

WC 8808034

A pair of man's leggings in pristine condition, made of native-tanned deerskin; length 37 inches, 94 cm.

Each legging is made of a whole skin with minimal tailoring; the hindlegs serving as belt ties, the neck at the slanted bottom of the legging. Beyond the sinew-sewn sideseam the skin is cut into long fringes.

Along the outer edges of the leggings are strips of pony beadwork in a loose lazy stitch technique, the black and white patters separated by blocks of blue.

These leggings were acquired by Alexander Gallery, NYC, from a private museum in Switzerland. Presumably this was the private museum in Sankt Gallen, that closed down in 1958-'60. Fixed to the leggings is a small blue stamp with the number 77, which may relate to the catalog system in the aforementioned museum.

After a study of forty pairs of pre-1850 Plains Indian leggings, Norman Feder concluded that there was hardly any tribal differentiation in the shape of early Plains leggings (Feder, 1962; 149). The block patterns, colors, and technique of the beadwork on this example strongly suggest a Blackfoot origin of the 1830-'40 period. Practically all other Blackfoot leggings of that period have the additional decoration of many parallel painted stripes, quill- or pericardium wrapping of the fringes, and fairly large bottom tabs. These details related to war honors; their absence on this pair and its pristine condition suggest that it was made for somebody without the rights to such distinctives, i.e. a white visitor, unless the leggings are unfinished.

Drs T.J. Brasser
Peterborough, Ontario
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Literature:

Feder, N., Bottom Tab Leggings. *American Indian Tradition*, Vol. 8-4, 1962.

Taylor, C., Northern Leggings. *Powwow Trails*, Vol. 3, 1967.