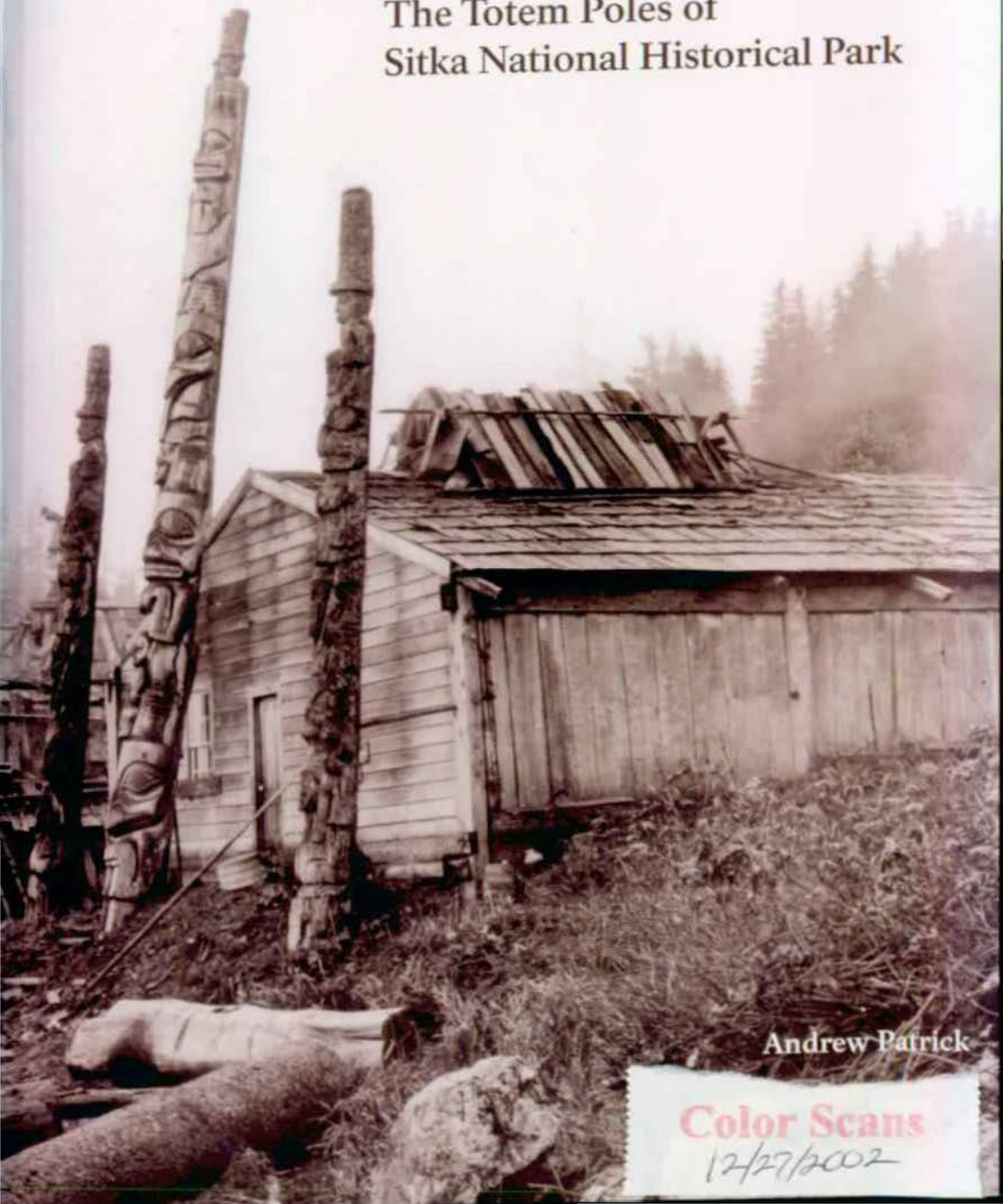
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Alaska Support Office, Anchorage, Alaska
and Sitka National Historical Park

314/ D-63

The Most Striking of Objects

The Totem Poles of Sitka National Historical Park



Andrew Patrick

Color Scans
12/27/2002



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Sitka National Historical Park
P.O. Box 738
Sitka, Alaska 99835

IN REPLY REFER TO:

K4219(AKSO-RCR)

November 5, 2002

Dear Reader:

Our office is pleased to enclose a copy of *The Most Striking of Objects: the Totem Poles of Sitka National Historical Park.* This report, written by Andrew Patrick of the Alaska Support Office staff, is a historical overview of these poles: where and how they were obtained, their role as symbols of Alaskan culture at two nationally-significant expositions, their importance to Sitka residents and visitors since 1906, and details about their maintenance and preservation.

If you have any questions about the information in this document, please contact Gene Griffin, chief, resources management, at Sitka NHP. He can be reached at (907) 747-0140 or by email at Gene_Griffin@nps.gov. If you would like to obtain additional copies, please contact Greg Dixon of the Alaska Support Office staff. He can be reached at (907) 644-3204 or by email at Greg_Dixon@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

Gary Gauthier
Superintendent

The Most Striking of Objects:
The Totem Poles of Sitka National Historical Park

Produced by the
Alaska Support Office,
National Park Service
and
Sitka National Historical Park
2002

U.S. Department of the Interior
Anchorage, Alaska

Author: Andrew Patrick

Cover: The village of Kasaan. This photograph was likely taken during John Brady's visit to collect the Saanaheit pole and house posts in 1901. In the foreground stand the Yaadaas Crest and Corner poles, later donated in 1903. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Left, detail of frog figure. Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi pole. Photograph by Gene Griffin. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files



Frog/Raven pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14924)

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Illustration of Frog/Raven pole by JoAnn George from the publication *CARVED HISTORY, The Totem Poles & House Posts of Sitka National Historical Park.*



Foreword

This year we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the beginning of what is now the Sitka National Historical Park totem pole collection. Totem poles are recognized as part of the dynamic Northwest Coast Native tradition. The Park collection began with the generous donation by Chief Saanheit, one of Kasaan's leaders in the early 1900s. Saanheit's donation of several large carved items including a totem pole, came with the condition "that these are to be transported to the government park at Sitka and to be erected and remain there as memorials to my people."

The original memorials and the subsequent recarved poles have been well incorporated into the forested park setting. Despite the years and cultural changes, the poles continue to be vibrant and solid reminders of the enduring Southeast Alaska Native peoples. This book pulls together written sources and interviews with present day carvers. The reader will gain a historical perspective of National Park Service management including preservation efforts and issues associated with the collection.

The addition of recent poles, the Haaleelk'u kaa sta heeni deiyi and the K'alyaan poles, to the park provide the continuity of what lies at the heart of the totem pole tradition:

> "Raising a totem pole is putting something in place, it's leaving a mark. Just saying who we are, what we are, what we belong to, and what we've been born with."
>
> Nathan Jackson, Master Carver

The National Park Service honors this tradition and through this publication and other efforts continues to provide education about the Sitka totem poles to future generations.

Sandra Anderson
Regional Historian

Mosquito Legend pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14964)

Introduction

The Totem Poles of Sitka National Historical Park

Upon arrival in Sitka, it takes only a few minutes to get a sense of its rich heritage. As perhaps the preeminent bastion of Alaskan history, the city and its landmarks brim with the character of the numerous groups who have inhabited the area in recent times. Many sites recount the history of the region's thriving Native population, and the Sheldon Jackson Museum is one of Alaska's premier repositories of Alaska Native artifacts. The spires of St. Michael's Cathedral embellish the town's contour as evidence of the prosperous settlement of Russian traders who once lived in Sitka. The bluff in the center of town, Castle Hill, was the location of the transfer of Alaska from Russian to American hands. Standing alongside all of these monuments in prominence are the totem poles of Sitka National Historical Park. Though Sitka is located on a portion of the coast where few totem poles have historically been carved, Sitka National Historical Park is home to one of the finest collections of poles in the world. The most basic facts of the poles, that they were collected for display at two early twentieth century World's Fairs and then brought to Sitka, have been common knowledge since their arrival in the city, but the details of their existence have not been well recorded. This is the first effort to comprehensively document the history of Sitka's poles. It is an attempt to discover the origins of the poles and document their years at Sitka National Historical Park.

The Sitka totem poles have led a dichotomous life. First and foremost, they are what their creators intended them to be: clan status symbols and heraldic artwork. They have an enduring ethnographic significance that is matched by few other objects worldwide; the poles remain as cultural emissaries of indigenous North American societies. By investigating their origins and meanings, we can better understand the lives of the people who carved them. While the images on the poles are intriguing, the reasoning behind the carving of the poles tells us volumes about the nature of nineteenth century coastal Alaska Native societies.

Once in the hands of the United States government, these totem poles took on additional significance as a preservation project for their new stewards. Just as the co-existence and blending of Alaska Native and non-Native societies has created interesting results, so has the U.S. government's stewardship of these Alaska Native objects. Alaska Governor John G.

Brady promised the donors that the government would preserve their poles, and the pole's caretakers have been inventing ways to accomplish this ever since. Solutions to preserving these highly perishable objects have been controversial and continue today as an ongoing learning process. The National Park Service's (NPS) goal has always been to preserve the poles for the purpose of educating the public.



"A considerable amount of decay. It is doubtful if this pole can be repaired."

At first, the poles proved to be an overwhelming task for the meagerly funded caretakers of what was at first a small government park at Sitka. New Deal recarving and restoration programs began the rejuvenation of the Sitka totem poles; the increased funding and proactive approach to management taken since the late 1960s has made the collection one of the finest on the northwest coast of North America.

Along with the NPS's stewardship, the poles' greatest allies have been the financial benefits of tourism and the Tlingit and Haida cultural renaissance of the latter twentieth century; custodial flaccidity, meager funding, and the numerous wood-rotting agents of the northwest coast of North America have been their greatest enemies. Totem poles remain an important part of Tlingit and Haida heritage, as well as their present-day cultures. The plight of the Sitka poles mirrors the troubles experienced by southeast Alaska Native cultures: while

Above right: An assessment photo taken of the Lakich'inei Pole before commencement of WPA and CCC work. Photographer: Charles Burdick. Page recreated from Burdick's original folder dated February 18, 1939. Caption is Burdick's typewritten comment. SITK Archives, RG-51, Box 3, Folder 3.

the Tlingit and Kaigani Haida people have lived through difficult times over the last two centuries, they have arrived at this place in history perhaps as strong as they have been since the turn of the century. As an extension of the curatorial promises of John G. Brady, the NPS has an obligation to preserve these artifacts as well as possible. The NPS also has a mission to educate the public about the significance of these totem poles, which is why better knowledge of their history is required. This book is a major part of the mission of Sitka National Historical Park, and while it does not hold all of the answers, it synthesizes more information about the Sitka poles than has ever been put together before.

This book is meant to help the reader understand the character and history of not only the Sitka totem poles, but of totem poles in general. The first chapter will introduce the reader to totem poles. Chapter 2 is a brief history of the changes in coastal Alaska Native culture since the beginning of contact with westerners, around 1780-1900. This chapter also considers how these changes altered the carving of totem poles. The rest of the book follows the poles from their initial collection to the present. The stories recounted here are primarily about how the poles came to be in Sitka, what was happening around the poles, and what was happening to the poles. In the interest of creating a smoother publication, detailed individual pole histories have been included in the appendices.

Acknowledgments

As is the case with all research projects of this type, there are far more people to thank than an author can remember, so I apologize now to those I forget. To start, I would like to thank the staffs of the various research facilities I visited while doing this project. These are the Alaska Room at the Z.J. Loussac Library, Anchorage, Alaska; the National Archives and Records Administration-Alaska Branch, Anchorage, Alaska; the Alaska Historical Library, Juneau, Alaska; the Alaska State Archives, Juneau, Alaska; the Beinecke Library, Yale University; the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri; the St. Louis Public Library; the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia; the Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon; and Special Collections at the University of Washington Library, Seattle, Washington. Many helpful, friendly, and interesting people work at these institutions.

More specifically, I would like to thank Peter Corey of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, Dan Savard of the Royal British Columbia Museum, wood preservation specialists Ron Sheetz and Al Levitan, and especially carver Tommy Joseph, who helped to broaden my perspective on pole carving through only a brief interview.

Big thanks to Gene Griffin, Sue Thorsen, Gary Gauthier, and everyone else at Sitka National Historical Park for their help in gathering information for this book. I would also like to thank past Sitka National Historical Park employees Gary Candelaria, Micki Hellickson, Steve Henrikson, and George Hall for their invaluable interviews. Additionally, I would like to thank my co-workers at the National Park Service Alaska Support Office in Anchorage. It was a fun few years.

Finally, I would like to thank Frank Broderick for his excellent graphics work on the book. A much deserved second nod to Gene Griffin for his "just ask and I'll do it" attitude throughout the process. Thanks to the prolific, Frank "Book of the Month" Norris for taking time out of his schedule to edit my text, and to Sande Anderson for her big picture editing and guidance throughout the process. And last, I would like to thank my wife Jami, whose perfectionist editing greatly improved the final version of the book.

Endnote Abbreviations

ASA: Alaska State Archives
JGB: John Green Brady Papers, Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University
SNHP: Sitka National Historical Park Archives
UW: University of Washington, Seattle, Special Collections



Chapter 1: The Land, the Natives, and the Poles

Monumental, intricate, and misunderstood, totem poles are intriguing objects. The abruptly angled carvings on massive red cedar trunks reveal semi-abstract animals, people, and fantastical hybrid creatures. The mysterious nature of totem poles challenges us to learn more about their origins and meanings.

Nineteenth Century Tlingit and Haida Societies

Extending approximately one thousand miles from the Puget Sound to the Alaskan panhandle, the "totempolar region," or the area in which Natives have historically carved poles, is characterized by rugged coastal terrain, steep mountains, dense and lush forests, high volumes of rain, mild temperatures, and numerous sheltered bays, coves, and navigable fjords. Importantly, the region is home to the durable and easily carved western red cedar tree, the traditional wood of choice among Native artisans.

Prior to European contact, or "pre-contact" as it is called, the peoples responsible for carving the poles in question, the Tlingit and Kaigani Haida, developed two of the more prosperous and sedentary non-agricultural societies in the world. The abundance of natural resources in this region allowed its inhabitants to move beyond a purely subsistence lifestyle. Residing in the sheltered bays and coves on rugged yet fecund Prince of Wales Island, and its smaller neighbors, the people harvested both land and sea to provide for their daily needs. Fish, sea mammals, land mammals, and mollusks supplied food. Sea otter pelts, seal skins, and deer hides, among others, provided clothing. The densely vegetated forests of the area provided wood for houses, hunting tools, and decorative arts. Most of these coastal Indians inhabited large, gabled plank houses in which several related families resided. In addition, they maintained hunting and fishing camps for use primarily in the summer months. These groups had also developed advanced seamanship skills and canoe-building techniques, as well as an extensive trading network with other coastal and interior Native groups.[1]

Left: The Wolf pole and donor, as taken by a crewmember of the Rush during the pole collection journey. While this pole is generally believed to be from Howkan, there is little evidence to prove this. Note that the original version of this pole had three rings on the hat of the top figure, while the present version has two. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK # 3825)

Northwest Coast culture evolved into a collection of complex, materialistic societies. Rankings among clans, and families within a clan, depended almost entirely on a person's expendable wealth and land holdings, with heredity largely determining one's wealth. Hunting, fishing, and gathering on certain

plots of land were the exclusive rights of a specific clan. Clan leaders received a set amount of all goods gathered or hunted by the clan members. Objects of value in the pre-contact period included Chilkat blankets, basketry, canoes, ceremonial clothing, shells, slaves, and weaponry.[2]

A complex social structure and an established set of ceremonies lay at the root of all Tlingit and Haida practices.[3] Villages usually consisted of numerous clans, each self-governed and ruled by a clan leader. Spread through several villages, clans existed as the most powerful social unit in both Tlingit and Haida societies. Members of one's own clan performed all special activities, such as house building and the raising of totem poles. Clans had two 'moieties' whose members never intermarried and often performed in large groups for each other. Moieties served few purposes other than these. Village political structures were flexible and regularly finessed by rival chiefs. In general, the leader of the dominant clan ruled the village. The social hierarchy in clans went from the clan leader and his immediate family, to those who were not so closely related, to slaves who had no standing whatsoever.[4]

According to Tlingit Andrew Hope III, Northwest Coast art emerged as a way of helping clansmen "to remember."[5] Haida carver Robert Davidson calls the totem pole "a declaration, a document" of clan crests, legends, wealth, and status.[6] Poles, historically, were not art in the western sense. This artwork, in the words of Hope, "was created for a purpose: either for some utilitarian use or for use as an emblem."[7] Historically, totem poles existed as one of the most visually important reminders of social status. While poles told legends, heralded great events, and memorialized people, their importance lay also in the fact that they commemorated an extravagant potlatch thrown by a chief. Family leaders hosted these events for numerous reasons: a funeral, the birth of a potential heir, the acquisition of a crest, the recapture of a war captive, and others. Beyond the special occasion, the main function of the potlatch was to declare the importance of the person and family responsible for throwing it. The clan leader giving the potlatch usually exhausted a large amount of capital, as he would be responsible for supplying the food, labor, and gifts in hopes of emerging with increased, or maintained, social status. People from neighboring villages attended, and the person throwing the potlatch gave lavish gifts in order to gain prestige or "symbolic capital," as one anthropologist has put it.[8] Everyone performed symbolic dances, all participants feasted, and the sponsoring clan raised a totem pole.



Saanaheit's family of the Kaigani Haida Taanaaslaas clan. The photo was probably taken at New Kasaan.

Now, the old poles stand as reminders of a proud heritage, and new totem poles are frequently carved, raised, and celebrated. While circumstances surrounding the poles have changed, carving continues and still holds an equally prominent place in Tlingit and Haida cultures.

The Carving of a Totem Pole

Totem carvers passed their skills from generation to generation by training a selected person for years. According to carver Duane Pasco, "because of the very formal nature of the art and because of the very involved and strict rules of application, long apprenticeships were required to produce a capable artist."[9] The complex process of carving a totem pole required much planning and often took several years to complete. First, the owners gathered their resources and planned the payments for the pole. Then a tree was selected and brought to the spot where carving was to take place, the trunk often having to be transported long distances. The people who worked on the transporting and carving of the pole were generally from the family of the male clan leader. From there, the hired carvers began work. Carvers generally used adzes and carving knives, constructed from wood and stone or iron, to sculpt the cedar. Secrecy was an important component in the carving of the totem pole, and only the person who





commissioned the work and those working on the pole knew what it would look like and signify prior to its raising. Following completion, the person who commissioned the pole would throw a potlatch during which the clan undertook the immense task of erecting the pole with rope, a tripod of logs, and sheer manpower.[10]

Present day carvers follow a similar process. Modern tools have helped to speed the carving process, but once a work nears its completion, methods are nearly the same. Just as the Northwest Coast carvers took advantage of the technology introduced by the European and American traders in the form of forged iron tools, modern carvers now use power saws and other industrial tools to make their jobs easier. Apprenticeships are equally long, with new carvers having to work together with experienced carvers over the course of several years to learn the trade. For example, Ketchikan carver Lee Wallace apprenticed on projects with Nathan Jackson and Wayne Price during the late 1980s, and also took a course taught by Steve Brown, all accomplished carvers. Wallace then began taking his own commissions during the 1990s and has become an experienced carver himself. Carvers must also be in top physical shape, as spending entire days shaping the red cedar trunk is arduous work. Current poles are commissioned by Alaska Natives through tribal councils or similar organizations for traditional purposes, and are usually raised with traditional ceremony. Poles are also carved for private collectors who view them more as a pure art form.[11] According to carver Tommy Joseph, the poles he has carved for regional Alaska Native interests, like his recent totem pole for the Kiksadi clan in Sitka, are the most important to him. He takes commissions from private collectors in order to earn a living as a full time carver.[12]

What is a Totem?

More important than the physical possessions of the Tlingit and Haida clans are their totems or crests. Family ancestors usually acquired the crests, which can loosely be defined as animals or objects exclusively associated with a particular family or clan. These ancestors encountered a mythic animal or spirit and who gave sole permission to use a specific symbol on poles, houses, blankets, and almost anything else they pleased. Clans acquired dances and stories, to which an individual or clan also had exclusive rights, during these encounters as well. Clans could also obtain crests through marriage, trade, or allocation following the extinction of a family.

Panorama on previous page: Early twentieth century photograph of Kasaan village. No Sitka poles can be seen in this image. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book Manuscript Library.



Early twentieth century view of Kasaan house interior. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

While many crests are animals, Alaska Natives use numerous other types of objects too. Both the Tlingit and Haida people use anything from a specific type of whale, to clouds, to the waasgo (a fantastical sea creature). Clans did not believe in any special or specific connection to the contemporary version of these animals; crest animals were not objects of religious worship.[13] As an early observer of the Tlingit put it, "It would seem that the crest animals and the actual animals are alike only in form, but are both associated with an indefinite being that existed in a far distant past."[14]

The Debate Concerning the Concept of "Totemism":

It is important to realize that a "totem" is merely an invented anthropological concept that attempts to describe a phenomenon that appears to occur in many non-western societies. The English word "totem" came into being during the mid-eighteenth century as a version of the Algonquin word

"It would seem that the crest animals and the actual animals are alike only in form, but are both associated with an indefinite being that existed in a far distant past."

"ototeman," roughly meaning "he is a relative of mine." The clans of this group each had an animal with which they represented themselves: for example, a person might say "my clan is the bear." With their origins in Algonquin mythology, the animals represented anthropomorphic, supernatural beings that emerged from the oceans and stayed among the Indians. The use of the word "totem" began to spread as a description for numerous, superficially analogous situations throughout the world.[5]



Detail of the Trader Legend pole showing the bottom beaver figure. Photograph by Gene Griffin. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files

The term "totem pole" first appeared shortly before the turn of the twentieth century, just as the study of "totemism" grew popular among academics. Totemism, at this time, was a branch of anthropology that attempted to classify certain aspects of all "primitive" societies as analogous ethnographic phenomena stemming from almost identical primitive minds.

This field focused on the clan structure of primitive societies, the animals, plants, or objects associated with the society's respective clans, and the Native's perception of the relationship between the clan and its associated object or objects. Many scholars, relying on the emerging tenets of psychoanalytic theory and an overreaching application of Darwinism, used totemism as a tool with which to prove the superiority of the European races. Sigmund Freud's ideas on the subject, as heavily influenced by Social Darwinian thought, are a prime example of this attitude. In his book *Totem and Taboo*, he states that in "so-called savage and semi-savage races" one could see "a well–preserved, early stage of our own development," thus equating the mind of a child as similar to the mind of an aboriginal person. Freud declared totemism as a precursor to the more complex Christianity of western society and compared characteristics of totemic societies with present day neuroses. Hence, totemism was not only the signature of an undeveloped mind, but it was also maladaptive.[16]

As often happens with attempts to create expansive classification systems, this one turned out to be overly simplistic and mired in the prejudices of its time. Numerous scholars of the period disagreed with the notion that totemism had any validity as an encompassing framework. Northwest Native scholar Franz Boas, for example, believed that totemism, as defined in such an inclusive manner, should not be assigned a lofty place in anthropology. He attacked the assertion that apparent similarities in ethnic phenomena were simply expressions of "psychological laws." Instead Boas argued that "actual [psychological] processes are immensely diversified," and "similar types of ethnic thought may develop in quite different ways," meaning apparently similar habits of separate aboriginal groups are the mark of different, but not inferior, minds. He also believed that Native groups chose totemic symbols "arbitrarily" and that scholars placed too much emphasis on the association between the clan and the symbol. For Boas, anthropology was not a tool to prove the superiority of the western mind. Instead, it was an implement that verified human equality and showed how influential the effect of environments could be.[17]

Though numerous objections to the study of totemism as an encompassing framework of classification appeared throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Claude Levi-Strauss led the final drive to limit this field's influence over anthropology with his 1962 book entitled *Totemism*. In this, he cynically defined the present status of the field as follows: "Totemism is firstly the projection outside our own universe, as though by kind of exorcism, of mental attitudes incompatible with the

While the poles often displayed the crests, or totems, of a clan, they also could tell stories.

exigency of a discontinuity between man and nature which Christian thought has held to be essential." This manifested his view that the study of totems had been developed as a Eurocentric system with no basis in reality.[18] Levi-Strauss did not reject the term entirely; he simply reduced it to a workable and limited unit that described the base relationship between the animal/symbol and the clan. In his work *The Savage Mind*, he states: "The differences between animals, which man can extract from nature and transfer to culture . . . are adopted as emblems by groups of men in order to do away with their own resemblances."[19] Within anthropological study, there were simply too many disparate systems of totemism for which academics had to stretch its definition. This rejection of totemism as a grand schematic framework is the norm in modern anthropology; Levi-Strauss was successful in curtailing its impact and retrenching it as a smaller, more effective tool for the social sciences.

Totem poles acquired their name during a time when totemism was in vogue and before scholars realized that the term totem pole did not accurately define the columns. While the poles often displayed the crests, or totems, of a clan, they also could tell stories. Anthropologist Viola Garfield recognized the insufficiency of this term and began calling poles "heraldic columns," which is more befitting to their place in Northwest Coast Alaska Native societies. No alternative has ever caught on, though, and the term totem pole has stuck with these monumental pieces of art.

Types of totem poles:

Types of totem poles on the Northwest Coast vary among different groups. The neighboring Tlingit and Kaigani Haida peoples are similar in many ways, and these similarities extend to their totem poles. Scholars have taken different approaches to totem pole classification, and many different systems have resulted. Below is a general survey of the types of Tlingit and Haida poles, split into categories based on what they signified and their traditional location in the village:[20]

- *House posts*: Probably the first type of totem pole, these are carvings on the support poles of Tlingit and Haida houses. With red cedar being rare in northern Tlingit territory, artisans carved a red cedar exterior that they placed on the non-red cedar posts. Carvers often placed legends on Haida house posts.

- *Mortuary/Memorial poles*: Carved to honor a living or dead person of importance, these were usually a plain pole with a large crest symbol carved on top. The family would

...[many of the poles] "were highly personalized and were intended to impress and mystify the audience. Their meanings were only suggested and not fully explained."

deposit the ashes or remains of the deceased person either in a box found on top of the pole or in a backside cavity, which was more common among southern Tlingit and Kaigani Haida. Mortuary poles would sometimes be organized in clusters near villages. These poles most likely came into prominence during the mid-nineteenth century as disease decimated the populations of the Northwest Coast.

- *Frontal poles*: These were generally freestanding poles placed either against or near the front of a house, often times near the door. They displayed clan crests, the history of a clan, and/or a legend.

