

PRESS RELEASE**Sheldon Jackson Museum**

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Home page: <http://www.museums.state.ak.us>**RARE SILVER TONGS ON DISPLAY IN APRIL****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****FOR MORE INFORMATION: #9; CAROLYN YOUNG, 747-8981**

A pair of tongs made by a Tlingit silver carver is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for April.

The tongs, shaped like canoe paddles joined at the handles, are thought to be the work of Rudolph Walton, a local artist who made numerous silver items for the tourist trade and for local residents from about 1890 to 1951. He was also proprietor of Rudolph Walton and Son Store on Katlian Street until 1920.

Curator Peter Corey first saw the tongs on the Internet auction site ebay and thought the piece might have been made by Walton because of the distinctive carving style. Walton, who lived in Sitka from 1867 to 1951, made many spoons, bracelets, and other items. Corey purchased the tongs for the Museum in September 2001.

Silver coins were introduced to the Tlingit people in the early to mid-1800s. Tlingit artists pounded the coins flat and made jewelry for personal adornment. This new type of art also attracted the attention of souvenir hunters, and by the late 1800s, silver carvers such as Silversmith Jim and Rudolph Walton began creating items for sale.



The tongs will be on view at the Museum April 1 to 30. The Artifact of the Month program is an opportunity to display various artifacts that are not part of the Museum's permanent exhibits.