

life. Obviously Mrs. Morrison had a carver (presumably at Port Simpson or at Metlakatla) carve a pole for the World's Fair at Chicago.

**Totem Pole of Skeena River** (Harriman), at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; seen there in 1915. Collected by O. Morrison, No. 18144.

From the date furnished and its contents, it seems to have been carved for outsiders and not actually for any given commemoration. Its museum label read as follows:

"This pole represents crests of the four great clans into which the Tsimsyans are divided. At the top is the eagle, the principal crest of the Eagle clan [phratry]. The second is a grampus or killer-whale, the principal crest of the Bear clan [incorrect — the Killer-Whale forms a distinct phratry under its own name]. The third is the wolf, the principal crest of the Wolf clan [phratry]. And the fourth represents a man. The fifth is a sculpin, a minor crest of the Raven clan, of which the sixth, the Raven, is the principal one.

"These posts are erected with much ceremony, feasting and distribution of property in front of the dwellings. They indicate the clan to which the owner belongs through his mother and may also show the crest of his wife, if she had aided with property. Rarely the crest of the owner's father is also shown."

(Cf. E. H. Harriman Expedition to Alaska: pole No. 19341.)

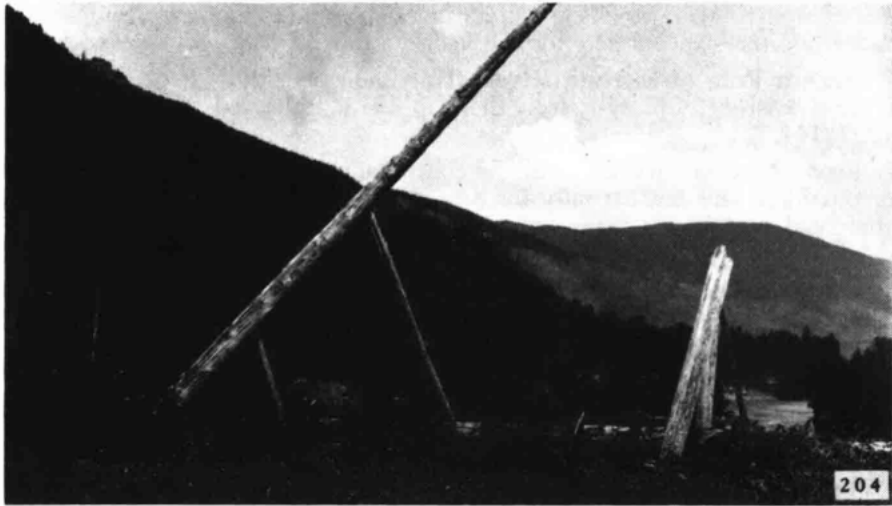
#### TSIMSYANS PROPER

(*Canyon of the Skeena*)

**Robin-Woman and Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman** (myth of origin). (Recorded by William Beynon in 1947 from Mrs. Bradley, aged 70, of Port Simpson.)

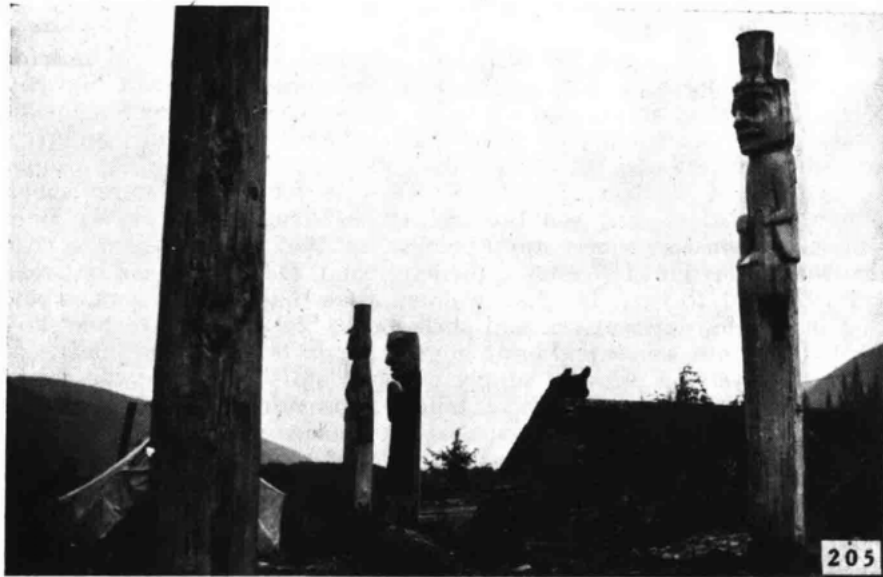
While the Tsimsyan tribes were living on both sides of the Metlakatla Passage, the shores of the Krhain were the home of the Gitwilgyawts people. Their chief at that time was Neeslaws, member of an Eagle clan. It was before the coming of this tribe of the Gispewudwade group of Sarhsarht. A great scarcity of food prevailed among all the coast people, and many died of starvation. Chief Neeslaws' two wives were Robin-Woman (*ksemgilarkiyaw*) and Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman (*ksem'ægyik*). Both of these women were supernatural beings, and they used to vie with each other for the favour of Neeslaws, their husband. During the winter, when food was hard to get, the chief woman, Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman, would bring in all the different sea and shell foods. She would take her slave women in her own canoe and bring in great quantities of halibut and seals. There was always a plentiful supply of food, and she taunted the chief's other wife, Robin-Woman, with her failure to provide it. Day after day she led the people of her husband's tribe to the place where seals, sea-lions, and whales were most plentiful, and the houses of all the Gitwilgyawts people were full of food. And thus it was all winter long, and her husband gave many feasts at a time when there was a scarcity of food.