- *Detached poles*: Placed anywhere in or near villages, these poles were similar to a frontal pole in what they displayed. These could also have stood as a monument of shame to a person with an unpaid debt, called a ridicule pole.[21]

Reading a Totem Pole

Due to several converging cultural and historical trends, totem poles are often difficult to decipher. The meaning of totem poles was usually a private matter to their original owners and thus not necessarily public knowledge. Pole symbols often represent components of a story or incident, which also presents a difficult scenario because stories are often told differently and change over time, especially in cultures reliant on oral tradition like those of the Northwest Coast of North America. As Viola Garfield has stated, many of the poles "were highly personalized and were intended to impress and mystify the audience. Their meanings were only suggested and not fully explained." Additionally she maintained that "legends, and carved and painted representations of them, were jealously guarded possessions of lineages," thus further obscuring their meaning.[22] Western minds generally feel that images and meaning have a one-to-one correlation and have trouble accepting a non-exact meaning, or multiple meanings, to a single thing such as a pole. According to Linn Forrest, head of the Civilian Conservation Corps recarving program: "Some people believe you can read a totem pole. This, I would say, is not correct at all because you will find different poles that have the same story that are completely different in their designs and the figures on it."[23] A single accepted meaning may or may not exist in any specific totem pole, and it will never be known whether this frustrating ambiguity is caused by the obscuration of meanings over time or the non-exacting nature of the culture itself. While the stories behind many poles have survived, others remain objects of controversy or speculation.

configurative, or more realistic representations. The deep carves and accentuated features are striking; they are "often organized as flat designs wrapped around a semi-cylindrical surface" with the convexity of each of the elements making them appear almost bloated.[24] This is part of the poles' intrigue; artisans do not carve the animals precisely how other groups of the world would consider drawing them, and yet they are vaguely recognizable to everyone. They fill the mind with awe, wonder, and even uneasiness—definite marks of effective artwork. Regardless of the reasons for their popularity as a regional symbol, it is certain that totem poles are impressive and unique artistic achievements.

Like any art form, different artists have different styles; compare the flowing images of the Waasgo Legend pole to the abrupt angles of the Yaadaas Crest Corner poles. Poles also take on different character even within the relatively small proximity from which the Sitka poles came. For example, Kaigani Haida poles, such as the Mosquito Legend pole, generally have little empty space, as compared with the simpler carvings of the Tlingit as shown in the Raven/Shark pole. There are exceptions to these assertions, like when Tlingit chiefs would hire Haida carvers, and vice versa. Comparing the styles of the artists and groups shows that Northwest Coast art, as exemplified in totem poles, is as complex and original as any other art form developed in the world. The history of the coast and its effects on the development of totem pole carving is an equally complex topic, as westerners slowly began flowing in during the mid-eighteenth century and had a profound effect on coastal Native cultures.

NOTES

[1] See works by prominent Northwest scholars Frederica DeLaguna, Philip Drucker, Erna Gunther, and Franz Boas.

[2] Julia Averkieva, "Tlingit," in *Historical Perspectives*, pp. 324-329.

[3] The terminology for the lineal divisions begins with the general "group" to which they belonged (Tlingit and Kaigani Haida), then to the locality (semi-autonomous groups), then to clans, then to families within the clan.

[4] Abraham Rosman and Paula Rubel, *Feasting*, pp. 34-39. Slaves were often captured wartime enemies.

[5] Andrew Hope, *Sacred Forms*, manuscript in Sitka National Historical Park Archives (hereafter abbreviated as SNHP), Record Group 51, Box 2, Folder 2, pp. 23.

[6] Robert Davidson, *Eagle Transforming*, p. 47.

[7] Andrew Hope, *Sacred Forms*, manuscript in SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 2, Folder 2, pp. 23-24.

[8] Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality*, p. 248-249.

[9] Duane Pasco, "Totem Pole Appraisal," March 1978, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 11.

[10] Marius Barbeau, *Totem Poles Vol.1*, p. 3.

[11] Robert Davidson, *Eagle Transforming*, pp. 47-57, and personal website of Lee Wallace, http://profiles.yahoo.com/haidacarver1.

[12] Tommy Joseph, interview by author, 29 August 2001, on file SNHP.

[13] De Laguna, "Tlingit," in *Crossroads*, p. 61.

[14] Emmons, *The Tlingit Indians*, pp. 31-34.

[15] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, pp. 18-22.

[16] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, p. 807-930.

[17] Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, pp. V, 316-323. Others had objected to the emphasis on totemism before Boas. E.B. Tylor, in an article for the 1899 *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, protested the influence which totemism had come to have over the study of the history of religion. He stated that totemism "has been exaggerated out of real proportion to its theological magnitude" and that "it may be best to postpone [certain] inquiries until . . . the totem has shrunk to the dimensions it is justly entitled to."

[18] Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, p. 3.

[19] Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, p.107. This represented a disagreement with Boas, as Levi-Strauss believed in slightly more than an "arbitrary" relationship between clan and totem.

[20] The classification of totem poles is an arbitrary activity, mainly because there are always plenty of exceptions to the categories created. Despite this, I have included this section to help the reader understand the function and purpose of the poles.

[21] Assembled from works by DeLaguna, Emmons, Halpin, Keithan, and Stewart.

[22] Viola Garfield, "The Haida," unpublished manuscript, p. 3, Special Collections #130, Box 2, Folder 8, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle (hereafter abbreviated as UW).

[23] Linn Forrest, interview by Lawrence Rakestraw, 1 August 1971, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 10.

[24] Bill Holm, *Indian Art*, pp. 11-13, 24-25.



Chapter 2: "We Do Not Know What Will Become of Us."

Cultural Transformation in Nineteenth Century Southeast Alaska

From the late eighteenth to the close of the nineteenth century, Northwest Coast Natives underwent a massive cultural transformation, and the rate of totem pole carving fluctuated accordingly during this era. Through their contact with westerners, coastal Natives changed from a group of autonomous societies to a more mixed cluster of peoples reliant on wage labor and western commodities. Beginning with small and superficial cultural shifts, the rate and profundity of change intensified throughout the period. In terms introduced by anthropologist Ralph Linton, the minor, though accumulative, initial changes occurred as a result of "non-directed" acculturation or cultural borrowing, that is an exchange in which one or both contact cultures actively chooses to incorporate certain aspects of another culture into their own. In this instance, the Natives remained autonomous, but they incorporated some useful aspects of western life into their society, such as forged iron tools. Westerners directed, or interfered with actively and purposefully, the later, more significant transformation. Missionaries encouraged them to accept Christianity, and western laws overruled age-old customs.[1]

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the production of totem poles increased as Indian coastal societies became more prosperous because of the fur trade. The artistic production of the Natives reached its height just following mid-century. During this time, totem poles bloomed into grand aesthetic achievements. With the purchase of Alaska by the United States and the influx of Christian missionaries, totem pole production slowed and became an endangered art form by the close of the nineteenth century.

Early Years of Contact (up to 1830)

During the 18th century, explorers scoured the seas in search of new trade routes to the far reaches of the earth. The land that would later become Southeast Alaska proved to be a lucrative trading ground. First sited in 1741 by a Russian expedition under the command of Alexei Chirikof, the region's abundant sea otters gave western traders the capital with which to barter in China. By the end of the century, British, Russian, and American seamen journeyed up and down the coast and began a structured commercial relationship with the

Left: Sailors from the U.S.S. Patterson pose against the Saanaheit pole. The Saanaheit house posts stand at rear. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15107)



Russian Orthodox clergy on the steps of Saint Michael's Cathedral. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3796)

various coastal Native communities. Aside from a few detrimental effects such as the introduction of western diseases and alcohol, this trade relationship brought little change to the societies and turned out to be beneficial to them in many respects.[2] One of the most notable changes accompanying the newfound prosperity brought by the fur trade was a burst of artistic production.

The relationship between westerners and Northwest Coast Natives during these early years was generally peaceful, and the fur trade thrived from about 1785 to 1830.[3] Centuries of trading amongst themselves had primed the Natives for exchange with the western traders. Early explorer narratives show that the western traders had stepped into a pre-existing network of commerce. In the journal of his 1792 exploratory voyage to the coast, famed Captain George Vancouver remarked that the Natives "had a very good idea of bartering and would not part with anything without the value of it." A member of his crew also noted commercial intercourse occurring between neighboring groups. More evidence of this came in the widespread distribution of certain items considered the specialty of specific Native societies. For example, groups all along the coast used Haida-produced dugout cedar canoes, and explorers found Tlingit spruceroot baskets in use far south of Tlingit territory.[4] During the earliest time of



Spruceroot basket. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3833)

intense trading (around 1785), Natives coveted iron and copper goods because they previously had very little access to forged metals. After these goods saturated the coast, guns, textiles, clothing, and blankets gained popularity. Near the end of this period, guns and woven cloth maintained their appeal to Native traders and were joined by foodstuffs (molasses, rice, bread, biscuits), rum and other manufactured goods (buttons, thread, scissors, and tobacco to name a few).[5]

During trade, the westerners usually had contact with only a few Native representatives and their assistants; they saw little of the general population. These select few agents actually represented "a vast nexus of producers, middlemen, and entrepreneurs to whom they were often still responsible to in their dealings."[6] The complexities of Northwest culture did not allow for an individual to trade, but instead steered almost all the profits to persons of high rank, analogous to the subservient relationship between the company and the sailors of lesser rank on the trading ships. While the quality of life undoubtedly rose for the whole of the Native population during this time of prosperity, it is also certain that the highest-ranking members received a disproportionate amount of the wealth.[7] The Natives also built a reputation as shrewd bargainers through their ability to easily exploit the many unaffiliated ships wandering along the coast by holding out for the highest bartering price on furs. As well as being astute traders, certain groups of Natives, such as the Sitka Tlingit and Kaigani Haida, proved to be able capitalists on a larger scale. These groups successfully dominated their neighbors by monopolizing normal European stopping points. Acting as middlemen, they would purchase skins from groups with no direct access to trade with westerners and then resell them at inflated prices.[8]

Times changed radically as Natives abandoned their old villages to work at canneries and totem poles were burned, stolen, sold to museums, or simply rotted away.



Kasaan in 1901. The Yaadaas Crest and Corner poles are in the foreground. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The early years of contact resulted in only modest transformation of Northwest Coast societies. Profit dominated the mindset of the western traders; they did not care to impose their culture on the Natives as later settlers and missionaries would. With transactions generally occurring through Native representatives aboard the ships, contact between western traders and villagers was limited. The only major attempt to



evangelize Northwest Coast Natives during this period came from the Russian Orthodox Church. While the Orthodox missionaries successfully converted a large number of Aleut and Alutiiq Natives to Christianity, they had less success when it came to the Tlingit. At the Sitka settlement, high levels of tension existed between the Russians and the local Natives. With the large village of Tlingit located directly

outside the walls of their community, the Russians lived in fear. Hence, most of the Russians never ventured outside of the settlement walls because they believed it unsafe to do so.[9] Furthermore, historian Ted Hinckley has suggested that:

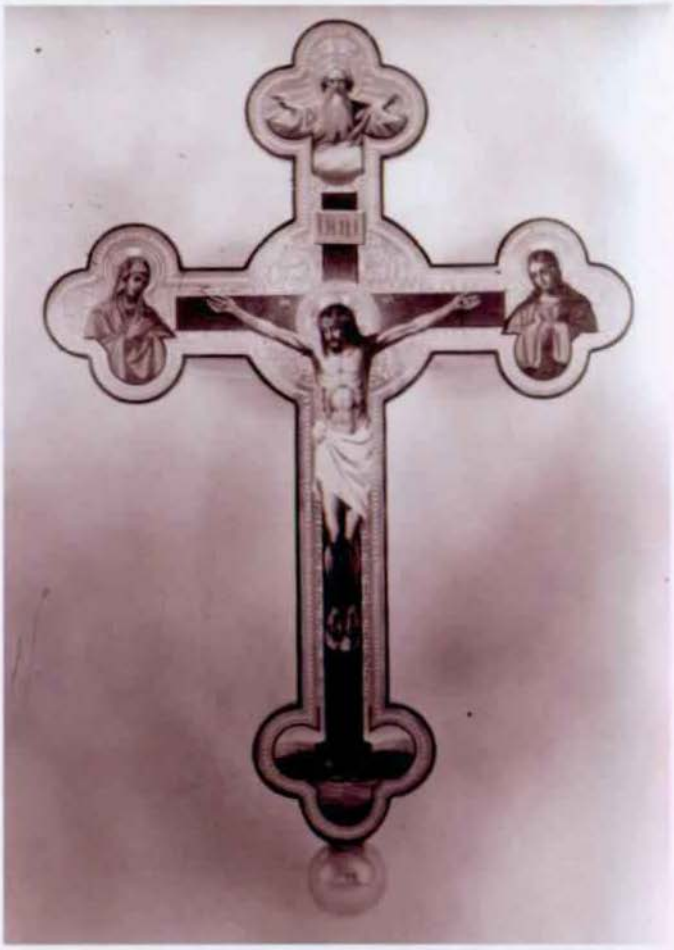
> The Tlingit's cynical reaction to Christianity's activist Golden Rule doctrines becomes less perplexing if one recalls their intense devotion to autonomous living and blatant materialism . . . For a Tlingit to divorce him or herself from their rich cultural inheritance with its entertaining rituals and colorful ceremonies, all so reflective of their magnificent natural environment, proved exceedingly difficult. For some Tlingit such a disjunction was quite impossible.[10]

The adversity faced by the Russian Orthodox missionaries in their Northwest Coast evangelism, as well as the engrained materialist ideals of the Tlingit and Kaigani Haida, stymied the assimilation of the local Natives into western religion in the early nineteenth century. Anthropologist Sergei Kan has even argued that the Tlingit saw little benefit in conversion to Orthodoxy because the majority of the Russians and converted indigenous peoples with which they were in contact appeared "poor, unfree, and certainly not enviable."[11] Native traditions flourished during this period.

First Encounters with Totem Poles and the Debate Concerning Their Antiquity

Many of the first explorers and traders made limited mention of carved works, which has led to debate amongst academics as to whether poles even existed before the arrival of westerners. Captain James Cook visited the Northwest Coast in 1778 and noted the Native's limited but skilled use of iron and "great dexterity in works of wood." One of Cook's officers also sketched several carved house posts. French explorer Etienne Marchand described a Haida frontal pole, which was "remarkable for the extreme smallness of its parts." During Italian navigator Alejandro Malaspina's journey (in service of Spain), a sketch was made of a large Tlingit mortuary pole, which he described as either "an idol or merely a frightful record of the destructive nature of death."[12] These descriptions, along with several others, delineate the border of the pre and post-contact periods in Northwest Coast study and with them has come much academic debate.

In hypothesizing on the antiquity of totem poles, academics have interpreted the first reports of carved artwork on the



Russian Orthodox cross. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3914)

Northwest Coast in different fashions. The most prominent initial ideas on the subject came from anthropologist Marius Barbeau, who believed carved poles to be an almost exclusively post-contact phenomenon. Totem poles proper, meaning poles not attached to or inside of tribal houses, began their development just prior to 1800 and reached their peak shortly after the mid-nineteenth century. In Barbeau's interpretation, early European accounts of the Native villages indicated the existence of smaller carved artwork such as trays or spoons, but made little mention of detached totem poles; no intense cultural development that would lead to the carving of such massive objects occurred in prehistoric times. Iron, Barbeau believed, was the key to the rise of totem pole carving, and the Northwest Coast Natives had possessed very little of this integral material prior to the arrival of the fur traders. As escalating numbers of European and American trading vessels made the region a frequent stopping point, the Natives acquired iron tools leading to faster, more efficient carving.

Totem poles...began their development just prior to 1800 and reached their peak shortly after the mid-nineteenth century.

They also acquired extra expendable wealth, which helped people of high rank commission the carving of more poles.[13]

Barbeau's theories about the lack of iron throughout the pre-contact Northwest Coast and the antiquity of the totem pole have been points of contention among scholars. In a more widely accepted explanation, anthropologist Philip Drucker has contended that the Natives did indeed have iron tools before European contact and had been carving in this manner for a long time. According to Drucker, the coastal Natives acquired iron "in a long series of exchanges, via Bering Strait, from some Iron Age center in Siberia." Furthermore, iron was not a mandatory element of carving, but merely a convenience that helped speed up the carving process.[14] Totem pole expert Wilson Duff also disagreed with Barbeau about the presence of iron before the arrival of the Europeans and the overall profundity of the change in Native art during the years of the fur trade. While "new wealth and new tools" helped to bring about an increase in totem pole production, Duff believed that "this distinctive art style was already in existence at the time of contact."[15] Renowned artist and art scholar Wolfgang Paalen focused his refutation of Barbeau on the certitude that the Northwest Coast Natives not only had access to iron but also "could get along without iron as well as could the Polynesians and Melanesians in shaping their monumental works in wood and stone."[16] Joyce Wike came to a similar conclusion following an exhaustive analysis of the records of fur traders. In her unpublished doctoral dissertation "The Effect of the Maritime Fur Trade on Northwest Coast Indian Society," Wike argued that "Barbeau's contention as to the extreme lateness of elements of Northwest Coast art and wood-working style and its dependence upon Russian sources can be taken as patently absurd."[17] While improved production efficiency and increased outlets for Native goods intensified certain aspects of Native life, these advancements occurred within an existing framework of social practice and control. The arrival of westerners did not initially change the development of Northwest Coast society; it simply sped up processes that were already in motion.[18] Hence, totem pole carving may have expanded as a result of the fur trade, but it was not created by it. Archeological records show that Northwest Coast art had, in fact, been developing for at least 1,000 years prior.[19]

While Marius Barbeau's contention that totem poles were generally a post-contact phenomenon holds little merit today, his general assertions pertaining to the golden age of totem pole carving appear to be an accurate assessment of their developmental process. The golden age commenced as

...totem pole carving may have expanded as a result of the fur trade, but it was not created by it. Archeological records show that Northwest Coast art had, in fact, been developing for at least 1,000 years prior.

expendable wealth increased among tribal leaders. Northwest Coast Native arts were flourishing during this time of prosperity:

> The benefits accruing from the fur trade at once stimulated local ambitions; they stirred up jealousies and rivalries, and incited sustained efforts for higher prestige and leadership. The overmastering desire everywhere was to outdo the others in ingenuity and wealth, power and display. The totem pole came into fashion through the rise of these ambitions, fostered mostly by the fur trade. It became the best way of announcing one's own identity in the commemoration of the dead, the decoration of houses, and in the perpetuation of traditional imagery. The size of the pole and the beauty of its figures proclaimed the fame of those it represented.[20]

Generally speaking, the Northwest Coast Natives had their way with the early European traders. The selective contact with westerners, the burgeoning fur market in China, the intense inter-clan rivalries for excessive material goods, and the resistance to western ways all played key roles in the development of an atmosphere in which the Natives continued to culturally evolve on their own terms. Totem pole carving was certainly a part of Northwest Coast civilization before contact, but numerous events increased their production and overall significance within the culture. While Barbeau appears to have been mistaken about the lack of poles before the arrival of Europeans, the low frequency of reports about the presence of poles lends credence to his argument that totem pole production increased in the decades following contact. There is also no doubt that iron was less abundant before contact, but it was also not a mandatory tool for carving. Its effect was to speed up the carving process, thus accelerating the rate of totem pole production during this period. The most important factors in this escalation were the maintenance of cultural autonomy by Northwest Coast societies and the increased prosperity acquired through the fur trade. Since the Europeans had not subordinated their trading partners during this time period, Natives sustained their independence and cultural development continued to occur along the similar lines as it had prior to contact. With the totem pole being one of the ultimate enduring material goods and proof of status in Northwest Coast societies, carving evolved into a burgeoning aspect of these artistic societies. Poles were entering their "golden age" at the end of this era, but the impending trans-

As the reliance on western goods set the basis for cultural erosion, the increased exposure helped to slowly bring about the end of Native autonomy.

formation in the character of both trade and western/Native relations, among other things, brought about slow and steady change that would further affect carving.

Mid-Century (1830-1867)

The character of Northwest Coast trade was constantly evolving. In accordance with the changing demands of the Natives and Chinese, merchants near the end of the fur trade period also made stops in Hawaii to procure the diverse cargoes sought by their customers. The traders extended their journeys from relatively short trips (average of two to three years) with fur being the main cargo, to longer voyages (four or more years) with much more diverse cargo to meet more diverse demands.[21] While Northwest Coast Natives maintained their political and social autonomy during this time, they also grew increasingly dependent on western goods. The cultural borrowing brought on by the convenience of guns and forged iron tools, as well as the attractions of western foods, alcohol, and clothing, slowly helped to erode the underlying societal base of the Natives. This trend continued as the more intrusive and organized Hudson Bay Company took interest in the region just before mid-century.[22] The introduction of disease also changed the structure of Native societies and played a role in the alteration of cultural practices. Because of these and other factors, artistic production and the carving of totem poles continued to flourish between 1830 and 1867.

In the 1830s, American interest in trading waned with falling profits and increased competition. The depletion of the sea otter and the rise of the beaver pelt trade changed the character of coastal commerce. Merchants from the United States were finding more profit in trading supplies up the coast than in the arduous journeys to China. The Hudson Bay Company entered the area during this period and began to dominate trade. While American traders were almost exclusively shipbound, the Hudson Bay Company established numerous posts along the coast, and interaction with the Natives became more frequent and prolonged. As the reliance on western goods set the basis for cultural erosion, the increased exposure helped to slowly bring about the end of Native autonomy.[23]

Perhaps the most significant, though mainly symbolic, effect of the Hudson Bay Company was their attempt to impose Imperial law on the Natives, with specific attempts to do away with slavery and intertribal warfare. British abolition of slavery in 1833 was enforced throughout the empire, albeit selectively in this region. The English saw nothing as more barbaric than the ritual killings and the constant abuse of the Native slave

classes. The British condemned these actions and managed to persuade several chiefs to end this aspect of their traditional practices. British policy also forbade inter-tribal warfare, and violent penalties were often imposed on coastal groups who violated this tenet. Before this, westerners had rarely forced their ways upon the Indians, as most contact was brief and purely business-oriented. Mid-century British dealings with the Natives brought the region's first major instance of directed cultural change. Though slavery and slave killings did not entirely end until around 1880, indicating the continuation of at least partial Native autonomy, the imposition of western ideals onto Northwest Coast culture began a sea change for the Natives and was a harbinger of things to come following the American purchase of Alaska.[24]

Westerners also brought so-called "virgin soil epidemics" to the Northwest Coast. Outbreaks of western diseases among the Natives, against which their bodies had no immunity, undoubtedly altered the character of their societies. It is estimated that the population of the Northwest Coast dropped by about 80 percent between 1774 and 1874 (188,000 to 35,000). Smallpox, through its ease of contagion and long incubation period, proved to be the most devastating virus in the region, and numerous outbreaks often wiped out large villages. During a smallpox epidemic in 1836-37, the Tlingit lost an estimated 27 percent of their population, from 9,980 to 7,255. During another outbreak in 1862, the Haida lost an astounding 83 percent of their population (9,618 to 1,658).[25]

Depopulation certainly had major effects on coastal Natives, though scholars disagree about the extent of its ramifications. One theory states that the inability of shamans to stave off disease undermined Native faith in their belief systems and lessened their resistance to western cultural encroachment.[26] Increased totem pole production may have been another product of the decline in population. Among the Kwakiutl Indians, the quantity of ceremonial potlatch positions outnumbered the men remaining alive, thus giving many commoners status that had been previously unattainable. Increased hereditary access to a prestigious rank would therefore have made the ceremonies more attractive to a higher percentage of the population, and more potlatching generally meant more totem pole production.[27] With the potlatch being such a symbolically charged event, their number may also have increased in order to commemorate the large number of deaths occurring during this time. By memorializing deceased ancestors with symbolic capital, such as a mortuary pole mounted with their crest, a tribal member could raise his clan's

"... For a Tlingit to divorce him or herself from their rich cultural inheritance with its entertaining rituals and colorful ceremonies, all so reflective of their magnificent natural environment, proved exceedingly difficult. For some Tlingit such a disjunction was quite impossible."

rank and personally lay claim to the status of the deceased relative. Hence, "the Tlingit transformed death from a threat to the social order into the major opportunity for strengthening and enhancing it."[28]

The brief resurgence of trade under the Hudson Bay Company came to a close as economic, political, and ecological factors combined to make business on the Northwest Coast unprofitable. Fashion tastes were changing in the eastern world, and the Chinese no longer desired furs. Sea otters, the main source of furs, had nearly been hunted to extinction. The Russians, English, and Americans were wrangling over borders and mercantile rights along the coast, creating a volatile atmosphere. Still, totem pole carving flourished because of the continued within-clan rivalries and rising mortality rate.

American Purchase and Directed Acculturation (1867-Brady/1897)

Following Alaska's purchase by the United States in 1867, the accelerating effects of nearly a century of cultural borrowing became painfully evident on the Natives' lifestyles, with the abuse of alcohol being especially prevalent. In addition to this, American policies and missionary teachings helped direct the Natives towards a more western lifestyle. The introduction of commercial fishing in the region instigated the Northwest Native's shift to wage labor, and people migrated from their traditional villages to locations near canneries. The adoption of western ways of life by the Natives was neither blind nor forced, but the actions of the missionaries and governing Americans, along with the new economic realities of American Alaska, certainly aided the process immensely. The carving of totem poles, just like many of the other Alaska Native traditions, began to fade.

Northwest Coast Alaska Natives had no exposure to alcohol prior to contact with westerners. The Russians, who had first brought alcohol into the region, quickly found that drunkenness brought on violent behavior. The Russians never had success in their efforts to stop the flow of alcohol to Natives, as ships wandering along the coast always contained willing salesmen. Rum was popular amongst the inhabitants of the coast by the end of the eighteenth century, and various Native groups learned how to distill their own shortly thereafter. Following American occupation, the problems associated with drinking intensified as wage labor provided money for alcohol, and a brewery in the town of Sitka made liquor more acces-

Facing page: A Tlingit aristocrat seated in front of the United States Flag. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3926)

sible to the coastal Natives. The use of alcohol at potlatches became common in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, often causing violent altercations between clans. A coastal Canadian newspaper reported "nine-tenths of all cases that have been tried in Police Court the last year were caused by whiskey given to the Indians."[29] Alaskan Governor John G. Brady also reported that "the Sitka Jail is filled up with young natives. Their great problem is drunkenness."[30] Alcohol abuse was both a cause and a result of the fading Northwest Native culture during the latter nineteenth century.

Partly in response to the onset of increasing confrontations with the Natives, Americans began enforcing their laws through courts and military force, thus directly attempting to shape the lifestyles of the Alaskan Natives. Before American occupation, westerners had scarcely enforced their laws on the Northwest Coast. The Russians had lived in quiet fear of the local Natives because of their superior numbers and large stocks of firearms, and the Russians rarely attempted to impress Czarist law upon their neighbors. Further south along the coast, the British had attempted, in certain instances, to eradicate both slavery and warfare between tribes, but these actions had only patchy influence on Native behavior. In 1867, the United States brought 530 troops to Alaska, with the bulk of them stationed at Sitka and Wrangell. Several major confrontations with the Natives scarred the first years of American occupation, and unstable relations would be the norm for years to come. The army punished two incidents of Tlingit blood atonement (the killing of a white man in response to the killing of one of their clansmen) by destroying Native villages. Americans also established a "Mayor's Court" at Sitka, where regional Indians and whites alike could air their grievances.[31] Because of a lack of congressional funding, the U.S. withdrew the army at the end of Alaska's first American decade, ending their role in the violent enforcement of American law among the Natives. Other, more subtle vehicles for imposing western ideals would soon take the army's place, and coastal Native society continued to change.

