

KWAKIUTLS
FORT RUPERT

The Kyinanuk family of Tongas (Tlingit) once moved to Fort Rupert and Alert Bay (Kwakiutl) and brought in their Tlingit totems.

(The following information was obtained in 1947 from: (1) Mrs. Elizabeth M. Wilson née Elizabeth Hunt of Fort Rupert; (2) Mr. and Mrs. Charles Peter Ryan of Metlakatla; (3) in 1927, from William Beynon, whose father and mother were closely connected with the same group. *See The Beaver, Winnipeg; Reminiscences of Fort Rupert*, by Travis. December 1946.)

1. *Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson's account.*

Here is Mrs. Elizabeth (Hunt) Wilson's own story as given by herself. Her native name at Fort Rupert is Whale-swimming-by (*Tlahlemdalaokwaw*); at Alert Bay among the Niskish tribe, it is Thunderbird (*Kunkwunkulegye*):

My mother Anain belonged to the Raven phratry of Tongas (Tlingit, southern Alaska), and her sister belonged to the Wolf. More correctly she was named Ansnaq, a Raven of Tongas, or Mary Ebbetts, and married Robert Hunt. Born in 1823, she died at Fort Rupert at 96, in 1919, and was buried there. Her people were born and had lived under the Russian flag; her grandfather was Shaiks, and her mother was of Stikine stock. Her mother was the daughter of the older wife (he had two) of the head-chief of Wrangell — the younger wife used to wait on her.

Mary (Ebbetts) Hunt's husband was a white man, Robert Hunt, engaged in the fur-trade for the Hudson's Bay Company. He had come from England to stay for a while at Fort Rupert, then to move on to Fort Nass on Nass River [Port Simpson presumably was meant, as the Nass establishment was maintained only two years, 1831-1833]. They first met at Fort Rupert, while she was stopping there with her family during one of their voyages to Victoria. It was the policy of the chief factors of the Hudson's Bay Company to marry chief's daughters, so as to establish peace between the natives and the Company. They were married at the Nass in the Indian way, a Hudson's Bay wedding, giving away dry goods and blankets. They had eleven children, seven daughters and four sons. They were: Emily Hunt, George Hunt (whom Dr. Boas used as interpreter and helper in his Kwakiutl research work), Annie (married Spencer — several of their children survived: Ann, Roy, Calvin, Allan, Stevens, Norman), Mary Hunt (who died young), Mary (her younger sister), Eli Hunt, William Hunt, Elizabeth (married Lynn, who still lives at Hardy Bay), Jane (married Cadwalder), and Robert, who died a young man.

They lived for some years in the north, then moved to Fort Rupert, where they remained the rest of their lives (the tribe here bears the name of Kwakiutl, and it is here that the name for other kindred tribes originated). Robert Hunt eventually bought out the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fort Rupert and moved into the Company's house with his family. It had been built of Stikine split boards, a big log house with very thick walls and two large fire places. The company had a number of employees at the post there under the chief factor, Captain McNeil, who had married a Haida chief's daughter.

Captain McNeil and his Haida wife had several children: Lucy (married to Captain Moffat), Helen (married to Blinkensop), another daughter (married to Young), William McNeil, a son, and other boys. Mrs. McNeil and some other members of her half-breed family did not show their Indian blood.

The informant, Elizabeth, was married to a Lowlander from Scotland, Daniel Wilson, who lived with her for a while at Fort Rupert, then moved to the Beaver Cannery where they lived for 30 years. George Hunt, her brother (Dr. Boas' helper), resided in Fort Rupert most of his life, in the large house formerly of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The source of the tall totem pole which used to stand at the far end of Fort Rupert village is my mother's people. It was a copy of the one she had erected on her mother's "grave" at Tongas, southern Alaska. She was drowned in the Nass in 1870, and soon after her grave was built at her home village, Tongas. This is the pole that was stolen for Seattle, and given the name of Princess-Face-shining-copper. In Fort Rupert the replica of the original Tongas pole, a "tombstone," was called Tlakwegem. It was carved by Yukwayu, a Tenarhtao.



Mr. and Mrs. Hunt and children, of the Kyinanuk clan of Tongas, established at Fort Rupert, Kwakiutl



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The Hunt sisters at Fort Rupert (Top).
Other members of the Hunt family

In rank the Kwakiutl (the Fort Rupert tribe) were at the head of several tribes; next were the Mamalekula, then the Nemqis (Alert Bay), the Hlawetsis, the Tanarhtao, etc.

The replica of the Tongas pole at Fort Rupert was meant to show that the Hunt family had come from the north. It was like a vindication, because the natives here looked down upon Mrs. Hunt's people in the north; in the earlier days they had fought with them, and they still hated them. Still, the Hunts were equally attached to both nations, north and south. At one time, when my mother went to Port Simpson, she purchased a slave from a Haida visiting there, as her friend Mrs. Moffatt had done. The Haida slave, called Carving-for-her (*gyemarh'alas*), worked a long time for my mother.

