the Tonquin, and spoke of Mr. McKay, the purser, who it was supposed blew the ship up: 1811, the year before Swan was born. Two sudden and vital friendships emerged here in Swan's notations of his first visits to Neah Bay. The earliest, and the one that would last for decades, was with the single resident of Neah Bay who was not a Makah: the white man Henry Webster, owner of a trading post at the eastern headland of the bay. It is enough to say of him now that Webster was a bleak-faced, obstinate frontier entrepreneur who did not get along with Indians notably well. In these beginning months of Swan's acquaintance-ship with him, an incident occurred in which, after an argument of some nature, five Indians pummeled Webster with rocks, dragged him along the beach, and threatened to kill him. Another instance, Swan reports to the diary page: The Indians talk very saucy today about shooting Webster. Neither the battering nor the threats at all dissuaded Webster from staying on at his trading post, or indeed from patiently pulling political strings for a couple of years until he won appointment as the first Indian agent for the new Makah Reservation. Swan had that tendency to lean on men chestier than himself---Russell, Isaac I. Stevens---and Webster amply seems to have been of the type. (He also, Swan noted promptly and gladly, was a man who know how to fill a table. The old adage that "God sends meat and the devil sends cooks" does not apply to my friend Webster's culinary department. Epicurus himself would have rejoiced over the nice and palatable dishes of fresh codfish tongues, fried; fresh halibut fins, broiled; fresh salmon, baked; together with side dishes of sea eggs, deep sea oysters and brook trout; with puddings made of the luscious salal and other rich berries of the season, winding up with cranberry tarts and pies; the whole the product of the ocean and land in the immediate vicinity of the house.)
The other immediate friend, supple and deft as Webster was granitic, of course was Swell. Rapidly in the diaries it becomes evident how valued a companion the young Makah proved to be. The pages of Swan's eight weeks at Neah Bay in late 1859 bustle with the forming connection: Went to Swell's house and made a sketch of some Tomanawos boards... Swell told about their land, that they were not satisfied with the way the treaty was written... Went to Swell's house. He says that the past year there were 30 canoes engaged in the whale fishery 8 men to each canoe but they have not all been out this past year... Swell says that there are in the Makah tribe 220 men 300 women 200 children 100 slaves... Made sketch of Swell... Swell started for Dungeness this morning. Saluted him with the swivel--1 gun... Swell brought down 50 bushels of potatoes from Dungeness... Swell's name Wha-laltl Asabuy... Made a carving today of the Ha hake to ak or the animal that makes the lightning... I cut it on a piece of sandstone from the cliff & intend giving it to Swell...

Elsewhere Swan writes of Swell's intelligence, of his knack for leadership, his prowess as a canoeman; I could almost say, reading not very deep between the lines, his alacrity to meet and learn about the white way of life that had come calling at Cape Flattery. Swell was a stag of a man, his name among the whites deriving from his posh sartorial preference: he sat resplendent in a new suit of Boston clothes when Swan made his first canoe trip to Neah Bay with him in mid-September of 1859. Swell has been among the white men as sailor and pilot, Swan recorded, and was the person who assisted in rescuing Capt. Weldon and the crew of the Swiss Boy, which was wrecked in Nittinat Sound in early 1859. He saved them from bondage, and landed them safe among their friends... He is still quite a young man, but if
he lives, he is destined to be a man of importance among his own and neighboring tribes.

They are, then, a pair of mutually interested men. The Makah canoeman who has adventured aboard steamships and schooners; the Boston ship's chandler who has adapted to cedar canoe. A young chieftain who knows the politics of his tribe and is attuning to some of the white version; a middle-aging white man with keenest interest in the coastal Indian cultures. At first they can only have been curiosities to one another; then, as Swan's diary agenda shows, exchangers of lore; then, from the evidence of the aftermath of Swell's slaying, friends. Such a growth of regard sometimes will happen when two people are cupped together in a single happenchance season of closeness--aboard a fishing boat, in a line cabin of a cattle ranch, at a military outpost; in this instance, at an outpost of another sort, the frontier pinnacle that was Neah Bay--and discover that they have similar lobes of mind. Swan was able to know the Makah chieftain for about a year and a half before the life was blasted from Swell in the breakers at Crescent Bay. By that late winter night, the two of them had entered what I would call a kind of adopted kinship, stronger than differences of blood can ever be.
Winter brothers, perhaps call them.

But Swan. What, besides tireless ears, did a domestic fugitive from Massachusetts have to offer Swell and the other Makahs? That answer too emerges from these diary entries, in the remark of a sketch here, a carved gift there; clearest of all in the laconic and intriguing entry for an October day in 1859 that he had gone down to a sandstone cliff along the Neah Bay beach and carved a swan into the rockface.

Artistry. Right there, in the fact that virtually the only skill of hand lacking in Swan was the ability to clutch a dollar, was his ticket into the Makah community. Draw, cut stone, invent patterns of paint, produce creatures from within the covers of his books: he could perform a gamut of tasks admired by a tribe in love with ornament. What was more, not much daunted Swan: went to Billy Balch's house and finished the Thunderbird. This was the hardest sketch I ever undertook. The lodge was dark and the board covered with smoke & grease and hid by boxes & baskets of food. The Indians removed these & washed the board with urine & then the only way I could decipher the painting was to mark round the drawing with a red crayon...

In fire and reek, as the storytellers of sagas would have said, and Swan blithely tracing. The Makahs met him at least halfway in rampant enthusiasm for picturizing, as Swan noted some years later when he wrote at length about his role as a frontier ambassador of art.

I have painted various devices for these Indians and have decorated their ta-ma-na-was masks; and in every instance I was simply required to paint something the Indians had never seen before. One Indian selected from a pictorial newspaper a cut of a Chinese dragon, and another chose a double-headed eagle, from a picture of an Austrian coat-of-arms. Both these I grouped with drawings of crabs, faces of men, and various devices, endeavor-
ing to make the whole look like Indian work; and I was very successful in giving the most entire satisfaction, so much so that they bestowed upon me the name of Cha-tic, intimating that I was as great an artist as the Cha-tic of Clyoquot (a tribe living north of the Makahs, on the coast of Vancouver Island).

So, no small gifts these--twin-headed eagles, dragons from beyond the rim of the Pacific, new flaunts of paint--to a people as vivid and showy as the Makahs.

Whale hunters, coastal annalists, slaveholders, art fanciers, the Makahs also were a people who chafed more than a little under the pale regime of frontier bureaucrats wanting to refashion the tribe's life. In another of Governor Stevens's brusque treaty parleys, the tribe had been told that only the tip of Cape Flattery from Neah Bay westward was now their land; even to so seaward-looking people as the Makahs, this new Reservation seemed scanty firmament. The first annual installment of treaty goods did nothing to reassure the Makahs about the bargain. A strange assort-

ment of stuff, Swan wrote as he watched it brought ashore, old plantation hoes, scythe blades... sickles, pitchforks, frying pans, Mexican spurs, and a lot of trash as though... some New York hard ware store had been emptied out on the beach at Neah Bay.

Swan termed the whole invoice a fraud on the Indians, who seemed amused that "Washington" should send out such worthless stuff. A shortfall of another sort amused the Makahs not at all. Swan is once more at Neah Bay--his sixth stint there so far--when in the autumn of 1861 the Makahs,
after six actionless months by the territorial officials, decide to
effect their price for the death of Swell.

Once resolved upon, their vengeance on the Elwha Clallams begins to be
brewed, savored. Conference, more conference, the Elwha village sketched
on the sand, a plan of attack argued out. As Swan watches and jots,
Neah Bay's largest canoes are worked up into fighting trim; the outsides
blackened, interiors daubed a fresh red. Lord Nelson, with his blood-
colored battle decks, would have nodded approval. Bow and stern of each
canoe are sprigged with green spruce limbs. Onto long poles are lashed
faggots of pitchy wood to torch the hapless Elwhas' lodges. Guns, knives,
spears, clubs, arrows, bows are hefted judiciously, made ready.

At last, the nineteenth of September of 1861, two hundred and two
days after Swell's death, the war party mills together in final encourage-
ment on the Neah Bay beach. Some speeches, a few dances, and they leap to
their decorated canoes and head east the sixty miles to deliver holocaust
to the Elwhas.

Twelve canoes, with eighty warriors, they aim up the Strait past
Swan like a volley of arrows on the water. His account of the scene was
published in a territorial newspaper, and so has been primped and extended
beyond the usual:

I stood on top of the rocks at Webster's point and saw them pass . . . .

Their green headdresses, black faces and brown arms, flashing paddles and
beautiful canoes, urged to their utmost speed, presented a scene at once
novel and interesting. I watched until a projecting point hid them from
view.
Then the waiting, the war spirit still boiling in the Makah village. Women and children, seated on the tops of their houses, were beating the roofs with sticks and uttering the most piercing shrieks I ever heard. Every day at sunrise and sunset they performed these savage matins and vespers...