With the acculturation problems that the Natives were experiencing, the Christian missionaries arrived at an opportune moment. In the early-nineteenth century, the Russian Orthodox Church had a difficult time converting the Southeast Alaskan Natives because of the strength of coastal culture and the weakness of the Russian presence in the region. By the late 1870s, the ravages of disease persisted in Tlingit and Kaigani Haida societies. Belief in the traditional shamans of their culture waned due to the shamans' ineffectiveness against

these new maladies. Many Natives recognized the brutalities that drunkenness had incurred on their society and wanted nothing more to do with it. Christianity held promise as a solution, and conversion was widespread. In younger converts, a more complete adoption of Christian values was common, but missionaries noted that the older Natives would sometimes mix in their traditional views with Christianity. The Presbyterian Church sent Sheldon Jackson, already renowned for his missionary work in the Rocky Mountains, to Southeast Alaska. With the lack of schools in Alaska, Jackson fought successfully for the funding of religious-based education for local youth.[32] As missionaries began establishing these schools, the Native youth began adopting Christian ways and many of their elders followed. In Sitka, Sheldon Jackson opened a boys home named the "Sitka Training School" in 1881; its goal was to make Native children "productive" members of western society. The missionaries taught Natives carpentry skills, along with religion and regular academic subjects. With missionary schools as the only option, all who chose to attend got a large



A US Marine standing before the Russian Blockhouse. A stockade was once linked to this structure separating the Euroamerican and Native communities. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK # 3917)



The village of Koianglas in 1902. This photograph illustrates how building materials were often transferred to new villages, but totem poles were not. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #481.

lessened the significance of poles in coastal society. Alaska Natives were generally encouraged to do away with their old customs. Poles, viewed as heathen icons by many missionaries, were destroyed in numerous villages. Also, the move towards wage labor changed the social structure of Native groups, and altered the symbolism of social status, thus lessening the need for poles. Times changed radically as Natives abandoned their old villages to work at canneries and totem poles were burned, stolen, sold to museums, or simply rotted away. They were seldom moved to new locations and new carvings became exceedingly rare. Even the potlatch had nearly died out by the turn of the century. With the social need for poles quickly vanishing from Native culture, the future of totem poles was very much in doubt.

The question of how a society can see its traditions fade in the short span of a century is a difficult and complicated one to answer. In the case of Southeast Alaska, it appears that the erosion of the core Native values brought about by the cumulative effects of a century of cultural borrowing made them much more submissive to western ways. Their culture could not provide the answers to problems created by disease and alcohol, which led them to question their way of life. Western medicine and religion offered solutions to their troubles, but these solutions required an almost complete conversion to the ways of the white man. At the heart of this conversion lay a deep sense of resignation, which is illustrated in a speech given by Chief Shakes of the Stikine Tlingit:

"... I [Chief Shakes] wish you to learn this new religion and teach it to your children, that you may all go when you die to that good heaven country of the white man and be happy."



Russian clergy and the St. Michael Brotherhood stand before St Michael's Cathedral. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3833)





Native fishermen in a traditional canoe pull to shore to gut their catch. Note the ship in background left, flying the United States flag. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3810)

> The white man makes great ships. We, like children, can only make canoes. He makes his big ships go with the wind and he also makes them go with fire. We chop down trees with stone axes; the Boston man with iron axes, which are far better. In everything the ways of the white man seem to be better than ours. Compared with the white man we are only blind children, knowing not how best to live either here or in the country we go to after we die . . . I wish you to learn this new religion and teach it to your children, that you may all go when you die to that good heaven country of the white man and be happy.[35]

The nineteenth century was a time of furious transformation for the Natives of the Northwest Coast, leaving many confused and misguided. Voicing his uncertainty for his people, another Tlingit chief stated, "The canoe rocks; we do not know what will become of us."[36] While the people of the Northwest Coast experienced an astounding cultural change, the ugly downside proved difficult for the societies to handle. Totem poles mattered much less: they were destroyed, sold to the highest

bidder, or in rare cases given to someone whom the Natives saw as their friend. John G. Brady's friendship with them brought about just such a case.

NOTES

[1] Ralph Linton, *Acculturation*, pp. 483-520.

[2] See Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, Joyce Wike "The Impact of Maritime Fur trade on the Northwest Coast," or James Gibson *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods* for more full explications of this argument.

[3] The Russians began infrequent trade excursions to the area about forty years before this period but had left little mark on the coast. See Gibson, *Otter Skins*, Chapter 1.

[4] Ibid., pp. 8-11.

[5] Wike, "Fur Trade," pp. 15-22, 53-56.

[6] Ibid., p. 54.

[7] Ibid., pp. 96-98. Both Wike and James Gibson also argued that a sort of "nouveau riche" arose during this period as well. A small group of untitled but skilful individual hunters sometimes acquired enough wealth to threaten the traditional place of chiefs. See Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 270-271 and Wike, "Fur Trade," pp. 94-95.

[8] Ted Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 5-11.

[9] James Gibson, "Russian Dependence," in Starr, *Russia's American Colony*, pp.82-89.

[10] Ted Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, p. 37.

[11] Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal*, p. 87.

[12] Edward Keithan, *Monuments*, pp. 35-44, and Marius Barbeau, *Totem Poles* Vol.1, pp. 8-9.

[13] Barbeau, *Totem Poles* Vol.1, pp. 4-14, and Barbeau, "Modern Growth," p. 496.

[14] Drucker, *Cultures*, p. 23. Erna Gunther, among others, claimed that iron was also acquired via drifting wreckage afloat on the Japanese Current. See Gunther, *Indian Life*, pp. 249-251.

[15] Duff, *Impact*, p. 59.

[16] Wolfgang Paalen, "Totem Art," in *DYN 4-5*, p. 12.

[17] Wike, "Fur Trade," p. 79.

[18] Ibid., p. 93.

[19] See Steven Brown, *Native Visions*, pp. 4-12.

[20] Barbeau, *Totem Poles* Vol. 1, p. 5.

[21] Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 265-267.

[22] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 49-50.

[23] Malloy, *"Boston Men,"* pp. 40-43 and Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 62-83.

[24] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 55-56; Richard Gough, *Gunboat Frontier*, pp. 16-19; Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery*, pp. 235-237; and Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading*, pp. 300-308.

[25] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, pp. 193-216 and Robert T. Boyd, "Demographic History" in *Handbook of North American Indians Vol. 7*, pp. 135-148. Some scholars do not believe the population drop was so drastic. See Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, pp. 21-23.

[26] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, p. 35.

[27] Helen Codere, *Fighting with Property*, p. 125.

[28] Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality*, pp. 289-302.

[29] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 91-98; Wike, "Fur Trade," pp. 49-50; and Edwin Lemert, *Alcohol*, pp. 333-336.

[30] Brady to Thomas Snuck, Klawak, Alaska, 22 October 1902, John G. Brady Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, (hereafter abbreviated as JGB), Box 4, Folder 67.

[31] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 97-103, 111-115.

[32] Jackson eventually received the job of General Agent of Education for the District in 1884.

[33] Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, pp. 265-296 and Hinckley, *Brady*, pp. 57-60. Numerous denominations split up Alaska, thus there were Quakers in Kotzebue, Episcopalians in Tanana, Moravians in Bethel, etc.

[34] Robert Price, *Great Father*, pp. 48-71.

[35] As quoted in Hinckley, *Canoe Rocks*, p. 269.
[36] Ibid., introductory note.



Chapter 3: "What I Want is a Good Show"

John G. Brady and the Collection Journey of the Rush

John G. Brady's ability to acquire the Sitka totem poles stemmed from the development of an amicable long-term relationship between himself and the Southeast Alaska Natives. Collecting Native goods was not a new project for him; he had been doing this for many years and had great respect for the artistry of the Tlingit and Haida. While Brady's evangelistic zeal was unyielding, his belief in the value of preserving the Natives' past was equally resolute. The Natives gave the poles to Brady, both as a representative of the U.S. government and as a friend, at a time when the cultural transformation of the coastal cultures had reached an advanced stage. Brady made a diverse array of informal promises to the donors, among which were the presentation of official government documents of gratitude, the building of schools, appointments as village policemen, the placement of commemorative plaques at the base of each pole, and paid passage to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition to those who wanted it. He did his best to keep his word but with the minimal funding available to him, Brady's promises often surpassed his limited abilities as district governor. Regardless, Brady managed to assemble popular exhibits at two world's fairs, aid in the preservation of a unique part of Northwest Native culture, and continue the betterment of Native/white relations in Alaska.

John G. Brady

Born in New York City in 1848, John G. Brady had a destitute childhood as he ran away from home to escape his sometimes abusive father. In 1857, New York City social services placed him in an orphanage and a judge from Indiana adopted him several years later. Brady spent his teenaged years working on his family's farm and going to school. When he completed his primary schooling, Brady became a teacher and shortly thereafter decided to continue his education at a small Indiana college prep school of Presbyterian affiliation. In 1870, John Brady made a huge leap in his life and enrolled in the Yale Theology School. He graduated in four years and entered a seminary, becoming an ordained minister in 1877. Brady went west under the direction of new acquaintance Sheldon Jackson to begin his evangelical career. About to establish new missions in Alaska, Jackson convinced Brady that this was the place for him. In mid-March of 1878, Brady arrived at Sitka.[1]

Left: This pole in Howkan shows the difficulty of identifying poles. The lower two-thirds of the pole is almost identical to Sitka's Waasgo Legend pole (collected in 1902), yet this poles remained in Howkan until the 1920s. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



An 1889 photo of Sukkwan by Lt. George Emmons. Sitka's Mosquito Legend pole is second from the left; the Lackich'inei pole is the third from the left; and the Trader Legend pole is the large carved frontal pole in the foreground. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #1357.

Brady spent the better part of two years in Southeast Alaska and learned that missionary work in this remote part of the world would be more difficult than he had imagined. Appalled by Alaska's lack of support from the federal government, Brady set out to Washington D.C. in order to utilize his Yale contacts for help. He returned to Sitka having at least raised some people's awareness of the remote district's problems, though concrete progress was less easy to achieve. Needing to supplement his missionary efforts, Brady was determined to find a way to make a living in Alaska. The slow influx of profit seekers (primarily miners), combined with Sitka's location on a main shipping route, created an excellent setting for business opportunities. Brady's successful ventures included a general



store and a lumber business. Financial stability combined with a happy marriage bestowed a pleasant life upon Brady in Sitka.[5]

With missionary work still a priority, Brady helped Sheldon Jackson create his Native school at Sitka. Brady also gained appointment as the Commissioner of Sitka in 1884, which was a combination of several typical American law enforcement jobs, including local justice of the peace and probate judge. With this appointment, he became more in touch with the territory's ills than ever before; the problems caused by alcohol in the Native community astounded him. By the mid-1890s, Brady understood the problems and needs of Alaska, and he sought



Old Kasaan at the turn of the century. Sitka National Historical Park's Yaadaas Crest and Corner poles are at the right of the photo. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #301.

an appointment as governor of the district. In 1897, Secretary of the Interior Cornelius N. Bliss selected him for this position.[3]

Brady's stint as governor (1897-1906) was competent, if unspectacular. Using his connections in Washington, he secured more government funding than Alaska had ever before received and tried hard to bring new attention to the region's potential. Probably the most important accomplishment of Brady's time in Alaska was the improvement of Native/white relations. Euroamericans still had an unwarranted fear of North America's indigenous people, and this created an occasionally volatile atmosphere throughout the district. Brady's attempts to help improve Native communities, and his efforts to treat Natives in the same way he treated the white residents of Alaska, both legally and personally, created a more amicable atmosphere amongst the district's inhabitants. Another part of Brady's legacy, though much less successful than his forays into Native relations, was his attempt to publicize Alaska as a place with great potential for settlement. The centerpieces of this effort were the Alaska world's fair exhibits. Fairs occurred with great frequency during this time period; it was just a matter of choosing the one or ones for

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition will: "turn the tide of immigrants to Alaska, which will last for years."

which to build a display. Brady chose the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, with its promises of grandiosity, and the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon, out of sheer convenience.[4]

Before deciding to put together an exhibit for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Brady received inquiries from the directors of other turn-of-the-century exhibitions. He turned down an offer from the 1901-02 Interstate and West Indian Exposition Company in South Carolina, stating that Alaska was "simply a district, with no power of local legislation. We are completely under the rule of congress and have no money."[5] He also declined to help represent Alaska at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, because "Alaska could not be as worthily represented as she deserves to be," again due to a lack of funding.[6] The 1904 St. Louis World's Fair was more attractive to Brady because of the large amount of time he had to plan the Alaska exhibit and to secure the necessary capital. Also, and perhaps most importantly, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition was planned to be one of the largest world's fairs ever held. Thus, according to Brady, more people were liable to attend the St. Louis fair than those at South Carolina and Buffalo, thereby having more ability to expose "just how great a place Alaska is."[7]

The battle for funding required Brady to engage in extensive lobbying. Alaska, designated as a district at this time, had no tax base and relied on Congress for the little funding it received. Brady aspired to build an excellent exhibit, or, as he stated, "What I want is a good show." He requested an appropriation of $100,000 and felt this was justified especially because of the neglect that has been shown to Alaska throughout its years as an American holding.[8] He lobbied the Louisiana Purchase Exposition's Committee on Legislation to fight for such funding: "If we can get this appropriation, I warrant you that Alaska will make an exhibit that will be one of the major drawing features of the fair."[9] On March 3rd, 1903, Congress authorized $50,000 for Alaska, which was a great disappointment to Brady. He continually lobbied for more before and during the fair but was not successful. Nonetheless, he had high expectations for the exhibit, as he hoped it would "turn the tide of immigrants to Alaska, which will last for years."[10]

"We are Rich in Totems": Brady and the Collection of the Totem Poles

Although Brady wanted a balanced exhibit showing all of Alaska's geologic, agricultural, and cultural wonders, the collection of totem poles turned into a special project for him.

"[Christianity] may be the only road to reform [the natives] can travel."

in America. Both private and public foundations were building huge museums in the major cities of America, and their administrators sent collectors to places all around the world in order to gather materials to fill these new repositories. The Northwest Coast of North America was a prime spot to bolster any ethnographic repository and collectors/anthropologists scoured the region in search of any vestige they could obtain. The collectors faced a difficult task, since the coastal Natives' good business sense remained prevalent. Prices for poles were generally far too high for a museum needing to stay within a reasonable budget, making Brady's task of obtaining these same poles for promises of future aid especially difficult.[11]

By the time of Brady's arrival, Natives were experiencing acculturation troubles and many had converted to Christianity. The collection of poles and other Native curios was of great importance to Brady because of the quickly vanishing local culture:

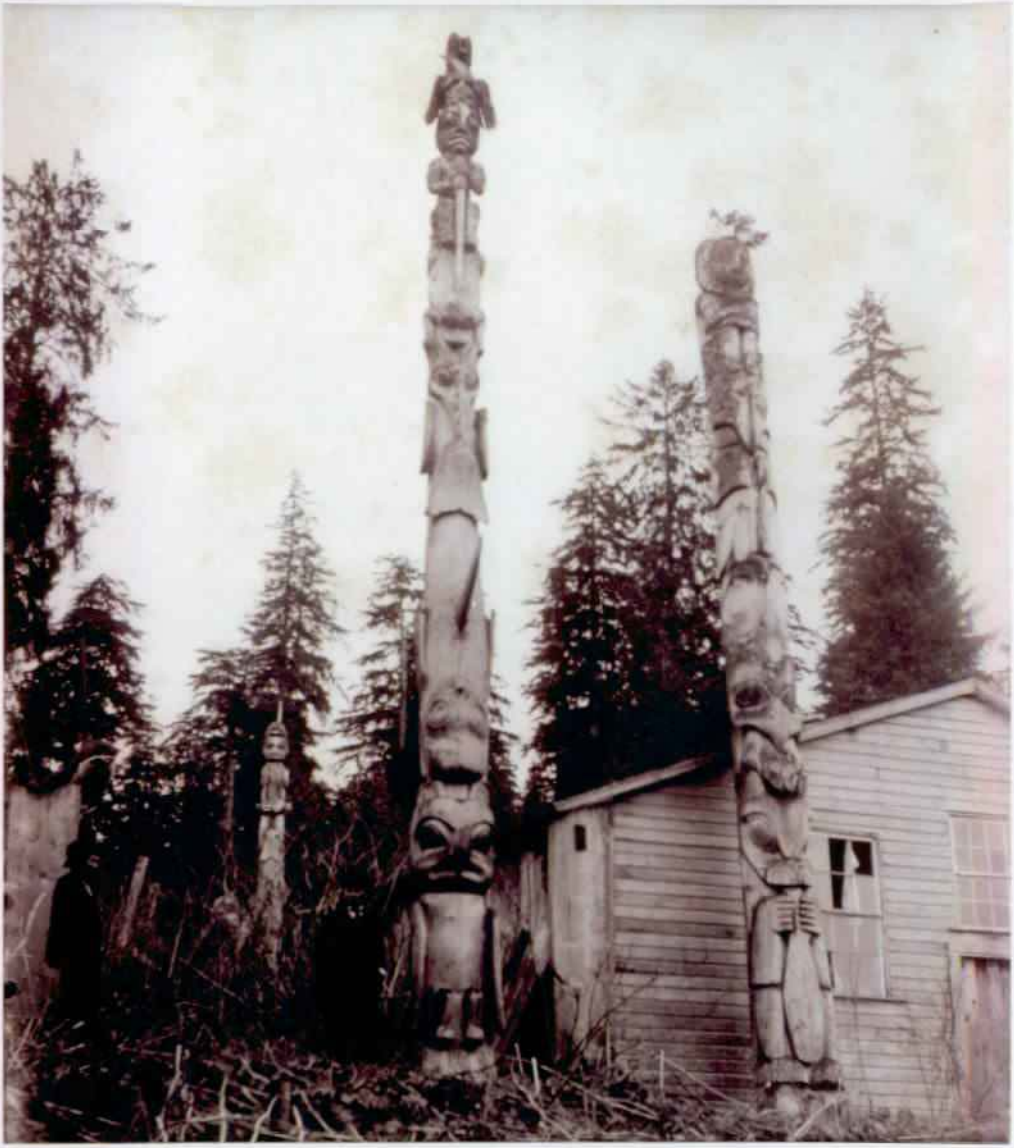
> The natives are now fast giving up their old customs which I think is right for them to do, but it is well to preserve many of the old things so that the young people who are coming on may see how their forefathers used to live.[12]

This reveals a seemingly strange contradiction: how could a man who came to Alaska hoping to convert the Natives to Christianity lament the fact that their culture was vanishing? This, in Brady's mind, was not an issue. As any missionary believed, Christianity was the only way to improve the Natives' lives and save their souls. In the case of the Alaska, the missionaries felt that it was a tool to save the Natives from the devastation that alcohol had brought to many in their society. Brady believed that this cultural transformation by way of Christianity was mandatory for their survival, and would serve to ease their assimilation into a western style of life. Brady felt that the Natives knew "that things are not right but they seem helpless and unable to extricate themselves [from their situation]."[13] In his opinion, "It [Christianity] may be the only road to reform they can travel."[14] To aid in the changing their ways, he even believed that "it would be well for many of the communities to change their location and thus take a fresh start and rid themselves of many old associations."[15] What Brady had, which many others who sought Native artifacts did not, was a true respect for the ingenuity of the Southeast Alaska Natives. These objects were not merely anthropologic curiosities to him; they were the skillful remnants of a people who were evolving for the better. This respect for what he saw as their past was merely part of a more general respect for the



> You wanted to know in your letter if I have anything to give the park. I have a fine large coeneau [canoe] the biggest one in Alaska and a fine large totem pole. I will give them to the white people of Alaska to take to Sitka and put in the park. I want them marked presented to the white people of Alaska by Soneheart Chief of the Hyda Indians Kasan Bay Prince of Wale Island.[17]

The chief donated a massive pole (referred to as the Saanaheit pole), four house posts, a house that never made it to Sitka, and a large canoe. According to *The Alaskan* newspaper, the pole was "over seventy years old."[18] The contract signed by Saanaheit stated the following:



Sitka's Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest pole in Tuxekan. The pole's donor, a Tlingit called Chief Gunyah, stands at the base of the pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3826).

Know all men that I the undersigned Sanhat through Governor John G. Brady present to the District of Alaska for its museum a totem pole which was erected at Kasaan Village by my Uncle also the frame and timbers of the house in which he lived viz the four corner posts, two round beams, and two tie beams. I present also my large canoe. The conditions are that these are to be transported to the government park at Sitka and to be erected and remain there as memorials to my people.[19]

"I [John Brady] carefully explained to (the donors) that in giving these totem poles they gave them to the United States Government for Alaska, and that we would take good care of them and preserve the history of each one."



Sitka's Raven Memorial pole in Tuxekan. The pole's donor, either George Staney or Thomas Snuck, stands at the base of the pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3819).

Brady wanted to reward those who helped him in his search for poles, and thus honored Saanaheit in a ceremony and continued his appointment as town policeman. This job, through the extension of the old status system, was certainly a prestigious post within the Native community. He also agreed to mark the poles "with the history giving the folklore story, and the name of the donor, all to be put on a sheet of metal so that visitors can read the story."[20] Brady also promised to attain funding for a school building at Kasaan but it turned out to be unnecessary, as the Haida would complete the relocation of their village the next year for a newly created mining and saltery site that offered schooling.[21]

With this acquisition, Brady achieved success in beginning his quest for poles. He brought the poles back to Sitka, "to remain there for repairs and painting." Brady claimed that the poles had "lichens and fungi growth more than an inch thick," and after clearing this off he found that "many of the figures were badly decayed." He then hired several "clever wood carvers" to repair the poles with "Portland cement" and pieces of red cedar they had brought from Kasaan.[22] Brady had the Saanaheit poles and houseposts raised in early 1902 at the present site of Sitka National Historical Park.

"I [John Brady] can hardly understand what caused [the Natives] to make me these presents, I had in no-wise even hinted that I wished curios."

In September of 1903, Brady, aboard the steamer *Albion*, went on a journey down the coast to secure promises of more pole donations. A few Natives had written him and pledged to donate poles but Brady was still uncertain of what to expect. He set reasonable goals for the journey: "Our object is to secure about six good totem poles and two Hydah buildings to form part of the exhibit."[23] He was hoping for more though, and told other people he wanted twelve. Brady proved successful from the beginning; at Shakan, his first stop, he received a promise for a pole. In a letter to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, he explained the promises made to the donor:

> Yun-nate said that he would give a totem pole which he had at Tuxekan [Raven Head Down pole, now at the Milwaukee Public Museum]. I carefully explained to them that in giving these totem poles they gave them to the United States Government for Alaska, and that we would take good care of them and preserve the history of each one.

The Natives usually did not live in the locations of their poles, as cannery work pulled them away from their ancestral homes either seasonally or permanently. For example, the Tlingit left Tuxekan for jobs at either Shakan or at Brady's next stopover, Klawock. Here two prominent locals, policeman Thomas Snuck and Chief Gunyah, promised to give three poles each, all of which were at Tuxekan. He also received a promise for a large canoe ("it is nine fathoms long") from a man named Russian Bob. Brady then steamed to Klinkwan and the nearby Hunter Bay Cannery where he received many more promises of poles. This cannery had attracted workers from Howkan, Klinkwan, and Sukkwan, and the poles promised him by Edward Scott[24], Douglas Suk-qua, Yeal-tat-see, and Hattie Wallace were from all three of these villages. Brady continued on to Old Kasaan where John Baronovich, the son of a Haida woman and Charles Baronovich (who had opened the saltery at New Kasaan), pledged him three poles in exchange for transportation to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The final stops on the journey were at Tongass and Ketchikan where Brady received promises for several poles and carvings from two men, William Kinninook and Chief Ka-Shakes.[25] This trip was a grand success in Brady's mind, as he had received promises for more poles than he needed and was heartened by the enthusiastic Native response.

So with the promises of poles, Brady set out to collect these monumental artifacts in the late fall of 1903, this time aboard the revenue cutter *Rush*. Brady's notes and correspondences



Grouping of mortuary poles in Tuxekan. Sitka's Cormorant Memorial/Mortuary Column stands third from the right. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3821)

do not tell the whole story here, as his journals are imprecise and often contradictory. The letters establish the names of the pole donors, though which pole they donated is not clear in every instance. On November 1st, Brady made his first stop at Shakan. He was uncertain as to whether or not the Natives would carry through with their promises of donations but found he had little reason for worry: "I lost no time in finding Kanet the old man who had promised me a pole. I was anxious to find out if he had invented an excuse to back out; but he had not."[26] Kanet (also spelled Yun-nate, Brady often spelled Native names differently) explained the pole to Brady and sent his grandson, George Demert, along to help the crew retrieve it from Tuxekan.[27] Brady also received presents from numerous people who he did not previously know at this village, indicating Native generosity and the respect they had for Brady: "I can hardly understand what caused them to make me these presents, I had in nowise even hinted that I wished curios."[28]

The next day, the *Rush* left for Klawock, and Brady gathered the people who had promised him poles and brought them aboard for the trip to Tuxekan. Among those taken on at this

"...[The ship Farallon] will discharge a funny cargo at Seattle - Chinese [cannery workers], totem poles, sulphurets, salt salmon, and various other commodities."



Poles in Koianglas taken in 1902. These are possibly the Golden Hill and Waasgo poles. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #980.

stop were Chief Gunyah, Russian Bob, Thomas Snook, and the clergyman of Klawock, Reverend Waggoner. The following day (November 3rd) they reached Tuxekan and went ashore to obtain all of the poles. Russian Bob took a few men to get his canoe, which was "8 miles from Tuxekan." Everyone else went ashore and dug out the promised totem poles. At day's end, Brady was happy with what he and his crew had accomplished: "We made good progress. The first one out is on deck and four others are ready to launch in the water." Also mentioned here are the official papers Brady promised the Natives, as he expressed his hope that the photographs taken of the poles were "good ones for I want to use them [in] the papers which I intend to give each donor." A Native named George Staney showed up as they were working, learned of Brady's mission, and immediately donated a pole. Thomas Snuck and Chief Gunyah, who had earlier promised three poles, ended up contributing only one each. The reasons for this are unclear, but it is probable that their other poles were in poor condition and Brady decided against taking them. Thomas Snuck's pole still contained human remains in the traditional carved out area at the base of the pole. The



Above: The Frog/Raven pole is one that has been changed. The frog originally faced upwards, but by the time it is in St. Louis, it faces down. It also had five rings on top to begin with and now has four. Photo by C.F. Newcombe. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #1652.

crew "sawed off [the lower] four feet of it and put it back in the ground." The poles collected from Tuxekan are now known as the Raven Head Down pole, which is in the Milwaukee Public Museum; the Cormorant Memorial/Mortuary pole; the Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest pole; and the Raven Memorial pole, all of which made it back to Sitka following the world's fairs.[29]



Sukkwan in 1901. The Lackich'inei pole is the first on the left. Photo by C.F. Newcombe. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #232.

Continuing on, they took another pole aboard at a place "six miles" from Klawock, donated by a Native named Tom Teh-gat (November 5th, the Raven/Shark pole). They then steamed to Howkan where a large meeting of Natives was taking place. Brady addressed the meeting in true missionary fashion, railing



against disrespect for the law, drunkenness, the poor treatment of Native women, and witchcraft. Here, at the attending Natives' request, he helped craft a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt appealing for citizenship for all non-white Alaskans. In Howkan, Brady most likely obtained the Wolf

cannery], totem poles, sulphurets, salt salmon, and various other commodities."[39] The first group of poles was on its way to the world's fair, but the collecting was not yet finished.

