

ALERT BAY AND OTHER KWAKIUTL VILLAGES

The Thunderbird of Wawkyas, now the tallest in Stanley Park, Vancouver.

Description. The figures on the pole, from bottom upwards, are: (1) Raven (*kwaw'wine*), with long bill which served as door entrance into the communal house; the outspread wings of the Raven were painted on the house front; (2) Bear; (3) Hukuk, a mythical bird with long bill, without an equivalent English name; (4) Wise-One (*ninwakawe*), a mythical man spoken of in a traditional story, the whole pole being a replica of the "speaking staff" of the Wise-One, about whom a long story was known; inside the stick there was a rattle; every time the Wise-One hit the floor with his staff it rattled; (5) Wolf (*alunem*); (6) Killer-Whale (*marhenurh*); (7) Thundermaker (*kwunkwanekulegyi*).

All these figures belonged to the Awikyenorh tribe, because Wawkyas, the owner, was from there on his father's side; his mother was Nimkish, that is, of Alert Bay.

Carver, age. It was carved, with the aid of helpers, by Yurhwayu, who belonged to the Mamtagyele tribe of the Kwakiutl, for Wawkyas, the informant's uncle, and erected about 1899. This was the first large totem pole at Alert Bay. Yurhwayu was quite old at the time he carved it. He died when the informant was young, and he was the only carver of totem poles in the district in those days. It is possible that at Blunden Harbour there may have been such carvers. Carving a pole was quite a public function, whereas the carving of masks was a strictly secret pursuit.

Wawkyas paid 350 white blankets with black borders to Yurhwayu for his work. This was a large price for those days, the value of a pair of blankets being \$3, and when given away these blankets formed a big pile.

(Informant, Daniel Cranmer, Alert Bay; born in 1885.)

The Talking Stick of Chief Wawkyas, of part Awikyenorh extraction (northern Kwakiutl). This pole now stands in Stanley Park, Vancouver.

Description. In the family of Wawkyas, in the Nurhwins tribe of the Awikyenorh, a speaker's staff was carved with the same figures as those on the present totem pole. From time immemorial this staff served the chief in the feasts. But Wawkyas, instead of using it as in the past, turned it into a pole and had it erected in front of his house. The Sisiutl (dragon) at the bottom of the pole, like the one now in the graveyard at Alert Bay, did not appear on Wawkyas' pole but was on the back of the settee in his house.

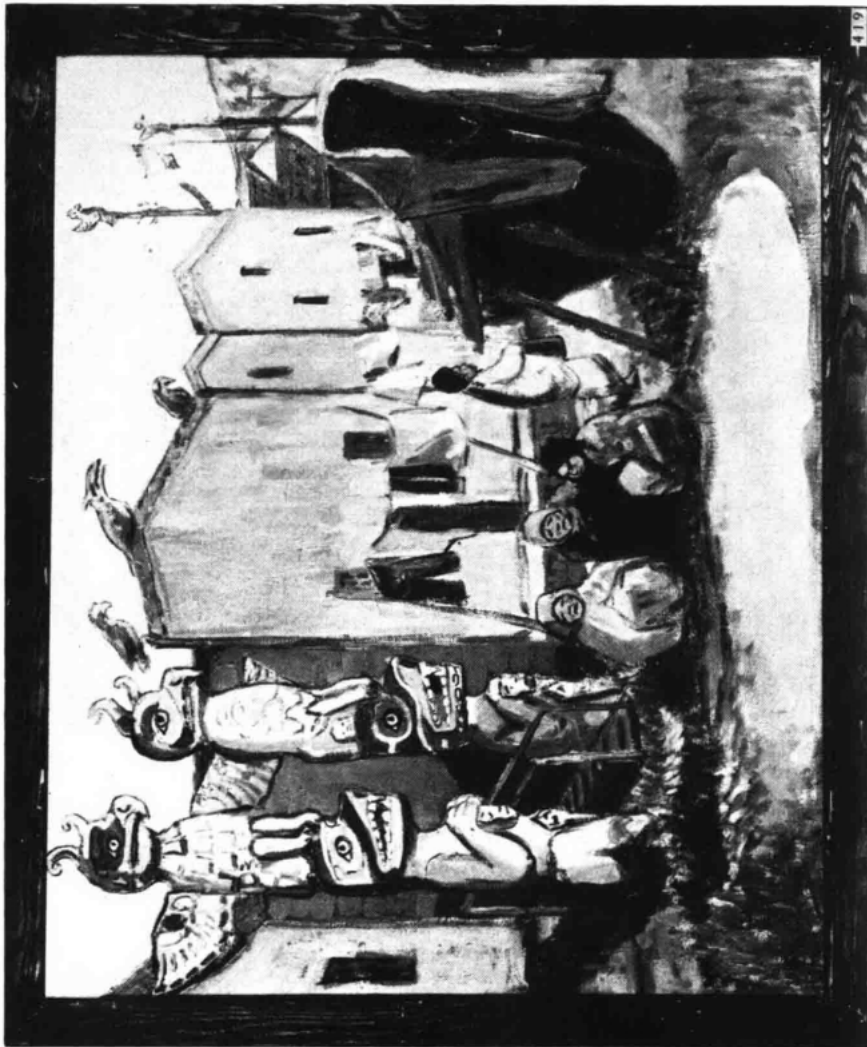
Myth of the speaker's staff and the pole. Nawarha'we, the chief of this family long ago, had four sons: Nu'lu'kwias (the eldest), Hralaqoyuwis, Hrwigyalagyelaku, and Hraihla'mas. These young men were getting ready to go mountain-goat hunting when their father gave them advice. "If you see different colours of smoke in the mountains, be very careful, for danger is there. One kind of smoke is rainbow-like; it is the smoke of the cannibals. Black smoke is that of the grizzly bear," and so on with the others. When they were ready to leave, the old grandmother gave the hunters a small pebble, very smooth, a wooden comb, some oil in a vial, and mountain-goat wool. "If you run into trouble, these will help you. Should the cannibals come after you, throw these objects one by one."



The Thunderbird of Wawkyas of Alert Bay in Stanley Park, Vancouver



The Thunderbird of Wawkyas, Alert Bay and Vancouver



Alert Bay in 1912. (Watercolour by Emily Carr)

Off the young men went into the mountains. After they had passed the first range, they saw a village in the distance, and various colours of smoke rose from the roofs. One of the hunters gave warning, "This must be the place which our father has advised us to avoid." The oldest brother answered, "Let us see!" So they agreed to go down and see this village with different colours of smoke. After they had entered the strange village, they went into the house emitting red smoke. In this house a large woman was seated, a child in her arms.

