

# Bowknot Sweater



**Elsa Schiaparelli's** famous trompe l'oeil **Bowknot Sweater** was part of her November 1927 collection. The sweater was knit using a fascinating technique which gave the sweater, in Elsa's words, a "steady look." Schiaparelli had seen a sweater knit in this unusual way and tracked down the knitter, an Armenian woman, who knit the first sweaters for Schiaparelli. As Schiaparelli sold more garments, other Armenian women in Paris familiar with this method were called upon to knit them. It is from these knitters we call the technique "Armenian."

The **Philadelphia Museum of Art's** Costume and Textile Department, of which **Lisa Stockebrand** is part, staged "Shocking! The Art and Fashion of Elsa Schiaparelli" -a comprehensive retrospective exhibit of Schiaparelli's work- from September 28 2003- January 4 2004. Prior to the exhibit, Lisa wrote an updated Bowknot Sweater pattern based on the sweater in the museum's collection using a larger gauge and making slight accommodations for a more modern fit. Eliciting

the editing advice of **Joyce Williams** and yarn advice from **Meg Swansen**, Lisa put together a kit in two color ways using Jamieson and Smith Shetland Wool to be sold in the museum shop. No longer available through the museum, we are pleased to offer Lisa's Bowknot Sweater pattern. The pattern calls for Shetland Jumperweight; but we recommend replacing it with Jamieson Shetland as the Shetland Jumperweight has dropped colors and is in flux.

Use **Jamieson Shetland Spindrift** in Black (Jamieson 999) and Cream (Jamieson 104) or any other colors you wish; Shocking Pink? The museum kit was also sold in pink (52) and purple (20). There is a knit along page on Ravelry on which you can both find and share advice with other knitters while you knit the sweater. Further description of the technique can be found in the book **Armenian Knitting by Meg Swansen and Joyce Williams**, including three different ways of achieving Armenian Knitting, along with their new circular designs.



# Bowknot Sweater

These instructions make a close-fitting medium size sweater. It should block to approximately a 38" chest measurement for a close fitting size 36.

## MATERIALS

Jamieson and Smith 2 ply Shetland Wool, 25 g balls  
8 balls main color (we used #77 - black)  
6 balls contrast color (we used #1A - cream)

US size 5 (3.75 mm) needles or size to obtain gauge – the cloth must be loose enough to notice the stranding behind, but tight enough to not pull through.

Crochet hook – Approx. 2.5 mm

## GAUGE

5.25 stitches/6 rows per inch (**BLOCKED**)

**TAKE TIME TO KNIT AND BLOCK A GENEROUS GAUGE SWATCH.** This will also give you the opportunity to practice the stranded knitting technique, and perfect your tension.

## "ARMENIAN" KNITTING

Hold main color in your right hand and knit with it as in "American" style knitting. Carry contrasting color in left hand as in "Continental" style knitting. Strand contrasting color across the knitted fabric and catch the yarn in every third stitch as follows: knit 2 stitches with main color in right hand and with contrasting color held in left hand out of the way below the knit stitch to create the stranding. On the third stitch insert the right hand needle into the stitch as if to knit. With your left hand lift the contrasting color up and knit the main color stitch under the contrasting color. Lower the contrasting color and knit the next main color stitch with contrasting color held below. (Contrasting color should be "caught" up in the third stitch, but not actually knit.)

Follow the same strategy for the purl row: purl with the main color in right hand and carry contrasting color in left hand. Raise contrast color every third purl stitch so you catch the yarn in main color stitch. The color will be seen through the front of the knitted work and give a tweedy effect. The contrasting color stranding should not be too loose as it will help the fabric hold together and not be quite as stretchy. Stagger the "caught up" strands so they do not line up above each other in the following row. The fabric will soften when blocked.

## CHART NOTE:

There is a notch charted in the side seams of the front and back where it seems as if two stitches have been cast off then added back. This "jig-jag" is meant to indicate that several rows have been skipped at this point in the charting, do not knit actual notches. I was unable to locate the original chart files so could not make the one or two corrections in some of the row counts. When in doubt, go with your measurements, not the row count on the chart, use them for the colorwork.

