



The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

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They began their existence as everyday objects, but in the hands of Bancroft Award-winning historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, fourteen domestic items from preindustrial America—ranging from a linen tablecloth to an unfinished sock—relinquish their stories and offer profound insights into our history.

In an age when even meals are rarely made from scratch, homespun easily acquires the glow of nostalgia. The objects Ulrich investigates unravel those simplified illusions, revealing important clues to the culture and people who made them. Ulrich uses an Indian basket to explore the uneasy coexistence of native and colonial Americans. A piece of silk embroidery reveals racial and class distinctions, and two old spinning wheels illuminate the connections between colonial cloth-making and war. Pulling these divergent threads together, Ulrich demonstrates how early Americans made, used, sold, and saved textiles in order to assert their identities, shape relationships, and create history.

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