

mortuaries at Sitka. He did, however, pay tribute to the native artists when he wrote, "they carved steamers, animals, etc. very neatly in stone, wood, and ivory, imitating, in short, everything that they see, either in reality or in drawings. . . ."

The foregoing accounts cover a period of exploration of one hundred years duration and contain about all that has been recorded concerning totem poles in that century. From them we may infer that interior house posts were in general use throughout the entire region before the coming of white men; that the mortuary pole was common in Tlingit and Haida villages; that the exterior house post is Haida in origin, probably originating on Langara Island; that the detached totem pole must be of recent origin, possibly not over a hundred years old — that totem poles in general reached their highest development during the period of white trade and occupation, roughly between 1840 and 1880.

31. The art of the Northwest Coast is recent, according to Edward L. Keithahn (62: 76).

Like the totem poles, the art of the Northwest Coast itself is recent. Many museum pieces in stone and wood reveal that the artist of this region has not always favoured the curvilinear figures he now executes to the exclusion of all others. Food and storage boxes in particular were formerly decorated with plain geometric figures, and red was the only colour employed on them. The women's art as seen in mats and baskets was also formal and meaningless, except that the various designs employed had names. In recent times, however, the native women have been prevailed upon by whites to imitate the men's totemic figures on their baskets.

32. The age of totem poles, by W. A. Newcombe (a review of the author's *Totem Poles of the Gitksan*) (77: 238-243).

In his discussion of the age of totem poles, Mr. Newcombe gives interesting information on the age of a number of totems and Indian villages.

33. Nass origin of detached poles. Detached totem poles originated among Nass River Tribes, according to the Rev. G. H. Raley, now of Vancouver, formerly a missionary among the Hartley Bay Indians.

Alfred Wesley, a Haida slave met at Gitamat about 1895 (he was then 40 years old), thought that the idea of the large totem poles detached from houses went back to the Nass. The Gitamat people were not totem pole carvers in the same sense as the Nass and Skeena tribes were. They had one when I lived there, and there had been others. The one standing was 35 or 40 feet tall. The figure at the top had a segmented hat; below was a Halibut, with a Frog superimposed.

34. Age of the Gitksan poles on upper Skeena River.

See details in a list in the author's museum monograph *Totem Poles of the Gitksan*, pp. 187-191:

At Gitwinkul (1860-1916), at Kitwanga (1850-1920), at Kispayaks (1850-1905), at Gitenmaks (1840-1900), at Hagwelget (1850-1875), at Qaldo (1860-1870?), at Gitsesyukla (1873-1925), at Kisgagas (1885). Some new poles have since been erected at Gitseyukla, Gitenmaks (Hazelton), and Kispayaks.

**III. In Mythology and Tales**, totem poles are very rarely mentioned. This omission indicates that these emblems do not go deep in the concepts of the past and the casual references to carved poles may obviously have been introduced recently under the strong influence of the art in the last part of the nineteenth century. Such allusions are found elsewhere in this book; in addition, I quote the two following extracts from the myths, and later of the Tlingits, Nos. 35 and 36:

35. The Raven makes a totem pole, recorded by Dr. J. R. Swanton (119a: p. 117):

Raven went to another place, and they said to him, "There will soon be a great feast here," and they asked him to make a totem pole. He finished it, and when they put it up,



Harlan I. Smith, engaged on the work of restoration  
of totem poles

they had a big dance. The people who gave this were of the Wolf clan, so he danced with one of the two Raven parties. Afterward he made a long speech to the host. Then they danced again, and Raven held a spear in his hands. This meant that he was going to be invited to a feast next, and was done that they might give him more than the others. So nowadays some are in earnest in doing this, and others go through the performance and leave without keeping it in mind. Raven was the person who first had those dances and speeches.

36. Dreaming of totem poles, according to Alfred Adams, Haida of Massett, in 1939:

The Queen Charlotte Island people claimed to be the best carvers and the best canoe-makers in the early days. In the legends of the Massett



A totem pole being removed

tribes, carvings are mentioned even before the flood. At the slough near Massett, there are traces of an ancient community house with inside grades excavated (the *da'q* of the Tsimisyans). Legend reports that this was the chief's house. One day he decided to give a feast, but before accomplishing his plan, he went with his son, a Prince, to the mainland to get a supply of grease. After their canoe was loaded with oolaken grease and other things, they started back. As they were passing by Rosespit (on the northeast point of the islands), the Chief's son fell into a trance and had a famous dream. He saw a large village under the water, full of fine houses and totem poles. In front of the chief's house stood two totems, the figures of which he still clearly remembered after he had returned to his senses. He advised his father to make similar totem poles, and they had carvers reproduce on good cedars the figures revealed in the vision. When the work was completed, a day was put aside for celebrations.