As the young men were going through the woods, the youngest brother scratched his shin, and the blood was running down his leg. The mother picked up a small stick and asked the young stranger, "Please scrape up the blood for my child." The hunter did as he was asked and handed the stick back with the drops of blood to the woman. And the mother gave the stick to her child, who swallowed it. The four brothers then began to suspect that their hostess was a cannibal, since her child craved human blood. They were afraid and whispered to one another, "Let us try to get out!"

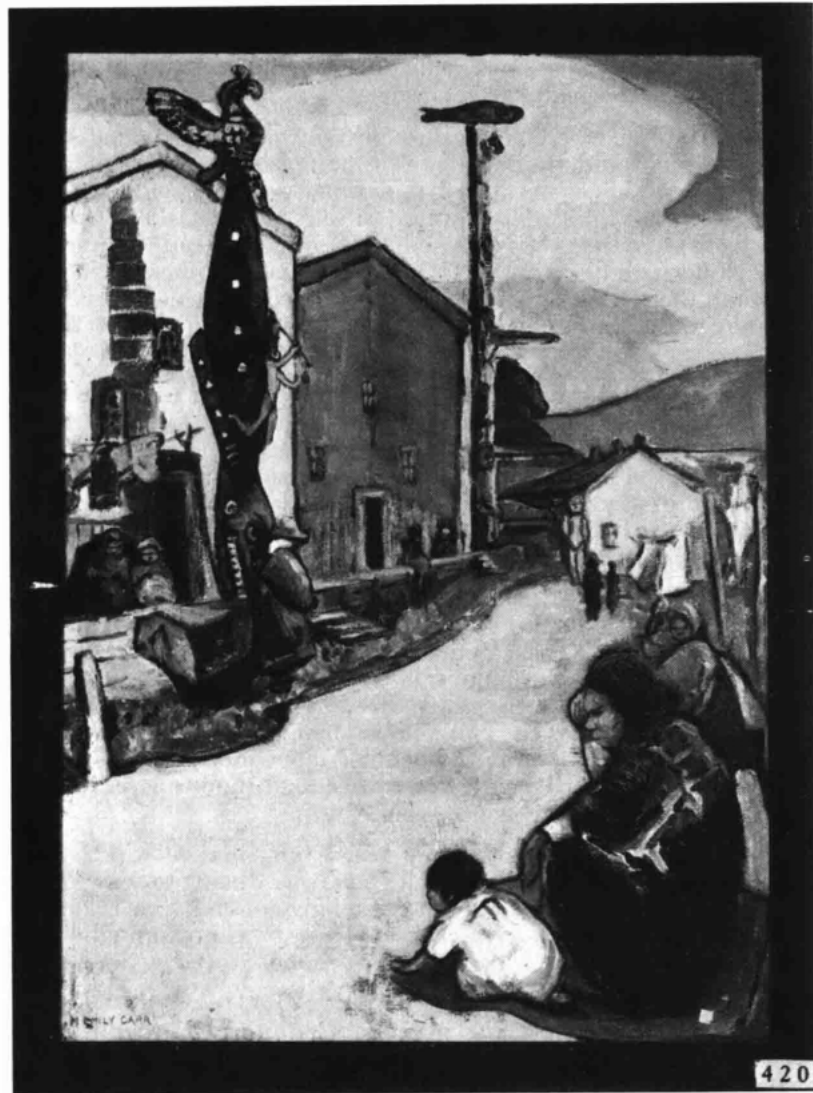
In the door there was a knothole just large enough to let an arrow go through. So they agreed to shoot an arrow through it to show their skill. The arrow shot by; the eldest brother flew through the hole, and he went out to pick up the arrow. The youngest also shot an arrow; he was the fastest runner of the four. After both the eldest and the youngest had stepped out of the house, they ran as fast as they could out of the village. The other two brothers also took to flight.

The large woman then hastened out of the house and hurriedly called her husband, who was a giant as well as a cannibal, saying that the hunters had lost their arrows. The cannibal came back home and then started running on the trail of the mountain-goat hunters. He had almost overtaken them when the oldest brother threw back the smooth pebble given him by his old grandmother. The pebble changed into a mountain wholly bare of trees and as smooth as the pebble. The cannibal could not at first climb its steepness, and the fugitives had enough time to gain much headway.

In the distance behind them they heard the cannibal whistle. He had succeeded in overcoming the obstacle and was about to catch up with them. The second brother poured out the oil given him by his grandmother. It turned into a large lake, barring the way of the cannibal. And the brothers ran on toward their home. But once more, after a time, the giant managed to resume the chase.

Just in time to avoid being overtaken, another brother threw back the wooden comb. It changed into a thicket of wild crab-apple trees, so thick and thorny that the giant remained there, stuck for a time. But he succeeded in extricating himself and continued to pursue the hunters as they were descending the mountain slopes approaching home.

The youngest brother dropped the mountain-goat wool on the trail, and there it changed into a thick fog. The giant was lost in it just long enough for the brothers to reach the neighbourhood of their home village. The eldest brother shouted to his father, "The cannibal is giving us chase! Hasten! Tie a cedar rope around the house!" So the chief surrounded the



Alert Bay in 1912. (Watercolour by Emily Carr)

house with a cedar rope. With his four sons he sought refuge inside the house, just before the cannibal arrived and looked for a way to enter it too. But the rope kept him out. He jumped upon the roof and broke one of the roof boards to look inside.

Nawarha'we, the father of the escaped hunters, spoke to the cannibal, saying, "Brother, be at ease! I invite you to come to-morrow with your wife and your son. Then, if you still care, you may devour my sons."

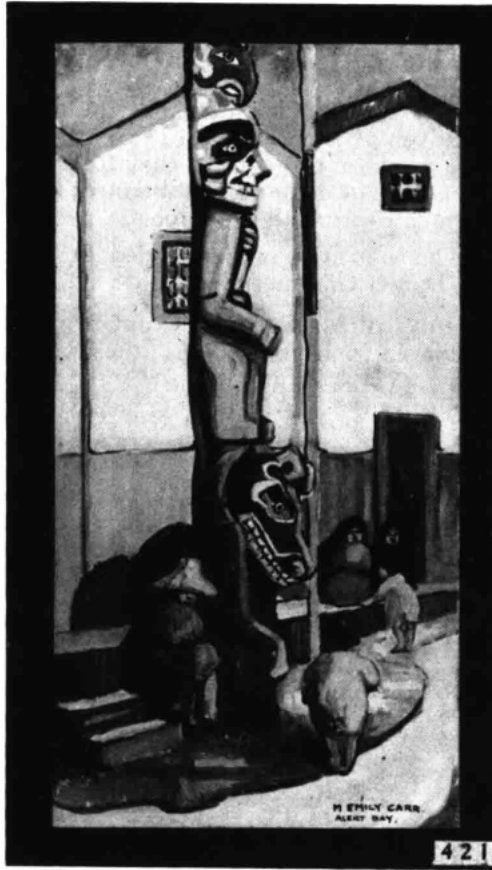
While the giant was absent back home in the mountains, the chief did not waste his time idling, but he told his sons to dig a big hole, quite deep, in the ground within the house. When the hole was finished, he placed a large wooden settee over it. Here he planned to have the cannibal sit down the next day with his family. He killed four dogs, pulled out the guts, and informed his sons that they would pretend to be dead, lying on the ground with their intestines torn out. Then he placed a great many rocks in the blazing fire. These rocks were such as are used for cooking purposes and which, when heated, are dropped into vessels containing water.