Below: Workers digging out the Yaadaas Crest and Corner poles and removing John Baronovich's house from Old Kasaan. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Leaving Klinkwan on November 14th, the *Rush* and its crew journeyed to Sukkwan in search of their next batch of totem poles. Once again, all Natives who promised a donation held true to their word and Brady obtained one pole each from Hattie Wallace, Johnny Kanow, and Douglas Suk-qua. The



Mosquito Legend pole, the Lakich'inei pole, and the Trader Legend pole, all eventually returned to Sitka, were on deck by November 15th, and the *Rush* set off for Kasaan that afternoon. At Old Kasaan, the final pole collection locale, Brady and crew set to work at collecting the Yaadaas Crest and two corner poles, all three of which returned to Sitka, as well as the house of John Baronovich. A man named Patty Kitcoon also donated a house frame and posts from which the houseposts were displayed at the fairs. Since the journey was long and physically taxing, Brady decided to bypass a stop at Tongass. By November 20th, the *Rush* docked at Ketchikan and Brady searched for a vessel to transport the rest of the poles to Seattle. This took several days, but he found two vessels with room for his freight and sent the poles on their way to St. Louis.[31]

Brady added the final pieces of the exhibit from Tongass in early March of 1904. He received several promises for poles and other carved works during his scouting trip in September of 1903, but was so successful in collecting poles on his November journey that he did not need to gather any more. Brady decided to focus on completing the second Native house with the materials promised him by William Kinninook and Chief Kashakes. Brady collected the house materials, along with "two totems [interior house posts] . . . a wooden bear, a large carved bird's head, which is the proper house sign, an old wooden drum, four old muskets and a number of other curios." Brady brought these goods to Ketchikan, and placed them on a steamer to Seattle.[32]

An examination of this journey reveals much about the relationship between Brady and the Alaska Native people. With museum collectors roaming the coast, the Tlingit and Kaigani Haida could have received money for their poles. Instead they chose to donate the totems to Brady in exchange for jobs as policemen, passage to and work at St. Louis, promises to preserve the poles, official government documents thanking them for their donation, and, most importantly, government aid to their respective communities sometime in the future. Many of the clan leaders, who were generally the pole caretakers, had witnessed the ravages that alcohol and disease had waged upon their people and aspired to do all they could to improve future living conditions. If this meant advocating conversion to Christianity and sending their children to western schools, then so be it. Brady wrote of a conversation he had with one of the donors:

> He [Edward Scott] reminded me that I was there a few years ago with Captain Kilgore on the cutter that we laid out a school lot and had driven stakes on the beach and promised them a school house and a teacher . . . still nothing had been done and they felt very sad to see their children neglected by not having proper means for their education as they see they have in other places. I must confess I felt humiliated by this manly speech of Edward Scott's for he said that while he felt sore over the unfulfilled promises he would cooperate in doing what I asked of them by giving two totem poles without conditions.[33]

With the donation of poles came the potential of getting help for their people, which was the overarching concern of most of the donors. Increased status and financial gain was secondary. Touched by the Natives' generosity, Brady pledged to do what he could for them; he stated in a letter to Reverend Waggoner, "I want to keep every promise I made to these people. I have praised them up everywhere and told of their generosity in giving their property to the government." Though it is not clear whether or not Brady was able to develop the photos of the Natives with their donated poles, he did send official government letters of thanks to the donors in the summer of 1904.[34]

NOTES

[1] Hinckley, *Brady*, pp. 3-30.

[2] Ibid., pp. 44-86.

[3] Ibid., pp. 57-60, 87-110.

[4] Ibid., pp. 169-347

[5] Brady to J. C. Hemphill, Charleston, South Carolina, 2 May 1901, JGB, Box 3, Folder 55.

[6] Brady to Arthur C. Jackson, Buffalo, 30 September 1901, JGB, Box 4, Folder 61.

[7] Alaskan Governor's Report, 1902, p. 53.

[8] Brady to Alfred H. Brooks, Washington D. C., 12 January 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 69.

[9] Brady to Chas. M. Reeves, St. Louis, 24 September 1901, JGB, Box 4, Folder 61.

[10] Alaskan Governor's Report, 1903, p. 59.

[11] See Douglas Cole's *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*.

[12] Brady to Yunnaii, Klawock, Alaska, 14 January 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 69.

[13] Brady to Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock, Washington D.C., 6 January 1902, JGB, Box 4, Folder 63.

[14] Brady to Elizabeth Brady (wife), Sitka, Alaska, 2 November 1903, JGB, Box 1, Folder 13, p. 1, 4, 6.

[15] Brady to George Snuck, Native policeman, Klawock, Alaska, 31 December 1901, JGB, Box 4, Folder 62.

[16] For example, Brady expressed anger towards a certain revenue cutter captain after the captain expressed that he did not want Natives in the cabin of the vessel. See Brady to Sheldon Jackson, Washington D.C., 15 December 1903, JGB, Box 3, Folder 56.

[17] Saanaheit to John Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 28 July 1901, Alaska State Archives RG101 File Misc 1901-1903, letter 59, Juneau, Alaska (hereafter abbreviated as ASA). In this quote, Saanaheit is referring to the Indian River Park in Sitka.

[18] *The Alaskan*, 2 November 1901.

[19] Contract signed by Saanaheit, 29 October 1901, JGB, Box 2, Folder 36.

[20] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 6 September 1905, JGB, Box 5, Folder 89.

[21] Hinckley, *Brady*, pp. 336-338; Brady to Saanaheit, 29 August 1901; JGB, Box 4, Folder 61, and Karen Hebert, "Kasaan," pp. 5-7.

[22] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 6 September 1905, JGB, Box 5, Folder 89.

[23] Brady to G. T. Emmons, Cambridge, Wisconsin, 12 September 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 75.

[24] This name has also turned up in records as Edwin, but Brady used Edward.

[25] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D. C., 30 September 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 75.

[26] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 2 November 1903, p. 1, JGB, Box 1, Folder 13. Brady wrote this letter throughout his journey and thus it acted as a journal for him. It is the best source on the origins of the totem poles.

[27] To get the poles, Brady and his crew would brace them with ropes, dig around their bases, and slowly lower them to the ground.

[28] Ibid., p. 2.

[29] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[30] Ibid., pp. 6-12, and *The Journal of the U.S. Steamer Rush*, 3 November-20 November 1903, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 2, Folder 22.

[31] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 2 November 1903, JGB, Box 1, Folder 13, pp. 13-22.

[32] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 5 January 1904, JGB, Box 5, Folder 81; Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, 7 March 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 14; and Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 11 March 1904, JGB, Box 5, Folder 96.

[33] Brady to Sheldon Jackson, Washington D.C., 8 October 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 76.

[34] Brady to Reverend D. Waggoner, Klawock, Alaska, 9 January 1904, JGB, Box 5, Folder 81, and Brady to Reverend D. Waggoner, Klawock, Alaska, 15 August 1904, JGB, Box 5, Folder 97.

Chapter 4: "A Great Power of Attraction"

The Totem Poles at the World's Fairs

Between 1876 and 1920, a large number of international expositions materialized in major cities throughout the United States. The American public's affinity for these events was closely linked with their purposeful heterogeneity; the places and peoples displayed would most likely never be encountered by the general populace of the country, thus these fairs gave Americans an opportunity to believe they had seen the world in a simple and inexpensive fashion. Communities decided to hold world's fairs because of the economic growth and improvements in infrastructure that hosting such an event generally provided. For exhibitors, the fairs provided a chance to display the wonders that lay in their state or country. Companies also built fair exhibits in order to display their products. John G. Brady used the Louisiana Purchase (1904) and the Lewis and Clark (1905) Expositions to promote Alaska; and while the exhibits did not have calculable effects on the district, they undoubtedly helped fair visitors learn that Alaska was far more than an uninhabitable, snowbound wilderness.

St. Louis

In sifting through the multitude of world's fairs occurring around the turn of the century, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, with over nineteen million visitors, stands out as one of the most impressive. Featuring massive exhibits of modern technology, twice the acreage of the famed Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the first modern Olympic games to take place outside of Europe, and the Democratic national convention, St. Louis was the center of the United States during the course of the fair.[1] The anthropology exhibits were perhaps the most intriguing aspects of the exposition, with many Americans fascinated by the Natives from their own country, as well as those from the Philippines and various parts of Africa. The Alaska display, with fourteen totem poles, two Native houses, two carved planks, numerous house posts, a canoe, and a myriad of other Alaska Native goods, qualified as one of the finest ethnographic collections at the fair and fascinated countless visitors.

Left: The Lakich'inei and Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest poles at the St. Louis World's Fair. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

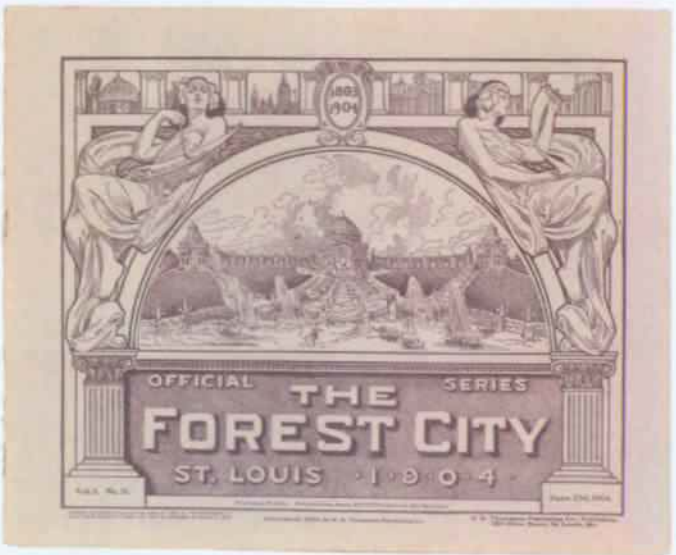
Brady's formative thoughts on the Alaska exhibit were purely promotional in nature or, in his words, "this is all done for the main purpose of starting immigrants this way."[2] Boosting the

population of his beloved Alaska, according to Brady, was the only thing that would accelerate the district's move toward respectability and statehood. He knew that fortune-seekers would come to Alaska without any urging; what he was looking for were true homesteaders looking for a fresh start. Brady declared himself Alaska's publicist: "If the people only knew what we have going to waste. I shall strive more earnestly to get people to move to Alaska. I cannot be mistaken in doing so."[3] In order to do this he felt he needed to worthily display Alaska's:

> . . . resources, her mines, timber, fish, furs, grasses, and other products from her soil, to exhibit our Eskimos, Aleuts, Thlingits, Hydahs, Tsimsheans, and Athabascans of the Yukon and display all the wonderful things which will instruct and delight our countrymen and all who come to visit the great exhibition . . .[4]

The main goal of Brady's effort at St. Louis was to increase public awareness of Alaska and convince people that it was not just an icebox. He wanted Alaskan settlement to mimic that of the American West, meaning free land, communities built from scratch, and schooling for all. These high ambitions for the exhibit made his tact uncompromising.

As the design for the Alaskan exhibit in St. Louis took shape, Brady decided to use the totem poles as the distinguishing feature of the building. While some Alaskans objected to the representation of the district with Native objects, Brady knew that this was the best plan since the totem poles had "a great



Visitor's memento from the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files

"The next morning the Indians came to take a view of the treasures of their ancestors and found that they had been erected upside down."

railroad. The Native workers (William Kinninook and John Navwishkay of Ketchikan; John Baronovich of Kasaan; Chief Yeal-tat-see and his son Tod E. Yeal-tat-see from the Klawock area), the designer (D. W. Fales), and the special agent to the exhibit (Joseph B. Marvin) arrived in early March of 1904 and immediately set to work. The Natives were given paid passage to St. Louis, $75 dollars a month for pay, and $3 per day for "subsistence while employed."[8] Brady reached St. Louis (April 26th) just days before the grand opening of the exposition and to his surprise he found that "hardly anything is ready in any of the buildings . . . the opening should be deferred for at least one month."[9] The Alaska building was slightly better off, as the main building was finished and the Native houses were completed. All was not perfect though, since workers had not yet finished the landscaping and erected only three of the poles. Once raised, the poles gained immediate and sometimes humorous press coverage:

> **Set Totem Poles Wrong End Up**
> Union workmen employed at the Alaskan building yesterday received their first instructions in erecting



A clan house and poles at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MHS negative 20629.



The Alaska Building under construction at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

totem poles. The native Indian workmen wished to erect their own totem poles but the union men insisted it must be done by them. The next morning the Indians came to take a view of the treasures of their ancestors and found that they had been erected upside down. The queer carvings were wrongly interpreted by the union workmen. Yesterday the natives spent the day keeping a watchful eye on the work.[10]

Myths about the totem poles were proliferated as well:

> Totem Poles from Alaska Set in Place at Fair
> The ancient lore and history of the Indian tribes of Alaska for generations back will be set up at the World's Fair for all to read-if they can. Twenty totem poles, brought from Alaska, will be the books in which this history is set out, and the poles will ornament the two native houses that flank the Alaska building. The first two of these poles were set up yesterday, and form a striking sight. They stand directly in front of the eastern end of the







Captain Dick Crane's exhibit of Alaska Natives on the Pike. The Golden Hill pole is in the background with electric lights in the eyes of several of its figures. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MHS negative WF 905.

building and are gaudily painted in the rude coloring of native artists. The oldest Alaskan inhabitant cannot remember the origin of these poles, but they are believed to be as old as 150 years."

While Brady knew local reports were bound to be filled with inaccuracies on the meanings of the totems, he also realized that any publicity was good publicity. Ready or not, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition opened on May 1st, 1904.

The Natives appeared to have an interesting experience in St. Louis, though accounts of their time at the fair are rare. The crew was not present as anthropologic curiosities like many other Native people at the fair; they dressed in western clothes and had adopted primarily western lifestyles in the years prior. Brady would not allow the Alaska Natives to become an anthropological exhibit. He believed that demonstrating their traditional ways of life, which such an exhibit would have required, would "keep alive the opinion that they are nothing but a set of savages."[12]

Previous pages: The poles and canoe. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MHS negative WF 339.



Stereograph view of a clan house and poles at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition by Keystone View Company, 1904. Keystone stereo 15244. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.



Stereograph view of a clan house and poles at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition by Keystone View Company, 1904. Keystone stereo 15362. Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.



Visitors flowing into the one of the clan houses at the Louisiana Purchase Exhibition. Photo by C.F. Newcombe. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #11820.

The appeal of the big city and its excesses was not entirely lost on the Alaska Natives. As Brady arrived, he noted "two of them got on a drunk once and returned pretty cut up."[13] John Baronovich of Kasaan contracted the measles but recovered fully at a hospital. William Kinninook and Tod Yeal-tat-see both had articles of clothing stolen.[14] With their work finished after about two months in St. Louis, the Natives were "anxious to start home" and did so in May.[15] Brady had much to do during the summer. Dividing his time between St. Louis, New York City, and Washington D.C., he kept busy hosting the exhibition and campaigning (in D.C.) for re-appointment as the governor of Alaska, which he would attain in the fall.

The Alaska exhibit won many awards, including a gold medal in anthropology for the totem poles.[16] The popularity of the poles brought numerous bids for them during the fair but Brady parted only with the two that were in the worst shape. Early in the Exposition, Chief Yeal-tat-see declared one of his poles, which had broken into three pieces when it was taken down, too decayed for erection at the Alaska Exhibit. He and Brady allowed the showman Captain Dick Crane to borrow the pole for his "Eskimo Village" exhibit in an area called "the Pike." This was the most popular strip of the fair, with independently produced exhibits that mainly featured obscure regions of the world. Crane, labeled the 'Buffalo Bill of the



The Frog/Raven, Trader Legend, and Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest poles at the Portland World's Fair. Photograph by C.F. Newcombe. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia,PN #11824.

Northwest,' erected the pole in his Eskimo exhibit and placed lights in the eyes of its figures. Following the fair, Brady sold this pole to a businessman "for one hundred twenty-five dollars."[17] This businessman then allowed the Governor of Missouri to give the pole to an influential Indiana businessman, probably in an attempt to attract his business to the state. This man, David Parry, then had it raised on his estate outside of



The Raven/Shark, Waasgo Legend, and Yaadaas Corner poles at the Lewis and Clark Exposition. Photo by C.F. Newcombe. Courtesy of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, PN #11823.

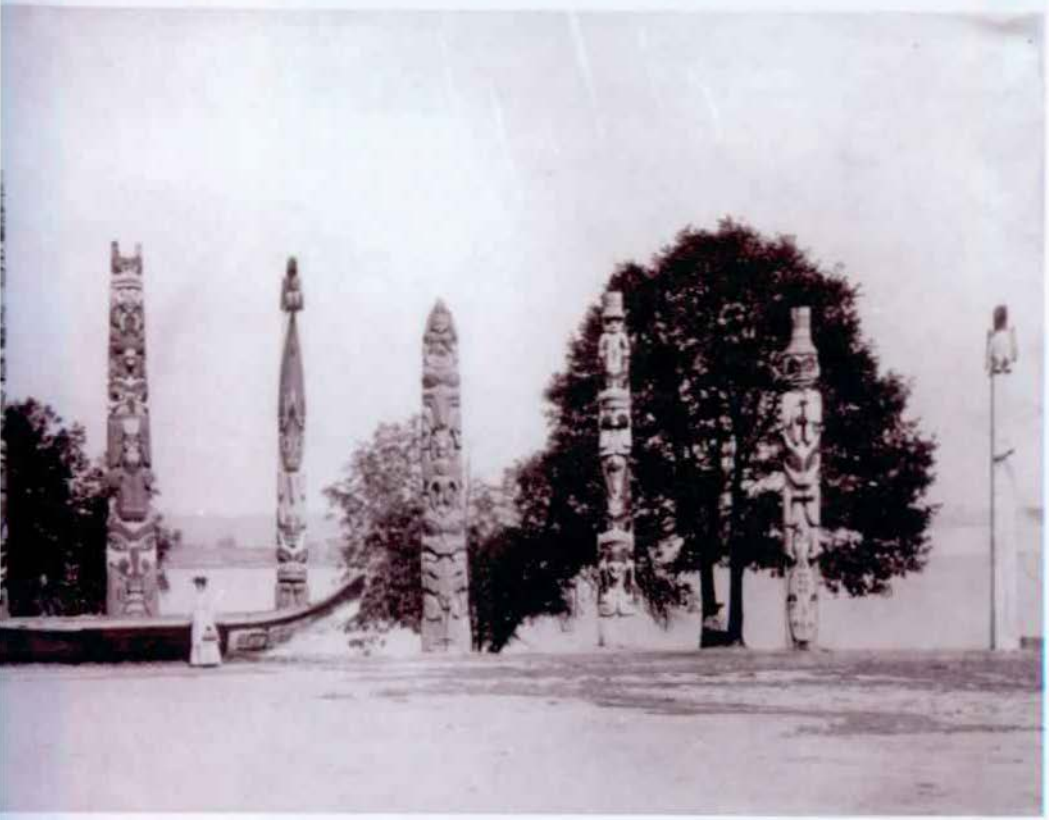
Indianapolis. When Parry passed away, his property was subdivided and sold off. The area became a wealthy neighborhood called Golden Hill and the decaying totem pole remained until the 1940s. It was supposedly donated to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis though no records of this transaction or pieces of the pole have been located. Certain people claim that it blew down around 1948. No one knows what became of it after this.[8] The Milwaukee Public Museum was the only institution to successfully purchase a pole from the Alaska

collection at the fair. Brady sold Yun-nate's "Raven Head Down Pole" to the museum for $500, feeling that it was too decayed to travel as far as Sitka. Brady also mentioned tentative plans to donate the Native houses, minus their house posts, to the University of Missouri and the "museum at Evansville." The University of Missouri-Columbia Museum of Anthropology now has three pieces that were displayed on one clan house front in St. Louis, though no records exist stating how they received these.[19] Brady also sold two carved cedar planks from Klinkwan to the Field Museum in Chicago for $200.[20] The remainder of the poles continued on to Portland, Oregon, for the Lewis and Clark Exposition.

Portland

The world's fair in Portland was a decidedly less ambitious affair than the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. The objectives of the Lewis and Clark Exposition's organizers were relative, as Portland was still a young city with a population of only 100,000 people. Looking for something to prod their depressed economy, city officials knew that hosting a major world's fair had proven to be a successful remedy in other cities and thus endorsed the idea. The organizers acquired a plot of land adjacent to the city and developed what turned out to be the first federally sponsored fair west of the Rocky Mountains. The attendance of over 1.5 million people was a major feat for their still-remote part of the country, and the exposition turned a good profit.[21]

For Brady, Portland's exposition was a convenient afterthought to St. Louis; the Alaska exhibit was smaller, less well funded, and housed in a modest wing of the federal government building, in which they shared exhibit space with the Philippines. Brady complained in his annual report that "the amount [of money, $25,000] was small and the time too short after the closing of the fair last year in St. Louis to get up an extensive exhibition." Still, he claimed that the resulting display was both "credible and instructive."[22] Exhibit organizers arranged the poles in a more synchronized and dramatic fashion than in St. Louis, with their backs to a lake and the tallest in the center with descending sizes on each side. Once again, they were a major draw and piqued the interest of many fair-goers. Numerous inquiries as to the availability of the poles for sale were also made, including one from the commissioner of the Japanese exhibit, but Brady turned them down, and the poles were transported to their official home in Sitka at the fair's end.



projects would help boost Alaska's population and livability. Brady meant well, but the rose-colored lens through which he viewed his beloved home softened the harsh realities of turn of the century Alaska.

Following the Portland fair, the totem poles returned from their cross-country journey to complete Brady's vision of their official home at Sitka. The poles fulfilled their role grandly at the fairs; Brady astutely envisaged the drawing power of these objects and hoped they could do the same for Sitka. He was proud of his exhibits, just as he would be proud of Indian River Park.

NOTES

[1] Eric Breibart, *World on Display*, pp. 34-38, and Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, pp. 154-183.

[2] Brady to Gowell-Kelly Advertising Company, Seattle, Washington, 27 November 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 78.

[3] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 25 April 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 14.

[4] Report of the Governor of Alaska, 1901, p. 11.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C., 30 September 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 75.

[7] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C., 19 November 1903, JGB Box 4, Folder 78, and Brady to Ethan Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C., 6 October 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 76.

[8] Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C. to Brady, 23 December 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 80.

[9] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 26 April 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 14.

[10] *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 4 May 1904.

[11] *St. Louis Republic*, 25 April 1904.

[12] Brady to Dr. W.J. McGhee, Chief of the Department of Anthropology, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, Missouri, 19 October 1903, JGB, Box 4, Folder 77.

[13] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 26 April 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 14.

[14] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 4 May 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 15.

[15] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 26 April 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 14.

[16] Report of the Governor of Alaska, 1904, p. 165.

[17] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 6 September 1905, JGB, Box 5, Folder 89.

[18]Richard Feldman, "Reaching Across a Continent: The Story of the Golden Hill Totem Pole," *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 40-48.

[19] Brady to Elizabeth Brady, Sitka, Alaska, 18 December 1904, JGB, Box 1, Folder 17.

[20] Brady to Thomas Ryan, Washington D.C., 6 September 1905, JGB, Box 5, Folder 89.

[21] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, pp.185-197.

[22] Report of the Governor of Alaska, 1905, pp. 54-55.

[23] Ibid.



Chapter 5: "A Goodly Show"

Placement at Sitka and the Early Years

With the return of the poles to Sitka, John Brady sought to complete his vision for their permanent display. He believed that the best location for the poles was the park at the mouth of Indian River. This area, set aside as government land through a presidential proclamation in 1890, was already a well-established part of the Sitka community. Every group who had occupied the area used this piece of land in some way, and it was the site of the legendary 1804 Russian-Tlingit battle.[1]

The display of totems in the park began before the return of the world's fair poles, as Chief Saanaheit's donations had been standing there since 1902. Erected in the vicinity of the old Tlingit fort, Brady organized the placement of these so that he could rebuild Saanaheit's house around them, though the house never made it to the park. The world's fair poles arrived at Sitka in mid-January 1906, aboard the steamer *Al-ki*. Brady secured the unpaid services of Sitkan Elbridge W. Merrill to rehabilitate and raise the poles. The day the ship arrived, Brady and Merrill wandered through the park to determine appropriate placement.[2]

Elbridge Merrill is an intriguing figure in Sitka's history. After growing up in Massachusetts and establishing a meager living as a news photographer and engraver, the lure of Alaska brought Merrill north; he moved to Sitka in 1898. In Sitka, Merrill sold photos and Alaska Native goods to the smattering of tourists coming through town. Merrill, nicknamed "father of pictures" by Sitkans, often photographed the local Tlingit population. His rapport with the community appears to have been especially good, as Merrill usually managed to obtain some of the highest quality Tlingit merchandise to sell to the tourists. Like Brady, he lamented the Southeast Alaska Natives' loss of their traditional culture, but saw it as an inevitable process.[3] Merrill believed that preserving these totem poles was one way in which to save the culture for future generations; in the early twentieth century, he wrote:

> I tried to preserve the spirit of the old order, which is passing. The white man had educated the Thlinget of today to be scornful of the totem art of his forefathers. Soon, I fear, these will be the only specimens left in Alaska.[4]

Left: E.W. Merrill "the father of pictures" and friend Kay Van Buren pose beside the Lakich'inei pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14851)



Alaska Natives helping to erect the poles for the first time at Sitka National Monument. Photo by E.W. Merrill. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3816)

Merrill's voluntary preservation efforts provided the poles, which he referred to as "Alaska's finest group of totemic art," with a much-needed guardian in the formative years of Sitka's park.[5] While he had the passion to oversee these poles, Merrill knew little about what it would require to preserve them.

Totem poles were a popular attraction in the fledgling tourism industry of Southeast Alaska, and they quickly became one of the trademark symbols of the region. Since the most popular and practical way to see Alaska in the early twentieth century was via ship from Puget Sound, Southeast Alaska was popular and relatively accessible. Totem poles became a top visitor attraction. As early as 1879, famed naturalist John Muir traveled up the coast and declared that "the carved totem-pole monuments are the most striking of objects displayed here."[6] By the turn of the century, Southeast Alaska Natives spent most of their year in towns near canneries, rather than in their older villages. These people rarely moved their totem poles, and tourist ships would sometimes land at uninhabited villages to see the decaying poles. Certain towns, like Ketchikan, recog-

"...it is only meet and just that this area be set aside as a playground for future generations..."

nized the drawing value of these poles and acquired them throughout the early twentieth century. One tour company even referred to the route to Sitka via the Inside Passage as the "Totemland Cruise."[7]

Brady and Merrill chose to place the totems along the Indian River Park's most popular trail in what they believed to be an artistically pleasing manner. This path skirted the beach, reached the mouth of the Indian River, and continued inland along the river—approximately the same trail historically used by the Tlingit and Russians. Merrill sought to highlight the natural features of the area while creating his totem-lined pathway; while viewing the poles, he also wanted people to be able to see the ocean, the forest, and the mountains. Along with preserving the totems for posterity, the idea was also to make the poles a decorative part of the park and a tourist attraction for Sitka.[8] With the help of Alaska Native students from the Industrial School, Merrill finished the task in March of 1906 and won praise from the local press: "E. W. Merrill has concluded his task of erecting the totem poles which were exhibited at the Lewis and Clark exposition and has arranged them in an artistic manner, and they make a goodly show."[9]

Vandalism of the Sitka poles emerged as a problem in these early days. To remedy this, the Arctic Brotherhood of Sitka sought the advice of Regional U. S. Forest Service Supervisor



Warren Harding at Sitka. He stopped in Sitka during his trip to drive the final spike into the Alaska railroad. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15108)

"Mr. Merrill is a peculiar genius and would rather work for nothing where the subject interests him than to make a success of his business."

