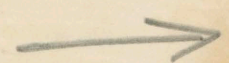
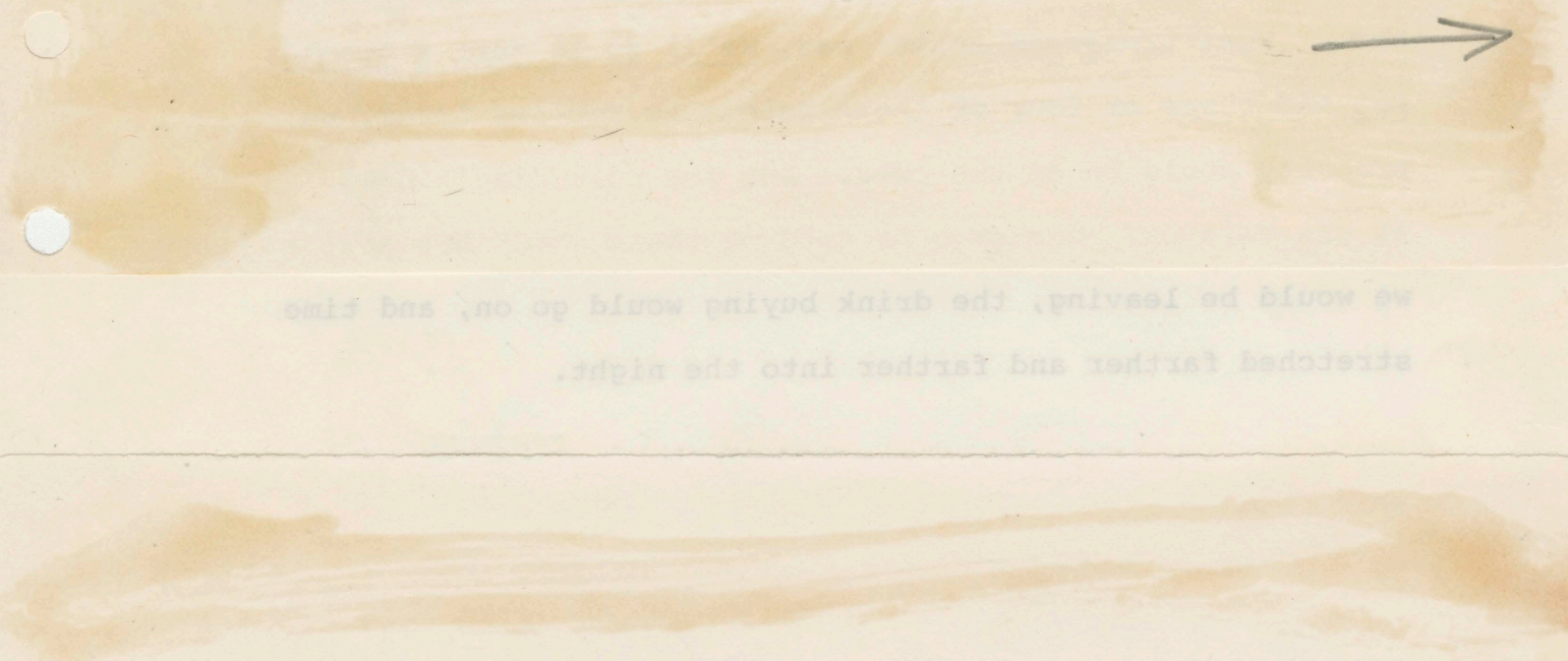


of ~~westering~~ <sup>west</sup> impulse that pull across America's girth of plains and  
over its continental summit and at last <sup>reluctantly</sup> nip off here at the surf  
from the Pacific. The companion I want for this winter, here along  
the continental edge that drew us both. And a guide, it may be, for  
me to see how it is that those paths which for so many years carried  
Swan now hold me.

4# 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 <sup>in late</sup> on the twenty-fifth of January, 1850, climbed off at San Francisco <sup>in full California springtime.</sup> on August eighth. <sup>9 is full April</sup>

What exact cache of promises and excuses this man of New England left behind him <sup>can't be</sup> isn't known in detail, but they likely were considerable. Something of the bulk and awkwardness of my own, I suppose, when I <sup>reared</sup> went off from Montana ranching to college and a typewriter. Swan was 32 1/2 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 <sup>erect</sup> 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--his own father, said to have been lost in a gale while captaining a brig back from Africa in 1823; a legendarily adventurous uncle who had sailed in an early fur-trading vessel to the Pacific Northwest--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 <sup>shows no sign that he made any</sup> ~~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.

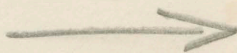
That once to Britain, however, put ~~the~~ Swan's writing hand into motion, and by my terms, the wan sheaf of paper that has survived comes as ancient and entrancing <sup>intriguingly hued</sup> and ~~enough~~ as a cave painting. The thirty brownish tatty-edged long manuscript pages are by a decade the earliest of all Swan's surviving paperwork, and must be a version he copied from <sup>his</sup> ~~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 and entrancing as a cave painting.~~ Any comparable paperwork having to do with ~~the Doig~~ <sup>my</sup> family would be drily governmental, in the Scottish archives, and likely would show <sup>sundry Doigs</sup> ~~us~~ irretrievably in arrears on <sup>our</sup> ~~croft~~ taxes or enlisting one of our number to die an infantry death in Madras or the Crimea. It is a bonus of <sup>archival</sup> ~~magic~~ for me, then, that the pages of Swan's life from his own hand begin here on the second of March, 1841, and recite the two months in which he sailed the Atlantic and rambled interestedly around Britain.

