

A L A S K A S T A T E M U S E U M S

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM, JUNEAU □ SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM, SITKA

Sheldon Jackson Museum

104 College Drive, Sitka, AK 99835

Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 747-3004

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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Scott McAdams, 747-8981

SEPTEMBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

[ALEUT STONE LAMP](#)

The Sheldon Jackson Museum is featuring an Aleut stone lamp as its Artifact of the Month for September.

The Reverend Dr. Sheldon Jackson collected the lamp in 1898 on Unalaska, near the village of Kashega. The lamp is broken into two pieces and was possibly found in that condition. The material from which the lamp is made is not positively identified but could be granite, basalt or even sandstone, all of which have been identified as the material of other Aleutian stone lamps. Oil burning lamps such as this came in many shapes and sizes and were used throughout Alaska.

The lamp does not have a wick groove as do some other lamps. Typically, one end of twisted or rolled moss rested in the bowl of the lamp in which sea mammal oil was placed. This lamp shows stains from the top of the rim down the sides suggesting it contained oil that had overflowed.

Besides lighting and heating the interiors of semi-subterranean homes, the lamps also provided an alternative to cooking in an outdoor pit. Women owned the lamps and generally were the ones responsible for keeping them going.

Carbon soot from the burning oil had much the same affect on the homes' inhabitants as the burning of coal in 19th century European homes. Both could cause a build up of carbon in the lungs creating health problems.

The Aleut stone lamp will be on exhibit September 1 through September 31. Summer hours continue through mid-September and are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Summer admission is \$4. Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and admission is \$3. Youth under 18 and those with annual passes are admitted free.

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