At Appomattox five days earlier... we heard several reports of cannon
which proved to be the swivel at Baadah but as it was raining none
of us cared to go to ascertain the cause although we supposed Mr
Maggs had received some news from Upsound of some great Victory
over the rebels.

And the next week, the grimmer echo: Mr Jones brings the sad
intelligence of the assassination of President Lincoln... Dreadful news...

The result will be that the north will be more united than ever and
will crush out the serpent that has been nourished...

The Reservation's potato field is planted. A day of fasting is
observed in Lincoln's honor. Swan puts a setting hen on thirteen eggs
in the schoolhouse basement.

The fifteenth of May, experiment by Swan's leading scholar.

(574) Jimmy took the tips of the bull's horns which were sawed off
yesterday and set them out among the cabbage plants. He had seen me
set out slips of currant and gooseberries and thought if sticks would
grow the horns certainly would.
Three canoes of Clayoquot Indians, faces painted red and black, arrive from Vancouver Island to visit. At Hosett, a Makah canoe splits apart on a reef and two women and a girl drown. Webster persuades Swan to stand for a seat in the territorial legislature, and Swan is trounced.

Swan sets another hen on another thirteen eggs.

The eleventh of June, a Sunday of frustration and retribution:

Yesterday my cat killed all my chickens so this morning I shot the cat.

Webster sends a number of Makahs aboard the schooner Brant, hoping to encourage them to learn shipboard fishing. The British gunboat Forward anchors in the bay overnight. On the Fourth of July, Swan hoists the flag at five in the morning and bakes a gooseberry pie.

The sixth of July, a bit of provisioning. Barker came home from Clallam Bay this noon bringing some venison. I bought a hind leg..... I strongly suspect it is our tame deer.
Swan spends a week in Port Townsend, buys two sets of underwear and a pair of pants. A few days after returning to Neah Bay, he suffers a bilious attack. He goes to Victoria for a few days. School resumes.

Annuities are distributed to the *Tribe's* women: china bowls, bread, molasses, a chunk of beef and two blankets each.

The twentieth of August, the imaginative Jimmy once more.

Jimmy had his ears bored yesterday and since then has refused to eat anything but hard bread and molasses and dried halibut. The superstition of the Indians being that if other food is eaten the ears will swell to an enormous size.
Capt. John tells me that the Indians predict a very cold winter. There will be according to his statement, very high tides, violent gales, great rains, much cold and snow. The Arhosets predict rain from an unusual number of frogs in a particular stream at their place. The Oquiets predict cold from the fact that great numbers of mice were seen leaving an island in Barclay Sound and swimming to the mainland.

The natives and the mice and the frogs were promptly right. The nineteenth of November: The wind this morning blew open my chamber door which opens out from the south side of the tower and slammed it against the flagstaff breaking out the entire panel work. This has been a very stormy day.

The next day: Gales of wind accompanied by tremendous surf, the highest tide that I ever saw. The water was nearly up to the Indian houses. The Indians were out with their torches saving their canoes and other property.

And the day after that: Gale lasted till sundown doing considerable damage to fences and unroofing Indian houses. Frequent lightning and thunder all day and evening. . . The Indians were badly frightened and brought their children to the schoolhouse for safety.
The eighteenth of December. at 11 AM said that evening.

The nineteenth. Dec. 19—Stormy. Crust of ice on the snow....The Indians have inquired of me frequently during the month when the sun will begin to return north. They say the fish are all hid under the stones and when the sun commences to come back, the stones will turn over and they will be able to catch fish.
This queer, jittery year bites through its last days. The diary entry for the twenty-ninth of December: Katy was taken sick on the 27th and I gave her medicine and told her to keep in the house, but she went to the tomanawas and took cold. Then, on the last day

Katy was a slave girl belonging to John's squaw and early in the year had begun to do household chores for Swan. He found her intelligent and competent. During the summer and autumn, she cooked at the house of the Reservation carpenter, then in early winter became cook for Swan at the schoolhouse. To all appearances a stout and remarkably healthy woman, her abrupt inclusion in Swan's of ill running list of Makahs is disquieting. Then on the 31st, the final several hours of 1865:

Katy died toward morning and was buried north of the schoolhouse near the beach....The attack was sudden and her death unexpected...
Day thirty-one

Point No Point is the tiny peg of map-line from which Puget Sound measures itself southward. Southward and southwestward, for the Sound at its farthest thrust begins to fringe toward the Pacific as if swept in a steady breeze. Those streamers of water extend the measuring considerably, because from here at the Point until the water has delineated every last remote bay and channel and inlet, thirteen hundred and fifty miles of shoreline—the equal of the entire Pacific Coast from San Diego to Cape Flattery—edge the Sound's strange trailing outline.

