Day forty-three

Whidbey Island, this first dawn of February. Admiralty Inlet, with the Strait of Juan de Fuca angling like a flat blue glacier into one end and Puget Sound out the other. This promontory surge of the island's steep edge, lifting me to look west onto the entire great bending valley of water. And south to the trim farmland where on a summer midnight in 1857, Indians snicked off a head.

The beheaders were, no surprise, norther Indians: Tlingit warriors from an Alaskan island near Sitka, knifing downcoast the thousand miles in their glorious high-powered canoes. The victim they caught and decapitated was a settler named Ebey, a militia officer and member of the Washington territorial legislature. There was no specific quibble between the raiding party and Ebey; simply, one of their tribal leaders had been killed during a clash with an American gunboat the previous year, and the Tlingits now exacted a chief for a chief.

Strange, for a timber-and-water empire which looks so everlastingly placid, and was explored by whites and yielded by the natives with perhaps less bloody contention than any other American frontier, that the practice of beheading crops up so in the Sound and Strait country. Recall the Makahs
bringing home to Neah Bay the pair of Clallam heads, like first cabbages of the season. The earliest white expedition in from the Pacific, Vancouver's in 1792, was met with "A Long Pole & two others of smaller size... put upright in the Ground each having a Human Scull on the top." That trio of skulls rode the air at Marrowstone Island, in direct line of sight across Admiralty Inlet from where I am perched, and the exploring Englishmen were blinklessly deferential about the display. Lieutenant Peter Puget, whose quote that is, proceeds to remark that he does not wish to criticize a people "whose Manners Customs Religion Laws & Government we are yet perfect Strangers to." Whether His Majesty's lieutenant would have been as equable about the northern warriors' manners in carrying Ebey's head away from here with them and eventually peeling the scalp off it and swapping the skin-and-hair hank to a Hudson's Bay trader for six blankets, a handkerchief, a bolt of cotton, three pipes and some tobacco—the trader then returning the prize to Ebey's family for burial—it would be interesting to know.

Come look from this eminence of bluff now, in the soft hour before daybreak, and you will declare on Bibles that the Tlingets' act of 122 years ago was the last sharp moment on this landscape. The island's farm fields are leather and
corduroy, rich even panels between black-furred stands of forest. Tan grass which broomed the backs of my hands as I climbed the path up to here now whisks soundlessly against a four-wire fenceline. The sky's only clouds are hung tidily on the southernmost Cascade Mountains, at the precise rim of summit where the sun will loft itself. Yes: Rural America of the last century, your eyes say—or Westphalia, or Devonshire.

Directly below where I stand is an aging barn with its long peaked eave pointing southeast, like the bill of a cap turned attentively toward sunrise. We will watch together. As much as I value the half-dawn, all the secretive shadings it goes through to hint how the world forms itself out of the mist of night, I am ready for sunlight and whatever heat it will bring against the frost. Hand by hand I put my fingers in my mouth to warm them, dry them rapidly on a pants leg, pull on my too-thin garden gloves again.

Across Admiralty, the street lights of Port Townsend begin to quench into the day. The timber-heavy shoreline angling westward out the Strait from the town seems not so black and barbed as it was minutes ago. That shoreline is my reason—one of my reasons; the other is sheerly that I love this blufftop arc above the tiering horizons of water and shore and mountains—to be here. Across there is the canoe route which Swan traveled time on time during his six Neah Bay years.
A hundred water miles stretch between Port Townsend and Cape Flattery, and the journey along the fjord-like shore of the Olympic Peninsula usually took three days. The Olympic range, recorded Swan from afloat, presents a wild forbidding aspect. But then: the line of foot-hills disclosing deep ravines, with fertile valleys lying between them, and reaching quite to the base of the great mountains. As for the long rough-hewn channel of the Strait itself, bays and points are bold, precipitous and rocky. The water at these points is deep, and, when the winds are high, dashes with tremendous force upon the cliffs, making a passage around them, at times, a difficult and dangerous matter.

I can see exactly to where one such matter occurred, beyond the headland where Port Townsend nestles. Early in his years on the Strait, Swan was inbound from Neah Bay one afternoon when his Makah canoe crew pulled ashore to camp at Discovery Bay instead of paddling on the half dozen miles to Port Townsend. Since the Indians' canoe pace seemed to be regulated part of the time by weather savvy and prudence, and the other part by indolence, it took some knowing to tell the moods apart. (Swan had mused on a similar puzzle of canoe etiquette during his time among the Chinooks and Chehalis at Shoalwater Bay.)
Speed will be kept up for a hundred rods, he wrote in Northwest Coast, then the paddles put to rest and all begin talking. Perhaps one has spied something, which he has to describe while the rest listen; or another thinks of some funny anecdote... or they are passing some remarkable tree or cliff, or stone, which has a legend attached to it...When the tale is over... all again paddle away with a desperate energy for a few minutes...)

This day, Swan decided the crew was being entirely too casual with his time, and insisted they continue. An old Makah woman in the canoe grumbled her disagreement, for she said she knew we should have a gale of wind from the northwest. The weather lambasted them as promptly as she predicted. We met the tide-rips, and had a fearful time....On we flew like an arrow, every sea throwing a swash into the canoe, keeping two persons constantly bailing. The old squaw began to sing a death song...The paddlers at last managed to teeter the canoe atop breakers which skimmed it to shore, and a shaken and wiser Swan hiked the rest of the way to Port Townsend.

Twin gulls break into my sight around the bend of the bluff. "Slim yachts of the element," Robinson Jeffers christened them, and taking him at his words these two are gentleman racers.

