

## Sheldon Jackson Museum

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

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### MAY ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

#### 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SURGICAL CASE AND EQUIPMENT

In 1881 Sheldon Jackson accompanied a young missionary couple, Eugene and Caroline Willard, to the Chilkat Mission located near Klukwan. They brought with them a number of possessions to set up a new life in Alaska – among them a surgical kit that was given to the Reverend Eugene Willard by his father. The kit is on view at the Sheldon Jackson Museum as the featured artifact of the month.

Along with his wife, Caroline (Carrie), the Reverend Willard helped establish the town of Haines Mission with a school and church. They hoped to entice the local Tlingit to relocate near them, convert to Christianity, and attend school. As part of their missionary work, the Willards ran the school and offered basic western medical care to the Native population.

In her writing, *Among the Tlingits, The Letters of 1881-1883*, published in 1995, Mrs. Willard makes many references to treating children and others for disease and injury, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Although the surgical case had been a gift to her husband, it appears that she did most of the care giving. However, both probably used this case, which contains a number of instruments for performing minor medical procedures. There are a thermometer, small forceps, tweezers, a folded knife with a hook and a blade, a lancet, needle, an inoculation needle and space for a second knife. The instruments are enclosed in a leather case with a purple silk and red velvet lining.

The kit, donated to the museum in 1949 by the Willards' daughter, Kotzie Willard Huntly, came with a note explaining that the kit was used primarily during their time in Haines. After leaving Haines, the Willards were stationed in Juneau for a number of years.

The surgical kit will be on exhibit May 1-31 and can also be viewed on our website at [www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us).

Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Summer hours begin May 15 and are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Winter admission is \$3 and summer 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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