At Fort Rupert, Captain Mowat, factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, had with him a Kanaka (South Sea islander) whose name was George Kamano. When young, I saw this old man, who had married Pauline, of the Tenarhtao tribe of the Kwakiutls. The large Kamano family at Alert Bay descends from them.

An Iroquois named Louis was married here, at the fort, to chief Mellas' sister. They went from here to Vancouver, but she came back here to die, with her daughters, who live at Alert Bay and Nanaimo. These people are copper colour or darker than the coast natives.

Mary (Ebbetts) Hunt of Tongas, the mother of the Hunt brothers and sisters, remained a loyal Tlingit all her life, in spite of living away from her own people. She was a skilful weaver of Tongas (the type is usually called Chilkat) blankets, having learned how to weave in her early childhood. When she reached the age of fourteen, her mother put her in seclusion in a room, according to the old custom. Before she began to weave blankets, a native painter was engaged to put up a painted cloth behind her when she was sitting at her work. An old woman would tell the girl the figures as they were being painted, in the manner of Chilkat designs (as they are better known). She would never look at the painted pattern at her back, but she reproduced it in her own work.

Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, her daughter at Fort Rupert, owns a Tongas blanket made by her mother. The pattern has the Raven on each side, the Killer-Whale under, and the Grizzly-Bear in the centre, with faces of other bears. This illustrates a story [Bear Mother . . .]

She wove many other blankets, until she was quite old. Five of them are still kept at the Cadewalder in Fort Rupert [all these were seen and photographed in 1947]. One of the blankets she made was sent to Honolulu. She stopped weaving only when the Fort Rupert people walked in on her to learn how to weave like her. She refused to teach them, as Tongas-blanket making was a right of her own tribe.

2. *William Beynon's account.* (W.B. of Port Simpson)

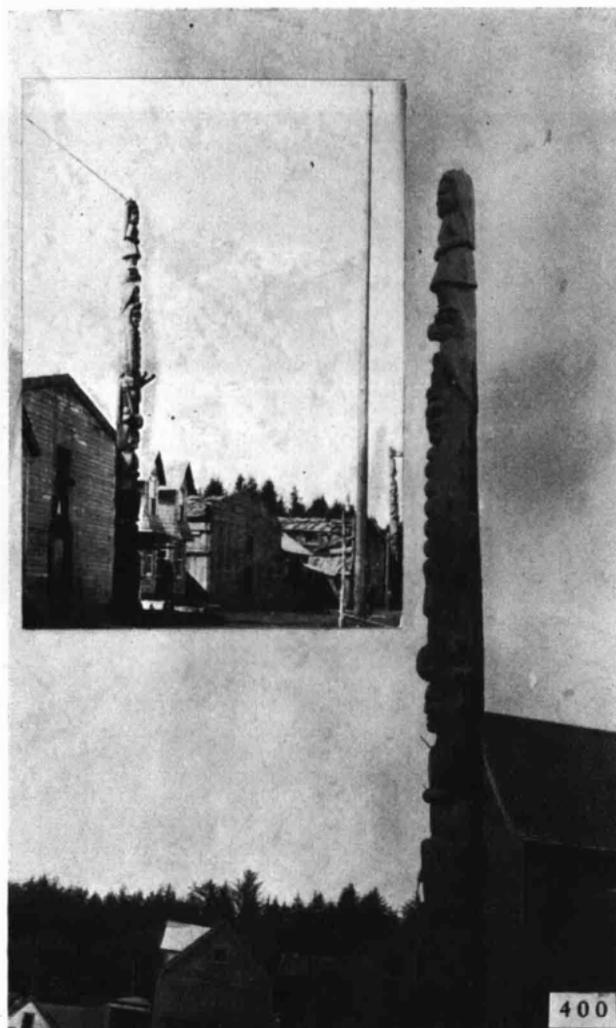
The Kyinanuk group at Fort Rupert is of Tongas Tlingit origin. It settled there over seventy years ago after the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company at the north end of Vancouver Island among the Kwakiutls. They seem to have had an influence on the carving of totem poles. The Seattle pole from Tongas was their property, and they received a considerable sum in compensation. Hunt who worked for Boas, as well as the Hughsons, belonged to the Kyinanuk of Tongas.

3. *Mr. and Mrs. Charles Peter Ryan of Mellakalla; William Beynon taking part in their account.*

This is a photograph of Annie Hunt, sister of Elizabeth Wilson and the other Hunt brothers and sisters, and daughter of a young Tongas woman who became the wife of Hunt, the Hudson's Bay Company trader. After they were married among the Tsimsyans, they were sent to Fort Rupert, and they took part in the establishment of the post there.