They stay paired, the inshore bird a few feather-lengths ahead, in a casual motionless glide past me, and on down the bluffline.
Then one flaps once, the other flaps once—evidently the rules of this contest of air—and they fly on out of my vision.

After his near-disaster, Swan slowed himself to the Indian pace of travel, and it seems to have been a pleasant enough one. He recounted for a San Francisco newspaper the canoe trip when a paddler named Tom Squi-qui commenced a Catholic hymn, which he sang in a fine clear voice, accompanied by all the others in chorus. John Fay then officiated as priest, and they went through the service in a regular and devout manner, till the word "O-mah-sista," or Amen, when Billy Barlow gave a whoop, and struck off into singing "Old Dan Tucker," joined by the rest, who gave quite as much attention to the negro melody as they had to the canticles of the church.

Ten minutes have passed since I joined the barn in peering for signs of sunrise. The light is slowed by the cloud lid. Now, overhead, a sudden dark constellation. Birds, oh god, birds in thousands, a complete swift seine of them sweeping the daybreak sky. Half a mile of wingdom at once swishing in across the water, flinging beyond into the farm fields. That quick flutter, brief glide: telltale marmalade breast: robins. Six times across Admiralty they come, the squadrons a minute or two apart. I can forecast that I will happen onto robins
all the rest of the morning on the bluff, spillover of these abrupt sky-filling migrations.

While I am monitoring birds, the first full daylight has reached into the peaks of the Olympic Mountains. The highest crags, far west into the range--Olympus itself is in that backfile, 8000 feet high but so discreet of summit that you must know where to look to pick it out--rather than the front pyramids of white. So a ceiling of sunshine is somewhere up there, and in minutes I will be granted the floor of it down here.

I suck warmth into my fingers again and hurry north along the bluff, wanting to watch the light come onto the lagoon which bows out from the shoreline below. The lagoon is not quite like any other piece of coastwork I have seen: a narrow band of gravel beach which mysteriously has looped out from the base of the bluff--the curve of the gravel snare about two hundred yards across at its widest--and entrapped several acres of tidewater. Driftlogs by the hundreds float within it like pewter tableware spilled across marble.

At two minutes before eight, the first beams set the lagoon aglow, the pewter suddenly is bronze.

The sun now is clear of the mountains, but so far onto the southern horizon at this time of year that its luster slants almost directly along the Sound and Admiralty Inlet, as if needing the ricochet help from the water in order to travel the extreme polar distances to the lagoon and, at last, me.
The canoes that slipped through these water distances like needles. Beautifully modeled, Swan said of the canoes of the Makahs, resembling in their bows our finest clipper ships...Formed from a single log of cedar, carved out with skill and elegance. The best canoes are made by the Clyoquot and Nittinat tribes, on Vancouver Island, who sell them to the Mackahs, but few being made by the latter tribe owing to the scarcity of cedar in their vicinity...

Propulsion was either the deft broadhead paddles carved by the Clyoquots or square sails of woven cedar bark, which made the craft look all the more like small clipper ships, diminutives of that greatest grace of seafaring.

The grace perhaps flowed up out of the cedar into the canoe man. Swan records than when the Makahs would him downcoast from Cape Flattery to the Hosett village at Cape Alava, they would thread the canoe through the archways where waves have pounded through the offshore seastacks. On one of these through-the-hole voyages Swan and the Reservation doctor had an opportunity of witnessing the operation of three tremendous rollers which came sweeping after us and which I feared would knock us against the top of the arch. The doctor said he had his eye on a ledge which he should try to catch hold of in case of emergency, but fortunately we had no occasion to try our skill at swimming as the Indians worked the canoe through the passage beautifully.
Canoemanship introduced Swan to Swell, dressed in that new fresh suit of Boston clothes, bound out from Port Townsend to Neah Bay on a mid-September day of 1859 with a cargo of flour, bacon, molasses and blankets. Swan climbed in for the jaunt, and ever after was impressed with Swell, wrote at once of him that line that 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.

If he lives. Why these edged words amid the admiration, on a fine bright journey out the valley of water to Neah?
Whatever the reason for those three uneasy jots of Swan's pen, they were augury, Swell long since dead by the time Swan canoed away from the Neah Bay teaching job seven Septembers later, reversed that original route to arrive in from Cape Flattery to Port Townsend across the water here.

A second illumination of this sunrise. I realize that I come back and back to this bluff because here, scenes still fit onto each other despite their distances of time. Becoming rarer in the west, constancy of this sort. What I am looking out over in this fresh dawn is little enough changed from the past, coming or going on the Port Townsend-Neah Bay route, that Swan in a Makah canoe can be readily imagined across there, the sailing gulls slide through his line of sight as they do mine.

Resonance of this rare sort, the reliable echo from the eye inward, I think should be prized like breath.
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 day, 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 ferry, Kalaedan, 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. 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 seashell 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 Bay 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 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.
Day eighty-nine

Sometimes 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, has silence all too much answer, the inquiring friend forces in to find him where the stroke has pinned him.

Life stays in Swan through the day, but only half the night.

He is buried near the center of the graveyard west of 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 gravestone, a line of sight is across the land Swan owned, to the dark profile of Whidbey Island and beyond to the Cascade Mountains, but the view has competition from the thrusting stones all around, the urn-topped and pyramid-peaked monuments of the merchants and captains of Swan's era. Amid them, his low box of granite is shape and size of a lectern.
from 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 old-time 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 should hope they might be lodged in some library interested in the special subjects they relate to."

Swan's death was announced in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer on May 16, 1907, and the Seattle Times on May 17, 1907. The obituary states that Swan was a prominent man in the community and a leader in business and civic affairs. He was deeply involved in Indian affairs and was known for his work with the Nez Perce and other tribes. He was a member of the Seattle Board of Education and was actively involved in the development of the city's public schools.