W. A. Langille on how they could obtain federally enforceable protection.[10] Langille recommended that they petition President William H. Taft to establish the park as a National Monument under the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906, which the Brotherhood did in 1908. In this document, they focused their appeal on the totem poles, the history of the site, and the tourism benefits the park would provide for Sitka. Langille drafted a map of the park and definitively set its boundaries. He also wrote a report recommending the establishment of the monument, in which he wrote poetically about the site's history:

> . . . as the site of an event that led to permanent Russian occupancy, and, through this, to the acquisition by the United States of a land that will



Couple in front of the Saanaheit pole. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3818)



Crew in costume standing in front of the Saanaheit pole. Photo by E.W. Merrill. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15110)

some day be an empire unto itself, a unit of the greater American public to be, and it is only meet and just that this area be set aside as a playground for future generations, and as a Monument to commemorate one of the most important events in Alaska's history."

The Governor of Alaska and the Secretary of the Interior endorsed Langille's recommendations, and the proposal went to the President's desk. On March 23, 1910, Taft signed the park's proclamation as a National Monument. This proclamation mentioned the poles as one of the founding elements of the park: "Whereas, within the limits of the public park created by proclamation June 21, 1890, near Sitka, Alaska is located . . . numerous totem poles constructed by Indians which record the genealogical history of their several clans . . . "[12] Yet the Federal Antiquities Act provided no means of funding for the park, nor did it name a controlling agency. This document did provide protective wording ("Warning is hereby expressly given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure or destroy any feature of this National Monument"), but it set up no practical mechanism for protection and upkeep. This led to

some uncertain times in the early years of the park. Concern for the poles within the community was immediate. In 1910, the lead article in an issue of *The Thlinget*, the newspaper of Sitka's Native population, lamented the fact that Saanaheit's canoe was now gone and feared that his pole would soon "exist only in history" as well.[13]

Following the establishment of Sitka National Monument, local officials unsuccessfully attempted to get funding for repairs and park maintenance. Arthur G. Shoup, a Sitka lawyer, first requested funding for general park upkeep from J. W. Lewis of Alaska's General Land Office in 1912, stating that the poles were "very badly in need of repair."[14] Apparently, no money



From left to right, the Lackich'inei pole, the Yaadaas Crest pole, and the Mosquito Legend pole in their original park placements. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14850)



Girls from the Sitka School posing in the park. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #3754)

was forthcoming and any repair work during these early years came from concerned locals like Merrill. With the formation of the National Park Service in 1916, Sitka National Monument finally had a definite custodial agency to fight for funding. The NPS offered Shoup the job of monument custodian, but he could not accept because he often appeared as an attorney in cases involving the Department of the Interior.[15]

Merrill, having worked as unofficial caretaker up to this point, then moved into the position in an official manner. In a July 1918 letter to Stephen Mather, the first director of the NPS, Alaska Governor Thomas Riggs proposed that Merrill be named custodian to the Park. In this request he stated that:

> Mr. Merrill is a peculiar genius and would rather work for nothing where the subject interests him than to make a success of his business. He has taken great interest in the Sitka National Monument and will spend a great deal of time either with or without compensation . . .

Riggs also showed great concern for the totem poles and asked for funding, having already had the Territory of Alaska pay for Merrill to do some repairs. He requested the large sum of $2,500 for the upkeep of the poles.[16] Mather granted only

$1,000, citing that the budget for all national monuments was only $10,000. He agreed that Merrill was the best man for the job and was happy to hear that he would do the job with or without compensation, because the only salary that the NPS could afford was a meager $12 per year.[7]

Merrill's eccentricities became evident in his employment as park caretaker. By the spring of 1919, he had not filled out the government oath of office forms that the NPS required, and he rarely communicated with Riggs or Mather. These two learned about progress on the monument through A.G. Shoup. Shoup claimed that Merrill would answer in a "mysterious" fashion when questioned about progress in his work. Though he had recommended Merrill for the position, Shoup seemed



The entrance to Sitka National Monument with the Merrill Plaque, August 1937. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14879)

Elbridge Merrill was never one to wait for government approval to begin or end working, and he surely completed many custodial duties without compensation.

to know that employing him would not be easy because Merrill was "largely of artistic temperament" and that he was "not lazy, but he expends a lot of his energy classifying bird life." Shoup believed he would begin work on the poles in the summer, but Riggs and NPS management grew impatient and began searching for another caretaker.[18] They hired F.C. Sheridan of Sitka, but upon his first visit to the park as caretaker, he found that Merrill had been hard at work for three weeks. Sheridan relinquished his job shortly thereafter. Merrill kept the position and worked feverishly all summer. His work consisted of "removing rubbish, bracing totems, erecting scaffoldings around the totems for painters to work on, and some painting, and removing some dead stumps."[19] According to Shoup, a pole had also fallen during the winter of 1919, though Merrill mentioned nothing of it in his explanation of repairs. Merrill completed much of his work by the fall and received compensation as the custodian of the park, though he still had not filled out official government paperwork.[20]

Elbridge Merrill was never one to wait for government approval to begin or end working, and he surely completed many custodial duties without compensation. In the summer of 1921, the NPS hired Merrill in the same manner to complete the repairs he had started two years earlier. With a budget of three hundred dollars, he worked on the poles throughout the summer and returned his vouchers for reimbursement in November. In April of 1922, the NPS decided to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Alaska Road Commission for care of the monument. Merrill still could not be bothered to fill out the government paperwork, so the NPS gave up on him and hired the Alaska Road Commission's Sitka foreman, Peter Trierschield, as the monument custodian in the fall.[21]

Beyond this, records indicate that little happened to the totems until the late 1930s, which reflected relatively quiet times for the community as a whole. Sitka National Monument drifted through these years without direction or ample funding for upkeep. One of the poles fell in 1923, and Trierschield re-erected it in 1925.[22] The Road Commission also regularly painted and repaired the poles, in hopes that they could permanently preserve these poles, or at least render heavy repairs unnecessary for many years. They reported on progress infrequently though, and records are sparse.[23] Elbridge Merrill died in 1929 and the local American Legion commissioned a plaque for him three years later. Many Sitkans wanted the plaque placed in the park, but NPS officials denied this since erecting monuments to people was against NPS policy and, furthermore, Merrill never officially worked for the government. The Legion sidestepped this decision by

placing a stone with the plaque attached immediately outside the park's boundary near the main entrance. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, several state and federal government officials suggested relocating additional totem poles from Howkan and Old Kasaan National Monument to Sitka. No funding was available for these projects and no one acted upon the suggestion. Peter Trierschield died in 1937 and his son, John, succeeded him as custodian.[24] As a report in the late 1930s stated, the Sitka National Monument was "to a large degree an orphan child of the national park system."[25]

The Sitka community lost a major piece of its identity in 1906 when the district capital moved to Juneau. The poles helped to fill the void in the community left by the government's departure, and they quickly became a source of pride for Sitkans. General commentary throughout the early twentieth century focused on the troubled, rotting condition of the poles, but funding was available to do only the most basic repairs. The totem poles were slowly deteriorating and losing their character through rot, inappropriate paints, and piecemeal repairs by inexperienced, though well-meaning, caretakers. This period is in direct contrast to the tumultuous and precedent setting times that were to follow.

NOTES

[1] Joan Antonson and William Hanable, *Administrative*, pp. 3-9.

[2] Hugh Brady to Marilyn Knapp, 30 May 1980, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 2, Folder 16, and Sharon Gmelch, "Merrill," p. 164.

[3] Gmelch, "Merrill," pp. 159-172 and Scott Chambers, "Merrill," pp. 138-145.

[4] As quoted in Barrett Willoughby, "Father of Pictures," p. 41.

[5] Merrill to Alaska Governor Thomas Riggs, 14 May 1921, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 14.

[6] John Muir, *World*, p. 74.

[7] Frank Norris, *Gawking*, p. 119-122.

[8] Holly Smith-Middleton and Arnold Alanen, *Impressions*, pp. 307-308.

[9] *The Alaskan*, 24 March 1906.

[10] The Arctic Brotherhood was an organization of men in the same vain as the Knights of Columbus. It held much political influence in Alaska's early years.

[11] As quoted in Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, p. 161.

[12] William H. Taft, Proclamation, "Sitka National Monument, Proclamation 959," 23 March 1910, in Antonson and Hanable, *Administrative*, Appendix B.

[13] "Passing," *The Thlinget*, December 1910, Vol. 3, No. 5, pp.1-2.

[14] Arthur Shoup to J. W. Lewis, 31 August 1912, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.

[15] Middleton and Alanen, *Impressions*, pp. 162-166 and numerous correspondences in SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 14.

[16] Thomas Riggs to Stephen Mather, 20 July 1918, ASA, Record Group 101, Series 130, Box 155, Folder 58.

[17] Stephen Mather to Thomas Riggs, 9 August 1918, and Stephen Mather to Thomas Riggs, 16 August 1918, both in ASA, Record Group 101, Series 130, Box 155, Folder 58.

[18] A.G. Shoup to Thomas Riggs, 22 March 1919, ASA, Record Group 101, Series 130, Box 172, Folder 58.

[19] A.G. Shoup to Thomas Riggs, 11 June 1919, ASA, Record Group 101, Series 130, Box 172, Folder 58.

[20] Various correspondences, ASA, Record Group 101, Series 130, Box 172, Folder 58.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Various notes, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 9.

[23] J. Steese, "Annual Report, Sitka National Monument, Fiscal Year 1927," 8 July 1927, SNHP, miscellaneous files of Gene Griffin.

[24] Antonson and Hanable, *Administrative*, pp. 73-75, and George Parks to C.W. Hawkesworth, 8 October 1927, on file at SNHP.

[25] Chief of Forestry Coffman, "Observations Relative to Sitka National Monument," 20 September 1938, SNHP, Record Group 16, Box 1, Folder 2.



Chapter 6: New Deal Pole Work

Franklin Roosevelt created his "New Deal" programs in response to the staggering depression that gripped the nation in the 1930s. Funding from two of Roosevelt's programs helped in the preservation of the Sitka totem poles: the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Both of these programs had been set up to relieve unemployment by creating jobs in many different areas. The WPA specialized in jobs for people such as unemployed artists and teachers, but it also coordinated projects to improve or create public facilities. The CCC employed young men to help rehabilitate the nation's natural resources and improve facilities at recreational areas.[1] These programs succeeded in employing millions and even Alaska, often forgotten by the federal government, received their benefits throughout the depression years.

The U.S. Forest Service, established in 1905, oversaw most of the New Deal programs in southeast Alaska, inasmuch as the Tongass National Forest covered large portions of land in the Alaska panhandle. Also on these lands, and under the guardianship of the Forest Service, were numerous, vacated Alaska Native villages with totem poles and traditional houses.[2] In 1933, the Forest Service began using CCC funds for a variety of tasks throughout southeast Alaska. CCC workers constructed campgrounds, roads, trails, and buildings. In the fall of 1938, the Forest Service, under the leadership of B. Frank Heintzleman, procured funding for the restoration of totem poles from the Native villages on their lands. Forest Service architect Linn Forrest headed the program, and work began in the fall of 1938 in Ketchikan and New Kasaan.[3]

Numerous uncertainties surrounded the project in its early stages. Not only did this undertaking venture into new territory for the Forest Service, it was also new to the Natives chosen to carve the poles, who generally had little experience in traditional woodworking. In an interview years after the project was completed, Sitka head carver George Benson claimed that the last pole finished was the better carved of all. He attributed this to the fact that the once inexperienced craftsmen had honed their skills during the making of earlier poles, and that by the project's end, all were experienced artisans."[4] According to another observer:

> When the Forest Service began the project of restoration, there were only a handful of older men

Left: CCC carver chiseling out a pole section. Photo by John Brillhart: Alaska State Library/ John Brillhart Collection/Photo # PCA 295-51.

"if restoration work had been delayed a very few years longer they would have fallen to pieces and been lost forever."

> who had any experience in carving. Many of the younger men had not even handled native types of tools and had to be taught manual habits appropriate to their use.[5]

Sitka and the numerous other pole restoration projects along the coast were the first of their kind, as the original Native caretakers of the poles had generally never restored their totem poles. The conversion of Northwest Coast Natives to Christianity helped to stifle Native woodworking. Many young Natives wanted a western way of life and saw the poles as reminders of the old ways. In one account, several young people at the Tlingit village of Kake "organized work parties to cut down all the totem poles in front of the village, took the bones of the dead from the boxes and in the mortuary poles, and blew them to bits with dynamite while the older people wept."[6] Totem pole carving had rarely occurred during the 20th century, and the existing poles were deteriorating before the CCC projects.



Deteriorated poles on the ground during the New Deal Recarving project. Sitka National Historic Park (SITK #R051)

The poor condition of the poles created a conundrum for the administrators: how could they restore almost entirely decrepit poles? Those assessing the situation realized that the carvers could not restore the worst of the poles. Thus, they needed to find other solutions. The decision to recarve a number of poles in their entirety was a last resort, but an acceptable alternative. According to one foreman, restoration was always the first option:

> On the balance of the large totems the original can be retained by removing the decayed portions and

> inserting new pieces of wood and wherever it is at all possible this procedure is being followed . . . The insert method of recarving takes about three times the amount of time in comparison with carving a new totem altogether, but it has the advantage that the original is still retained.[7]

While renovation was the preferred method of restoration, many of the poles could not be saved:

> The state of deterioration on some of the larger totems has advanced beyond the stage where it is possible to recondition the original and for this reason, a reproduction will have to be carved out of a new log. In fact, if restoration work had been delayed a very few years longer they would have fallen to pieces and been lost forever.[8]

Early in the process, Forest Service officials knew that wood was especially vulnerable to rot in the rainy coastal climate, and the original poles could not last forever in an outdoor setting. They decided that, while maintaining the original poles was important, preserving the images on the poles was more realistic and important to the survival of the totem-carving genre.[9]

The motive behind the restoring and recarving of these poles was not simply to save them from extinction, but to create tourist attractions with the construction of totem parks. These parks were done more in the mold of Sitka, where they were set provocatively along pathways, rather than attempting to recreate traditional Tlingit or Haida settings.[10] With the realization of the totem's value for tourism, the press throughout Alaska praised the CCC program. The *Alaska Sportsman*, emphasizing the drawing power of the poles, stated:

> Of all states, territories and nations, Alaska is without a doubt the most backward in tourist travel. . . . A bright guide for the future is the restoration of the totem poles of Southeastern Alaska now being undertaken by the Forest Service with the help of the CCC. Formerly rotting in abandoned Indian villages, far out of regular steamer lanes, many of these unique monuments of the past will be reconditioned and moved to sites where they may be seen by all visitors to Alaska.[11]

The *Anchorage Times* also praised the program, with its primary headline, "Totem Display is Intriguing to Observers," displaying

"As soon as Alaska is properly exploited . . . the territory can be transformed into a magical mecca of nothing but dollars."

the priority of tourism over its secondary caption, "Native Carving Preserved by the National Park Service." The *Times* continued:

> The hundreds of Alaska tourists who walk through lovely forested Sitka National Monument to see these displays of native art and legendry will find their visit anticipated by appropriately rustic benches, finely graveled footpaths, sanitary facilities, and resurfaced approach road and sidewalk from the boat dock.

Thus, the poles were simply part of a pleasant and civilized experience for the tourist. As a project promoter declared in the article, "Sitka National Monument will be in its best dress to welcome Alaska's biggest tourist season."[12] The project ethnologist, Viola Garfield, even believed in the lucrative possibilities of the poles:

> If present day Alaskans wished they could likely capitalize handsomely on their legendary Indian background. As soon as Alaska is properly exploited . . . the territory can be transformed into a magical mecca of nothing but dollars.[13]

Tourism added a legitimate possibility for financial gains through the enhancement of the totem poles; hence, propo-



Below: Carver painting a pole inside a CCC-built shed. Photo by John Brillhart: Alaska State Library/John Brillhart Collection/ Photo # PCA 295-52.

Because the unprecedented scenario of recarving raised many uncertainties, members of the NPS questioned the presence of the poles at Sitka to begin with.

nents had more than simply the rescue of Alaska Native art with which to promote the recarving program.

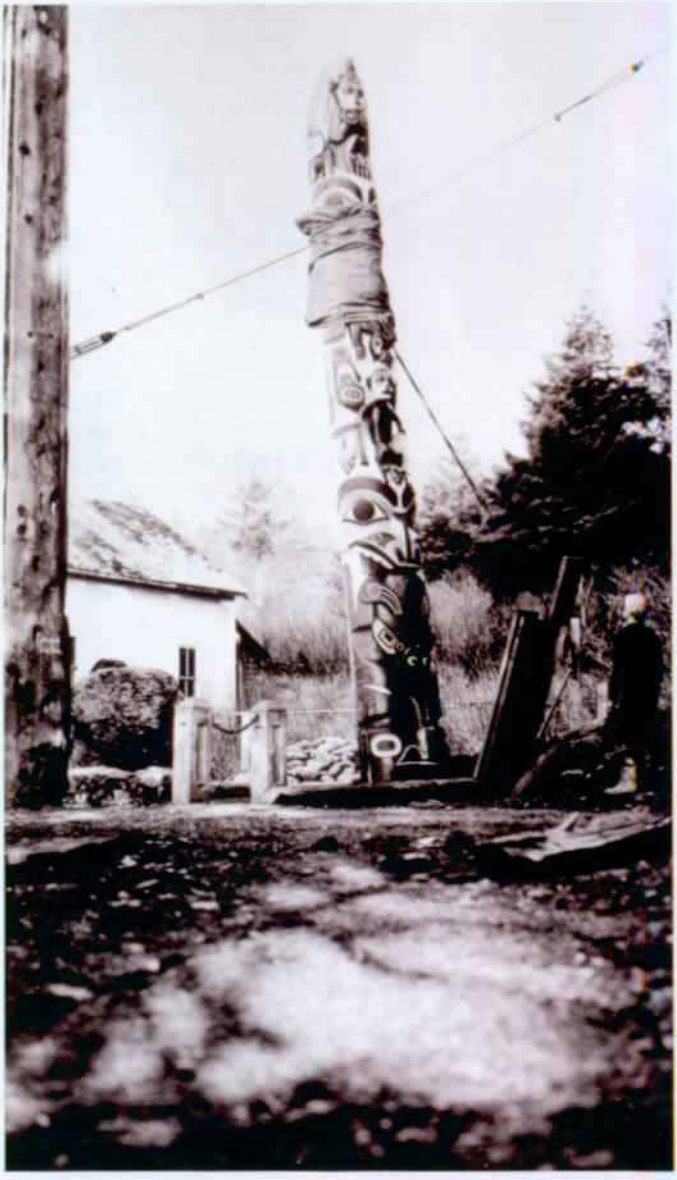
The involvement of the WPA and CCC with Sitka's totem poles began in January 1939. Heintzleman secured WPA funding for totem pole restoration at Sitka National Monument. Work began on February 18th when Assistant Regional Forester Charles Burdick assessed, photographed, and numbered the poles. Burdick hoped that the totems could be repaired while still standing, but instead he found that "repair work must be very extensive, and it will be necessary to remove them to a repair shop." Heintzleman named John Maurstad head of the Sitka WPA project, citing his "considerable experience in handling natives, and in both carpentry and cabinet making."[14] At Sitka, a crew of between 9 and 15 mostly Native workers began the restoration, and the recarving was "being done by the Indians exclusively."[15] The workers lowered the poles to the ground with ropes and heavy equipment and brought them to one of two 16′x 48′ sheds built as workshop space. Here, the crew would carry out the work, either restoring or entirely recarving the poles. Maurstad indicated that practically all preservation methods utilized were experimental.[16]

Funding switched from the WPA to the CCC just a month after the work first began. In mid-summer, Maurstad wrote the first official report on the restoration of the Sitka totems. He stated that workers had completed five totems from February 18th to June 30th. They had also taken down three more and moved them to the sheds for preparatory work.[17] In an interview many years later, carver George Benson stated that none of the first five poles finished required major repairs.[18] In July, J. R. "Dick" Tate replaced Maurstad as foreman.[19] By March 22nd, 1940, all of the totem poles, except for Saanaheit's which was still being recarved, had been refurbished or replaced.

In January of 1940, Sitka received its first NPS custodian, Ben C. Miller, who came from Glacier National Park. He arrived at a park in flux; NPS managers in both Washington, D.C. and Alaska doubted the future of the monument. Because the unprecedented scenario of recarving raised many uncertainties, members of the NPS questioned the presence of the poles at Sitka to begin with. Frank T. Been, Superintendent of Mount McKinley National Park, went to the National Monument on August 15th and 16th of 1939 in order to investigate the condition of its resources. Been did not believe the poles were appropriately placed at Sitka:

> Sitka National Monument may be considered antithetical to National Park Service purposes and

ideals. The area is not unique nor has it an outstanding feature either scenically or scientifically. The totem poles are completely exotic for they were originally taken from the vicinity of Wrangell and Ketchikan for the St. Louis Exposition and then placed at Sitka, whence they did not come, on a plot of ground donated for the purpose [of preserving them] . . . Unless the Service is committed to this distortion of park service functions, the poles should be moved to a place approximating their original location.[20]



CCC workers re-erecting the Waasgo legend pole at the Park entrance. Photo by John Brillhart: Alaska State Library/John Brillhart Collection/Photo # PCA 295-55.

"Myths about witch trees, blarney stones, and lover's lanes have had to be created to divert visitors' attention from the fact that information concerning the local Russian and native history is not readily available, and knowledge of the totem poles is almost non-existent . . ."

Been preferred the other WPA/CCC recarving programs because of their locations near the pole's ancestral homes. A. E. Demaray, Acting Director of the National Park Service, agreed with Been:

> These totem poles were long since removed from the Indian communities to which they properly belong; they have no proper place at Sitka National Monument which might better stress the Russian colonization and fur trade history of southeastern Alaska.[21]

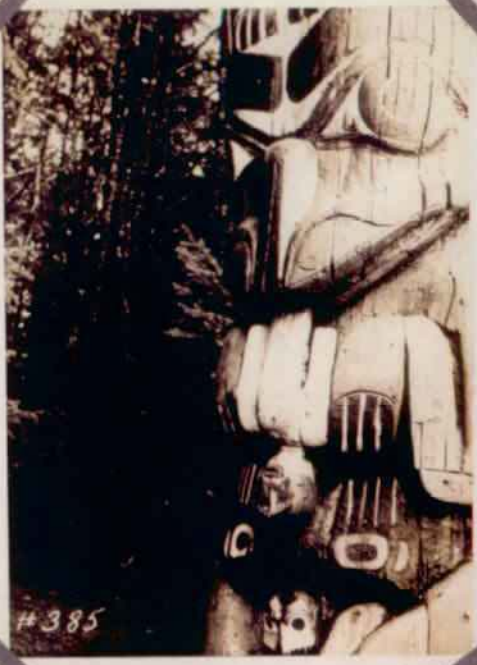
Even newcomer Ben C. Miller did not believe that the poles were correctly placed in Sitka, though he felt moving them would damage the reputation of the NPS:

> The mistake was in bringing the poles here in the first place. Most of the publicity about Sitka and the Monument, even in Park Service literature, has stressed the totem poles. Should the poles be removed before the monument is fully developed, its greatest attraction would be gone.[22]

Nonetheless, both Been and Miller recommended continuation of pole recarvings in the interest of salvaging them, regardless of whether or not they were to remain at Sitka.[23]

The recarving of the Saanaheit pole proved troublesome, with perhaps the biggest difficulty being the inability to find a log of adequate size for the recarve. Because Sitka lay north of the region where red cedar trees grow, and because the cost of attaining a suitable log was high, carvers had to reproduce the pole on a 55 foot rather than 65 foot log. Both Frank Been of the NPS and the Forest Service's Frank Heintzleman believed that the pole had no place in Sitka because they had not duplicated it exactly.[24] At first, Sitka's custodian Miller regretfully did not believe the smaller replica of the Saanaheit pole should be put in place either: "It is a shame the present tree isn't large enough as the carvers are doing a wonderful piece of work."[25] He spent a large portion of the fall and winter attempting to procure a tree large enough for a full-sized recarve. None were forthcoming though, and the smaller pole sufficed. Miller and a crew raised the pole in April of 1942. Just three months later, on July 2nd, the Sitka restoration and recarving project officially ended. Cultural confusion played an intriguing role in the projects as well. Administrators displayed frustration with the variable schedules of most Alaska Natives. Carving slowed considerably in the summertime, as commercial fishing earned the workers much more

Following pages: Charles Burdick's pole assessment photos before the commencement of WPA and CCC work. Pages recreated from Burdick's original folder. Captions are Burdick's typewritten comments. SITK Archives, RG-51, Box 3, Folder 3.



"Close-up showing detail of carving."

Photos taken by—

Chas. G. Burdick—



"Close-up showing ancient adz marks and detail carving."



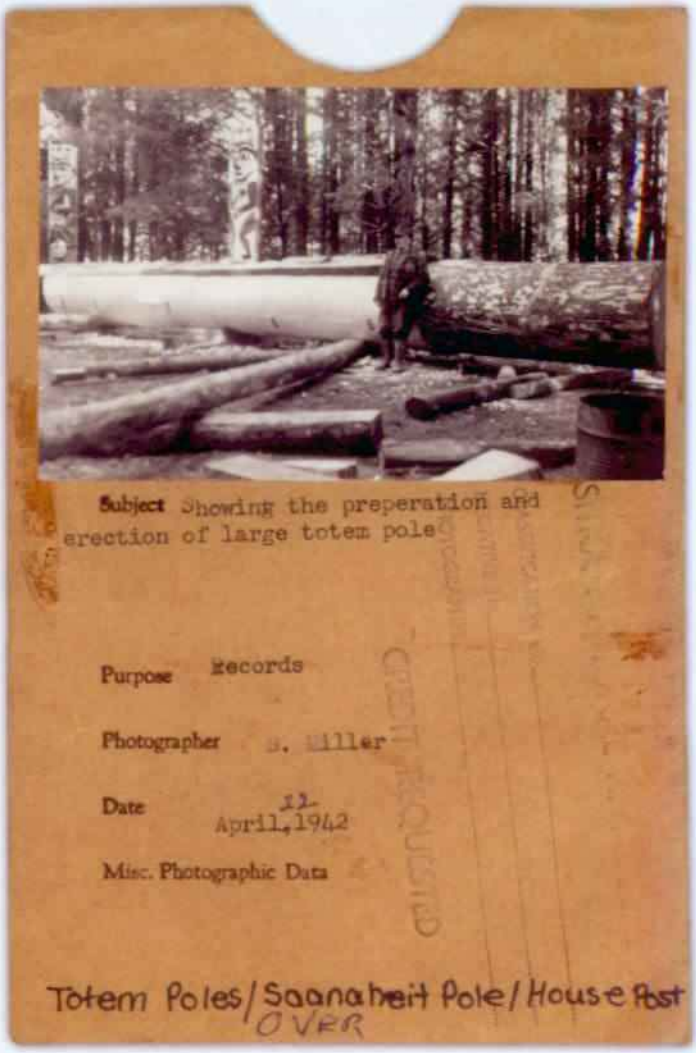
"Close-up showing peculiarity of carving."