On the third day, the canoes flash back into sight, the crews announcing themselves across the water by exuberant musket shots and songs of victory. The war, however, turns out to have been considerably less than total. The avenging Makahs landed on the beach opposite the monument of Swell... and forming into a line came up the beach in single file with old Cowbetsi, their great war chief, at their head. A short distance behind him came a savage holding with both hands a bloody head that had been severed from the body of an unfortunate Elwha. Two or three Indians followed this and then another grim trophy, held in the same manner as the first.

Swan learned that the war party had come upon the unlucky pair of Elwhas hunting seals at Crescent Bay, the precise site of Swell's murder. When blood was most ready to answer blood, the two were simply targets of opportunity. Having shot and beheaded them, the Makahs noted the alarms being shrieked by several Elwha women who had watched the ambush from a distance, held a rapid council, and decided revenge had been sufficiently done.

In all of this Swan takes greatest interest, so much so that he makes the mistake of spectating too close to the song circle which has formed around the severed heads. After they had finished their war song, I heard my name called, and thinking I was in the way of some of their
operations was about moving off, when I was again summoned in a manner that left no doubt in my mind but that I was wanted.

The Makahs gesture Swan into the circle, beside the heads. Cowbetsi and an Indian who is to interpret to Swan face him.

Cowbetsi orates to Swan that they killed the Elwhas because the territorial Indian agent did not settle the matter of Swell's murder. A line of fact indisputable.

Swan responds gingerly that the Indian agent at the time has been removed from office, consequently he could not come as he had promised, but that he had not lied for I knew that he fully intended to have done just what he had promised to do; that Mr. Simmons was a friend of Swell's and they all knew—a careful veer here—I was a friend also.

"Yes," said Cowbetsi, "we know you are our friend, and we are friends of yours."

Swan emits a degree of relief when I was assured of the fact; but I thought that their friendship was of the kind that might induce them, should I give offence, to stick my head on top of a pole for a memento...

He stands silent through a victory dance performed while four Makahs point guns at the heads and his general vicinity, and does not give offense. Only the two heads of the Elwhas go up on poles above Neah Bay like queer jack-o-lanterns.

Swan by this time has made his way, in years and fractions of years, through four diaries—black, tan, black and tan again—and been back and forth between Neah Bay and Port Townsend until he seems more a citizen of mid-water than of either community. Early in the diary of his fourth year on the Strait, the brown pocket volume for 1862, a different rhythm begins to come out to me. Swan is at Neah Bay with the hope now, through Webster's doggedly achieved new position
as agent in charge of the Reservation, of staying on for some steady span of time, and a beat of hour comfortably nudging hour, of settledness, sets in.

Wind NW fresh, the seventeenth of March. Caught a large male skunk. Finished the Tomanawas stone for John. Sundown, sch Alert off San Juan harbor trying to beat out. A ship and two barks also working out slowly. A year ago, the salmonberry & other shrubs were in blossom. Now no signs of vegetation are visible. Peter came up today and I cut out a coat for him out of some blue flannel he had.

Wind SE rain all day, the twentieth of March. Ship Wm Sturgis from Pt Townsend hove to this forenoon & landed Charly Howard, who came down as pilot. Howard brought letters & papers... Caught another skunk... measured 28 inches from nose to tip of his tail.

Wind SE very light, the twenty-first of March, Foggy with constant rain. Brook very high. Peter came up today and told me that he had made up his mind to buy Totatelum, Colchote's daughter, but he did not wish either white men or Indians to know it except myself. He wishes to make the girl a present and will bring it up to me and wishes me to give it to Totatelum... I am curious to see the result of this courtship.

Light airs from SE, the twenty-second of March, with calms and thick fog. Walked down to Neeah to see Totatelum and announce to her Peter's desire. She was somewhat surprised and said she would think about the matter... Old Sally, the paralyzed woman, died last night and the Indians buried her by caving in the bank of sand under which she has been lying since they turned her out of the lodges. They are cruel wretches to the poor and sick.
Calm, cloudy & some fog, the twenty-third of March. Carried Peter's present--calico, needles, thread and two bars of soap--down to Totatelum, who received it very modestly.

Wind SE Morning cloudy and showery, PM calm, the twenty-seventh of March. John said that the people in Victoria told him that Queen Victoria had ordered a very hot summer to make up for the cold winter. Caught another skunk--8.

Day and day and day the diaries say it now. Swan's life is patterning itself to this frontier coast. Tomorrow, then, to the first of the coastal sites where Swan's paths and mine braid together. To Dungeness.
Day eleven

Above the two of us the eagle glides a complete slow circle, as if studying from the corner of his eye our surprising plaid skins. Near enough he floats, perhaps a hundred fifty feet above Carol in her jacket of gray and yellow and black, me in my red and black, that we can see the scalloped pattern of feathers at the ends of his wings, the snowiness of head and tail that marks him as a bald.

One more silent exact noose of patrol, then the dark flier flaps off southeast across the bay. The Boston bird, Swan says the coastal Indians began to call the eagle after arrival of the first American trading ships, pale New Englanders aboard them with the glittering wide-winged image on their coins. Under this taloned hunter's glide now a fleet of swimming ducks crash dives in fear, but they are not the target of the moment. When the eagle scrapes into the water, it is a fish that lofts away to doom.

We stand atop Dungeness Spit's rough spine of driftwood to watch the bald eagle and his meal vanish into the shore trees. From up here, all its bowed length into the Strait of Juan de Fuca--seven miles--Dungeness pricks into view like a gigantic hedgerow somehow weired atop the water. Age-gray drift logs tumble across each other to the height of a Dutch dike, fresher logs perpetually angle ashore, yellow and tattered from grinding across the gravel beach, to pile in turn onto the long heap. The rarity of Dungeness in all the dozen thousand miles of America's coastal edge speaks itself even in the dry intonings of scientists: longest natural sandspit in the United States; driest point on the West Coast north of San Diego. A thin hook of desert snagging the water, within walk of glaciated mountains and cool fir forests.
Swan, as said, sailed by here for the first time on a February morning of 1859, inbound for Port Townsend and his resumed western life. With his feathered name and that migratory nature, he was something of a Boston bird himself, testing new waters, fresh paths of glide. For the several years after his arrival to the Strait, Swan shows up time upon time at this sandy breakwater, usually portaging across the base of the Spit as the most direct canoe route between Port Townsend and the Makah settlement at Neah Bay. If he happened to journey by ship the route went close past the site of the lighthouse which rises like a white candle at the far end of the Spit... A keeper's house and a fine brick tower 92 feet high, he noted in that year of 1859, in which is placed a stationary light of the order of Fresnel.

The Dungeness light tower is now white-painted concrete, and not so lofty, that original beacon having proved to be so eminent that it was seen futilely above the fogs that drift on the face of the Strait. But there is a Fresnel light even yet, not the one Swan describes but an 1897 version, an exquisite six-sided set of glass bull's eyes which flings a beam of brightness eighteen miles.

Once Carol and I had the experience of being drawn the full length of the Spit, through the exact blackest center of night, by the focused blaze out of that elegant box of glass. I was to write a magazine article about the Coast Guard families stationed there at the remote end of the Spit's ribbon of sand, and Carol to shoot photographs for illustration. We arrived here to Dungeness about an hour before a November midnight and met a specter.

The bosun's mate in charge at the lighthouse had said he would drive in to meet us on the coastal bluff overlooking the Spit. He
wavered now out of the blackness like a drunken genii, clasping a hand
to half of his forehead and announcing thickly that we had to hurry
to keep the tide.

Wait a minute, we said. What exactly had gone wrong with
his head?

Groggy but full of duty, he recited that when he judged the
time had come to drive in above the tide, he traveled fast. Racing
through a bank of spume, his four-wheel-drive vehicle bounded over a
log the way a foxhunter's horse would take a hedge, and when man and
machine plunged to sand again, his forehead clouted the windshield.

With woozy determination our would-be chauffeur repeated that
we would lose the tide if we did not hurry. I looked at Carol, some
decision happened between us, and we climbed into the four-wheel-drive.

Headlights feeling out the thin route between driftwood debris
and crashing waves, our Coast Guardsman ducked us through cloud upon
cloud of spume sailing thigh-deep on the beach. That spine-tingling
journey was like being seated in a small plane as it sliced among puffy overcast.
From that night I have the sense of what the early pilots must have felt,
Saint-Exupery's blinded men aloft with the night mail above Patagonia,
avoid for "even the flicker of an inn lamp." We had our ray of light,
leading us with tireless reliable winks, but even it could not see into
our foaming route for us.

At last at the lighthouse, with the engine cut, no next encounter
between four-wheel-drive and fat driftlog having been ordained, the Fresnel
lens wheeling its spokes of light above our heads; we breathed out and
climbed down to the Dungeness sand for our weekend stay.
Two moments stand in my memory from that next day at the tip of Dungeness Spit. The first was seeing the lens itself, coming onto the fact of its art here on a scanty ledge of sand and upcast wood. What I had expected perhaps was something like a titanic spotlight, some modern metallic capsule of unfathomable power: not a seventy-five-year-old concoction of magnifying prisms, worked by the French artisans to angles as precise and acute as those of cut glass goblets, which employed a single thousand watt bulb and stretched its glow across nearly twenty miles. The magnifying power from this small cabinet of glass was as pleasantly astounding as Swell's explanation of the aurora borealis glinting up from Eskimo campfires.

