

The Felt Industry (Shire Library)

Peter Walter



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Felt is an amazing material, and its history, properties and uses are unparalleled among textiles. Although its origins are lost in prehistory, there is a clear record of its manufacture and use in Roman times and it has a special place in many cultures. The Mongols, in particular, were masters of felt and to them it had an almost magical importance.

Taking advantage of the unique form of wool fibers, felt is made by matting fibers together in water, producing a dense. Warm un-woven material that can be made into a million different things, from carpets to piano hammers and from hats to homes. Felt can be soft and cushioning, or hard and dense enough to be carved.

This is a history of the woollen felt industry that was developed to produce felt on a large scale using expertise and machinery and production that had been developed in the textile industry during the industrial revolution. Now virtually extinct - replaced by machines capable of artificially felting manmade fibres - the woollen felt industry remains almost solely to produce high quality felts for use in pianos. This well-researched and readable history provides long-overdue coverage of an important part of textile history.



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