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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **February 25, 2013**

March

Artifact of the Month: Pair of Siberian Boots

SITKA – In honor of Women’s History Month, the Sheldon Jackson Museum’s artifact of the month for March is a pair of Siberian boots. These boots are similar to a pair of boots that were acquired from a Chukchi community at Cape Tchaplin in Siberia. Chukchi Women were especially known for their embroidery skills. The boots are made from reindeer skin with an ugruk (bearded seal) skin sole. A strip of de-haired sealskin with reindeer fur embroidered in a zigzag pattern decorates the top of the boots. A sinew drawstring is fastened to the top of the boots and straps along the ankle secure the boots around the wearer’s foot.



Women as seamstresses played an extremely important role in the expression of cultural values as well as the survival of a group. The clothing created by women was vital to the culture because life in arctic conditions was simply not possible without extremely well-made clothing to protect an individual. Through clothing, seamstresses often expressed the magical beliefs and symbolic values of their group. Social positions within the group were also expressed by characteristics of clothing that marked gender, age and status. Women today still play an important role in keeping sewing traditions alive.

These boots were presumably collected by the Reverend Sheldon Jackson during one of his trips to the Siberian coast on the US Revenue Cutter “Bear.” Beginning in 1891 Jackson completed many trips to Siberia in the process of developing a reindeer industry in Alaska. According to notes from his travel, almost the entire village came on board while the Bear was anchored at Cape Tchaplin. These boots can be seen at the Sheldon Jackson Museum during our winter hours from 10a.m. to 4p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Discounted winter admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger and pass holders are admitted free of charge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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