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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEBRUARY ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH TLINGIT ENGRAVED SILVER NAPKIN RINGS

The Sheldon Jackson Museum's February Artifacts of the Month are the first of their kind in the museum's collection: engraved silver napkin rings. One was made by century Tlingit carver Rudolph Walton, and the other by an unknown artist. Funds for purchase of the Walton ring were provided by the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum and the second napkin ring was a donation from Peter Corey, former museum curator.

The distinctive "Sitka, Alaska" engraved as well as the date (6/6/95) and the extensive cross-hatching are widely acknowledged traits of Walton's work. The Walton piece is a mixture of northwest coast formline design and naturalistic animal forms. A buck and a doe are facing each other on one side and on the opposite are two bears facing each other. Ovoid and split u-shapes are also found on the ring. The name Elsie B. Loring is engraved by a different hand than Walton's.

The Walton napkin ring was purchased on eBay from a woman in Oregon. It had belonged to her grandmother, Elsie B. Loring who traveled extensively with her physician father. When asked about the date associated with the name, the seller only knew that it was not her grandmother's birthday, but speculated it could have been around the date she purchased it. Possibly she brought it home from Alaska and had someone engrave those dates and her name in the ring. According to the seller, "nearly everything I have of hers from that era has her initials or name on it."

Rudolph Walton, Kaawootk' (Little Bead) Aakw'tatseen (Lively Frog in a Lake), Kik'sadi Tin.aa Hit (Copper Plate House) was a well-known Tlingit carver from Sitka. Walton lived in Sitka from 1867 to 1951. He was widely known for his silver and wood carving and made many spoons, bracelets and other items for the tourist trade. He was the proprietor of Rudolph Walton and Son Store on Katlian Street until 1920.

Shortly after the purchase of the Walton napkin ring, another silver napkin ring showed up on eBay. The second ring is also a combination of formlines with a somewhat naturalistic shark design. There is no date, name or other associated mark to help in identifying the artist. This napkin ring was purchased from an antiques dealer in New York who had found it at an estate sale in New England. Corey, who is an avid "eBayer" noted that he had never seen a Tlingit carved napkin ring on eBay and within a week two had shown up.

The artifacts will be on display February 1–29. Winter hours at the Sheldon Jackson Museum are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Winter admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

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[return to top](#)

[SJ Artifacts-of-the-Month](#) | [press releases](#) | [SJ home](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)

TLINGIT ENGRAVED SILVER NAPKIN RINGS



[return to top](#)

[SJ Artifacts-of-the-Month](#) | [press releases](#) | [SJ home](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)