Evidently in derision, Point No Point was named by the Wilkes expedition of 1841, when that American naval survey team sailed up to what seemed from a distance to be a promontory prowling boldly into the Sound, and wasn't. The forested ridgeline lies a few hundred yards back from the shore, and the flat acres intervening between the dark bluff and the water, plus the nubbin of beach which provides a perch for the lighthouse, proved to be the maritime sum of the site. But eminent or not, Point No Point marks the northern entrance to the great Sound, and nobody now remembers who Wilkes was.

Except for the four of us—Carol, me, Ann and Phil, good friends newly moved to the hill above our valley—today's visitors to the Point all are out on the water with salmon as their purpose: twenty-five boats in a bright shoal around the lighthouse. Many of them are red rowboats from the resort nearby, with dashing white script on their sides
proclaiming Point No Point. The fanciness reminds me of another prank of language, that when his Mississippi townsmen used to scorn Faulkner as an overelegant scribbler, they would call him Count No 'Count. Here is a site in escansion I can see the sly squire enjoying, out in one of the red rowboats with an antique bamboo rod and a flask of sipping whiskey, affirming to fellow anglers that yes, none other, he is Count No 'Count of Point No Point.

When the tide is down, as it is now, the beach can be walked for a few miles southward from the Point into long views of the forested rim of Puget Sound. In fact, an angled look across the water to a particular patch of the quilled horizon on the Sound's eastern shore exactly reverses my usual line of sight along the gray plain of water: the view from the top of the valley which holds our house, across into this Point No Point corner of the Sound.

Now, here on the western shoreline, bluffs sit in sequence along the Sound's edge, like sterns of a moored fleet.

We begin to do the leisurely beach miles, and the friends' gab that goes with them.

Ann performs a squinched-up impression which she assures us is an anemone.

I retaliate with my impression of a tenpenny nail being driven: rigid stance, hands at side, shuddering winces as my knees buckle downward. Phil gently informs us that neither has much career ahead as shellfish or spike. Carol is first to see an inbound ship. Freighters entering the Sound pass close by the Point—indeed, emerging from Admiralty Inlet to round the bluff, they give the illusion that they are going to carve away the lighthouse as they come—and this beach is one of the few sites
where I can share in Swan's fixation on passing ships. Windships sail day on day in his pages, rocking into view with the hidden push of air against their groves of canvas, whitely slicing the Strait's breadth of blue, the very print of their names vivid enough to ferry the imagination horizonward. Willamantic and Alert and Flying Mist and Naramissic. The Toando Keller, the Lizzie Roberts, the Jenny Ford. Orion, Iconium, Visurgis. Torrent. Saucy Lass. Wild Pigeon. Forest Queen. Maunaloa. Growler. Quickstep. Up from San Francisco, Nahumkeag. Aguilar de Los Andes, eagle of the Andes and homebound to Santiago. Lalla Rookh and Wavelet and Jeannie Berteux.

Nothing in our world is so richly named any more, unless it would be racehorses, and the sails that come and go on these waters now are for pleasure rather than commerce. Spinnakers instead of broadsheets.

Swan would like it, though, that the region still is water-mad. To walk down to the shoreline of any Puget Sound community is to find mast-filled marinas, natural as coves of cattails. But schooners, barks, any of the working-canvas fleet that went past him, sometimes several a day--no. Our version sheers past the Point No Point light like strap-iron passing crystal, then steadies into the shipping lane of the Sound.

We try, and fail, to pick the name off the freighter's bow with field glasses.
We try, and fail, to pick out the freighter's name with binoculars.

Ann tells of a handy powerful monocular her father carries with him on hikes. A spyglass, it would have been in Swan's time.

As if the first ship was the outrider, others now show themselves from behind the bluff regularly each half hour or so. The third ship cuts past just at low tide, three p.m.

As we have walked, I have been watching a known place on the horizon for any glimpse of Mount Rainier, where I will be at this time tomorrow, but a squall in the center of the Sound's gray plain of water is intervening.

