

If the Haidas were a diminished tribe, in unaccustomed baffled retreat to the safest of their shores, they remained a profound academy of artists. Besides the tattoo pages in Swan's Contributions article, he drew a few of the stone carvings the visiting Haidas had brought with them--ⁱ~~mini~~atures of the carved cedar poles which soared in their villages--and I can barely pull my gaze from the one that ^{protrudes} ~~has~~ four fantastic figures lined one atop the other. Or as Swan explains, two sets of two creatures: . . . the lower one is Hoorts the bear holding in his paws the Stoo or crayfish. The upper figure is the Tsching or Tsing, the beaver, holding the Tl-kam-kostan or frog. . . The Indian, however rude or grotesque his carvings or paintings may be, is always true to nature. He knows that the bears eat crabs, crayfish and other littoral marine crustacea, and that the frog is the fresh-water companion of the beaver. . . If the carver had reversed the grouping, he would have been laughed at by his friends. . . The linework is as fluid as the logic; no inch of the carving is without some thrust of action, something amazing about to begin. The beaver could be some creature of Mayan art gone mad; the frog he holds looks like some semi-human doing a handstand while wearing a gas mask; the bear could be a South Seas version of a jolly grizzly; the crayfish being plucked up backwards into his jaws is clearly ^{some far star. is.} from Venus. Restless skilled minds ^{move} ~~are~~ behind this deftly-stacked menagerie; minds which took magic from the forest and ocean and merrily made it art.

Swan caught an idea from the Haidas during that day of tattoo-tracing in his Port Townsend office, and it became the underpattern of his Contributions article: the Haidas were a most intriguing tribe--of larger stature, better proportion, and lighter complexion--whose home villages

in the Queen Charlotte Islands--a healthy picturesque territory--ought to be visited--if the Government would empower some person here, and appropriate sufficient funds to be expended--by someone probably named Swan.

That notion persisted, I find, as if one of the Haida ^{tattooists} had en-
graved it on the inside of Swan's forehead. # Over the next years, Swan's
letters to Baird say steadily this: I am more desirous of making explora-
tions in the Queen Charlotte Island Group than of doing anything else.

And Baird's to him say as steadily only: I hope that one of these
days. . .

Later: something remembered as I stare at Swan's sketch of Beaver
fondling Frog, Bear sampling Crayfish. When we returned from our time in
Britain six years ago, Carol brought with her a recording of African Sanctus,
the fusion of African songs and dances with Western choir music, and began
to use it in her semantics course to show the queer capturing power of
rhythm, the vast sophistication of "primitive" folk-art. The Haida work
is something like that awesome Sanctus: anthems of existence, modulation
upon modulation
of the creaturedom which we too belong to. Carved music.

Day fifty-five

Storm. Fence-floater. Goosedrowner. None of which is fractionally enough word for such weather. Nightlong, rain swatted walls and windows, the wind pounded and ripped among the valley trees. Carol and I ~~jerked~~ ^{yanked} awake at the gale's first try at peeling the roof from the house, never fully ~~entirely~~ slept from then on. I was certain that the birch trees outside the bedroom would be bending, eluding, as they always do in southwest blows. I was equally certain I would be greeting one or more of them in through the rafters any moment.

After breakfast--the birches still stood, although branches thicketed the lawn as if someone had spent the night up in the limbs with a pruning saw--I slumped away to try for sleep, Carol drove up the hill to meet her classes. The wind roared on. In minutes I admitted myself more or less awake for good, managed to decide that I would head for Shilshole to see this weather at full run on the Sound.

In the car: full run hardly says it either. Wind-flung clouds dive almost into the streets. Just beneath their reach, traffic lights dance like lanterns swung by frantic trainmen. People waiting for buses try to squeeze themselves narrow enough to fit the lee spaces behind telephone poles. Everywhere, a sprinkle of evergreen branches has sifted down, as if the city has been seeded with them by a giant foresting hand.

In restaurants I pass, people are talking to each other with their hands. Famous weather, a man ^{brogued} ~~said~~ to me on a Killarney street one wan but rainless spring morning, famous weather. This gale is going to have name of its own sort. It takes much to draw a gesture from a Puget Sound resident, but steaming mugs of coffee are being waved around in there to punctuate

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the expostulations that somebody's daughter and son-in-law got up this morning to find a Douglas fir limb exploded down through the carport roof, that they themselves will not even attempt driving to the job at Boeings this morning, that there's been nothing like this christly wind since the Columbus Day blow of '62.

At Shilshole: I lean my way out onto the fishing pier. A bird lifts hazardingly in front of me near the boat ramp. Incredibly, it is a kingfisher, blown in from some forested river bank or another and looking very weary of wind. I glance west, north, south, and find the Sound ^{absolutely} ~~entirely~~ empty of ships and boats, the first time I have ^{ever} seen it so in my dozen years along this shore. ^{The next surprise is that} Oddly, the weather is not the steady rage down here that it is in our valley. ^{myself} ~~There is~~ a harsh uneven chop to the water, but no higher than a tugboat's bow, and not much breakage of wave along the shoreline. I realize what is happening: instead of crashing the waves ashore here, the southerly wind is skidding the water the length of the Sound. When all the miles of chop finally fetch up against the banks of Whidbey Island, the banging spray must be colossal.

Out of the wind which whangs among the harbor's sailboat masts seeps a high agitated whistling, like the cry of mournful birds. Souls of displaced kingfishers, most likely. In the clouds to the west the Olympic peaks pop through into whetted outline every so often, and unexpectedly, sunshine through some

loophole in the vapors is beaming onto a stretch of the shoreline across the Sound. But quickly full storm again. The new rain front hits, rolls along the wavetops, resists me every waterlogged inch of the way back to the car; I could lay forward into the storm as if it were a wall of wool.

Homebound: against my habit, the storm has me listening to the car radio. The announcer has just said the Hood Canal ^{floating} bridge has vanished-- a mile of it, strutwork, giant pontoons, roadway, the bunch, blown beneath the waters. I count the number of times I have driven across the span to the Olympic Peninsula this winter, to Neah Bay, Alava, Port Townsend, Dungeness; once just back and forth over it to see where Swan and the errant Clallams canoed past after the Graveyard Spit massacre. With its linkage of barge-sized pontoons sitting across the broad surface of Hood Canal, the gray floating bridge has always reminded me of a blockade chain across some river being contested in the Civil War. No more. This storm was the iron wind to snap it.

Day fifty-six

Innocent weather today. Clouds wander sheep-like along the horizon as if unacquainted with rain, never any lust to meet the wind and go dancing raucously on the grave on a bridge.

In one or another of his earliest sojourns at Neah Bay, Swan had watched a Makah pageant of marriage proposal. According to what he wrote later for the Smithsonian, into the bow of a beached canoe stepped a man with a whaling harpoon. Another Makah sailor climbed in amidship and held a seal-skin buoy as if ready to cast it onto the waves. A third man, the steersman, alertly knelt in the stern with paddle poised.

Onto the shoulders of eight men were hoisted the canoe and its crew of three, and through the air in its above-sand voyage toward the lodge of the family of the girl being wooed, the whaling pantomime slowly sailed.

In front led a fourth Makah actor, a man beneath a blanket and creeping on all fours, occasionally raising his body to imitate a whale when blowing. At intervals the Indian in the canoe would throw the harpoon as if to strike, taking studious care, however, not to hit him.

Behind the man-whale and the airborne sailors strode a chorus of the suitor's friends, singing, drumming, shaking rattles. The burthen of their song was, that they had come to purchase a wife for one of their number, and recounted his merits and the number of blankets he would pay.

At last, as the procession reached the lodge, ^{of the intended,} the mock-whale scuttled to one side; there was an instant of poised expectation among the entire tableau; and the harpoonist with full might whammed his harpoon into the cedar plank door.

This operation, deadpanned Swan, may be said to be symbolical of Cupid's dart on a large scale.

Evidently some splinter of that great dart flew and buried itself years-deep within the watching guest. Just before Christmas of 1874, into Swan's diary pages arrives the name of Amelia Roberts. It sparkles there fifteen times in the next two months, and oftener and oftener "Amelia" is fondly burnished down to the ~~attractor's~~ ^{attractor's} nickname, "Dolly."

This is new. Over the years, Swan's words on women have been scant. In 1863 when the Neah Bay employees invited ashore to Fourth of July dinner the captain of a trading vessel, it was rare exuberance when Swan noted that the captain was companioned by a very handsome specimen of savage beauty in the person of a Stikene squaw whom he had brought down in his schooner...

There are the warm diary entries about the Makah housekeeper, Katy. A single wisp on a spring evening at Port Townsend in 1869, when Swan had gone calling on friends: Mrs. Phillips and her sister from Whidbey Island were present. I was much interested in Mrs. Phillips from her strong resemblance to my late wife. But little else. Until now these drumbeat inscriptions of Dolly, Dolly, Dolly.

Gifts to her begin to dollop from Swan like honey from a pitcher: sewing box, market basket, inkstand, writing desk, earrings, a painting, collections of seashells. Dolly full of fun, the diary exults. Dolly weighs 127 pounds and measures 5 ft 4½ inches, it commends.

One other reckoning does not reach its pages. That winter of 1874-75, James G. Swan reached his fifty-seventh birthday. Dolly Roberts was sixteen.

That canyon between their ages perhaps did not gape as widely as it

would in later eras, but it ~~was~~ ^{made} chasm enough. There were Swan's other fissures as well: his thin finances, his drinking. Indians sometimes slept--⁽good gracious, sometimes lived!--⁾ in his office. Swan himself periodically dwindled across the horizon to Sitka or Utah or somewhere. Plenty, in short, for Dolly's mother, and maybe even Dolly, to mull about Swan the swain. And Port Townsend being the compound of New England small town and muscular western port it was, whatever could be brought up against Swan stayed in the air a doubly long while, as tittle-tattle among the mercantile families on the bluff (Dolly was the niece of prominent merchant F. W. Pettygrove, one of the town's founders), heavy winks and nudges among the waterfront saloon constituencies.

Unpromising odds. Yet, as the ongoing diary lines about Dolly indicate, Swan had a bridgehead in the situation. He had been smitten with young Miss Roberts in, of all locales he ever can be found at, the Port Townsend Episcopal church choir.

