edited Dec. 12 —
Marilyn retyped, into
final version, D 13



Day sixty-six

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The still-unpopulated western coastline of the Queen Charlottes remains one of the remotest loose ends of North America, and winter flogs it with surf, gust, downpour. But even in ~~late~~ summer, as Swan is aiming for, I would not have the means he did. The advice had been held out by Dawson to whomever adventured ~~in next~~ in next: the Queen Charlottes' west shore "would, I believe, be most easily dealt with in one of the canoes of the country manned by a good Indian crew." To Swan, rider of canoes throughout the frontier half of his life, those words chimed exactly right. ~~The~~ To me, footsoldier of a considerably tamer west, they can only be rue.

As to why Swan decided to dare the Charlottes' western shore, ~~or~~ when the Haida population and the material he sought to collect for the Smithsonian were peppered along the eastern coastline, ~~or~~ the answer does not show itself in his diaries or the letters to Baird. My hunch is that whatever he told himself, in his justifying Boston way, he wanted to do it for the edge of challenge, as the Makahs canoeing downcoast along Cape Flattery could not resist darting themselves through the tide-rip tunnels in the searocks. Swan ~~had~~ held no small estimation of himself as a coastman--a true coastie, in the Dungeness lighthouse keeper's sudden fine phrase to Carol and me--and here lay one of the last unknown rims of western shore. Whatever, this is greatly the broadest leap I have seen Swan take--his 1849 decision to cast himself west to California being lost to time--and I settle in with anticipation to watch how he will manage it.

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From under that Port Townsend civic cloud of decreed drunkenness, which at least was newly lined with the Smithsonian's silver, Swan sets off for the Queen Charlotte Islands in mid-June of 1883. He voyages in rare style, out of Victoria aboard the Otter, a Hudson's Bay Company supply steamer.

In effect, he is traveling to the Queen Charlottes as the invited guest of British Columbia's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Dr. Israel Wood Powell. Of their time, Powell and Swan are perhaps the two white men of the Pacific Northwest most ardent and informed about the coastal native cultures, and long have known each other through Swan's visits across the Strait to Victoria. Powell's cachet, particularly in vouching for Swan to the Hudson's Bay Company whose ships and trading posts were the supply line into the North Pacific, was ideal, and with it came the suggestion that Swan be accompanied by one of Powell's field agents, James Deans. The one hitch in this supremely hospitable arrangement is that Deans missed the boat.

Swan shrugs--watched for Mr. Deans till the Steamer was under way but he did not appear, the diary reports, and lets it go at that--and settles back to savor the cruise of the Otter. Not much of event has happened to him in the almost two years since leaving Neah Bay. Wait, there is this: Henry Webster's death, which Swan inscribed and then drew triple lines around, crosshatching them darkly at the corners and center until the result looked eerily

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The Otter chugs to shore at Metlakatla. Two years earlier, Swan had crossed paths with William Duncan when they both were calling in Victoria, and in his diary noted a long talk with him about Indians. I hope that in some other chamber of time, men born native to the Northwest coast--Peter, say, on some trading trip northward from Neah Bay, and perhaps the tattooed Haida Kitkune, veteran of canoe visits across Hecate Channel to Metlakatla--met around a lodge fire and compared their tales of those two curious whitebeards, Duncan and Swan. In 1857 Duncan, straight from Yorkshire, had arrived among the Tsimshian tribe in northern British Columbia as an Anglican missionary. A stubborn stump of a man--he looked rather like some witchburning Massachusetts

great-ancestor of Swan's--Duncan across the next sixty years had a potent effect on the coastal native culture. His presence in the region came as if you were accustomed to worshipping, say, elm trees, and one day looked up to find the Canterbury Cathedral next door. Duncan remade his Tsimshian followers not only into Christians, but practitioners of Victorian capitalism as well: the Metlakatlans operated a salmon cannery and a woolen mill, had their own tinsmiths and shoemakers and photographers, even their own uniformed brass band. The village (and its later and more famous namesake on Annette Island in Alaska, founded in the late 1880's after Duncan clashed with his church authorities and British Columbia officialdom) had a reputation as a showplace of native adaptation, if, Swan thought, not of thorough white example. As I had but a very short time to remain on shore I hurried to Mr Duncans house where I was very cordially received, but the hour was too early for these settlers who had but just got up. I notice this listlessness, and desire to lie in bed mornings to prevail in Victoria and every where I have been in British Columbia and Alaska. Sit up late at night, and get up late in the morning. Duncan, fervid in rising as in all else, whisks Swan through the community's cannery and woolen mill before the Otter's whistle blasts.

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, it ought to be reported,
Swan is writing now in triplicate--or rather, in three versions which add up to triplicate and then some. During each day he pencils into a pocket diary, and in it flash his touches of mood, occasional

grumbles or frets or chuckles amid the doings of the day. At first chance he transcribes, in that brown ink, into a small squarish hardbound composition book. This version is narrative at fuller flow, expansion of the pocketed days. Next exists the fifty-page report ~~Swan~~ he later ~~wrote~~ drew up for the Smithsonian, typed--shakily--and with historical background of the Queen Charlottes periodically swatched in. I have had no small amount of decipherment to do on James Gilchrist Swan the past two months, but never before triangulation.

What is happening is this: in a sense, just as Swan is being whetted against a new edge of the continent now, so are the diaries. As I have begun to go through the simultaneous three, it occurs to me that with their blend of detail and elucidation and reprise they are truly taking their place with those supreme westering pages, Lewis and Clark's and young Patience Loader's. To tell his Queen Charlottes journey in any higher style, Swan would have to hymn it. And after the ledgerly reports of contentment from ~~Swan's~~ his 1878-1881 stint at Neah Bay and the unreported discontents of his Port Townsend life of 1882 and early 1883, ~~this~~ these diaries' frank completeness is unexpected and welcome, ~~and~~ like having a trout begin to sing to you up through its pond. These next days I am going to stand back a bit and give the busy pages vocal space.

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Fort Simpson. Here, Swan makes his call on Rev Thomas Crosby the missionary whom I had seen seven years ago when I was here on the Wolcott collecting for the Centennial celebration...Went with Mr Crosby to see his school and church...While at Metlakatla I noticed the houses were nearly all of very plain box like appearance without any attempt at architectural beauty, and unpainted... At Ft Simpson where the Indians have been encouraged to display their taste they have done so and produced some very neat looking cottages painted or whitewashed...

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Fort Wrangell. Arrived...at 8 AM and found the whole town asleep.