The wilderness of waters which surround us on his crossing; the which tossed a fellow passenger beneath the table and his breakfast storm-tossed breakfast which tumbled a

after him, his head was covered with a showed of fried eggs which looked for all the world like doubloons stuck in his hair; arrival to Liverpool and St. Patrick's Day, the Irish have been walking in procession <sup>the whole day...</sup> ~~the day~~ all rigged out with green sashes and sprigs of shamrock, a species of weed similar to the chick weed...



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  
and 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 <sup>all</sup> ~~at~~ all come on report at the nib of his pen. So too  
the social impress of Britain of Dickens' time. Liverpool astounds  
and horrifies this Bostonian with the hurly-burly of its streets:...  
female scavengers...go round with baskets and 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...Quickly, the unsurprising  
exclamation: Liverpool is a shocking dirty place & I am sick enough  
of it.

<sup>is beguiling</sup>  
But Edinburgh was an improvement, the streets are laid out with a good

deal of taste, and the trip southward ~~is~~ a lark: In the carriage  
with me were a party of Irish Gentlemen & Ladies...They all took me  
for a Scotchman & as I had just left Scotland I could talk to them  
finely. London proves to be downright wondrous, walked two hours this  
morning in one direction & every step of the way the street was crowded  
with people & vehicles. His young American eyes have not seen the  
like except possibly on a Boston market day when a drawbridge over the  
Charles River would hold up traffic, the crowd then is just the same  
as the streets are here all the time from sunrise to sunset.

no 9 He glimpses the young queen, Victoria, trundling out of the  
Buckingham Palace grounds on her way to church...had a good sight of her  
face as she was looking out the carriage window...quite pretty, Swan  
considers her, in a little blue silk bonnet. He is drawn back and

back to the <sup>stupendous</sup> dome of St. Paul's



service there seems to him mumbled over in a very bad manner. Tours the new museum of wax figures shown by an old French woman & her son-- the Tussauds-- who are making a deal of money out of this affair. Rides the night mail train from London back to Liverpool: they go with the greatest velocity sometimes 50 miles an hour-- the fastest travel in the world of its time-- only stopping to get water.

Swan-among-the-Britons arrives at the last line of his journey having viewed a great deal to admire & much to censure, and that <sup>already</sup> is the exact Swan style I have begun to find ~~amid~~ <sup>ledge</sup> amid his accumulating day-by-day pages on my desk, here at our shared ~~edge~~ <sup>ledge</sup> of the American landscape: banquet of details, ready snifters of opinion.

Something else of moment happened to Swan that 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 the courtship and its aftermath, Swan's <sup>archival</sup> ~~heap~~ <sup>reads</sup> of paper is <sup>all too</sup> conspicuously silent. But from the circumstances, this ~~must have~~ <sup>reads</sup> ~~become~~ <sup>as</sup> one of those marriages where it afterward is unclear whether the wife chided because the husband took on the world's whiskey as a personal challenge, or the husband fled into the bottle because the

wife was a shrike. What is plain enough, even in the thumbing scan of his life I have been doing yesterday and today, is that Swan continued to



111  
court the bottle <sup>long</sup> even after, in the eighth year of marriage to Matilda,  
he pointed himself west across America.

I hunger to have overheard just how he said 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 Chelsea with the  
two children of the divided household, four-year-old Ellen and  
seven-year-old Charles-- and did Swan simply come onto the porch one  
day and offer, Matilda, I have been thinking I will go to California?

The many weeks to round Cape Horn in 1850, the long climbing  
voyage along the Pacific shores, arrival: <sup>To judge by his piecemeal recollection,</sup> ~~and~~ then Swan was like a  
good many of us ever since in not quite knowing what to make of  
California.



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 <sup>too</sup> himself completed the pilgrimage up the Sacramento to the mining camps, but only as a purser on a river steamer. <sup>I find that</sup> He hesitated in that job, and at the <sup>maritime</sup> firm's dockside office in San Francisco, for only a matter of weeks, then signed on <sup>onto</sup> ~~as the purser~~ of a schooner bound for Hawaii to take <sup>aboard</sup> on a cargo of potatoes.

Why he so promptly went sailing off for spuds is not ~~known~~, <sup>at all clear to me, and maybe not to him.</sup> but the jaunt into the Pacific seems to have been instructive enough.

Swan managed to linger at Lahaina <sup>on the isle of Maui</sup> for twenty-five days, and one of his rare surviving letters to Matilda gives the islands and islanders a dozen pages of the same blunderbuss observation. Liverpool and London had received: ...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."

Back from that <sup>sway</sup> Hawaiian sojourn, Swan at once settled again into a dockside way of life in San Francisco, <sup>again as a clerk for a ship-outfitting firm,</sup> through the rest of 1850, and through 1851, and through most of 1852. Money always slid through his pockets almost without stopping, and he evidently found life sufficiently interesting by just being away from Massachusetts and alongside the rougher torrent of California waterfront traffic. <sup>His</sup> This routine indeed seems to have been <sup>all but identical to</sup> very like the career <sup>Swan</sup> he had left in Boston except that he could do it at about half-speed and without regard for hometown opinion: laxities which have been <sup>high</sup> among the traditional rewards of the west ever since there was an America. Then, late in 1852, down from the Oregon country <sup>to San Francisco</sup> arrived Charles J. W. Russell.

