

Oilskin Clothes

CONTRIBUTOR: Mary Barney

COLLECTOR: Gertie Fowler

Gertie Fowler:

I'm here in L'Anse au Loup today, with Mary Barney and Mary is gonna explain to me today, how she made oil skin clothes from Linseed oil. Okay Mary, how did you go about it, maid?

Mary Barney:

Well first thing we had to do, we had to use the flour bags.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And... those suits were made out of flour bags, same flour that you'd eat and then use the bags for it.

Gertie Fowler:

Hmmm.

Mary Barney:

And you'd make it up, the overalls...the pants, like you would a pair of overalls and the tops we knit, we could knit a Cossack. We didn't make them button up. We knit them with the hood and all on to it.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh

Mary Barney:

So then they'd have the hoods for their heads and that kept them good. What else?

Gertie Fowler:

So how'd ya... how did you go about now, puttin' ... makin' that water proof.

Mary Barney:

Oh to make it waterproof, well we make two.... I'm not quite sure, Organ's or Pikes ...W.Y.Pike sold Linseed Oil by the gallon. So you would boil your linseed oil, have it good and hot, and then you would dip the cloth, the overalls, and the Cossack, down into it. First time you'd do it, you'd dip them down into it and wring it up. You'd put it out on the clothes line to dry. So you.... if the sun was good And you'd make sure the sun was up before you would put it out. Will then, you would leave it there all day.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

But you would bring it in, in the night just in case it would rain and that would spoil the product right away. So you kept putting it out and then the next day, you'd dip it down, when it would get a little dry, you'd dip it down again and ring it again.

And you ring it..... I can't tell you how many times you'd dip it down and ring it out. While the cloth was soft, you would ring it, but once the cloth got hard, stiff, you wouldn't ring it anymore because that would spoil it.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh, okay.

Mary Barney:

So you'd use a paint brush, then. You'd use a paintbrush, and oil it all over with a paintbrush because it was too stiff by this time, to ah ring it anymore, like I said, if you rung it, then you would spoil the whole thing.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

And it all depended on the sun. How long it would be before you'd be able to use it. Most likely, the first..... it'd take two weeks by ringing it.

Gertie Fowler:

To make it set.

Mary Barney:

To make it a little bit stiff. You'd take.... and that had to depend on the sun, if you got rain, well you wouldn't do anything with it because the rain was no good. Had to have the sun. The sun would make it dry stiff.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

And then ah.... ah.... like I said, you'd have to go to work then and put it into and paint it over with a brush. And then.... and then... sometimes you might take a month. We could start early in the Spring, that was number one. You'd start early in the Spring because the boys wouldn't be using them, take them out of school.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah.

Mary Barney:

So what we would do was start early in the Spring and then add a couple of months before the fishing season. And we only made that for the boys, for about fourteen and fifteen years old, when they would go out jigging in the summer after school was over.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. To keep 'em

Mary Barney:

Warm. To keep 'em yeah. Where the men used their rubber clothes, they would have the oil clothes, but it would do the same purpose.

Gertie Fowler:

Yeah. So who taught you now, how to make it?

Mary Barney:

Well, mom. Mom and them always done it for their boys, too.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

Yup, that's where we learned it at. Where I learned it at, and everyone here in this community at that time, because they wouldn't be.... no one would sell it, small clothes. So we the reason we did it because you couldn't buy it if you had the money. And money wasn't so... wasn't so fancy as it is now.

Gertie Fowler:

No

Mary Barney:

Never had so much money around as what it is those days. And even if you did, you wouldn't be able to buy it. Because it wasn't to be bought.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

So I don't know how the older people, like mom and them, how ever they came to To find out you know about this. We never ever asked 'em that. All we knew, we saw them do it, you never ever checked with her.

Gertie Fowler:

You never ever checked with her to see.

Mary Barney:

Never, ever checked to see, how they would come to use linseed oil. But linseed oil had to be boiled, if you just used raw linseed oil..... like when you buy it, it was marked on the can, raw linseed oil.

Gertie Fowler:

Okay.

Mary Barney:

And ah...

Gertie Fowler:

So it had to be hot, like in order.....

Mary Barney:

It had to be you would boil it and let it cool off 'fer.... cold enough.... just enough so you could ring it. The same as you would dye things, you would soak it into the high up and ring it out.

Gertie Fowler:

Oh. Okay.

Mary Barney:

And keep ringing it until it would be too stiff because, like I said if you had to ring it when it was stiff, well then you'd spoil the whole thing....

Gertie Fowler:

Sure.

Mary Barney:

.... Because you'd crack.

Gertie Fowler:

Be cracked. Okay.

Mary Barney:

Be cracked. Okay.

Gertie Fowler:

Well is that all you want to add to your story then today.

Mary Barney:

Well, that's all, that's it.

Gertie Fowler:

Well that was beautiful, thank you very much.