Now came the moon of the spring salmon. The other wife of the chief, Robin-Woman, brought the young men of her husband's tribe together and said, "To-morrow we shall go away. Get your canoes ready and we will go



At the canyon of Gitsalas on Skeena River

up the Skeena." Ice still covered the Skeena, but she went ahead of the canoes, beating a channel through the ice so that the canoes could follow. This was done until they came to the mouth of Kitsemkælem River. There they saw the stomachs (bladders) of salmon floating down, and they were happy. They kept on travelling up this stream until they came to the beautiful village of Kitsemkælem (often referred to as Gilarkiyaw: village of the Robin-People).



Posts after they were restored, at the Gitsalas canyon

Then the chief woman, Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman, using her own tongue, said, "Let us land here at my uncle's house!" They all went into the house of the chief. They feasted on fresh salmon, a treat they had never before enjoyed at this season. After a rest, Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman took her husband's tribesmen, together with her own relatives, and caught a great quantity of salmon. They dried them and had many bundles of *li'uks*. Her uncle, the chief, brought down many mountain goats. These also were dried by smoking (*dwa'emti*), similarly with high-bush cranberries and wild crab-apples. When all was gathered, they started to pack it into their canoes, and when the canoes proved too small for the huge quantity, Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman used her supernatural powers, reducing the bulk of the food so that it could all be packed away. They then set out to return to the village of Neeslaws, at Khrain.

It was now early spring, and as food could only be gathered in the summer and early autumn by the other people of Khrain, there was a scarcity of provisions. When Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman landed there, she called upon all her husband's people to unload the canoes and used her supernatural powers to increase the quantity of the few canoes' contents. Soon a huge pile stood in the chief's house, and all the houses of her companions were also filled. Food was now abundant, so Neeslaws invited all his tribesmen to a great feast at which he gave away quantities of food. Then, at a time when food was scarce, he invited all of the Tsimsyan tribes and treated them in the same way. Thus he became great among the Tsimsyans.

Neeslaws' other wife, Robin-Woman, was also busy gathering sea foods, and there was great rivalry between the two women. Robin-Woman claimed she was the more industrious, just as did Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman. A quarrel arose between them, and they vied with each other more than ever for the favour of the chief.

Neeslaws, aware of this rivalry between his wives, was at a loss to know what to do. First he would favour one, then the other, but never letting the disregarded one know. When both were in the house he treated them alike, and when one went out and brought back food to earn his favours, the other would be forced to do the same. One day Robin-Woman came in when Neeslaws was favouring the other wife. Jealous and angry, she cried out, "I will return to my own people." At once she turned into a robin and flew out of the house through the smoke-hole. Neeslaws became angry with Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman because of the loss of his wife who had brought him so much food. Greatly embarrassed at the rebuke before her husband's people, she stepped out of the house to the water's edge and, turning into the blue-bill duck, swam away. The Robin-Woman returned to her own people at Kitsemkælem, and the Blue-Bill-Duck-Woman went to the sea. Neeslaws, because of his anger, had lost both his wives.

**Totem Poles at the Kitselas Canyon** of Skeena River, in 1910, according to Lieut. G. T. Emmons (42: 467-471).



At the Gitsalas canyon

The decayed remains of other carvings and house-timbers, half buried in the moss and overgrown with brush, confirm the statement of the natives that this was the largest and most important of the villages in the vicinity.

#### FIREWEED AND KILLER-WHALE PHRATRY

**The Fireweed Pole of Neeshaiwærhs**, on the Fortress (*ta'awdzep*) of the Gitsalas canyon of the mid-Skeena River. Restored in 1928; it had been leaning at a precarious angle.

*Description.* This long plain pole, without any carving except, possibly, the rods surmounted with representations of fireweed blossoms near the top, represented the Fireweed crest of the owner.