A self-described oyster entrepreneur, this visitor from the shaggy north was better portrayed by Swan as possessing a good deal of the romancing spirit of the Baron Munchausen. <sup>materialized in</sup> 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 ended up at Shoalwater Bay, <sup>some</sup> a few miles north of ~~the mouth of~~ the Columbia, where he began dispatching shiploads of oysters to San Francisco. Even at the distance of 130 years, the gent has a sheen. Russell in his swanky spielster's way invited Swan to the oystering enterprise,

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

I have prowled the Washington coastline where Swan plopped ashore at the end of 1852, and a misted, spongy, cozeeful kind of place it is. On the western rim of bay, what <sup>appears</sup> ~~seems~~ from a distance to be a line of white-gabled houses proves to be the <sup>foaming</sup> ~~surf~~ of the Pacific. The saltwater reaches hungrily in through this entrance and, in a <sup>momentous</sup> ~~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.

*no 9* <sup>This</sup> ~~The~~ mix yields a maximum of tan marshes and gray muddy tideflats. 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 <sup>big</sup> ~~shallow~~



bay's name from Shoalwater to the less embarrassing Willapa.

When Swan showed up here, more than likely shaking the rain off his hatbrim, Shoalwater Bay's sum of civilization totted up as 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 <sup>held</sup> had their own ebb-and-flow view of life. Put at its more generous, this colony on the eastern shore of Shoalwater Bay in the early 1850s-- Bruceport, it was dubbed, in memory of a schooner which had grounded there-- amounted more to an episode of prolonged beachcombing than a serious effort at enterprise. And Swan, stretching 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.

<sup>and this is significant, Swan</sup>  
Rapidly ~~he~~ made himself at home among the people of the Chehalis

and Chinook tribes as well. The Shoalwater Indians were told by Russell, who could embellish as readily as he breathed, that Swan was a famous physician.

Correctly regarding himself as able to improvise on just about any frontier task, Swan did his part to advance the reputation. The tribal people arrive to him with complaints of headache or rheumatism; he doctors them with a liniment concocted of ammonia and whale oil, which was considered, from its pungency, to be very potent.

Not, however, as potent as the frontier could demand. One evening Swan noticed that the face and neck of one of the Chinook women were



covered with little spots like flea-bites. <sup>4</sup> I said to Russell, "This woman has either got the small-pox or measles."

Smallpox it was, and that frontier plague tore like flung knives through the Shoalwater community. Swan did what <sup>doctoring and</sup> nursing he could; all his life he would show a fine compassionate touch for <sup>such</sup> that task. But several of the natives died, Russell and a number of other whites were laid low for weeks. Somehow Swan himself went untouched. <sup>4</sup> I trust, he wrote somberly afterward, I may not be obliged to pass through such another trial.

Life at Shoalwater thereafter proved to be seldom dull, hardly ever strenuous.

Much of the lulling appeal of that beachside life at Shoalwater, as Swan recounted it, was simply the stomach's common sense. The bay in those days set a kind of floating feast, offering as it did clams, crabs, shrimp, mussels, sand-lobster, salmon, sturgeon, trout, turbot, sole, flounder, and, naturally, oysters. The facet of Swan that was an interested and inventive cook-- his victuals ~~often~~ make a sudden savory appearance in his pages; among the Indian delicacies he notes down as having tried and liked are seal liver, cow parsnip, and cold raccoon--couldn't help but prize this easy bounty. Just once in these plump

years does Swan <sup>sundays</sup> ~~come onto~~ a hungry time, and that was during <sup>one hectic</sup> the onset of winter when he was trying to homestead with <sup>an</sup> the old whaling captain <sup>named</sup> Purrington. The captain was famous for cooking every thing that had ever lived. We had eaten of young eagles, hawks, owls, lynx, beaver, seal, otter, gulls, pelican, and, finally, wound up with crow; and the crow was the worst of the lot. The captain once tried to bake a skunk, but not having properly cleaned it, it smelt so unsavory when the bake-kettle was opened that he was forced to throw skunk and kettle into the river,



which he did with a sigh, remarking what a pity it was that it smelled  
so strong, when it was baked so nice and brown.

While Swan carried on his love affair with <sup>Shoalwater's</sup> food and leisure,  
he <sup>likely</sup> probably flirted often enough with alcohol as well. The  
<sup>basically</sup> Shoalwater residents, white and native, emerge out of his words and  
those of others as a boozy bunch who did as much roistering as  
oystering. On the Fourth of July of 1853, to take the <sup>frivolous</sup> prime example,  
after orations and eating and a feu-de-joie by the guns and rifles  
of the whole company, the Shoalwater patriots stumbled onto the <sup>inspiration</sup> idea  
to close the performances for the day by going on top of the cliff  
opposite, and make a tremendous big blaze. They found a colossal  
hollow cedar stump, filled it to the brim with dry spruce limbs,  
torched it off. It made the best bonfire I ever saw, Swan recollected  
in considerable understatement, and after burning all night and part  
of the next day, finally set fire to the forest, which continued to  
burn for several months, till the winter rains finally extinguished  
it.

<sup>no 9</sup> A jolly conflagration of four or five months duration <sup>couldn't have been</sup> wasn't  
entirely usual, but much other unsober behavior was. And when Swan  
remarked of one of his compatriots that, like all the rest of the  
frontier people, he was fond of Old Rye, the unwritten admission is  
there that Swan too numbered among the frontier people. <sup>was</sup>  
numbered one James G. Swan.