The second memory is of the mustached bosun's mate himself. With what pride he showed off his domain of Dungeness, not only the glass casing at the top of the lighthouse but the radio beacon apparatus and the foghorn and even the flagpole with a red storm warning flag bucking madly at the top. "The wind wears out about ten flags a winter," he said to impress us, and did.

Lighthouse life dimmed a bit when he escorted us in to talk with his wife and the wife of the young petty officer on duty with him. Both proved to be edgy about the strand-of-sand way of existence. Mrs. Bosun's Mate calculated to when their oldest child would start school, which would let the family away to land duty: "I WANT to move inland." Until that could happen she was forbidding the children to leave the fenced yard around the quarters because they might injure themselves in the driftwood. The petty officer's dwelling in the building attached to the base of the lighthouse tower itself, was disconcerted to have in her living room one huge round wall
which emitted a night-long beamish hum.

The bosun's mate heard them out, evidently not for the first time, then led the pair of us off to see any further feature of lighthouse keeping he could think of. The day, blown pure by last night's wind, had its own magnifying clarity. Mountains rose in white shards far north along the Canadian coastline. Mount Baker lorded over the glinting horizon of the Cascades to our east, highest ice-flame among dozens of ice-flames, while the Olympic range crowded full the sky south and west of us. Dungeness seemed more astounding than ever, a gift of promontory grafted carefully amid the mountains and strait.

The knot on his forehead barely visible beneath his cap bill, hands fisted for warmth into his jacket pockets, the bosun's mate looked around at this ice-and-water rim of the Pacific Northwest in a quick expert glance, then turned to us. "I'm a true coastie," he announced as if introducing himself. "A shallow water sailor."

The Dungeness light has blinked through a number of hundreds of nights since then, and today in bright sun Carol and I casually prowl the inside shore of the Spit, around to where smaller Graveyard Spit veers off from Dungeness. In outline from the air, Dungeness and Graveyard together look like a long wishbone, Graveyard poking shoreward from near the end of Dungeness like the briefer prong of the forked pieces. Out there now just beyond where they join, the lighthouse and out buildings sit in silhouette against Mt. Baker, a white peg and white boxes against that tremendous tent of mountain overtopping the skyline a hundred miles to the northeast.

I am watching for snowy owls. This is the fourth year of the
cycle which brings them this far south from the arctic, and we once
sighted one here, a wraith of white against the gray driftwood. Pleased
with ourselves, we returned to Seattle to discover that another snowy
had taken up a roost on a television antenna above a mid-city restaurant
and half the population had been out to see him. No owl today, nor the
blue herons who often stilt along Graveyard Spit.

We stay with the inside shore, the one facing Graveyard. This is
the wildfowl side, the commissary for migrating ducks and brant, as
the outward shore is the lagoon for seals who pop up and disappear as
abruptly as periscopes. Today's find presents itself here on the interior
water: a half dozen eider ducks making their kor-r-r, kor-r-r chuckles
to each other, then, as if having discussed to agreement, all diving
at once.

An edge of ice whitens the shoreline, a first for all the times--
fifty? seventy-five?—we have come here. Full-dress winter greeted
Swan once, in January of 1880: We arrived in Dungeness harbor at
10 AM and found three feet of snow had fallen during the night.
Everything was covered with a white mantle, our boat's deck was
loaded with snow and the light house tower on its north east side
had a thick coating from the base to the lantern. Fog signal house
and all the other outbuildings were covered, and the whole scenery
of Dungeness Spit and bluff was the most like an Eastern winter of
any I have seen in this country. This afternoon, mountains stand
in all directions

p. 57A follows
with the clear loveliness Swan observed during one of his early visits—unobscured by mist or clouds their snowy peaks shone most gloriously...

Across the Strait at Vancouver Island, where we can see in miniature detail the tallest downtown buildings of twenty-mile-distant Victoria, Swan had marveled at the endless timber level as a field of wheat, following the undulation of the ground with a regular growth most wonderful for such a dense forest.

How cold the day, but how little wind. It balances out toward comfort. That is not always the case in this restless spot. Swan on an excursion past the Spit on a day in May of 1862... stopped for
the night at the light house where Mr Blake, the keeper treated me very politely to a supper & a share of his bed. Next morning: Left the light house at 3:15 A.M., calm. Passed round the spit where a breeze sprung up which freshened into a squall with rain. A tremendous surf was breaking on the beach & we for a time were in great peril. But finally we managed to get ashore at Point Angeles where we found shelter...

Dark settles early, the sun spinning southwest into the Olympic Mountains instead of going down near the end of the Strait as it does in summer. We leave the Spit before dusk, heading back to Seattle to spend New Year's Eve in our traditional geographically diverse game of penny ante poker. Baltimore--"Ballumer," she says it--will play her challenging, by-god-you're-not-going-to-get-away-with-it style. Texas, behind a cigar which would credit J.P. Morgan, contents himself until a strong hand, when he raises and re-raises relentlessly. Carol--New Jersey--is the steadiest of the bunch, and wins regularly from the rest of us. By way of Montana--me--comes an uncharacteristically fevered kind of style which can swathe through the game, devastating everybody else for three or four hands in a row, or obliterating my own stake.

Swan would approve the pasttime, if not our particular card table temperaments. He once passed up a chance to come ashore to visit with the lightkeeper at Dungeness because he and the others concluded to remain on board, devoting our energies to the successful performance of a game of seven-up, or all-four, or old sledge, as that wonderful combination of cards is variously termed.
Day twelve

The new year.

On Sunday, January 1, 1860, his first New Year's Day on the coast of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Swan opened a new tan pocket diary and inscribed on its first page:

May it be not only the commencement of the week, the month and the year, but the commencement of a new Era in my life, and may good resolve result in good action.
Day thirteen

Today Mr Brooks, William Ingraham & myself finished setting the posts for the main building of the school house and when we had all ready which was at noon, I told Capt John to call the Indians. Some twenty five or thirty came out and when Mr Brooks was ready I told John who then gave the word and the sticks were lifted into their places and the whole of the sills for the main building fastened together in about an hour. I told John that when the buildings were done Mr Webster would give them a treat to pay for the good feelings evinced on this occasion. They have been opposed to having the building erected back of their lodges and I have had a deal of explanation to make, to do away with the superstitious prejudices of the old men. But by the exercise of a great deal of patience I have succeeded in inspiring them with a confidence in me, which makes them believe not only what I tell them is true, but what we are doing is for their good.

The noontime came on the fifteenth of October, 1862, and the exertions which overtopped the cedar longhouses of the Makahs with the framework of a schoolhouse lofted more good for James G. Swan than he let his pen admit.

Precisely when his mind had become set on securing the job as teacher at Neah Bay, there is no direct evidence. But hints murmur up from the diary pages. Likely as early as those first visits to Cape Flattery in 1859 Swan divined that Henry Webster would try for the appointment as Indian agent when the Makah Reservation came into being. Even more likely is that Webster, noticing Swan's knack of getting along with the Indians, advised or asked him to seek a Reservation job.
Those discernments and Swan's rummaging curiosity about Makah tribal life were the pulls to Neah Bay. The push was that Port Townsend had not worked out well for Swan, and a fundamental reason seems to have been whiskey.

Once I happened across the lines of a diarying compatriot of Swan's, a Scot named Melrose who also had arrived to the Pacific Northwest— to Victoria, north on the Canadian coast of the Strait—early in the 1850's. The alcoholic atmosphere of the frontier enthused Melrose to near rapture. "It would almost take a line of packet ships," he wrote cheerily, "running regularly between here and San Francisco to supply this isle with grog, so great a thirst prevails among its inhabitants." He took care to note down how far his companions in thirst overcame their parching; whether each had become one-quarter drunk, one-half drunk, three-quarters drunk, or wholly drunk. Every so often the Melrose diary presents the forthright notation: "author whole D."

Swan I hardly need say was not a man to record himself as whole D or any other degree of it. But that he was tussling with the temptation of the bottle is plain enough in his own diary even so.

Joined the Dashaway Club of Port Townsend—a group who took a pledge of abstinence and whom one unsympathetic editor dubbed a claque of "high-toned drunkards."

Cut my lip with a brush hook this evening in Gerrishes store in a scuffle with Maj. Van Bokkelin—Van Bokkelin one of Swan's closest friends and a pillar of community respect, and a scuffle hardly thinkable of a sober Swan.

Days later, Made a pledge... not to drink any more liquor for
two years from this date, the ninth of December, 1860.

That pact may have been as much with Webster, the gatekeeper to future employment at the Makah Reservation, as with himself. Whether or not, most of the next twenty-one months until Webster finally was able to pluck the appointment as Indian agent found Swan odd-jobbing in sobriety at Neah Bay. (And quartering at the Baadah Point trading post with Webster and whoever else happened to be on hand, in what seems to have been a peppery household: During the evening a skunk came into the kitchen to eat swill. Mr Webster fired at him with his pistol, cutting some of his hair off with the ball. The skunk made his escape but filled the house with his stench.) Several months more had to pass before Webster could enroll Swan on the Makah Reservation payroll as teacher, but then, the first of July of 1862, at last Swan having secured position and salary, some immediate dignification sets in. Three and a half years of jotted doings in pocket notebooks leave off, and the first of Swan's ledger diaries, the pages long and officious and the handwriting scrupulously clear and margined, begins.