On the day of the feast the tide began to rise; gradually it came up, bringing on its crest the visitors invited from all over the island — Massett and Skidegate, and from the mainland, Alaska. They were getting ready to raise the totem when the tide came up once more and covered the whole land with salt water. The guests changed into birds — birds with white heads and black, some black all over, with red bills (puffins) — and flew away home. The totem pole became alive and swam away.

At the time the people blamed the young man for bringing this about. The totem he had seen under the sea must have been too sacred to carve. It was afterwards said to have been found stranded beyond the present slough on the hill above Delcatla. Those who discovered it used to tie their canoes up there as the tidewaters still rose up to that point. When the land began to dry up, those who possessed strong medicine could see totem poles. It proves that the Haidas at that time were already carvers. That is why they have ever since remained partial to carving.

Among our people, the Haidas, the same carvers made both the masks, the spirits (*narhnork*), and the totems. There was no difference among them. A good craftsman could undertake anything he wanted. The art, however, was not the privilege of common folk; it had to be inherited in high society. A carver had to train his successors to continue his work; but as long as he was able it was his exclusive right to carve. A carver of totems was a high man. In former times there were special men for every calling; as some were good speakers, others were makers of totem poles.

37. The first totem ever known was shown to the author in 1947 in the form of a miniature pole of red cedar, 18 inches high, hollow back. This model was owned by Mrs. William Paul of Juneau, Alaska.



Totem poles towed to Prince Rupert

It illustrates a story in the cycle of the Raven. Briefly, it is as follows, according to Mrs. Paul: The Raven and the Bullhead were travelling together. The Raven, in the form of a man pulled down his bill to his stomach, and his companion Bullhead, went down to Whaletown under the sea. On their way back from Whaletown, the Raven produced this totem pole in memory of his visit.

This model pole was carved by John Wallace of old Klinkwan (new Haidaberg) about 1926, as a gift to Mr. William Paul of Juneau in acknowledgment of their blood relationship.

John Wallace (according to the Rev. Samuel Davis, merchant at Haidaberg, Alaska) was about 80 years old in 1939 and had been trained in carving by David Wallace, an older man (Yakulanos).

**IV. Opinions of the Tsimtsyan and Haida Informants** as to age of art of carving and erecting totem poles.

38. Origin of house and carved columns, according to Edensaw, in 1891 (33, 34).

They [the Haidas] say they do not know how long ago it was that their forefathers began to build themselves houses after the present style and to set up carved columns. It was many generations ago. At first they lived in very cold and comfortless huts, without columns or any such thing outside of their dwellings. Whether it was in order to improve his house or to inform the rest of his tribe about his name or that of his village that the chief erected these columns, I have never been able to discover. If the name has been preserved to posterity, these people do not care to make it known. This chief seems to have been in possession of more than ordinary intelligence, because he set himself to devise a more comfortable style of house in every respect.

While he was thinking over a plan, an angel — or rather, I ought to have said, a spirit, for among these people angels and spirits were one and the same — appeared to his clairvoyant eyes and showed him the style of a house, with the measurements and everything connected with the future building in detail, excepting a carved column. In the same manner King David got the plan of the temple at Jerusalem. Having been provided with a plan, he and all his tribe set to work in order to get out the requisite material. Just as they were about to build, the same visitor appeared to the chief and again showed him the plan, with this difference: a carved column was placed in front of the house, with his crest (a Raven) carved on top. Underneath the Raven was a second carving, the crest of his wife, an Eagle. Lower down still were the crests of his father and mother, and also those of his wife's family. While showing him the plan, his adviser from the celestial sphere told him that not only was his tribe or himself to build houses like the one shown, but all the people in every village were to build the same and to set up columns. Slowly but surely as the old huts were pulled down, new styled ones took their places, each one having one or more columns. One had the husband's crest and that of his parents; the other had the wife's crest and that of her parents underneath.

39. The age of the Skidegate totem poles, according to Mrs. Susan Grey, who stated that she was 80 years old (in 1947).

Skidegate, she affirms, is not very old. The earlier village was beyond what is now Tlelel (or *q'ahlenskun*), on the sea-coast to the northeast. But the people moved from there to Skidegate before she was born. Her first husband, William Dixon, called Ayaa (later, Neyuwens), was a carver of small totem poles and other things. In his time, the tribe here was no longer erecting large poles. He was dead some 30 years, in 1947.