Soon after, the squall line moves north, off Whidbey Island, and try as we do to convince ourselves it can't boomerang toward us, it comes. The Sound and sky go to deeper grays, the lighthouse begins sending out dashes of light, and we start back to the Point as the day's fourth ship, edges erased in the rain, passes indistinct as a phantom.
This once, however, the threat did not come from the far-north
raiders, 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, this time
with the Makahs 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 Clallams. 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 Clyoquets 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 barrell 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 Arhosetts did not even have the satisfaction of receiving an envoy from the Makahs. Swan
peremptorily sent word to them through Cedakanim, the Clyoquot
cchief who had faced them down with his wealth of blubber, and
eventually two abashed Arhoetts 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 Comm. 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 Kiddekubbut. 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—a brave heart.

...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.

A fairly fiery record, these few years of bravado and
occasional bloodshed by the Makahs. It might be remembered,
however, that while this sequence was occurring at Cape Flattery,
the United States of America and its cousin tribe, 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. *kekkek* 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
for this last talon of cliff. Behind, on all sides, the continent shears away, leaves me to water and air; Surf pounds underfoot

"Those whales," a Makah tribesman had told me. "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 Tatooche, 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 behind 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 the dwellers of this coast it come to mind: what humans could do before they found other, easier routes.
Day fifty

A day that promises better weather one minute and reconsiders the next. The valley is sought out by wind every so often, but no rain, and the thermometer is nosing 50. I would have known without looking that the mercury was up, for the cat is atop a post on the fence at the far side of the neighbor's yard. More than ever he looks like a lion seen from far off, adoze at the edge of some thornbush thicket, waiting for a rabbit-sized wildebeeste to patter into his dreams.

What regulates this periodic cat, besides the day's warmth sliding in through his fur, or any other of the cats I have watched past my writing-room windows for the past dozen or so years, I have no conception.

They are the most constant animals I see, and the most out-of-place they pace through our wooded backyard in robes of color entirely unsuited to hunting. Harlequin figures against the green. Yet unlike the neighborhood's dogs which loll around the street in marauding dizzy thorough concern for human attention, cats are in place within their routes. Only other cats stir their imagination.

Those aloof encounters by day when any two, orientatiously stalking like muffled-and-coated heiresses, will keep the full length of the backyard between them, then the rites by night when they try to murder one another as imaginatively as possible. The
Otherwise, it takes the most intrusion to nick into their routine. The gray-and-white wanderer that one day walked into the garden dirt, scratched a hole, daintily settled atop it in hunched but poised position—Queen Victoria on a thunderbox—to do the necessary, did it, scratched the lid of dirt into place, looked uneasily around, spotted me watching from the window, and fled as if aflame.
(No such episode from the tan cat; it would not be lionly.)

Probably the mind of cats is territory we are better off not knowing. The winter Carol and I lived in London, I stretched back from my typewriter one morning and looked directly up at a cat on the ceiling. Our flat was the below-stairs portion of a Georgian townhouse, a long warren of rooms with plumbing pipes and electrical wires vined along the walls like root systems and a splash of daylight at the rear, a kind of glassed-over porch with frosted panes as its roof. The cat was roof-sitting. Ceiling-sitting, from my point of view. Into the middle of the roof-panes of glass a light fixture had been webbed, on the English electrical principle that unless the electrician has been told by the householder not to expend 232,000 miles of wiring he can proceed to rig a bulb to the underside of the moon, and the light as it glowed threw upward a small circle of heat. By some instinct the cat had ambled up from the alley to curl itself to the warmth. (Is it Eiseley?—"In the days of the frost seek a minor sun.") The rest of the day, I would glance overhead every so often and find the cat absorbedly licking its paws, its midnight-and-snow face dabbing in and out of focus through the frosted glass. That time of an alley tabby in wavery orbit over me convinced me that whatever their thousand daily pretenses, cats all are secret Cheshires.
To Swan of Port Townsend now, another here-again-gone-again countenance. His effort to woo the railroad was mostly told in spare pages of the ledger diary he had used at Neah Bay—evidently a special effort to keep straight the skein of blandishments was being on the Northern Pacific executives. The Graveyard Spit interlude was put down in a pocket notebook, and the years that follow it are an entire era of pocket diaries; lines jotted instead of composed. Scrawled small as they are, these lines will be day upon day of decipherment. But beyond doubt, worth it. I lift pages to the start of 1869 and find:

Stormy day. Commenced to occupy office on the lower floor of old Post Office building Pt Townsend, as the office for Commissioner of Pilots. US Commissioner. Notary Public & rent $5 per month.