*Function, age.* It was erected by Kastu'ini, a chief of an Eagle clan of the Gitsemkælem tribe of the Tsimisyans Proper, in memory of a former Neeshaiwærhs, about sixty years ago or more.

(Informants, S. W. Qawm, chief of a Raven clan of the same place and Rosa Herring of Port Essington, belonging to the same family; William Beynon, acting as interpreter, 1926.)

There remained standing (P. 470, Plate XXXIII) in 1910, three old, slender totem poles, or heraldic columns, which were rounded from base to summit and showed no evidence from chambers in the back that they were used as mortuary columns for the reception of the ashes of the cremated dead. These carvings are crude in comparison with either those of the coast or of the upper river, and would indicate either the poverty or the want of artistic sense of this people.

In the accompanying Plate XXXIII, the totem pole shown in (a) is carved to represent a beaver sitting up at the base, above which the rounded pole is ornamented in encircling series of parallel grooves indicating the marks of the beaver's incisors.<sup>1</sup>

The pole in (b) is more elaborate; it shows at the base a frog, and above a mythical four-fin killer-whale [M.B., the salmon *qanis*], the tail carved to represent a human figure. Adjoining are the remains of the old communal house, with ridge-pole carved in the form of a salmon.

Figure (c) of the plate is a plain, rounded column surmounted by a wolf figure [M.B., the Grizzly Bear].

Only the base of the pole shown in (d) now remains; it is a human figure seated and enclosing a smaller figure.

<sup>1</sup> The small projecting shelf above the figure contains a trespass notice requesting that the post be not disturbed, as it is private property.



At the Gitsalas canyon

**The Fireweed Poles of Neesnawæ** of the Gillodzar tribe, of Sarhsarh of the Gitwilgyawts tribe, and of the Gispewudwade clans from Temlarham at the Gitsalas canyon of Skeena River.

*Myth of Origin.* Many years after the people had moved away from Temlarham down the river following the deluge of snow, a nephew of Neeshaiwærhs fasted and prepared himself for a long hunting trip at the headwaters of Gitsegyukla River. When he was hunting during the winter, much snow covered the ground. One morning, as he awakened on his



Decayed totems at the Gitsalas canyon

trap-line, he had a vision. A huge fireweed grew out of the snow and reached up, very bright, into the sky. After he had observed it, he started for his camp and on his way turned back to see the Fireweed. It had disappeared.

When he got home to Temlarham, he told his uncles about this vision. They decided to make the Single-Fireweed their clan crest, under the name of Gilhæs or Single-Fireweed. The descendants within the clan, wherever they went, have ever since used this Single-Fireweed as their own.

**Four Welmis House Posts of Læns.** The Welmis (Spawning-river-of-many) house posts of Læns, Gispewudwade of the Gitsees tribe of the Tsimsyans.



Decayed Eagle and Beaver poles at Gitsalas



Totem at the Gitsalas canyon

Welmis was represented as a crest in the form of small human beings with fins on the back, on the four house posts of this family. This crest was derived from a myth belonging to the owner, who had no connection, as might have been expected, with the Gitnagunaks group from the south.

(Informant, Arthur Wellington Klah, Wolf, Port Simpson; William Beynon, interpreter, 1915.)

#### RAVEN PHRATRY

**Grandfather-of-Red-Hair** (*neesmaskaus*) pole, of a Raven household at the former Gisparhlawts village of the Tsimisyans Proper on lower Skeena River, a mile below the present Shames. Still standing there in 1926, according to the informant, but not seen by the author or photographed.

*Description.* This pole was round, rather short, standing with the Raven (*qaq*) on top, the only carving. There used to be one exactly like it at Port Simpson in the section of the Gisparhlawts tribe; it was cut down at the same time as most of the other poles. It was put up "long ago."

(Informant, Herbert Wallace, Raven chief of the Gitsees tribe, at Port Simpson; interpreter, William Beynon, 1926.)

**Poles of Larahnitsk**, a chief of the Fortress tribe (*ta'awdzep*) in the canyon of the mid-Skeena. These were re-erected and restored in 1928 under the auspices of the Dominion Government and the Canadian National Railways.

*Description.* There were several poles in this group: four carved house posts on the outside, called *qausemdæle* (meaning?); four inside corner posts representing the Bullhead fish (*qayet*), head downwards and tail on the top ridge. The name of the totem pole outside was Small-Hat (*kwawrait*), a hat with disks. For whom the house was erected and at what time were unknown to the informant.

(Informant, Rosa Herring, Port Essington, a member of Qawm's household, 1926.)

**The Pole of Thunder.** The totem pole at the house of Trharhalelip (Thunder), at the canyon of the mid-Skeena.

(Informant, Rosa Herring, Port Essington, a member of Qawm's household, 1926.)