Swan was born in New York in 1820 and moved to the Pacific Northwest in 1849. He became a successful merchant and was appointed as the first Indian agent for the Nez Perce. He was a charter member of the Seattle Board of Education and was instrumental in the establishment of the University of Washington. Swan died in Seattle on May 15, 1907. His body was taken back to Massachusetts for burial in his hometown.
Days eighty-two and eighty-three

Victoria, in almost-spring sun.

Not at all like the dry and dowdy little Queen whose name it wears, this capital of British Columbia. Rather, the city is in the manner of the youngest daughter of some Edwardian country-house family, attractive and passionately self-absorbed and more than a little silly.

Victoria imagines, among other things, that it is a ward of Olde England somehow rolled out like turf over Western Canadian bedrock.

Consequently you can sip tea in the massive Empress Hotel while across the street, seaplanes yammer in and out of the Inner Harbor with shaggy civil servants from up-island or logging company men off to soon-to-be-deforested shores. A block away, the Parliament building presides in grand daffy Empire style, a sprawl of gray-stone beneath a central dome—the entirety of outlined with lightbulbs, so that at night it blazes like a profile in a fireworks display. I never look at it without expecting the dome to begin spewing up rockets.

Such preoccupation with glitter is not new. British troops and sailors stationed at Victoria in the last century would drill in such solemnly spectacular
style that the watching Haidas went home and asked a missionary
to teach them such fine maneuvers. To gauge from Swan's entries
of his occasional visits to Victoria, he noticed that the town
was a bit high-falutin': Had my hair cut. Paid 75¢ a Victoria
swindle. For its part, Victoria likely found Swan a little too
American robust in his drinking and his opinions. (Wrote to Dr
Powell a letter of apology for my actions while in Victoria,
runs one diary entry of earlier years.) But according to the
holdings of the Provincial Archives, all seems forgiven on both
sides when Swan arrived back from the Queen Charlottes in late
September of 1883.

The Victoria Daily Colonist announced that "Mr.
Swan's researches have been conducted with assiduity and attended

Better yet, the British Columbia legislature invited him to speak,
and he instructed the lawmakers for more than an hour about their
little-known northern archipelago. Two notable features were his
snub of Deans--I had no occasion for the services of a white man,
and consequently took none in any capacity--and his runaway enthusiasm
for black cod, which took up nearly half his address.

The British Columbians voted him their appreciation, and here
I give him my ovation as well. Swan's west shore adventure defeated
some of the North Pacific's most difficult weather. From the Haidas
of the eastern shore villages, he purchased--
which is to say preserved, brought forward for posterity's study--
29 crates of Haida craft and art. With his combination of pencil
and pen and eventual typewriter, he added to the lore known of the Haidas, at a time when it was not at all certain that the tribe itself would survive. Most of all, he did his dare of himself: went off to one more west, lived according to the place's own terms, and came home to tell about it.

The other journeyers of 1883, I turn elsewhere in the Provincial Archives to find.
died at Victoria in 1905. The aftereffects of his journey with Swan seem to have been some more lame poetry ("On a Queen Charlotte Island Mountain Torrent": Up in the mountains high/Springs a small river/Down through the forests high/Rushing for ever) and an enthusiasm for Indian legends and artifacts. "He was always digging for Indian trophies... He was looked upon, therefore, by many as a complete crank, an eccentric."

Edinso lived until 1897. His age was uncertain, but probably he was at least eighty-five when death at last caught him. A white settler at Masset remembered of Edinso’s last years that "the old chief would wander around the village with an old blanket around him and a staff in his hand and an old stub clay pipe in his mouth. The old fellow would call on my mother at the Hudson’s Bay house, come in the back door of the kitchen and sit on his haunches beside the stove and tell her yarns of the ancient glories of the Haidas." The *Vancouver Colonist*’s last word on Edinso was the declaration that "it is doubtless partly owing to his influence and example that the Haidas have taken so readily to civilized ways and become one of the most law abiding tribes on the Coast."
The famous man of the bunch is the carver, Charlie Edensaw.

"...We now know he was a prodigy among a race of artists," runs one encomium. Examples of his work in ivory and black slate grace the display cases of the Provincial Museum, and in his name the Canadian government has erected a memorial longhouse at Masset.
Of Johnny Kit Elswa, there is the photo posed with Swan before they left Victoria for the north, and not a trace more.

I decided to make one more delve, to the Ethnology Division of the Provincial Museum to go through their collection of photos taken in the Queen Charlottes in the nineteenth century. A photographer made a stay at Masset and Skidegate the year after Swan, and counted by Swan the village skylines of carved poles. Vivid, the Masset carvings more fluid with images, the Skidegate columns topped with single great bird figures, one brilliant bold eagle seems ready to flap away with the sixty-foot column in his claws.

As I flip the last of these hundred-faced horizons, ethnologist Alan Hoover happens by from his office to talk chat with me about the Queen Charlottes and Swan. "I’ve got something to show you."

He leads me to a back room shelved full of masks and baskets, reaches into a drawer, turns, grins, opens his fist to me.

"Jesus," I breathe. "Jesus, Jesus. It’s Jumbo."

Across the palm of Alan Hoover’s hand the ivory elephant’s head lies like a meld of silver and gold. The trunk is curved and accented
by Charlie Edenshaw so that it looks like the downspout of a faucet—a glorious fat aqueduct of a snout. Jumbo's eyes are the large teardrop shape often seen in Haida art, without iris or pupil, at once blank as blindness and taking in everything. His tusks curve up and across the trunk, and like it are plump and blunt. This is plainly an elephant of gaiety rather than rampage, and the carver put even more play to him by substituting for flap-like ears a sweeping coiffure of elegant waves and tucks, very much as if Jumbo had decided to wig up for an appearance at the court of Louis XIV.