I check the final night of 1874 and learn:

One Arm Smith & I worked this PM sodding Bulkeley's grave & planting shrubbery around it.

Even for Swan, these seem broad brackets of enterprise.
before it was agreed that Swan was to have $300 a month for at
least three months, and an allowance for expenses and purchases
of Haida artifacts. Baird made it plain,

until it was worked out that Swan would receive
in the Queen Charlotte, plus
$300 a month for at
least three months, an allowance for expenses and purchases of
Haida artifacts. Baird made it plain he wanted his money's worth:

You will understand that we want the fullest collections of all kinds,
especially of objects connected with the fisheries and with hunting,
to include models or originals of boats and canoes, weapons, hunting
and fishing dresses, &c. As stated, I want you to make the most
exhaustive memoranda as to the manufacture and application of the
various articles gathered by you.

Swan, at sixty-five, is about to have his pension.
Day sixty-five

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

The big green-and-white ferry *Kaleetan* spins north out of the Edmonds ferry slip as if having decided to make for Alaska, and the newness of direction sends itself up from the deck plates through my body, a vibrant return to the time when passenger craft went up and down the Sound and Strait in purposeful day-long voyages instead of flat across the channels in quick commuters' hops. The fresh sense of surging out onto the water world is not illusion; the *Kaleetan*, at 00 knots, will take an hour and a half to reach Port Townsend.

The day is dark enough that the first of the lighthouses to slide past the ferry, Point No Point, still has its light winking. Behind
it, the shoreline of the Peninsula juts blackly along the gray canyon of water and sky, Whidbey Island its mate-shore to the east.

I have brought along Swan in scholarly tatters, notes and photocopies and snippings, but the wide water and its dikes of forest keep my eyes. Time enough for Swan's future at the two coffers of it waiting for me in Port Townsend.

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

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

Seen here from the water, Port Townsend stands forth as a surprising new place. It regains itself as the handsome port site
of its beginnings, the great water-facing houses look correct and
captainly on their bluff, the downtown main street is set broadside
it ought to be in a
along the shore as proper in a working proper working wharf town.

Instead of the dodgy glimpses along its main street through too many
cars and powerlines, this Port Townsend looks you level in the eye
and asks where you've sailed in from.

Docking this ferry is also from maritime days of the last century.

Kaleetan is far too massive for the tiny ferry slip--
like an ocean liner coming up to moor to a balcony--and the crew
must show seamanship. One ferryman fishes out with a boat hook, snags
a large hawser off pilings at the port bow. With that our vessel is
snubbed while a tugboat hustles in and butts the stern around until,
slotted just so, the ferry can make a final careful surge to the
little dock ramp. The elephant has landed.

Many of us who step off as foot passengers could be our great-
grandparents coming ashore at Ellis Island,
Montreal, Boston: beards, duffel coats, parcels, suitcases. A number of us, as I am, in watchcap and waterproof jacket, which I suppose would mark us as crew of an immigrant windship. Three ministers are prim among us, over from Seattle for the day on some missionary duty or another. Women carry children ashore, mothers greet daughters, husbands wives, huge trucks ease off the ferry, others snort aboard, turmoil of drayage and pilgrims. But a block or so from the ferry landing, within a dozing quiet from some other vector of the last century, the carved cane rests in its glass museum case. I squat and begin the astonishing inventory. The handle is ivory carved into a perfect fist the size of a child's right hand. Through the grasp of the fingers, like a held rattle, and out the circling grip of thumb pressed onto forefinger, twines a snake. The ivory reptile then writhes through air down onto the wrist. There above where the tiny pulse would hammer, the snakehead rests. Except that it is not at rest, but in mid-swallow of a frog, eternally doomed in its try to escape around the rim of wrist.
I check my notes. Swan first saw this creation in the village of Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands on the tenth of July, 1883. The carver, one of the best Haida artists, either in wood, stone, or in gold or silver, still was at work on the cane. Swan asked the artisan's price—ten dollars—and said he would be back.