CCC workers re-erecting the Lackich'inei pole. Photo by John Brillhart: Alaska State Library/John Brillhart Collection/Photo # PCA 295-54.

money than the CCC could pay.[25] Their methodical way of working also frustrated those unfamiliar with coastal Natives. According to Miller, "These natives have only one speed, which is slow, and they won't be hurried."[27] Another problem erupted when the Forest Service hired Tlingits from the Wrangell area to carve a pole that commemorated the history of Sitka, as designed by Sitka carver George Benson. Miller introduced the idea of this commemorative pole to Frank Been in early March 1940. Been liked the idea, believing that the nature of the park, thought to be the site of the legendary battle between the Russians and the Tlingits, lent itself well to such a totem pole. The Forest Service took this idea and made it a reality, though the pole was to be put up in front of one of their buildings and not in the park. With no carvers available in Sitka at the time, Linn Forrest commissioned carvers in Wrangell to do the work. The Sitka Tlingit, being traditional enemies with the Natives from that vicinity, declared they would "deface, chop, and burn" the pole if it was erected in Sitka. The Forest Service raised the pole in front of their Sitka headquarters, and threats of repercussions staved off any action by the Sitka Natives.[28]

From the beginning of the project, the Forest Service administration sought a qualified ethnologist to record information on the poles, but they had difficulty securing funds for one. Funding finally became available during the late summer of 1940, when the government hired Dr. Viola Garfield of the University of Washington "for the purpose of gathering data



Preparation of the new version of the Saanaheit pole on April 22,1942. Photo by Ben C. Miller. Sitka National Historic Park (SITK #15145)

on Indian lore for use in Forest Service Recreation Folders."[29] Garfield focused on interviews of people connected to the poles, be they carvers or relatives of the pole's original owners. She knew the Northwest Coast well; much of her past research pertained to the Tsimshians and Southeast Alaska Native customs in general. She believed her job of collecting information on the poles was an important one, citing Sitka as a poor example for totem pole interpretation:

> Myths about witch trees, blarney stones, and lover's lanes have had to be created to divert visitors' attention from the fact that information concerning the local Russian and native history is not readily available, and knowledge of the totem poles is almost non-existent . . . The slight cost of undertak-



Crew erecting the new version of the Saanaheit pole on April 22, 1942. Photo by Ben C. Miller. Sitka National Historic Park (SITK #15145, reverse side)

> ing completion of the totem pole history now, and the greater accuracy of the account as compared with undertaking it at some later date should certainly be taken into consideration.[10]

With the meager funding and numerous delays in the procurement of travel funds, Garfield's work during her first summer was limited to about forty days of fieldwork, primarily in Ketchikan and Kasaan. The following summer, the NPS funded Garfield to continue her work. Again, administrative problems slowed the process, but she would not have her work season cut short again so she embarked before funding approval. She spent little time at Sitka National Monument, as the CCC workers had almost completed the pole restoration project at the time of her arrival on the coast. The time she did

"The art of carving totem poles has been dying out as the older Indians are passing away."

spend in Sitka proved mostly fruitless, since she found few people with accurate information on the poles. In her notebooks, she expressed frustration at the lack of available data on the Sitka poles and the conflicting stories she often received. A result of her research was the book entitled *The Wolf and the Raven* in which she recounts the stories on the poles at Saxman, Ketchikan, Mud Bight, and Klawak. Due to the lack of information available, the totem poles at Sitka were noticeably absent from this book. While Garfield's work has proven essential for the general understanding of totem poles, the details of Sitka's totems remained a mystery, much to her dismay.[31]

Not everyone praised the New Deal recarving programs, as several outside observers claimed the recarved poles to be anemic copies of the originals. In 1946, the Bureau of Indian Affairs hired one of the most outspoken of these critics, Katherine Kuh, to prepare a comprehensive report on extant totemic art in Alaska. She traveled to Alaska in the summer of 1941 and viewed the CCC recarving projects. Kuh disagreed that many of the poles had needed to be entirely recarved; in her mind, many of the old, discarded poles were still redeemable and the copies could "never replace originals." Later, as Art Editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, she lamented in a controversial article that those responsible for pole stewardship were doing little or nothing to preserve the original poles.[32] While program officials admitted that some of the recarves lacked the power and subtlety of the originals, Kuh focused on the negative aspects of a generally successful project. Despite a lack of fairness in her opinions, Kuh's report eventually served as a catalyst to make the U.S. and Alaska state government come up with answers to the vexing and unprecedented questions that totem preservation had presented.

The Forest Service initiated the coastal recarving programs at a fortunate moment, as totem carving had almost reached the point of extinction. Elders ceased teaching the skills involved in carving totem poles to the younger generation; the traditional apprenticeship system had all but died. According to Sitka foreman John Maurstad:

> The art of carving totem poles has been dying out as the older Indians are passing away. Quite a number of the younger Indians have been employed on the restoration project and it has contributed considerably in reviving their interest in this art.[33]

The recarvings also renewed Southeast Alaska Native's pride in their heritage. As Tlingit carver Charles Brown stated during the project:

> The story of our fathers' totems is nearly dead, but now once again is being brought back to life. Once more our old familiar totems will proudly face the world with new war paints. The makers of these old totems will not have died in vain. May these old poles help bring about prosperity to our people.[34]

While the art of Tlingit and Haida woodworking may have survived if this project had not occurred, the program surely accelerated its reinvigoration. Tangibly speaking, the CCC program succeeded in restoring or reproducing over 100 poles and salvaging ancestral images that may have otherwise vanished. While the CCC program succeeded in many ways, it also introduced many questions that the NPS would wrestle with for years to come.

Notes

[1] The age restriction, men 18 to 25, was lifted in Alaska.

[2] Lawrence Rakestraw, *A History of the United States Forest Service in Alaska*, pp. 13-17.

[3] Linn Forrest, "Restoration of Shakes Island," *Wrangell Sentinel*, May 31, 1940.

[4] Duane Pasco, "Totem Pole Appraisal March 1978," SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 11.

[5] Viola Garfield, "Classifying Totem Poles," unpublished manuscript, Viola Garfield Papers, UW Special Collections #130, Box 2, Folder 8, p. 15.

[6] Recounted in Alison K. Hoagland, "Totem Poles and Plank Houses: Reconstructing Native Culture in Southeast Alaska," in *Shaping Communities,* p. 182.

[7] John Maurstad, "Memorandum. Restoration Totem Poles at Sitka National Monument," Summer 1939, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See Frank Bean and Earl Trager, "Report on the Inspection of Sitka National Monument," 1939, SNHP, Record Group 16, Box 1, Folder 2.

[10] Lawrence Rakestraw, *Forest Service in Alaska*, pp. 95-106, and Linn Forrest, "Restoration of Shakes Island," *Wrangell Sentinel*, 31 May 1940.

[11] Editorial, *The Alaska Sportsman*, March 1939, p. 7.

[12] "Totem Display is Intriguing to Observers," *Anchorage Times*, 27 March 1940.

[13] Viola Garfield, quoted in Truman Bishop, "A Lady Looks at Family Trees," *Alaska Life*, May 1941, p. 17.

[14] Telegram from B. Frank Heintzleman, Regional Forester to "Director, National Parks Washington DC" 27 January, 1939; telegram from Arno B. Cammerer to US Forest Service, Juneau, 31 January 1939; and Chas. Burdick, "Memorandum for File," 2 March 1939, all in SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 14.

[15] The variation in worker numbers is a result of the seasonal pull of higher paying work elsewhere. Known participants included George Benson, Peter Jones, John Sam, and Frank Kitka.

[16] Chas. Burdick, "Memorandum for File," 2 March 1939 and "Memorandum. Restoration Totem Poles at Sitka National Monument," SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 14, and John Maurstad, "Memorandum. Restoration Totem Poles at Sitka National Monument," Summer 1939, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10.

[17] John Maurstad, "Memorandum. Restoration Totem Poles at Sitka National Monument," Summer 1939, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10. The completed poles are listed as the Cormorant Memorial/Mortuary Column, the Raven Memorial Pole, the Wolf Pole, Yaadaas Corner Pole #1, and the Yaadaas Crest Pole.

[18] "Interview with George Benson, September 7, 1967," SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 9.

[19] Robert Martin, "Totem Poles Restored," *The Alaskan*, 20 February 1940, p. 5.

[20] Frank Been, "Report on the Inspection of Sitka National Monument," 1939, SNHP, Record Group 16, Box 1, Folder 2, p. 6.

[21] A.E. Demaray, "Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Four," 24 December 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.

[22] Ben C. Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 7 February 1942, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.

[23] Frank Been, "Report on the inspection of Sitka National Monument," 1939, SNHP, Record Group 16, Box 1, Folder 2, pp. 8-12.

[24] Frank Been, "Memorandum for Custodian Miller," 11 March 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3, and Ben C. Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 22 March 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.

[25] Ben C. Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 22 March 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.

[26] Frank Heintzleman, Letter to Frank Been, 13 February 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[27] Ben C. Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 5 February 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[28] Various correspondences, National Archives-Pacific Alaska Region, Record Group 95, Box 2, Number 10.
[29] B. Frank Heintzleman, Letter to Viola Garfield, 27 August 1940, Viola Garfield Papers, UW, Special Collections #130, Box 1, Folder 8.
[30] Viola Garfield, Letter to B.F. Heintzleman, 12 August 1940, Viola Garfield Papers, UW, Special Collections #130, Box 1, Folder 11.
[31] Viola Garfield, various correspondences, Viola Garfield Papers, UW, Special Collections #130, Box 1, Folder 8.
[32] Katherine Kuh, "Alaska's Vanishing Art," *Saturday Review*, 22 October 1966, pp. 25-31.
[33] John Maurstad, "Memorandum. Restoration Totem Poles at Sitka National Monument," no date but most likely mid-1939, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10.
[34] Charles Brown, as quoted in Lawrence Rakestraw, *Totem Pole Restoration*, p. 26.

Chapter 7: The Japonski Loan and Mid-Century

In the aftermath of the New Deal recarving project, the poles were in excellent condition and had the advantages offered by a full-time caretaker. Yet, recarving and patching the poles prolonged their lives for only a short period. The poles still received little funding from the NPS, and it was not long until they began to show major signs of deterioration again. During this time period (from 1940 to 1969), the string of custodians at Sitka National Monument began to grasp the major complexities and difficulties involved in caring for these poles.

The quandary of what to do with the original versions of the seven recarved poles, which were now lying on the ground and still exposed to the elements, confounded those administering the CCC project. While just about every official believed the old poles to be of great historic value, the money for proper storage of them was not forthcoming. Ben Miller stated:

> I realize that while the new poles are exact duplicates they do not have the historical value the old ones do, therefore I feel they [the originals] should be preserved in some way that people who may be interested in this work may have a chance to study the original native handicraft.[1]

Frank Heintzleman advised against the idea of a temporary shed to house the poles because it would be costly and of course it would present a poor appearance. He instead believed that the old poles should be left out in the open but . . . on skids where they could be readily observed and studied until the NPS could build a permanent shelter. He reasoned that "these poles, after many years in the open, would not be materially changed by another six months or a year of exposure."[2] Ben Miller went along with this plan and placed the seven original poles on skids in the open.

With the NPS providing no funding to house these poles, Sitka's military contingent gave Miller another option in late 1941. Concerned with the status of the poles, the wife of an officer at Sitka approached Ben Miller about the possibility of loaning the original totems to the Sitka Naval Air Station on Japonski Island. There, they could be stored in a Navy warehouse, "until such time as suitable housing facilities are provided in the Monument."[3] The official request came from

Left: *The original Mosquito Legend* pole at the Sheldon Jackson Museum. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK Accession Files)

...members of the community had criticized the NPS for allowing the poles to become so dilapidated in the first place.

J.R. Tate, the Commander of the Naval Air Station at Sitka, to Mt. McKinley Superintendent Frank Been:

> It was our thought, that if these old and authentic totems were taken inside undercover and preserved, they would probably last quite a long time and a great deal of additional use and enjoyment might be had therefrom . . . Rather than merely discard them and let them rot away in the woods, information is requested of you as to the practicability of turning them over to the Air Station for rehabilitation and use inside buildings, as suggested.[4]

Been approved the transfer, stating "The opportunity for having the poles sheltered appears too good to lose."[5] NPS Director A. E. Demaray countered this recommendation with the suggestion that "it would be better to place them in the State Capital at Juneau."[6] Miller then contacted Edward L. Keithahn, the curator of the Alaska Historical Library and Museum, and asked if he would be interested in acquiring the old poles. Keithahn turned down the offer, stating that he had no room for them. Miller and Been reiterated their request to loan the poles to the Naval Air Station, stating "the possibility for erecting a shelter over the poles is so remote that the poles will almost certainly be entirely decomposed by the time funds become available."[7] Demaray finally approved the loan by May of 1942, but even then the pole transfer was not a sure thing.

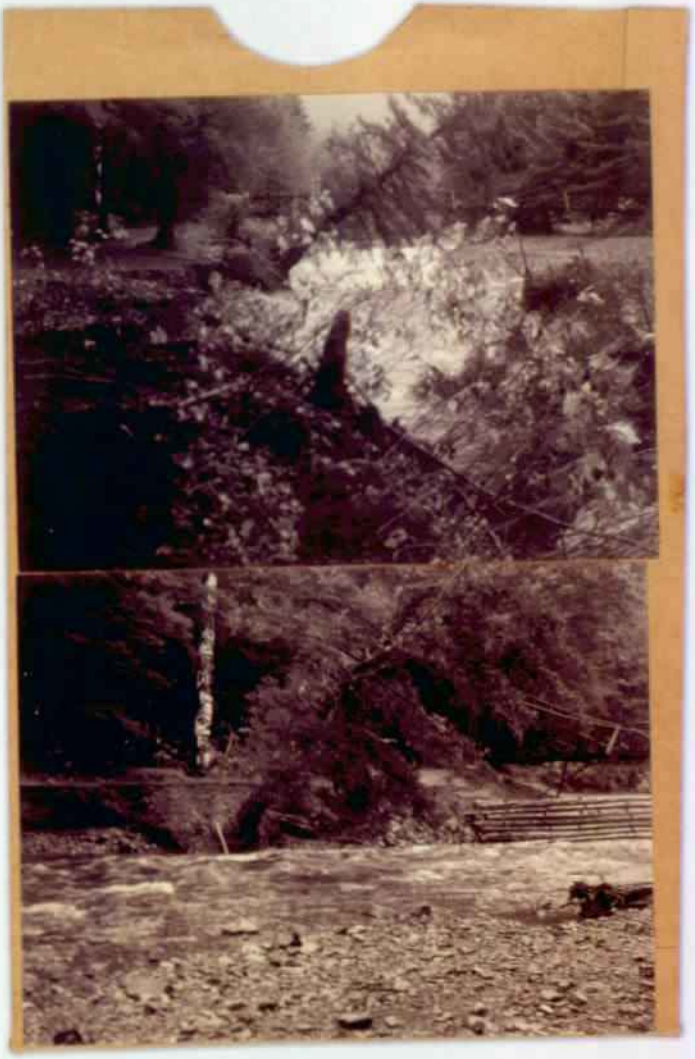
By the time Ben Miller finally reassessed the poles for the loan, he felt they could not be moved from their present position without falling to pieces and the eventual plan to build a shed over them would only be a waste of time and money and would not prolong their usefulness. Apparently, members of the community had criticized the NPS for allowing the poles to become so dilapidated in the first place. This brought Miller to an alarming conclusion:

> Under the existing circumstances, I am requesting permission to destroy the poles, saving the figures that can be restored. By doing this I am quite sure that the National Park Service will avoid considerable adverse criticism . . . It would appear that in as much as these old poles have passed their usefulness and we have replicas of them that their destruction would be altogether fitting and proper.[8]

The Park Service's acting director, Hillory Tolson, rejected this idea stating:

> The responsibility of preserving the original specimens, even though exhibit and scientific value is reduced, cannot be waived to avoid criticism for inadequate preservation. The lack of funds . . . may lead to the eventual complete decay of the totem poles, but they are not to be destroyed as surplus.[9]

Heintzleman issued similar orders: "No pieces, regardless of the stage of deterioration, should be destroyed."[10] So the plan to move the poles to warehouses on Japonski Island went forward and the Naval Air Station received a few pole fragments during the summer of 1942. Frank Been, on an inspec-



The Trader Legend pole before the floods swept it out to sea. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15181)



The poles heading to the 1964-65 New York World's Fair with a fresh coating of snow. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15401C)

tion trip to Japonski Island during the late summer, noted that pole pieces stood at the entrances of the air station's administration and recreation buildings. The recreation building housed a few fragments as well.[11] Though the Navy was able to house several of the original pole fragments at this point, many remained unprotected in the woods of the National Monument.

Following the advent of war in December 1941, Sitka National Monument and its poles received much less attention than during the New Deal era. The U.S. Army took over most of the monument's land till August of 1943 and Miller devoted much of his time in jobs related to the war effort, such as serving on the local draft board and becoming a master sergeant in Alaska's Territorial Guard.[12] In September of 1942, a flood swept down Indian River and washed the Trader Legend Pole, then positioned near a footbridge over the river, out to sea. The Navy retrieved the pole and brought it back to the park shortly thereafter. Some people believed that the severity of the flooding in the monument was directly attributable to massive gravel excavations conducted by the Navy in this area.[13]

Following the war, Miller left the park and was replaced with longtime Alaskan and Mt. McKinley National Park employee

"...fifteen or twenty totem pole figures just laying on the ground (eventually) pushed into the water and buried in dirt and rocks as fill."

Grant H. Pearson. The Navy transferred its Air Station on Japonski Island to the Alaska Native Service, who created the Mt. Edgecumbe School for Alaska Natives in the existing buildings. George Federoff of the Alaska Native Service immediately grew interested in the plight of the poles and requested that the NPS loan its remaining original poles to a proposed museum in one of the hangars. Pearson requested and received permission for this from the NPS Regional Director in the summer of 1947 and, after much administrative posturing, delivered the poles to Mt. Edgecumbe on November 21-22. Pearson stated that "there were eight sections of which some were broken. The poles were in a bad state of deterioration and much care was taken in moving them."[14] According to Federoff, the poles remained in a hangar for only six months, and then the school officials had them moved to a shed with a leaky roof, probably because they took up too much space. The poles continued to deteriorate "until what was left was burned or destroyed."[15] The NPS knew nothing about the destruction of the poles and, because of the lack of funding for Sitka National Monument, could have done little had they known. Later testimony revealed that several Sitka residents had rescued a few pieces. Local artifact collector George Beacom salvaged three portions of the poles that were going to be bull-dozed over the side of the fill out on the island. Beacom saw "fifteen or twenty totem pole figures just laying on the ground," which he believed were eventually "pushed into the water and buried in dirt and rocks as fill."[16] According to later park historian George Hall, the administrators at Mt. Edgecumbe "didn't really care much to have them there when they realized how big the space requirement was, and so . . . they would single out a very bad looking piece and take it out quietly to the dump and burn it."[17]



The poles in front of the Alaska "igloo" at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14930)



The poles in the early days of the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #14928)

Mid-Century and Beyond

Following the Japonski transfer, mid-century proved to be a relatively quiet time for the poles that remained standing. George Hall, appointed park historian in 1957, said that the poles were in good shape when he took the position. According to Hall, being the head of the Monument at this time was extremely difficult because the regional office was "penurious, which means they were cheap bastards." Perhaps the most noteworthy event pertaining to the poles during his time at the park was the burning of the Raven Pole. In 1959, a Sitka teacher took her students to the park for a field trip and lit a fire in the hollowed out portion of the pole that once held human remains, apparently believing that was the cavity's purpose. The pole quickly went up in flames, and by the time Hall arrived at the scene, it was beyond repair. With the monument having very little funding to begin with, Hall had to find a way to cheaply finance a recarve. He wired Hugh Brady, son of John G. Brady and owner of a Washington logging company, hoping to obtain a piece of cedar for a new pole. Brady filled the request immediately and did not ask for compensation in return. George Federoff recarved the figure on top of the pole as a favor to the NPS, and Sitka resident Ralph Branson adzed the pole for a more traditional look. Hall raised the pole in the same location shortly thereafter.[6]

Hall also managed to recover one of the last intact poles from Mount Edgecumbe. By 1961, only a few of the poles remained at the Native school and they had become increasingly extraneous over the years. Hall got word that the Alaska Native school was about to destroy the last large pole, which turned out to be the original Mosquito Legend pole, so he acted quickly to obtain it. Mt. Edgecumbe officials gladly gave him the pole, and Hall transported it to a temporary spot in the Sitka cemetery garage where it stayed for about six months. Hall then arranged for its indefinite loan to the Sheldon Jackson Museum where it remained until the early 1980s.[39]

The next destination for a few of Sitka National Monument's poles was the New York World's Fair in 1964-65. In an August 28, 1963 letter to Sitka and Glacier Bay Superintendent L.J. Mitchell, Alaska Governor William Egan requested to borrow a group of three totem poles from the National Monument Park at Sitka for the two summers during which the world's fair was to occur. Mitchell agreed, and the NPS approved the request in January of 1964. The state arranged to have the monument's seasonal museum aid, Romaine Hardcastle, facilitate the removal of the poles in early March. The NPS and the State agreed upon the Waasgo Legend, the Raven/Shark, and the Yaadaas Crest poles. Pole removal was not a simple matter, and no one in Sitka had experience in the process. The crews had trouble lowering the Yaadaas Crest pole, the largest of the three, to the ground; they managed to

Below: The poles after their return to Sitka following the 1964-65 New York World's Fair. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #959-f)



flip a truck and damage a backhoe in the process, but the pole and the laborers emerged unharmed. Workers wrapped the poles with felt, padded them, and shipped them off on March 11th.[20]

The Alaska exhibit at the New York's World's Fair was an igloo-shaped, two-story building, and organizers decided to have the poles placed in front. The display did not get off to a good start, as the pavilion was not ready in time for the Fair's official opening in late April. The exhibit's director blamed the problems on the contractors and, curiously, the Alaska earthquake of March 27th. Much to the horror of Sitkans and Sitka's NPS workers, reports came back that the poles remained laying on the ground next to the Alaska building as late as June, with "kids running all over them, people sitting on them and carving initials . . . just getting ruined."[21] These

Below: Sitka National Monument's staff posing in front of one of the Yaadaas Corner poles in April of 1964. From left to right, Superintendent L.J. Mitchell, Museum Aid Romaine Hardcastle, Historian William T. Ingersoll. Photo by John M. Morse, architect of the Monument's visitor center. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15301)



...the president of the Sitka Chamber of Commerce exclaimed, "We miss our poles!"

reports turned out to be slightly exaggerated but generally true and, following complaints from Sitka and NPS officials, workers raised the poles shortly thereafter. Following this incident, the exhibit continued without any trouble.

After the fair closed in 1965, the organizers of the Alaska exhibit were slow in returning the poles. The attachment of Sitka citizens to the poles was evident throughout this process. In a letter to the director of travel for the Alaska pavilion, the president of the Sitka Chamber of Commerce exclaimed, "We miss our poles!" and continued to inquire about the return of them.[22] The poles finally arrived home in late March of 1966.

Sitka National Monument received its first visitor center in 1965. Earlier in the decade, the Department of Interior began an Alaska Native arts program at Sitka, for which the NPS created workspace in the new visitor center, though it was not large enough for the carving of large totem poles. Also, during the 1960s, Romaine Hardcastle researched the meanings and legends associated with each pole extensively, and her findings broadened NPS knowledge of the collection.[23]

Perhaps the seminal event in this period pertaining to totem poles was the 1967 Conference on Southeast Alaska Native Artifacts and Monuments. The stir caused by Katherine Kuh's article in an October 1966 issue of the *Saturday Review* nationally publicized the issues surrounding the preservation of totem poles. The political commotion prompted Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to contact former Sitka custodian George Hall and request that he organize a meeting of specialists to discuss the issues brought out in the article. Chaired by Hall, this conference involved experts from throughout Alaska and Canada. Among those present were several U.S. government and Alaska state officials charged with pole stewardship, famed northwest coast Native art expert Bill Holm, noted northwest coast scholars such as Erna Gunther and Wilson Duff, and Grand President of the Alaska Native Brotherhood Dr. Walter Soboleff. The conference gave the most experienced pole stewards on the coast a chance to brainstorm on all of the issues raised throughout the poles' twentieth century history. The participants discussed questions of pole ownership following a recarve, how poles should be salvaged from old villages, and how to create and maintain amicable relationships with northwest coast Alaska Natives. One of the major recommendations was that all poles from southeast Alaska should remain in southeast Alaska in order to help in the revitalization of the Tlingit and Haida cultures.[24]

From this conference came a survey of totem parks and abandoned villages in 1969 by Wilson Duff; Jane Wallen of the Alaska State Museum; Joe Clark, Wood Pathologist from the U.S. Forest Service; and many Tlingit and Haida facilitators who acted as local authorities throughout the survey. In their report following the survey, they recommended large-scale preservation projects for poles remaining in those villages no longer inhabited. They also recommended that pole stewards make efforts to remove the poles, transfer them to central locations, and rehabilitate them for public viewing. Before moving any poles, stewards would be required to contact the clans who raised them and allow these clans to decide the fate of their property. For poles in cities and totem parks, the group recommended more emphasis on preservation treatments.[25] While the implementation of these recommendations was dependent on the enthusiasm and funding of specific groups responsible for the land on which the totem poles were situated, the suggestions of the surveying group presented a broad framework for preservation that represented the opinions of the leading totem pole stewardship experts of the day. The scattered efforts of the past gained important focus and organization from this conference. It was now up to pole stewards along the coast to find the best way to apply these proposals.

NOTES

[1] Ben Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 26 February 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[2] Frank Heintzleman, Letter to Frank Been, 13 February 1940, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[3] Ben Miller, "Memorandum for the [NPS] Director," 19 November 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[4] J. R. Tate, Letter to Frank T. Been, 19 November 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[5] Frank Been, "Memorandum for Custodian of Sitka," 15 December 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[6] A. E. Demaray, "Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region Four," 24 December 1941, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[7] Frank T. Been, "Memorandum for the Director," 7 April 1942, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[8] Ben C. Miller, "Memorandum for Superintendent Been," 1 June 1942, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[9] Hillory A. Tolson, "Memorandum for Superintendent," 3 August 1942, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 3.
[10] B. F. Heintzleman, Letter to Tongass Division Supervisor, 7 April 1942, National Archives-Pacific Alaska Region, Record Group 95, Box 2, Number 10.
[11] Frank Been, "Field Notes and Interviews, Inspection of Glacier Bay National Monument and Sitka National Monument," 12 August to 4 September 1942, SNHP, miscellaneous files of Gene Griffin, p. 31.
[12] The Department of the Interior officially transferred the land to the War Department on 14 July, 1942. It was not formally returned to the Department of the Interior until 10 July, 1947, but the two NPS custodians in this era were still able to carry out their duties.
[13] Ben C. Miller, "Monthly Narrative Report, September 1942," SNHP, miscellaneous files of Gene Griffin, and Bonnie Houston, "Sitka National Monument Land Use History; 1939-1945," unpublished manuscript, May 1995, on file at the National Park Service-Alaska Support Office.
[14] Grant Pearson, "Monthly Narrative Report, November, 1947," SNHP, miscellaneous files of Gene Griffin, and numerous correspondences, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10.
[15] "Interview with George Federoff," 27 May 1968, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 9.
[16] Steve Henrikson, Memorandum to Gary Candelaria-"Beacom Collection—Recent Contact with George Beacom," SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 10.
[17] George Hall, interview by author, 24 October 2000, Anchorage, AK, on file at the National Park Service- Alaska Support Office, Anchorage, AK.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., and numerous correspondences, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 1.
[20] Numerous correspondences, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 13.
[21] William Ingersoll, Letter to L. J. Mitchell, 4 June 1964, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 13.
[22] Leslie Yaw, letter to Morris Ford, 6 December 1965, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 13.
[23] See SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 2, Folder 6.
[24] Proceedings of "Conference on Southeast Alaska Native Artifacts and Monuments," 13-14 July 1967, Juneau, Alaska, on file at the National Park Service-Alaska Support Office.
[25] Wilson Duff, Jane Wallen, and Joe Clark, *Totem Pole Survey*, June-October 1969.