What came to Swan's mind when he first looked upon this suave beast at Masset ninety-six years ago I cannot know. But I find myself absurdly remembering a sardonic quote read somewhere: "Every man for himself!" cried the elephant as he danced among the chickens." Or perhaps not entirely absurd, for this is a wonderful Jumbo who can be imagined dancing with serene care, when he chooses, in any company whatsoever, capable as well of minuet and magical circling prance, within the Haida mind of Charley Edenshaw.
Day seventy-one

I flip the month on the photo calendar above my desk, and the room fills with lumberjacks. The calendar came as a gift, a dozen scenes from the glass plates of a photographer who roved the Olympic Peninsula lumber camps in the first years of this century, and I've paid no particular attention to the scenery atop the days: January a stand of age-silvered trees, February a few dodgy sawyers off in the middle distance from the camera. But March's four loggers, spanned across the cut they are making in a cedar tree as big in diameter as this room, hover in as if estimating the board footage my desktop would yield.

The chunky logger at the left stands on a springboard, straight out and waist-high, his axe held extended, in his left hand and the blade resting almost tenderly against the gash in the cedar. He is like a man fishing off a bridge beam, but absent-mindedly having picked up the camp axe instead of the bamboo rod.

The next man is seated in the cut, legs casually dangling and crossed at the ankles. A small shark's grin of spikes is made by the bottoms of his caulked boots. His arms are folded easily across his middle; he has trimly rolled his pant-legs and sleeves; is handsome and dark-browned with a lady-killing lock of hair down the right side of his forehead.

The woodman beside him is similarly seated, arms also crossed, but is flap-eared, broad-hipped, mustached. Surely he is the Swede of the crew, whatever his origins.
Day forty-two

God, how the blood strums in such weather. What it tinges out is: be truant.

Which I am. I woke with the sense that this would be another day brought pure by the cold, and that I needed to be out in it at once. When daybreak came, a dry crackle of light onto the frost, I already had arrived here at Shilshole, a bay favorite to me for its head-on view west across the Sound to the wooded headlands and mountains.

arrived here at Shilshole. The Olympics, clouds caped on their backs, as yet are pale, wraithy, in the beginning day. Snow gods, asleep standing up, like horses. Going past is a big seagoing tug, in from the north and in a hurry. It seems to ride the floe of white water pushed up by its impatient bow. Freighter traffic is starting to procession past, two ships inbound to the Seattle dockfront, two out. Three of the fleet are outlined in traditional lines of superstructure, masts and plow-pointed bow, but the fourth is squatty as a huge barge, some new style of vanship. Swan would enter in his ship list an occasional herm brig—hermaphrodite brig, with a square-rigged foremast but a triangular schooner-sail on its mainmast. The day now of the herm freighter?

One inbound vessel overtakes the other, and as it begins to pass, the dark shapes merge, then slowly attenuate, pulled longer and longer like a telescope being extended, until they are two again.
After an hour or so of shivery wandering, I go on to the
dockside coffee shop at Salmon Bay, the fishing fleet schooled
into winter berths all around.

Heavily: "Breakfast, Bill?" the waitress asks the regular on the stool
next to me.

"No, a doughnut."

"Any particular kind, or whatever I grab?"

"Whatever you grab, dealer's choice."

"Powdered sugar. There you go."

There you go: that western byphrase from waitresses and bartenders,
sometimes from friends or just people in conversation. I hear it
in Montana as I do here and like it immensely, the release in the
saying, the unfussy deliverance it carries. A very independent
little trio of words, encouraging yet declaring okay-I've-done-my-
part-it's-up-to-you-now. The best of benedictions.

Mid-morning. Here at the desk, more attenuation. Swan has
begun to pull from his five years at Neah Bay.
I am surprised with myself, he has recently said in the diary, to find that I have so much patience as I have with these children. I get almost discouraged at times and then again I feel as though they were doing something. But they try my patience sorely and occasionally I feel like giving up my situation in despair of ever being able to do any good... In April of 1866 had occurred the tensest time Swan experienced at Cape Flattery, the arrival of troops to arrest Peter for the fatal stabbing he had anted into the rivalry with the Elwhas. The Makahs resented the show of force, the soldiers resented being thumped down on the back porch of the continent, and we are all heartily sick of their protracted stay. Also, the month's weather was rampageous even for Cape Flattery: 11 7/10 inches Rain 3 pleasant days during month. The diary pages twang more than a little. The Swan who liked to intone that he never carried the least calibre of self-defense among the Indians--I have always found that a civil tongue is the best weapon I can use--now inscribes something different: Bought a Remington revolver of Mr Philips this PM...

Nerves cool a bit in the next weeks, but in mid-summer Swan takes a twelve-day respite from Neah Bay--visiting in Victoria, Port Townsend and Port Angeles--and a few days after his return, there is the entry the year's diary pages have been marching toward. Wednesday, the twenty-second of August:

Notified Mr Webster of my intention of sending in my resignation
as teacher when I send in my monthly report. The resignation to
take effect on the 1st of October.

