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## Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: August 31, 2010

### **September First Friday: New acquisition and continuing summer exhibits**

The Alaska State Museum will be open with extended hours on September 3 during the First Friday gallery walk, with free admission from 4:30-7 p.m.

Friday's event will focus on the recent acquisition of a bust of Vitus Bering, the Danish explorer credited with exploring and mapping much of what is now the Bering Sea coast. Bering and most of his crewmembers died after shipwrecking on Bering Island, off the coast of Kamchatka, during the winter of 1741-1742. This bust of Bering may be the most accurate resemblance to date, created with forensic reconstruction by Dr. Viktor Zviagin of Moscow's Institute of Forensic Medicine.

After a joint Danish-Russian expedition in 1990 that excavated the graves of Bering and his crew, Zviagin used Bering's remains to scientifically create an accurate image of the explorer. Zviagin concluded that Bering's face as we've seen in popular illustrations is an inaccurate likeness, and that his death on the island was not due to scurvy as was previously believed, but rather a result of chronic heart disease.

The bust was transferred to the Alaska State Museums collection by Zviagin on August 21 during the Russian American Conference at St. Michael's Cathedral in Sitka. Many visiting Russian and American scholars were present at the ceremony, at which Lt. Gov. Craig E. Campbell accepted the bust on behalf of the people of Alaska.

Continuing exhibitions include Sue Kraft's solo exhibition "Familiar Places," which features new oil and acrylic paintings, and "Alaska Positive 2010," which highlights the photography of artists from around the state. These exhibits will be on display through October 16.

Also continuing through October 23 is "From Gift to Gallery: Recent Acquisitions," which includes more than 100 of the approximately 500 artifacts acquired by the museum during the past five years. The show not only highlights the objects on display, but also offers insight into the collecting process. Featured items include World War II military artifacts and other firearms, dolls, weavings and recoveries from Alaskan and Russian shipwrecks.

Winter hours at the museum begin Sept. 27. Discounted winter admission is \$3. Summer admission is \$5. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free of charge. An annual pass that allows unlimited visits to the Alaska State Museum and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka is available for \$15. Assistance is available for visitors with special needs. Please contact Visitor Services at 465-2901 before the visit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Phone (907) 465-2901 Fax (907) 465-2976

[www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)

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