What is recorded for the first year and more has nothing to do with education, except that over this course of time Swan's classroom ever so slowly gets carpentered to completion. Instead, Swan spent the time lending a hand in the sundry chores of the little Neah Bay work force, especially the labors of the Reservation's farmer, Maggs, earnest bearer of agriculture to damp Cape Flattery.
"Making the earth say beans instead of grass," Thoreau teased himself about his garden at Walden. At Neah Bay, the official notion was that the coastal soil ought to orate potatoes.

... We plow the land twice, Swan recorded, harrow it twice, then plow in the potatoes and harrow the whole over again... If what we plant grows as thrifty as the wild raspberry, currant, gooseberry and elder and nettles, cow parsnip and other rubbish grew we shall have a famous crop. There is a kind of Hibernian woefulness about this idea of remaking such a people of the sea as the Makahs into potato farmers. I think of the "potato Protestants" of Connaught in the Irish famine, forced to barter their religion for the meals of survival. (Credit Swan with grave doubts about persuading the Makahs to trade canoe for plow: Indians cannot live on potatoes alone, any more than the white man; they require animal food, and prefer the products of the ocean to the farina of the land. It will take many years, and cost the Government large sums of money to induce these savages to abandon their old habits of life and acquire new ones... I think they should be encouraged in their fisheries...) The Makahs, however, with an oceanfull of seafood at their front doors, were not at the edge of desperation and so managed to make the best of the potato policy. As democratic eaters, they blithely claimed their spud allotments whenever a harvest was produced. But as uninspired agriculturalists they conspicuously left most of the plowing and other field labor to Maggs, and Swan.
Through 1862 and most of 1863, Swan dabbles as extra muscle in the potato field. Gleans lore from the Makahs. (Captain John fund is an ever-ready, if problematical, fountain of it: John as a general thing is a great liar, but he is well informed on all historical matters...)

Does sketchwork. Keeps the diary constant. And otherwise disposes of days until the carpenter hired by Webster at last completes the schoolhouse.

Webster himself is absent from Neah Bay much of the time now that he has Swan and the others in place there, so Swan fairly often finds himself standing in as arbiter among the Indians. Peter came in this evening and had a long talk with me relative to his conduct since he came back from California. He promised to do better and said he hoped I would be friendly to him. I told him I always had been his best friend and was now, but his actions had displeased me and in particular the fact that he had not paid a debt he owed in Port Townsend to Sheehan the tinsmith...

And sometimes the tumbleweed white population as well. Capt Melvin arrived in the schooner Elisabeth. He had been down on a trading voyage and had been trading whiskey among the Nittinat Indians in the vicinity of Barclay Sound... he assured me positively that he had not nor would he sell any liquor near the reserve. He however inadvertently showed me his account book and I saw that he had with his potatoes one barrel 33 gallons whiskey... I advised him to keep away from where I was for so soon as I had proof of his selling whiskey so sure would I complain of him.

Finally, in mid-November of 1863, the potato harvest was in, the schoolhouse stood roofed and windowed, I painted the alphabet on the blocks Mr. Phillips made for me and tomorrow I intend to commence teaching.
This Neah Bay Swan, if you look steadily at him for a moment, is a greatly more interesting and instructive fellow than the Shoalwater oysterer/loiterer first met on this frontier coast. He has shown himself to be a chap who likes to hear a story and to take a drink, not absolutely in that order; reveals a remarkable fast knack for friendships, among whites and Indians both; is as exact a diarist as ever filled a page and as steadily curious as a question mark; contrives not to stay in the slog of any job very long (although we shall have to see about this forthcoming profession in the Cape Flattery schoolhouse); can drily laugh—I thought that their friendship was of the kind that might induce them, should I give offence, to stick my head on top of a pole for a memento—or get a bit preachy—

I told Peter I always had been his best friend and was now, but--; long since has unwifed and defamilied himself yet maintains week by week steady correspondence with Matilda, Ellen and Charles; hardly ever meets a meal he doesn't like or a coastal scene he doesn't want to sketch; muses occasionally, observes always.

And now is about to offer more instruction yet. Mid-November of 1863, the potato harvest in, the schoolhouse at last roofed and windowed, I painted the alphabet on the blocks Mr. Phillips made for me and tomorrow I intend to commence teaching.
Day fourteen

Neah Bay pedagogy gets off to a stuttery start. The first morning, the seventeenth of November of 1863, a single student showed up; Captain John's ten-year-old nephew, Jimmy Claplanhoo. Swan chose a bit of guile. This evening I got out the magic lantern and gave Jimmy an exhibition of it as a reward... Within a few days, four more Makah children edged into the schoolroom and were treated to Swan's picture show. By the end of the first week, twenty children present today exercised them on the alphabet and then gave them a pan full of boiled potatoes.

Success in the schoolroom, discord in the world. Something here unusually sets Swan to brooding about the Civil War and its politics: I do not believe in the principles of the Republican party as enunciated by Greeley, Sumner, Phillips, Beecher... but I do believe that the country is in real danger and I believe at such times it is the duty of every true man to stand by his Government (no matter what the party) in saving this country and ourselves from ruin.

That out of his system, Swan goes on to note that the Indians' dogs killed two skunks in the lumber pile.

He next has to take three days out to supervise the digging of the schoolhouse cellar, introducing the Makah laborers to the wheelbarrow, which they think a hilarious machine. Then, a drain to carry the runoff from the schoolhouse roof needs to be finished. Jimmy Claplanhoo comes down with a cough so severe that Swan worries it may be consumption. The Makahs put on a raucous tamanoas ceremony to boost Jimmy's health, just as a gale rips across Neah Bay. Crows tip over Swan's rain gauge.
He sets to work on them with shotgun and strychnine. Makahs from the village of Waatch arrive for Swan to dispense potatoes to. One of the Makah men brings his two-year-old son to school to learn the alphabet and creates uproar by spanking the tot for not mastering it. A number of the Indians embark on a drinking spree which gets rougher as it progresses day by day. There are knife wounds and one combatant smashes three canoes with a stone before other partyers knock him out with a brick.

At risk here was more than a few cedar hulls.

This drunken frolic shows how easily these people can be excited to deeds of violence, Swan's pen scolds. We are powerless under the present circumstances either to prevent these drunken scraps or protect ourselves in case of an attack. But I have not the least apprehension of any difficulty if liquor is kept from them.

Now Swan catches cold; I have not felt so sick for a year certainly. Jimmy Claplanhoo's health mends and he arrives back at school. The agency's winter larder begins to be questionable: Sometimes we are very short of provisions and have to depend on our beef barrel, then again the Indians will bring in such quantities of fish and game that there is a surfeit. The agency cattle start dying. Cold damp weather holds and holds. On December 16 the most remarkable fall of rain I have ever known gurgling to the top of his rain gauges twice, a total of nearly seven inches. A number of the Indians begin another drinking party. One participant is blasted in the arm with a dragoon pistol and another comes to borrow a shovel from Swan. He went to where old Flattery Jack Sixey's father had been buried and dug up one of his arm bones which was taken and bound on as splints to the arm of Sixey. The Indians
believing that the bone from the father's arm would cure.

A weakened bull from the staggering agency herd has to be put in the basement of the schoolhouse for shelter. He takes out a window on his way in. Another party of Makahs from Waatch troops in to purchase a bride: They came in the house and rigged themselves up with masks and feathers and all went to Whattie's house to make their trade.

Five weeks since Jimmy Claplanhoo inaugurated the schoolhouse, Webster at last sails into the bay with some supplies, and an audible sigh lifts from the ledger pages as Swan notes the coming of Christmas and the making of a plum pudding.
Day fifteen

The strop of this weather on the days, each one made identically keen, tingling. Rainless hours after rainless hours glimmering past, it has dawned on me how extraordinary is this dry cold time, as if I were living in the Montana Rockies again but without the clouting mountain-hurled wind. There is a bright becalmed feel, a kind of disbelief the weather has about itself. Other years, by now I might have shrugged almost without noticing into our regional cloak of rain-and cloud, the season's garment of interesting texture and of patterned pleasant sound as well. "Rain again," a friend growls. "Right," I say and smile absently, listening for the booommm and whooommm of foghorns out in the murk of Puget Sound. But through yesterday morning, the temperature hung below freezing for four days and nights in a row, the longest skein of its kind I can remember here at the rim of the Sound. I bury our kitchen vegetable scraps directly into my garden patch each evening as immediate compost and the shovel brings up six-inch clods of frozen soil, like lowest-grade coal.