4#

Then, at the end of the afternoon of June twenty-fifth, a shore which appeared low and quite level, but as it was very rainy we did not get a good sight.

The dim landfall is Graham, largest island of the Charlottes.

4#

Arrived at Massett at 5 PM....Delivered my letters of Introduction ...took account of my freight as it was landed--wisely: 2 sacks flour short in my count & notified Purser Sinclair--and then went to a very comfortable cottage in the enclosure of the HB Co...

# Off the Otter's gangplank with Swan steps

is the one expeditionary companion he has hired, described in a letter to Baird as a very intelligent young Haida man, a worker in jewelry, a painter and tatooer who has been with me about 3 months... Johnny Kit Elswa is the keg-chested fellow beside Swan in the second Victoria studio portrait, and his jacket-and-trousers attire does not hide that he is a new example, perhaps in his mid-twenties, of the outdoor artists in which the Haidas had been so rich. Johnny (Swan calls him so in the diary, and I will ~~mostly~~ follow that) has become the latest in Swan's line of Indian confidantes--Swell, Captain John, the Port Townsend Clallam chieftain Duke of York, Jimmy Claplanhoo--and promises to be especially valuable to Swan as hired helper on this expedition. The most faithful intelligent and reliable Indian I have seen, as Swan touts him to Baird, Johnny is from the village of Cumshewa on an eastern midpoint of the Queen Charlottes shoreline, and can show me things of Indian manufacture that the foreign collectors never have seen.

He at once proves to have less exotic talents as well:

~~pocket diary, June 29~~

This forenoon the roof of the house I am occupying, took fire from old stove pipe falling down. Johnny & another Indian put it out with buckets and Mr McKenzie furnished new pipe which Johnny fixed all right.

4.#

Swan is advised at Masset that the man he needs is the chief who, before smallpox emptied the area, ruled on the absolute northwesternmost fragment of the Charlottes--then called simply North Island, now on the maps as Langara Island. With that chief and his canoe crew, North Island could serve as the piton for the journey along the western shore: relatively calm waters from Masset to North, assured shelter there on the chief's home isle, then the headland-to-headland descent by canoe seventy-five miles down the coast to Skidegate Channel, the passageway between Graham and Moresby Islands, and through to the settlement at Skidegate, at the southeastern corner of Graham Island. The one omission in the smooth plan echoes the absence of Deans back at the Victoria dock. At the moment, the chief is away somewhere on another canoe errand.

4##

On wait at Masset, Swan begins to entertain himself typically, with his pen. Goes out and counts the Haida community--sixty five houses old and new, nearly all of them with a carved column or pillar in front, covered with heraldic devices...of the family residing within, and representing some legend... Does whatever collecting is possible:

(no 9) Johnson brought me a fine model of an ancient war canoe with mat sails, paddles and every thing complete. The Haidahs were formerly a warlike people and a terror to all the Coast tribes...but they have become peaceful lately and no war parties are now sent out, and the ancient canoes have all decayed and gone....

(no 41) Johnny was of great assistance in trading and purchased everything much lower than I could. The Indians remonstrated with him and asked him why he liked the white man better than his own people? Because, was the reply, "the white man pays me, you pay me and I work

for you." This logic did not suit them but they let Johnny alone and I succeeded in obtaining some very interesting specimens. Visits companionably with Masset's handful of white residents, Alexander McKenzie trader, Charles W.D. Clifford of the Indian Service who was there on a visit and Reverend Charles Harrison the Episcopal Missionary and his wife all of whom were most courteous...

Swan also passes his tests, Haida and white, as a guest. ~~The~~ One item I noticed especially in Swan's consignments of supplies taken aboard the Otter in Victoria was a copper tank for specimens of fish he is to obtain from the waters surrounding the Queen Charlottes. A Baird idea, of course. Besides his duties at the Smithsonian, where he had become Secretary after the death of Joseph Henry several years before, Baird in his spare time ~~was in~~ had assumed charge of the U.S. Fish Commission. ~~Some years before~~ he had tapped Swan into the Fish Commission payroll for occasional collecting of fish in the Cape Flattery region, and now Baird wanted samples from the North Pacific. Swan, nobody's amateur when it comes to packing for a journey, ~~has~~ filled the fish tank with oranges bought in Victoria, ~~now~~ opens the lid and bestows oranges on the Hudson's Baymen and the local Haidas. 9| Next, the

first of July, An Indian sold me 2 halibut heads for 2 pieces of tobacco and I made a real old fashioned down east chowder which we had for breakfast. Mr McKenzie and Mr Clifford pronounced it delicious... Then I showed Johnny how to make a plum pudding which was done by 5 PM & served with baked salmon...This being "Dominion day," which is celebrated by the Canadians & provincials they considered that my cooking was done in compliment to the day, which however I knew nothing about till this evening.

Clifford, the Canadian Indian agent, walks Swan to the burial ground near the entrance to Masset Inlet that afternoon. Beyond the gravestones--the christianized Haidas now were importing them from Victoria--they see the platforms which elevate the remains of a trio of tribal skagas, medicine men. The skeletons show through the rotting plank coffins, rather as if the skagas are getting restless about eternity. Together with their sacred bones, Swan knows, will be the carved instruments of magic, medicine sticks and implements of office...But we did not care to examine too closely at this time for fear of giving offence, so we turned our attention to examining the surrounding scenery.

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Ceremonies of Canadian-American amity aside, Swan paces the Masset shoreline day upon day, because still there is no sign of his canoemen. The site at least has its

beguilements. Wild strawberries, fat little pellets of flavor, virtually carpet areas of the island. Elsewhere, for miles as far as the eye could reach were acres upon acres of wild roses in full bloom. McKenzie told Swan he had been visited the previous summer by a Russian traveler who marveled: "This is Bulgaria, the land of roses!"

Swan's own comparison is less exotic, but as emphatic:

The whole region about Masset reminds me of the appearance of the land of Neah Bay...covered with the same kind of forest and shrubbery. It is an Indians paradise, plenty of fish and berries in summer, wild geese and ducks in myriads in the fall and all winter, and with but little physical exertion their every want is supplied.

The pause; the propositional line which is as close as Swan ever comes to disclosing calculation:

If there was a regular communication between this place and Victoria by steam so that one could come and go at least twice a month, I would as soon reside here as at any place I know.

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~~Day sixty-seven~~

Two weeks and a day after Swan's arrival at Masset, paragraphs of promise. The ninth of July: The old chief for whom I had been waiting returned home today. His name is Edinso or, as the whites pronounce it, Edin shaw.

