



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: DECEMBER 4, 2014

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM DECEMBER ARTIFACTS OF THE MONTH



The December Artifacts of the Month at the Sheldon Jackson Museum are five small, carved wooden animals (SJ.II.D.128 a; SJII.D.128.e; SJII.X.215.a; SJII.215.b; SJII.D.129). The wooden figures are in the shape of a wolf, a pig, a fox, and two birds. The fox, wolf, and pig were collected at Cape Prince of Wales and were likely made by an Inupiaq person, but it is unknown where the birds were collected or who made them. Charming and simple, yet artistically rendered, the miniature carved animals may have been made for sale for the souvenir trade or for children to play and learn with.

Inupiaq and Yup'ik children have traditionally had small figures of birds, seals, and other animals carved by their fathers for toys. The miniatures tended to be made with ivory, bone, or wood. While Inupiaq and Yup'ik on the coast generally utilized ivory for such carvings, the people of the interior were apt to use the more readily available bone or deer horn. Bird images often represented geese, murres or other waterfowl. Typically animals represented were either local to the area in which they were carved or mythical creatures.

Inupiaq and Yup'ik animal and bird carvings are not limited to toys and items made to be sold to tourists – they may also take the form of representations of animal's yua (inua in the Inupiaq language) or spirit, amulets, and appendages on masks. A variety of such carvings are in the collection of the Sheldon Jackson Museum and they, along with these figures, may be seen in the museum gallery through December 31st. Winter hours at the Sheldon Jackson Museum are 10am to 4pm, Tuesday through Saturday. The museum is closed holidays. 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.

Murdock, John. *Ethnological Results of the Point Barrow Expedition*. Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. 1887-1888 by John W. Powell. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office. 1892. Print

Nelson, Edward William. *The Eskimo about Bering Strait*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. 1983.

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