<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crochet#Origins>

Knitted textiles survive from early periods but the first substantive evidence of crocheted fabric relates to its appearance in Europe during the 19th century. Earlier work identified as crochet was commonly made by [nålebinding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%A5lebinding%22%20%5Co%20%22N%C3%A5lebinding), a separate looped yarn technique.

A crocheted purse described in 1823 in *Penélopé*.

The first known published instructions for crochet explicitly using that term to designate the craft in its present sense, appeared in the Dutch magazine *Penélopé* in 1823. This includes a color plate showing five different style purses of which three were intended to be crocheted with silk thread. The first is "simple open crochet" (*crochet simple ajour*); a mesh of chain-stitch arches. The second (illustrated here) starts in a semi-open form (*demi jour*), where chain-stitch arches alternate with equally long segments of slip-stitch crochet, and closes with a star made with "double-crochet stitches" (*dubbelde hekelsteek*— double-crochet in British terminology; single-crochet in US). The third purse is made entirely in double-crochet. The instructions prescribe the use of a tambour needle (as illustrated below) and introduce a number of decorative techniques.

The earliest dated English reference to garments made of cloth produced by looping yarn with a hook — *shepherd's knitting* — is in, *The Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, by Elizabeth Grant (1797–1830). The journal entry, itself, is dated 1812 but was not recorded in its subsequently published form until some time between 1845 and 1867, and the actual date of publication was first in 1898. Nonetheless, the 1833 volume of *Penélopé* describes and illustrates a shepherd's hook, and recommends its use for crochet with coarser yarn.

In 1842, one of the numerous books discussing crochet that began to appear in the 1840s states:

"Crochet needles, sometimes called *Shepherds' hooks*, are made of steel, ivory, or box-wood. They have a hook at one end similar in shape to a fish-hook, by which the wool or silk is caught and drawn through the work. These instruments are to be procured of various sizes..."

Two years later, the same author, writes:

"Crochet, — a species of knitting originally practised by the peasants in Scotland, with a small hooked needle called a shepherd’s hook, — has, within the last seven years, aided by taste and fashion, obtained the preference over all other ornamental works of a similar nature. It derives its present name from the French; the instrument with which it is worked being by them, from its crooked shape, termed 'crochet.' This art has attained its highest degree of perfection in England, whence it has been transplanted to France and Germany, and both countries, although unjustifiably, have claimed the invention."

An instruction book from 1846 describes *Shepherd or Single Crochet* as what in current British usage is either called single crochet or slip-stitch crochet, with U.S. American terminology always using the latter (reserving single crochet for use as noted above). It similarly equates "Double" and "French crochet".



Tambour embroidery in the Diderot Encyclopedia

Notwithstanding the categorical assertion of a purely British origin, there is solid evidence of a connection between French tambour embroidery and crochet. The former method of production was illustrated in detail in 1763 in [Diderot's Encyclopedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9die). The tip of the needle shown there is indistinguishable from that of a present-day inline crochet hook and the chain stitch separated from a cloth support is a fundamental element of the latter technique. The 1823 *Penélopé* instructions unequivocally state that the tambour tool was used for crochet and the first of the 1840s instruction books uses the terms *tambour* and *crochet* as synonyms. This equivalence is retained in the 4th edition of that work, 1847.



Shepherd's hook, 19th-century tapered hook, modern inline hook

The strong taper of the shepherd's hook eases the production of slip-stitch crochet but is less amenable to stitches that require multiple loops on the hook at the same time. Early yarn hooks were also continuously tapered but gradually enough to accommodate multiple loops. The design with a cylindrical shaft that is commonplace today was largely reserved for tambour-style steel needles. Both types gradually merged into the modern form that appeared toward the end of the 19th century, including both tapered and cylindrical segments, and the continuously tapered bone hook remained in industrial production until World War II.

The early instruction books make frequent reference to the alternate use of 'ivory, bone, or wooden hooks' and 'steel needles in a handle', as appropriate to the stitch being made. Taken with the synonymous labeling of shepherd's- and single crochet, and the similar equivalence of French- and double crochet, there is a strong suggestion that crochet is rooted both in tambour embroidery and shepherd's knitting, leading to thread and yarn crochet respectively; a distinction that is still made. The locus of the fusion of all these elements — the "invention" noted above — has yet to be determined, as does the origin of shepherd's knitting.

Shepherd's hooks are still being made for local slip-stitch crochet traditions. The form in the accompanying photograph is typical for contemporary production. A longer continuously tapering design intermediate between it and the 19th-century tapered hook was also in earlier production, commonly being made from the handles of forks and spoons.