By letter to Baird the next day: The Chief of North Island, who has been absent, will be starting shortly to go with me to that interesting place and till he is ready I shall busy myself collecting specimens of fish, and dredging for molluscs. The familiar financial sign-off--My Indian, Johnny Kit Elswa has proved of great service in purchasing articles at far less prices than I could, as tourists and collectors have advanced prices greatly. Mr. McKenzie tells me that my purchases are actually lower than he has paid Indians for the same kind of articles--and Swan is away to begin dickering with the canoe chief.

Edinso. There is a story of him terrible as any mythic lightning flung down from Olympus. When smallpox erupted in Victoria in 1862, a group of Haidas led by Edinso was there. Whether to clear the Haidas from the disease's ravages or simply to get the obstreperous Edinso out of town--the Victoria Daily British Colonist once called him "a perfect fiend" when he had a few drinks in him--it is not clear, but the governor of British Columbia ordered in a gunboat to tow the Indians home. Not far north along the coastline of Vancouver Island, Edinso pulled out an axe and hacked free his canoes. He put to shore with his followers, they made camp, defiantly returned to Victoria, and

smallpox swept them. When Edinso eventually led home to the Queen Charlottes those who had survived, the epidemic went with them.

Which of course is only to say that horror came to the Haidas on one wind rather than the next. Yet that wind was Edinso's, as if fate couldn't leave him alone.

Edinso likely was in his early seventies when Swan met him and started to talk canoe charter, and for decades had been a name in the North Pacific for the sumptuous potlatches he had thrown; for whirling a Tsimshian chief into the path of a gunshot intended for him during a tribal fracus; for traveling about the Queen Charlottes in his glory days in a canoe "twelve fathoms in length, elaborately carved and painted at both ends, manned by a large number of slaves and dependents." By now, however, he also was a fading figure, an aging sea-soldier who was merely one of a dozen chiefs basing themselves at Masset since their villages had died or dwindled and trying to accommodate to the tribe's narrowed future. Christianity's magic of inoculations and other medical care, and the example of Duncan's peacock colony of converts at Metlakatla swung many of these Haida chiefs, until by the late 1870's a number of them and even some of the shamans who had most desperately resisted the missionaries came into the new fold. With whatever level of enthusiasm, Edinso had been one of these Haida leaders to decide that missionaries were a milder plague than the invisible diseases, and made his peace as well with Victoria officialdom, even erecting a carved column topped with the figure of the governor of British Columbia in frock coat and silk hat.

But political accommodations with the white world were one matter, canoe charter was another. Swan would just have to wait longer, Edinso serenely told him, until he completed a trading trip to Fort Simpson on the British Columbia mainland. Meanwhile, wouldn't Swan care to look over a lot of ancient things he had for sale?

The tenth of July, in probably not the best of moods, Swan shops through Edinso's items. As he asked too much I did not purchase, the diary says shortly. What did seize Swan's interest was the project of the chief's nephew, Charley Edinso, a carver at work on a pair of caneheads made from the ivory teeth of a walrus. Two beautiful canes nearly finished, Swan records, each representing a serpent twined around the stick which was a crab apple sapling...on top of one was a clenched fist: yes. The writhing Port Townsend museum piece in gestation.

The depiction, Charley Edinso enlightens Swan, is the hand of Apollo's priest Laocoon, vainly grappling the serpent as it crushes him to death for trying to warn his fellow citizens against the Trojan horse. The Haida carver did not have an advanced knowledge of Greek mythology, although I would not put it past the best of Haida artists to tune in from the very air whatever lore they wanted for the day. Simply a picture from a London illustrated newspaper which had found its way across the planet to Masset.

As for the other canehead, Swan squints close to find that this one is merely the head of an elephant. Newsprint provided these astounding

details--thrust of tusks, bend of trunk--too: a picture of Barnum's Jumbo, representing the hoisting on board a steamer when bound to New York.

Veteran shopper of Indian art that he is, Swan is dazzled. Beautifully carved, the diary says again, then the cautious prod to Charley Edinso about price. He asks $10 each. Swan may even manage to keep a straight face as he says he'll think on it.

Edinso pushes off across Dixon Entrance and Hecate Strait toward Fort Simpson, Swan strolls down to watch a Haida canoe maker at work. As a canoe connoisseur, Swan is closely interested in the process of molding a hollowed log into a craft of honed grace. The builder first softened the wood by filling...with water which he made to boil by putting red hot stones in it. The canoe was then partially spread and allowed to remain for a day...The next morning after heating the water again with hot stones he built a slow fire of rotten wood and bark on the ground along the sides of the canoe to render the wood perfectly soft, or as he said, "to cook it," and then stretched the sides apart as far as was safe and kept them in position by means of stretchers or thwarts. I measured this canoe before he commenced to widen it and found that amidship, the opening was two feet eight inches wide, after he had finished the canoe I again measured it at the same place and found it was four feet nine inches...

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Days peel this way from Swan's Queen Charlotte summer with practically no effort at all. On the twenty-first of July, a canoe

at last glides up Masset Inlet. Not Edinso; out steps the tardy James Deans, by way of a supply steamer which brought him as far as Skidegate. Swan shows no measurable enthusiasm about the arrival.

Instead, now that he has been beached at Masset for a solid three weeks, Swan's thoughts turn inward. Stomachward.

Not that his menu thus far hasn't been fertile as usual. Johnny cooked a nice breakfast, runs one diary report, a stew of Potatoes and onions, Griddle cakes or "Slap Jacks" as Johnny calls them, and nice coffee--Another:..Made some clam fritters for breakfast which were very fine. And again: Today I made a pudding of the roots of the brown lily... first boiled the root, then mashed and mixed with eggs, milk, sugar and spice and baked...I think it is the first pudding ever made of this kind of root. But if his own palate is faring splendidly, the victuals of the Hudson's Bay colony horrifies him. Prior to my advent, the H.B. Company people were content to live on Indian dried salmon cured without salt, canned meats, beans, peas and salted fish... In other words, like a colony of Martians bivouacked in an orange grove and eating galactic K-rations. So I thought to give them a treat.

The diary pages now whoosh with Swan's marine gathering and garnishing...some clams which I put in a tub of water for two days to get rid of the sand...large crabs nicely boiled in salt water. Some fresh trout and fresh salmon...A soda-biscuit stuffing prepared for the trout, enhanced with dried herbs...fat bacon chopped fine...three cloves of garlic bruised, pepper and salt and water, the whole rubbed into a uniform mass with a potato masher.