The mother was a Tlingit of Larhtorh at Cape Fox. The chief there was Hanadzurh, a Raven (*Kanhade*). Kyinanuk and Anadzurh were other chiefs of the same clan. Their totem pole was the one which a Seattle party sponsored by the Board of Trade and the Seattle Times appropriated. They all shared later in the cash compensation obtained from Seattle. One of them, Lizzy Hunt, was granted \$3,000.

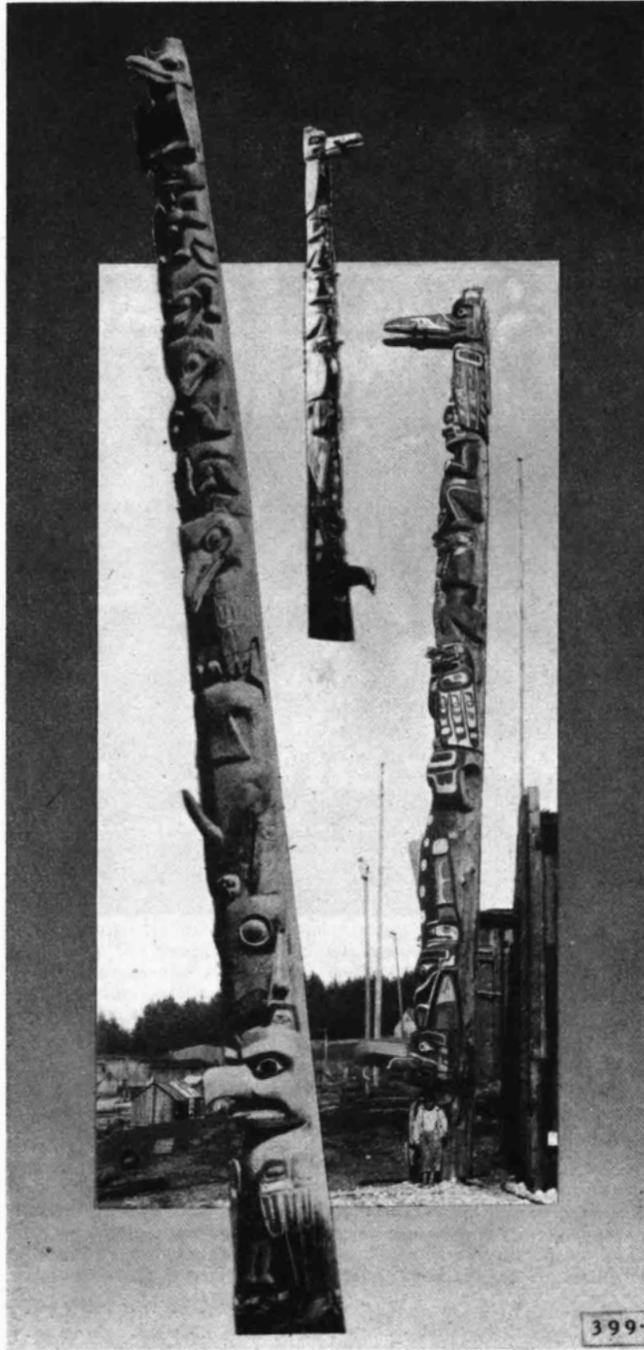
Spencer, a fur trader, married Annie Hunt and established a salmon cannery at Alert Bay, in partnership with William Beynon (a Welsh seaman, father of William, of Port Simpson). Spencer had five sons, some of them (Roy in particular) living to this day. George Hughson married one of the Hunt sisters, and their family is still living at Alert Bay. Elie Hunt once was brought over to New York by Dr. Boas for his study of the Kwakiutls. George Hunt, his son, continued in his father's footsteps in assisting Dr. Boas. The Ravens of Tongas (*Kanhade Gidaranits*) in a way had moved on with them to Fort Rupert and Alert



A Hunt totem pole at Fort Rupert

Bay. William Beynon, the author's assistant, although born of a Niskæ mother of the Wolf clan, spent part of his childhood at Alert Bay (from 1900 to 1904), and while on holidays from school at Victoria, returned there for the summers. His impression is that the growth of totem poles there was largely due to these Kyinanuk of Tongas, along with their use of the Thunderbird, which became a predominant feature. [M.B.— Also used were the Raven and the Sun, the Cannibal Tsonokwa, the Sisiutl, the Sea-Lion, etc.]

This Tlingit influx into the Kwakiutl country was further increased by the settlement at Fort Rupert of the families of Marwick, Fry, and McNeil. They were all employees of the Hudson's Bay Company and married to Tongas Tlingit (also called Larhsail); their wives' main crest was the Raven. These people usually kept their connections with their home folk, the Kyinanuks of the north. Old Eliza Marwick, for instance, often visited her daughter at Ketchikan. Her husband was the hero of Jack London's *Sea Wolf* under the name of Smith.



