

WC 8606016

A quiver, consisting of an off-white rawhide container for arrows and a bow case made of native-tanned buffalo hide, originally painted red.

Length 46.75 inches; 118.8 cm.

The rawhide container is profusely decorated with painted triangular designs which are outlined with bird-quills; two large roundels of sewn porcupine quill work; the upper border wrapped with bird quills; quill wrapped fringes along side-seam and bottom. Much of the space of the long narrow bow case is covered with a long strip of sewn quillwork, interrupted by three quill-worked rosettes, and bordered with blue pony beads. Attached along this border are clusters of quill-wrapped strings. The brown sections in the quillwork have been executed in fibers of maidenhair fern.

In the 1980's, this quiver and some other Indian items were found in an old trunk by Angus Macalister of Glenbarr, Scotland. His family did not recall any information on the collections' origin, but many Scottish people were employed in the Canadian fur trade during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Glenbarr collection consisted of garments and pouches identifiable as of Red River Métis, Manitoba/Saulteaux/Cree, and Eastern Sioux origin. All of these items point to the northeastern Plains, and their condition indicates that they were new and un-used when acquired. This collection was sold at Christie's auction in London, June 23, 1986; this quiver as lot 22. Alexander Acevedo sold it to the Masco Corporation; it was acquired by John and Marva Warnock in 2004.

The general form of this quiver conforms to the type known from Plains Indians, but beyond this observation, we are presented with several most unusual features. Some of these strange details were already noticed in Christies' auction catalogue, where it was suspected that the two large roundels had been taken from an Indian shirt, and that the quillwork on the bow case looks like the traditional decoration of an Indian buffalo robe.

Quillworked roundels similar to those on man's shirts have been noticed on a few early quivers, decorating a long tapering flap sewn to the upper edge. This particular quiver does not have such a flap, and the application of roundels on the quiver itself is uncommon. Quivers were normally made of soft tanned skin, either with or without fur on it. I have never before seen one made of stiff rawhide.

Bow cases are seldom decorated, and the quillwork strip with rosettes on this example may well have been taken from a buffalo robe.

Decidedly strange are the paintings outlined with bird-quills; there is no resemblance to any native style of painting. However, similar peculiar paintings are noticeable on other garments acquired on the northeaster Plains and adjoining Minnesota in the 1830s-'40s.<sup>1</sup> It is from the same region that the collection originated in which this quiver was found. The quillwork on this quiver also fits 1830-'40 period, and the use of bird-quills supports

its origin from the northeastern Plains. The question remains who were producing these strange things and why.

In the 1830-'40s the northeastern margins of the Plains were inhabited by native bands which are usually identified as Saulteaux (or Plains Ojibwa), Cree, and Métis. In reality, every one of these regional bands consisted of a mixture of these three ethnic groups. Although primarily involved with the fur trade, many of these people catered to a demand for elaborately decorated garments, horse gear, and similar items. The regional Canadian and American traders were aware of a growing market for such "curiosities", due to increasing visiting by adventurous sport hunters, artists, and amateur explorers. Many of these travelers desired souvenirs representative of their romantic ideas of Plains Indians. Traders and native people rapidly got a notion of what saleable souvenirs should look like. Particularly the Red River Métis became most active in this market. Garments and horse trappings made by these Métis were often decorated with quillwork made by their Indian relatives, or taken from discarded Indian costumes. Most probably this quiver originated from this context. The quillwork on this object may have been acquired from trading partners among the Gros Ventre Indians on the upper Missouri.

1. Feder, N., *Art of the Eastern Plains Indians*. The Brooklyn Museum, 1964, fig. 23.  
Akicita. *The Southwest Museum*, Los Angeles, 1983, Figs. 8, 62.  
*American Indian Art Magazine*, Winter 2002, p. 106.  
Sotheby's May 27, 1987, lot 154  
Sotheby's, December 2, 1998, lot 599.  
U. S. National Museum, Washington D. C., Cat. nr. 73156.

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