Swan chefs on to crabs, clams, salmon. When all was ready, I called the gentlemen to the repast which may be enumerated as follows, clam chowder, baked trout, roasted salmon and deviled crab, with a dessert of wild strawberries and strawberry short cake, coffee and tea; a banquet of natural products which elicited encomiums of praise from the guests.

Even the glazed encomiums are not his final word. Where food is concerned, there seems never to be one with Swan. Two days later he is busy preparing an octopus salad and serving it up to his Hudson Bay converts with chutney sauce and another of his culinary perorations:... when one knows how to render such food palatable it will be found that many a relishing and nutricious meal can be had from articles which previously excited disgust.

Day sixty-six

Unfold a map of the North Pacific, and you notice, some six hundred miles north of the British Columbia capital of Victoria and not far under the overhang of Alaska, ~~the Queen Charlotte island group, looking like~~ a stalactite-like large shard which has fallen free of the continental cliff of shoreline. The illusory plummet has carried the chunk fifty miles to sea, striking its western edge into some of the trickiest weather of the entire Pacific, and shattering the landmass into a hundred and twenty-five fragments from the size of rocky hummocks to big adrift peninsulas. Swan's telling of the geographic proportions: The extreme length of the group from North Point, North Island to Cape St James the southern extremity is 156 miles. The Islands of the main group are North, Graham, Moresby and Prevost. Graham and Moresby, are the largest and constitute nearly eighty five per cent of the whole area ~~of the group.~~

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4#

, it ought to be reported,
Swan is writing now in triplicate--or rather, in three versions which add up to triplicate and then some. During each day he pencils into a pocket diary, and in it flash his touches of mood, occasional

grumbles or frets or chuckles amid the doings of the day. At first chance he transcribes, in that brown ink, into a small squarish hardbound composition book. This version is narrative at fuller flow, expansion of the pocketed days. Next exists the fifty-page report Swan later wrote up for the Smithsonian, typed--shakily--and with historical background of the Queen Charlottes periodically swatched in. I have had no small amount of decipherment to do on James Gilchrist Swan the past two months, but never triangulation.

What is happening is this: in a sense, just as Swan is being whetted against a new edge of the continent now, so are the diaries. As I have begun to go through the simultaneous three, it occurs to me that with their blend of detail and elucidation and reprise they are truly taking their place with those supreme westering pages, Lewis and Clark's and young Patience Loader's. To tell his Queen Charlottes journey in any higher style, Swan would have to hymn it. And after the ledgerly reports of contentment from Swan's 1878-1881 stint at Neah Bay and the unreported discontents of his Port Townsend life of 1882 and early 1883, this is unexpected and welcome, and like having a trout begin to sing to you up through its pond. These next days I am going to stand back a bit and give the busy pages vocal space.

Off the Otter's gangplank with Swan steps is the one expeditionary companion he has hired, described in a letter to Baird as a very intelligent young Haida man, a worker in jewelry, a painter and tatooer who has been with me about 3 months... Johnny Kit Elswa is the keg-chested fellow beside Swan in the second Victoria studio portrait, and his jacket-and-trousers attire does not hide that he is a new example, perhaps in his mid-twenties, of the outdoor artists in which the Haidas had been so rich. Johnny (Swan calls him so in the diary, and I will ~~mostly~~ follow that) has become the latest in Swan's line of Indian confidantes--Swell, Captain John, the Port Townsend Clallam chieftain Duke of York, Jimmy Claplanhoo--and promises to be especially valuable to Swan as hired helper on this expedition. The most faithful intelligent and reliable Indian I have seen, as Swan touts him to Baird, Johnny is from the village of Cumshewa on an eastern midpoint of the Queen Charlottes shoreline, and can show me things of Indian manufacture that the foreign collectors never have seen.

He at once proves to have less exotic talents as well:

~~pocket diary, June 29~~

This forenoon the roof of the house I am occupying, took fire from old stove pipe falling down. Johnny & another Indian put it out with buckets and Mr McKenzie furnished new pipe which Johnny fixed all right.

4#

Swan is advised at Masset that the man he needs is the chief who, before smallpox emptied the area, ruled on the absolute northwesternmost fragment of the Charlottes--then called simply North Island, now on the maps as Langara Island. With that chief and his canoe crew, North Island could serve as the piton for the journey along the western shore: relatively calm waters from Masset to North, assured shelter there on the chief's home isle, then the headland-to-headland descent by canoe seventy-five miles down the coast to Skidegate Channel, the passageway between Graham and Moresby Islands, and through to the settlement at Skidegate, at the southeastern corner of Graham Island. The one omission in the smooth plan echoes the absence of Deans back at the Victoria dock. At the moment, the chief is away somewhere on another canoe errand.

4#

On wait at Masset, Swan begins to entertain himself typically, with his pen. Goes out and counts the Haida community--sixty five houses old and new, nearly all of them with a carved column or pillar in front, covered with heraldic devices...of the family residing within, and representing some legend. . Does whatever collecting is possible:

(no 9) Johnson brought me a fine model of an ancient war canoe with mat sails, paddles and every thing complete. The Haidahs were formerly a warlike people and a terror to all the Coast tribes...but they have become peaceful lately and no war parties are now sent out, and the ancient canoes have all decayed and gone....

(no 41) Johnny was of great assistance in trading and purchased everything much lower than I could. The Indians remonstrated with him and asked him why he liked the white man better than his own people? Because, was the reply, "the white man pays me, you pay me and I work

for you." This logic did not suit them but they let Johnny alone and I succeeded in obtaining some very interesting specimens. Visits companionably with Masset's handful of white residents, Alexander McKenzie trader, Charles W.D. Clifford of the Indian Service who was there on a visit and Reverend Charles Harrison the Episcopal Missionary and his wife all of whom were most courteous...

Swan also passes his tests, Haida and white, as a guest. ~~The~~ One item I noticed especially in Swan's consignments of supplies taken aboard the Otter in Victoria was a copper tank for specimens of fish he is to obtain from the waters surrounding the Queen Charlottes. A Baird idea, of course. Besides his duties at the Smithsonian, where he had become Secretary after the death of Joseph Henry several years before, Baird in his spare time had assumed ~~was in~~ charge of the U.S. Fish Commission. ~~Some years before~~ he had tapped Swan into the Fish Commission payroll for occasional collecting of fish in the Cape Flattery region, and now Baird wanted samples from the North Pacific. Swan, nobody's amateur when it comes to packing for a journey, ~~has~~ filled the fish tank with oranges bought in Victoria, ~~now~~ opens the lid and bestows oranges on the Hudson's Baymen and the local Haidas. Next, the

first of July, An Indian sold me 2 halibut heads for 2 pieces of tobacco and I made a real old fashioned down east chowder which we had for breakfast. Mr McKenzie and Mr Clifford pronounced it delicious... Then I showed Johnny how to make a plum pudding which was done by 5 PM & served with baked salmon...This being "Dominion day," which is celebrated by the Canadians & provincials they considered that my cooking was done in compliment to the day, which however I knew nothing about till this evening.