The Raven totem pole of Tongas (Tlingit) at Seattle (Left).
The same subject on the totem pole at Fort Rupert (Right)

David Hunt's Totem Pole (not a memorial). A round pole, still standing, about 60 feet high.

Description. From the top, the carvings are: (1) Raven (*rhwa'wina*); (2) Man (*pegwanem*) carrying the Frog (*wuq'æhl*); (3) Grizzly-Bear (*gyila*) holding a seal (*mi'gwet*); (4) Raven (*gwa'awin*); (5) Killer-Whale (*rhwarwyem*). (6) Sea-Eagle (*kwigwis*).

Historical sketch. It was erected for David Hunt in front of his house in a big potlatch but not as a memorial to anybody. A copper was broken and put in the pit where it was planted. In former times, the people used to put a slave under the pole. It is said to be a (free) copy of the pole once standing at Tongas, south Alaska, on the grave of the owner's grandmother, which was stolen and taken to Seattle where it stood in the centre of the city for many years. It has now been replaced there by a replica. When the Fort Rupert pole was raised, the mother of the Hunt brothers and sisters stood underneath it and sang a traditional dirge. The Hunt family, through the mother, originated among the Tlingit at Tongas, Alaska, and moved down to Fort Rupert because of marriage with an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company, presumably in the 1840's.

Carver, present owner. Charlie James (*Yaqulas*), of Alert Bay, native of Mamelekula. Over forty years ago. Now it belongs to the former owner's brother, Thomas Hunt of Alert Bay. The red cedar out of which it was carved in the round came from Hardy Bay, 10 miles away.

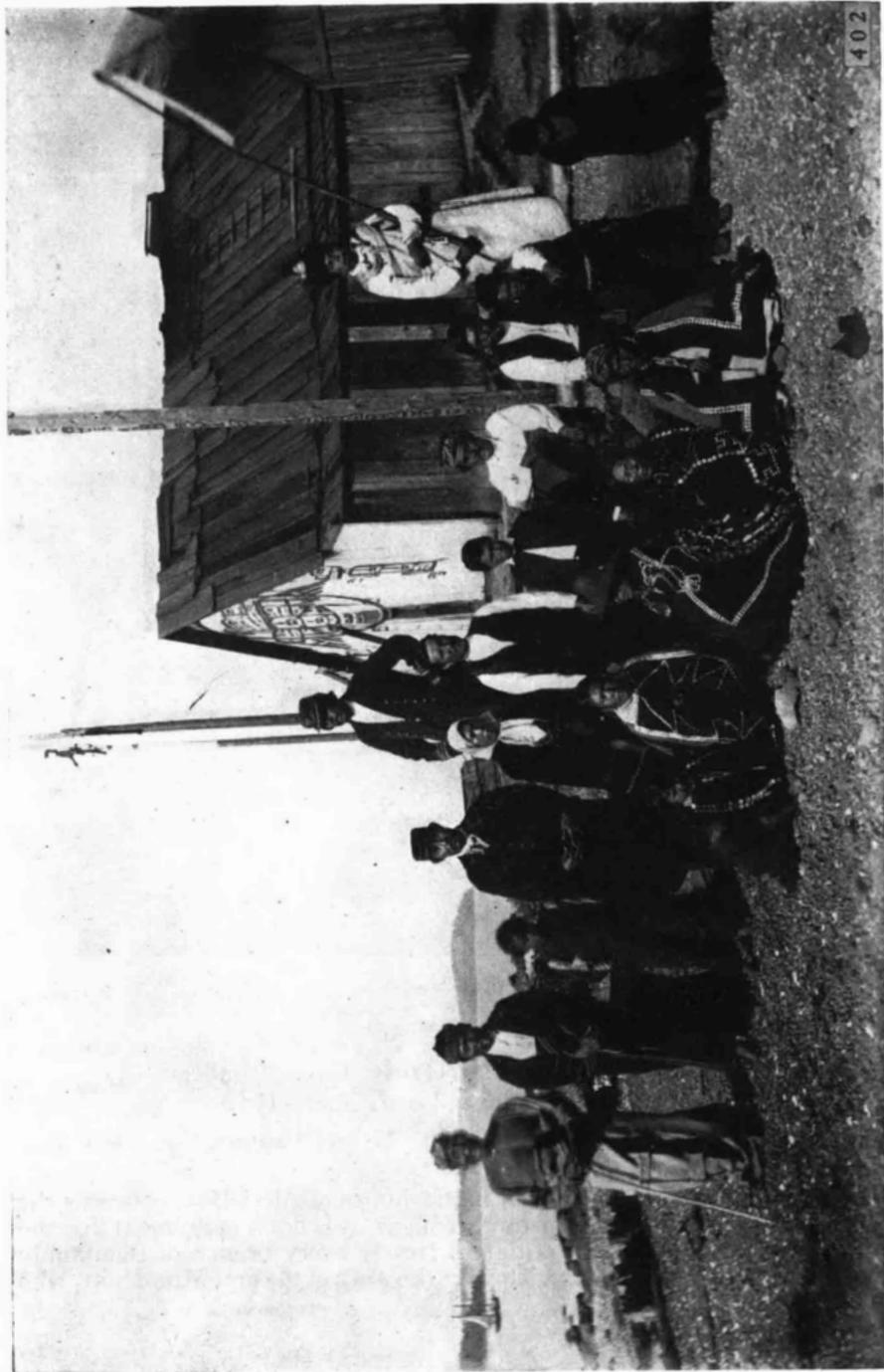
(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, Fort Rupert, 1947.)