But what speaks the weather even clearer is today's renewed presence of birds. This morning kindled into warmer sun than we have had and already, Carol minutes gone up the hill to teach her first class of the day, just to be out in the fresh mildness I have walked up to the top of the valley. Clouds were lined low across the southern reach of the Olympics while clear weather held the northern end, the Strait country. The view west from me was banded in five blues: the water of Puget Sound in two shades, azure nearest me, a more delicately inked hue farther out; the
foreshore of the Olympic Peninsula in its heavy forested tint; the mountains behind their blue dust of distance; the clear cornflower sky. Such mornings shrug away time. Vessels on the Sound—freighter, tug harnessed to barge, second freighter, the ivory arrow that is the Edmonds to Kingston ferry—seemed pinned in place, and I had to watch intently before my eyes could begin to catch the simultaneous motion of them all, inching on the water. Then as I turned home, the flurry. Robins in fluster at the mouth of the valley, abruptly dotting suburban fir trees and frost-stiff lawns. Motion double quick, headlong. Airful of flying bodies, a vigor in orbit around fixed beauty of Sound and mountains.

Soon after, a jay cry, like rods of some terrible substance being briskly rasped against each other. Then framed in the desk-end window, popping from place to place along the bank beneath the valley slope's evergreens, a tiny brown flying mouse which proved to be a wren.

These past iced days I have tried to picture this valley's birds, up somewhere in innermost branches, fluffed with dismay and wondering why the hell they didn't wing south with their saner cousins. It occurs I live in this suburb for its privacy, the way it empties itself during the workday—people evaporated off to office, school, supermarket—and delivers the valley to me and the birds and any backyard cats. I suppose I could get by without the cats, or trade them for other interesting wanderers, maybe coyotes or foxes, but a birdless world, the air permanently fallow, is unthinkable. To be without birds would be to suffer a kind of color blindness, a glaucoma gauzing over one of the planet's special brightnesses. Bushtits must bounce again out there on the thin ends of
birch branches like monks riding bell ropes. A fretful nest-building robin—we always have one or two nattering in the trees at either end of the house—must gather and gather dry spears of grass until the beakful bristles out like tomcat whiskers. Towhees, chickadees, flickers, juncoes. (All the creatures of this world that do not know they have splendid names.)

occasional flashing hummingbirds; seasonal grosbeaks who arrive in the driveway and, masked like society burglars, munch on seeds amid the gravel. Besides Carol and the pulse of words across paper there are few everyday necessities in my life, but birds are among them.

And Swan, with his name which the Indian woman at Shoalwater had said is like our word Cocumb, a big bird: birds perpetually aviate across his horizons. Time upon time I marker incidents of birds in his pages. This forenoon, the tenth of July of 1865 at Neah Bay, I saw a kingfisher fluttering in the brook and supposed he had a trout which he could not swallow. On going to him I found he had driven his bill into an old rotten stick with such force as to bury it clear up to his eyes...hard and fast. I took him with the stick to the house and called Jones & Phillips to see the curiosity. It was with difficulty that his bill was pulled out again. Two years previous, in the same week of July: I discovered a dead Albatross on the beach yesterday which had a large dogfish which it had swallowed partially
but it was too large, and while the fish's head rested in
the bird's stomach, its tail was out of its mouth. Consequently
the bird was soon suffocated...I never met with a similar
instance of voracity. And the twelfth of February of 1863: Quite a
number of crows have been washed ashore dead. They have
a rookery at Waadah Island and probably the stormy wind
that has prevailed for several days with the thick snow
blinded them and they fell into the water... There is
a catastrophe of that sort here as well, although

Fortunately not in bunches. This house I live in sits as
a glass crag in the birds' midst. Badgerlike, I hunch in
here at the typing desk and watch helplessly as the building
every so often imposes itself athwart the birds' paths and
once in awhile kills them. Grosbeaks have been the most
frequent victims of headlong smash against a window. During
one of their migrations, twice in two days I found corpses,
flat on their backs and feet curled in a final surprised clutch,
below the north window.

One bird outside these transparent walls is invincible:
the stellar's jay. Jays attack their way through life like
cynical connivers in a royal court. A stellar's will
alight on the garden dirt, cock his head in disdain, scream
twice, burst off into the hemlock and set the lower branches
dancing, almost before its blue sheen has blazed on my
retina. What a vacancy a jay leaves in the air. The Makahs
explained to Swan that the blue jay was the mother of a
rascally Indian named Kwahkie. She had asked him to fetch
some water, saying that she wished he would hurry, because
she felt as if she were turning into a bird. Kwahkie ignored
her and went on making the arrow he was at work on. While
she was talking she turned into a blue jay and flew into a
bush. Kwahkie tried to shoot her, but his arrow passed behind
her neck, glancing over the top of her head, ruffling up the
feathers, as they have always remained in the head of the blue
jay. It seems to me as good an explanation as any for this
sharp-hooded brigand.

And then the most arresting of Swan's notations, the one
that halts me in dismay: During the spring, when the flowers
are in bloom and the humming birds are plenty, the boys take
a stick smeared with the slime from snails, and place it among
a cluster of flowers....if a humming bird applies his tongue
to it he is glued fast. They will then tie a piece of thread
to its feet and holding the other end let the birds fly, their
humming being considered quite an amusement.
That scene is doubly horrific to me. The doom of the
hummingbirds, and the knowledge that had I been one of the
Makah boys I would have had my own captive bird whirring
like a toy on the end of a tether.
Day sixteen

Swan as disclosed by the few, damnably few, photos of him.

In a portrait studio at age sixty-five, he sits wearing a small round-crowned hat, brim serenely without crimp, and has trimmed his snug white beard, toyed a chain and fob into precise place above the middle button of his vest, and primped a little show of handkerchief at the breast pocket of his jacket. His right hand, holding wire-rim reading glasses, rests amid books and sheafed paper atop a tablecloth so Victorianly brocaded that it looks as if it would stand in place without the table beneath it. Just slightly he faces to the left of the camera, the photographer's experience evidently having been that dignity is an oblique matter. Angled as Swan is, a white wedge of collar stands out sharply between his high-cut vest and his left jawline. This stiff bright fence of fabric at his neck and the dark orb of hat exactly flat across his head make the portrayed figure startlingly like a priest, probably some in to pose while home on leave from some far missionary billet or another.

Five years later in a crowd scene at Port Townsend, his beard is fuller and he sports a derby with the brim making a dapper little swoop to his brow. Here he looks somehow... elfin; somehow not quite of the same world as the foursquare townfolk all around him.

Another shot, when I judge him to be perhaps fifty. Hatless this time, and his hairline arcing fairly far back. A comb has done careful work and scissors have tidied around ears and back of neck. White, or more likely gray, is wisping into the beard only at either side of his chin. According to what one writer of regional history has remarked the dark cheek portions of beard and Swan's hair were brown, but I have no word yet
from any contemporary of his on that. One surprise: the corners of his eyes are touched with only a few brief lines. I conclude that dry Montana of this century, which early put a web of lines on the upper face of my father and grandmother and made a noticeable start on me, is more erosive than Swan's maritime frontier of a hundred years ago.

Next, Swan older again, and in high regalia. He wears a fez and a broad sash, evidently trigged up for a convention of the Order of Red Man, one of the several Port Townsend lodges he belonged to. As a frontier caliph, Swan looks spendidly silly, and there may be a hint held in around his lips that he more than suspects it. The new feature here, fez and sash aside, is the clear profile of Swan's nose. For most of us the nose is an open hinge in the center of the face, shaped to no discernible purpose except revenge on us by forgotten ancestors. But Swan came off rather well, a straight unfleshy version proportioned comfortably between the wide set of his eyes and the emphasis of his barbered beard. A restrained nose.

A smatter of other scenes exists— one I particularly grin over, Swan at ease in his Port Townsend office with a deluge of Indian regalia covering every wall and shelf around him; the place looked as this writing room of mine is beginning to with the copied heaps of Swan's paperwork stacked around—but they do not offer further detail. Except one final pose, unquestionably snapped the same day in the studio as the priestly portrait. This time Swan perches on a queer chair-sized square of small notched logs, evidently the photographer's notion of a rural setting, and with casual care is holding a large canoe paddle slantwise across his body. If a flash flood should sweep through the studio he will be ready atop his small square floe. He has company in this photo, a blocky and strong-faced young Haida
named Johnny Kit Elswa. Wearing a suit jacket which his chest and shoulders threaten to explode, Johnny Kit Elswa stolidly stands just apart from Swan, also grips a paddle, and a fistful of arrows and a small bow as well.

Both men, one of Massachusetts and the other of the wild native coast of the North Pacific, are stiffly tethered by their stares to the camera's lens. But precisely between them breaks out a vertical riot of animated faces: a ceremonial Indian carving roughly the length and shape of the canoe paddles, agog every six inches with some fantastic wood-faced creature or another popping its eyes in the direction of the camera. Giddy, droll, mischievous, outright hee-hawing, the carvings are an acrobatic ladder of forest imps. In this company the humans seem dry solemn stuff indeed.