I want not to see Swan step from Neah Bay; not see this
particular Boston bird drift back townward from the ultimate point
of the west, Cape Flattery. It may account for my own tautness of
the past days. The glimpses I have had into the diaries ahead do
not show the rhythmned richness of these regal ledger pages. There
Port Townsend, which will be Swan's next site, I think cannot be
such a
transfixing place as Cape Flattery, nor probably one to which
Swan's talents are so alert. There

is grit in the ink to come, I judge. But 1866 is Swan's cosmos,
not mine. Whatever I might wish here in the ether of the future,
he traces his own way with that ceaseless pen. And in the last five
weeks of more than two hundred and fifty spent at Neah Bay, that
pen begins to record farewells.
Day seventy-two

Sunshine, bright as ripe grain. Just before lunch as I looked out wishing for birds, a cloud of bushtits and chickadees imploded into the backyard firs. I stepped into the yard to listen to their dee-dee-dee chorus, watched them become fast flecks among the branches.

No sooner had I come inside than the lion-colored cat, pausing for a slow slitted look in the direction of the sun, lazed up the hillside into the long grass.

Three times in four minutes he tried to nest himself. Then sat casually and eyed a number of items he evidently had never noticed before, such as his own tail, a bug in the grass, every nearby tree. Sneeze, and was astonished about it. I have decided there is no worry about him marauding the birds. More likely the birds will mistake him for a fluffy boulder, perch atop and drown him in droppings.

Now to Swan. He is saying, in the three-handed style he has chosen for the Queen Charlottes, that their next site, Chathl, has proved a disappointment. Bones of seals, otters and fish, showing that it was the inhabitants of the water and not of the sands that constituted their food, and a few toppled memorial columns: that was all. Except for a few seasonal hunters of fur seals, Chathl was once more of the west-shore ghost villages of the Haidas, as if the tribal people one afternoon heard the canoeing
orders from some forest spirit and in a single fleet followed him up the rays of a red sunset. Here again, Swan is struck with the wild shale and conglomerate coastline, which seems more alive than the dead-quiet villages ever could have been.

Sunday, the twelfth of August, back at Edenso's own village of Kicosta, Swan arises at five intending an early start downcoast from North Island, the cornering turn which will take the expedition along the Queen Charlotte's west shore. Arises and feels a southeast wind on his face, and peers seaward: to a brilliant and perfect rainbow, a double one, which indicated rain. Within half an hour the downpour had begun. I am disappointed as there is nothing to prevent our going but the rain, and I am anxious to be moving. Anxious or not, Swan and Edenso's crew clear out the brush from an abandoned lodge, everyone moved in with the provisions to a dry corner, Edenso built a big fire and the old house assumed a cheerful appearance.

Their interior weather improved further with a halibut caught by Johnny Kit Elsewa and a couple of crew members. Swan dines heartily of it, and of a crane shot by Johnny which was stuffed and roasted, and of boiled halibut paunch...a delicate kind of tripe tender and delicious.

After that repast—a very nice Sunday dinner Swan writes, as blandly as if he were dabbing away the last taste of baked beans
and pot roast—the weather cleared enough for Swan and Deans to be guided by one of the canoe men to yet another burial cave, in a high ridge near the headland called Cape Knox.

Edinso gave the cave towering billing. In the legend time, he declared, a fifteen-foot-long lamprey eel inhabited the darkness... It could go on the land like a snake and would attack men and dogs. A celebrated hunter of ancient times who had a large pack of hounds, attacked this Lamprey in a small lake before the entrance to the cave, but the creature cut them with its sharp teeth and drove them off and then dived down into the lake and was seen no more.

The abode of a demon like the Dragon which St. George slew, Swan mused, and plunged in under the daggering stalactites.

The cave was one more stone womb of the Haida past, beyond the recollections of the present or former generation, littered now with fragments of boxes and bones... torn from their resting place by some wild animal. None of these burial deposits had escaped the marauder whoever it was....

Back at camp, Edinso as usual told them they were the first white to have seen the place, which Swan eagerly accepted as no white men have been here to whom he has shown it, and no one could find it except by accident which it not likely... as the geological formation of the ridge presents no attraction to either gold or coal seekers.
Monday, thirteenth of August, a most disagreeable day, misty rain an alternate showers. I remained in my tent most of the time, writing and drawing, but the rain prevented out of door sketching. Edinso's sprained back remained a bother. Yesterday he put some hot sand in a sack and...sweated the part; now evidently had taken cold. This makes it disagreeable to us as well as painful to him. The ailing chief passed the day by having several messes of boiled halibut served up till Mr. Deans and I were surfeited.

Meanwhile, Swan adds, one of the paddlers is busy at the fire forging a lot of square staples to mend our canoe which had got split along the bottom.

The cracked canoe creates a new fret, and Swan's most serious yet. Cedar canoes such as those of the Haidas are so finely honed, so extreme a protrusion of tree-into-vessel-of-grace--recall the Masset canoe maker Swan watched stretching the anidship to double its original width--that their beautiful tension of design becomes a kind of delicacy. For all their length and capacity they are thin, thin craft, leanest of wood. And dependent for their safety on Edinso's canoe, which like its owner has lived past spryness, are Swan, Johnny Kit Elswa, Deans, the chief himself, the five crew members, nine persons, and full supplies, and Swan's hefty tanks of fish specimens. It can be imagined that Swan watched carefully as the copper staples were tacked into place along the fissure through which the entire expedition would dribble out.
The rain was gone by the next morning, and on the ebb tide they set out again, Swan uneasy about the crammed canoe bottom but as I know Edinso is careful I don't think he will take any chances although I expect we will get some of our things wet, and we may have to lighten the canoe by throwing some part of our cargo overboard.

That mild fret put away in the diary, we moved and paddled along, noting everything of interest in this, to me, most interesting region.

Rounding Cape Knox, a long promontory which on the map looks ominously like a canoe flipped on its back, Swan and crew met a headwind which forced them to land on a rocky point and scramble for a camping site. They found a place sheltered...
from the rain, which was quite curious, by spruce trees and high grass.