Against Port Townsend's night-in, night-out whiskey baritone, that choir must have been a very wavery Sunday trill. Sometimes the hymning voices were six or seven, sometimes as few as four. But consistently in late 1874 and early 1875--the diary begins to show dogged stints of church-going by Swan as long ago as 1869-- they included Mrs. Roberts and her daughters Dolly and Mary, and Swan. (Mr. Roberts is a mysterious absence, both from the choir and the household. Deceased? Absconded? A sea captain?) Swan quite promptly begins to drop by the Roberts home

for rehearsal of the church music. Then he begins gifts of food--scallops, salmon--and naturally is invited to share supper. Henry Webster, also at loose ends in Port Townsend just then and still Swan's stalwart, might be asked to join in as well. One fine February Sunday, ^{an afternoon's} there is even a genteel stroll, Swan and Webster and Dolly and Mary, in the course of which the young women probably heard more than they wanted to know about the singularities of life at Neah Bay.

What came of Swan's season of romantic hovering was just what could be expected: letdown. The choiring goes on, but the gifts and visits slow a bit, and then become more widely--more respectably?--spaced.

Swan never speaks it in the diaries, but the increasing intervals say it for him. Sometime here, the moment occurs, invisible but sharp, when the fact registers on Swan, as it probably already had on Dolly with some help from her mother, that the choirgirl and the white-bearded frontiersman are not a likely match. I find ahead in the diaries that for a number of years to come, Swan will continue a fond proximity to Dolly and the Roberts family. Not this daily nearness of an infatuated suitor, however. More like the weekliness of a favorite bachelor uncle.

So then. Who would have thought the clerkish whiskeyfied aging dabbler had such steam in him? But of course he did, exactly because he had never shown so, and ^{to me} I find his infatuation ^{is}

as entirely ~~marvelous~~ ^{enchanting} as it was foolish. Wish such a season to any of us, man or woman, so long self-locked into aloneness; let the blaze come out, for once, from within the bones. I say emotional paroles are due the alone of this world even if, like Swan's, the outing turns out to be quick and bittersweet. Better that than simply bitter.

Meanwhile, early in that spring of 1875, a territorial newspaper carries this item:

MARRIED: In Portland, Oregon, April 3d, Henry A. Webster and Mary E. Roberts, both of Port Townsend.

Day fifty-seven

I am negotiating for the purchase of the largest canoe ever built on this coast, Swan to Baird, another spring day of 1875. It is at Alert Bay, Vancouver Island. It measures 75 to 80 feet long...

The great canoe's reputation proved to be somewhat vaster than its actual dimensions--sixty feet in length--but it still was a titanic craft, able to carry a hundred persons. What was more, Swan himself could ^{jaunt} ~~go~~ north in pursuit of the canoe and whatever other tribal items caught his fancy along the coast of British Columbia and southeastern Alaska. Baird had ^{caught} ~~seen~~ a glint of opportunity: the U.S. Indian Bureau wanted to ^{sponsor} ~~have~~ a major exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, and after the Exposition, the exhibit items could pass to ^{no surprise,} ~~the~~ the Smithsonian. The way they would reach the Indian Bureau exhibit was from Special Commissioner James G. Swan, salaried at \$200 a month and offered the U.S. revenue cutter Wolcott to convey him around the North Pacific.

Left for Victoria on Steamer...with Lieut Kilgore, to purchase charts and other articles for Wolcott & for me to get some silver to take north to make purchases, the seventh of June, 1875. That same night the Wolcott docked long enough to take the pair of them aboard, and about 12 Midnight the cruise began.

For the next forty-four days, Swan records ports of call all

along the broken coast of the North Pacific and buys busily:
 hundreds of items ranging from the giant canoe for \$225 to wooden
 berry spoons for 25¢ each. Only the wonderfully carved poles of
 the coastal villages eluded him. At last, at Howkan village on
 Prince of Wales Island, he is given a forthright explanation:

"These posts are monuments for the dead and we will not sell them
 any more than white people will sell the grave stones or monuments
 in cemeteries but you can have one made for you." Swan at once
put his order in.

Yet, his scrupulously-daily-as-ever journal is somehow
 perfunctory about the tribes he was among, the Bella Bella and
 Tsimshian and Tlingit, artistic peoples all. My guess is that
 Swan spent time in gab among the Wolcott's eight officers and crew
 of twenty-nine which otherwise would have gone into diarying.
 Just twice does his Wolcott account leap to life for me, and
 oddly, the backdrop each time is death.

--At Fort Tongass, I went ashore with Lieuts Hewitt & Kilgore
and walked over a villainous trail to the Indian village on the
west side of the Island where I witnessed a most interesting scene.
It was the body of a woman, niece of Yah sood...laid in state.
The Indians said she had a fall accidentally which injured her spine
and bringing on premature child birth, last night or early this morning
she died. I saw Yahsood outside his house evidently in great mental
affliction I told him I had come to visit at the lodges but out of
respect to his feelings I would not call on any more but go on home.
He then invited me to go in his house and see the corpse which I did.

The body was dressed in the best attire, the face painted red and hair nicely combed. On the head was a sort of crown curiously carved, and on the back part was a sort of apron or cloak reaching to the ankles, thickly covered with ermine skins...On her right near her head was her husband, on her left was her father, at her feet were her mother and two aunts, and two or three other women. The deceased was about 20 years of age very regular and pretty features and looked as if asleep...The poor old father kept up a conversation with his dead daughter. The husbands head was bowed to the ground with grief and the women were all weeping. It was a very affecting sight. I addressed a few words of sympathy... This is the first scene of the kind I ever saw.

--At Fort Simpson, Swan went to a wedding feast by special invitation of the Indians, through their pastor Rev Mr Crosby. Swan sat in a place of honor near the bride and groom with Reverend Crosby and his wife and Lieutenant Kilgore. We were served with a nice roast goose & roast ducks potatoes bread cake tea & coffee &c. 6 or 8 young men dressed like hotel waiters attended on us and the whole passed off pleasantly. Then, an incident occurred which was very gratifying to me. A Tsimshian woman came up to him: she was Kik-tairlkh, the lone survivor of the Graveyard Spit massacre seven years earlier. She told me through an interpreter that she never should forget my kindness, and that she thought of me every day and considered that I had saved her life. Mr Crosby called the attention of the Indians at the feast to the fact, and they gave me applause by stamping their feet and clapping their hands, after

which one old man made a speech in which he said that I had showed
myself a friend of the Simseans and they never would forget...

Days fifty-eight, fifty-nine

After these steady days of my ~~winnowing~~^{sorting} within their pages, the Port Townsend diaries at last begin to annal themselves.

1869: the year's page-edges ~~glint~~^{shine} with gilt respectability. After a decade of daybooks imported from Boston or New York, this is Swan's first western diary, printed by the H.H. Bancroft firm of San Francisco. Plump as a pocket Bible and with a deft flap to bring the covers closed, it is fancier than anything Swan has been writing into since the Neah Bay ledgers, and his entries ~~begin~~^{start off} more neatly, purposefully, than the previous year's. He is churchgoing. Has begun to woo the Northern Pacific Railroad, and bought some land on the edge of Port Townsend in case the courtship is consummated. Makes his mercantile jaunt to Sitka.

The first half of 1870 ~~is~~^{stays} as steadily sunny--Swan at last sees his Makah monograph brought into print by the Smithsonian, and on June 30 hoists a flag to celebrate the marriage of his son--until the mystifying pilgrimage to Utah on behalf of the Northern Pacific. The diary, another Bancroft and near-twin of 1869, shows its own consequences of that journey: spine nearly worn through, the covers flaking and fraying.

1871: this diary a "Pacific" imprint; smaller and an enlivening dark-green after the parson-black Bancroft covers.

Swan begins the year with scrupulous routine again, the tidbits of good news--a lock of hair from his new grandson, sale of the last of the Ellen Foster scrap iron, admission to practice as a lawyer--steady until September. Then he is taken ill again. Perhaps worse, the Northern Pacific has not come through with the salary he has been trying to obtain for months. Gaps riddle the rest of the pages. Swan ends the year literally at sea, en route home to Port Townsend after a journey to Olympia: At 12 midnight while about midway between Steilacoom and Tacoma...the pilot blew three long and loud blasts with the steamer whistle for New Years.

A brighter year, 1872, The Northern Pacific at last pays up, Swan buys still more land, settles his bills and borrows no more. He does much walking of the Port Townsend headland; is impressed with a touring temperance lecturer and evidently takes another of his periodic vows of dryness. This year, the Pacific people have inserted a credo on the calendar page at the front of the diary: "Make your words agree with your thoughts."

For 1873, the Pacific diary featured across the top of each day's page a decorative band of colored lines, red-blue-red, ^{to me} reminiscent of the battle-ribbon rows on the chests of World War Two servicemen. Combat says it for the year, which arrived on the heels of a New Year's Eve gale and swept on to bring the Northern Pacific's collapse. Swan records long bouts with

neuralgia; Peter's wife, Dukwitsa, arrives from Neah Bay, suffers hemorrhage and has to be put up in Swan's room for nine days. Except for the visit of the tattooed Haidas from the north, the best that can be said of the twelve months is that a brewery has opened ^{at Port Townsend} ~~--~~ tasted the first brewing made... found it a very fine quality and it reminded me of the home made beer I used to have at home when I was a boy--and that Swan was given the honor of sending the first message on the new telegraph line to Seattle: Flags flying here and every one rejoices.

1874, a Bancroft diary again, but the biggest and gaudiest of this group: about the size and fatness of a thick paperback book, and bound in purple with angled streaks, like the pinstripe suit of a colorblind gangster. Swan is gaudy himself. Another inheritance is to be claimed in Massachusetts, and for the first time he travels east by train. Only seven days ^{now} ~~,~~ the trip across the continent ~~takes~~ ^{now}. As before, he lavishes time and money on his daughter Ellen, but also dips down to Washington, D.C., to call on Spencer Baird at the Smithsonian; and up to New York with son Charles, sightseeing together from the top of the new Brooklyn Bridge. Swan is back in Port Townsend by late September, spends the autumn getting interested in Dolly Roberts, closes the year on that queer note of the New Year's Eve sodding of the grave of the Port Townsend jeweler, Bulkely.