## **FRONT (knit front first, it is much easier to adjust the back to match)**

Cast on 99 stitches with main color (front is wider than back). Knit using "Armenian" technique for 6 -1/2 inches, ending with a purl row (lengthen or shorten here before beginning color chart). Establish color chart as follows: knit 50 stitches in main color, knit 1 stitch in contrasting color, knit remaining 48 stitches in main color. Follow color chart carrying both yarns across the full width of fabric. Shape armholes as indicated on chart, this will be about 17 inches up from the bottom edge: bind off 5 stitches at beginning of next two rows, then bind off 1 stitch at beginning of every row 10 times (5 times each side) for a total of 10 stitches bound off each side, 79 stitches.

Begin V-neck shaping where indicated on color chart: knit 39 stitches, bind off center stitch, knit remaining 39 stitches. Work each neck half separately following color chart. Armhole edges remain straight. Bind off at neck edge 1 stitch every other row 5 times, 1 stitch every fourth row 3 times. Continue straight following color chart until armhole measures 9 inches. Bind off 5 stitches at armhole edges every other row 4 times; bind off remaining 11 stitches. Attach yarn to remaining side and repeat, reversing shaping.

## **BACK**

Cast on 90 stitches using main color (back is narrower than front) and knit using "Armenian" knitting for about 17", from bottom edge or **length required to match front**, ending with a purl row, then bind off for armholes as follows: bind off 5 stitches at beginning of next two rows, then bind off 1 stitch at beginning of every row 10 times (5 times each side) for a total of 10 stitches bound off each side. Continue stranded knitting on 70 stitches for 20 - 21 rows, ending with a purl row, (approximately 6" from underarm) then establish color chart as follows: knit 11 stitches with main color stranding contrasting color, switch colors and knit 48 stitches with contrasting color stranding main color, then knit remaining 11 stitches in main color stranding contrasting color. Continue this established pattern for about 15 rows or until armhole measures 8 inches (back is shorter than front). To shape shoulders, bind off 4 stitches at beginning of every row 8 times (4 times each side). Bind off remaining 38 stitches.

## **SLEEVES (sleeves are worked from the shoulder down to wrist)**

Cast on 15 stitches with main color and knit using "Armenian" knitting technique. Follow the chart shaping: cast on 3 stitches at the beginning of each row 10 times (30 stitches added each side - 75 stitches in total). Decrease 1 stitch each side every row twice, (71 stitches). Knit 10 rows, decrease 1 stitch each side. Knit 8 rows and decrease 1 stitch each side; continue decreasing following chart until sleeve is about 4 inches short of desired length. Knit across to center stitch with main color stranding contrasting color, knit 1 stitch with contrast color, then knit to end of row with main color stranding contrasting color to establish color chart. Continue following chart for remaining 23 rows or until sleeve reaches desired length. Work second sleeve.

## **NOTES ON ASSEMBLY**

The original sweater in the Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection was knit at a gauge of 9 stitches to the inch – blocked. We decided, taking into account the available materials and the patience of a modern knitter, to follow the lead of the knock off Schiaparelli published in a 1928 Ladies' Home Journal, and use a larger gauge. It is clear the original sweater had been heavily blocked – much more so than a modern knitter would be comfortable with – which, along with the crochet edge, enabled the hem to lie flat.

This pattern follows the period shaping used by Elsa Schiaparelli in many of her sweaters and garments. The shoulder and side seams are set farther back on the body than we are accustomed to today. The front is indeed 2" wider than the back, and the armhole is an inch longer. When assembled, the back of the neck appears extremely narrow. This is because the shoulder seam should rest not on the top of the shoulder, but in line with the back of the neck.

We enlarged the armhole area to accommodate a more modern fit, but you may still find the sleeves a bit narrow and the arm hole a bit smaller than you are used to. You can add some "afterthought" ease if you find the sweater a bit tight for your taste, by working a diamond shaped gusset and inserting it at the juncture of the armholes and side seams.

### **OPTIONAL GUSSET**

In main color, using same needle size as the body of the sweater, cast on 2 stitches. Using the "Armenian" technique, knit increasing 1 stitch each side every 4<sup>th</sup> row until there are 10 – 12 stitches then decrease one stitch each side every other row until 2 stitches remain and cast off these 2 stitches. Release the side seams at the underarm as necessary and insert the gusset into the side seam with the longer end of the diamond going down the side seam, the widest points matching the armhole and the shorter end of the diamond going down the sleeve seam. Gusset can be made wider or narrower as necessary.