Clifford, the Canadian Indian agent, walks Swan to the burial ground near the entrance to Masset Inlet that afternoon. Beyond the gravestones--the christianized Haidas now were importing them from Victoria--they see the platforms which elevate the remains of a trio of tribal skagas, medicine men. The skeletons show through the rotting plank coffins, rather as if the skagas are getting restless about eternity. Together with their sacred bones, Swan knows, will be the carved instruments of magic, medicine sticks and implements of office...But we did not care to examine too closely at this time for fear of giving offence, so we turned our attention to examining the surrounding scenery.

4#

Ceremonies of Canadian-American amity aside, Swan paces the Masset shoreline day upon day, because still there is no sign of his canoemen. The site at least has its

beguilements. Wild strawberries, fat little pellets of flavor, virtually carpet areas of the island. Elsewhere, for miles as far as the eye could reach were acres upon acres of wild roses in full bloom. McKenzie told Swan he had been visited the previous summer by a Russian traveler who marveled: "This is Bulgaria, the land of roses!"

Swan's own comparison is less exotic, but as emphatic:

The whole region about Masset reminds me of the appearance of the land of Neah Bay...covered with the same kind of forest and shrubbery. It is an Indians paradise, plenty of fish and berries in summer, wild geese and ducks in myriads in the fall and all winter, and with but little physical exertion their every want is supplied.

The pause; the propositional line which is as close as Swan ever comes to disclosing calculation:

If there was a regular communication between this place and Victoria by steam so that one could come and go at least twice a month, I would as soon reside here as at any place I know.

4H

previous version,
before Dec. 12 editing

Day sixty-six

From under that civic cloud, which at least was newly lined with the Smithsonian's silver, Swan sets off for the Queen Charlotte Islands in mid-June of 1883. He voyages in rare style, out of Victoria aboard the Otter, a Hudson's Bay Company supply steamer.

In effect, Swan is traveling to the Queen Charlottes as the invited guest of British Columbia's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Dr. Israel Wood Powell. Of their time, Powell and Swan are perhaps the two white men of the Pacific Northwest most ardent and informed about the coastal native cultures, and long have known each other through Swan's visits across the Strait to Victoria. Powell's cachet, particularly in vouching for Swan to the Hudson's Bay Company whose ships and trading posts were the supply line into the North Pacific, was ideal, and with it came the suggestion that Swan be accompanied by one of Powell's field agents, James Deans. The one hitch in this supremely hospitable arrangement is that Deans missed the boat.

Swan shrugs--watched for Mr. Deans till the Steamer was under way but he did not appear, the diary reports, and lets it go at that--and settles back to savor the cruise of the Otter. Not much of event has happened to him in the almost two years since leaving Neah Bay. Wait, there is this: Henry Webster's death, which Swan inscribed and then drew triple lines around, crosshatching them darkly at the corners and center until the result looked eerily

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weather of the entire Pacific, and shattering the landmass into a hundred and twenty-five fragments from the size of rocky hummocks to fifty-mile-wide Graham. Swan's telling of the geographic proportions: The extreme length of the group from North Point, North Island to Cape St James the southern extremity is 156 miles. The Islands of the main group are North, Graham, Moresby and Prevost. Graham and Moresby, are the largest and constitute nearly eighty five per cent of the whole area of the group.

White seagoers had arrived in the late 1780's--the islands received their name from the British captain who sailed in on the trading vessel Queen Charlotte--but except for the Hudson's Bay post at Masset and a dogfish oil refinery at Skidegate, white enterprise and settlement still were strangers to the Haida homeland. This changed sharply in the next decade or two after this visit of Swan's; the Queen Charlottes now count a population of about 10,000, the majority of it non-Haida.

Swan's intention, here in 1883, lies with the west coast of the Queen Charlottes, that region swept peopleless by the smallpox epidemic two decades earlier. The idea wafted to him out of what had thwarted the last white expeditionary to the Charlottes: the wild broth of weather along that shore. Geologist George M. Dawson in the mid 1870s had been able to sail and clamber at will among the Charlottes, except along their west shore. "The time and means at my disposal did not enable me to make a survey or geological examination of the west coast of the islands, which would require to

fragment of the Charlottes--then called simply North Island, now on the maps as Langara Island. With that chief and his canoe crew, North Island could serve as the piton for the journey along the western shore: relatively calm waters from Masset to North, assured shelter there on the chief's home isle, then the headland-to-headland descent by canoe 00 miles down the coast to the settlement at Skidegate, at the southeastern corner of Graham Island. The one omission in the smooth plan echoes the absence of Deans back at the Victoria dock. At the moment, the chief is away somewhere on another canoe errand.

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The next day, both McKenzie and Clifford set off in a canoe with Swan, Johnny, and McKenzie's Indian servant George. The cruise is to be a simple shakedown, overnight up Masset Inlet to give Johnny, as Swan puts it, an opportunity of pitching the tent...and to drill him

in the duties of the camp life. Swan, much satisfied, named this camp No. I.

The morning after the canoe party ambles back to Masset is the Fourth of July. In full Anglo-American amity by now, we intended firing a salute from an old cannon belonging to the Indians which was formerly mounted on the bastion at Fort Simpson, but on examination it proved too rusty and we were afraid to test it.

Swan instead promenades the beach and is rewarded with the find of a dead porpoise. I cut off his head to clean it by putting it into salt water where the marine mollusks are very useful in cleaning off the flesh and leaving the bones white and nice... When the Russians occupied Sitka, one of the surgeons adopted this method of cleaning skeletons which was found very effective. The specimen was placed on the beach at low tide and covered with a mat or an old gunny sack, on the corners of which stones were placed to prevent it floating off, and in a short time the myriads of sand fleas would clean it perfectly.

