

PRESS RELEASE

Sheldon Jackson Museum

104 College Drive, Sitka, AK 99835

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

Home page: <http://www.museums.state.ak.us>

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM SPOTLIGHTS ATHABASCAN MITTENS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR MORE INFORMATION CAROLYN YOUNG, 747-8981

Long before the days of telephones and computers, the Rev. Dr. Sheldon Jackson, founder of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, maintained contacts throughout Alaska. Through these remote associates he acquired artifacts representing areas far removed from Sitka. The Artifact of the Month for July, a pair of Athabascan mittens from the eastern Yukon region, was probably collected by one of these agents.

The caribou hide mittens probably date from the mid- to late 1800s. Instead of the intricate beadwork found on many articles of Athabascan clothing, traditional porcupine quill work decorates these mittens. Four bands of quill work are found on the wrist and two rows are at the base of the thumb. The fringe at the wrist is also partially wrapped in quills. A red line of pigment (ochre) runs down the back of the gloves and is visible under some of the quill work. Mittens used for winter work were usually made with the fur on the inside. This pair of mittens is not fur-lined. Ethnographers believe this style of mitten served as summer wear, and in some areas these were used only when paddling a canoe.