With tents up and a fire going, Swan decided to lift the party's spirits. This is a pretty rough time, with wind and rain, so to mark the event I had a ham cut and some slices fried for supper.

The ham and a good campsite warmed Swan's sense of whimsey.

This same place had been occupied as a camp last summer by Count Luboff, a Russian who was looking at lands for parties in Victoria. He had put up a notice on a board, that the place was taken as a coal claim. Some of the Indians not knowing what the board meant, split it up for fire wood, which was the best use that the board could be dedicated to, as there is no coal or any indications of coal at this place except the charred remains of Count Luboffs fire.

There was, however, a rumor of copper, and the next afternoon Swan and Deans walked about three miles by a circuitous route to see a rock formation where the Indians said they once had plucked out pure copper. Again, volcanic action had molded phantasmagoric shapes. One great bluff looked like a gigantic roly pudding cut in two. Others reminded me of sheets of dough in a cracker bakery with a layer of flour between the sheets to represent the calcareous spar or quartz which is between each layer of this metamorphic rock. Then lift this mass of dough and throw
it into a heap, would give a good idea of the violent and terrible
turmoil when this upheaval took place. Cataclysm galore, but the
visitors saw no copper.

The rain kept on--Our situation is more romantic than pleasant--and the expedition hunkered in for another day. Swan passed it by sketching the stone doctor...a sandstone reef washed by the surf into a form that certainly does not require much imagination to make one think as the Indians do that it is a giant doctor of ancient times petrified and fossilized...

Perhaps inspired by the offshore medicine man, Swan had made a salve of spruce gum and deer tallow for Edinso's ailing back.

If not cured, the chief at least is assuaged. He bestows a pair of teeth ear ornaments on Swan in return.

The crewmen passed the time by foraging for Swan--fossil shells, a smidgin of coal dug from among the reefs, a plant called Tl'kumite which the Indians ate with candlefish grease but which Swan thought tastes earthy like moss. The weathered-in site atop Cape Knox began to pall on Swan.

Aug. 16

This delay, and Edinso's sickness makes me feel pretty blue...this evening as I must pay for every day these people are with me...

At 2 P.M. a schooner on the offing bound south with all sails set...A pleasant sight as there is nothing between us at this camp, and Japan, nothing but a dreary stretch of wild and monotonous ocean...the swiftly moving vessel gave a feeling of life...I am quite tired of this place and long to leave it.
The last of dusk. Beyond Lake Quinault, northward along the Pacific edge of the Olympic Peninsula, we are passing through miles of tunnel of high firs. The line of sky is so narrow between the margins of our deep road-canyon that it looks like a blue path somehow hung along the treetops. I am sagging from the day of deciphering Swan's travel, readying for our own; Carol with her better attention to the dark drives this last blackening stretch of distance.

Mapping in my mind as the road slits the forest, I realize that the coast here, off through the timber to the west of us, is the single piece of Washington shoreline never visited by Swan. He came as far north as the mouth of the Quinault River in 1854, on that jesting report from the Shoalwater Indians that a British steamship was carrying on a smuggling trade with the Quinaulths, and he once canoed down from Neah Bay to the Quillayute tribe at La Push. Between, the stretch of shore where the Hoh River flows into the Pacific, Swan somehow did not attain. But the two of us in this fat pellet of metal have, on some tideline wander or another. Since I have been everywhere I think over the fact of having set foot anywhere along this continental rim where the wandersom Swan didn't, and of sleeping tonight beside a fine Peninsula river he somehow never the surprise of it saw, and it whirls to me out of the rushing dark that I am becoming something of a winter brother myself.
Day seventy-four

A night that was several nights long. Our aged tent, which has been as far as Nova Scotia and up and down the mountain west in all manner of weather, never was soggier, droppier. Rain hit the canvas all night in buckshot bursts. Seepage sprung in one corner and then around the doorway flap, until by morning we were scrunched in our sleeping bag into the exact center of the tent, islanded away from the sopping edges like a pair of frogs on a lily pad.

Vehement as it was, the rain made the night's lesser threat. When the wind arrived off the ocean, the tent walloped and bellied, tried to lift us off into the fir trees somewhere. All in all, as restful as trying to sleep inside the bag of the balloon, and every hour or so Carol and I muttered inconclusively about the situation. It crossed my mind, and without doubt hers, that this might be a repeat of the big windstorm. Somehow it got decided that if this was so, the weather would first define itself by swatting the tent down onto our heads, and at that point we would face the issue of sitting up in the car the rest of the night.

More velocity did not arrive, we finished the night damp but stubbornly prone, then began the drive home through coastal rain moving almost solidly through the air, as if walls of
water were dissolving down over us as the car nudged them. Swan's own overweathered site, the rainy perch atop Cape Knox, he concluded to leave on the morning of the seventeenth of August, even if it meant abandoning the journey down the western coastline.

I told Edinso if he did not feel better I would return to Masset. He said if he went back it would be as bad as if he goes on and he thought my spruce slave had done his back good. On they went.

11:30 a.m...we passed Salsthlung point and passed Natzun Bay into which three small streams empty, but there are no Indian settlements ancient or modern. Saw a school of whales rolling and blowing.

2:20 p.m...we reached Kle-ta-koon point, near which there is a snug harbor inside the reef. On the shore is the summer residence of the otter hunters, a cluster of houses forming a little village called Tledso but at present unoccupied: a narrow rift...not over twenty feet wide, formed the dangerous and only passage for canoes and boats.

Bouncing through the reef-cut, they came out in a quiet little harbor as smooth as a mill pond...After appeasing our appetites, we started out prospecting. What the rocks yielded were oozy steaks of black pitch, a species of Trachite, which Swan sound mystifying...This fossil pitch is forced up in a manner similar
to quartz veins... I took some... and chewed it... It burns freely in the fire... a most singular formation.

