**Artifact of the Month**

For the working cowboy, chaps were an absolute necessity. Made of heavy leather, they protected a rider's legs not only from thick brush, but also from the elements. Many different styles evolved depending on what the cowboy needed to accomplish and where he worked. The first chaps were called, "Armitas," which means, "little armor." They were developed by vaqueros who worked the California haciendas in the 1700s. Batwings, a later model that became popular after the close of the open range, had short, open legs. Woolies, made from Angora fleece or hair-on cattle or bison hide, provided warmth during the harsh winters on the northern Plains. The chaps pictured, however, were the most popular design used during the open range era. Known as shotgun chaps, this style featured a closed-leg design with clasps. This made putting them on and taking them off much easier than the pant-like armitas. They were slightly close-fitting, which helped trap heat in colder climates and also kept out the rain and snow. With a slight flare at the bottom, they fit snugly over boots. This particular pair of chaps was produced sometime between 1873-1881 by the E.L. Gallatin & Company of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Stamped onto the pocket flap is, "Con," indicating that these chaps once belonged to Conrad Kohrs. Exactly when they were purchased or how long they were worn is not known, but they beat the weathering of a sturdy utility that served their purpose well.