The sand fleas could just as well have taken their time with the porpoise cranium, because still there is no sign of Swan's canoemen. Swan paces the Masset shoreline day upon day. The site has its beguilements. Wild strawberries, fat little pellets of flavor, virtually carpet areas of the island. Elsewhere, for miles as far as the eye could reach were acres upon acres of wild roses in full bloom. McKenzie told Swan he had been visited the previous summer by a Russian traveler who marveled: "This is Bulgaria, the land of roses!"

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typist-ready copy, June '79



Day one

9:15. . . Out in the dark, the Sound wind visits favorite trees, is shaken off, hankers on along the valley in stubborn search. The gusting started up hours ago, during the wink-like pause of daylight that is December evening, and by now seems paced to try to last the night. ... 9:16. . . Until the wind came the day was nordic--sunless, but silent and dry. The neighborhood's lion-colored cat, inspector-general of such days, all this morning tucked himself in satisfied stupor atop the board fence outside the north window of my writing room. ... 9:17. . . Out of his doze each several minutes or so a sharp cat ear would twitch, giving the air a tan flick just to be certain it still could. Then the self-hug into snooze again.

9:18. . . I see, by leaning to hear the wind, that I am reflected in the night-black window which faces west off the end of my desk. The glass collects the half of me above the typewriter into quiet of my own. My hands can move out of sight and clatter these words. ... 9:19. . . I think of Swan, in another December, the time he wrote of a Peninsula settler driven to highest fury when some visiting Indians were clumsy with a canoe mast being stowed for the night and crashed an end through the hard-bought one window of the homestead cabin's one window. 9:20. . . This suburban house glints with thirteen more windows besides the glass my reflection occupies, windows to every direction and

inclination. Wobbly mast-bearers could pass none of my walls without creating crystal.

9:21, and now winter. The instant separates from all [redacted] before it in my western life. The wind and I and the fencetop cat have been clocked through solstice into our coastal season of beginnings. From here, from the bend of this moment, chill and warmth may each ride forth. Weeks of Northwest winter when a traffic of storms will swoop as the Pacific repeatedly tries to throw itself into the air and out across the continent. Other times when the weather will come open-skied and glittering, the mountains of the Olympic and Cascade ranges a spill of rough white gems along two entire horizons. Rain or brave thin days of sun, a restless, startful season always, this run of December's close-January-February-March, and from such uncertain air we take our future.

The lion-cat in all confidence can be counted on to give an even more gratified snuggle to any rainless mornings he can discover from now on. The wind can simply habit itself to the southwesterly mood of storms, arrive into this tiny valley off Puget Sound as naturally as rainflow to a streambed. I am the one on a route of chance. (And although I remind myself I have no superstition, there is the night's odd tick of portent, an arrival of winter at precisely 2121 hours of December 21.) The winter's appointment I have set myself,

back so many dozens of years and across geography to the Olympic Peninsula and elsewhere along the coastal tracery of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and indeed into the life of another man--this is all a journey I have awaited for a decade, ever since I began to grow aware of how powerfully, mortally, I am bonded to this elusive last margin of the land.

A season of frontier, this winter will be for me. Of exploring, stepping in search of the paths of westering impulse that pull across America's girth of plains and over its continental summit and at last must nip off here at the surf of the Pacific. Those paths that for so many years carried Swan, and now hold me.

Day two

His name was James Gilchrist Swan, and we will see it to be more than a prank of language that his own era looked on him as distinctly an odd duck. I have felt my pull toward him ever since some forgotten writing pursuit or another landed me into the coastal region of history where he presides, meticulous as a usurer's clerk, diarying and diarying that life of his, ~~five~~ four generations and as many lightyears from my own.

*This is the 18th day since Swell was shot and there is no offensive smell from the corpse. It may be accounted for in this manner. He was shot through the body and afterwards washed in the breakers, consequently all the blood in him must have run out. He was then rolled up tight in 2 new blankets and put into a new box, nailed up strong.*

I know the beach at Crescent Bay where the life of Swell, the chieftain of the Makah tribe, was snapped off. Across on the Canadian shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca the lights of modern Victoria now make a spread of white embers atop the burn-dark rim of coastline. But on Swell's final winter night in 1861, only a beach campfire at Crescent on our southern shore flashed bright enough to attract the eye, and Swell misread it as an encampment of traveling members of his own tribe. Instead, he stepped from his canoe to find that the overnighters were of the Elwha village of the Clallam tribe, among them chanced to be a particular rival of Swell, and his bullet spun the Makah dead into the cold surf.

It was a killing less casual than the downtown deaths my morning newspaper brings me three or four times a week--the Elwahs and the Makahs at least had the excuse of ~~generations~~ lifetimes of quarrel--or that I could go see in aftermath, eligible as I am for all manner of intrusion because of being a writer, were I to accompany the Seattle homicide squad. James G. Swan did go hurrying to be beside Swell's corpse, and there the first of our differences is marked.

Truth told, I find among Swan's words that more than one motive carried him west along the Strait from Port Townsend to the death scene. Swell was his best-regarded friend among the coastal tribes, a man he had voyaged with, learned legends from. Swan's diary pages show them steadily swapping favors: now Swell detailing for Swan the Makahs' skill at hunting whales, now Swan painting for Swell in red and black his *name and a horse on his canoe sail. Swell said he always went faster in his canoe than the other Indians. . . like a horse, so he wanted to have one painted* . . . But solid as the comradeship may have been, so was Swan's Yankee instinct to retrieve the goods which Swell had been consigned to bring home by canoe to another of Swan's coastal acquaintances, a trader situated at the western extent of the Strait. From the merchants of Port Townsend, Swan compiles a list of Swell's cargo, then in his small quick hand sums

his resolve: *Must therefore look for 1 British tea pot, 1 small brass kettle, 1 tin trunk . . .*

I ponder this, mulling what it would take to send me off on a fetch of this sort. . . a crate of books, the chance to hear a grand story . . .