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

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

Over lunch in a restaurant which confusedly has tried to rig its interior as a shipdeck, I think of Swan coming upon the snake-cane six hundred miles to the north of here. Keen as he was about the art of this coast, he must have felt like a prospector whose boot has kicked up a nugget in front of him. The carved scene ripples the other way in me, from art out into life. I see back to the instant when a jay attacked
into the garden outside my window, its flash of blue and black and the high excited HEEP-HEEP-HEEP cry and then the toss of the garter snake which had been sunning on the warm dirt. In combination of grappling and chopping, the jay finished off the snake in an instant, then undertook to pull it apart, like a man trying to stretch an inner tube he is standing on. After a few minutes of tugging, the jay dropped the corpse in disinterest, bounded across the garden and flew off. When I went out to look at the snake, I found it as long as the span of my hand, nine inches: gray-green, with three lengthwise strings of yellow down its length. In three places the jay had frayed through the body, small ruptures like those a knife makes in rubberoid wiring. Even as I bent in study of the snake, not three minutes after the jay's ambush had begun, an ant scampered on like a pirate coming aboard a derelict schooner, dashed in and out of the snake's open mouth and up to a quick circle of the flat skull, then raced off in exploration of the first body-rip. How sudden it all, the same eternal suddenness of the ivory frog going down the ivory snake's gullet.

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

It is Ordered, Adjudged and Decreed that...James G. Swan is an
Habitual Drunkard as described in Section 1674 of Code of Washington
Territory. And it is hereby further ordered...to every Dealer
in Intoxicating Liquor and to all other persons residing in
the County of Jefferson...not to give or sell under any pretence
any Intoxicating Liquor to said James G. Swan...
the expostulations that somebody's daughter and son-in-law got up this morning to find a Douglas fir limb exploded down through the carport roof, that they themselves will not even attempt driving to the job at Boatings this morning, that there's been nothing like this Christly wind since the Columbus Day blow of '62.

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

Out of the wind which whangs among the harbor's sailboat masts seeps a high agitated whistling, like the cry of mournful birds. Souls of displaced kingfishers, most likely. In the clouds to the west the Olympic pop through into whetted outline every so often, and unexpectedly, sunshine through some loophole in the vapors is beaming onto a stretch of the shoreline across the Sound. But quickly full storm again. The new rain front hits, rolls along the wavetops, resists me every waterlogged inch of the way back to the car.

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

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

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

Against Port Townsend's night-in, night-out whiskey baritone, that
choir must have been a very wavery Sunday trill. Sometimes the hymning
voices were six or seven, sometimes as few as four. But consistently
in late 1874 and early 1875—the diary begins to show dogged stints of church-
going by Swan as long ago as 1869—they included Mrs. Roberts and her daughters
Dolly and Mary, and Swan. (Mr. Roberts is a mysterious absence, both from
the choir and the household. Deceased? Absconded? A sea captain?) Swan
quite promptly begins to drop by the Roberts home for rehearsal of the church
music. Then he begins gifts of food—scallops, salmon—and naturally is
invited to share supper. Henry Webster, also at loose ends in Port Townsend
just then and still Swan's stalwart, might be asked to join in as well.
One fine February Sunday, there is even a genteel stroll, Swan and Webster and Dolly and Mary, in the course of which the young women probably heard more than they wanted to know about the singularities of life at Neah Bay.

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

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

Who would have thought the clerkish shiskeyfied aging dabbler had such steam in him? But of course he did, exactly because he had never shown so, and I find his infatuation as entirely wonderful as it was foolish. I wish such a season to any of us, man or woman, so long self-locked into alone

ess; let the blaze come out, for once, from within the bones.

Emotional paroles are due the solitary even if, like Swan's, the outing turns out to be quick and bittersweet. Better that than simply bitter.

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

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

From places here at the outer corner of the Strait, it can be

seen clearest how startlingly close the Olympic range of mountains

stands to this coastline: like gorgeously-caped elephants about
to go wading. Along much of the Peninsula south of the

logging town of Forks, for instance, peaks of 4,000 to 7,000 feet
rise within thirty miles of the Pacific shore, rather as if
the Rockies were to begin at Philadelphia, or the Sierra Nevada just
beyond the east alleys of Oakland. Such drinking closeness between
the earth's ice-tipped summits and its arcing horizon of water is

pronounced

even more

where from one particular swoosh of this roller-coaster Neah Bay road,
the Olympics look as if they are striding right into the Strait. Some
shore sites back there--
sites sure the best for this, as so much else, is Dungeness Spit--
open so directly onto an overhead wall of white crags that you lose
sense of any ground. Wave-slosh and caping forest, and that is all.