In the spring of 1853, when the region north of the Columbia River was hived off from Oregon to become Washington Territory, several of the Shoalwater oyster-boys <sup>had been</sup> ~~were~~ inspired to file for land claims. Swan in ~~May~~ selected a site at the mouth of what is now the Bone River-- the Querquelin, it was called by the Indians: Mouse River-- on the bay's northeastern shore. Reasoning that the absence of a wife by some three thousand miles didn't really lessen the marital status all that much, <sup>he</sup> ~~Swan~~ claimed 160 acres for himself and a second 160 for Matilda.

A half-mile square of frontier <sup>in the spring</sup> conquered by ink. I was perfectly delighted with the place, Swan enthuses in one breath, and notes in the next that the unwooded portion was overgrown with nettles and ferns three feet high. In that divided comment he sounds precisely like my kin who grew up on our pair of Doig homesteads south of Helena, entranced to the end of their lives with memory of the blue-timbered glory of the Big Belt mountains and still furious with



the impossible winter snows as well.

Swan and <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ convivial old whaling captain whom <sup>Purrington eventually</sup> ~~Russell~~ had invited up from Astoria set about to build a cabin on the new riverside estate. Their cabin work went at a creep. You can all but see the pair of them, day upon day, sighing regret at the blisters on their hands and settling onto a handy log for Captain Purrington to recite another sea story. With winter <sup>stalking</sup> coming in fast, they at last cobbled together a shack from the split cedar boards of an abandoned Indian lodge. Swan inventively masoned a huge fireplace out of clay blocks cut from a nearby cliff. The first real storm of winter made mud of his handiwork, sluiced a couple of bushels of coals and ashes into the middle of the room, and very nearly set the place ablaze. Not long after, <sup>he catches</sup> Swan caught a schooner back to San Francisco, to clerk under a dry roof until spring.

Fresh dollars in his pocket, <sup>he</sup> Swan is found again at Shoalwater at the start of summer, 1854. For the first of numerous times in his life, <sup>Swan</sup> ~~he~~ now wangled <sup>1/3</sup> a brief, modest niche in the federal payroll. He was appointed assistant customs collector, for that portion of the coast north of the Columbia, including Shoalwater Bay and Gray's Harbor to Cape Flattery; the duties of the office being to report all vessels arriving at or departing from Shoal-water Bay, and to keep a diligent watch on the coast to see that none of the Russian or Hudson Bay Companies' vessels came around either for smuggling or trading with the Indians.

Since this comprised an all-but-empty stretch of shore, with only the lackadaisical oysterers at Shoalwater, a handful of stump



farmers and sawmillers up around Grays Harbor, and the tiny ~~drowsing~~ tribal settlements at a few river mouths, Swan's precinct seems to have been spectacularly free of smuggling prospects. The only time he is on record as having had to exert himself was when the Indians, as a joke, lured him several days up the coast to check on a vessel which turned out to be a U.S. Geological Survey steamship. Swan being Swan, he did not much mind the futile jaunt: So far as related to smuggling, I had walked sixty miles up the beach for no purpose, but I did not regret having started, as I had seen a line of coast which few, if any white men had been over before.

*#* Months slid past, years began to go.

*not nearly all*  
Yet a majority of Swan's time at Shoalwater could ~~not~~ have been spent *promenading* strolling the coast or *aiming himself* ~~sipped~~ into the bottom of a bottle. He has left us a *frontier* view greatly wider and deeper than that. The maraud of smallpox, which merely made the white men ill but slaughtered the Chinooks and Chehalis; the pride



of place when selecting a homestead site; the casual reach of distance as Swan strolled sixty miles of wild coast to gaze upon an innocent steamship: these carry a sense of this rough margin of the west as true as a thumb testing the teeth of a rip-saw. And all of it derives from Swan as serious and published author, in a book I have been quoting from ever since <sup>he</sup> Swan squished ashore at Shoalwater. (If Swan was <sup>regularly</sup> diarying in <sup>e</sup> those years, and I judge he was not, although he mentions having written and lost a collection of notes about the Indians, the volumes never have come to sight.) The Northwest Coast, he titled the work, then thought he had better elucidate: Or Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory. ~~Harper & Brothers published the effort in 1857.~~

This coastal drifter, then, this dabbling man born a decade or so before my own great-grandfather, <sup>spent</sup> ~~is found~~ spending part of his life at the enterprise I do: shaping words into print. Whether the fact nudges Swan closer into resemblance of me or me to Swan, I am not ready to say, but certainly it fetches both of us into the same cottage industry at least some hours of the week. I imagine that Swan, like me, when he held pen in hand for another chapter of Northwest Coast or, as later, to begin an article for a frontier newspaper, <sup>laced making</sup> had his times of wishing he had chosen some sounder cottage job, such as ~~tweed weaving~~ or raising chinchillas. I imagine as well that in the next minute or so he was knuckle-deep into the words again. Cottagers have to be like that.



Harper & Brothers <sup>brought out</sup> published Northwest Coast in 1857, and ~~not~~

~~only does the book~~, with its lore of baked skunks and patriotic

pyromania, <sup>the same</sup> ~~it~~ stands as a jaunty grandfather of us all who face

west above our typewriters. But more than that. This book of <sup>Swan's</sup> ~~his~~

time at Shoalwater conveys, as he would in the diary pages for all

the length of his life, <sup>his</sup> ~~Swan's~~ rare knack of looking at the coastal

~~as personages~~ natives rather than the frontier's human rubble.

natives as flesh and blood rather than the frontier's tribal rubble.



