

BAUBLES & BANGLES



Silver Engraving Adds Elegance to Leather Pieces

As a child, Victoria Adams loved small boxes for holding the treasures of a young girl. This penchant for unique cases has carried over into her work as an artist in the creation of exquisite silver-engraved leather boxes and bags.

Although Adams has had formal art training, she is largely self-taught in silversmithing. Elongated silver rings left to her by her Cheyenne Indian grandmother intrigued Adams, whose heritage also includes Irish and Creek ancestors. She began experimenting with blending European and American Indian designs in her jewelry work. She carried the ideas over into the

creation of bits and spurs and buckle sets of saddle silver, and finally to the silver-engraving work seen on her bags and trunks.

Now working fulltime in her Augusta, Montana, studio, Victoria Adams prefers to design pieces that have a historic reference. A Western film buff, Adams noticed that stagecoach drivers in movies often threw down small travel trunks from the top of the stage at the end of the trail. She became fascinated with the idea of producing a similar piece. In designing the 20" x 10" x 13" hand-tooled leather trunk shown here, Adams used skirting leather which

she prepared for hand stamping, a process that took her two months to complete. Bronze ship nails on which Adams soldered silver heads serve as tacks along edges that lead to engraved corner pieces and latch. Lined with French silk, the trunk was further embellished by fellow artist and neighbor Buckeye Blake who did the paintings on the inside of the trunk's lid (\$3,000).

In her design of the richly appointed evening bag of fine-grained Cabretta leather, Adams shows a melding of Plains Indian styles in the intricate engraving. The stylized horse in 18k gold overlay is a pre-1850 Brulé Sioux design; European and Indian influences mix in the floral patterns. Lapis lazuli, topaz, garnets, and sapphires adorn the metal portion of the bag which is lined in purple silk (\$1,200).

Victoria Adams' work can be seen at the C. M. Russell Auction of Original Western Art, Heritage Inn, Great Falls, Montana, March 16-19, and at the Bighorn Gallery in Cody, Wyoming, July 4. Interested readers may write to Adams at P.O. Box 277, Augusta, MT 59410. ❖

