Finch & Co



A FINE PAIR OF CREE INDIAN EMBROIDERED CARIBOU HIDE SLIPPER MOCCASINS

A FINE PAIR OF CREE INDIAN EMBROIDERED CARIBOU HIDE SLIPPER MOCCASINS
LAKE WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
THE SOFT SOLE BLEACHED CARIBOU HIDE LINED WITH BLUE SILK TRADE CLOTH WITH AN EXQUISITE SYMMETRICAL FLORAL DESIGN OF SMALL BLOSSOMS AND LEAVES WITH A PROMINENT CENTRAL VEIN, EMBROIDERED ON THE FRONT AND SIDES IN BUTTONHOLE AND CHAIN STITCH IN LAVENDER, BLUE, MAROON, FADED SALMON, GREEN AND CHARTREUSE SILK THREAD
LATE 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 22CM LONG – 8¾ INS LONG

LITERATURE

IN THE LAKE WINNIPEG AREA OF THE SUB-ARCTIC IN THE 19TH CENTURY LIVED BOTH CREE AND OJIBWA SPEAKING PEOPLE: PARTICULARLY THE SWAMPY CREE DIVISION OF THE WESTERN WOODS CREE AND THE CREE MÉTIS. WOMEN ORIGINALLY DESIGNED ALL CREE EMBROIDERIES AND OFTEN THE DESIGN WAS TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM NATURE AND DRAWN ONTO THE HIDE WITH PORCUPINE QUILLS DIPPED IN BERRY JUICE.
IN THE 19TH CENTURY MISSION SCHOOLS RUN BY URSULINE AND GREY NUNS WOULD TEACH YOUNG INDIAN GIRLS EMBROIDERY SKILLS AS PART OF THEIR GENERAL EDUCATION. EXISTING EUROPEAN FABRICS AND TAPESTRIES INSPIRED MANY OF THE MOTIFS THEY WERE TAUGHT TO EMBROIDER.
THESE SLIPPERS ARE MADE OF SOFT WHITE CARIBOU HIDE THAT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY TANNED, THEN BLEACHED BY HANGING IT OUTSIDE IN LATE WINTER WHEN THE SUN REFLECTED OFF THE SNOW. 19TH CENTURY INVENTORIES OF THE HUDSON'S BAY TRADING POSTS SHOW GRADUALLY INCREASING STOCKS OF SILK THREAD CARRIED FOR SALE TO NATIVE COMMUNITIES. WILLIAM SINCLAIR, A DIRECTOR OF THE COMPANY AND OF MIXED ENGLISH AND NATIVE DESCENT, PURCHASED IN JULY 1857 AT THE NORWAY HOUSE TRADING POST 'TWO LISTS OF COLOURED THREAD, TWO LISTS OF WHITE STITCHING THREAD, AND TEN SKEINS OF COLOURED SILK THREAD' ALL FOR HIS WIFE.