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## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 30, 2010

### **May Artifact of the Month: Jumbo Spruce Root Basket**

The Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for May is a jumbo-sized Tlingit spruce root basket.

This large low-sided basket has a thirty inch diameter and is about eight inches high. It has two narrow lines of brown two-strand twining near the rim. About five and half inches of the center are also two-strand twining. The rest of the basket is woven in "between weave" where a single flat element is woven over under the warps separating rows of twining. This method helped save time and materials in basket construction and was often used on large berry and work baskets which did not call for the fine weaving and design work of other spruce root baskets.

In form, it is similar to the large baskets used in berry gathering and screening, however those large berry baskets generally had from two to four twisted spruce root or leather handles on them but this one has none. Also there are no berry stains in the basket but some water stains suggesting it may have been another variety of large tray-like basket: a woman's work basket.

Weavers used large usually little decorated tray-like baskets to hold their weaving or sewing supplies. In photographs from the late 19th century, woman are shown with similar large baskets like this one full of prepared basketry materials, tools for splitting roots, split roots, dyed grasses, and other tools used in basket making.

The basket was donated to the museum by Verna Elizabeth (Nan) Peterson in 1965. She and her husband Charles purchased the "Sitka Bazaar" from his parents in 1945. The original store opened the 1929. Mrs. Peterson managed the "Bazaar" until the 1966 fire in downtown Sitka. The store was sold to their nephew Charles Trierschild and his wife who rebuilt the store. According to family members in the early days of the Sitka Bazaar "Indian Curios" were sold in the store, often being obtained from artists through trade for groceries. Possibly that is how the large basket came into Mrs. Peterson's hands.

The basket will be on display May 1 – 31. Summer hours at the Sheldon Jackson Museum are a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Closed holidays. Summer admission is \$4. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge. An annual pass for both museums (including the Alaska State Museum in Juneau) is available for \$15.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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[www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)

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