1875: the year of Swan's collecting trip to Alaska aboard the Wolcott, but also the year the matter of Dolly Roberts comes to nothing. In this diary's calendar pages the publisher, who chose anonymity, decorated each month with some scene of gods or gamins. Swan must have looked with rue upon Miss August, a robust unbloused lady around whom a troupe of cupids perform acrobatics on trapeze lines of flowers.

— Sick, robust, drunk, dry, infatuated, thwarted, railroad-hopeful, railroad-undone, off now to Alaska and now to Utah and now to Boston, yearning north toward the Haidas, still ambassa-
doring occasionally among the Makahs and Clallams from his own white tribe, esteemed author at last for his Makah memoir and dabbler as ever amid ^{padding} minor paperwork. I take back the slander that Swan's Port Townsend years are more doze-ful than his time at Neah. Not as much of it a life I would trade for, though. The periodic illness, the steady lure of too much whiskey, the seesaw finances, all or any would be as perpetual earthquakes compared to my even days. (Nor does Dolly Roberts, sweetly though she trills, sound like the best prospect I can imagine.) But I do envy Swan the historical moment, just there before America marked that centennial which he went collecting for.

(Although historical moments may be less different from our own than we like to think: the quote recovered from a notebook I put

it in during the Bicentennial hoopla ^{of three years ago:} humorist Mose Skinner in 1875, on the eve of the American centennial, proposing a ceremony to match the popular mood: "Any person who insinuates in the remotest degree that America isn't the biggest and best country in the world, and far ahead of every other country in everything, will be filled with gunpowder and touched off.")

Both of my grandfathers, in Scotland and Illinois, were born amid the years spanned by these half-dozen diaries, and with them the family's western impulse. It seems a time when the (although the frontier populace was busy enough at it); American landscape had not yet been swathed so hard, a time yet

of a green tentativeness about the country, and particularly the west, as if we were still deciding what to make of it, or what it might make of us.

11

Night.

That odd community of time I mentioned at the start. In this logbook since, I have spent a pair of simultaneous spans with James Gilchrist Swan, the first two months of this winter and the quarter-century after he left Boston for the Pacific Coast. What escort he has been. The people of my own blood are gone now, buried in Montana, the storytellers, the reciters-of-sayings, the carriers of the Scots lowland voice that is scarcely traceable on my tongue, and Swan, filling his days and mine with his steady diary lines, is an entrancing winterer, a tale-bringer such as I have not been around in the years since. He seems a kind of bonus, a dividend to me for making this chronological quest. And there still is a month of him to collect.

Day sixty

The Bone River is flowing into itself, turned backwards by the tide of Willapa Bay advancing between its banks. For some hundreds of yards here at its mouth, the Bone slowly, slowly creeps back toward its origin, like a bolt of olive-drab cloth surreptitiously trying to roll itself up.

The course of the Bone, here where Swan filed his river- side land claim in 1853, does some final indeterminate wandering before snaking into the northeast side of sprawling Willapa Bay--or Shoalwater Bay, as it was in Swan's time here. Even today, with the highway and its sporadic towns, there ^{hangs} a sense of this area going its own ~~geographical~~ ^{route} path indifferent to man. The ridge country around Willapa, for instance, declares itself ~~single~~ single-purposed: it bulks there to produce trees in the way a porcupine exists to feature quills. The devoutest admiring mutters about the Northwest forestscape--thick as hair on a dog's back...timber till you can't sleep--chant themselves when you gaze around this region. Yet, an onlooker will see too what already is in his eyes, and as with nearly any other frontier site where white men could manage to whittle a clearing, Shoalwater was declared by its earliest American inhabitants to have high metropolitan prospects. Swan almost at once was prophesying Shoal-water Bay, as a harbor, will be

of great importance to Washington Territory as soon as its advantages are known...

He was more specific about the glories of his own chosen site here: a fine level prairie, containing five or six acres of marsh, and as many more of elevated land above the reach of the highest tides...a fine grove of spruce trees sheltered the place from the north wind... Specific, if overoptimistic, for his real estate hopes were ~~galloping~~ away with him in those phrases. The meadow-like area is more bog than otherwise. Fen country, really, trying to decide whether to remain marsh or become something more. As for the spruce-shield against the north wind, the benefit is moot: weather roars through here from the southwest or west, fresh off the Pacific. (Weather, that is to say, such as the southwester--great gusts would come sweeping over the cliff, and, descending on us with a whirl, seemed as if they would tear everything before them--which sluiced apart Swan's fireplace in his new riverside cabin in 1853.)

The weather today--the eighteenth of February--is only mildly fitful, an occasional shower rising in the hills east of the bay. Last night, however, ^{one of those sw s} brought in a whooping storm. Wind ^{through frame} screamed ~~around~~ the door of my motel room until I folded lengthwise strips of newspaper and jammed every crack. Then sometime in the middle of the dark, the door burst open, the newspaper strips flying through the room like white swords.

"What the Jesus...?" I shouted blearily.

"Security," intoned a voice outside. "You forgot to lock your door. Be sure to lock your door."

From security which flings open my door in the black stormy hours of the night, may I hereafter be preserved. I yawn and try to walk myself awake along the riverbank. Swan visited his empty land ^{of his} in 1868. (Indians glad to see me, he reported of the reunion with his Chinook and Chehalis neighbors of fifteen years before.) It is still empty. Empty, that is, except of the sounds of water. Here at Willapa water makes gradation upon gradation, exists in almost every conceivable form except iceberg. Tide, stream, current, seep, all are ^{hum} steadily at work, sometimes almost within touch of each other. Off the high clay cliffs on the south side of the river, a few jets of water as big around as my arm--the Willapa Bay version of a trickle--dive loudly into the Bone.

A sharper sound: oyster shells clink as I walk across them. Swan mentioned such heaps, left over from an Indian settlement, when he took claim on the land, and probably there has been one such brittle midden or another on this riverbank since humanity arrived.

This oystery turf beside the Bone is Swan's path not taken, which is why I have returned to have one more look at it. Being Swan--being, that is, like any of us who do not go through life as if it were a footstep wide--^{anywhere} he passed up commercial opportunity ^{may to} ~~here~~ as if it was cold gravy. All those years ago Swan alit at Willapa ~~nee~~ Shoalwater with as much mercantile knowledge

as anyone on the coast north of San Francisco, connections in the Bay city, money in his family, understanding of the Indians, a temperament for the climate. The oysters beckoned for the taking, were said to lie like rich reefs, "in layers of two to three feet in thickness." They were more than palatable; Swan himself noted that they rivaled English Channel oysters, having the same strong, coppery taste. But when the beds of Willapa oysters made an eventual industry--between 1870 and 1876, well over a half million bushels were shipped to San Francisco--and a few fortunes, Swan was years gone.

It can be seen now that he spent his few years here on exactly the wrong shore of Willapa Bay. On this eastern side, there is no longer a trace of Bruceport, the erstwhile "settlement" of Swan and Russell and the other earliest oystermen, except for a commemorative highway plaque. But across the water is quite another matter. There the Long Beach Peninsula, another of the geographic whimsies of the Washington coastline, stretches between the Pacific and Willapa Bay like a narrow but tremendously long and crowded picnic table. Modern pushy members of the family--the motel towns, Long Beach, Ocean Park, Oceanside--are gathered along the coastal side with their belly buttons out to the sun and their neon trinkets glinting wildly off one another, while away at the north inland end drowns the gray-gowned maiden aunt of the mob, Oysterville.

Had Swan poled across the bay from Bruceport to settle at Oysterville and work the oyster business from there, he might

well have made it to prosperity. The village--it actually is less than that, simply a handful of handsome rangy houses of the last century, on wide lots opening out to Willapa Bay and the dark bristling ridges beyond--seems these days to exist solely on memory and cozy isolation, but it had its era of oyster bonanza.

~~The site, I suppose, was too far from activity for Swan;~~
~~in the end, he always was drawn to a busy port.~~ Yet ⁷Oysterville encapsulates exactly the sort of frontier gentility Swan seems suited for. I can see him there in one of the toplofty houses, spending an hour each morning on the accounts ledger of his oystering enterprise and two hours on a monograph about the local Indians, his second wife--a sea captain's widow, say, from Astoria, and bearing more than incidental resemblance to Matilda--summoning him to noontime dinner of clam chowder and lightly baked salmon and wild strawberry shortcake, then in the afternoon a long-bearded crony or two from the Bruceport days dropping by to spin tales. (Perhaps the single most comfortable line in Swan's thousands of diary entries is an evening he records simply as telling stories and eating apples.)

But I also see him, this time in actuality ^{here} on his fortuneless side of the bay in 1868, mulling whether to veer his life this direction again (a jot in the diary about the nearest sawmill's price on lumber for a cabin) and then dropping the notion like one more empty oyster shell. Any Willapa Bay Site, Oysterville or the riverland, I suppose was too far from activity for Swan; in the end, he always is drawn to a busy port.

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Drawn as well to the ~~rock~~ uppermost rim of the American Northwest,
to that specificity, magnetism of geography, which operates so
strongly for some of us along the shoreline of the Strait of Juan
de Fuca and Puget Sound.

There is a limit to how much you can admit about your future
at any one time, however, and Swan now does a little ritual of
just-in-case. He concludes his visit to the claim by penning an
absentee owner's fussy plaint.

Notice

All persons are hereby cautioned against trespassing upon
my donation claim on the Querquellin or Bone River, either by
cutting or removing timber or any other property or by pasturing
stock or building residences.

All such persons will hereafter be dealt with according to law.

Mr Wm H Clark will attend to any business connected with my
claim during my absence from the bay...

--and in his saunter away from the posted piece of paper,
for the last time set ~~foot~~ here beside the Bone.

Day sixty-one

Capt John came to my house this afternoon, the sixteenth of November of 1878, and told me the following queer yarn. He says that at the time Ah a yah's son died at Hosett, Peter, whose sister is mother of the boy, and Ah a yah were putting the body in a box for burial. They had that portion of the lodge screened with mats and fastened the door so that no one but themselves should be present. A woman however who was in the lodge unobserved made a hole in the mat screen and looked through. She first heard the dull sound of something chopping, and saw Peter and Ah a yah cut off both the boys arms below the elbows and then put the body in the box and bury it.