The next day when the cannibal arrived with his wife and child, they saw the bodies of the young hunters lying on the ground within the house with their intestines seemingly out and scattered about. "This is to be your food," said the Indian host to the mountain spirits, "but you must sit down on the settee first. It is our custom here to tell a story first, before the guests begin to regale themselves."

Nawarha'we then picked up his speaking-staff (which nowadays has become a totem pole) and began to tell a long story to the strangers. Every now and then he stamped the ground with the butt of the staff, and the top part rattled. The story interested the cannibals so much that they listened intently. But they fell asleep after a while, as they were expected to do.

The four sons pulled the settee apart. The cannibal, his wife, and son fell into the deep hole dug under them. Then the red hot stones and the boiling water were cast upon them, and the hole was filled up with earth.

This was the end of the mountain cannibals. Nawarha'we and his sons burned the flesh of the giants and cast the ashes to the winds, saying, "You shall be mosquitoes, and, in later years, you shall sting the people." Then he bade his sons go back to the house of the giants in the mountains, and he said, "Look in their house for anything that is worth our having here."



In Alert Bay, 1912. (Watercolour by Emily Carr)

They went back and found the cannibal masks now called Hrurhuo, the Raven Hrawi'ne, and a great deal of smoked meat of mountain goat. These masks and the meat, they took back home. This is how the Awikye'-norh people own the cannibal dance; they once conquered it. In this dance, wild men capture the cannibals.

(This narrative was recorded in the summer of 1947, at Alert Bay, from Daniel Cranmer.)

The Talking Stick of Chief Wawkius or "Speaker's Staff" formerly standing in front of Wawkius' house at Alert Bay, now at Stanley Park in Vancouver. Explanation given by the Rev. John C. Goodfellow, as obtained by him from George Hunt of Fort Rupert in 1926 (51: 10, 11).



Poles at Alert Bay. (Left and Centre) In the graveyard. (Right) Raven-of-the-Sea of Alert Bay at the University of British Columbia

This lengthy legend is told by Mr. [George] Hunt in the 35th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (1913-14, Part 2, pp. 1222-1248). The next figure

Hunt knew Wakius well and spoke eloquently of the Potlatch of 1893 on Turnour Island. At that celebration the Chief picked up a small model of his totem and said: "This is the talking stick, and the root of my family, and now I have to turn it into a Speaker's Staff at this Potlatch I am giving." Hence Wakius' totem is known as his "Talking Stick." On that occasion, however, Wakius did not conform to the usual custom of telling the story of each unit of the totem. Mr. Hunt gently reprimanded the Chief for this breach of custom and, in his good-humoured way, told in detail the story that Wakius should have told. This is the story of Wakius' great ancestry, and how he and his sons outwitted the Cannibal who feasted himself at the expense of the tribe. Wakius' first ancestor took the Thunderbird for his crest, and hence it appears at the top of the pole.

In *The Totem Poles in Stanley Park* by the Rev. John C. Goodfellow, the following information is added (52: 30, 33, 34):

The figures on the pole (from the top) are: Thunderbird, a crest of the Raven clan; the fin-back or Killer Whale; the Wolf with a man's head between its jaws; Nenwaqawa, the wise one (according to George Hunt). At a potlatch on Turnour Island in 1893, picking up a small model of his totem, Wakius said, "This is the Talking Stick, and the root of my family; and now in this potlatch I am giving I have to turn it into a Speaker's Staff." Hence the totem is known as Wakius' Talking Stick. The story of Wakius' great ancestor, Nenwaqawa, tells how he and his sons outwitted the great Cannibal-at-the-North-End-of-the-World.

on the pole is the mythological bird known as the Hoh-hok, frequently used in the huge masks worn on ceremonial occasions by the Indians of Rivers Inlet, Alert Bay, and Cape Mudge. This bird here rests on the Bear, member of the Bear family married into Nenuqawa's family. The last figure, at the bottom, is the Raven. The ceremonial entrance to the house is through the throat of the Raven; it is 5 feet in height.

Sisa-kaulas. (Totem pole of Alert Bay.) Explanation of its meaning by Mrs. Jane Cook to Rev. John C. Goodfellow (51: 10, 11).

Mrs. Cook of Alert Bay, who is well versed in Indian lore, told the story of Sisa-kaulas' totem. Those who have heard the story will remember that the Spirit of the Deep gave to See-wid permission to use for crests the animals he had seen at the bottom of the sea. Hence on his totem we find the sea-otter, sea bear, whale, etc. But there was something else he saw that did not enter into the story of the totem. That was a cradle. The story of the cradle was the origin of the famous cradle dance which, until recent years, was staged by various tribes up the coast.

This totem pole was described more fully in *The Totem Poles in Stanley Park* by the Rev. John C. Goodfellow (52: 36-41). It included the following information.

The story of this pole, given by Mrs. Jane Cook of Alert Bay, tells of Chief Sisa-kaulas' great ancestor, See-wid.

See-wid was a delicate boy. His father was disappointed in him; he had hoped that the son would be the glory of the family. One night a young brave saved the tribe from destruction at the hands of their enemies. This only made the father more ill-disposed towards his son, See-wid. One day See-wid walked off into the woods. He walked and walked, not caring what became of him. At length he sat down by a pool. Looking into the glassy waters, he pondered long. He brooded over his misfortunes. Presently the waters became troubled and began to rise. See-wid did not move. A great frog appeared in the water. "Do you want to come with me?" the frog inquired. See-wid answered that he was willing to go, and placed himself on the back of the frog. The frog went down, down, down till it touched bottom: The unhappy boy forgot his miseries, for, at the bottom of the sea, the Spirit of the deep gave him permission to use for crests the animals he had seen at the bottom of the sea; hence the sea-bear, sea-otter, whale. When, after a long time, See-wid appeared on the earth again, he had strange trials to pass through before he could resume the life of an ordinary mortal. But when these trials were over, the father rejoiced in the son, who became great and powerful.