The Hunt Totem Pole, according to Daniel Cranmer of Alert Bay (1947).

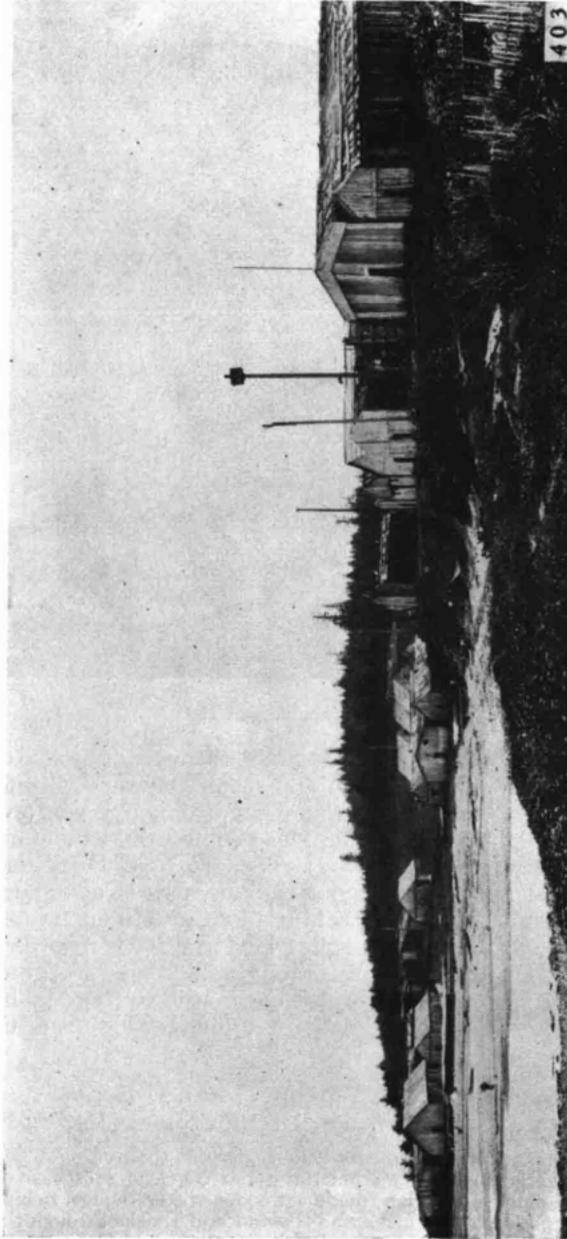
This 60-foot pole, a carving of Charlie James of Alert Bay, concerns the Hunt family, whose story goes back to Tongas. It is not a monument [for the dead], but it was raised for a potlatch. Nearly every branch of this family has kept blankets for dancing, which were the work of the first Mrs. Hunt, who



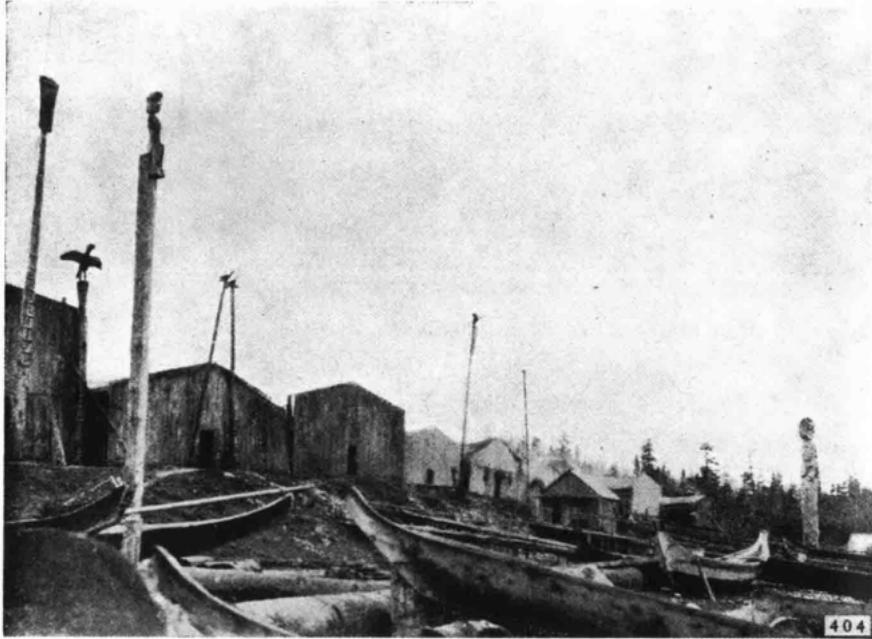
The totem pole of David Hunt at Fort Rupert