Some time the past summer the Indians found near a small brook which runs near Ah a Yahs house two human fore arms & hands or rather the bones, one end of which rested in a tin plate and the hands rested on a stick held by two forked sticks, so they could be roasted before a fire, the remnants of which were plainly seen. The marrow which had melted into the plate had mostly been removed but some remained which was hard and white.

These were lethal doings, Captain John solemnly explained to Swan. With the substance in the plate Peter had cast a spell--bad medicine-- which took the life of a boy of the tribe.

I listened very attentively to the recital of this fabulous tale just to find out to what lengths Johns superstitions will lead him but the idea of Peter roasting the arms of his own nephew to

extract grease to work bad medicine to kill his enemies, is too monstrous and absurd for me to believe without better proof than Capt John...

Captain John's busy tongue: the mysteries of Peter: Swan's recording pen. Unmistakably, life at Neah Bay.

Swan ^{returned} ~~came back~~ to Cape Flattery in mid-August of 1878, once more kited on the wind of Henry Webster's political fortunes. Newly appointed as collector of customs for Puget Sound, Webster named Swan his inspector at Neah Bay. A job at last exactly Swan's size and fit. The first several months of each year, a small fleet of schooners in the fur seal trade now worked out of Neah Bay. Swan was to make sure their sealskins were the harvest of Makah canoe crews launched from the vessels, rather than any catch from the natives of alien British Columbia across the Strait. Another trader at Neah dealt in the oil of the small sharks called dogfish, a useful lubricant for sawmill machinery. Swan similarly was to see that the dogfish oil remained all-American, or had the proper import fee paid. As to the Makahs themselves, original merchants of Cape Flattery, they were to be regularly cautioned against trading dutiable goods with the British Columbia tribes. Those few tax-sentry tasks ^{made} were the sum of Swan's new job: otherwise, he was free to read, write and, finally, collect one single salary he could live on.

His new prosperity wasn't fancy--as assistant customs collector, he received about a hundred dollars a month--but ^{could not help but be} it was steadier than

his life had been in Port Townsend the past few years. The diaries of 1876-77 show a number of gaps, the dangerous silences when Swan is either ill or in whiskey; one ^{month-long} void ~~follows~~ follows the note that he has been enjoying Scotch whiskey punch with some chums. ^{Then} ~~At~~ he begins to regain himself when Neah Bay becomes a prospect again, in mid-September of 1877. Webster long since had lost his position as agent of the Makah Reservation, but his successor, named Huntington, was about to skid from Cape Flattery, too. Indian Bureau officials suspicious of the Reservation bookkeeping stopped by at Port Townsend to ask Swan what he knew, then invited him to cruise out with them to Neah Bay. Swan went gleefully:

When we landed at Neah there was a canoe just putting off which had fresh beef in it. Col Watkins asked Mr Huntington if it was Government beef--He said it was and he was sending it to Clallam bay to the US Brig Fauntleroy. All right said the Col, but when he examined the Agency books he found no account either of this beef or of 4 bullocks which had been put on the US Steamer Lackawanna.

Huntington said he had taken hard bread in pay for the beef which he had turned over to the poor school children....He is a regular old knave and does his nefarious acts under the cloak of religion. Col W suspended the old hypocrite and we left for Port Townsend.

Huntington's successor was a former Puget Sound steamboat captain names Charles Willoughby, and when Swan arrived to Neah Bay in late summer of 1878, Willoughby promptly dealt Swan into the doings of the

agency by calling on him to interpret to the Makahs. Swan in turn thought well of the Willoughby style of administration, as when an election process was set up to choose tribal leaders: One feature in the election was that several women voted by permission of the Agent, thus establishing a precedent in this tribe of womans suffrage which is right, as the women of the tribe always have a voice in the councils. This is the first election ever held by the Indians here, and will be followed by similar elections in Waatch Tsooess & Hosett.

Another amendment to Makah life, however, Swan's pen liked not at all. While at the Lighthouse yesterday, Capt Sampson informed me that whales have been quite plenty around the vicinity of the Cape this Spring but the Indians have not been after them as they devote themselves exclusively to ~~Sealing~~. I think the business as now conducted is a positive detriment to these Indians. They neglect all other avocations during the sealing season, from January to June, and the money they receive for the skins they secure is either gambled away or is spent for flour, bread, sugar &c, is distributed in potlatches to their friends.

In other ways besides the lapse from whale-hunting, the Makahs no longer were so dramatic and turbulent as in the past. Instead, after twenty years of persistent Reservation administration, they had become not quite citizens of either their ancestral world or the new white world, but of some shifting ground between; as though the Cape Flattery "earthshakes" Swan used to record in his schoolhouse tower

were sending tremors up through the tribal society as well. ⁴On the one hand, the customary ceremonies of the tribe lived roaringly on:

The Indians had a great time last evening. They visited the various lodges and performed some savage scenes one of which was eating raw dog. A lot of boys imitated raccoons and climbed on Davids house and entered through the roof throwing everything down from the shelves and making a deal of mischief. Other boys imitated hornets and had needles fastened to sticks with which they pricked every one they met. Today they had the thunder bird performance and a potlatch. These Makahs are as wild and savage in their Dukwalli performances as when I first knew them twenty years ago.

But another day, Swan is startled when the schoolgirls, playing in a corner of his office, pretend they are holding a tea party and begin by primly reciting grace.

for first time school entering

There is a moment in the diary when the tilt⁻⁻ to the Makahs, perhaps a lurch⁻⁻ to the future can almost be seen to be happening. Swan is called to the school to interpret as the Makah women bring in their children who are to begin classes. The schoolroom baffles the little newcomers. They were as wild as young foxes and some were quite alarmed and struggled and bellowed. The school girls were standing outside to receive them and they looked so nice and neat, that it reminded me of what I have read about tame animals being taught to tame and subject wild ones.

And one mark further of change in the tribe. Neah Bay in these years has a chief of police, and he is Peter.

In other areas besides Peter's psyche Neah Bay showed itself as a greatly tamer place now than in the early 1860's.

Regularly each week, a steamship chugged in; no more three-day canoe trips to Port Townsend. Another vessel ^{stood} ~~was~~ on station in the bay with pilots to go aboard ships entering the Strait. There was even an official-but-underfunded lifeboat station. (When Swan and the Makahs watched a few annual practice rounds being fired from the station's mortar, Old Doctor told me he thought the mortar would be a fine thing to kill whales with.) Willoughby's Reservation staff of whites was much expanded from Webster's original shaggy little crew of bachelors. Wives and children, even a woman schoolteacher, were on hand now. This new Neah Bay is capable of social whirl which reads almost giddy in the pages where Swan used to record the pasttime of warring on skunks:

Mrs Brash and Mr Gallick came up today and dined. After dinner Mrs Willoughby, Miss Park, Wesley Smith and I sang, or tried to sing the Pinafore but with poor success as I had a bad cold and a head ache and the others were not feeling well and to crown all our discomfort the organ was badly out of tune, but we blundered through it some how and our audience said we did well, but I did not think so.

Mr Fisher, Charley Willoughby and Mr Plympton came in this evening and I read from Scribners magazine the "Uncle Remus" stories which amused them very much particularly Mr Fisher who pronounced them "Doggoned good yarns."

If Neah Bay was changing, so was Swan, at least the diarying part of him, and tremendously for the better. After years of crabbed pocket diaries, these thirty-six months at Neah--August of 1878 to August of 1881--are exquisitely, almost artistically, penned. Swan returned to the grand 1866 ledger, which he had been using only to copy letters of almighty importance, such as his blandishments to the Northern Pacific, and resumed the day-by-day superior script he had practiced in the last years of his previous Neah Bay life. When he reached the bottom of the ledger's final page on the ^{thirtieth} last of June, 1879, he procured an identical leather-covered volume and invented even more elaborate diarymanship, ^{now} annotating events in the margins and summarizing each month with a stupendous double-page weather chart which recorded Cape Flattery's every nudge of temperature and drift of breeze.

In more than penmanship, these are high years for Swan. He is puttering usefully, staying sober and enjoying health. His days seem not only better kempt, but glossed.

Last night was very calm and at 11 PM there was but little surf on the beach and the air being perfectly still the least sound could

be noticed....As the swell of the ocean gently fell on the sands and
receded it sounded like harmonious music. I laid awake an hour
listening to it. The air seemed at times filled with...the steady
notes of some great organ.

④ Indians out again tonight after ducks. Their torches make the bay
look as if a number of vessels were lying at anchor.

Called on Capt John....He then gave me the words of a wedding
song, which originated with the Nimpkish Indians in Alert Bay...When
a Nutka man buys a Nimpkish woman and she is brought home, they sing,

"Ya ha haie, ya ha haie

Halo hwai kook sa esh

Yaks na artleesh, mamats sna aht

Cha ahk wyee, cha ahk wyee,

Ya ai ho ho ho ho ho hoo hoo"

and may be rendered thus. I have a strong house on an island full
of presents, and I will toss you there as if you were a bird.

The final word is a jingle like row de dow dow in an English song.

John could not give me the full explanation of the words but
said there would be some Nutka Indians here before long and I could
find out from them the exact meaning, but I inferred that it was as
difficult for him to explain what the words meant as it would be for
me to interpret Mother Goose's melodies to him....

— Capt Dalgardno, Pilot Stevens and Mr Fisher made me a visit this evening and we had a pleasant time telling stories in which Fisher as usual carried off the palm. He told about firing a 4th of July salute in a mining camp in California with a quicksilver can, which at the last discharge kicked through a pine stump then flew into a miners cabin knocked the top off a loaf of bread and finally jumped into a bunk among the blankets.

— Fisher, the Reservation farmer, ^{proves} is a particular boon to Swan, the kind of rumbustious frontier character he has savored ever since the days of the oyster boyos at Shoalwater Bay. Fisher shot two very fat wild geese a short time since and eat them both at one meal and drank up about a pint of Goose oil. It rather loosened him up for a couple of days....Fisher sent an order to the "Toledo Blade" for a book on horse diseases and received by mail yesterday a copy of Pictorial Bible Biography with a postal card that they had sold out all the horse books...

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But Fisher is a now-and-then performer, showing up when Swan's assiduous pen takes time off to chuckle. The most frequent figure in the diary of this second Neah Bay stint is ^{Swan's} his most affectionately-written ever.