This bayside site also was notable for being almost empty of birds—a solitary raven, two or three sparrows and a few sea gulls. Swan, old combatant of crows, edgily noted that the quiet was too good to last. As soon as a camp of Indian otter hunters comes here for a few weeks, the place will be alive with crows and other birds which seem to follow the abode of man, like nettles, sorrel and other noxious weeds.

Storm returned the next day, heavy surf, strong wind. Swan spent the time packing his alcoholic specimens of fish and mollusks in one large tin tank in a wooden box. He noticed chunks of California redwood among the tide wrack on the beach and felt gratified... It shows the Northerly current which sets inshore all along the coast from California to Alaska.... Some writers assert that the Southerly current—the Kuro Shiwo or Japanese current, he interjected in explanation—sweeps along the entire Coast, which is incorrect, as my observations of the ocean currents since 1852, from the Columbia River to Cape Flattery satisfactorily demonstrate.

The rain that night turned tremendous—fearful, Swan wrote—and the morning promised no better. We are now 13 days from Masset and have advanced but fifty miles and at this rate we cannot reach Skidegate in three months and all our provisions
will get exhausted...

The weather, the wild broth of the North Pacific, is too much. Beside the campfire at Kle-ta-koon, Swan writes what he has not permitted the pocket diary even to speculate on before. 

Failure; cancellation of this bravura canoe trip and exploration of the western shore of the Queen Charlottes.

pocket diary, Aug. 19

Edinson's canoe is an old one and unsafe to proceed with so much weight in her, and prudence dictates a return as soon as the wind abates... On

consulting with Mr. Beams have decided to return to Massett where

I can leave some of my heavy articles and proceed to Skidegate... by the east side of the island.
Day seventy-five

A final spurt of—anguish? disgust?—in Swan's pages. I can't understand this weather with the Barometer so well up. Edinson announced his own baleful theory. Our present ill luck is occasioned by Mr. Deans stirring up the remains of the old skaga or doctor back at 66 nine days before.
Day seventy-seven

Warm breeze again today, nearly a chinook. Since morning I have charged shirts three times, each time to lighter material; now, at 2:30, it is 64 degrees. Winter is turning into winter/spring. Absolute proof: I have begun sneezing, an allergy has thawed. Captain John of the Makahs once explained to Swan why he and the other Neah Bay recited several sentences after sneezing: they were asking the Great Spirit to spare them. If they did not utter this brief petition, the top of their heads would be blown off when they sneezed. I may yet prove him right.

With Edinso and the cracked canoe and the west shore weather all out of his system, Swan drew breath and began to calculate the rest of his Queen Charlottes summer. The steamer Princess Louise, taking on a cargo of dogfish oil at the Skidegate refinery, will convey Swan's mail to Victoria. His fish tanks delivered to Masset by the providential otter hunter will be shipped from there by the Hudson's Bay Company. A crew of Indians has been sent off for black cod, the last specimen Swan needs. The summer's final task is to garner more art from the Haidas.
along Skidegate Inlet and the eastern shore of Moresby Island where

the tribal villages still were living places.

Sadors to their elders. It is the morning of the twenty-eighth of August

when Rev. Mr. Robinson the Methodist Missionary came from Skidegate village

with Ellswarsh and his wife, Sam his dumb boy and Ellen his youngest girl

a child of about seven years...Two years ago this family with an elder
daughter Soodatl were in Port Townsend and occupied a room near my office

where Ellswarsh worked making silver bracelets and other articles of jewelry.
The children were very fond of me and came to my office every day and they
had not forgotten the kind treatment they received from me. Then the words

Swan needs: Ellswarsh invited me to go to his house at Skidegate village

where he had some things to show me.

After breakfast, the first of September, Johnny rowed me to Skidegate

village. The distance is about two miles. On landing I found Sam, Ellswarsh's

boy waiting on the beach and dancing for joy. He took my coat and drawing

book to the house where I found Ellswarsh and wife. Soodatl and her husband

and little Ellen who jumped in my lap with every demonstration of delight...

...As soon as our salutations were over, a mat was spread on the floor

and two chairs placed, one for me and one for Johnny. Then clean water in

a wash bowl with soap and a clean towel to wash our hands and faces. By

the time we had finished, the Indians began to come in with things to sell...

The diary becomes a brief blizzard of buying: ...carved spoon...scana mask

...crow mask...Embroidered dance shirt of blue blanket, red figure, very fine...

But as it was Saturday and I wanted to look around the village I concluded

to defer other purchases till Monday.

One matter Swan decided he had deferred long enough: his feelings
toward Deans. Throughout the journey along the western shore, Swan's
notations on his companion remained polite. Suspiciously polite, though
the diarist did not want any commotion if wrong eyes found the pages.
But now that he is finished sharing canoe and campfire with Deans, Swan
unloads several weeks of wrath: I find that Mr. James Deans who accompanied
me from Masset and represented that he is in the employ of Dr. Powell has
proved himself a great nuisance by interfering with my Indian trade and
purchase of curiosities. He represented to parties here that he was in
my employ and made bargains with Indians to take me about in canoes which
I repudiated. He is filthy in his habits, and untruthful to a degree. I
have not suffered him to go with me since I arrived here, and wish I never
had seen the man. That wish will be multiplied in a month or so when Swan
discovers that Powell's Indian Department, considering that Deans's
assignment no longer valid when he missed the Otter and the first
several weeks in the Queen Charlottes, will not reimburse Swan for any
of the expenses of the free-lancing Deans.