There is a kind of stolen thrill, something unearned and simply

granted, about the presence of the Olympics. History itself seems
The state of Washington makes its margin with the Pacific as if
the land west of the Cascade Mountains had all been dropped heavily
against the ocean, creating wild splatters of both land and water:
the islands of Puget Sound and the San Juan group, streaky inlets
everywhere, stripes of peninsula such as Dungeness and Long Beach,
and a webwork of more than forty sizable rivers emptying to the
westerly, wave-tossed coast. Amid this, the Olympic Mountains stand in calm files,
their even slopes like fur to shed the wet. The region's
history itself seems to step back and marvel at these shoreline
mountains. The coastal Indians

not seem never to have troubled to travel much in them, why wrestle forest
when the sea is an open larder? White frontier-probing nor went into

an unusual and welcome slowdown when it reached the Olympics. Although


1889 did a six-man expedition sponsored by a Seattle newspaper


traipse entirely across the Olympic Mountains and leave some
of the loveliest peaks of America with the curious legacy of
being named for editors.
Thereafter, its terrific shaggy abundance of timber saved the range; giant fir and cedar and spruce stood so mighty along its shorelines and foothills that the heart of the Olympics was not logged before National Park status came in the 1930's.

They rise to me, when I climb to the rim of our suburban valley, as the [Sawtooth Range] gnashed up to the west of our Montana grassland: Townsend, Olympus, Constance, The Brothers, two dozen Olympic peaks in jagged white rhythm like lightning laid lengthwise. History itself seems.

From the instant I saw them a dozen years ago, I have felt exhilaration from these mountains like a gust down from their glaciers. If they did not exist, I think I would not live here; would need to be within sight of some other craggy western horizon. As it is, over the years I have hiked into all the main valleys of the Olympics except a few of the southernmost, and go time upon time upon time to places along the Sound and Strait where I have favorite views of peaks.

And today I have spent hours studying the Olympics rather than Swan's past. I don't much mind; Swan undoubtedly did the same. I find him writing once for the San Francisco newspaper, "The great Sierra of the Olympic range appear to come down quite to the water's edge, and present a wild forbidding aspect."

Other times, I find him tallying into the diaries a morning when the Olympics happened to be spectacularly sunlit. But I do not find him ever exploring into the so-near fortress of peaks. Enough of Boston evidently remained in him that he would admire mountains with his eyes rather than his feet.
Day twenty-five

I like about Swan that he has arithmetic in his eye.

When he and the Makahs dig around in the rubble of the short-lived Spanish fort at Neah Bay, the clay tiles they find are 10 inches long 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) wide & 1\(\frac{1}{2}\) thick. When Swan visits the lighthouse on Tatoosh Island, the Fresnel lens measures 6 ft across and is composed of 13 rings of glass above 6 rings below. When he wonders how large the clearing behind the Indian lodges at Neah is, he finds out by pacing it off...235 paces long 60 paces wide this will give at a rough estimate 2 9/10 acres.

cannot

If life does not always add up for Swan, at least its dimensions can.
Day, October thirty

Year and year Swan's hand shuttles on paper, pushing the quick
daily threads into the pocket notebooks, the longer yarn across
the broad ledger pages. In all his total of lines, forty steady
years of them and tag-ends at either end of that, there is not as
much typewritten material as I produce in a week. But
more handwriting than I would beget in four hundred lifetimes.

Staring down into the diaries these weeks, I begin to marvel at
this
constant route of Swan's pen-hand. Rather, his pen-hands, for
the weave of words on these pages is not steady tapestry, more like
the output from some Hebridean isle of tweedmakers, steadily of a
style but also different and distinct wefts.

Pocket diaries: they generally are in pencil, and the smallest of
them—1863 the size of a deck of cards—offer crimped little
language indeed. One handwriting in these, Swan simply tosses together
of teensy stalactites and stalagmites. A word such as Webster jags
along as if scratched onto the page with an icepick. This is Swan's
casual—but-get-it-down hand, jab the day's doings into place and
sit down to supper.

His second handwriting is slightly smaller—the comb from my pocket covers five lines at a time when I hold it across the page as a measure—but immensely more legible; the clerkly Swan, this one. These diary days procession along as if stitched by a sewing machine.