Little Janji and Joe Willoughby amused themselves this forenoon in my woodshed splitting sticks for kindling. while so engaged they hear a noise and ran in and slammed the door too. Joe said "Something out there will bite us. - What is it, a squirrel or a rat? I asked No said Janji "big bee bumbel bee." I went out and saw nothing and told the boys there was no bee there. "Yes said Janji, hear him sing." Just then the fog whistle blew at Tatoosh Island and the distance made the sound hum like a bee. I explained to the little fellows what it was but they didnt believe me and Joe ran home. Ginger said, "Josie fraid, I not fraid I big boy I not fraid Bumbel bee." He then went out and caught a bee in a fox glove blossom which he killed by stepping on it and then showed it to me in triumph....I told him he is the chief of the bumble bees, and he is very proud. He still thinks the fog signal is an immense bee in my woodshed which he intends to kill with a hatchet....

He reminds me of my own boyish days....is constantly in motion never at rest from the time he gets up till he goes to bed and is as healthy a little boy as there is....Jimmy's relatives were at Capt Johns house, they were telling little Ginger how kind I am to him, when to the surprise of every one the little child said "I love Mr Swan and when I am a big

man I will marry a Boston kloochman and have a big house and Mr Swan shall come and live with me and I will take care of him when he is old...."

Janji is very polite and will open the gate for me to pass through.
The only instance of an Indian's politeness that I ever knew. If he lives, he will be a superior man and may be of great service to his tribe.

Jangi Claplanhoo--"Ginger"--was the son of Jimmy, Swan's first student nearly twenty years before. Swan, refugee from Boston family responsibilities for nearly half of his life, now becomes a kind of honorary frontier grandfather. The diary is open about it: Ginger, he writes, is a dear little fellow and I love him very much.... Or, more open still, that fretful little earlier phrase about the boy: if he lives. Swan had written that of another Makah once, when he met Swell.

One other significant newness in the pages of this second Neah Bay life of Swan's. The Indians of the past--elip tillicums, the first people, the woman Suis had called them at Shoalwater all those years before--are having their effect on Swan's night hours. The incident of Swan's-dream-of-the-dead-and-subsequent-gift-of-clams occurs, and another as well. The twenty-seventh of February, 1879:

I had a dream last fall that...Boston Tom came to me and requested me to move his wife's remains so that the salt water should not wash them away but I did not know till today where she was buried. A few more storms will wish the grave away. Dashio promised to have the remains removed as soon as the weather gets settled...

Swan seems not to know what to make of these nighttime visitations.

Nor do I. ^{Suddenly} Captain John is going to have to be ^{our} ~~the~~ final source.

Day sixty-two

In Cardiff I remember hearing of the Welsh custom of nicknaming by item of livelihood. It was said that in one village, the mechanic was known as Evans the Garage, and his father, local purveyor for a medicinal liquid of some sort, as Evans the Oil. By that standard, in 1880 this winter companion of mine truly becomes Swan the Pen.

He is sixty-two years old, ^{hale,} sufficiently salaried at last, away from Port Townsend and its tempting aroma of whiskey, among the Makah community he knows perhaps better than his own white tribe. He celebrates all this in ink, ink, ink.

...This forenoon, the third of January, called to see Capt John. Mary Ann made me a New Years present of a cap of Sea otter skin which she had just finished. It is a very nice one and very warm. Little Janji was very well and very lively, and told me the cap was a present from him.

Peter, David, Albert & Lechessar, of the newly elected chiefs came up, the fourteenth of February, to get their "papers" or certificates of election which Capt Willoughby gave them in my office. They were then told to choose one of their number as head chief for one year and they chose David.

Today, the nineteenth of March, I commenced painting a Thunder Bird and whale on the top of the chest I bought from Fannys father. I made up the design from the drawings of whales and Eagles done for me by Haida Indians...

This remarkable year, even mishap amends itself. This forenoon, the twenty-first of March, while splitting a stick for kindling it flew in my face injuring my right eye, and cutting my eye brow and nose. I expect a weeks black eye in consequence....I thought it would be imprudent for me to go up to the house to dinner this evening as it was raining and I feared I might take cold in my eye So Mrs Willoughby sent my dinner down in grand style. First the Captain came then Mrs. Willoughby and with her 16 school girls each one bearing something. One had soup, another meat, another bread, the 4th one had pie, 5th had pepper, 6th salt, 7th vinegar and so on...and the smallest one Emma, had my napkin.

With the arrival of spring, Swan does his summary of the seal fishery for the quarter ending March 31--1,474 seals harvested by the Makah canoe crews and the schooners Lottie, Champion, Eudora, Teazer and Letitia. Then back to notes of pleasure:

Frogs in full blast tonight for the first time, the twenty-second of April.

One of the Rhododendron plants which came from Port Townsend and was set out by me Dec 31 1878 has blossomed, and today--the thirtieth of May--is in full bloom. This is the first time a Rhododendron ever bloomed in this portion of Clallam County. They are found at Port Discovery but I think not farther west than Sequim Bay. I have 30 plants

and think nearly every one will blossom next year.

Neah Bay is not yet so domesticated it can pass a year without commotion. In late June, the body of a visiting Quillayute ~~Quillayute~~ Indian is found in the forest, murdered and robbed.

When the investigation proceeds more slowly than the Quillayutes ~~Quillayutes~~ think it should, Swan has a talk with Peter.

Said he "you remember when I killed a man at Crescent Bay for helping to kill my brother Swell I thought I was right but Mr. Webster put me in the fort at Steilacoom and kept me there a year I have learned better since then and now I am the head of the police and Washington pays me to look after the bad people." In a week, Peter is stepping aboard a schooner to take the Makah accused of the murder to Port Townsend for trial.

Swan does his second quarterly report, the final one, on the seal harvest, ^{calculates} finds that the total is up to 6,268 skins.

This has been another delightful day, the sixteenth of July, the temperature just about right, with a refreshing breeze and everything looking charming. My flower garden looks very pretty Fox gloves, white and purple, and blue Canterburybells...My roses are beginning to bloom and Lillies ready to expand...If our season is later than up sound it is very welcome, for while everything here is green and fresh, at Port Townsend and on Whidbey Island the ground is parched and flowers are done.

Swan has reason to find charm in his Neah Bay days. By regular steamship, he can ^{jaunt} go to Port Townsend once a month, tend to a few office chores there, see friends and be back at Neah within a day or so. ^{across the Strait} Visits to Victoria are equally easy. His official duties ^{rest} are so light he can spend ^{as much time as he wants} on personal correspondence, and letters constantly flow off, to Baird, to Ellen and other relatives, to any number of acquaintances out of his past two decades in the Pacific Northwest.

Brief aggravation on the nineteenth of August: The calves have annoyed me so much by running in my back door whenever it is open that today I put up a temporary fence of poles but I doubt if it keeps them out. But then the year purls along again. Swan draws a salmon as the pattern for the new weather vane put atop the schoolhouse. Sends off to ^a tailor in Boston for a suit of Navy Blue Beaver Cloth. Cheerfully reimburses Webster, that dogged practitioner of patronage, \$24 as my assessment to National Republican Committee... Has ^{chortle} a chuckle when the chief of the Makahs reports his impression of Rutherford B. Hayes, the chief of the whites making a visit to Puget Sound: David returned from Seattle & Port Townsend. Says he saw the President, but had about as lief see me...I think David expected to have seen him in uniform. Discovers that he himself has ^{unsuspected} considerable tribal standing: Mrs Webster told me that when President Hayes and wife called on her, they expressed their regret that I had not come up from Neah Bay as they had heard

of me at Olympia. She said that President Mrs Hayes, Gen
Sherman & Daughter, Gov & Mrs Ferry, Secretary Owings & others
of the Presidential Party called at my office but I was not
there and they then learned that I was not in town.

Even early winter ~~looks~~^{seems} just dandy to Swan. Driving NE
Snow Storm 3 inches fell to 7 AM, the fifth of December...I
think it auspicious to have winter set in at this time of year.
The more cold weather we have now, the better the prospect
there is for an early spring.

By the end of 1880, Swan has filled 366 sumptuous ledger
pages with daily entries, done twelve elaborate tables of
day-by-day ~~monthly~~ weather, kept account of the seal harvest, written
413 letters (and received 185), and had the President of the
United States knock on his door. Writ large in more ways than
one, this year of Swan the Pen.

Day sixty-three

A quiet rain, which hangs bright beads on the birches--at the end of every branch, and strung at random between, elves' balloons of silver against the evergreen valley slope.

Swan's weather at Neah this date--the twenty-first of February--in 1881: very heavy rain during night 3.25 inches fell stormy dull day. This is the perihelion of Venus Jupiter & Mercury and the last quarter of the moon The weather is quite warm and buds are well started.

Another 1881 entry: the twenty-fourth of May;

The Teazer brought the "Intelligencer" and "Argus" in which is the announcement that Mr H A Webster Collector of Customs has been removed from office and this will of course remove me...

The twenty-seventh of July:

Arrived at Port Townsend from Neah Bay at 2 oclock PM. Called at Custom House and reported myself to the new Collector A W Bash...Received an invitation to tender my resignation as Inspector of Customs which I took into consideration. Dined at Mr Websters and gave Mrs W a boquet of flowers which I brought from my garden at Neah.

The first of August:

Left Port Townsend at 11 AM for Neah Bay to get my things....Before leaving I handed Collector Bash a letter in which I declined tendering

my resignation and he in turn gave me a notification that my services were no longer required...

The second of August:

Very pleasant morning and smooth all night. Arrived at Clallam Bay at 6 AM and after leaving mail proceeded on to Neah where we arrived at 9 AM. Capt Munroe blew the whistle before we reached Baadah, and on rounding the point Mr C M Plympton teacher came off in a canoe and took me ashore.

I immediately commenced packing my things and was assisted by Jimmy and others.

I gave Jimmy all my floor mats, an empty barrel, a lot of coal oil cans and a variety of stuff.

I gave all my little garden tools to Ginger and distributed a lot of other things to Martha, Ellen, and some other children and to Martha I gave many of the flowers in the garden particularly my white lillies and Tiger lillies.

I feel more regret at leaving my flowers and plants than anything else, as they have been to me a source of pleasure the past three years.

