

# Artics

by Lynne Belluscio

Unlike today, in the 50s we all wore rubber boots in winter. My mother wouldn't let me out of the house without them. The boots pulled over our shoes and zipped up the front and had fur around the top. (It wasn't real fur.) My grandmother - my dad's mother - always called them "artics." We just called them boots.

The guys had tall black rubber boots with buckles. The buckles would get filled with snow and ice and would freeze shut. Or the guys wouldn't fasten the buckles and when they walked there was a jingling rattle. My grandmother called the buckle boots "galoshes.\*"

In fact, today you can still buy buckle galoshes, but I can't find "artics" - not that I want to wear them, but I'm thinking we should have a pair in the collection. I did find a pair of artics on ebay. They were listed as "vintage 1950s" and had never been worn. (Look in the back of your grandmother's closet and if you find a pair, give me a call. That is, unless she is still wearing them.)

When I think about it, we wore those rubber boots when we went sledding. They weren't very warm and it was really hard to pull them on and just as hard to take them off. If they were too big, your shoes slipped around in the boot and it was had to run. The worst part, if there was a hole in the boot, or the zippers leaked, your feet would get wet and really cold.

My grandmother also had a pair of artics that she wore to

church. They were pretty fancy and stylish - or so we thought. They had hollow heels so she could wear her good high heeled shoes inside the boots. They had fur trim up the front and were laced. I also remember plastic boots that my mother wore over her shoes. There was a front flap that would fold over and some of them had a snap or others had an elastic loop that would go around a button.

The advertisements claimed that they could be folded up, put in a plastic bag and put in your purse. They smelled like a shower curtain and after a while the plastic would harden and crack.

I think by the time I went to high school, everyone was wearing lined, slip on "shoe boots", but you had to carry your shoes to school, because you would never think of wearing boots in school. At the time, if you really wanted to be fashionable, you'd carry your shoes in a shoe bag - another accessory that has disappeared.

Lined boots eventually leaked, unless you sealed the seams with boot sealer on a regular basis. (I think I have some on a shelf in the basement.) By the time my kids were wearing those kinds of boots, it was not unusual to wear bread bags on your feet inside the boots to keep your feet dry. God forbid, if the bags came out the top and people could see that you were wearing bread bags!!

I can't imagine what it was like in the 19th century when leather boots were water-proofed with grease. They couldn't have been very warm. Certainly heavy wool socks were necessary. And I'm not sure what women might have worn in the winter.

In the early 1800s, farm women might have worn brogans, heavy leather shoes with wood soles. Not very stylish. In the early 1800s, many farm kids didn't have shoes. In fact, one of the local teachers wrote in her diary that she had to close school, because there was snow on the ground and the kids didn't have shoes, and she



couldn't bear watching the kids walking to school in their bare feet. I can't help but wonder what they wore on their feet around home in the winter.

It's easy to understand how important it was to have foot warmers to put in the sleigh, or to carry with you to church. The foot warmers had a small tin that could be filled with hot coals. I just wonder how long they gave off heat before you had to fill them up again. It's not something today's kids have to worry about. They leave a warm house in their sneakers, jump on a heated school

bus or into a heated car, and then run into school. If their hands get cold, they have little warmer packets they can buy at the store. In the old days, I've read that kids would take a baked potato out of the fire and put it in their pocket on the way to school to keep their hands warm. When they got to school, they ate the potato for lunch.

\* I did a little research on the word galoshes and discovered that the word comes from Medieval times and is a reference to the boots that the "Gauls" wore.