He does not go all the way, sometimes dwelling overmuch on the simplicities of the <sup>the bay's natives</sup> tribal people while he and the other oyster-boys were not exactly an advanced institute themselves. ~~But more often~~ <sup>however, his</sup> than not, ~~his~~ remarks carry uncommon sympathy and insight about the Chinooks and Chehalis:

The Indians can see but little or no difference between their system of Tomanawos and our own views as taught them. For instance, the talipus, or fox, is their emblem of the creative power; the swispee, or duck, that of wisdom. And they say that the Boston people, or Americans, have for their Tomanowos the wheark, or eagle and that the King George, or English people, have a lion for their Tomanawos.

Or again: One day, while being more than usually inquisitive, old Suis. . . after trying to make me understand that the names I was asking about had no meaning, at last said, "Why, you white people have names like ours; some mean something, and others mean nothing. I know your name, Swan, is like our word Cocumb, and means a big bird; and Mr. Lake's name is for water, like Shoalwater Bay. But what does Mr. Russell's or Baldt's, or Champ's or Hillyer's, or Sweeney's, or Weldon's name mean?"

I told her I did not know. "Well," she replied, "so it is with us. We don't know what those names you have asked mean; all we know is that they were the names of our ancestors--elip tillicums, or first people."



Thoughtful jots about first people, and the tamanoas of whites.  
The time of ~~freinship~~<sup>comradeship</sup> with Swell, and the honor to repaint his funeral boards, lay not so far ahead.

With Swan, you never know where a competence is going to lead,  
if indeed it ~~ambles~~<sup>ever ambles</sup> anywhere. It was his skill with the native lore and languages which now transported ~~him~~<sup>S</sup> for awhile out of the Pacific Northwest. In the mid-1850s, territorial officials of Washington and Oregon began to ~~call~~<sup>summon</sup> the Northwest tribes into treaty councils. These worked out as was usual in our continental history: the Indians got a chance for soulful rhetoric, and the whites got the land.

When this ritualistic process reached southwesternmost Washington with a treaty parley at a site on the Chehalis River in February, 1855, Swan inevitably was on hand; Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens had invited him to come over from the coast and interpret. At the riverbank congress Swan noted with sympathy the objection of a Chinook chief to the governor's offhand plan

to place the assembled tribes on a single reservation. We are not friends, and if we went together we should fight, and soon we would all be killed. But ~~Swan~~<sup>he</sup> noted as well a chance for himself among the and it was not on the Indian side of the campfire. assemblage, Grasping at the coat-tails of Governor Stevens and other budding politicians of the Territory, by late 1856 he pulled himself to Washington, D.C.

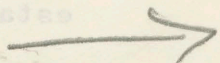


First his follow of Charles J.W. Munchausen-Russell up to Shoalwater,  
now this traipse back around the continent behind political patrons.

Moves of this sort cause me to think Swan must have been something like  
a jack in life's deck, not a man of a bit of a courtier, say, In any case event,

his trajectory now is from the frontier Washington to the governmental  
Washington, where somebody, and it is not evident who or how, arranges  
for him the brief job of writing about the burial customs ~~and beliefs~~  
of the Chinooks for the U.S. Indian Bureau's history of American tribes.

In late 1857--another pointed fact about Swan is that a year or two could





slip by before he turned to any next task--he became<sup>10/15</sup> secretary to Stevens, who <sup>newly</sup> had been elected the territorial delegate to Congress.

<sup>no 9</sup> Swan <sup>does</sup> did clerkly chores <sup>for Stevens</sup> until Congress recessed<sup>15</sup> and his benefactor <sup>has</sup> had to return home to woo votes. Swan himself then turned <sup>15</sup> like a wind<sup>vane</sup> to the Pacific Northwest again. <sup>4</sup> On some amalgam of Steven's advice that the community <sup>might be</sup> was a comer and his own none-too-well-formed notion that he <sup>maybe would</sup> might set up a supply station for whaling ships, Swan decided <sup>15</sup> this time his site <sup>will</sup> would be ~~Port Townsend~~, the customs port for Washington Territory, <sup>Port Townsend.</sup>

The location was, and is, one of the most intriguing on this continent. The Strait of Juan de Fuca swings broadly in from the Pacific, a fat fjord between the Olympic Mountains of Washington and the lower peaks of Vancouver Island, until at last, after <sup>a hundred</sup> 100 miles, and precisely at the brink of land which holds Port Townsend, the span of water turns southward in a long, sinuous stretch like an arm delving to the very bottom of a barrel.

<sup>check</sup> <sup>no 9</sup> The topmost portion is Admiralty Inlet, the rest of the thrusting arm of channel is Puget Sound. I live at its elbow. This small valley which holds my house is one of the wrinkles in the Sound's tremendous timber-green sleeves.

So it is that the last thing I will do, in this first full winter day of watching Swan try out sites along this coast, is to walk in the rain to the bluff above my house and <sup>take a studying</sup> look north-westward, to where the Sound bends off toward the Strait. Around



that horizon, at six on the morning of February 13, 1859: Swan awakes  
aboard the schooner Dashaway to find the ship passing the lighthouse  
at Dungeness Spit, coming on the wind into these waters where he  
will spend the rest of his years.