At last all was packed, and boxes and packages taken to the beach and put into Kichusams canoe, and soon the Dispatch came up and anchored and my things were taken off. It took two canoe loads. I went on board in the last canoe after bidding good bye to the family and friends I

have lived with the past three years. The school children will miss
a kind friend.

I do not regret leaving Neah Bay as I think I can do better
elsewhere....

Day sixty-four

As it is better late than never--Baird of the Smithsonian, the last day of January, 1883, blandly about to incant a miracle--I may perhaps be able to arrange for an exploration under your direction during the present summer...

Not simply an exploration: the exploration, Swan ^{to the home islands of} ~~sent to the~~ Haidas, the Queen Charlottes.

He had tugged at Baird's sleeve about the topic for ten entire years. Now there was some quick back-and-forthing on money--Swan: Will you kindly allow me to remind you that I have received no salary for my work...I support myself wholly by office work which in a place like this is but a mere stipend, and I cannot leave to go on any expedition to make collections but I find on my return that I have lost business....Baird: I am not unmindful of the very great service you have rendered...our funds are either so limited or tied up that it is extremely difficult to use them as I would like-- ^{they} ~~until it was~~ worked out that Swan would receive \$300 a month for at least three months in the Queen Charlottes, plus an allowance for expenses and purchases of Haida artifacts. Baird made it plain he wanted his money's worth: You will understand that we want the fullest collections of all kinds, especially of objects connected with the fisheries and with hunting, to include models or originals of boats and canoes, weapons, hunting and fishing dresses, &c. As stated, I want you to make the most exhaustive memoranda as to the manufacture and application of the various articles gathered by you.

Swan, at ^{age} ~~7~~ sixty-five, is about to have the one last west he has wanted.

Day sixty-five

The water route to Port Townsend, hastily recreated after a lapse since steamship days now that the Hood Canal bridge lies tumbled beneath three hundred feet of riptide. That void atop the waves has made Port Townsend more queerly isolated and central than ever: without the bridge, the drive to Port Townsend and the Olympic Peninsula beyond is so long, south all the way around Hood Canal, that the state ferry system has installed this nautical shortcut.

The big green-and-white ferry Kaleetan spins north out of the Edmonds ferry slip as if having decided to make a break for Alaska, and the newness of direction sends itself up from the deck plates through my body, a vibrant return to the time when passenger craft ^{skimmed} ~~went up~~ and down the Sound and Strait in purposeful day-long voyages instead of flat across the channels in quick commuters' hops. The fresh sense of surging out onto the water world is not illusion; the Kaleetan, at 18 knots, will take an hour and a half to reach Port Townsend.

The day is dark enough that the first of the lighthouses to slide past the ferry, Point No Point, still has its light winking. Behind it, the shoreline of the Peninsula juts blackly along the gray canyon of water and sky, Whidbey Island its mate-shore to the east. I have brought along Swan in scholarly tatters, notes and photocopies and snippings, but the wide water and its dikes of forest keep my eyes. Time enough for Swan's future at the two coffered of it waiting for me in Port Townsend.

Some dozens of minutes and Foulweather Bluff, named by Captain Vancouver as the North Pacific rain ran into his ears. Strangely, Puget Sound and now Admiralty Inlet seem broader, out here as the ferry goes along the center of their joined water like a zipper up a jumpsuit, than when I look across from either shore; the wave-ruffled distance in both directions somehow adds up extra.

More mid-channel minutes, until the Kaleetan sprints north past Fort Flagler, opposite Port Townsend, as if still determined on Alaska, then at last yields slightly west with a graceful dip and begins to wheel direct onto the hillside town.

Seen here from the water, Port Townsend stands forth as a surprising new place. It regains itself as the handsome port site of its beginnings, the great water-facing houses ^{appear} look correct and captainly on their bluff, the main street is set broadside along the shore as it ought to be in a proper working wharftown. Instead of the dodgy glimpses along its downtown through too many cars and powerlines, this Port Townsend looks you level in the eye and asks where you've sailed in from.

Docking this ferry is also from maritime days of the last century. Kaleetan is far too massive for the tiny ferry slip--like an ocean liner coming ⁱⁿ to moor to a balcony--and the crew must show seamanship. One ferryman fishes out with a boathook, snags a large hawser off pilings at the port bow. With that our vessel is snubbed while a tugboat hustles in and butts the stern around until, slotted just so,

the ferry can make a final careful surge to the little dock ramp.

The elephant has landed.

Many of us who step off as foot passengers could be our great-grandparents ~~coming~~ ^{traipsing} ashore at Ellis Island, Montreal, Boston: beards, duffel coats, parcels, suitcases. A number of us, as I am, in watchcap and waterproof jacket, which I suppose would mark us as crew of an immigrant windship. Three ministers are prim among us, over from Seattle for the day on some missionary duty or another. Women carry children ashore, mothers greet daughters, husbands wives, huge trucks ease off the ferry, others snort aboard, turmoil of drayage and pilgrims such as the town hasn't seen in eons.

But a block or so from the ferry landing, within a dozing quiet from some other vector of the last century, the carved cane ~~rests~~ ^{reposes} in its glass museum case. I squat and begin to inventory. The handle is ivory carved into a perfect fist the size of a child's right hand. Through the grasp of the fingers, like a held rattle, and out the circling grip of thumb pressed onto forefinger, twines a snake. The ivory reptile then writhes through air down onto the wrist. There above where the tiny pulse would hammer, the snakehead rests. Except that it is not at rest, but in mid-swallow of a frog, eternally doomed in its try to escape around the rim of wrist.

I check my notes. Swan first saw this creation in the village of Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands on the tenth of July, 1883.

The carver, one of the Haida magicians either in wood, stone, or in gold or silver, still was at work on the cane. Swan asked the artisan's price--ten dollars--and said he would be back.

A second snake, this one of wood, drives up the cane from the bottom, in three precise writhes covering most of the length, until the head poises very near to the carved struggle of snakehead and frog. After snake-eat-frog, the outlook seems to be snake-eat-snake. This deft crawler along the cane length has a broad scalloped design along the middle of its back, with cross-hatched scales along either side of the broader cuts. It also has tiny blue-green abalone eyes, a gentle everlasting glitter.

Snakes white and brown, contorting a stick of wood into struggle, legend, art. I very nearly reel back from this example of Haida blade magic.

Over lunch in a restaurant which confusedly has tried to rig its interior as a shipdeck, I think of Swan coming upon the snake-cane six hundred miles to the north of here. Keen as he was about art of this coast, he must have felt like a prospector whose boot has kicked up a potato-sized nugget in front of him. The carved scene ripples the other way in me, from art out into life. I see back to the instant when a jay attacked into the garden outside my window, its flash of blue and black and the high excited HEEP-HEEP-HEEP cry and then the toss of the garter snake which had been sunning on the warm dirt. In combination of grappling and chopping, the jay

finished off the snake in an instant, then undertook to pull it apart, like a man trying to stretch an inner tube he is standing on. After a few minutes of tugging, the jay dropped the loop of corpse in disdain, bounded across the garden in three arrogant hops and flew off. When I went out to look at the snake, I found it as long as the span of my hand, nine inches: gray-green, with three strings of yellow down its length. In places the jay had frayed through the body, small ruptures like those a knife makes in rubberoid wiring. Even as I bent in study of the snake, not two minutes after the jay's ambush had begun, an ant clambered on like a pirate coming aboard a derelict schooner, dashed in and out of the snake's open mouth and up to a quick circle of the flat skull, then raced off in exploration of the first body-rip. How sudden it all, the same eternal suddenness of the ivory frog sinking down the ivory snake's gullet.

End of the Port Townsend day, the Kaleetan churning a fast white current away from the town. In the early dusk--hard to tell this day's darkness from its daylight--I can see from the afterdeck back to today's second reference point of Swan's embarkment toward the Queen Charlottes that early summer of 1883. The bespired red-brick courthouse, and in it the records of the municipal court which Swan himself presided over in some earlier years, and within those records this verdict from the twenty-sixth of May, 1883:

It is Ordered, Adjudged and Decreed that...James G. Swan is an
Habitual Drunkard as described in Section 1674 of Code of Washington
Territory. And it is hereby further ordered...to every Dealer
in Intoxicating Liquor and to all other persons residing in the
County of Jefferson...not to give or sell under any pretence any
Intoxicating Liquor to said James G. Swan...

Day eighty-four

Swan to Baird:

I think that your attention has not been called to the fact that there is a balance due me of \$1,147.82...Those Englishmen in Victoria cannot understand why I could not have closed my accounts with them at the close of the year 1883...

And Baird to Swan:

I notice what you say about coming east some time with your Haidah Indian, and overhauling the collections, and putting them properly in order. I have no doubt that it would be of great advantage to us, but the question is as to the means to compass it....

Familiar shuttlecock, which the corresponding pair has been carrying on since Swan's completion of the Makah memoir two decades earlier. But Swan is arriving to the time of his life when the familiar begins to evaporate. Over the next few years, he does a few dabs of local collecting for Baird and the Smithsonian, tries every so often to pry up some support there for another Queen Charlottes journey, then on the twentieth of August of 1887, the diary entry with a black box ~~drawn~~ ^{stroked} around:

The news comes today of the death of Professor Baird who died yesterday at Woods Hole Mass--I set my flags at half mast in token of my respect for his memory.

The Smithsonian itself passes from Swan next. By the end of 1889, he has written:

Professor Baird's death was a great blow to me from which I have not recovered. There is a new deal and no sympathy in Washington. A new king has arisen over Egypt who knows not Jospheh.

