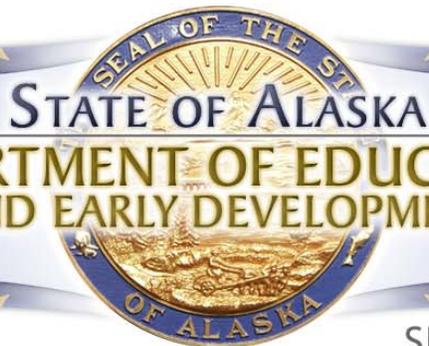


Kathryn H. Shelton
Director

Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums

www.museums.state.ak.us



Bruce Kato
Chief Curator

Alaska State Museums

395 Whittier St.
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718
907.465.2901

Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 26, 2007

JANUARY ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH TLINGIT SILVER SOUVENIR SPOON

A northwest coast style engraved silver souvenir spoon is the January Artifact of the Month at the Sheldon Jackson Museum.

The five inch spoon came back to Alaska in early 2007 from Wenatchee, Washington. Local resident Karen Christner's sister of Wenatchee purchased the spoon at an estate sale. The spoon was later purchased in Sitka by former museum curator, Peter Corey. He in turn offered it as a donation to the museum.

Unfortunately, many souvenirs that were purchased in Alaska in the late 1800s and early 1900's ended up in a drawer or closet after being passed down through a generation or two and information on how, when or where it was obtained is lost. In addition, the identity of the artist is lost too. Curators, researchers and collectors in recent years have identified certain writing styles, motifs, and other characteristics that can sometimes be attributed to the works of specific artists. Or as in the case of this spoon, the area it probably came from.

The round bowl is hammered or peened, leaving an appearance of tiny dents in the metal. There are also two spots that have been repousséed: one in the eye and the other at the top of the wing. Both the hammering and repoussé work are characteristic of silver souvenir spoons made in quantity at the curio shops located in Skagway around the time of the gold rush and into the early 20th century. The Indian Curio Shop run by Peter Kern, The Native Curio Shop owned by Mr. and Mrs. Jim Williams, and the Kirmse Store, owned by Herman Kirmse all hired Native artists to produce souvenir items such as the silver spoons. The Kirmse Store still operates in Skagway but no longer hires artists to produce objects as it did at the turn of the twentieth century. However the store still deals in antiques and Native art.

The silver spoon can be seen at the museum until January 2 – 31, 2008. 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.

[return to top](#)

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Rosemary Carlton

Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 747-3004

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