Day three

Sour ink today, Swan's and mine both. Again I am alone in the house, six days now, and the fact echoes. I miss Carol like the inner-ear cog that produces sense of balance. Need her lanky stride to unsilence the hallway to this writing room, her staccato typing to stir the air, her grin to tweak my musing. I even, Death Valley of desperation this must be, miss her goddamn puns.

<sup>cottony</sup>  
The moodless weather does not help. No winter I have spent in the Pacific Northwest--this will make an even dozen--ever has been as grayly bland and excitementless as the season's reputation. ("Oh, Seattle," anyone from elsewhere will begin, and one of the next three words is "rain.") There can be winter weeks here when the Pacific repeatedly tries to throw itself into the air and out across the continent, an exhilarating traffic of swooping storms. Other durations when the days ~~are~~ arrive open-skied and glittering, the mountains of the Olympic and Cascade ranges a spill of rough white gems along ~~the~~ two entire horizons. All else quiet, this valley invites wind, the flow of it habiting to the southwesterly mood of winter and arriving into this green vee like rainflow to a streambed. Oceanburst or brave thin days of sun or spurting breeze, Northwest winter I enjoy as restless, startful: except that today it has followed me onto dead center.



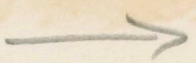
Carol, Carol. Remember when we were crossing Healy Pass in  
County Cork, those drab poor howl-lonely slopes where stones, in  
evident desperation, would get up and become sheep? A Healy Pass  
of a day, this.

To work, refuge of the alone. To Swan, that other winterer and  
pages  
muller. His ~~situation~~ hold another matter I would see changed, as  
stones-into-sheep, and cannot. As I have told,

by the time Swan spoke goodbye to Matilda and the East in the first  
month of 1850, there were two children of the divided household:

Ellen, four, and Charles, seven. In that moment, Swan jettisoned

Summer  
Autumn





<sup>daughter and son</sup>  
them, left ~~them~~ to Matilda and her lineal Boston colony as part of his ~~passage~~ price, which he seems to have been little enough ~~agenized~~ about assuming, for his leaving of New England.

At about the age of Charles, I was jettisoned myself, by the death of my mother. Following my father up and down our Montana ranching valley, I began to learn that a sundered family can heal strongly across the break. If, that is, the remaining parent possesses the strength of stubbornness, and I think it can be granted that Matilda likely had her share of that. Hard witness that I am today, then, I am able to wish for Charles and Ellen only that they could have come argonauting with Swan. To reverse him in the imagination from stepping aboard the ship to San Francisco is merely to see him spending his time on the Boston waterfront, or any other waterfront, in preference to twiddling under the family roof. To transfer the roof with him, Swan and Matilda and the children all staunchly mutual new citizens of the Pacific <sup>shore,</sup> is to find the family settling to the <sup>grooved</sup> routines of a city neighborhood again; likely in Portland, with its New England affiliations. But could the Swan youngsters have grown up at their father's inquisitive side here <sup>along</sup> this coast in the life he led, absorbing the Indian languages and lore as he did, poking along the shore with him into the bays he appraised like a portraitist, stooping as he did to the frontier's odd bouquets of camas and kinnickinnick and yarrow and skunk cabbage, what western venturers that daughter and that son might have been.

Come they did not, of course--could not except as I would reinvent



their lives--and but for Swan's scanty visits back to Boston heard their father's voice only from across the continent, by the paper echo of mail, for the next half century.

4#  
Evening, last inches of the leaden day. Ellen and Charles missed sprigs of knowledge indeed when their father left them to Boston. From Swell's tribe, the Makahs, Swan noted down that their version of the sun arrived robustly each morning by

thrusting away the stars with his head and trampling night underfoot. Rainbows, they considered, had claws at either end to seize the unwary. Comets and meteors were the luminous souls of dead chiefs. As for the mysterious northern lights that

sometimes webbed the sky beyond the Strait, Swell explained them astutely to Swan:

Under that little sun, a great distance from here, live a race of Indians who are not taller than half the length of my paddle. They live on the ice and eat seals and whales. They are so strong that they dive down into the water and catch whales with their hands, and that light we see is from the fires of those little people who are boiling blubber.

alt,  
86



Day four

# Swell as tutor about Eskimo life puts light on something else as well.

Along the wilderness that was the North Pacific coastland, a thousand miles of broken shore from Neah Bay even to southernmost Alaska and greater distances beyond that to the people of the ice, ideas of <sup>that</sup> the sort must have traveled like thistledown on the <sup>breeze</sup> wind: canoeing tribe in wary touch with canoeing tribe, a seed of story deposited, to be carried along by the next barter-trip southward. By the time the Makahs had the story of the miniature ice-men of the north, lore had been nurtured into legend. I recognize such <sup>wafts of</sup> alchemy, for I live with <sup>them</sup> it as well. A morning in the nineteen-twenties, a dozen riders are returning to their home

ranches after a weekend rodeo. Whenever the horses' hoofs strike the dryness of a Montana county road, dust drifts up until from a distance the group looks like men of smoke. Most of the journey, however, cuts across open sageland, and the slap of the gray tassels of brush against leather chaps competes with their talk of the rodeo broncs. Unexpectedly, the loose troop reins to a halt. Across a stretch of pasture they have always ridden through, a fresh barbed-wire fence glints. The owner of the land emerges from a nearby cabin to explain that he intends to plow the ground, that they can no longer go across it. A rider with a notch-scar in the center of his chin--he was my father--grins down at the man and says in his style of half-joke, half-declaration: "We never saw any place yet we couldn't go." Turning his horse to the fence,



he touches spur to flank, and mount and man pass through the air above the blades of wire. One after another, the others soar after him, like boys on great birds of sorrel, roan, dapple gray.

