

Sheldon Jackson Museum

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Release date: February 1, 2007

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FEBRUARY ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH **ARCTIC ENGRAVED PROJECTILE PIECE**

An Arctic projectile piece with a hunting scene engraved on one side is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for February.

The pictographic engraving on the piece makes this a unique piece in our collection. Some toggle-head harpoons have geometric designs and occasionally a bird point will also be engraved with line and circular designs, there aren't any other projectile pieces in our collection with a scene engraved on it.

According to author Dorothy Jean Ray, the first recorded pictorial scenes engraved on ivory coming from archeological sites date from around 1200–1800 A.D. – not considered particularly old for archeological material. Older ivory or bone projectile piece or harpoon points with linear or circular designs are not unusual however.

European and American explorers in the early 1800s began noting and collecting bow drills, bag handles and pipes that had pictorial scenes, but made no mention of scenes on projectile pieces such as this one. Why this projectile piece was engraved is a mystery. Since some interpret the older drawings to be histories of hunts indicating the number of animals taken or activities that transpired, it is possible that this piece illustrates how seven hunters had taken two walruses and possibly a small whale.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum staff is interested to learn if others have similar items in their private collections or remembers seeing projectile pieces with these pictorial style scenes. Contact Rosemary Carlton at 747-8981 if you have any information on engraved projectile pieces or harpoon points.

Winter hours at the museum are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. General admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge. This artifact-of-the-month can also be seen on our website at www.museums.state.ak.us.

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