The bird at the top of the pole is clearly related to the bird at the top of Wakius' totem. The bird with folded wings is Kulus, the sister to the Thunderbird. The next figure on the pole represents one of the ancestors of Sisa-kaulas. The child in its embrace is the Chief's son, who later became a chief. The following figure is the Killer-Whale, on the back of which is painted a small human figure. The Sea-Otter is the next figure; it is shown devouring a sea-urchin or sea-egg. The tail of the Sea-Otter is turned up between the hind legs and appears in front of the lower part of the body. The Sea-Bear, near the bottom, is sup-



(Left) The Sea-Lion house post, Alert Bay.

(Right) The Thunderbird at Alert Bay

posed to live in the sea. The figure at the bottom shows one who spoke evil of the chief. But the chief, who is seen with his mouth wide open, had the best of the argument, and defeats his rival.

The Raven Totem. A copy of the dancing stick of Nu-nu-kai-wi, as described by the Rev. Mr. Corker to the Rev. H. P. Corser (28: 73).



Alert Bay

The Raven totem at Alert Bay is carved as a bird with its wings spread ready for flight. The legend of the Raven among these Indians leaves out all of its good qualities and emphasizes its craftiness, cunning, and deceit. Its name is a synonym for hypocrisy.

Space will allow us to describe only two of the Alert Bay totems. The first will be the tall, elaborately carved totem having a large, bat-like bird at the top; part way down a bird with the bill of a crane; and at the bottom the Raven with its wings pictured on the side of the house. This is a copy of the dancing stick of one Nu-nu-kai-wi.

He had four sons, and they said, "We go a-hunting."

The father warned them to be very careful, for over the mountains in the Valley of Smokes was the black smoke (the bear); the white smoke (the mountain sheep); the brown smoke (the grizzly); and the blood-coloured smoke (the man-eating giant).

One son received mountain sheep wool, another a sandstone, another hair oil, and the youngest a comb. The man-eater nearly caught up with the youngest. The comb was thrown down, becoming a jungle; the sandstone became a mountain; the hair oil turned into a lake; and the wool into a fog, which is always seen at the foot of Raven's Inlet.

All these things delayed the man-eater [in his chase after them], so that the sons managed to get home and barricade their house.

The man-eater tried to enter through the hole in the roof. The father said, "Do not be so fierce! Come back to-morrow with your wife and son, and I will give you my two sons, the next day the other two."

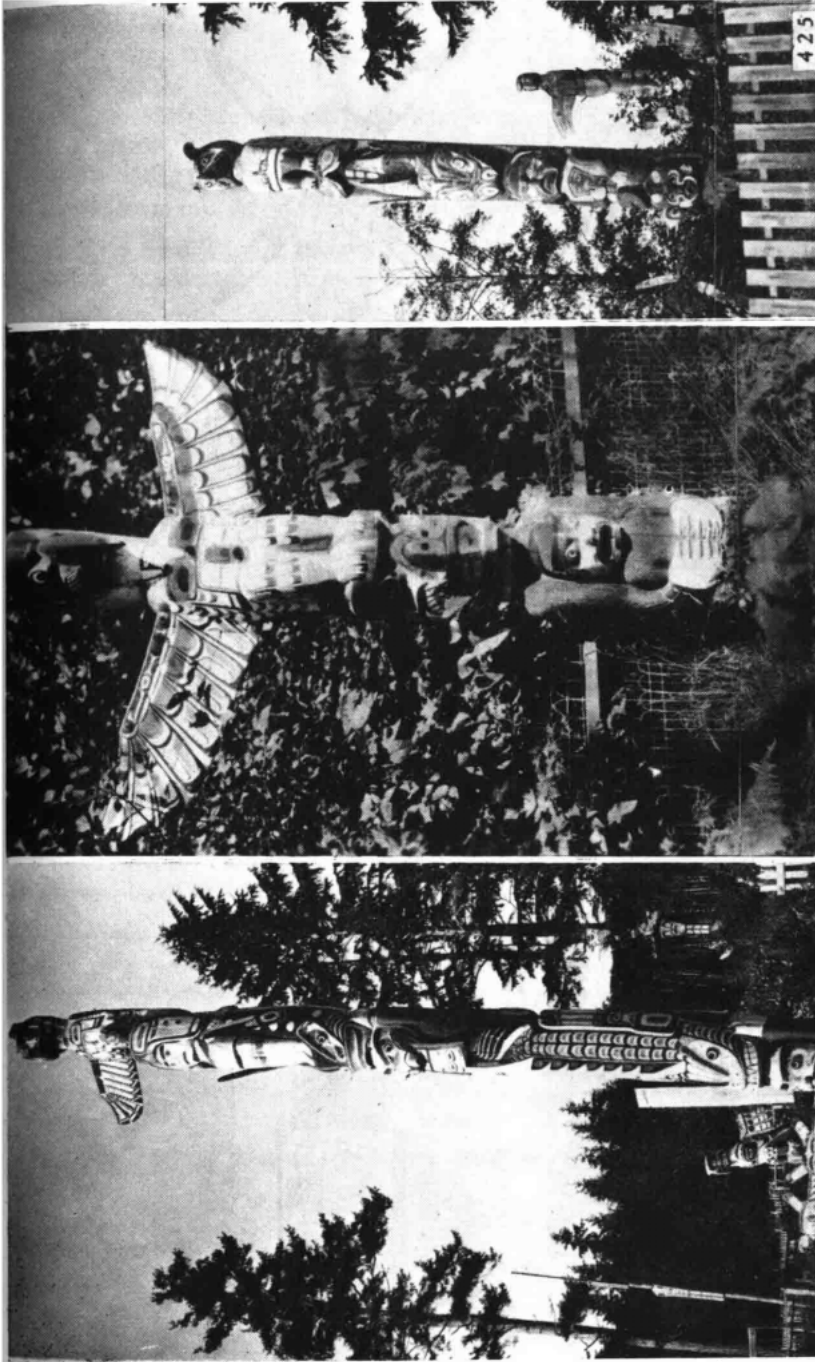
The father with the help of his people dug a deep hole and placed two seats over it. After the man-eater came, he took his place on the seat over the hidden hole.

The father then began to tell the history of the tribe and marked time with his speaking stick. Then the enchanted pillars opened and closed their eyes. The stick itself did queer things. The man-eater, now drowsy, was pushed into the pit, where hot water, made hot by hot stones, was ready for him. When he was dead they took his body, cut it up, and burned it. Its ashes became the stinging insects, like the horsefly.

The dancing stick was the model of the totem.

Raven-of-the-Sea (*q̄wawis*) of Kwawrhilanukumi, John Drabble of Alert Bay. Purchased in 1947 for the University of British Columbia from LaLahlewildzemkæ, his old wife (Rachel Drabble), and removed.

