

WC 9708005

Sioux-Métis coat, 1880

A coat made of native-tanned and yellow-ochre deerskin, decorated along the front opening and on the back with curvilinear floral and abstract designs, and with the images of two pairs of bighorn sheep, all in spot-stitched beadwork. Fringed along sleeves and bottom; strips of cloth sewn around the ends of the sleeves, along the shoulders, and along the bottom edge.

This coat was acquired by Richard Pohrt Sr. from a family in Sault Ste, Marie, Ontario, Canada.

This type of garment is often referred to as a “scout jacket”. This example is important as an expression of Métis art just before its final disappearance among the Teton Sioux. For earlier stages in this art development, see WC 8808030 and 8308013. The two large abstract motifs at the center of the shoulder blades are still reminiscent of the roundels at the same place on the early quillworked Métis coats. The monochrome coloring of skin garments is well known from the Southern Plains, but the custom was not unknown among the Western Sioux.

By the 1880s, these types of coats and jackets were popular among sport-hunters. The images of bighorn sheep may relate to this craft outlet. For a picture of such tourists in fancy dress, see “American Heritage” of October 1964, p. 33.

Drs. T. J. Brassler

Peterborough, Ontario

July 2006