirror the purse pattern starting at Row 23, with the Dark Emerald Green.

When you get to the ribbing at the end, do not dc in the back loop in the very first row that is attached to the Emerald green. Start working the back loop in the second row.

Blocking

You can wet your wool before pinning, or wet after pinning. Blocking will help give you straight edges, as you may have noticed your work leaning slightly on the side where you keep tying on.

Lining and Sides

Lay down your work on top of the lining, and cut it out. Fold the edge of the fabric inside, you can also put all the tails from the crochet work in between the layers... I have seen this recommended in period patterns, and it sure is a time saver.

For bottom stability, and to imitate frame work. I marked two inches in the center... if you make a bigger bag, then go ahead and make the bottom bigger! Then, I put another piece of fabric on top of this area, and sewed channels for two dowel rods. I cut them into 12 inches with a razor. I didn't go all the way to the edge, as the sides would need to turn in a bit.



For the sides, you want to turn each side inward $\frac{1}{2}$ of the distance of your framed area. Then sew down. I used regular thread on the inside. On the outside, I sewed with the yarn, and went through all the layers.

Just to make the corners of the bag look better, I did some sewing there to make sure everything laid nicely. I did not sew all the way up the sides of the bag. As I needed to fold over the top, and add the dowel rods.



Top

Fold over the top enough to insert the dowel rod. You can even just sew it in. Cut the rod short enough that it doesn't interfere with the sides of the bag.



Handles

There are so many ways to make a cord. I selected the twisted rope style cord. It was the style that appeared to be used on two of the bags that I looked at. Here is a youtube video on this technique.

In my first attempt, I made my handles out of wool. Beautiful, but thin and stretchier than I liked. I added some cotton to my handle the next time, and definitely recommend that! I used about 20 strands of yarn, two yards long for each handle.

I added an extra piece of fabric to secure the handle when sewing it down, and give it a more polished look.

Finish off with a hook and eye if you would like, or another form of closure.

Enjoy!

~ Jamie

As always, pattern is copywrite@2022. You are welcome to make and even sell the bag! But, my pattern/directions are not to be sold or published, without contacting me for permission. Pattern can be found on Raverly!