

State transfers *Japanese artifacts*

JUNEAU — Gov. Steve Cowper has directed that artifacts from a Japanese sealing vessel seized by U.S. federal agents near Sitka 80 years ago be returned to descendants of the ship's crew in Sitka.

The artifacts — glass fragments, procelain dish, lantern globe, coins, laquered wooden dish, fragments of paper with writing on them — have been in state possession since they were recovered off Japonski Island near Sitka in 1983. They were transferred to a Japanese delegation from the Japanese town of Shiogama, the home port of the sealing ship.

At issue are the remains of the *Kaisei-Maru*, a Japanese sealing vessel seized by the U.S. Revenue Service in 1909 and charged with illegal sealing. The ship was brought to Sitka and the crew imprisoned in Juneau.

The crew was eventually acquitted and deported back to Japan, but without the ship which eventually sunk in Sealing Cove near Sitka.

In 1983, construction of a boat harbor in the cove unearthed the remains of the ship.