

PRESS RELEASE

Sheldon Jackson Museum

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Eskimo Ground Squirrel Parka is April Artifact of the Month

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A Yup'ik man's squirrel parka is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for April. The Museum acquired this parka in 2000. Like a number of recent purchases it was discovered on the online auction house eBay. The seller, who was representing a nephew of the collector, had two squirrel parkas, both purchased by the museum.

The original collector was Roy Waugaman, who came to Alaska to work as a mechanical engineer for the Fairbanks Exploration Company in the late 1920s. In 1930, along with two other people, Waugaman won the Nenana Ice Classic. He remained in Alaska only a short time, returning to his home in California and taking with him the parkas he had collected in Alaska. With the money he won in the Ice Classic, he took flying lessons and bought a plane. Unfortunately, in 1933 he, his wife and a passenger died when the plane crashed in northern California. The parkas went to Waugaman's brother, whose family occasionally used them at costumed events, but otherwise stored them in a trunk.



The two parkas make a strong addition to the Museum's Eskimo collections. Dr. Sheldon Jackson had collected some fur clothing for the Museum in the 1890s but none of has survived. In his correspondence, Jackson mentions furs being shipped in barrels to the Museum with instructions to open the barrels and air out the furs. It is likely the furs spoiled soon after their arrival at the Museum and, until recently the collection had few pieces of fur clothing.

Yup'ik scholar, Chuna McIntyre examined the two parkas and identified them as probably being from the Norton Sound area. He suggested the parkas were made from a combination of furs, predominately ground squirrel. Other furs in the parkas are mink, wolverine, clipped reindeer hide, wolf and with caribou sinew used for sewing them together.

One of the parkas may be viewed in the Museum gallery from April 1-30. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger and those with passes are admitted free of charge.