Kwakiutl and half-breeds at Fort Rupert, 1885



Fort Rupert in 1870



A Kwakiutl village in 1895

was very skilful. [The informant repeats the account of Robert Hunt's marriage to a Tongas Tlingit woman and states that his own wife is a member of the same family.] I am entitled to a Tongas dance or whatever dance my wife gives me through our marriage. Her people would show me how to use it, had I an occasion to bring it out. The old Mrs. Hunt used to attend dances, feasts, and potlatches. Her daughter, Mrs. Cadwallader, also did. They taught the Fort Rupert Kwakiutls lots of Tlingit songs, and I have learned them too. Some of these songs I have put on records at Columbia University, N.Y. [Dr. Franz Boas, some years ago, had Cranmer stay at the University for the benefit of anthropological studies there.] They are dance songs, wild songs, in Tlingit. We don't understand the meaning of their words.

Statue To-Speak-Through (Hope Island, Boas) in the potlatch house of the Kwakiutl, as described by Dr. Franz Boaz (21: 376, 379, figure 19).

A statue in a house at Rhumtaspe belongs to the subdivision Meemaqaae of the Naqomgilisala. The original home was on the island Gigelem, southeast of Hope Island, Lelaken, who was a chief of the clan, made a wooden statue, hollow behind, and with its mouth open. In the potlatch the chief stands behind and speaks through the mouth of the statue, thus indicating that it is his ancestor who is speaking. Lelaken had one dish representing a wolf, another one representing a man, and a third one in the shape of a bear. As the man who made the present statue was too poor to have all these carvings made, he had them carved on the statue instead.

Commemoration of Hegwugyelagwaw ("What they gave away for her never came back"), Dick Price's young daughter. The name of the father who had it erected on her grave, during a potlatch, is Carried-and-given-away (*yarhenekwulas*).



Graveyard pole at Fort Rupert



Graveyard pole at Fort Rupert (profile)

Description. The figures, from the top, are: (1) *qrhulus*, a mystic bird seen only once by an ancestor; it had down on its body, no feathers; another informant, Charlie Knowles, claimed that this was a minor variant of the Thunderbird from Deer Island; (2) *huhuk* (what kind?); (3) *Tsonokwarw*, the mythical sleeping woman, belonging as a symbol to the family of Kwekusutenuq at Fort Rupert, of which the father of the child was a member. The mother was a Mamelekula woman.

Carver, age. It was carved by Hæhlama (Willie Seaweed) of Blunden Harbour, one of the best Kwakiutl carvers, over 20 years ago.

(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson of Fort Rupert, 1947.)

Monument of Kwakwabaes (Her-sitting-down-place) with the Sun emblem (*lesala*). It was erected by her father, Kwarhsistal, of the Tenarhtao tribe.

Description. Under the Sun emblem, a human face with rays all round, a great fish like the Bullhead, is here shown on a house front called *kwakwedzalas*.

Carver, age. Dick Price, whose name is Yarherekwulas, of Fort Rupert, over 20 years ago. He died soon after.

(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, Fort Rupert, 1947.)

Graveyard Pole of Tsawlarhlehlilaakwe, who died at Rivers Inlet but was buried here. Her husband was Arhwarhalekyelis, chief of the Fort Rupert tribe.

Description. From the top: (1) *qrhulus* (small Thunderbird, from Deer Island); (2) Grizzly-Bear (*kyilurh*) biting a copper; (3) mythical Tsonokwaw woman with a copper.

Carver, age. It was carved by Charlie James (*yaqulas*) of Alert Bay, native of Mamelekula, over 22 years ago.