She added: "There were totem poles before my time, long before. They say that the Raven made us and could do everything. He made totems too."

40. When the Skidegate Haidas began to erect totem poles, according to Henry Young, a carver 75 years old in 1947.

He said, "Totem poles go back to the time before I was born. My father, who was 89 years old when he died, had seen poles standing when he was a little boy. So there were some, over 100 years ago. Most people, when I was young, wanted to have their own totem poles. But when the Rev. Mr. Crosby, the missionary, arrived in his boat in 1884, he stopped the people and threatened them with jail, if they wanted to raise totems. And he had a number of converted Skidegates wear police uniforms. It was at that time



T. B. Campbell restoring totem poles at Kitwanga



Totem pole at Kitwanga being taken down for restoration



A house frontal pole at Kitwanga, before restoration

that the Skidegates began to build white man's houses here — not quite 60 years ago, when I was 9 or 10 years old. The old-timers among our people, who were used to the old style, did not care for the new buildings."

Large Haida totem poles, when they were carved and erected, according to Henry Young, an old Skidegate chief, were 6, 8, 9 fathoms long, and stood in front of the houses. They began to carve argillite poles (miniature poles in black argillite) at the time when they were erecting large ones. Before this, they did not make argillite poles, but "only pipes, all the time." [M.B. Actually the oldest argillite poles we know date back only to the late 1860's.]

41. When the last totem poles were made at Massett (Haida), according to Alfred Young (in 1939), an old member of the Eagle clan.

During his time [when he was young], totems were still being carved and erected. He was born among totem pole carvers. His clan (named Tsitskitnæ — Inhabitants-of-Tsits) had nine totems. It was during the missionary Harrison's time that the people stopped erecting poles and gave up the potlatch.

42. Age of the totem poles at Gitlarhdamks, up Nass River (Tsimshyan) according to Dennis Wood, an old member of an Eagle clan at Gitlarhdamks (with William Beynon, interpreter). The twenty-four poles of Gitlarhdamks that he described in detail were the first poles erected there.

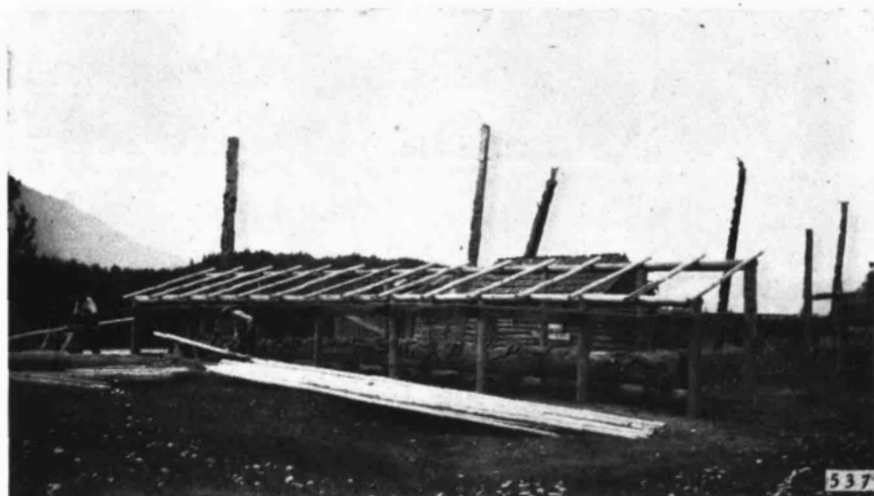
"Before totem poles were used, house paintings decorated the house fronts. The native tools were not fit for the carving of large poles. In later days, the paint was obtained from the white people. The earlier native paints were fixed with the oil of the salmon roe. The dyes were extracted by chewing from the bark of the cedar. Red ochre was also used. Green (*mehlatk* and *lawrawsan*) was obtained by pulverizing a green rock. Black was produced from the charcoal of alder ground together with the oil of salmon roe. Yellow, in the early days, was not available. But a tan colour was secured by grinding the dry dung of the bear in cedar bark juice — the bear's dung presumably acted as a fixative."





After the Kitwanga house frontal was restored

Two other old informants, present at the time — Guiteen Menæsk, the head-chief of the local Eagles, and Peter Neesyawq, head of the Wolf clans, shared the same opinion, that the totem poles described were the only ones that ever existed at Gitlarhdamks.



The old totem pole of Næqt under cover at Kitwanga