Lastly, Swan has a scrawling hand, evidently for use in a canoe or other deskless locales, and it needs a bit of cryptoanalysis. After a half-minute or so of blank staring, something like

Prow & rum wood 8 will seep through to me as Snow & rain wind S.

Thankfully, there is not much of this written mumble.

These notebook hands have rich cousins: the two handwritings of the Neah Bay ledgers he began in 1862. (That tiniest of pocket diaries, 1863, Swan reprimed elaborated into ledger entries as well.)

The most prominent of these is done in lines about as high as the thickness of a pencil, and slanted on the page as rain is with a brisk breeze behind it. These are pretty pages, each headed with the year and month—Swan had real flourish here; the M of March, for instance, will begin off in space with a loop that seems to be going nowhere but then swoops in to make the central pillars of the letter and then curlicues off into a smaller farewell knee—-and Swans weather entries. Hard to believe that weather such as Cape Flattery’s could be made decorative, but Swan has done it: each day’s temperature readings at seven in the morning, two in the afternoon and nine at night are stacked within an elegant bracket which Swan draws beautifully, featherlike lines meeting in a precise pucker.
Rarely in these big pages is anything crossed out, and never blotched. Quirks show themselves--Swan's alphabet tends to be open at the top, an a or o only slightly more closed than his u; and at the end of a word may have a quick concluding stroke out of its top, so as if it looks as if a musical note has dropped in from somewhere; commas, when they exist, are the briefest specks a pen can make—but overall this is a steady hand for which, again, the only word is clerkly.

His language is remarkably not-out-of-date. He surprises me, for instance, by using pretty as loosely as any of us would: worked pretty constantly all day. The one off-word I find consistently is eat for ater, as when they schoolboys stay for supper with him: I boiled a shin of beef with potatoes...and they eat heartily and washed it down with cold water. (N. 12, '44)

Swan's other handwriting in the ledgers, the fifth of the bunch, is simply more crouched than his standard ledger hand: about two-thirds in size. The reason could be in the deep springs of his psyche, Swan in these occasional pages showing some tightened mood. My guess is lamplight. That when Swan wrote at night, he hovered to the page more carefully to be within the narrow yellow puddle of light.

All in all, Swan the so-constant diarist puts me in mind of a story he once records, of meeting a seaman named John Johnson who had sailed aboard an American ship with three other Scandinavians of the same name in the crew, and who told Swan I was called Johnson Number Four. All these days of pages are the shared craft of Swan One, Two, Three, Four and Five.
Day fifty-seven

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

The great canoe's reputation proved to be somewhat vaster than its actual dimensions. It was 100--sixty feet in length--but it still was a titanic craft, able to carry a hundred persons. What was more, Swan himself could go north in pursuit of the canoe and whatever other tribal items caught his fancy along the coast of British Columbia and southeastern Alaska. Baird had seen a glint of opportunity: the U.S. Indian Bureau wanted to have a major exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, and after the Exposition, the exhibit items could pass to, yes, the Smithsonian.

The way they would reach the Indian Bureau exhibit was from Special Commissioner James G. Swan, salaried at $200 a month and provided offered the U.S. revenue cutter Wolcott to convey him around the North Pacific.

Left for Victoria on Steamer North Pacific with Lieut Kilgore, to purchase charts and other articles for Wolcott & for me to get some silver to take north to make purchases, the seventh of June, 1875.

That same night the Wolcott docked long enough to take the pair of them aboard, and about 12 Midnight the cruise began.
For the next forty-four days, Swan records ports of call all along the broken coast of the North Pacific and buys busily: hundreds of items ranging from the giant canoe for $225 to wooden berry spoons for 25¢ each. Only the wonderfully carved poles of the coastal villages eluded him. At last, at Hwkan village on Prince of Wales Island, he is given a forthright explanation: "These posts are monuments for the dead and we will not sell them any more than white people will sell the grave stones or monuments in cemeteries but you can have one made for you." Swan at once put his order in.

