

Sheldon Jackson Museum

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APRIL ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

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ROSEMARY CARLTON, 747-8981

Three Northwest Coast carved silver spoons and a small silver paddle are Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifacts of the Month for April. These four pieces are among a group of objects recently donated to the museum by former curator, Peter Corey. Corey obtained three of the pieces from John R. Mickey, former professor of anthropology at the University of Northern Colorado. Mickey's uncle collected them around 1900 when he was working as a mining engineer in Alaska. The small paddle and the spoon with the frog handle are similar to other works in the collection done by Rudolph Walton. "Sitka" carved on both pieces is often found on Walton's silver work.

The spoon with what appears to be a wolf design is similar to work done by other Sitka artists but cannot be positively attributed to any one artist at this time.

Corey obtained the fourth silver piece through the online auction house eBay from a seller in Newport, NJ. Its small size suggests it is a demitasse spoon. An unidentified toothed creature, possibly a shark or wolf, is carved on the handle along with very fine cross-hatching. The reverse is plain except for the word "Sitka" which has the *I* dotted with a small x. Although it may have been carved in Sitka, it cannot be positively associated with known Sitka carvers.

All four of the pieces appear to be made from silver coins. Tlingit artists pounded the coins flat and made jewelry for personal adornment. This new type of art attracted the attention of souvenir hunters, and by the late 1800s, silver carvers such as Silversmith Jim and Rudolph Walton began creating such things as spoons, pickle forks, and tongs.

The silver pieces will be on view at the museum April 1 to 30. The Artifact of the Month program is an opportunity to display various artifacts that are not part of the Museum's permanent exhibits.

Winter hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. General admission is \$3. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of Sheldon Jackson Museum and those with passes are admitted free of charge.

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