These half dozen years from the Queen Charlottes achievement to that disgusted sign-off of the Smithsonian emerge from the diary pages to me as written echoes. Line upon ¹starting line, the pen's skritch-skritch now murmurs reprise of Swan's earlier Port Townsend life. Dolly Roberts has married a naval lieutenant and become Dolly Biondi, but Swan is drawn ^{irregularly} to another well-made young lady: Grand opening ball at Learned's Opera House. Took Harriet Appleton and danced for the first time in my life at a ball. Had a good time & got home at 2 AM.

no 91 He is back at the usual sheaf of paperwork jobs; his letterhead recites Attorney at Law and Proctor in Admiralty United States Commissioner Commissioner of Oregon for the State of Washington Notary Public Hawaiian Consul and there are matters in the ungirdled Port Townsend style: Capt Moore of US Rev Cutter Wolcott came this morning to ask my advice about his Chinese steward who smuggled some opium on board when the Cutter was last in Victoria, and yesterday he brought it ashore in the Captain's soiled linen and attempted to sell it to the steward of the Rush, now lying in port. There were 8 pounds of this opium which he seized & confiscated and now has the Chinaman in Irons. I told Capt Moore that I thought if he kept the Chinaman in

irons for 10 days, it would be punishment enough as the loss of the
opium worth \$100 added to being 10 days in irons would be a sufficient
vindication of the law and...I did not think it necessary to put the
Government to the expense of a trial. He jaunts to Boston and family
 another time, goes to Matilda's grave, with more sentiment than
 scruple of fact plucks a geranium leaf as a memento of my dear wife.
 He occasionally visits Neah Bay, or Neah Bay will visit him: Sch Lottie
 arrived from Neah this morning. All Jimmys family came up on the
 schooner. I took Jangi to Peysers store and gave him a complete out-
 fit. He returned to the vessel as proud as an eagle. Swan remains
 ready, at the nudge of a pen nib, to share with any correspondent his
 Indian lore: Recd letter from Mrs Mary B Leary Seattle requesting
 me to give her an Indian word suited for the new City Cemetery--I
 suggested "Washelli" the Makah word for west wind, and quoted from
 "Hiawatha" to show that the west is the "region of the hereafter," and
 that "Washelli Cemetery" would mean the "Cemetery of the land of the
 hereafter." His palate is as enthusiastic as ever: Capt Dalgardno
 called on me this evening and we celebrated New Years with a pitcher
 of punch stuffed olives and potted duck and felt much refreshed.
 And so is his sporadic thirst for alcohol, for again, on the first of
 June of 1885, there is another court order adjudging and decreeing
 that "James G. Swan is an Habitual Drunkard..." Again too, Swan evades
 telling this particular matter to his diary, reporting instead: This
 morning I eat a hearty breakfast of salt cod and potatoes which caused
 a violent fit of indigestion.

Yet something new does speak within the diary lines, and it is that Swan the pioneer is shading into Swan the Pioneer. I have seen this happen before, among the two Montana generations older than mine: homesteaders or cowboys or sheepmen who endured decades enough that longevity began to intensify their outline, as a tree against an evening sky will become more and more darkly stroked, distincter than reality. Part of the process is simply to have outlived the other figures from your time, and Swan definitely has been doing so; his pages at times read like a visitation book as he makes calls on sinking Port Townsend acquaintances. Part of it as well is to have honed a sharper than those of your neighbors, skill, and Swan has become rightly recognized for his knowledge of the coastal native cultures. As President Hayes had done in 1880, the famed anthropologist Franz Boas in July of 1889 to Swan as a rare ambassador to the tribes. ~~in July of 1889~~ (Their introduction occurred in Victoria: Met Dr Franz Boaz and went with him to see a lot of Haidas which had just arrived. They were all drunk yet another but civil.) And part of the capping of the P ~~of the nation~~ of "pioneer" simply is--what else would it be in Swan's case?--literal: he joins and is an enthusiastic member of an old-timers' group called Washington Pioneers. # He amply qualifies. Washington Territory was ^{yet} not created ~~when~~ ~~when~~ Swan sailed into Shoalwater Bay that late autumn of 1852, and now, the eighteenth of November of 1889 at Olympia:

This is the Inauguration day when we become a State.

The town is crowded to excess The pioneers met at Columbia Hall and each one had a nice badge furnished...

At 10 AM we marched out and took our places in the grand procession. First the Tacoma Bank, then the Pioneers headed by E C Ferguson President, James G Swan Vice President, Frank Henry Secretary, & Geo A Barney Treasurer. Then followed some 50 or 60 Pioneers, men & women Then the Military, more bands the Governors members of the Legislature and citizens generally....

Days eighty-five, eighty-six, eighty seven

This has been a stormy cold disagreeable day, the first of February of 1893. Snow falling all day. The worst day this winter. I have felt much depressed with the many deaths of friends since New Years. Felix Dobelli lies dead at the Undertaker and Capt Sampson died last Sunday and Mrs. Morrison is very low. My turn may come soon.

The diaries of the 1890's. Common tan pocket notebooks for the decade's opening year. Inauspicious. But for 1891, an elongated Standard diary with maroon leather covers and gilt page edges. Notebooks again for 1892. Then beginning with 1893, five volumes in a row with Excelsior Diary in gilt script across a maroon cover. 1894 is longer and slimmer than the other Excelsiors, but the group is more uniform than any other of Swan's sets of years.

For Swan and his town, the decade itself is not at all so orderly, and red ink the more usual coloration than maroon. Port Townsend had boomed at the end of the 1880's. Seven thousand population, streetcar lines, an electricity plant fed with slabwood; the big downtown buildings which still stand, three- and four-story dowagers of stone and brick, were built then. Naturally, railroad hopes had freshened. A line called the Port Townsend Southern, the first mile laid by the townspeople themselves, caught the attention of eastern railroad men--officials of the Union Pacific, this time--and drew a promise of completion to Portland. The acreage Swan bought west of town ^{twenty years earlier,} ~~2000~~

at last looked as if it would pay off; an offer of \$100,000 had been made to him, he wrote his daughter Ellen. Swan had bet as well by investing in a fish-processing plant, and Franz Boas was salaried him to do some artifact-collecting for the famous Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Then, with the depression of 1893, financial fizzle for both Port Townsend and Swan. Again no railroad, again no profit from the long-held land.

Whether the dull day, the eleventh of January, 1894, or as a precursor of bad news I have felt remarkably dull and low spirited. The times are very dull, taxes are due and no money to pay them and I feel as if I have lost all.

But there are thousands of people worse off, and I have good health. I have much to be thankful for, but I feel very despondent.

As when he explored the west shore of the Queen Charlottes, Swan now is going into territory where I, as a modern winterer, cannot follow. Just once have I experienced the lack of money which plagues Swan now--sixteen years ago, as I arrived back to Montana out of the Air Force, stepping off the train at Ringling with two dollars, both of them borrowed--and mine was only a moment, tiniest fraction of his new chronic brokenness.

Stormy day, the twenty-sixth of December, 1895, remained at home and dyed my pilot jacket which had become faded and rusty -- I used

diamond navy blue dye and tomorrow I can tell how I have succeeded.

The next day: Pressed out my navy jacket and it looks as good as new.

The old pantaloons which I dyed and pressed a few days ago, and this fresh dyed jacket make my friends think I have just bought a new suit of clothes. I am much pleased as now I can renovate my old clothes with but small cost...

Nor can I truly share the fact of age as it works now on Swan. I can watch his reports of it in the diary pages of 1896 and 1897, how the wide days of Northwest summer seem to mean less to him now, and the days of coastal winter ^{now} ~~become~~ newly treacherous--Snow showers this evening. I slipped down on the crossway and sprained my right thumb. How he records, as ever, the letters sent and received, whom he has called on, met on the street, borrowed two dollars from, but all the while the incidents of his life becoming smaller and smaller, a walk around town chronicled as a canoe trip to Neah once had been. I see, and am moved by, the way Swan ^{apportioned} ~~shared~~ begins to be among his coastal friends. The women who were the Roberts sisters of Swan's smitten sentences of twenty years before, Dolly Biondi and Mary Webster, take turns with Sarah Willoughby, wife of the Makah Reservation agent during Swan's last trio of years at Neah Bay, in hearing again his stories, seating him to the table: Dined at Mrs Websters on Stewed chicken, mushrooms and huckleberry pudding--delicious. His landlord forgives him his office rent, the family of Jimmy Claplanhoo--Jimmy has fledged into Capt James Claplanhoo in the diary, owner and skipper

of a schooner of his own--provides frequent visits from Cape Flattery and an occasional gift of a suit of clothes. Study as I may, however, I know I do not grasp this process, silent as spiderspin, which is happening to Swan here and which is called age. My belief is that we cannot truly see ourselves as we will be when old--perhaps dare not--and so are unable to ^{very far} imagine into the oldness of others. All I can learn for certain from Swan, and it may be plenty, is that now some of his days are better than other of his days, but no day is easy.

Yet if such information must be secondhand until I encounter age myself, ^{this} it would not be Swan's wordstream if it were not also clear as a diary pen can make it. On the first of April of 1898, Swan's eightieth year, he begins to use an old but unfilled pocket diary, a mustard-colored Standard published for 1890. Generally he remembers to add the tiny loop of ink atop the 0 of 1890 to transform the year, but when he doesn't, it is as if his entries ebb back and forth between the years:

The twenty-eighth of June: Weighed myself on Joe Gates scales
I weighed 143 pounds the lightest I have weighed in some time My
long sickness pulled me down but I am getting better slowly.

The twelfth of July: Mr. Springs of Everett was here to day and
talked against Port Townsend, said...if the rail road is completed it
will do no good as vessels will all load at Seattle and a lot more such
rot. I told him if the road is completed to here, that trains of cars

can bring their grain direct to Port Townsend as well as to Seattle or Everett, but he would not admit that...

I told him he is an old fossil & he had better remain in Everett as it is an evidence of ignorance and bad taste to go into a town and run it down before its residents. He is a regular crank and is fit for such a place as Everett.

The second of August: Have felt very much depressed all day. Think there is to be a change of weather.

— The seventh of August: I did not go to church, as it seemed that everything was wrong about my clothes and I did not get ready to go out till 12 o'clock noon.

The twenty-fourth of August: A lot of Quilliute and Makah Indians arrived today and camped at Point Hudson They are going to pick hops I went down to the beach to see them. They all knew me and were glad to see me. It looked like old times to see so many Indians on the beach.

The eleventh of September: Commenced a letter to my daughter Miss Ellen M Swan. The letter I received from her on the 7th I burned as it was a very disagreeable one.

The fifteenth of September: Mrs. Webster gave me a bagfull of doughnuts for bringing her mail from the Post Office to her however

I took the doughnuts to Mrs Blondis and her sharp perceptive faculties soon found out the contents of the parcel and she soon had an impromptu course of hot coffee cake and doughnuts we enjoyed them.