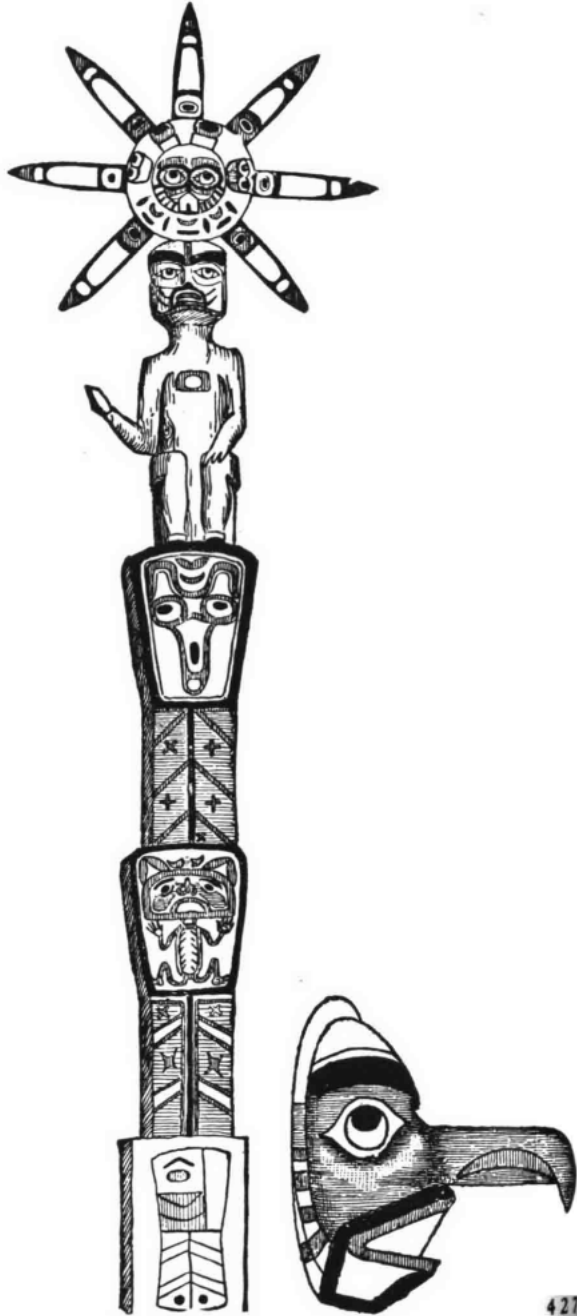
Description. Planted in front of the owner's house near the sidewalk, it was one of the very last poles left in Alert Bay. Its figures are, from the top: (1) Raven or Crow-of-the-Sea (*q̄wawis*); (2) Sea-Lion (*liken*); (3) Grizzly-Bear (*gyila*); (4) You-Speak-Through (*yeqandaq*), a man. (In the



Poles in the graveyard, Alert Bay



Graveyard figures at Alert Bay



Sinsintlæ pole at Alert Bay

feast houses, there were some detached figures, with the protruding mouth shaped like a funnel. The speaker stood behind the hollow figure to give its message to the guests inside.)

Function, carver, age. A big feast was given by the owner at the time of its erection. Mungo Martin, who carved it over twenty-five years ago and restored its top figure for the University of British Columbia, is still living. He was paid \$350 for his carving.

(Informant, Mrs. Drabble; interpreter, Daniel Cranmer, 1947.)

The Sun Totem (*Leesele*) of Lalakiyihit, the brother of the informant's father, at Alert Bay.

Description. Its figures were not well remembered. At the top was the Sun (*Leesele*); underneath, the Whale.

Age. It was erected about 1900–1905 and was almost as old as the pole of Wawkyas, the oldest of the large poles at Alert Bay. The name of the carver was forgotten.

(Informant, Daniel Cranmer, Alert Bay, 1947.)

The Sinsintlæ of the Nimkish tribe, according to Dr. Franz Boas (21: 338).

This post represents the sun surmounting the speaker of the clan. The upper part is carved in the shape of two coppers, the lower one being painted with the design of a bear. The lower part of the pole has a rectangular cross-section and is painted with figures representing coppers.

Chief Sesarhawles' Pole, presumably now at Stanley Park. Standing about 30 or 40 feet high, it was the tallest in Alert Bay.

Carver. It may have been the work of Charlie James, with the assistance of Mungo Martin.

(Informant, Daniel Cranmer, Alert Bay, 1947.)

Bullhead Graveyard Pole in the Alert Bay graveyard, near the gate, carved by Awaleskyinis of the Mamalelkula tribe, about two years ago.

Function. It is a monument to the memory of Abraham (Sirhwaqawle — the Big-Chief: Way-taller-than-the-others), who belonged in halves to Mamalelkula and to Fort Rupert. The carver was not considered a particularly good one, nor did he accomplish much work.

(Informant, Daniel Cranmer, Alert Bay, 1947.)

Graveyard Pole of Tsaqalahl (Nelson) of the Kwatsino tribe, about fifty years old, at the far end (western) near the front.

(Informant, Daniel Cranmer, Alert Bay, 1947.)

Doorway to a Koskimo house, described by Louis and Florence Shotridge (89: 71, 77).

This doorway represents the jaws of a fabulous monster that lived in the water at the mouth of Cache Creek, where the Koskimo formerly had their abode. The legend concerning this doorway and its heraldic device is, as follows:

In very early times there came on Cache Creek a very large fish known as Stokish. Placing itself where the Indians were accustomed to come for water, this monster gradually



Alert Bay house posts at the American Museum of
Natural History



Kwakiutl totem at Rivers Inlet



Poles and grave post at Karlukwees



Kwakiutl village of Blunden Harbour

decimated the tribe in the following manner. When the people came down for water, the fish, hidden at the bottom of the river, would open its huge mouth and, as the water rushed in, the people were sucked in with it. Finally, the tribe was reduced to one old man and a young girl. (It is this old man whose face is carved over the door shown in figure 56.) The old man and the maid were afraid to go to the river for water, knowing that they would be devoured if they did so. At this time there appeared a stranger called Kankokala (who, it seems, was a kind of supernatural being and a saviour), and the old man and the maid told him the story of Stokish. Kankokala took off his belt and, placing it around the girl, bade her go unafraid to bring water. Thereupon the old man was seized with fear that he would be left alone and protested against the suggestion. Finally the maid went to fetch water by Kankokala's command and was swallowed up like the rest of her tribe. The old man, now being left alone, set up a doleful lamentation until Kankokala led him by gentle persuasion to the place where his tribe had been devoured by Stokish. Upon their arrival they saw the monster (large fish: *stokish*) wallowing in the water in great agony. At last, precipitating himself upon the bank the monster burst open, whereupon the young girl stepped out alive and well. At the same time, the skeletons of the lost tribe came to light and were scattered over the shore. The old man recognized his tribesmen and started to call them by their names. Then he began putting the bones together, taking care that each man and woman

