

Linda S. Thibodeau
Director
Division of Libraries, Archives,
& Museums
www.eed.state.ak.us



Bruce Kato
Chief Curator
Alaska State Museums
395 Whittier St.
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1718
907.465.2901

Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: June 24, 2009

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Rosemary Carlton
Phone (907) 747-8981 Fax (907) 747-3004
www.museums.state.ak.us

JULY ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH **TLINGIT SPRUCE ROOT BASKET/COLLECTION PLATE**

The July Artifact of the Month at the Sheldon Jackson Museum is a Tlingit woven spruce root basket. The short cylindrical basket was used in the Tlingit Presbyterian Church as a collection plate. Four other similar baskets in the collection are thought to have been used in the church as well. Photographs of the interior of the church, one taken by E.W. Merrill (date unknown) and another taken probably by Luella Smith in 1944, both show baskets on the altar. This basket and one other can be seen quite clearly in the Smith photograph.

The Tlingit Presbyterian Church was located about where Stratton Library now stands. The Church – completed in 1892 – housed the congregation associated with the Sheldon Jackson Industrial and Training School. The church was used until 1956 when a new Presbyterian Church was constructed. The original church was demolished in 1963.

The five baskets in the collection are all done in the traditional manner of spruce root basketry weaving. They are twined and use false embroidery or wrapped weft design elements. The Artifact of the Month is done in brown, green and rust colors. It has some self-weave or skip stitch and is decorated with variation of the “feather wings of the arrow” or “leaves of the fireweed” as top and bottom bands. The central wide band is the blanket boarder design.

It could be assumed that possibly this or some of the other collections plates were in the church in 1923 when President Harding visited Sitka and attended his last public church services shortly before his death.

Another interesting side story about the collection plates appeared in the *Verstovian*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1927 (SJC paper). “Tourist acquisitiveness accounted for the loss during the past summer of two collection baskets, woven by native [sic] women and presented to the Thlinget [sic] Presbyterian Church when the building was first erected in 1892.” The baskets most likely came into the museum’s collection at the time the congregation moved into the new church in 1955.

The basketry collection plate can be seen in the museum gallery from June 1 through June 30. Summer hours are daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with \$4 admission. Visitors 18 and younger, Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and those with passes are admitted free of charge. The images can also be viewed on our website at http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html.

[return to top](#)

[SJ Artifacts-of-the-Month](#) | [press releases](#) | [SJ home](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)

TLINGIT SPRUCE ROOT BASKET/COLLECTION PLATE



[return to top](#)

[SJ Artifacts-of-the-Month](#) | [press releases](#) | [SJ home](#) | [Alaska State Museums](#)