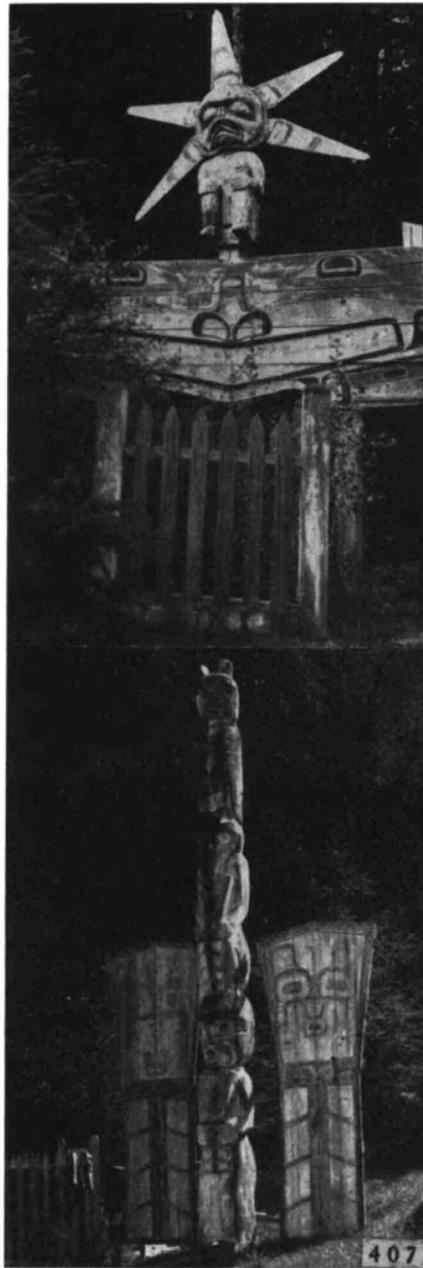
(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson, Fort Rupert, 1947.)

The Speak-Through Post (*yeqant'aqu*) in Wawk'yatsee's communal house (Billy McDuff's uncle) at Fort Rupert. This house is the last one of its type still standing there.

This carved post, about 6 feet high, within the house, is in the form of a human figure, with the mouth open, round, and in the shape of a funnel. This mythical person was supposed to speak and give advice to the chief; actually someone stood behind and spoke through the wooden mouth.

Carver, age. Nelson (*Laqalahl*) of Quatsino, a Hope Island Kwakiutl, carved it over twenty years ago.

(Informant, Mrs. Elizabeth Wilson of Fort Rupert, 1947.)



Graveyard monuments at Fort Rupert



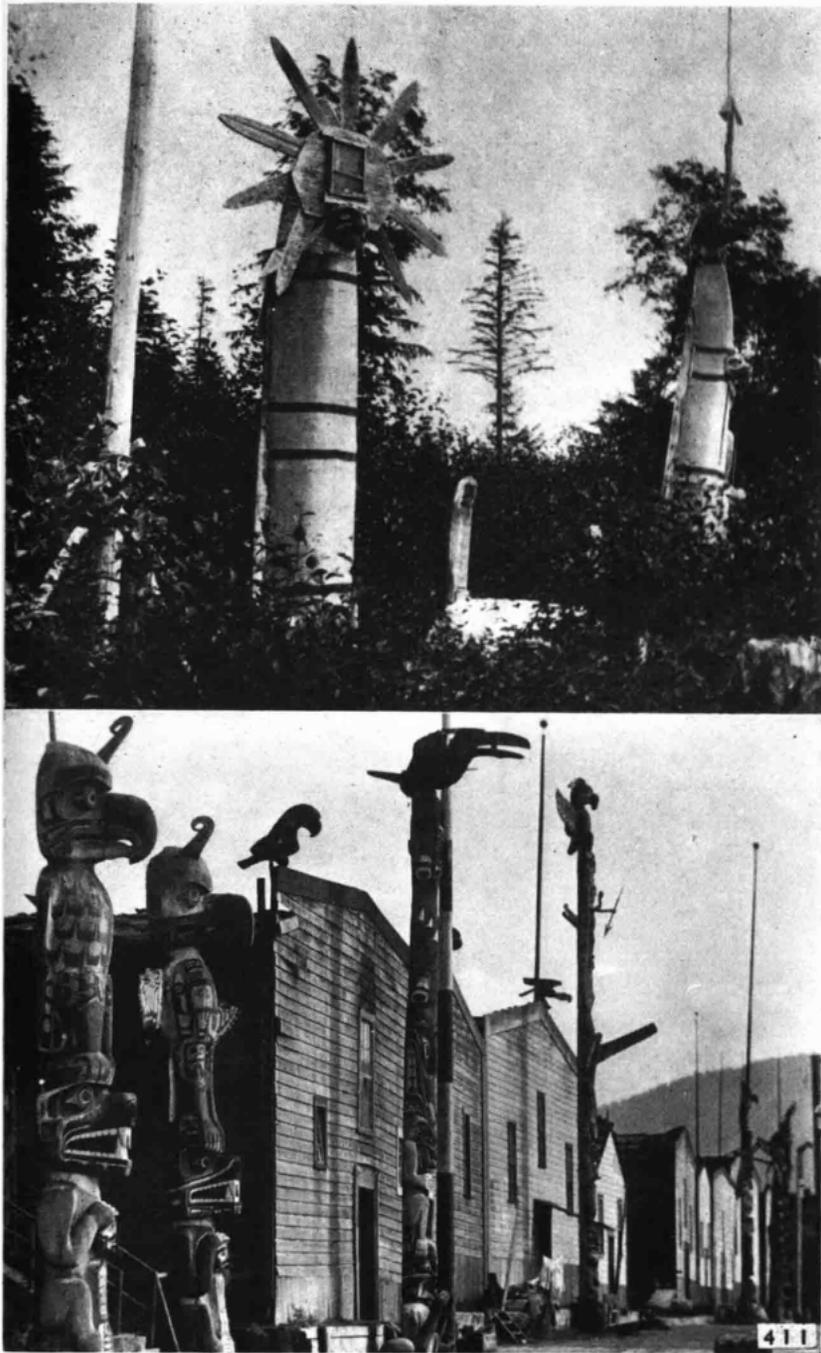
Poles at Fort Rupert. Collected for the University of British Columbia in 1947