The story and its impromptu anthem of the <sup>west's</sup> last horseback generation have come down to me, on embellishing lips, very much as ~~the~~ legends of the Eskimoes must have arrived south to Swell. "The same winds blow spring on all men's dreams," I read once from a folklorist. Whether there were a dozen rodeoers or just four; whether they all lofted themselves in the barbwire steeplechase or just the <sup>rider</sup> ~~one~~ with that starred chin: in the tale as I have received it, they are twelve and they soar.

4# # Later.

How much comes out our fingers that was taken in by earlier eyes.

Clearing a shelf for Swan's reams of diary, I discover<sup>ed</sup> that my daybook of winter will not be my family's first. In a tottering pile of mementoes, one of my grandmother's tablet-sized address books into which she jotted everything from recipes to her schedule of television soap operas. And the arrival of Montana winter weather each year: our first real cold spell and lite snow falling and blowing Nov. 20 1963 2 below....our first snow storm Sept the 15-1965...our first snow storm 1 inch when I got up this morning Sept 14-1973.



Karen: stop numbering with this page.

That early snow of 1973 was her final such entry. The autumn of the next year she was dead, the last of the family to pass from ~~the~~ blustery valley where one or another of us had been for eighty years. Now, with my half-a-week-old words about the onset of this coastal winter, we begin to be jotted here on the continent's margin.



Day eleven

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

One more silent, <sup>flier</sup> exact noose of patrol, then the dark bird flaps off southeast across the bay. ~~Swimming ducks crash-dive~~

The Boston bird, ~~Swan~~ says the coastal Indians began to call the eagle after arrival of the first American trading ships, pale New Englanders aboard them with the glittering wide-winged image on their coins. Under this taloned hunter's glide now a fleet of swimming ducks crash-dives

in fear, but they are not the target of the moment. When the eagle scrapes into the water, ~~with its claws~~, it is a fish that lofts away to doom.

We stand atop Dungeness Spit's rough spine of driftwood to watch the <sup>bald</sup> eagle and his meal vanish into the shore trees. From up here, all its bowed length into the Strait of Juan de Fuca--seven miles--Dungeness prickles into view like a gigantic hedgerow somehow <sup>weired atop the</sup> built on water. Age-gray drift logs tumble <sup>across</sup> atop each other to the height of a Dutch dike, fresher logs perpetually angle ashore, yellow and tattered from grinding across the gravel beach, to pile in turn onto the long heap. The rarity of Dungeness in all the dozen thousand miles of America's coastal edge speaks itself even in the dry intonings of scientists: longest natural sandspit in the United States;



driest point on the West Coast north of San Diego. A thin hook of desert snagging the water, within walk of glaciated mountains and cool fir forests.

Swan, as I <sup>said</sup> have told, sailed by here for the first time on a February morning of 1859, inbound for Port Townsend and his resumed western life. With his feathered name and <sup>that</sup> ~~his~~ migratory nature, ~~he~~ Swan was something of a Boston bird himself, testing ~~these~~ new waters, <sup>fresh</sup> ~~new~~ ~~ways~~ paths of glide. For the several years after his arrival to the Strait, <sup>Swan showed up</sup> ~~he is found~~

~~resumed western life.~~ The next several years, he is found <sup>at this sandy breakwater,</sup> time upon time ~~in the vicinity of Dungeness,~~ usually portaging across the base of the Spit as the most direct canoe route between Port Townsend and the Makah settlement at Neah Bay. If he happened to journey by ship, the route went close past the site of the lighthouse which rises like a white candle at the far end of the Spit....A keeper's house and a fine brick tower 92 feet high, <sup>he</sup> Swan noted in that year of 1859, in which is placed a stationary light of the order of Fresnel.

<sup>Dungeness light</sup>  
The tower is now white-painted concrete, and not so lofty. That original beacon proved to be so high it shined above the fogs that drift on the face of the Strait. But there is a Fresnel light even yet, not the one Swan describes but an 1897 version, an exquisite six-sided set of glass bulls-eyes which flings a beam of brightness eighteen miles.



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

The bosun's mate in charge at the lighthouse had said he would drive in to meet us on the coastal bluff overlooking the Spit. He wavered now out of the blackness like a drunken genii, clasping a hand to half of his forehead and announcing thickly that we had to hurry to keep the tide. <sup>7</sup> Wait a minute, we said. <sup>exactly</sup> What had gone wrong with his head?

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

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



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

At last at the lighthouse, with the engine cut, no next encounter between four-wheel-drive and fat driftlog having been ordained, the Fresnel lens wheeling its spokes of light above our heads: we breathed out and climbed down to the Dungeness sand for our weekend stay.

Two moments stand in my memory from that next day at the tip of Dungeness Spit. The first was seeing the lens itself, coming onto the fact of its art here on a <sup>scanty</sup> ledge of sand and upcast wood. What I had expected perhaps was something like a titanic spotlight, some modern metallic capsule of unfathomable

power: not a seventy-five-year-old concoction of magnifying prisms, ~~in circles and louvers~~ worked by the Paris artisans to angles as precise and <sup>acute</sup> ~~deft~~ as those of cut-glass goblets, which

employed a single thousand-watt bulb and stretched its glow across nearly twenty miles. The magnifying power from this small cabinet of glass was as pleasantly astounding as Swell's explanation



of the aurora borealis glinting up from Eskimo camp-fires.

