



Elizabeth Doherty's first design with Twist Collective is the charming [Litchfield](#) Cloche and Mitten set. Today's post, cross posted from her own [blog](#) talks a little about her inspiration for the design.

My Great-Grandmother Nettie Mae Colby was a prolific knitter, and what she made was mostly mittens. She made them for her family, for the hired men who worked on the family farm, for folks around town. In this she was abetted by my Great-Grandfather James, who would bring her reports of children with cold hands and the approximate dimensions of the needed mittens.



The mittens she made were extremely fine, knit on steel pins, probably #000 or #0000, and apparently very warm. My mother had a treasured pair that she lost some years ago. She mentions them every winter. This past year one of her cousins unearthed a pair, and passed them along to me. I made a fairly faithful reproduction of them for my mom – though I could only bring myself to use #00 needles.

Nettie Mae taught me some interesting tricks with those mittens: the rolled-edge cuff, and the purled gutter around the thumb gusset. Somewhere along the way, I became rather fascinated with mitten construction, and came up with a few of my own improvements. The result is Litchfield.

I have always liked the anatomical shaping of “technical” mittens, those used for skiing or ice-climbing, and used them as a model for the shaping that I built into the design. And where Nettie Mae made a purely functional mitten, I can’t resist embellishing those small blank canvases with a little balanced asymmetry.



Designing a companion hat was a natural progression from the mitten. The suggestion for its shape came from twist collective's editor, Kate Gilbert. As soon as I heard the word 'cloche', I saw the hat perfectly – what fun to take that asymmetrical cable, and make it run around the band. The technical challenge was to create a brim with enough structure to keep it from going floppy as soon as the hat was washed. My solution was to use a ribbing pattern that comes together before the rolled edge to form a sort of buttress to the brim. It was quite an interesting puzzle to work out.



The pattern name? It's the New Hampshire town where Great-Grandma Nettie Mae's steel pins were kept so busy.