



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM OCTOBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH



The Sheldon Jackson Museum's October Artifact of the Month is a Yup'ik seal intestine pouch (SJ.A.45). The pouch was donated to the museum in 1978 by Harry and Barbara Meek of Washington state along with a bird breast cap, a beaded wedding cap, a woman's parka, a feather mat, and two photographs of the donor's mother and father at Nushagak, Alaska where the pieces were collected between 1912 and 1918.



The flat pocket-shaped pouch is made of intestine or seal gut. It has blue, green and brown glass seed beads on the borders and embroidery on each side. One side of the pouch has an embroidered American flag and a double-pennant shaped flag; the other, a fox following or approaching a bird. It is lined with white cotton fabric, has a red, white and blue drawstring made of yarn and contains a small quantity of either herbs or tobacco. There are some signs of insect damage on each side, but the pouch

is otherwise in good condition with the embroidered areas and beadwork very much intact.

According to notes on file, a research visit with Yup'ik elders living in the Dillingham area in 2000 resulted in a discussion about the pouch with Marie Ishnook, Elia Ishnook, Julia Apalayak, and Wassillie Simeon. Marie commented that the bag was made with seal intestine and Mary stated that it was "used to carry bullets in when they went hunting..." and that the fox represented the story of a fox following a goose singing a song. Julia and Wassillie agreed and the latter recounted that his mother had made him one with straps made of yarn.

Preparing seal intestine, or quiluk in Yup'ik, is a laborious process. The intestine can be punctured if care is not taken at every stage of processing. The intestine must be washed repeatedly to remove any signs of blood or food. Only the middle layer of the intestine is used and other layers are scraped away. Traditionally, to sew into the intestine, animal sinew rolled into a long thread would be used to sew with ivory needles.

The Sheldon Jackson Museum is home to around a dozen intestine pouches, bags, and parkas. The October Artifact of the Month will be on exhibit until October 31st and can be seen during winter hours Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 4pm. The museum is closed on Sundays and Mondays. General admission is \$3 and free for those 18 and under or members of either the Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum or Friends of the Alaska State Museum. The museum is closed holidays year round.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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