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## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
DATE: September 21, 2009

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### **SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH FOR OCTOBER: [ALEUT/ALUTIIQ BOOTS](#)**

October's Artifact of the Month at the Sheldon Jackson Museum is a pair of small child-sized Aleut/Alutiiq boots made from sea mammal esophagus or intestine and sea mammal hide. Feathers and small bits of red fabric or yarn are visible inside the seams.

The boots were purchased from a woman in Vacaville, CA which is about 3 hours from Ft. Ross, the Russian American outpost during the early 1800s. Aleut/Alutiiq people helped establish the fort. It could be speculated that these small, fragile boots had their origins from some of those 19th century settlers. Unfortunately the seller knew nothing about the boots other than having purchased them at a church sale in Vacaville.

There is some speculation that the boots were made later as a tourist item. The size seems small, even for a child-sized boot and the material used in the boot vamps may be from an acquired trade item as it has the appearance of industrial processing and surface treatment. Traditionally, that part of the boot would have been made from seal mammal hide. At this time the material has not yet been positively identified.

For the last year and half, the boots have been at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau undergoing evaluation and preservation treatment. On a recent trip to Sitka, Museum Conservator Ellen Carrlee brought the boots back to Sitka. Museum intern, Lauren Horelick from the UCLA/ Getty graduate training program in conservation, has been working on the boots so they could be returned to the Sheldon Jackson Museum and exhibited this month.

The distinctive style of these boots can be seen in a few other examples found around the globe. An almost identical pair is pictured in *The Etholén Collection* (p. 233) – a catalog of ethnographic materials collected by Adolf Etholén, a manager of the Russian American Company Etholén who served with the company at various levels from 1818 to 1846. His collections reside in the National Museum of Finland.

The boots can be seen at the Sheldon Jackson Museum October 1 through October 31. Winter hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge. The images can also be viewed on our website at [http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon\\_jackson/artifact\\_of\\_month.html](http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html).



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## ALEUT/ALUTHIQ BOOTS



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