

ALASKA STATE MUSEUMS

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM, JUNEAU ❖ SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM, SITKA

Sheldon Jackson Museum

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JULY ARTIFACTS OF THE MONTH MEMORABILIA OF [PRESIDENT HARDING'S MUSEUM VISIT](#)

A stereopticon of President Harding and party, along with the guest log signed by Harding, are the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifacts of the Month for July.

In June of 1923, President Warren G. Harding along with his wife, Florence, and an entourage of cabinet members including his Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, and other political associates, traveled cross country by rail, boarding the Navy transport Henderson, which brought them to Alaska. Harding's intent for the extended trip was to meet people on a personal level and justify his policies and his choice of officials. It was during this time that Harding's administration was plagued by rumors of corruption and scandal.

In Alaska, the group made stops in Metlakatla, Fairbanks, and Nenana, where Harding drove the final spike completing the Alaska Railroad. As the trip continued, the party stopped in Anchorage and Cordova, finally arriving in Sitka on the morning of July 22, 1923.

Harding and his party received a royal welcome from Sitka residents who played in bands, rang bells and gave speeches. On this – their last day in Alaska – the President and his group were treated to all the sights and hand shakings Sitka could provide. A touring car belonging to the Pioneers' Home provided transportation for the President and Mrs. Harding to the Presbyterian Church on the campus of Sheldon Jackson School, where they attended services. The pew the Hardings sat in remained in the Sheldon Jackson Museum until 1984, when the museum was purchased by the state and the pew turned over to the Stratton Library, where it can be seen today. A visit was made to Sitka National Monument (Sitka National Historical Park) and to the Sheldon Jackson Museum, where the President and party viewed the "Indian Relics." The stereopticon view shows the presidential party leaving the museum. While visiting the museum

the group signed the guest log for July 22, 1923. The discoloration of the two pages where his signature can be seen attests to many years on exhibition in the sunlight.

On the journey south, Harding became ill with what was then attributed to a touch of food poisoning. After leaving Seattle, Harding's condition worsened and despite being rushed by train to San Francisco, the President died on August 2. He suffered what is thought to have been a heart attack or stroke. He died quietly and instantaneously. Legend has it that he had eaten "tainted crab" that came on board in Sitka. In later years those accusations were dismissed and it is now generally accepted that a heart attack or stroke killed him.

The stereopticon and log book can be seen in the museum gallery through July 31 and are viewable on the web site: <http://www.museums.state.ak.us>.

Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$4. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

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PRESIDENT HARDING'S MUSEUM VISIT



Admiral Rogers July 17, 1923

The Sitka Tribune
Extra Friday August 3rd. 1923. 7 a.m.

The President is Dead

San Francisco, August 2nd. President Harding died instantly and without warning tonight at seven thirty o'clock. He was talking to members of his family. Physicians think his death due to some brain involvement.

Later. Mrs. Harding and two nurses were present when a slight tremor passed through him. General Sawyer and Dr. Boone were immediately in attendance but death was instantaneous.

The death occurred at the Palace Hotel: when the flags were lowered and raised to half mast, thousands congregated with hushed voices and awed faces.

The cause of death is given as cerebral apoplexy. Mrs. Harding is bearing up bravely. The whole nation is mourning with her.

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1923

Presidential Party July 22, 1923

James Harding	D.C.
Wm. W. Harding	"
Hubert Work	Colorado
Lawrence Work	"
Herbert Hoover	California
Franklin D. Roosevelt	"
Henry C. Wallace	Iowa
Dr. H. H. H. H.	Massachusetts
W. E. Sawyer	Washington D.C.
May C. Sawyer	"
J. F. Boone	Washington D.C.
W. J. F. F.	Kentucky
W. C. C.	Utah
Harold C. Casper	Hokone Wash.
E. Ross Bartley	Washington D.C.
Orin P. Wilcox	Seattle, Wash.
M. O'Connell	Knox Ill.
L. Gordon	Ohio, Pa.
D. K. Eagle	Nebraska, D.C.
H. Braunfield	Rochester, N.Y.
John P. Stone	Washington, D.C.
H. E. Mason	Wash. D.C.
C. W. Wilson	U.S.M.C. U.S.S. Henderson.
M. J. Murdoch	U.S.M.C. U.S.S. Henderson
H. Zaucha	U.S.S. Henderson

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