Chapter 8: "Double Diffusion"

The Next Wave of Preservation

Sitka's totem poles represented a daunting responsibility to each of their caretakers throughout the century. Funding for preservation work was almost non-existent, and the poles continued to decay. In 1972, President Nixon signed a bill that changed the name of the monument to Sitka National Historical Park, expanded its boundaries, and recommended the immediate purchase of historic Russian properties in Sitka. The NPS acquired Russian buildings shortly thereafter, and funding for the park increased rapidly after this expansion. With more funding, NPS managers were able to take a more proactive approach toward caring for the poles, and new ideas for long-term pole preservation emerged.



The chemicals used in the early 1970s preservation project were highly toxic. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15364)

In 1969, park management conducted the first full condition assessment of the poles since the New Deal. Predictably, the assessors were alarmed by the poles' poor condition. In response to this, Superintendent Daniel Kuehn consulted with wood preservation experts and, on their recommendation, had the poles treated with anti-fungal sprays in 1971. Midway through the project, lab tests showed that this process was proving to be ineffective, so after more correspondence, Kuehn chose to experiment with another method. The alternative process, called "double diffusion," was much more tedious and expensive. Park employees dug two large, totem-sized trenches, filled them with different chemical solutions, and allowed the poles to soak in each of these solutions for a number of days. Following this, workers performed additional maintenance and raised the poles on new supports. Kuehn

Left: Detail of the Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi pole during carving. Photograph by Gene Griffin. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files



The laborious totem pole preservation project of 1971-73. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15371B)

decided not to soak two of the poles in order to gauge the effectiveness of the treatment. He also decided against lowering the Saanaheit pole because its large size made the utilization of this treatment exceedingly difficult. Instead, workers placed scaffolding around the pole and sprayed it with a preservative. Having taken three summers to accomplish all of this (1971-73), the arduous project showed great promise but only helped to preserve the poles for a short period.[1] According to a 1975 memorandum to NPS headquarters on behalf of Sitka, Pacific Northwest Regional Director Edward Kurtz stated that "although the deterioration has subsided somewhat, continued deterioration is evident." These preservation treatments, especially on the older poles, were not effective enough. The park, Kurtz concluded, needed to house the totems indoors.[2]

With the coming of the U. S. Bicentennial in 1976, park officials came up with the idea to have a new pole carved to symbolize the history of the United States. This was the first time a pole would be added to the collection. Park officials first thought up the project in 1974, but funding did not come through until December of 1975. As new Park Superintendent Ellen Lang drew up the contract for bidding, she included a clause that was new to Sitka: along with carving the pole, the carver would be required to provide a living history demonstration and be accessible to the public throughout the carving process. Lang, a Tlingit herself, believed such a display was important for the re-invigoration of her culture, so much so that she would not award a contract to anyone who refused to comply with this clause. The NPS gave the contract to Duane Pasco and changed the focus of the pole from US history to northwest

coast history. Pasco lived in the Seattle area, which angered local Native leaders and prompted inquiries from Alaska Senator Ted Stevens and Representative Don Young. Since Lang had contracted the project through proper NPS contracting methods via the Alaska Native Brotherhood, nothing came of the protests. Pasco finished the pole on September 7th, 1976, and the park dedicated it on October 16th.[3]



Tommy Jimmy nearing completion of the Raven/Shark pole in April of 1978. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #942-I)

Following this successful addition to the Sitka collection, Lang decided to use some of Sitka National Historical Park's rising funds for recarving the park's original poles. With the park's budget almost doubling between 1973 and 1980, Lang and her successors were able to set aside annual funding for such a project. She felt that one of the Yaadaas Corner poles (#2) and the Raven/Shark pole were most in need of recarving, and she again contracted with the Alaska Native Brotherhood for a carver. The ANB awarded the contract, which again included the "living history" clause, to experienced Alaska Native carver Tommy Jimmy. He completed the poles in 1978.[4] New Park Superintendent Sue Edelstein, the replacement for Ellen Lang (who took an NPS position in Anchorage), sought to continue the reproduction of the poles. The Cormorant pole was next in line, and in the contract, she specified what she believed "living history" to mean: "The carver must be willing to converse with park visitors as he/she works, explaining his tools and methods."[5] Carver Nathan Jackson won the contract and completed the job in late 1979. The park rededicated the pole in a ceremony on August 16th, 1980.

Additionally, Duane Pasco performed a survey of the Sitka poles in March of 1978. Through study of the poles, Pasco reported that:

"... when it came to saying 'we'd like to do a Mosquito legend pole,' it was clear [the NPS] had no rights to the story and were "trespassing" if we did a new interpretation of that in carving."

Unfortunately, from the purist point of view, these totem poles lack much of their original magnificence ... since their acquisition they have been tampered with many times and by unskilled hands or at least by persons not of the old school ... each time elements on the totem poles were repaired or "cleaned up," distortions were a result.



The original Cormorant pole going into storage in October of 1980. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #940-jj)

Though some of the CCC recarves appeared to adhere more towards tradition, most of them did not. Pasco examined the details of the poles and speculated, with exactitude, what they had originally looked like. In conclusion, Pasco recommended certain carvers he believed had the skills "to prevent the continuation of the kind of mistakes that have been made in the past."[6]

With the increased volume of thought on the totem poles and a growing degree of concern among park management, Edelstein and Sitka Chief Ranger Gary Candelaria began to prepare a long-term preservation plan for the poles. They journeyed to Ketchikan in April of 1979 to inquire into pole management techniques at the repositories in Saxman Village, the Totem Heritage Center, and Totem Bight State Park. They also discussed the possibilities for the future of the poles with community leaders and Natives in Sitka before formulating the first draft.[7]

In October, they completed a draft of the plan. In the cover letter to this document, Edelstein recognized the unprecedented nature of the agreement: "As far as I can tell, this is the first comprehensive plan that has been compiled that takes a look at the long-range problems."[8] While past preservation efforts often focused on wood and chemicals, Edelstein and Candelaria, as prompted by Pasco, set precedent by examining

"... since their acquisition [the poles] have been tampered with many times and by unskilled hands or at least by persons not of the old school ... each time elements on the totem poles were repaired or 'cleaned up,' distortions were a result."

the adequacy of images on the poles. The plan focused on ensuring that pole reproductions were of the highest quality. Preserving the sense of place created by the poles' 75 year tenure in Sitka was also a major concern of Edelstein and Candelaria.[9] According to the draft, the preservation of the remaining original poles was more important than that of the recarves. The park would remove the original poles from their outdoor setting and place them in sheds to dry. Able carvers would then copy the originals and park officials would have the copies erected in their former plots. The originals would be treated and prepared for indoor display in a new portion of the visitor center. This plan also proposed that the park not have any of the CCC recarves further reproduced, stating that they did not portray the feeling and spirit of the originals. One CCC pole would be preserved in order to interpret "both the history of the CCC in this area and show changes in Native art after prolonged contact with the white man." These poles



Replacing an old Yaadaas Corner pole with a new one in 1978. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK Accession Files)

were referred to as evolving Alaska Native art, and it was felt that the NPS should commission reinterpretations, or new and different carvings, of the same story or features. Though this concept was totally foreign to traditional concepts of totem carving, Edelstein and Candelaria believed that if the park had the poles recarved for a second time, they would stray too far from the original. After a "reinterpretation was carved, the CCC poles would remain on view in the park as long as possible then left in the woods to rot, as they traditionally would have been in their original villages."[10]



Nathan Jackson recarving the Yaadaas Corner Pole #2 in 1982. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK # 15356)

Edelstein and Candelaria sought extensive public comment on the draft. They attended the Alaska Native Brotherhood convention, held open town meetings, and sought advice from numerous sources. Following these sessions, they modified their proposal in various ways. In the revised plan, the park would offer CCC poles to museums and public agencies rather than allowing them to rot. In another amendment, they recommended that the park commission a historian to do definitive research on the poorly documented poles. In the final amendment, park leadership stated their hope for active southeast Alaska Native involvement in future pole issues. Another of the preservation plan's more controversial aspects, the reinterpretation of poles, never came to be. According to Candelaria, the pole preservation plan contained discordant logic:



Nathan Jackson recarving the Yaadaas Corner Pole #2 in 1982. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK # 15336)

> We went from the one extreme of letting the poles decay and disappear naturally as was traditional, to commissioning totally new designs for new poles. What we really felt [in the end] was that we, the NPS, had no status to commission a true totem pole as we owned no crests or stories that would make poles "genuine" . . . when it came to saying "we'd like to do a Mosquito legend pole," it was clear we had no rights to the story and were "trespassing" if we did a new interpretation of that in carving.[11]

So reinterpretations never played a role in Sitka's pole recarving. With these changed provisions, Edelstein and Candelaria completed their totem preservation plan. The key components of the plan did not stray drastically from the ideas brought forth in prior decades. The results of this endeavor may not have been a revelatory management document, but the plan did give the poles a framework with which to move forward.[12]

The park then moved to procure red cedar logs for the proposed reproductions. The Louisiana Pacific Company out of Ketchikan won the bid for the logs. Sitka's Alaska Lumber and Pulp Company transported the logs to the park free of charge, yet again showing the community's support for the poles. Park leadership slated the Saanaheit house posts and



Nathan Jackson recarving the Yaadaas Corner Pole #2 in 1982 with Steve Brown. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15343)

the Wolf pole to be recarved first, and Sitka resident Reggie Peterson won the bid to do these. The house posts were set for completion by September 30, 1980, and the Wolf pole for December 31, 1980. Peterson did the work but completed the poles much slower than the NPS had hoped, and not as quickly as the contract had stated. Forty years after the CCC project, ranger Gary Candelaria experienced the same culture clash as Sitka's first custodian, Ben C. Miller, noting:

> The folks we contracted were quite good, but they worked on their own schedules and calendars and it wasn't always in sync with the governmental mindset of "get to work and get it done" . . . In hindsight, I suspect this was our "euroamerican" bias showing through, as well as not being in tune with what life and art on the northwest coast is really all about.[13]

Peterson completed the Wolf pole in late 1981. Nathan Jackson and Steve Brown won the contract to reproduce one of the Yaadaas Corner poles. Again, the pole took longer than had been hoped but Park officials began to realize that this was how things were going to be done, even by the best carvers. Jackson and Brown also recarved the Gaanaxadi/Raven pole in 1984. Following this, 10 of the 11 poles that were not recarved during the CCC program were finished, and the





Polaroid photographs of original pole fragments found on Japonski Island. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK Archives, RG-51, Box 2, Folder 20)

recarved poles were installed along the path. The eleventh pole, the Yaadaas Crest, was still mostly original, though CCC workers had recarved its top figure, the twin village watchmen, and its bottom figure, the bear.

Other major developments during the 1980s involved the recovery of an original pole and several original pole fragments from around Sitka. The Sheldon Jackson Museum obtained the original Mosquito Legend Pole on loan from the park in the fall of 1960. In 1980, the museum sought to either make the loan permanent or return the pole to the park. Park officials wanted the pole returned, but it took some time to acquire the funding to do so, as well as to find storage space in which to house the pole. The Sheldon Jackson Museum returned the pole on February 3, 1983.[14]

The set of original pole fragments came from Japonski Island; after hearing reports of old pole pieces being scattered in different residences on the island, the park's seasonal curator Steve Henrikson researched the original loans. He discovered that most of the original poles loaned to the Navy and the Mount Edgecumbe School had been destroyed. Henrikson did manage to locate a few pieces, both at the Mount Edgecumbe School and at a residence. He immediately began efforts to recover them. The school cooperated with the project and returned their two fragments: one piece of the Saanaheit pole and one piece of the Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest pole. The other pieces once belonged to past Sitka resident George Beacom. Beacom, who ran a small museum filled with an assortment of objects, received a house post in the late 1940s or the early 1950s from a friend who found the post in a condemned building in downtown Sitka. This post was from Kasaan and had been displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair.[15] Beacom also saved other pieces from being plowed into fill.



Saanaheit pole fragment at the Totem Club on Japonski Island. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #960-a)

NOTES

[1] Selected documents, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 5 and 7.

[2] Edward Kurtz, Memorandum to Associate Director, Administration, National Park Service, 18 June 1975, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 7.

[3] Selected documents, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 19.

[4] Gary Candelaria, Letter to Steve Wilke, Vice President Geo Recon International, 12 April 1982, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 10.

[5] National Park Service Contract # R09 100-9-0029, 31 August 1979, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 6.

[6] Duane Pasco, "Totem Pole Appraisal," March 1978, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 1, Folder 11.

[7] Gary Candelaria, personal correspondence, 2 April 2001, in possession of SNHP.

[8] Sue Edelstein, Memorandum to NPS Area Director, Alaska, 19 October 1979, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 8.

[9] Gary Candelaria, personal correspondence, 2 April 2001, in possession of SNHP.

[10] "Totem Pole Preservation Plan Proposal," Draft, 1979, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 10.

[11] Gary Candelaria, personal correspondence, 2 April 2001, in possession of SNHP.

[12] Sue Edelstein, Memorandum to NPS Area Director, Alaska, 12 December 1979, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 8.

[13] Gary Candelaria, personal correspondence, 2 April 2001.

[14] Peter Corey, Curator of the Sheldon Jackson Museum, personal correspondence, 10 April 2002, on file at SNHP; Sue Edelstein, Memorandum to NPS Area Director, Alaska, 12 December 1979, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 8; and selected documents, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 10.

[15] This piece is nearly identical to one held by the Alaska State Museum.

[16] Steve Henrikson, personal correspondence, 21 May 2001, on file at SNHP, and selected documents, SNHP, Record Group 51, Box 3, Folder 10.

Chapter 9: "Where Science and History Met"

1990s to Present

In the 1970s and 1980s, the National Park Service's proactive pole management approach greatly improved the overall condition of the Sitka collection, yet the poles continued to deteriorate. During the 1990s, the pole's caretakers shifted their focus to the preservation of poles, and the collection continued to expand with the help of the local Tlingit community.

With the collection requiring no full recarves entering the 1990s, park management shifted its focus to finding new, more effective wood preservation techniques in hopes of extending the poles' outdoor lives. Wood preservation efforts had been haphazard before this period. In the early twentieth century, caretakers tried to patch decayed areas on the poles and repainted them on numerous occasions, believing that it was the best way to protect the wood from water damage. Conservators now think that this may have trapped water in the poles and most likely hastened decay rather than arrest it. During the CCC recarves, poles were treated with creosote on the buried part of their support posts and sodium pentachlorophenate, a preservative and fungicide, on the exposed portions. In the 1960s, park workers treated the poles with pentachlorophenol, a similar solution to that used during the New Deal recarving. In the early 1970s, park employees underwent the tedious process of lowering and dipping the poles in pits of sodium flouride and copper sulfate. Park officials were not happy with the success of these treatments, so they switched to frequent applications of a wax/mineral-oil/varnish treatment and pentachlorophenol in 1976. They discontinued the use of this treatment in 1984, when it was determined that these actions were not effective. The park utilized no preservation treatments for the remainder of the 1980s. While all of the post-CCC preservation techniques may have helped to a degree, none of them managed to stave off continued deterioration for more than a few years.[1]

In hopes of finding a better preservation solution, Sitka's Superintendent Micki Hellickson sought the opinions of NPS wood conservators Ron Sheetz and Al Levitan, who had been in Sitka doing different projects for the park. Following their preliminary assessments, in which they stated that the poles required preservation work in the near future, Hellickson arranged for Sheetz and Levitan to conduct a complete

Left: Detail of the Lakich'inei pole showing the bottom bear figure. Photograph by Gene Griffin. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files

Perhaps the broadest recommendation given by the participants was that the park needed to draft a goal statement for the totem poles and clarify the poles' role in the future of Sitka National Historical Park.

condition assessment in the early summer of 1991. In this assessment, the conservators identified seven of the poles as in the most advanced state of decay and believed that removing several of them for treatment was mandatory.[2] Hellickson also secured the services of Sheetz and Levitan for future preservation work on the poles.

On the heels of this appraisal, Hellickson and the Sitka staff organized a totem pole preservation conference at the park. They invited many interested parties from throughout Alaska and Canada in hopes of getting advice on long-term strategies for pole care. This conference exhibited the difficulties of pole stewardship well, as participants discussed a huge number of complex topics relating to the poles. According to Hellickson, the topics included:

The cultural significance of the poles and how that might affect decisions about their preservation, cultural patrimony and repatriation issues, the issue of whether the NPS should replace poles when they could no longer stand safely and, if so, what any replacements should look like (reproductions or new images) and how those replacements should be treated in the future, the issue of whether the NPS should commission new poles like the Bicentennial pole and under what circumstances, the question of whether reproduction poles might have added significance depending on their carver, and the issue of whether reproduction poles and new poles should be preserved in perpetuity.[3]

With the diverse array of opinions received from conference participants, Sitka National Historical Park's management now had a large number of ideas from which to choose future policies for the pole collection. Perhaps the broadest recommendation given by the participants was that the park needed to draft a goal statement for the totem poles and clarify the poles' role in the future of Sitka National Historical Park. Generally speaking, the NPS needed to create an official vision for the future of the poles, and formalize the ideas touched upon in the pole preservation plan of the early 1980s.[4]

Conference participants also identified four preservation goals for Sheetz and Levitan:

1. To provide effective protection for above ground wood while minimizing hazards to both applicators and the environment.
2. To use a treatment that is as reversible as possible.

3. To easily apply the treatment.
4. To cause the least change in the appearance of the wood.[5]

Sheetz and Levitan believed that a new treatment chemical called Bora-Care would be the most effective preservative. In experiments, this solution had successfully prevented fungal rot and deterred most wood-destroying insects. In addition, Bora-Care was safe for both its users and the environment, or, according to Sheetz, no more toxic than salt. The chemical was also relatively inexpensive and easy to apply. After applying the Bora-Care to the poles, Sheetz and Levitan planned to coat them with a water repellant containing paraffin oil. This served the dual purpose of keeping the Bora-Care from leeching out of the wood and protecting the poles from water damage.[6]



Ron Sheetz and Al Levitan treating the poles. Sitka National Historical Park (SITK #15379FF)

Treatment of the poles occurred during the summers of the early to mid 1990s, with the conservators singling out several poles to treat each year. Park workers removed the poles from their placements and brought them to a covered workplace for Sheetz and Levitan. Before the application of the chemicals, the conservators performed routine maintenance, such as cleaning, securing deteriorated patches of wood, and removing fungus. Because the largest amount of deterioration on the poles occurred at ground level and continued almost two feet

As knowledge of the park's success in preserving totem poles spread throughout southeast Alaska, interest grew in Sitka's preservation techniques.

below the surface, conservators decided to move the carved portions of the poles several inches off the ground by attaching them to new, separate support posts. They felt that this would stop the rot from spreading to the carved parts of the pole.[7] End caps emerged as an experimental issue as well. The conservators discovered that a lead end cap, put in place by the CCC workers, remained on the Saanaheit pole, whereas other such caps had been removed. This cap reduced decay in the upper portions of the pole so, based on that evidence, Sheetz and Levitan began installing similar caps on all poles with flat tops.[8]

After observing the results of these wood preservation techniques for several years, the conservators believed that they were working and felt that reapplication every few years would keep the sealant effective. One of the main advantages of the preservatives was the ease of their application. Conservators were not the only ones who could reapply the Bora-Care or water repellant; the process only required a stepladder, or mechanical lift, and spray canisters, thus park maintenance workers could accomplish the job easily. Happy with this success, park management has made these preservation treatments a mandatory part of the park budget and decreed that poles be re-treated every three to five years, or as needed. According to Gene Griffin, Sitka's head of cultural resources during most of the 1990s, the preservation techniques pioneered by Sheetz and Levitan were the point "where science and history met" at Sitka.[9]

During these preservation treatments, park management also decided to substitute fiberglass rods for the steel rods already placed in the poles to prevent splitting. This turned out to be the least successful aspect of 1990s preservation, as these new rods did not prove to be strong enough to hold the poles together. In the summer of 1994, the Waasgo Legend pole, one of the first to have the fiberglass rods put in place, split and a portion of it fell to the ground. Park management decided that the fiberglass rods could not handle the weight of the totem poles. Park staff replaced them with stainless-steel rods, and no such problems have occurred since.[10]

As knowledge of the park's success in preserving totem poles spread throughout southeast Alaska, interest grew in Sitka's preservation techniques. Numerous other communities throughout the region had large pole collections as well, and concern for decaying totems was widespread along the coast. Through a grant by the Cultural Resource Training Initiative

(CRTI), the NPS, in cooperation with the Wrangell Museum, organized a pole preservation training course in April of 1998. While this course was rudimentary, it convened totem caretakers from various coastal communities and helped them realize common concerns about their respective totem poles. The organizers held a more hands-on follow-up course in August of 1999, with the help of another CRTI grant, and again had large participation from local totem caretakers and carvers. The success of these courses has bred community-based interest in such training. According to Al Levitan, the courses provide "a good example of how the NPS can leverage its expertise and funding, and thereby have a positive effect on cultural resource preservation beyond its own boundaries."[11] The first community-based training course occurred at Klawock in July of 2001.



The park's current head of maintenance, Gene Hirayama, spraying preservative on the poles (1990s). Sitka National Historical Park (SITK # SITK 945-u)

[the "Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi" pole is] "...a marker to show that people lived here in the past. A connection to the ownership of the land, the past connecting to the future."[12]

While several of the indoor exhibits at the park have long featured objects crafted by their ancestors, the local Tlingit population had little to do with the outdoor totem display. In order to compensate for this, the community, with the cooperation of the NPS, added new poles to the park in the 1990s. In 1996, the Southeast Alaska Cultural Center commissioned Tlingit carvers Will Burkhart, Tommy Joseph, and Wayne Price to create a pole signifying the first people to settle in the Sitka area. Images of the many different clans in Sitka adorn the pole. Called the "Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi," the pole represents these clans putting old rivalries behind. According to project facilitator Dave Galanin, the pole is important to the Sitka Tlingit because "It's a marker to show that people lived here in the past. A connection to the ownership of the land, the past connecting to the future."[13] The local Tlingit donated this pole to the park on the condition that the NPS provide "conservation services . . . in the same manner it cares for other totems in its collection."[15]



Raising the "Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi" pole. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files

In 1999, the Tlingit Kiksadi clan commissioned Tommy Joseph and assistant Fred Beltran to carve a pole honoring K'alyaan, the leader of the Tlingit in the 1804 battle against the Russians. They raised the pole in Sitka National Historical Park, at the site of the fort defended by the Tlingit during this battle. Alfred Perkins, leader of the Kiksadi clan, raised more than $50,000 to have the pole carved.[14]

At the end of the 1990s, park management won a long battle to secure funding for a renovation of the increasingly inadequate visitor center. The new design includes a large indoor display area for the remaining original pieces of the totems. Once the project is completed, the park will finally be able to display the poles after years of keeping them in warehouses. Construction

The addition of two poles gave the local Tlingit population a more significant attachment to the park and helped to show that totem pole carving was alive and well on the Northwest Coast.

on the visitor center began in spring of 2001. According to Gene Griffin, "The new display will give the poles their due in the park."[15]

The 1990s to the present have proven to be a successful period in pole management. The discovery of new preservation techniques improved the poles and made their stewards



Raising the "K'alyaan" pole. Sitka National Historical Park, SITK Accession Files

confident that it will be possible to prolong the lives of outdoor totems. The addition of two poles gave the local Tlingit population a more significant attachment to the park and helped to show that totem pole carving was alive and well on the Northwest Coast. Finally, the revamped visitor center will allow the park to display almost its entire pole collection, thus giving visitors a chance to more fully understand the totem

poles of Sitka National Historical Park. These advances have improved the park and given its management a framework with which to manage their poles in the future.

NOTES

[1] Ron Sheetz, "Totem Pole and House Post Conservation" in *Wood Structures*, p. 260.

[2] Ron Sheetz and Charles Fisher, *Preservation Tech Notes*, p. 3.

[3] Michele Hellickson, interview by author, 16 July 2001, notes on file at SNHP.

[4] *Totem Preservation Conference*, 24-27 June 1991, on file a SNHP. The number of suggestions were too large and varied to list here.

[5] Ibid., p. 262.

[6] Ron Sheetz, interview by author, 3 July 2001; Al Levitan, interview by author; 3 July 2001, notes for both on file at SNHP; and Ron Sheetz and Charles Fisher, *Preservation Tech Notes*, pp. 3-4.

[7] This idea was originally brought forth in the 1980s.

[8] Ron Sheetz, interview by author, 3 July 2001; Al Levitan, interview by author, 3 July 2001; and Ron Sheetz and Charles Fisher, *Preservation Tech Notes*, pp. 3-4.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Gene Griffin, interview by author, 3 July 2001, notes on file at SNHP.

[11] Al Levitan, "Totem Preservation in Southeast Alaska," *National Park Service Cultural Resource Manual*, Vol. 22, No. 7, 1999.

[12] As quoted in "Totem of the People: Restoring the Lost World of the Tlingits," *Anchorage Daily News*, 12 May 1996.

[13] Letter of agreement signed by Gary Gauthier and Nels Lawson, President of the Board, Southeast Alaska Indian Cultural Center, 16 November 1999, on file at SNHP.

[14] *Anchorage Daily News*, 17 September 1999, p. B-4.

[15] Gene Griffin, interview by author, 3 July 2001, notes on file at SNHP.

Conclusions

The Poles of Sitka National Historical Park, Past, Present, and Future

As the Tlingit and Haida cultures have evolved throughout the last one hundred years, so has totem pole carving. The plight of the Sitka totem poles is representative of the situation of other poles along the coast, and of the southeast Alaska Native cultures in general. Totem pole carving flourished while the cultures that produced them flourished, and then diminished as their cultures experienced problems. Now, in conjunction with a cultural renaissance along the coast, totem poles are receiving increased attention, in both new carvings and the preservation of older poles. As one observer of this phenomenon has put it, "I would say five years ago [the mid-1980s] you could look at the carvers and list them on one hand. Now there are carvers all over."[1] United States culture has evolved during this period as well, and appreciation for the Tlingit and Haida cultures, and their artwork, has advanced into the popular realm. Art camps and workshops for the youth occur in communities along the coast, with both Alaska Native and non-Native children learning traditional Native skills.

In getting to the present day, the Sitka poles have suffered through periods of great uncertainty. The New Deal preservation program was the seminal event in the history of these poles. Along with using the old method of patching decayed portions of the poles and experimenting with wood preservation techniques, the Forest Service facilitators of the WPA/CCC project introduced the recarve as an option for pole preservation. This undertaking provided the framework through which totem pole preservation has progressed to the present day. By allowing identical recarves to be done, both the carvers and project facilitators declared that saving the poles' images was their primary concern, while salvaging the wood on which these images were carved was secondary.

