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## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: **June 21, 2010**

### **July Artifact of the Month: Tlingit Silver Souvenir Spoon**

A Tlingit silver souvenir spoon is the Sheldon Jackson Museum's Artifact of the Month for July.

In December 2008, an auction house auctioned portions of the estate of Linda Trusdell, owner and operator of Crown and Eagle Antiques of New Hope, Pennsylvania. Among the hundreds of items in the sale was a lot containing 21 pieces of Northwest Coast silver and copper souvenir spoons and one brooch. The Friends of the Sheldon Jackson Museum donated the funds for the museum's successful bid on the lot. One spoon was commercially stamped and the brooch was made by a contemporary artist rendering it outside the museum's scope of collections. The Friends kept those pieces to be used in their annual silent auction fund-raiser held in late fall. This spoon was one of the nineteen Northwest Coast pieces from this estate lot purchase, and was added to the permanent collection.

The spoon has a 180° curved handle, while at the end of the handle are northwest coast formline-like designs with geometric shapes. The curved section is cut in the shape of a bird's head and wing. Formline eyes appear on the head, wing and tail. There are claws which appear to hold an eye form on the tail. Hatch marks or cross hatching are used in several spaces. The straight part of the handle is peened and has four (4) sets of diagonal parallel lines cutting across the surface dividing the peened areas.

The specific use of the spoon was a mystery but after researching nineteenth century spoons, some possibilities have come to light. Nineteenth century curved handled spoons (non-Native made) were found and described as sauce spoons or baby spoons. The baby spoon handles resemble this spoon more than the sauce spoons whose handles only had a gentle curve. The size of the museum spoon is also consistent with other antique baby spoons. The pointed end of the handle raises questions as to whether it would have been practical for a toddler to use; however, on the underside of the spoon handle is an adult finger or thumb print etched into the metal which suggests the adult held the spoon either for feeding or that the spoon was for other purposes. The fingerprint is clear evidence of damage that can be done simply by handling an artifact.

Native artists were known to make a wide variety of made-to-order silver utensils: tongs, bon bon spoons, pickle forks, butter knives, so it is not out of the question that it could have been made as a baby gift, possibly never intended for actual use. Further research might reveal other similar spoons and how they were used.

The spoon can be seen in the museum gallery from July 1 through July 31. 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](http://www.museums.state.ak.us/sheldon_jackson/artifact_of_month.html).

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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[www.museums.state.ak.us](http://www.museums.state.ak.us)

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## Tlingit Silver Souvenir Spoon



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