Swan, then, in the entirety of his gallery of likeness. Slightly narrow-shouldered, with a tendency to build a bit at the waistline. Surprisingly long-armed: a 32½-inch sleeve when he orders a coat from Boston. Average chest: 37 inches, on that same garment. He is perhaps five feet eight inches in height and not heavily built: Batsie took me across the Waatch Creek on his shoulders, the diary discloses. Say, at his best-fed, perhaps 160 pounds. All in all a shape which could be pared and stretched a bit into my own, I notice. But his beard, with its regular, combed smoothness, is nothing like my copper-wire version. My bet is that he grew it aboard the Rob Roy, coming west to California in 1850: new life, new face. In the ceremonial pictures in his later years, he seems to have begun shaving his cheeks along the top of his beard, declaring a definite border such as where department store Santa's whiskers begin. Which leads
to the thought that, like me, he may have been a touch overproud of a firm face of beard. A sack of hair from ear to ear may be less enhancing than we imagine.

Not an elaborate man, but with a small dressy touch or two. A ring with a stone there on the ring finger of the left hand; that chain and fob. A pocket watch which he tries, with no great success, to keep accurate with the precision clock of the Port Townsend jeweler.

Average vanities aside, Swan impresses as tidy; deft enough within his radius of interests; indeed, even painstaking about any matter he thinks sufficient to warrant it, such as presenting his face for the world to see. And yet in every pose, more distance to him than merely the span from the camera's lens. An inward man, a winterer within himself as well as his far-frontier surroundings.

As I have fingered through the photographs, Swan has seemed more than half familiar to me, the kind of visage seen from the tail of my eye and not quite willing to register. The tiny jungled planet that is the human head can be mysterious this way. Forest of hair and that sometime cultivation of beard, plain of brow, the twin seas of eyes, wrinkled country of memory and cunning and wonder and who knows what all you can look on constellations of heads all day long without fully seeing any single orb. (Unless you sense reason for comparison. I am interested that Swan seems never to have gone bald at the north polar region where I have, but his forehead began to extend into the farthest tundra country.) At last the exact resemblance clicks. Swan
looked more than a little like the history book portraits of the steel king of the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie. Similar wide clear brow, same trim half-face of beard with downward arc of mouth in it. Between brow and beard, however, exactly there across the eyes and cheekbones, entire difference arrives. Even as his most carefully benign, Carnegie's scrutiny lances off the page at you as that of a man gauging just how far you can be tantalized with the gift of a public library. Swan blinks the middle-distance gaze of a fellow who would be in that Carnegie library thumbing through the collected works of John Greenleaf Whittier all the afternoon.
Day seventeen

Neah Bay, mid-January, 1864: a week of Swan's winter.

Sunday. Russian Jim came in this evening and requested me to intercede with his squaw who has recently left him and try and induce her to return. Jim told me that when any one came to my door at night I should always ask "Who is there" for the Skookums sometimes came to peoples doors and did mischief. I told him I was not afraid of the powers of the air at all. He said I had a skookum tumtum—a brave soul.

Monday. This is my birth day 46 years old. Cleaned up the school house today, piled the lumber, and placed things in order. I shall be glad when the building is completed for the constant interruption I have and the various duties I am called on to perform prevent my giving that attention to the children I wish to. I have no time that I can call my own or in which I am not liable to interruptions except evenings and then I am generally alone but I can find but little time to write for my sight is getting too poor to attempt writing much except by daylight.

The Indians think I have a skookum tumtum to live alone in this great house. I do not suppose one of them would dare sleep here alone for anything they are so afraid of spirits. I think the spirits of the earth are more to be feared, both spirituous liquors and evil prowling Indians but I don't apprehend any dangers or alarms from any source and thus far never have been more peacefully situated.
Tuesday. Today took an inventory of Government property for Mr Webster. Billy Balch came in this evening and gave me a very lucid explanation why the spirits of the dead did not molest me. He says that it is because we have a cellar to the house and a floor over it, but in Indian houses there is nothing but the bare ground or sand. That when any of the Indians are alone in a great house and make a fire and cook, that the memelose or dead come up through the earth and eat food and kill the Indian, but he thinks they can't come up through our floor altho as he says he would be afraid to try to sleep alone here for there might be some knot hole or crack in the floor through which they could come.

Billy also related an interesting tradition. He says that... at a very remote period the water flowed from Neeah Bay through the Waatch prairie, and Cape Flattery was an island. That the water receded and left Neeah Bay dry for four days and became very warm. It then rose again without any swell or waves and submerged the whole of the cape and in fact the whole country except the mountains... As the water rose those who had canoes put their effects into them and floated off with the current which set strong to the north. Some drifted one way and some another and when the waters again resumed their accustomed level a portion of the tribe found themselves beyond Nootka where their descendants now reside and are known by the same name as the Makahs...

Many canoes came down in the trees and were destroyed and numerous lives were lost...

There is no doubt in my mind of the truth of this tradition. The Waatch prairie shows conclusively that the waters of the ocean once
flowed through it, and as this whole country shows marked evidences of volcanic influences there is every reason to believe that there was a crust which made the waters to rise and recede as the Indian stated.

Wednesday. Very heavy surf during the night and this morning, showing there must have been strong winds outside the cape recently... At 8 PM Jackson & Bob came to the door and informed me that a vessel had run on the rocks on the north end of Waadda Island. I went out on the beach and saw a light in that direction, but after watching it some time I concluded it was as likely to be a vessel at anchor in the harbor as one on the rocks. The Indians refused to go off to ascertain, as the wind was blowing too strong, so I came back to the house and after going up to my room in the upper part of the turret, where I had a better chance to judge I concluded from the appearance of the light that it was the US Rev Cutter Joe Lane...expected here with Mr Smith the keeper of Tatoosh Light.

Thursday. My surmise last evening proved correct, it was the cutter Joe Lane which arrived. Mr Webster came down and breakfasted with me and then went on board the cutter in a canoe with five Indians who afterward conveyed him to Baadah.

Yowarthl brought one cord oven wood today. Paid him 12 buckets of potatoes.

Went to Baadah this PM Mr Webster gave me a letter to send to the Cutter, which I sent by Hopestubbe & Yachah, who carried it and delivered it safe. Wrote this evening...
Friday. 7:30 AM The Cutter got under way and stood out of the bay bound to Barclay Sound in search of Bark Narramissic, said to be lost or missing...

Saturday. Went to Baakah to pay off Indians. Peter says that a short time since a Quillehuyte Indian named Towallanho came across by way of the Hoko river and from thence down on foot to Baakah where he arrived at night and reconnoitered Mr Webster's premises and then passed on to Waatch. This may account for the Indians asking me if I was not afraid to be alone in this great house and also the reason why Russian Jim cautioned me not to open my door to any one without enquiring who was there, for the Indians say that the Quillehuytes have threatened to come here and attack the whites. This may or may not be true and may be only some scheme of these people to do mischief and charge it on the Quillehuytes.
Day eighteen

Swan's day-upon-day sluice of diary words: why?

Was the diarizing habit something which surfaced out of instinct, the unsalable one that says in some of us that our way to put a mark on the world is not with sword or tool, but pen? Or did the contents mean more to him than the doing of it—the diary a way to touch out into life as it flowed past him and skim the most interesting as an elixir? Either way, Swan clearly was not using his pen nib merely to pass the time. So much interested him, inside the covers of books and wherever else his glance fell along this coastline, that boredom seldom seems to have found him. I do accept that the inked words helped to keep straight in memory what he was seeing or being told; Swan had a granny's passion for gossip, and a broker's fixity on exact sums and issues. But passions and fixities do not commonly last for forty years and two and a half million words generally at some moonstruck time of our lives, by hand. Any of us serve summer terms as diarists, somewhere in the interred, deservedly, tumble of family items in a closet of this room is the five-year diary I began in my final year of high school. I lasted at the routine a few months and am now told nothing by it but a recital of football and basketball scores and journeys between my boarding place in town and the family's sheep ranch. That dry stick of a youngster tracing such items into my life, I can scarcely recognize. Almost twenty years passed before I undertook a diary again—oddly, the occasion was the same as that earliest eddy of Swan's torrent of paper, a time spent in Britain—and even now I dodge behind yet the constant excuse that a page should be a hireling, not the field boss, to evade for days, weeks, at a time. This journal of winter, I face down into regularly because it must be kept, as a ship's log must.
To navigate by; know the headway. But Swan's diary plainly masters him.

Pulls his hand down onto each day's page like a coaxing lover. How far beyond the surface of the paper he ever can be coaxed, however, is yet to be seen. Swan's days and the land and people of them get scrupulous report; less so his own interior. Unlike that other tireless clerk, Pepys of place-time London, Swan does not confess himself every second sentence, gaily jot down who he last tumbled to bed with and is eyeing next nor repent every hangover nor retaste every jealousy. Much more assessor than confessor, is Swan. Yet, yet, his words do configure, make enough significant silhouette that I stare hard for the rest. No, the Swan style of diary-keeping--this dialogue of a man with his days--is not merely maintenance, but more like architecture, the careful ungiddy construction of something grand as it is odd. Swan works at these pages of his as steadily, incessantly, as a man building a castle out of pebbles.