Sunday, the second of September, the Indians dispatched for black cod
return with 25 of the fish. Specimens they may be, but I had the tongues
cut out and fried, and a chowder made of the heads, and roes and livers
fried. They were all first rate...

Monday, the first of September, brings a new bargain, Ellswarsh
to come tomorrow morning and take me in his large canoe to Skedanse villages,
Cumshewas, Laskeek and other places along the eastern shore of the Queen
Charlottes.
Day eighty

Swan's first set of hours at sea for Victoria:

I dreamed last night that little Jangi, Jimmys boy, was in bed with me and told me that we should have a pleasant day and a fair wind, both of which we have had. In fact this has been one of the most delightful days I ever saw.

I found on waking, that I did not have Jangi but a wooden image of an Indian Skaga or doctor which I had put on the back side of my berth, which probably caused my dream.
Day sixty-nine

Monday, the eighth of August, 1883, 8:30 that morning, a splash of canoe paddles at last. Swan, Johnny Kit Elswa and Deans push off from Masset, in company with Edinso and his squaw, three men and two boys. I am to pay Edinso $1.00 per day. His wife and the three men 75¢ each and the two boys 50¢ each and canoe 50¢ per day...which makes a total of $5.50 per day. Plus rations, which, as Swan would rapidly find out, were another negotiation altogether.

The expedition's start had not been promisingly smooth. Edinso did not give instructions about stowing the things and when I got in I found myself perched up on some boxes with Mr. Deans. Old Edinso asked in a curt manner why I sat so high up. I told him...if he wanted me to stow his canoe I could do so. I then ordered several packages placed properly and made myself comfortable and we proceeded on...

After that bit of bramble, the canoe rode before a fair but light wind. Its passengers let out fishing lines with spoon bait and trawled them astern and soon caught three large salmon. Edinso's squaw had about two gallons of strawberries and a lot of red huckleberries and she gave us as many as we could eat.

The floating picnic crossed Virago Sound by mid-afternoon and a stop to cook a meal for the canoe crew. Mr. Deans and I lunched on strawberries, sardines, bread and cold coffee. They went on to camp for the night at a village called Yatze, a spot Swan thought was little to recommend it even to Indians. The Haida villagers were gone somewhere, a few wan potato patches and one lonely carved monument the only signs of life. Human life, that is. Mosquitoes and gnats were plentiful and...quite lively.
As if not wanting another clear look at the place, the canoers paddled out of Yatze the next morning before dawn. Edinso complained of having sprained his back while launching the canoe and, Swan noted, perhaps a bit apprehensively, was quite cross, but the expedition progressed west several miles to the Jalun River before breakfasting.

The queer beach there impressed Swan as singular exhibit of volcanic action in which the lava had burst up through the upper strata of rocks as though the region had boiled up like a pot. The lava was of a brick red color and a pale sulphur yellow in places, filled with boulders and pebbles of stone blackened outside with the heat and looking like a gigantic plum pudding. This is the first instance I have seen of such an evident volcanic action on the direct sea beach.

In early afternoon, Pillar Point was passed. Swan hurriedly did a sketch showing it as a ninety-foot-high spike of stone driven into the offshoreshoals. This Queen Charlotte coastline was proving to be like the rim of some other world. A few hours later, the canoe eased ashore at Edinso's own village, Kioosta, deserted except for many carved columns the handsomest of which are in front of Edinso's house.

Swan was in his tent after supper this second night out from Masset, possibly congratulating himself on the expedition's progress, when Edinso came by to inform him of new terms of canoe-hire: he and the crew desired hot biscuits and coffee to be served them every night.
and coffee to be served them every night. I knew the old fellow put on considerable style with strangers and I determined to settle our status at once. I told him I did not wish him to dictate to me what I should do, and he knew that since we left Masset we had no time for any cooking but the most simple kind, and it was no use to talk to me about hot biscuits till we got to camp where we would have leisure.

Edinso huffed from the tent, and Swan fell asleep to the mutters of the crewmen debating the biscuit issue.

In the morning, the dietary ruckus woke with them. Had a good blow up with old Edinso, Swan's pocket diary begins. This time, the chief was trying Swan on the angle that the canoe crew wanted to eat with him and
they want flour and potatoes and pancakes, and want Johnny to be their cook.

They might as well have wanted Swan to pare their toenails during supper every night, too. If there was one matter in the cosmos that Swan had a clear doctrine about, it was the sanctity of his meals. He shot back to Edinso and the other Haidas the ultimatum—bluff, more likely—that if I heard any more complaints I would return to Masset and get another crew...

When they found I was determined they gave up and all became good natured.

Good-natured or not, Edinso gave up on biscuits and hotcakes and began showing Swan and Deans the long-awaited shores of his North Island, now the maps as Langara Island. He took them first to a site called Tadense, a deserted village rapidly expiring back into the forest. Even the more recent houses built fifty years ago are fast decaying: the humidity of the climate causes a growth of moss which, freezing in winter and seldom or never dry in summer, rots the soft cedar and rapidly reduces it to a pulpy mould.

Then from the oozing-away village, along the waterline to a burial cave.

A dry cavern some 60 feet in length, as Swan jotted it, the entrance to which is 25 feet above high water mark and approached by a rough path over conglomerate boulders.

Next Edinso, who was proving to have a rhetorical formula for every occasion, steered them along the waterline to a burial cave with the assurance that no white eyes had ever seen the hallowed spot before that instant.

They clambered in among some 28 or 30 burial boxes of various sizes...

In one of the boxes of skeletons which had been opened by age, a puffin or sea parrot had made its nest...Some of the burial boxes were ornamented with the crests of the occupants carved and painted in colors, others were merely rough boxes. Some of the bodies were rolled in Hudson Bay blankets, and some