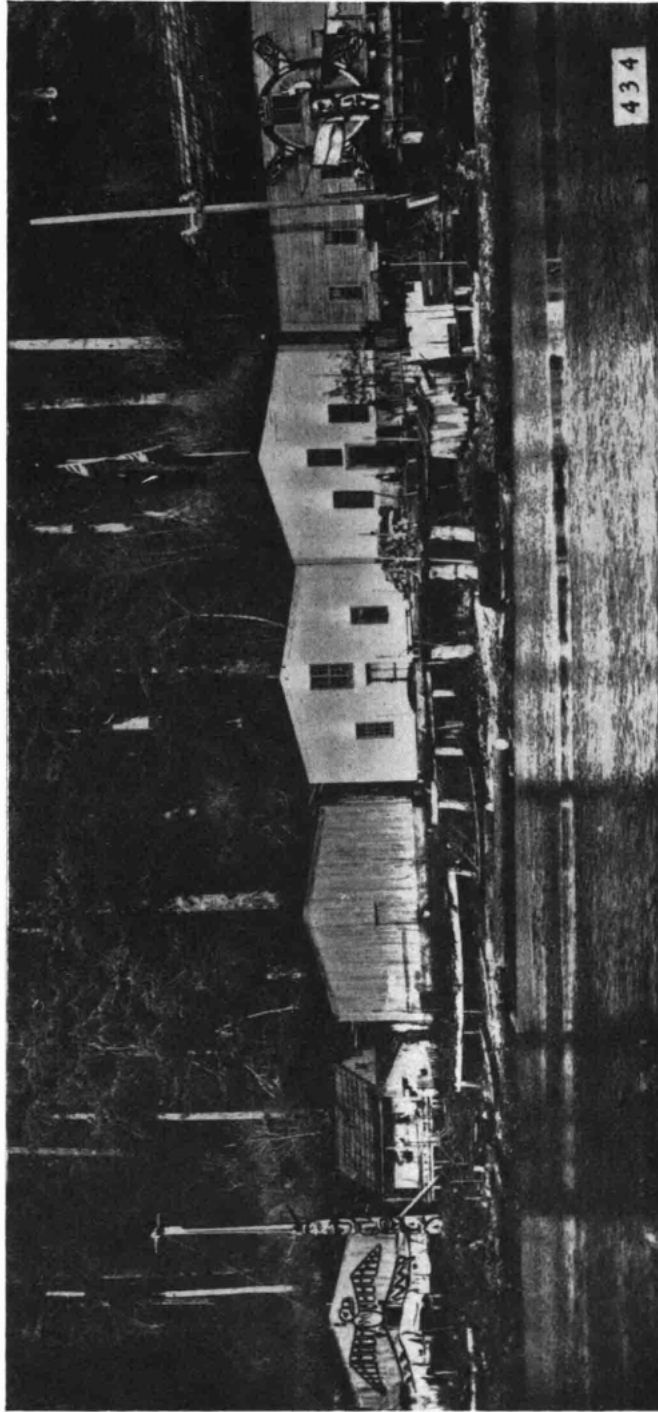


Kwakiutl posts

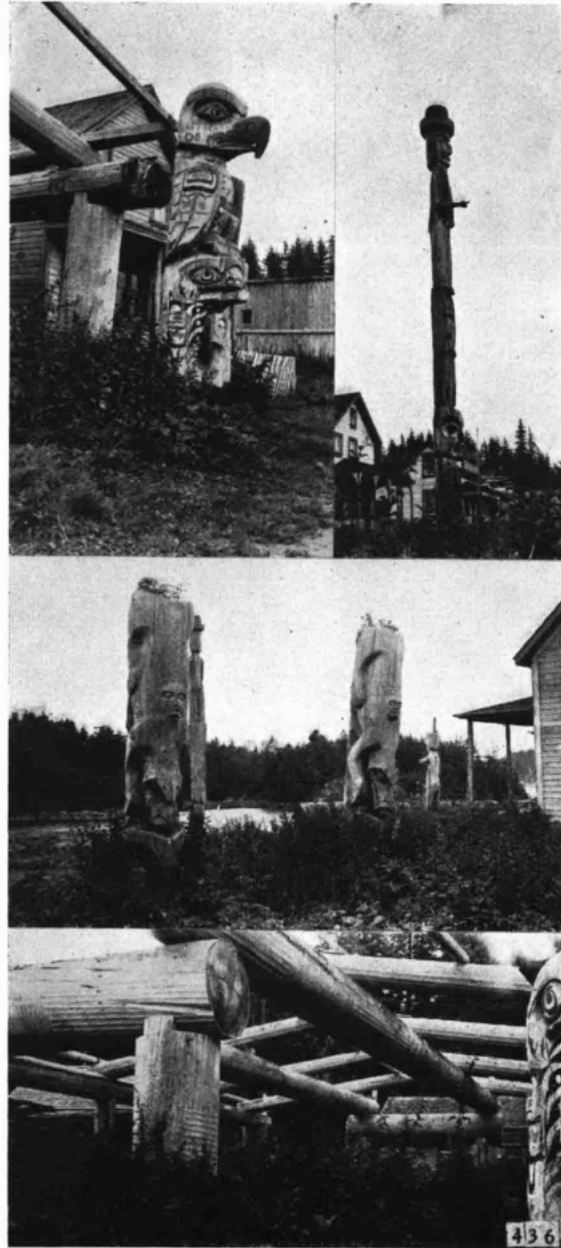
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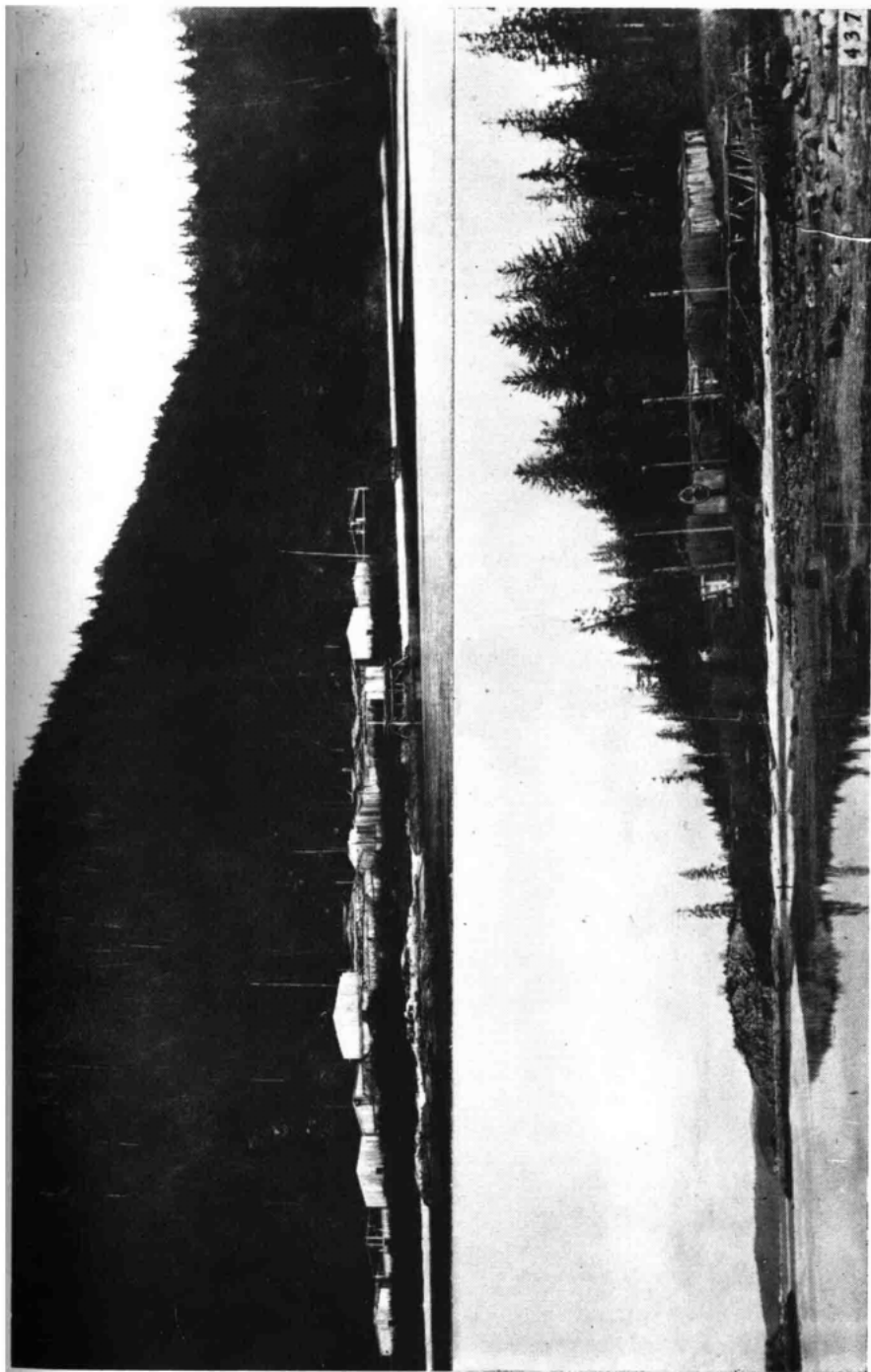
Totem at Kingcome Inlet