Castling his own life, I suppose, while I have the luck to look on in curiosity.
Day nineteen

In continental outline the United States rides the map as a gallon carpentered together from the woodyard's left over slabs: plankish bowsprit ascending at northernmost Maine, line of keel cobbled along Gulf shores and southwest border (Florida the Armada- surplus anchor chain hung fat with seaweed), surprising long clean amidship straightness of the 49th parallel across upper Midwest and West. This patchwork ship of states is, by chance, prowling eastward. Or as I prefer to think of it, forecastle and bow are awallow in the Atlantic while great lifting tides gather beneath our Pacific portion of the craft.

Trace to the last of this land vessel at the westernmost reach of the state of Washington, to the final briefest tacked-on deckline of peninsula. There is Cape Flattery, where the Makahs of James G. Swan's years lived and where I am traveling today.

Towns thin down abruptly along this farthest-west promontory. In the sixty-five mile stretch beyond Port Angeles only three--Clallam Bay; within sight of Sekiu; then after fifteen final miles of dodgy road, Neah Bay--and each one tightly hugs some cove in the northern shoreline of the cape, as if grateful to have been rolled ashore out of the cold wallowing waters of the Strait.

The tiny communities exist on logging and seasonal salmon fishing, and as such places do, produce ample vacant time for their
citizens to eye one another. The man beside me this morning at the Sekiu cafe counter was working his way through hash browns, sunny side eggs, toast, sausage, coffee, and vehemence.

"That kid," he grumped across the room to the waitress, "that kid never did make much of a showing for himself around here. Glad to see him gone." An instant later, of someone else: "Never liked that lamebrained SOB anyway." As fork and tongue flashed, a close contest whether his meal or the local population would be chomped through first.

At Neah Bay, now at mid-morning, I am the one looked at, for my red beard and black watch cap. The Makahs of Neah Bay have been studying odd white faces in their streets for well over two hundred years. One story is that an early Russian sailing vessel smashed ashore at Cape Flattery and Swan believed that those survivors and probably other voyagers had left their genetic calling cards. (Of the Makahs, he noted, some have black hair; very dark brown eyes, almost black; high cheek-bones, and dark copper-colored skin; others have reddish hair, and a few, particularly among the children, light flaxen locks...) It is definite that Spanish mariners arrived in the late eighteenth century to build a small clay-brick fort, which seems to have lasted about as long as it took them to stack it together. Every so often Swan and a
few interested Indians would poke around in the Spanish shards, and the midden would stir up righteousness in him: How different our position from theirs. They came to conquer. We are here to render benefit.

After a hundred and twenty years as a Reservation people under United States governance, the Makahs might care to argue that point of benefit. Neah Bay meets the visitor as a splatter of weather-whipped houses, despite its age a tentative town seemingly pinned into place by the heavy government buildings at its corners: Bureau of Indian Affairs offices, Coast Guard enclave, Air Force base on the opposite neck of the peninsula. One building stands out alone in grace, a high-roofed museum built by the tribal council to display the finds from an archeological dig southward along the coast at Cape Alava. Despite the museum's brave thrust and the bulky federal presence, the forested hills which crowd the bay seem simply to be waiting until the right moonless night to take back the townsite.

I have brought with me the copied portions of Swan's diaries where he writes of Cape Flattery's place in the tribal geography of the North Pacific. Remoteness and the empty expanses of Strait and ocean would seem to insulate such a site, but that was not the case
at all when Swan lived among the Neah Bay villagers in the early
1860's. He found them carrying on a complicated war of nerves,
and occasionally biceps, which would do credit to any adventurous
modern nation. South, north and east, the Makahs looked from their
pinnacle of land toward some tribal neighbor they were at issue
with.

The slowest-simmering of these rivalries extended south-
half the territory of
ward, about a day's canoe journey down the coast to where the
Quillayute tribe lived. The Makahs suspected the Quillayutes of
massacred having killed one of their whaling crews which had been blown
downcoast by storm. Time and again this tale reached Swan at
Neah Bay, occasionally with the added note that the murdered
canoemen had been seen as owls with shells hanging from their
bills similar to those worn by Makahs in their noses.

Suspicion of the Quillayutes remained a matter of muttering,
however. With the Elwha Clallams, east along the Strait, the
galling issue was their killing of Swell, and it rankled hard
and often. In Swan's diary months, Neah Bay jousts repeatedly
with Elwha over the dead young chieftain. Early on, Swan and
a Makah canoe crew returning from Port Townsend brought back
an Elwha
with them a Clallam chief who wanted to talk peace. The Clallam
breakfasted with Swell's brother Peter, everyone seemed to be
pleasant and friendly, but the point was sledged home to the Clallams:

It is generally understood that if they will kill... Charlie entire peace will be restored.

Weeks later, Clallams came to parley some more, to no further abruptly result. Months later, a Makah elder suddenly announced that he would set fire to Swell's monument because the white men had not arranged vengeance for his murder.

Of a sudden, inspiration evidently lit by that torching speech, the Makahs now scored a move: Today

Peter stole a squaw from Capt. Jack, one of the Clallam Indians who was here on a visit. The squaw was part Elwha and Peter took her as a hostage to enforce pay from the Elwhas for robbing and killing Swell a year and a half ago.

The ransom fell through, one of the Makah tribal elders allowed the woman to escape. Peter came to me today with a very heavy heart in consequence of the squaw having absconded.

Just then the attention of the Makahs pivoted abruptly northward, across the Strait. Which customarily was the worst direction to have to expect trouble from: the northern Indians beyond Vancouver Island were numerous and powerful canoe-people with a history of raiding almost casually down onto the smaller tribes of the Strait and Sound. The north could mean the Tsimshians and the Tlingits, and most dread of all, the Haidas of the Queen Charlotte Islands, almost to Alaska. Swan once had watched a canoe party of Haidas depart Port Townsend under the uneasy jeers of the local Clallams and Chimakums. For farewell, a Haida woman ripped a handful of grass and blew the shreds in the face of a Chimakum chieftain. That, she said: that is how easily our warriors could kill you.
This once, however, the threat did not come from the far-north marauders, but from a nearer and cousin tribe of the Makahs, the Arhosetts on the west side of Vancouver Island. A Makah and an Arhosett chief had wrangled about some trading goods: Sah tay hub getting angry because the Arhosett Indian would not agree to his terms, stabbed him with his knife.

Here was a bladed version of Swell's death, with the Makahs this time on the delivering end, and Swan records Neah Bay's jitters about the Arhosetts voyaging down on them in revenge: . . . a whooping and yelling all night occasionally firing off guns to show their bravery. No enemy however appeared.

Tension now on two fronts, and during a potlatch at Neah Bay a number of tribesmen from the outlying Makah villages said they wanted peace at least with the Chiilams. But Peter said that he would never be satisfied until he received pay in some shape for the murder of his brother. . .

Next, however, intelligence reached the Makahs and of course Swan's pen that the Arhosetts were having their own problems of pride. This forenoon Frank told me that he had just received news from his father, old Cedakanim of Clyoquot. It appears that the Arhosett Indians have been trying to induce the Clyoquots to join them in an attack on the Makahs. . . They offered 100 blankets and 20 Makah women as slaves provided they could catch them. Cedakanim and the other Clyoquot chief rejected this offer and demanded a steamboat, a sawmill and a barrel of gold. This difference of opinion came near resulting in a fight but at length old Cedakanim told them he would not fight the Makahs nor did he want any pay from the Arhosetts as he was much richer than they and to prove this
he ordered 100 pieces of blubber to be given them. . . This, said Frank, made the Arhosetts so ashamed that the sweat ran out of their faces.

Perhaps deciding that it would be easier to negotiate with enemies than allies of Cedakanim's sort, the Arhosetts held back to see what might be forthcoming from Neah Bay. Agent Webster suggested to the Makahs that they offer the Arhosetts a peace settlement of, say, twenty blankets; the U.S. government would provide half the total.

Given the prospect of getting out of a possible war at the cost of only ten blankets of their own, the Makahs decided to preen a bit, find out just how much pride had been sweated out of the Arhosetts. Swan was nominated the Neah Bay plenipotentiary to go over to the Arhosetts and find out if they are willing to settle the affair by a payment to them of blankets, and if so the Arhosetts were to be invited to come over and get them, but we were not to carry anything at first to them but merely to find out the state of their feelings.

As it turned out, the luckless Arhosetts did not even have the face-saving moment of receiving an envoy from the Makahs. Swan peremptorily sent word to them through Cedakanim, the Clyoquot chief who had faced them down with his wealth of blubber, and eventually two abashed Arhosetts arrived at Neah Bay to say they would settle for the blankets.

Peace ensued for two weeks, until the Elwhas protested that a cousin of Peter had wounded with a knife the brother of Swell's killer, Charlie. Peter responded that he was sorry, sorry that Charlie's brother had only been wounded instead of killed, for he would do it himself if he could get a chance.

Peter being Peter, the chance came. There is this ultimate entry by Swan:
Tried to get Indians to go to Pt. Angeles for Mr. Webster but all are afraid as Peter on his trip down killed an Indian at Crescent Bay. The Indian was an Elwha and some years ago killed Dukwitsa's father. Peter obtained a bottle and a half of whiskey from a white man at Crescent Bay and while under its influence was instigated by Dukwitsa to kill the Elwha which he did by stabbing him. Peter told me that after he had stabbed the man several times he broke the blade of the knife off in the man's body.