A morning soon after learning of Swell's death, having traveled with a friendly chieftain of the Clallam band nearest to Port Townsend, Swan strolled into the Elwha village. *Charley, the murderer, then got up and made a speech. He said that he shot Swell for two reasons, one of which was, that the Makah's had killed two of the Elwha's a few months previous, and they were determined to kill a Mackah chief to pay for it. And the other reason was, that Swell had taken his squaw away, and would not return either the woman or the fifty blankets he had paid for her.* Swan then haggled out of Charley the potwear, several blankets and a dozen yards of calico. *I could not help feeling while standing up alongside this murderer, surrounded by the residents of the village (some 75 persons), that I would gladly give a pull at the rope that should hang him . . .*

That day's chastisement remained the product of vocal cords rather than hemp, however. When Swan was done, it became the turn of the visiting chieftain to erupt to his Clallam cousins about the paltry compensation Charley was handing over. *This talk produced two more blankets which closed the business.*

Swan next carried the matter of Swell's death to the federal Indian agent for Washington Territory, met inconclusion there, Sent ~~wrote~~ a seething letter to the newspaper in the territorial capital of Olympia. . . *an Indian peaceable passing on his way home in his canoe, laden with white men's goods. . . foully murdered . . . agents of our munificent government have not the means at their disposal to defray the expenses of going to arrest the murderer. . .* and at last canoed once more along the Strait to accompany Swell--still nailed up strong--for the hundred miles to burial at the Makah village of Neah Bay. There, Swell's brother Peter *came and wished me to go with him and select a suitable spot to bury Swell . . . I did as he desired, marked out the spot and dug out the first sand.* And this further: *He also brought up the large tomanawas boards*--the Makahs' cedar tableaus of magic which would be the grave's monument--*of Swell for me to paint anew. . .*

That friend-of-the-family request for a man from Boston to trace fresh the sacred designs of a buried Makah chieftain came in one of the earliest of Swan's decades of winters along this frontier coast. I would wager much, however, that it will be not the last unlikely instant in so brim-full a life as this of his.

James G. Swan had hastened west in the same scurry as many thousands of other mid-nineteenth-century Americans.

Their word isn't much known today, but at the time they were called argonauts, the seekers drawn by the finds of gold in California streambeds as if they had glimpsed wisps of the glittering fleece that lured Jason and his Greeks. Like Jason's, their journey generally was by ship, the very impatience for wealth-to-come evidently weighting the sailing vessels to slowness. Swan stepped aboard the Rob Roy in Boston harbor on the twenty-fifth of January, 1850, climbed off at San Francisco on August eighth.

What exact cache of promises and excuses this man of New England had left behind in eastern America isn't known in detail, but they likely were considerable. Something of the bulk and awkwardness of my own, I suppose, when I went off from Montana ranching to college and a typewriter. Swan was 32½ years old when he set foot on the Pacific Coast.

By the time of his birth in 1818--Turgenev's year, Karl Marx's year--in the north-of-Boston village of Medford, the Swan family name already had been in Massachusetts for eighteen decades, evidently the devout achieving sort of New England clan which began to count itself gentry from the moment the Indians could be elbowed out of sight into the forest. Merchants, doctors, educators, lawyers populate the generations. Swan's own older brothers stayed standard, Samuel as physician, Benjamin a minister.

But not James. He evidently took the excuse that occasional seafarers had cropped up in the family--a legendarily adventurous uncle, and more recently his own father, said to have been lost in a gale while captaining a brig back from Africa in 1823--and in his mid-teens Swan started in on the try of a waterfront life in Boston. Dallying around the docks, first as a clerk with a shipping firm and eventually as a merchandiser of ships' supplies, must have suited the young Swan comfortably enough. With forests of sail sweeping back and forth before his eyes, and the new steam vessels shuddering to life around him, this adventurer of the waterfront made no ocean voyage of his own until he was twenty-three. Then he embarked on a Boston-to-Liverpool jaunt with a chore or two of his employer's business attached, and seems to have been content to do it just the once.

That once to Britain, however, put Swan's writing hand into motion. The long, brownish, tatty-edged manuscript pages are ten years the earliest of all Swan's surviving paperwork, and must be a version he copied from his pocket notebook--it would have been the start of that habit, too--as soon as he returned to America. By my terms, this wan sheaf of paper comes as ancient as a cave painting. Any comparable paperwork having to do with the Doig family would be drily governmental, irretrievably in the Scottish archives, and likely would show us in arrears on croft taxes or enlisting one of our number to die an infantry death in Madras or the Crimea. It is a bonus of magic for me, then, that Swan's life from his own hand begin here on March second, 1841, and recite the month in which he rambled interestedly around

Britain.

And how keen, assiduous an account his squinched little lines of ink are. Weather, conveyance, schedule, meals, roadside fields, birds of those fields, even Swan's morning disposition--*I was very stupid today,* the sixteenth of March, *from the want of sleep last night & for the first time since I left home I felt really homesick & would have been glad to have been home but as soon as I walked out I felt much relieved & hope to get my thoughts on a business train after a good nights rest*--all come on report at the nib of his pen. So too the impress of Britian of Dickens's time. Liverpool astounded and horrified this ~~New Englander~~ Bostonian with the hurly-burly of its streets: . . . *female scavengers. . . go round with baskets & collect all the manure & offal in the city which they put in heaps & offer then for sale. Their heaps are bought by the gardeners for a few pence to enrich the garden beds--It struck me as the filthiest work I had ever seen a woman engaged in & more especially as they use nothing but their hands to work with.* Then the proverbial fishwives, *a queer lot of beings & probably the lowest of the human race. . . They go screaming round the streets like so many gulls . . .* ~~*Quietly, the unsurprising exclamation:*~~ Quickly, the unsurprising exclamation: *Liverpool is a shocking dirty place & I am sick enough of it.*

But London he ~~thought~~ thinks a wondrous city . . . *walked two hours this morning in one direction & every step of the way*

Something else of moment happened to Swan that same year, of 1841. He married rather above himself. Matilda Loring, of a prominent Boston printing and publishing family, a small neatly-built woman with a firm line of jaw, became his bride on the twenty-sixth of October of 1841. Swan's pen is conspicuously silent on the courtship and its aftermath. But from the circumstances, it must have become one of those marriages where it afterward is unclear whether the wife chided because the husband boozed, or the husband drank because the wife was a shrike. What is plain enough is that Swan continued to court the bottle even after, in the eighth year of marriage to Matilda, he pointed himself west across America.

I hunger to have overheard the exact words of that decision. Swan and Matilda were living apart by the year 1849—he in a Boston boarding house handy to his waterfront life, she in a house in Chelsea—and did he simply come onto the porch one day and offer, *Matilda, I have been thinking I will go to California?* Whatever the severing sentence, a mass chorus of husbandly farewells could have been heard in the gold-struck America of that moment. Eastern newspapers grumped of men "rushing head over heels towards the El Dorado on the Pacific. . ." In 1848, before gold, the non-native population of California seems to have totaled fewer than fifteen thousand. By 1852, the count was a quarter million, and James Gilchrist Swan long since among them.

and skunk cabbage, what western venturers that daughter and that son might have been. But come they did not, and instead simply were left by Swan as part of his passage price, which he seems to have been little enough agonized about assuming, for his leaving of New England.