Koskimo village, Kwakiut



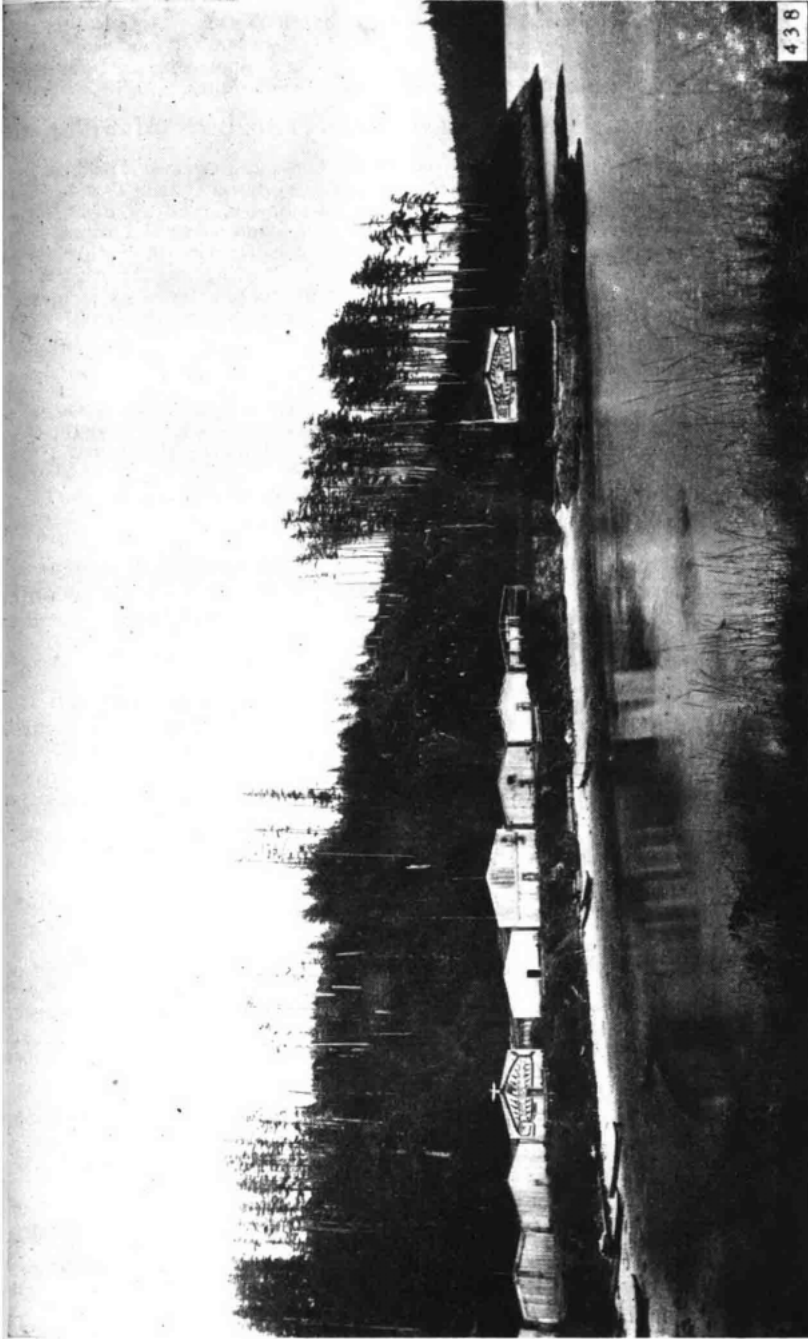
Mamalikula on Turnour Island



Kwayustums, Gilford Island



The house of Sweit at Koskimo



Kwakiutl village on Turnour Island

should be made up of his and her own parts. Kankokala then sprinkled the bones with water, whereupon they became clothed with flesh, and all the tribe came to life, rubbing their eyes as though they had been asleep. The old man, however, had made some mistakes and occasionally got the parts mixed; that is why to this day some people are born deformed and why you sometimes see a man with one leg shorter than another.

