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Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

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October Artifact of the Month: Point Hope Mask



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The October artifact of the month is a spruce driftwood mask collected by Sheldon Jackson in 1891 near Point Hope, Alaska. The mask has an overhanging forehead reminiscent of a visor and a downturned mouth lightly painted red. A single slit eye runs across the width of the mask.

According to Froelich Rainey, an anthropologist working in Point Hope in the late 1930s, this mask is based on a Point Hope shaman's first vision experience. The story is recorded in Dorothy Jean Ray's 1967 publication *Eskimo Masks: Art and Ceremony* (p. 12-13). While running across the tundra from his summer camp to the village of Tigara, a shaman named Umigluk "saw a boat descending from the moon and in the boat he recognized another speedy runner, a shaman who had died recently. The shaman disappeared from view, and another man, Anguluk, wearing fancy new clothes and with only one big eye instead of two, appeared in the boat and danced for Umigluk." After his vision, Umigluk directed eight men to make eight masks with a protruding forehead and one long slit eye in the likeness of Anguluk which were then danced by the shaman. One of these masks was collected by Sheldon Jackson.

As the General Agent of Education, the Rev. Sheldon Jackson traveled aboard a Revenue Cutter Service vessel to complete an annual school inspection. His diary from July 1891 records that he purchased several "curios," possibly including this mask, from Point Hope residents who came on board the vessel to trade. The Sheldon Jackson Museum holds an extensive mask collection representing many communities in Alaska. The masks from the Point Hope region at the Sheldon Jackson Museum are among the largest grouping of Point Hope masks held by any museum in the world.

The Point Hope mask can be seen at the Sheldon Jackson Museum October 1 through October 31. An image of the mask can also be viewed on our website at: http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html. Winter hours are daily from 10 AM to 4 PM with discounted \$3 winter admission. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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