If the New Deal pole work rescued the poles from difficult circumstances, then the increased funding provided by the National Park Service in the last thirty years has been the poles' second salvation. By using modern wood preservation techniques and employing some of the best carvers to work on its collection, the NPS has taken a proactive approach to assuring the continued quality of Sitka's poles.

While NPS dedication to the Sitka poles has been improving, one bureau-wide policy has hindered the ability of Sitka National Historical Park's administration to effectively manage

their poles. The strictly material definition of preservation adopted by the National Park Service fails to encompass the complexities of totem pole recarving. Since recarving does not materially preserve the poles, the NPS does not provide preservation funding for recarving projects. This forces Sitka's management to scrounge for preservation funding from other parts of their budget. In the case of totem poles, recarving is preservation. Wood cannot be preserved forever, thus preserving the essence of the poles - their images - in high quality recarves is crucial to their survival. Preservation, in this instance, is much more than a material issue.

In general, though, the National Park Service has become an excellent caretaker of these poles. Thanks to the efforts of the present day carvers, with the support of organizations like the National Park Service, the northwest coast style of art is thriving, and one of its headquarters is Sitka. Whether it be Native children admiring the work of both their ancestors and their elders, a Sitka community member jogging past these pillars of the city, or tourists staring curiously at these legendary objects, the Southeast Alaska Native community and the National Park Service have helped ensure that totem poles have a place in the future of Southeast Alaska. As carver Tommy Joseph has stated, "there are still many stories to be told, both old and new."[2]

NOTES

[1] Bill Trudeau, former director of the Totem Heritage Center in Ketchikan, as quoted in Sue Cross, "Art of totem pole carving resurges," *Anchorage Daily News*, 19 September 1988, p. B-1.

[2] Tommy Joseph, interview by author, 29 August 2001, on file at SNHP.

Totem Pole Appendix

While this book has been written as a history of the Sitka National Historical Park totem pole collection as a whole, these pole files serve as brief histories of the individual poles. They contain information on the origins, the travels, and the recarvings of each pole, and are meant to serve as quick reference guides. The information contained in these files is based on evidence cited in the main text of this book, unless otherwise noted. They serve as a companion to the text and, hopefully, will provide a good starting point for further research on the poles, especially for the few whose origins still remain elusive.

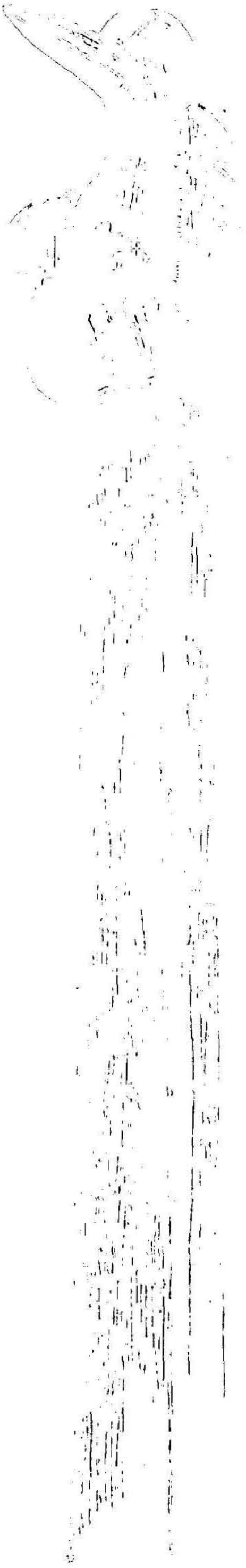


Illustration of Raven memorial pole by JoAnn George from the publication *CARVED HISTORY, The Totem Poles & House Posts of Sitka National Historical Park*.

Measurements (1975): 25 feet tall, 3 feet 2 inches wide, 4 feet thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired pole from Klinkwan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
1967 George Benson interview summary excerpt: "This one was recarved completely. Working with him [Benson] on this one was John Sam [1939-40]." Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy.

Other Points of Interest:
The five rings underneath the top figure indicate that the person who commissioned the pole was of high standing.



Gaanaxadi/Raven Crest Pole
(also called Crane People Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 10; 1939 CCC numbering - 388; present park numbering - 9

Place of Origin: Tuxekan

Affiliation: Tlingit

Date of Collection: November 3 to 4, 1903

Donor: Chief Gunyah, as evidenced in Brady's field notes

Type of Pole: Either Crest or Legend



Measurements (1975): 32 feet tall, 2 feet 4 inches wide, 3 feet thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole from Tuxekan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
CCC carver George Benson claimed he did not recarve it, "just like new in 1939" (1967 interview summary), but Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy. Nathan Jackson and Steve Brown recarved the pole in 1983.

Other Points of Interest:
Affiliated with the Tlingit "Gaanaxadi" clan.
From Brady field notes of collection journey: "Gunyah in pilot house on Rush - the pole which he gives has a raven on top. Raven holds the moon by his foot. He asked for the moon and it was given to him. The raven went to the Naas [?] and asked for some hoolicans but they would [not] give any then the raven placed the sun and the moon in the heavens. Before this all was darkness and all got scared by the light. The bear people and the deer people went to [?] and the seal people went to water. Next to the raven is a man. He hit a frog on the back with a stick because he was afraid of him. Then come raven married to a Keet. The raven bites the Keet's tail - The owl is the last figure on the pole. Anciently they had a quarrel with the owl and beat him. The pole is about 27 years old+"

Golden Hill Pole
(A Waasgo legend pole)

Identification: Never in SNHP

Place of Origin: Most likely Koianglas (also called Quinlas or Onhonklis)

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 7 to 8, 1903

Donor: Yeal-tat-see, broken pole (almost identical crest to another pole at Howkan)

Type of Pole: Legend or Crest

Measurement: Unknown

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original carving date unknown; Bill Holm estimated early to mid-19th century. During Brady's acquisition of the pole, it broke into three pieces as it was lowered to the ground. Brady brought the pole to St. Louis in 1904. Native craftsman considered it beyond repair, and the pieces were loaned to showman Captain Dick Crane for use in his "Esquimaux Village" during the fair (on the Pike, not at Alaska exhibit). Following the fair, Brady sold this pole to a businessman for $125. This businessman then allowed the Governor of Missouri to give the pole to an influential Indiana business-man, probably in an attempt to attract his business to the state. This man, David Parry, then had it raised on his estate outside of Indianapolis. When Parry passed away, his property was subdivided and sold off. The area became a wealthy neighborhood called Golden Hill, and the decaying totem pole remained until the 1940s. It was supposedly donated to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis though, no records of this transaction or pieces of the pole have been located. People claim that it blew down in a storm around 1948.

Recarvings:
Similar pole carved by Ketchikan carver Lee Wallace, for Eiteljorg Museum, Indianapolis, Indiana in 1996.

Other Points of Interest:
Crane placed electric lights in the eyes of several figures at his Esquimaux Village on the Pike at St. Louis in 1904. Waasgo-type pole, possibly carved by same artist as Sitka's Waasgo pole, according to Bill Holm.

Raven Head Down Pole

Identification: Never at SNHP

Place of Origin: Tuxekan

Affiliation: Tlingit

Date of Collection: November 3 to 4, 1903

Donor: Yun-nate (also spelled Yennate, Koo-neit, Kanet)

Type of Pole: Mortuary for donor's mother. "The raven on top represents his clan, the woman beneath his mother and the two crouching figures were slaves who belonged to his uncle a noted Icht in his day." See Brady Letter to Elizabeth, November 2, 1903, p. 1.

Measurements: Unknown

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole from Tuxekan in 1903. It was shipped to Seattle then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, 1904. Brady sold the pole to the Milwaukee Public Museum at the end of the fair for $500. "I shall dispose of two-one to Milwaukee Museum for $600 . . .". He later dropped the price to $500 because of the pole's poor condition.

Recarvings:
None known

Other Points of Interest:
Brady claimed it belonged to the Tlingit "Kokwonton" clan in his 1904 annual report.



Haa leelk'u has Kaa sta heeni deiyi Pole

Place of Origin: Sitka

Affiliation: Tlingit

Year Carved: 1996

Carvers: Will Burkhart, Tommy Joseph, and Wayne Price

Other Points of Interest:
The pole represents the clans of the Sitka Tlingit putting their old rivalries behind them and working for the good of all Tlingit people. According to project facilitator Dave Galanin, the pole is important to the Sitka Tlingit because "It's a marker to show that people lived here in the past. A connection to the ownership of the land, the past connecting to the future."



K'alyaan Pole

Place of Origin: Sitka

Affiliation: Tlingit Kiksadi

Year Carved: 1999

Carvers: Tommy Joseph and Fred Beltran

Other Points of Interest:
The pole honors K'alyaan, the leader of the Tlingit during their 1804 battle against the Russians. It stands at the site of the fort defended by the Tlingit during this battle.



Lakich'inei Pole
(also spelled Lagwadji'na)

Identification: Early park numbering - 11; 1939 CCC numbering - 389; present park numbering - 10

Place of Origin: Sukkwan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 15, 1903

Donor: Johnny Kanow/Jones (also spelled Kelnow)

Type of Pole: Probably Legend

Measurements (1975): 28 feet tall, 4 feet wide, 2 feet 3 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Carved before 1888 (photographic evidence). Brady acquired the pole from Sukkwan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
1967 George Benson interview summary: "Just like new in 1939," though it was most likely recarved. Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy.



Mosquito Legend Pole
(also called Goo-teekhl Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 13; 1939 CCC numbering - 391; present park numbering - 11

Place of Origin: Sukkwan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 15, 1903

Donor: Hattie Wallace, wife of Joseph Wallace. From Viola Garfield Collection (UW, no.130), Album 11, p. 28: "Mr. Wallace

said that this looks like his mother's sister's pole. He lived with her part of the time at Sukkwan. He recognized the devilfish as similar to one on the pole in front of her house, but did not know the story of it." Brady's field notes state "Joseph Wallace and his wife Hattie at Klinkwan: She claims a totem on the point at Sukkwan and expressed a willingness to donate it."

Type of Pole: Legend

Measurements (1975): 33 feet tall, 3 feet 6 inches wide, 2 feet 2 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Carved before 1888 (photographic evidence). Brady acquired the pole from Sukkwan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906. Original loaned to either the Naval Air Station or the Mt. Edgecumbe School in the 1940s. Recovered in 1961, and loaned to the Sheldon Jackson Museum until 1983, when it was returned to Sitka National Historical Park.

Recarvings:
According to George Benson, 1939 CCC: "Repairs were made," though it was most likely recarved. Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy. According to Marilyn Knapp in *Carved History*: "recarved by Frank Kitka in the 1938-41 CCC Project here in the park."

Other Points of Interest:
Original pole now referred to as the "Frankenstein" pole because of its extensive patching and treatment.



Raven Memorial Pole

Identification: Early park numbering - 9; 1939 CCC numbering - 387; present park numbering - 8

Place of Origin: Tuxekan

Affiliation: Tlingit

Date of Collection: November 3 to 4, 1903

Donor: George Staney or Thomas Snuck

Type of Pole: Memorial/Mortuary

Measurements (1975): 21 feet tall, 2 feet wide, 2 feet thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole from Tuxekan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
"Restoration of Totem Poles" memorandum states that CCC workers restored but did not recarve this pole in 1939-42. CCC carver George Benson claimed that "no one worked on this one" in a 1967 interview. A Sitka school group accidentally burned the pole in 1959. Mt. Edgecumbe School official George Federoff recarved the top figure shortly thereafter, and Sitka resident Ralph Branson adzed the lower portion of the pole.



Raven/Shark Pole
(also called Shark People Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 2; 1939 CCC numbering - 381; present park numbering - 14

Place of Origin: A village "six miles from Klawock." E-mail correspondence with Dr. Steven Langdon of the University of Alaska-Anchorage, August 14, 2001: "It seems likely that it comes from the south shore of the Klawock estuary, to the east of the present village of Klawock and in proximity to the mouth of the Klawock River."

Affiliation: Tlingit



Date of Collection: November 6, 1903

Donor: Tom Teh-Gat (Taki-et, Chief Tom). The pole described on p. 6 of Brady's letter summarizing the collection journey to his wife is the only Sitka pole that matches. Brady field notes state "Chief Tom (Teh gat) a leader of people at Klawock. He gave a totem pole Eagle at the top-dog fish-wolf-brown bear."

Type of Pole: Crest or legend

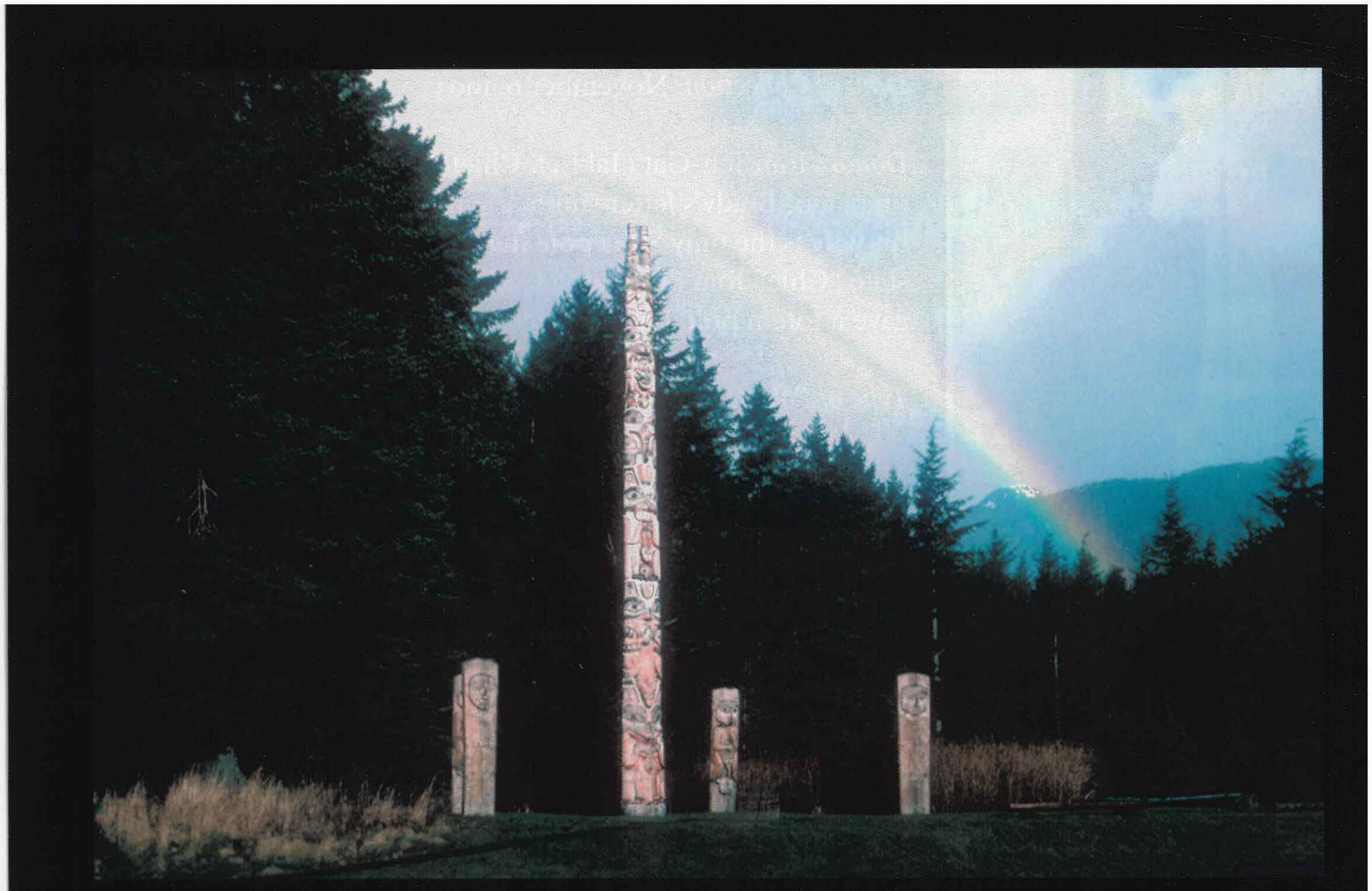
Measurements (1975): 29 feet tall, 2 feet 9 inches wide, 2 feet 2 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole from the vicinity of Klawock in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906. Brought to New York World's Fair in 1964. Original (minus the bottom figure) now in main lobby of Anchorage Museum of History and Art. Park management had the pole cut in two for the journey to Anchorage in 1987.

Recarvings:
1967 George Benson interview summary "Patched, but from what he said the patching was done prior to the late 1930's by the 'old-timers.'" Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be an original, "extensively patched and repaired." Tommy Jimmy recarved the pole in 1978. Original cleaned and stabilized by Steve Brown in 1982.

Other Points of Interest:
Brady's description: "It was made for his wife and represents the Kok-wan-ton totems-the eagle dogfish wolf and brown bear." See Brady letter to Elizabeth November 2, 1903, p. 6.

Immediate left: The original Raven/Shark Pole as it now stands in the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. Photograph by Chris Ahrend.



Saanaheit Pole and House Posts
(Pole also called Fog Woman Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 14; 1939 CCC numbering - 392; present park numbering - 12. House posts: CCC numbering 393 to 396; present park numbering-15 to 18.

Place of Origin: Old Kasaan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: October, 1901



Donor: Chief Saanaheit

Type of Pole: Unknown

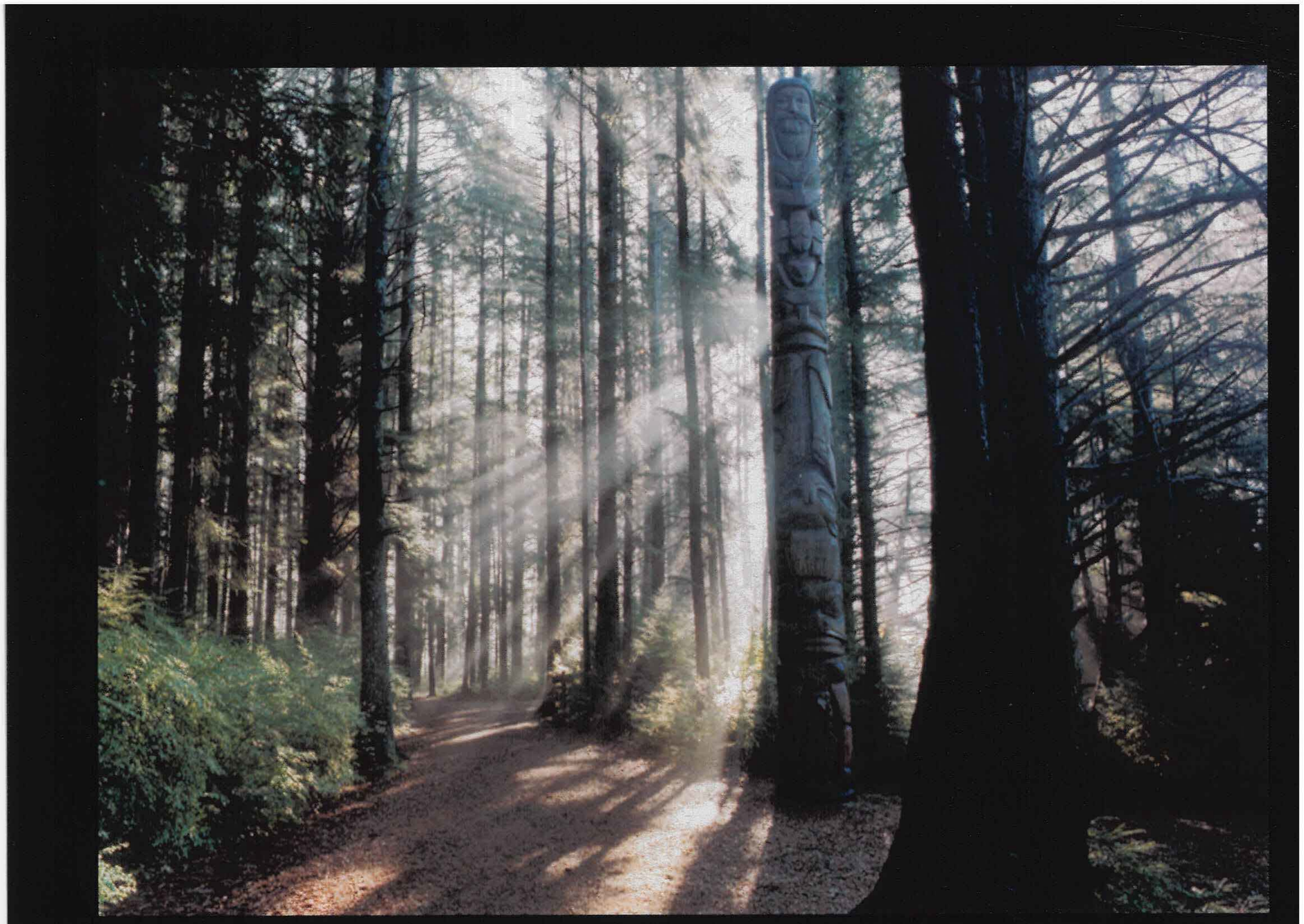
Measurements (1975): 55 feet tall, 4 feet 9 inches wide, 2 feet 3 inches thick; original said to have been about 60' tall; all house posts 14 feet tall, 3 feet 2 inches wide, 1 foot thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Procured by Brady in 1901 at Old Kasaan. Brought to Sitka. Did not travel to the Louisiana Purchase or Lewis & Clark Expositions. Original loaned to either the Naval Air Station or the Mt. Edgecumbe School in the 1940s. Park officials recovered a fragment of the pole from the old Navy "Totem

Club" in the late 1980s. Another fragment of the pole still exists at a home on Japonski Island.

Recarvings:
Completely recarved in 1941-42 by George Benson and Peter Jones. Wilson Duff (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed the pole to be a copy and the house posts to be originals "extensively patched and repaired." House posts recarved in 1981/82 by Reggie Peterson.





Trader Legend Pole
(also called Fur Trader Pole and Mr. Mills Totem)

Identification: Early park numbering - 8; 1939 CCC numbering - 397; present park numbering - 7

Place of Origin: Sukkwan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 15, 1903

Donor: Douglas Suk-qua. Brady field notes state "Douglas Sukqua is the name of the old chief who promised the house and pole at Sukkwan. It is the first house nearest the anchorage. He is about 70 years old."

Type of Pole: Ridicule

Measurements (1975): 27 feet tall, 2 feet 11 inches wide, 2 feet 1 inch thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Carved before 1888 (photographic evidence). Brady acquired the pole from Sukkwan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then

erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906. Recarved by CCC workers; original lent to Navy, then Native School on Japonski Island. George Beacom saved a piece, but the rest was destroyed; this piece remains at a home on Japonski Island.

Recarvings: 1967 George Benson interview summary: "This one was completely recarved [1941-42]." Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy.

Other Points of Interest:
Excerpt from the 1967 George Benson interview summary: "Mr. Benson and Peter Neilson laughed and called this the 'Mr. Mills' totem. It seems the natives didn't care for Mr. Mills and the figure on top being a white man gave rise to their calling it after Mr. Mills." Mills was a local newspaperman.

Washed away in flooding during September of 1941 and retrieved by Navy.

George Beacom acquired a piece of the original Trader Legend Pole as it was about to be bulldozed into fill (following transfer to Native School) in late 1940's/early 1950's.



Waasgo Legend Pole
(also called Gonaquadet or Gunakadeit Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 1; 1939 CCC numbering - 380; present park numbering - 13

Place of Origin: Most likely Koianglas (also called Quinlas or Onhonklis)

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 15, 1903

Donor: Probably Yeal-tat-see

Type of Pole: Legend

Measurements (1975): 23 feet tall, 3 feet 1 inches wide, 2 feet 5 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole from Koianglas (most likely) in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906. Recarve brought to New York World's Fair in 1964.

Recarvings:
Recarved by George Benson in 1939, according to 1967 interview. Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be a copy.



Wolf Pole
(also called Wedding Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 4; 1939 CCC numbering - 383; present park numbering - 3

Place of Origin: Probably Howkan, according to labeling on photos

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 7 to 9, 1903

Donor: Unknown; photo with probable donor at base of pole in SNHP photo file

Type of Pole: Unknown

Measurements (1975): 22 feet tall, 2 feet wide, 1 foot 10 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Original date of carving unknown. Brady acquired the pole, probably from Howkan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
"Restoration of Totem Poles" memorandum states that this pole restored (not recarved) in 1939. 1967 George Benson interview summary: "He said Mr. Frank Kitka worked on this totem." Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be an original, extensively patched and repaired. Reggie Peterson recarved the pole in 1981-82.



Yaadaas Corner Poles #1 and #2
(also called First and Second Twin Poles)

Identification: Early park numbering - 3,7; 1939 CCC numbering - 382,386; present park numbering - 2,6

Place of Origin: Old Kasaan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 17 to 18, 1903

Donor: John Baronovich, brother-in-law of Sonihat

Type of Pole: Frontal (Corner)

Measurements (1975): First Twin: 23 feet tall, 2 feet 6 inches wide, 2 feet 3 inches thick
Second Twin: 21 feet tall, 2 feet 5 inches wide, 2 feet 1 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Carved before 1885 (photographic evidence). Brady acquired the pole from Old Kasaan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906.

Recarvings:
"Restoration of Totem Poles" memorandum states that pole 386 (#6) was restored (not recarved) in 1939. Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed these to be originals, "extensively patched and repaired." Pole #2 reproduced by Tommy Jimmy in 1978. #6 recarved in 1982/3 by Nathan Jackson and Steve Brown.

Other Points of Interest:
Affiliated with the Kaigani Haida "Yaadaas" clan.



Yaadaas Crest Pole
(also called Potlatch Pole)

Identification: Early park numbering - 12; 1939 CCC numbering - 390; present park numbering - 1

Place of Origin: Old Kasaan

Affiliation: Kaigani Haida

Date of Collection: November 17 to 18, 1903

Donor: John Baronovich, brother-in-law of Saanaheit.

Type of Pole: Crest

Measurements (1975): 35 feet tall, 3 feet 4 inches wide, 2 feet 8 inches thick

Where the Pole Has Been:
Most likely carved between 1885 and 1893 (photographic evidence). Brady acquired the pole from Old Kasaan in 1903. Shipped to Seattle, then erected at Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Sent to Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland, Oregon in 1905. Returned to Sitka in 1906. Brought to New York World's Fair in 1964. Taken down in 1993, and stored inside.

Recarvings:
"Restoration of Totem Poles" memorandum states that this pole restored (not recarved) in 1939. 1967 George Benson interview summary excerpt: "They just painted this one." Wilson Duff et al. (1969 *Totem Pole Survey*) believed it to be an original, "extensively patched and repaired." Recent research revealed that the middle section was still original but CCC carvers replaced the top watchmen and bottom figure.

Other Points of Interest:
Affiliated with the Kaigani Haida "Yaadaas" clan.

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A few of Brady's friends and children in 1906. Photo by E.W. Merrill. John G. Brady Papers, Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

"You wanted to know... if I [Chief Saanaheit] have anything to give the park. I have a fine large coeneau [canoe] the biggest one in Alaska and a fine large totem pole. I will give them to the white people of Alaska..."