Newetee Totem Pole, according to Dr. Franz Boas (21:379. Fig. 21).

It stood until a few years before 1895 in front of a house at Newetee. The crest belongs to a subdivision of the clan Gigilqam. The members of this group have the Tsonoqoa, a man split in two, another man, wolf, beaver, and the sea-monster *tseqic* for dishes. A man named Qoayolelas of this clan was told to unite the dishes and to carve a totem pole. He did. The second figure from below is placed upside down because the dish was in the back of the man, whereas all the others were in the bellies of the carvings. This history may also explain the fact that all the figures are separated on this column, although in most other totem poles they overlap, one holding the other or one standing on the other.

From the same clan was obtained the crane surmounting the speaker on the post farthest to the right on Plate 16.

The three posts in figures 22 and 23 are the front and rear posts of the house Qoqoakimlilas of the clan Gerhsem of the Naqomgilisala. The posts were on exhibition at the World's Columbian Exposition and were transferred to the Field Columbian Museum.

The Tsonoqoa of Old Nahwittee at the National Museum of Canada (No. VII E 405, 406).

A pair of door posts, it formed part of a ceremonial house at Cape Comerell, Vancouver Island. They were collected by Dr. C. F. Newcombe in 1899. "Each village had its own" is a remark about it noted in the catalogue.

In storage; not illustrated here.

Pole of the Denarhtog (Knight Inlet). The figures from top downwards are: Thunderbird, Dzonqoa holding a copper, Grizzly Bear and Halibut, a chief holding a copper, a giant sculpin. "The original still stands at Tsawadi, and is about 45 feet high." This was recorded by the author in the spring of 1915 at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. The model of this totem pole at the Museum bore the number 85823 and had been collected in 1904 by C. F. Newcombe.

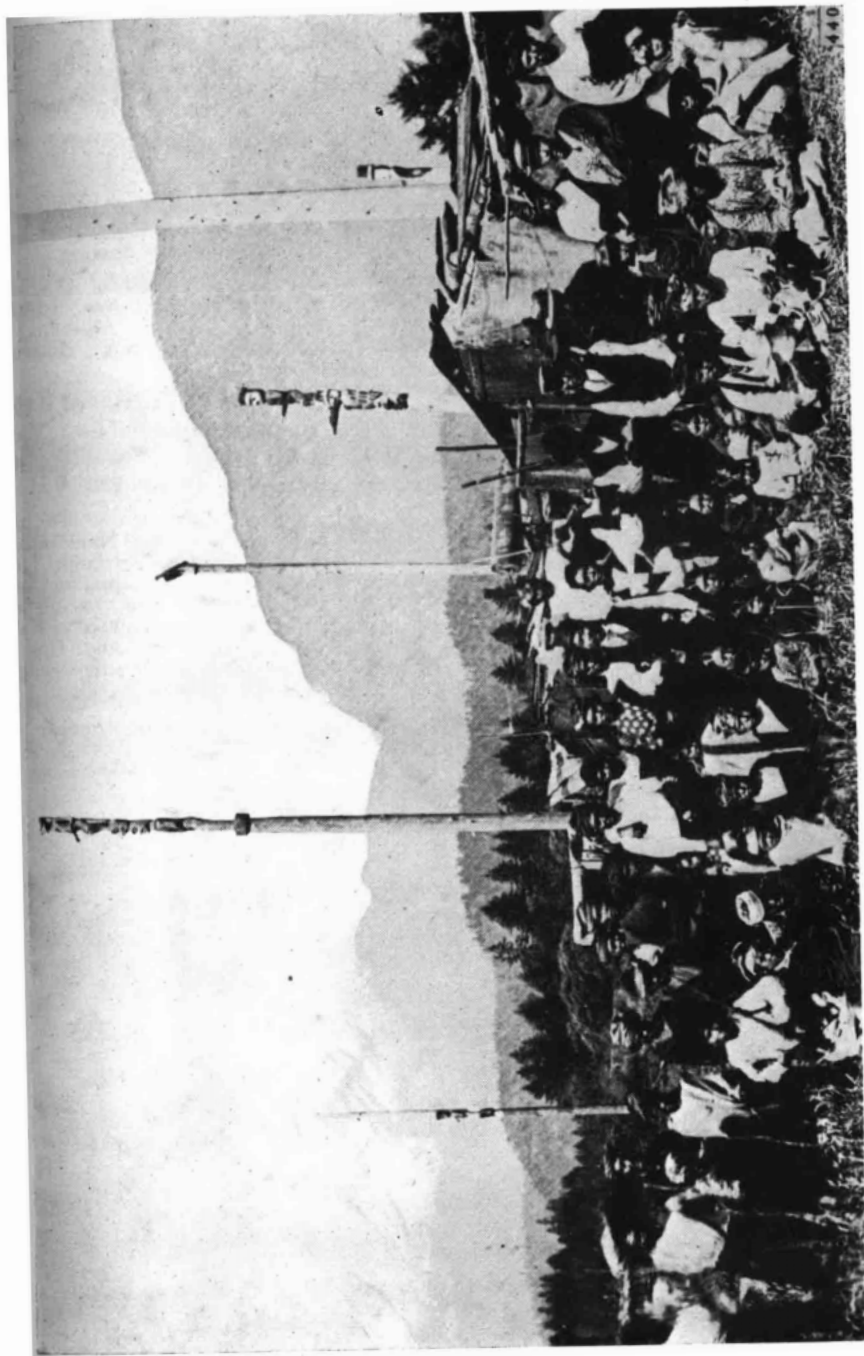
Poles of Tsawadi (Knight Inlet), according to W. A. Newcombe (76: C10, Pl. V).

From a photograph taken by R. Maynard in 1873. The tall pole on the right of the picture is similar to P.M. Nos. 1859 and 1863; this is the original type of pole of the Kwakiutl and the specimen shown was apparently old at the time of taking the photograph. The inside pole supporting the house-beam shows the "Thunderbird;" and the "Sonoqoa," the mythical "wild woman of the woods" (P.M. No. 1854), from Koskimo, V. I., supported a similar beam.

Inside Poles of Tsawadi (Knight Inlet), according to W. A. Newcombe (76: C10, Pl. VI).

Many of the older houses had two or more carved poles supporting a timber upon which rested the central house-beam. The three poles shown are P.M. Nos. 1860, 1861, 1862, with "Sonoqoa" and bear carvings of the Kwakiutl.

Post of Sadi (Knight Inlet) of the Danarhtog tribe of Tsawadi. From above down, the figures are: Eagle, Killer-Whale, Raven, Wolf, Grizzly Bear holding a man's body, Dzonqoa, and Toad (Frog). Seen by the author at the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, in 1915. It had been collected by C. F. Newcombe in 1904 and bore the number 65824.



Midway up the British Columbia coast