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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE:

OCTOBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH [SPRUCE ROOT BASKET](#)

A Tlingit spruce root basket is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for October. The medium-size twined cylindrical basket has three bands containing design elements of wrapped weft (false embroidery). The top and bottom bands have the design elements of "shaman's hat" and "war club," and the center band is the "goose track" design as described by nineteenth century naturalist, George T. Emmons. Baskets like this are often referred to as berry or storage baskets. The basket is 8" high with a diameter of 8 1/4". It's in relatively good condition for its age. A four inch portion of the rim is missing and only 3 small breaks in the twining have occurred over the one hundred and ten plus years since it was woven. Specific characteristics such as the narrow design band just below the rim were more commonly done before 1890.

The basket was a donation from William of N. Shannon of Massachusetts. He contacted the museum in the summer of 2006 to see if there might be any interest in a basket his father had collected in Alaska in the early 1940s. Shannon explained that in the 1970s, the basket was shown to curatorial assistant John Putnam at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle. He identified the basket as having been made prior to 1890 which would easily qualify the basket for the Sheldon Jackson Museum's scope of collecting: Alaska Native materials prior to the early 1930's. After photos were sent to the museum and the decision was made to accept the basket, Mr. Shannon had it appraised, and it arrived in Sitka in April of 2007. It was the donor's desire to have the basket return to the "ancestral homeland of the Tlingit."

The spruce root basket can be seen at the museum until October 31 or online at http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html.

Winter hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4p.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.

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