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Press Release

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM

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SEPTEMBER ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH **ENGRAVED TLINGIT SILVER SPOON**

The Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for September is a repoussé engraved silver souvenir spoon created by a Tlingit artist around the turn of the 20th century. The spoon, purchased through an auction site, came back to Alaska by way of the mid-west and Arizona.

Thousands of small engraved silver spoons, many pounded out from silver coins, were taken from Alaska during the flourishing tourist market of the late 1890s or early 1900s. Some were carved by well known artists such as Rudolph Walton and Jim the Jeweler of Sitka. Others were mass produced at "curio workshops" such as the ones in Skagway and Haines run by owners such as Peter Kern, Herman Kirmse or Jim Williams and his wife.

Unfortunately, all too often the spoons went unsigned by the artist as is the case with this spoon with the repousséd head and an eagle engraved in the bowl. The repoussé work on the spoon is comparable to some of the work done by Walton, but doesn't bear the characteristic found on many of Walton's works. However, not all pieces attributed to him bear the word Sitka. Artists often shared or "borrowed" ideas from each other and unless a significant characteristic shows itself on the spoon, the artist remains a mystery.

Several other engraved silver and copper spoons have been acquired by the museum in the past year through donations from the Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum and from individuals. During the next year these spoons will also be featured as an Artifact of the Month.

The engraved Tlingit silver souvenir spoon can be seen at the museum until September 30 or online at http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html. Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with winter hours beginning September 18, 10:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Summer admission is \$4. Winter admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

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