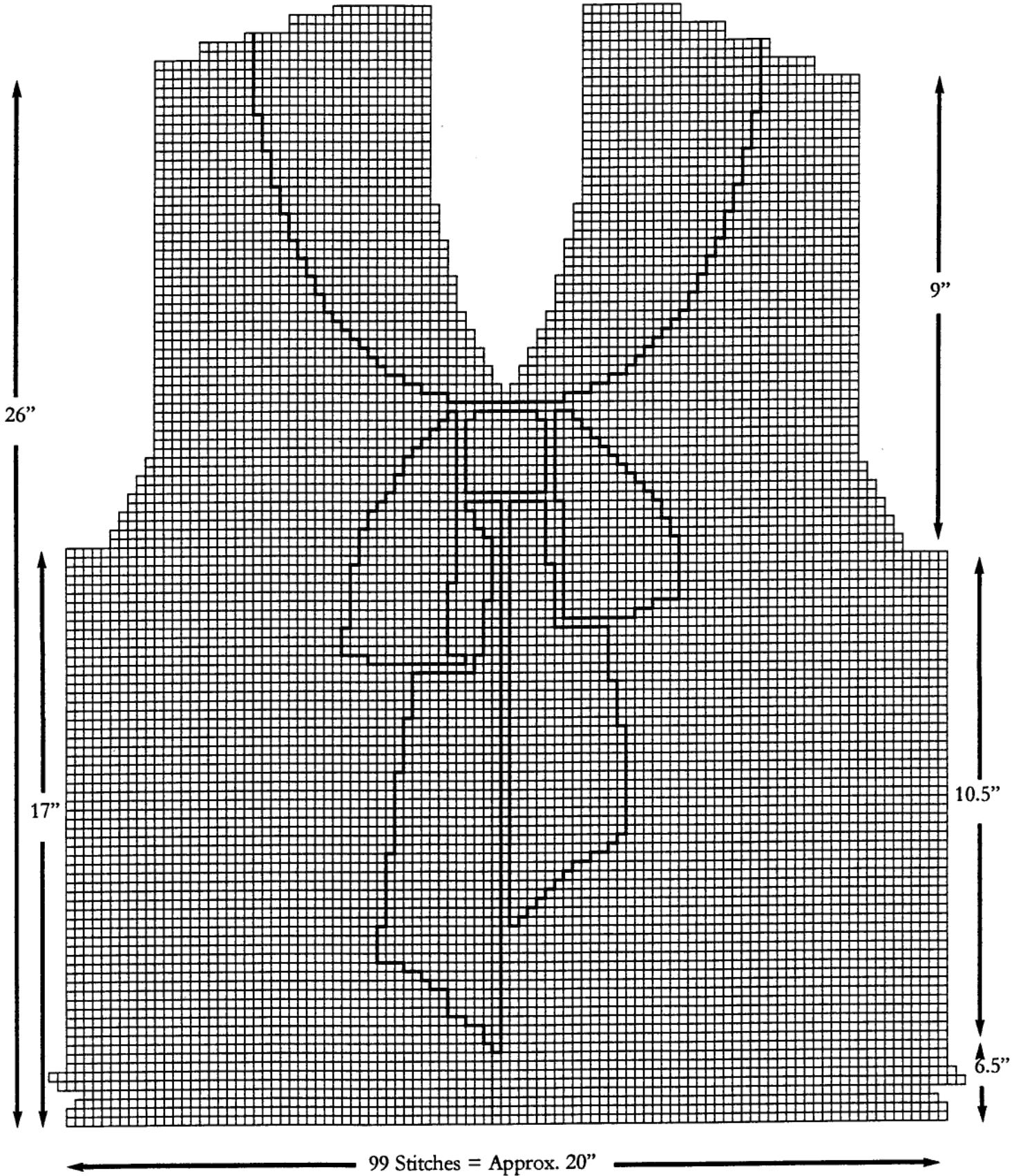
## **FINISHING**

CAREFULLY WASH AND **BLOCK** ALL PIECES

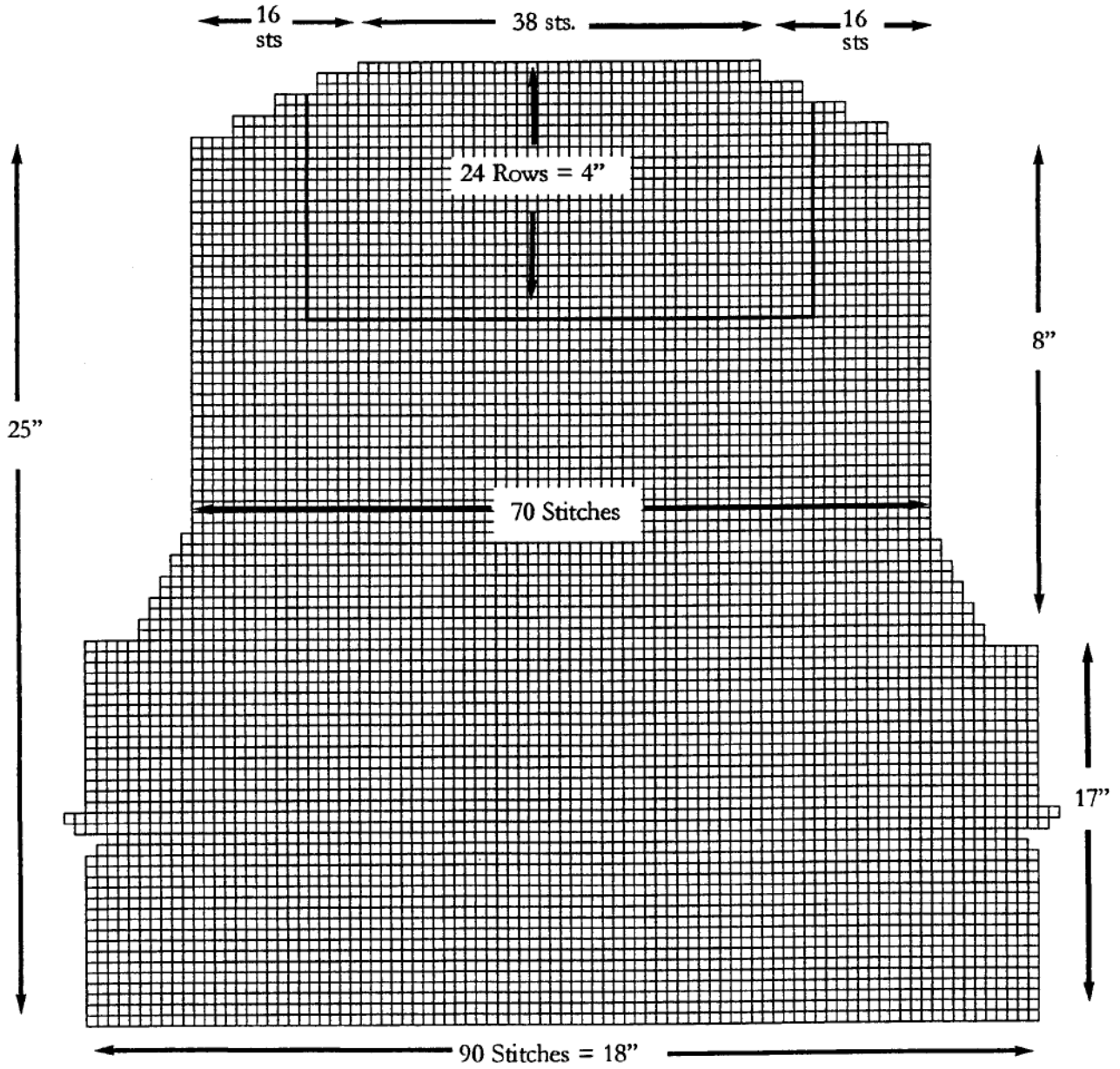
Stitch the sweater together. Work a single crochet edging around bottom of the sweater using main color. With contrasting color, single crochet around edge of neck and cuffs. Work a second row of single crochet around neck edge. You may want a second row of single crochet around the bottom edge to help control rolling.

PRESS SWEATER AGAIN with a damp cloth and warm iron.