Yet, his scrupulously-daily-as-ever journal is somehow perfunctory about the tribes he was among, the Bella Bella and Tsimsian and Tlingit, artistic peoples all. My guess is that Swan spent time in gab among the Wolcott's eight officers and crew of twenty-nine which otherwise would have gone into diarying. Just twice does his Wolcott account leap to life for me, and oddly, the backdrop each time is death.
--At Fort Tongass, I went ashore with Lieuts Hewitt & Kilgore and walked over a villainous trail to the Indian village on the west side of the Island where I witnessed a most interesting scene. It was the body of a woman, niece of Yahsood, who died last night and was laid in state. The Indians said she had a fall accidentally which injured her spine and bringing on premature child birth, last night or early this morning she died. I saw Yahsood outside his house evidently in great mental affliction. I told him I had come to visit at the lodges but out of respect to his feelings I would not call on any more but go on home. He then invited me to go in his house and see the corpse which I did. The body was dressed in the best attire, the face painted red and hair nicely combed. On the head was a sort of crown curiously carved, and on the back part was a sort of apron or cloak reaching to the ankles, thickly covered with ermine skins. On this robe the body was laid. Across the breast and feet were two embroidered shawls made by the Chilkoot Indians from the wool of mountain sheep, and highly prized. On her bosom was laid an image dressed to resemble an infant. A silk shawl was around the neck and other articles of finery indicative of wealth and rank were plentifully displayed. Around the body were her relatives. On her right near her head was her husband, on her left was her father, at her feet were her mother and two aunts, and two or three other women. The deceased was about 20 years of age very regular and pretty features and looked as if asleep. There was nothing repulsive in the appearance of either the body or the surroundings. The poor old father kept up a conversation with his
dead daughter. The husband's head was bowed to the ground with grief and the women were all weeping. It was a very affecting sight. I addressed a few words of sympathy... This is the first scene of the kind I ever saw.
At Fort Simpson, Swan went to a wedding feast by special invitation of the Indians, through their pastor Rev Mr Crosby. Swan sat in a place of honor with Reverend Crosby and his wife and Lieutenant Kilgore. We were served with a nice roast goose & roast ducks potatoes bread cake tea & coffee &c. 6 or 8 young men dressed like hotel waiters attended on us and the whole passed off pleasantly. Then, an incident occurred which was very gratifying to me. A Tsimshian woman came up to him; she was Kik-tairlkh, the lone survivor of the Graveyard Spit massacre seven years earlier. She told me through an interpreter that she never should forget my kindness, and that she thought of me every day and considered that I had saved her life. Mr Crosby called the attention of the Indians at the feast to the fact, and they gave me applause by stomping their feet and clapping their hands, after which one old man made a speech in which he said that I had showed myself a friend of the Simseans and they never would forget...
Day fifty-eight

After these steady days I have been in their pages, the diaries at last begin to annal themselves, and Swan's Port Townsend life.

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

The first half of 1870 is as steadily sunny—Swan at last sees his Makan brought into print by the Smithsonian, and on June 30 hoists a flag to celebrate the marriage of his son—until the mystifying journey to Utah on behalf of the Northern Pacific. The diary, another Bancroft and near-twin of 1869, shows its own consequences of that rugged trip; spine nearly worn through, the covers tattered and fraying. In the pages, Swan's days wane after Utah; (examples)
1871: a "Pacific" imprint; smaller, dark-green after the summer begins. Swan starts the year with scrupulous routine again, the tidbits of good news—a lock of hair from his new grandson, sale of the last of the Ellen Foster scrap iron, admission to practice as a lawyer—steady until September. Then Swan is taken ill again.

Perhaps worse, the Northern Pacific has not come through with the he has been trying to obtain for months. Gaps riddle the rest of the pages.

He ends the year literally at sea, en route home to Port Townsend after a journey to Olympia.

1871, S en rt from Oly to Pt T

12 midnight while about midway between Steilacoom and Tacoma... the pilot blew three long and loud blasts with the steamer whistle for New Years.

1872 is a brighter year;  The Northern Pacific at last pays up, Swan buys still more land, settles his bills and borrows no more.

He does much walking of the Port Townsend headland; is impressed with a touring temperance lecturer and evidently takes another of his periodic vows of dryness.

This year, the Pacific people have inserted December on the calendar page at the front of the diary: "Make your words agree with your thoughts."
June 27, 1877:

It was a fine day for the first visit of the American delegation to the new brewery of Swan, which has a large capacity. The beer is said to be of the highest quality, and it reminded me of the homemade beer I used to have at home when I was a boy—just like that.

Excerpt from a letter:

Day fifty-two.

Lived in Seattle.

Flaggs playing here and every one rejoicing.

So glad to see you again and all the old friends.

For 170, the Pacific diary featured across the top of each day's page a decorative band of colored lines, red-blue-red, reminiscent of the battle-ribbon rows on the chests of World War Two sailors.