

## **Glover's Needle the Workhorse for Leatherworking - by Gene**

**Hickman** The secret to making moccasins or any leather garment or accessory is a good sharp glover's needle. The 3 sided & sometimes 4 sided, **very sharp** point of a glover's needle won't tear garment leathers, but cuts a hole. Glover's needles will usually penetrate several thicknesses of buckskin & you rarely have to use an awl. However, I have made small awls, for those hard or thick spots, by inserting & gluing a large glover's needle into a piece of antler. These glover's needles & awls are extra-sharp & will cut through skins easily. Needle sizes are often gauged with zeroes through higher digits to indicate size. The smaller the needle number the larger the needle. The large size needle is needed for heavier threads. If the needle is too small for the thread it is difficult to thread the needle & the thread won't pull through the hole cut in the leather by the needle. I prefer an "0" or "00" for moccasins & heavy leather & "1" for most garment work. Sewers are often surprised at how easy leather is to work with once they have good glover's needles & have completed their first project. You can spot the novice leatherworker making moccasins as they are pre-punching or pounding holes in the leather, & then using a round point needle. Save the large awls, punches, etc. for heavy strap leather, such as on belts, straps, sheaths & cartridge boxes. I have **not** found the leatherworking needles found in fabric & sewing stores to be sharp or durable to work with. The ones from the fabric store seem to have been "chromed" over the point, so they do not have the sharp ground edges of the good glover's needle. The best glover's needles will come from saddle makers, shoe repair shops, or leatherworking & taxidermy supply sources. Glover's needles go back hundreds of years & were perfected & named by glove makers. Lewis & Clark bring 4600 assorted needles on the expedition and in the existing invoices for specific needles we find glover's needles to be well over 50% of all needles compared to the 7 other needle styles purchased, i.e. millinery, yarn, tabling, old work, white chapel, collar, & packing needles. Additionally, in Lewis' list of requirements for Indian Presents, he lists: *12 Groce Needles Assorted w/ points for sewing leather and 12 Groce Needles Assorted No.1-8 Common Points*. The total number and styles of needles is "fuzzy," but we do know he had lots of glover's needles and he bought needles from Harvey & Worth, 62 North Front Street, in Philadelphia.