# FRONT



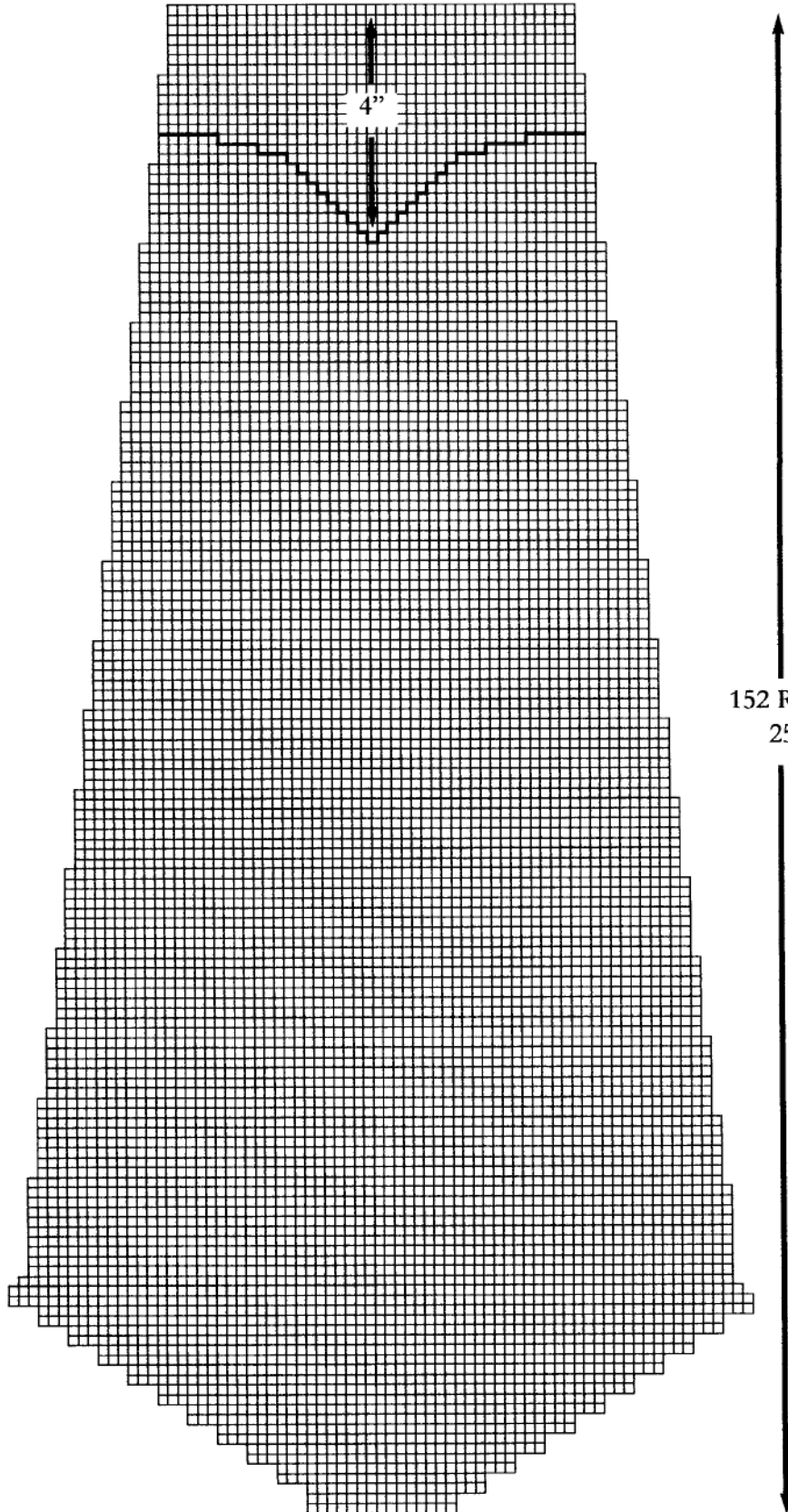
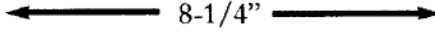
# BACK



# SLEEVES

41 Stitches

8-1/4"



4"

152 Rows

25"

Begin at Top of Sleeve – 15 Stitches

15"