The many weeks to round Cape Horn, in 1850, the long climbing voyage along the Pacific shores, arrival--and then Swan was like a good many of us ever since in not quite knowing what to make of California. I am reminded that only months ago Carol and I drove casually through the Sierra Nevada foothills where the gold towns had blossomed and found all rivers bucking in high white fury and daily reports of rafting Californians drowning themselves. *Damn river is like Niagara Falls laid out flat*, somebody complained, and so the waters of the lode country all looked. To the annals of exasperation about forest fires, earthquake and drought heard during our previous California journeys we now added crazed streams, and wondered to one another when the place manages to catch its breath. Certainly it already was in full exotic gallop when Swan disembarked one-hundred-twenty-eight years ago. Dozens, scores of deserted ships clogged the San Francisco harbor, a fleet of Marie Celestes left ghostly by crews which had swarmed to the goldstrikes.

Swan himself completed the pilgrimage up the Sacramento River to the mining camps, but only as a purser on a river steamer. He hesitated in that job, and at the firm's dockside office in San Francisco, for only a matter of weeks, then signed

on as the purser of a schooner bound for Hawaii to take on a cargo of potatoes.

Why he so promptly went sailing off for spuds is not known, but the jaunt into the Pacific ~~was~~ seems to have been instructive enough. Swan managed to linger at Lahaina for twenty-five days, and one of his rare surviving letters to Matilda gives ~~twelve~~ a dozen pages of blunderbuss observations of the islands and islanders *. . . on great occasions or when the white men will pay the expenses they get up a feast called a Lu wow. . . This Lu wow consists of a series of Baked dishes such as Dogs Hogs Turkeys fowls fish Fruits and Greens . . . Their native dances being prohibited are only given by stealth or by express invitation of the whites. They are called Hoolah hoolah. I was desirous of seeing one. . . The natives all call themselves mickonaree or missionary which is the term they use to express their ideas of christianity. . . there are but very few really sincere & devout persons among them. and are mostly like one I saw in Mr Bolles store, who was cutting up some capers, when Mr B remarked, I thought you was a missionary Yes said the fellow pointing to his mouth "me mickonary here, all rest no mickonary."*

Say for Swan, however, that censorious as he sometimes could be ~~generally~~ most often when writing eastward ~~he inevitably~~ ended up as he did now in final lines to Matilda. *All these islands have something of interest attached to them which is well worth the time of the curious to investigate and I never yet*

*found that information was useless to any one. . . much pleased with the result of my voyage and hope I may never be doomed to meet with worse people than I have parted with . . . Faithfully & Affectionately, your Husband. . .*

Back from that Hawaiian sojourn, Swan at once settled again into a dockside way of life in San Francisco, through the rest of 1850, and through 1851, and through most of 1852. Money always slid through his Swan's pockets almost without stopping, and he evidently found life sufficiently interesting just by being away from Massachusetts and alongside the rougher torrent of California waterfront traffic. ~~He didn't bestir himself from~~ this routine ~~which~~ indeed seems to have been very like the career he had left in Boston except that he would do it at about half-speed and without regard for hometown opinion: laxities which have been among the traditional rewards of the West ever since there was an America ~~until~~ Then, late in 1852, ~~when~~ down from the Oregon country arrived Charles J. W. Russell.

A self-described oyster entrepreneur, this visitor from the shaggy north ~~Russell~~ was better portrayed by Swan as ~~having~~ possessing *a good deal of the romancing spirit of the Baron Munchausen.* ~~He~~ Russell had gone to Oregon Territory in dream of some real-estate scheme at the mouth of the Columbia River, found that he was a number of generations ahead of his time with that notion, and instead began ~~sending~~ dispatching

shiploads of oysters to San Francisco; even at the distance of 130 years, the man has a sheen. Russell in his swanky way invited Swan to his oystering enterprise on Shoalwater

Bay, just to the north of the mouth of the Columbia, and Swan ~~promptly~~ seems to have accepted as rapidly as he could get the words out of his mouth.

I have prowled the Washington coastline where Swan ~~stepped~~ flopped ashore at the end of 1852, and a misted, spongy, ozzeful kind of place it is. On the western rim of bay, what seems from a distance to be a line of white-gabled houses proves to be the surf of the Pacific. The saltwater reaches hungrily in through this entrance and, in a tremendous splatter of inlets and fingers--the bay lying stretched from north to south for twenty-five miles, and nearly ten across its greatest width--mingles with the inflow of half a dozen sizable rivers and who knows how many creeks and seeps.

The mix yields a maximum of ~~gray~~ tan marshes and muddy tideflats and ~~tan marshes.~~ Mapmakers have granted names to twenty-seven of these Shoalwater Bay sloughs, and almost as many more haven't been thought worth the effort. Yet around its eastern extent the bay surprises a visitor with sudden timber-topped cliffs about a hundred feet high. *Banks of a sandy clay,* Swan once categorized them, *intermingled with strata of shells and remains of ancient forest-trees that for ages have been buried.*

All in all, a vast estuarine pudding in a clay bowl. One of the few advances since Swan's time has been the amendment of the shallow bay's name from *Shoalwater* to the less embarrassing *Willapa*.

When Swan showed up here, ~~probably~~ more than likely shaking the rain off

his hatrim, Shoalwater Bay had only a few huts, a temporary crew of sawyers cutting pilings, a shifting population of members of the Chinook and Chehalis tribes, and fourteen white "residents" who pottered away at oystering or homesteading. Fourteen kinds of Swan, it could be said. The whites hired the Indians to do the bulk of the oyster harvesting, the Indians had their own ebb-and-flow view of life. All in all, the colony at Shoalwater Bay in the early 1850s amounted more to an episode of prolonged beachcombing than a serious effort at enterprise. And Swan, putting ever more distance between himself and those 220 years of New England rectitude in his family line--Swan fit with the idling oysterers like a pinky in an opera glove.

Rapidly he was at home among the Chehalis and Chinooks as well. Russell, who could embellish as readily as he breathed, had told the Indians that Swan was a famous physician. Correctly regarding himself as able to improvise on just about any frontier task, Swan did his part to fulfill the reputation. The tribal people would arrive to him with complaints of headache or rheumatism; he would doctor them with a liniment concocted of ammonia and whale oil, *which was considered, from its pungency, to be very potent.*

All too soon, Swan's doctoring stopped being a jest. One evening he noticed that the face and neck of one of the