The tenth of October: Dr Brooks O Baker examined me for vertigo which has troubled me at intervals since last January. He said it proceeds from heart weakness and gave me a prescription of his own preparing, of which strychnine forms one of the ingredients Commenced taking Dr Bakers medicine this afternoon.

The thirtieth of December: Have had quite an attack of vertigo this evening.

Day eighty-eight

My first birth day in the new century, the eleventh of January,
1900. 82 years old. May this new Era bring new prospect and may
I live to see its so glorious promise unfold....I have been reading
evenings in my diaries and it seems singular to see half my life
therein...50 years ago I left Boston and 41 I began my daily journal
but yet my early years at Neah Bay are fresh to my mind Only when
I recall the deaths of so many friends Prof Baird Maj Van Bokkelin
friend Webster Bulkley & storekeeper Gerrish my own dear son
Charley last year, does the time seem so long as it is. And the
Indians I formerly knew are gone Swell Duke of York old Edinso
Capt John only Peter alive...Ellens letters and the little sums she
sends are all I have now to tide me over to improved times. My
wish is that Pt Townsend will yet take its rightful place as the
most magnificent city of the west and that my burden of debt will
pass from me. As the Poet John G Whittier writes "for all sad
words of tongue or pen The saddest are these, it might have
been!" But if it is ordained otherwise I have other remuneration
in life my collecting for the Smithsonian Institution the Makah
memoir The Northwest Coast my expedition to the Queen Charlottes
Archipelago the knowledge of Indian ways and language which
otherwise would have been lost for future generations, I would not
trade for more worldly wealth. For if I have not prospered greatly
in my western life yet I am greatly prosperous in what I have done....

Swan did not write those words. I have written them for him, or rather, for the both of us, this dusk of winter and of his life. The archival diaries end with 1898, the volumes for 1899 and 1900 held in a private collection, but the entries have been dwindling anyway, Swan lamenting to his daughter Ellen his failing grip: My hand and wrist are still painful and I have to write slow. I don't think this is so much of a Rheumatic affection as it is the pen paralysis from over exertion writing...But it is very annoying to me to have such continual pain in the cords of my hand when I attempt to write. I have been trying a little instrument called the "Electropoise" which my cousin Edward kindly sent from New York. It sends a gentle current of electricity to the part affected but it is too much bother for me to use it properly. Swan hooked to an electrical rheumatism gizmo rather than a pen is Swan become an old bewildered stranger to himself, I am afraid. From that eighty-second birthday of his, where my imagination takes over the telling, he has four months and a week to live.

But I discover an odd thing as this companion of my winter begins to fade from life. There at the first days of this century, Swan comes into view to me in a strong new way: as if a ^{white}~~black~~-instead-of-tawny cat suddenly has padded into sight at the forest edge. Swan has endured into time which touches my own. A little more than a year from that eleventh morning of 1900, my father will be born at the homestead in Montana. The grandmother who will share in raising me, and be the one to begin noting down our family winters, already is a

directly?
cut?

seven-year-old farmgirl in Wisconsin. (In history's less personal terms, put it this way: Swan was born when James Monroe inhabited the White House and Napoleon was yet alive, and now he is almost to Theodore Roosevelt's America, and Einstein already is thinking the world into a nuclear future.) Connection of lifespans is added to our shared places, our intermingled wests.

So much of Swan I still do not know, even after studying him through the fifteen thousand days and two and a half million words of his diaries. In his lamplit times alone in the schoolhouse tower at Neah or the narrow office at Port Townsend, for instance, what urges of the night worked in him, moving behind his brow, under his thatch of beard, between his legs. Or why, like me, he chose to invest his life at this edge of America over all other--although I think it has most to do, in both our cases, with a preference for gossamer possibilities, such as words, rather than hard-and-fast obligations. Or why he would admit into his pages whatever peevish ^{held} ~~had~~, but no hatreds; details of infatuation with a choirgirl, but none of the fact of it; hints of whiskey, but never direct confession of too many bottles. Unlearnable, those beneath-the-skin frontiers. Even the outer ones leave questions, for I believe now that no one winterbook--no book--can find nearly all that should be said of the west, the wests. Profundities of westering there undoubtedly are, but do they count for more than a liking of mountains and of hearing a waitress say, There you go...?

western-edged

Yet somehow the scenes of this winter, and of Swan's seasons, do flow together, much as beings mingle in one of those great carvings of the Haidas. ("They weren't bound by the silly feeling that it's impossible for two figures to occupy the same space at the same time.") Perhaps atoms merge out of the landscape into us. However it happens, the places are newly ^{freshly} in me. Whidbey Island, gulls balleting along the roofs of wind. Dungeness Spit, days there glossed with sea ducks and crowned with an eagle. The Capes, Flattery and Alava, their surfs bringing in perpetual cargoes of sound. This suburban valley, at its mouth the greater gray-blue water valley, Puget Sound. The cabin at Rainier, summing all these sites by being abode for a dweller rather than a citizen. The patterns explore their way back and forth between centuries as well, and I see with less surprise than I would have three months ago that a torpedo test Swan watches in the Port Townsend harbor will become Trident nuclear submarines in Hood Canal. That his dream of railroad along one shore of Puget Sound must bend and become a transportation megalopolis along the opposite shore. That his introduction of the alphabet in the Neah Bay schoolhouse in 1863 has led to a federal grant for the preservation of the Makah language. That no more than Swan knew of such eventuating can I know what is ahead for my west. ⁴ And there, in that specific rill of realization, I suppose is the truest bond of pattern I have to you, Swan, old coastal nomad, remembrance of so many diary pages, canoeist of yestertime. Winter brother.

Day eighty-nine

Sometime in the morning of the eighteenth of May of 1900, Swan lies in his room and listens for footsteps. They are slow to come, time needed for it to dawn on one or another downtown citizen of Port Townsend that the old man has not been seen to emerge to the street as usual. Feet at last are heard and a knock questions through the door; then, silence all too much answer, the inquiring friend forces in to find ^{Swan}him where the stroke has pinned him.

Life stays in Swan through ^{that}the day, but only half the night.

He is buried near the center of this graveyard west from Port Townsend's headland of houses, under a gray marble stone. Rust-orange lichens have crept down into the cut letters, but they can be read: PIONEER-HISTORIAN JAMES G. SWAN Born Medford Mass. Jan. 11 1818 Died Port Townsend Wash. May 18, 1900. From here at the grave-stone, my automatic line of sight is across the land Swan owned, to the dark hackled profile of Whidbey Island and beyond to the Cascade Mountains, but the view does have competition from the thrusting stones all around, the urn-topped and pyramid-peaked monuments of the merchants and ship's captains of Swan's era. Amid them, his low box of stone is the shape and size of a lectern.

The Port Townsend Morning Leader, four days after Swan's death:

"...The friends of the deceased were permitted to take a last look at the venerable pioneer, and just before the casket was closed a delegation of Indians from Neah Bay appeared and asked permission to take a last look at their oldtime friend and adviser. The Indians as they gazed upon the rigid features gave expressions of their grief in low moans and each affectionately patted the face of the dead man."

Swan's grandnephew in Massachusetts to the Port Townsend lawyer who notified him that debts would swallow Swan's scant belongings: "Of course the manuscripts & diaries can have no great money value... and I ~~w~~^hould hope they might be lodged in some library interested in the special subjects they relate to."

Day ninety

Winter's last dozen hours. Today the Sun crosses the line and it is the first day of spring, Swan wrote on this date, the twentieth of March, in his lustrous year of 1880 at Neah Bay, then stepped outside to admire his larkspurs and lilies. As we approach Neah Bay, mid-morning sun making shadowplay with the trees and sea boulders along the shore of the Strait, I calculate where we will be when spring arrives tonight at nine twenty-two: back aboard the big ferry, south from Port Townsend by about an hour; near Point No Point, its lighthouse the ushering beam from Admiralty Inlet into Puget Sound: almost home.

Two sites ahead of us before then. One is the rock tip at Cape Flattery, where Carol and I will be by mid-day to watch for whales in northward migration, out past Tatoosh Island. From our watching times elsewhere on this coast, other springs, we know that first the spouts will be glimpsed, small here-and-gone geysers in the ocean, then sudden blades of dark in the water that are the grey whales. Only those ridges of their backs--the wet island of being which the Makah hunting canoes shadowed in on--rising in quick glistening view, until for an instant the great Y of a tail is seen to lift, then plunge.

But before the whales, the stop at Neah Bay. Sometime amid this winter's constant scud of words, the brief casual news: oh yes, that still exists, it's tricky to find but if you ask so-and-so at Neah Bay...

Luck. We reach Neah at low tide, and the rock deck of shore beneath the low coastal precipice lies open to us. A young woman who works for the Makah Tribal Council leads us beneath the cliff face, peering carefully. In a minute or so, she says: "There it is. There." As she returns up the bluff to her construction work--the Makahs are building a greenhouse of translucent plastic to grow vegetable seedlings; progress I am glad to see from Swan's depot of potatoes--we are left with the bayline sheet of rock.

The sun's brightness stops a stride or so short of the cliff. Shadowed sandstone swells as high as my chest, bulges and rounds there, and then recedes as a sudden ledge, angled at about thirty degrees. That afternoon in 1859 Swan stood atop something, likely a driftlog long since reclaimed by the Strait, to reach this beveled shelf. The deep-cut letters J G S are level with my eyes, and above them rides the stone swan.

Tail fluted high to a jaunty point.

Neck an elaborate curve gentle and extended as a suitor's caress.

Breast serenely parting the shadowed current of cliff.

As Carol inserts a roll of film into her camera, I span my hand three times to measure the length of the bird, less than half that for its height. A bit more than two feet long, a bit less than a foot high, this swimmer-of-rock. Swan's diary entry for the afternoon of that long-past day is this project--Worked carving a swan on a sandstone cliff with my initials under it--and surely the stone embossment

took the full set of hours. So clearly and firmly did he sculpt in that only the downthrust of the bird's head, where the beak and eyes would be, has faded with erosion, the weathering-away providing a demure mask of time.

Otherwise, Swan's swan, as I step back until it is just visible within the cliff-shadow, punctuates the flow of this coast as firmly for me as it did for him. The stone dot that puts period--and seed of the ellipsis for whatever continuation is on its way--to this winter.