As might be expected, that stabbing invited battle. As might not be expected, the skirmish lines shaped themselves not between the Makahs and the Elwhas, but the Makahs and the United States. These years at Cape Flattery had been passing with remarkable tranquility between the natives and the white newcomers, as Swan was entirely aware: I have been reading this evening the report of the Comr. of Indian Affairs and it seems singular to be able to sit here in peace and quiet on this the most remote frontier of the United States and read of the hostilities among the tribes between this Territory and the Eastern settlements. Peter's knife punctured that state of affairs. Swan's daily narrative begins to show move, counter-move, counter-counter-move:

Mr. Webster arrested Peter this evening and took him on board the sch. A.J. Westen to be taken to Steilacoom, the territorial army headquarters.

... A canoe with a party of Indians followed the schooner and this evening it was reported that they had rescued Peter and conveyed him to Kiddekkubbut. I think this report doubtful. But later... ascertained it was true... Old Capt. John and 16 others came this forenoon to make me a prisoner and keep me as long as Mr. Webster keeps Peter but when
they found that Peter had escaped they came to tell me not to be afraid. I said I was not afraid of any of them and gave them a long lecture. John said I had a skookum tumtum.

... The steamer Cyrus Walker with a detachment of 33 soldiers under Lieut. Kestler arrived at Neah Bay about midnight of Tuesday... The steamer with Mr. Webster on board proceeded to Kiddekubbut and succeeded in arresting 14 Indians: Peter and thirteen others.

Peter now vanishes from the Neah Bay chronicle, to Swan's considerable relief. I have tried for the past three years to make Mr. Webster believe what a bad fellow Peter is, the diary splutters in farewell to the Makah warlock.

A fiery enough record, these few years of Makah bravado and occasional bloodshed as chronicled by Swan. It might be remembered, however, that while this sequence of ruckus was occurring out on the back stoop of the continent at Cape Flattery, the United States of America and the Confederated States of America were inventing modern mass war at Antietam and Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. If it is a question as to which civilization in those years was more casual with life, the Makahs don't begin to compete with the Civil War's creeks and bayous of blood.

Some hours in Neah Bay fitting its geography onto Swan's era--a breakwater, built in the name of World War II security, now stretches from the west headland of the bay to Waadah Island; the Bureau of Indian Affairs buildings top the eastern point where Webster's trading post stood--and I turn toward the ocean.

Cape Flattery is, as I have said, as far west as you can go on the mainland forty-eight states of America. But along its Pacific extremity there are thrusts of cliff actually out above the ocean; ultimate sharp points of landscape as if a new compass heading had been devised for here,
west of west.

From a logging road I climb down the forest trail to the tip of the Cape's longest finger of headland. At the trailhead the Makah Tribal Council has nailed up alarming signs... Rugged High Cliffs... Extremely Dangerous Area... enter at own risk. The final brink of the trail lives up to them by simply snapping off into mid-air.

There, some eighty or hundred feet above the Pacific, rides an oceanlooker's perch, an oval of white hardpack clay about twenty feet wide and twice as long. A clawnail hardness for this last talon of cliff.

I have clambered up all the great capes of this Northwest coast: Cape Disappointment at the mouth of the Columbia, to step to the Pacific horizon as Lewis and Clark did; Oregon's Cape Falcon with its howling fluency of wind, and south of it Cape Meares and Cape Lookout, and south from them Cape Foulweather and Cape Perpetua, But none of those, has the pinnacle-loneliness of this tip of Cape Flattery. Behind, on all sides, the continent shears away, dangles me to air and the rocky water below. "Those whales," a Makah tribesman has told me of the spring migrating pattern, "Sometimes they come right in under the cliffs. They scrape those barnacles off themselves on the rocks."

Surf pounds underfoot with surprisingly little noise but wind makes up for it. I crouch carefully, not to be puffed off the continent, and peer out the half-mile or so to Tatoosh, the lighthouse island here at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. While at Tatoooche, Swan entered in his diary on July 18, 1864, I counted 18 vessels in sight.

Now machines instead of humans operate the Tatoosh light, visitors are none, and the tiny white cluster of lighthouse, residential quarters, water tower, and a collapsing shed are visual echoes of emptiness. Tatoosh
simply rests out there like a fat stepping stone off the end of the continent, and the next foothold beyond it is Asia.

In the 1860's the Makah tribesmen told Swan that below these cliffs, in hours of calm water, they sometimes hunted seals. Caves drill back in very far at the base of the cliffs, and so a Makah would approach by canoe, swim or wade in with a lighted torch and a knife, and stalk back along the tunneled floor until he came onto drowsing seals. The blaze of the torch confused the animals, and the hunter took the chance of their confusion to stab them.

There was risk, Swan noted. Occasionally the torch will go out, and leave the cavern in profoundest darkness.

Profoundest darkness, and naked knife-bearing men who would wade into it. Even if you do not know that story, to stand atop this last rough end of the continent is to have it come to mind: what the dwellers of this coast could do before they found other, easier routes.
Day twenty

Cape Flattery must have stood the neck hair on Swan a few times, too. This morning I find that in one of the several articles he wrote about the Makahs he listed in firm school teacherly style the superstitions of the tribe, then let burst from him this uncommonly uneasy language:

The grandeur of the scenery about Cape Flattery, and the strange contortions and fantastic shapes into which its cliffs have been thrown by some former convulsion of nature, or worn and abraded by the ceaseless surge of the waves; the wild and varied sounds which fill the air, from the dash of water into the caverns and fissures of the rocks, mingled with the living cries of innumerable fowl...all combined, present an accumulation of sights and sounds sufficient to fill a less superstitious beholder than the Indian with mysterious awe.

Yesterday's weather faded and faded, had gone into gray by sundown. This morning is delivering sleet, blanking the coastline of the Strait down to a few hundred yards of mingled sky and water and rock. A worker from a construction crew stepped from the room next to mine and declared, "I need to look into the icy mush. He shook his head and announced: "I need this like I need another armpit."

The feel of Cape Flattery as an everlasting precipice of existence is strong as I repeat routes of Swan's here. When he established himself in the schoolhouse at Neah Bay in 1863, ready to reason the
peninsular natives into the white culture's version of education, he became in that moment the westernmost frontiersman in the continental United States. Jones, the Reservation farmer at the moment, moved briefly into the schoolhouse with Swan while his own quarters were being built, but it was Swan who nestled for good into the room atop the school's square tower. Away from the shared nest household at Webster's and out here on his pinnacle of the coast, he becomes now the Republic of Swan, newly independent. Population: one; Caucasian and male. Resources: ink, books, and an occasional newspaper off a passing ship. Languages: Bostonian, Chinook, Makah. Politics: Lincoln Republican, solder-the-Union-back-together-with-bayonet-steel. Industry: an exuberant light, allotted mainly to educational manufacture. Foodstuffs: a variety ranging from halibut-head chowder to something termed beef hash a la Makah. Flag: a river of words against a backdrop of black fir forest.

Delightfully situated as he now was, with windows facing the north, west, and east, and a glass door opening south, in a matter of months after the move to his schoolhouse aerie came news from across the continent which reminded Swan how far he had flung himself. On the tenth of February, 1864:

...letter from my brother Benj L Swan stating that on Sunday Nov 29 my mother died aged 84 years 7 mos & 27 days and that on Wednesday Dec 2d my dear wife Matilda W Swan died of consumption.
The double deaths staggered Swan for days. As I read the lines, the same scimitar of bay before me as Swan stared to during the writing of them, his distress and realization thud and thud like a slow surf:

nearly paralyzed with grief

had fondly thought that I might once again go home and be joined with my dear wife and children, but it was ordered otherwise

aching, breaking heart

but little sleep last night went to bed at two and got up at six

Severe pain my teeth today. Sick in body and mind.
Day twenty-one

Sick in body and mind, and of all air and earth that touch the two. Any of us who have had such news of death know Swan's disorder, and its cure: routine. After some days of remorseful entries, probably whetted sharper by the memory of that permanent goodbye to Matilda in 1850, Swan turns to schoolroom worries again. Today, the fifteenth of February, quite a number of children were in attendance but David and some others came in about trade which I do not desire and frightened the children away... I have been to Baadah every Saturday at Mr Webster's request to issue goods to Indians in payment for work done on the reservation. This has caused the others to think I am the trader and they continually come to me to sell oil, skins and blankets much to my annoyance.

Annoyance is a broad step up from misery, and as the months of 1864 pass, Swan's words brighten, the classroom perplexity (.... slow work teaching these Indians. They appear intelligent enough in most respects but appear to take but little interest in learning the alphabet) giving way to the glint of the Makahs themselves.

Julia and another squaw came up today, the tenth of April, and stated that the Hosett Indians had discovered that Kayattie one of the old men... had caused the late spell of bad weather which has kept the Indians from fishing or whaling. A Squaw and a boy had overheard him at his incantations and had reported to the others, whereupon the whole village turned out and proceeded to Keyatties lodge and told him if he did not immediately stop and make fair weather they would hang him.