At Fort Rupert



Alert Bay before poles had been erected



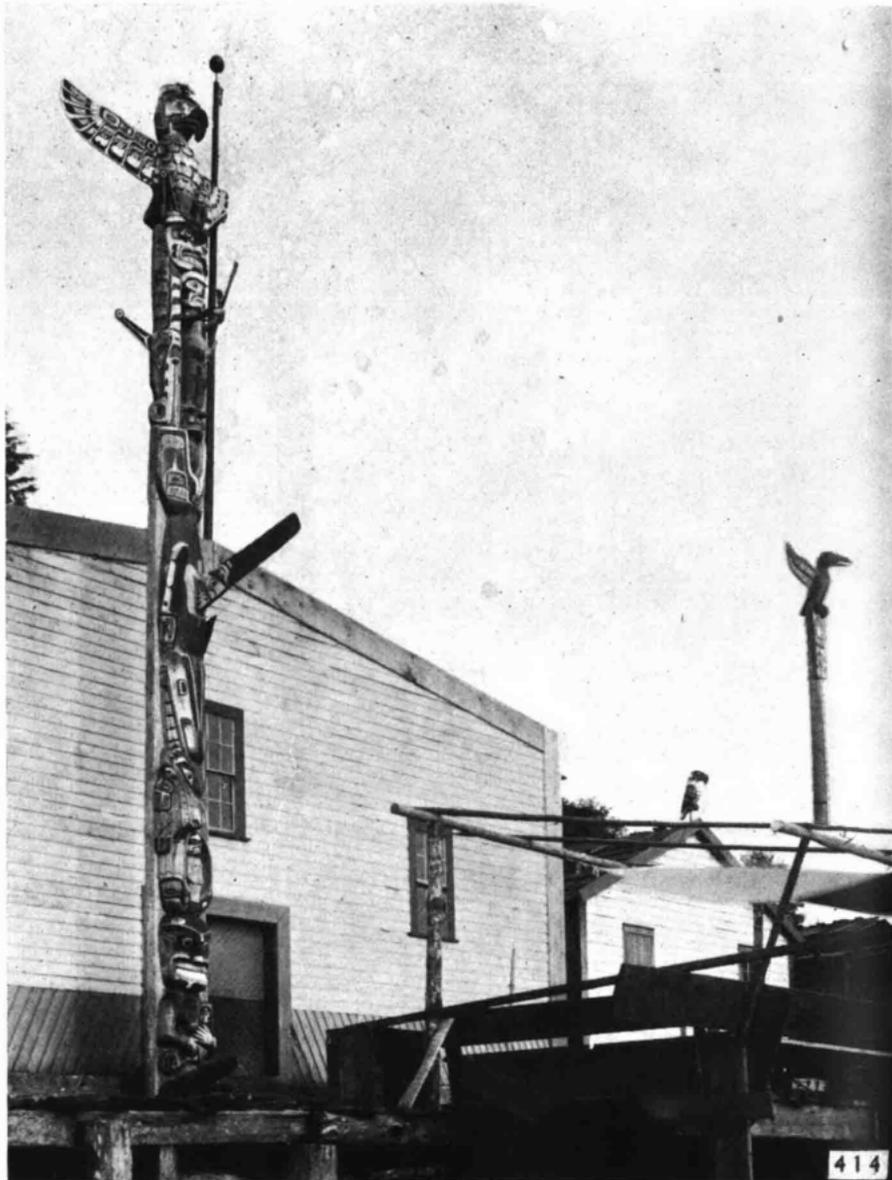
The Alert Bay graveyard. (Bottom) Alert Bay



Alert Bay, looking northwards



Alert Bay, looking northwards



Alert Bay



Alert Bay



A pole at Alert Bay