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

Lighthouse life dimmed a bit when he escorted us in to talk with his wife, and the wife of the young petty officer on duty with him. Both were edgy about the Spit. Mrs. Bosun's Mate calculated out loud to when their oldest child would start school, which would take the family to land duty: "I WANT to move inland." Until that could happen, she was forbidding the children to leave the fenced yard around the quarters because they might injure themselves in the driftwood. The petty officer's recent bride, who lived in the rooms at the base of the lighthouse tower itself, was disconcerted to have in her living room one huge round wall which emitted a ~~mild~~ <sup>beamish</sup> night-long hum.

The bosun's mate heard them out, <sup>evidently not for the first time,</sup> then led the pair of us off to see any further feature of lighthousekeeping he could think of. The day, blown pure by last night's wind, had ~~astonishing~~ <sup>its own magnifying</sup> clarity. Mountains rose in white shards far north along the Canadian coastline. Mount Baker lorded over the glinting horizon of the



Cascades to our east, highest ice-flame among dozens of ice-flames, while the Olympic range crowded full the sky south and west of us. Dungeness seemed more <sup>astounding</sup> unlikely than ever, a gift of promontory grafted carefully amid the mountains and strait. <sup>¶</sup> The knot on his forehead barely visible beneath his cap bill, hands fisted for warmth into his jacket pockets, the bosun's mate looked around at this ice-and-water rim of the Pacific Northwest in a quick expert glance, then turned to us. "I'm a true coastie," he announced as if introducing himself. "A shallow water sailor."

The Dungeness light has blinked through a number of hundreds of nights since then, and today in bright sun <sup>Carol and I</sup> ~~the pair of us~~ casually prowl the inside shore of the Spit, around to where smaller Graveyard Spit veers off from Dungeness. In outline from the air,

Dungeness and Graveyard together look like a <sup>long</sup> ~~big~~ wishbone, Graveyard poking shoreward from near the end of Dungeness like the briefer, snapped-short prong of the forked pieces. Out there now just beyond where they join, the lighthouse and out-

buildings sit in silhouette against Mt. Baker, a white peg and white boxes against that tremendous tent of mountain overtopping the skyline a hundred miles to the northeast.

I am watching for snowy owls. This is the fourth year of the cycle which brings them this far south from the arctic, and we once saw one here, a wraith of white against the gray driftwood.



Pleased with ourselves, we returned to Seattle to discover that another snowy had taken up a roost on a television antenna above a mid-city restaurant, and half the population had been out to see him. No owl today, nor the blue herons who often stilt along Graveyard Spit.

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

An edge of ice whitens the shoreline, a first for all the ~~times~~ <sup>fifty? seventy-five? -</sup> we have come here. Mountains stand in all directions with the clear loveliness Swan observed during one of his <sup>early</sup> ~~first~~ visits—unobscured by mist or clouds their snowy peaks shone most gloriously... Across the Strait at Vancouver Island, where we can see in <sup>miniature</sup> detail the tallest downtown buildings of <sup>twenty-mile-distant</sup> Victoria, Swan had marveled at the endless timber level as a field of wheat, following the undulation of the ground with a regular growth most wonderful for such a dense forest.

How cold the day, but how little wind. It balances out toward ~~bliss~~ comfort. That is not always the case in this restless spot. Swan, on an excursion past the Spit on a day in May of 1862:... stopped for the night at the lighthouse where Mr. Blake, the keeper,

✓  
May 28, 1862



treated me very politely to a supper and a share of his bed. Next morning: Left the lighthouse at 3:15 <sup>AM</sup> a.m., clam. Passed round the spit where a breeze sprung up which freshened into a squall with rain. A tremendous surf was breaking on the beach and we for a time were in great peril. But finally we managed to get ashore at <sup>Point</sup> ~~Port~~ Angeles, where we found shelter...

Dark settles early, the sun spinning southwest into the Olympic Mountains instead of going down <sup>near</sup> ~~into~~ the end of the Strait as it does in summer. We leave the Spit before dusk, heading back to Seattle to spend New Year's Eve <sup>our</sup> ~~a~~ traditional geographically diverse game of penny-ante poker. Baltimore--

"Ballumer," she says it--will play her challenging, by-god-you're-not-going-to-get-away-with-it style. Texas, behind a cigar which would credit J.P. Morgan, contents himself until a strong hand, when he raises and re-raises relentlessly. Carol--New Jersey--is the steadiest of the bunch, and wins regularly from the rest of us. By way of Montana--~~me~~ comes an uncharacteristically fevered kind of style which can swathe ~~through~~ <sup>devastating</sup> the game, ~~wiping out~~ <sup>obliterating</sup> everybody else for three or four hands in a row, or ending my own stake.

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



Day fourteen

Neah Bay pedagogy got off to a stuttery start. The first morning, the seventeenth of November of 1863, a single student showed up-- Captain John's ten-year-old nephew, Jimmy Claplanhoo.

showed up. Swan chose a bit of guile. This evening I got out the magic lantern and gave Jimmy an exhibition of it as a reward...

Within a few days, four more Makah children edged into the schoolroom and were treated to Swan's picture show. By the end of the first week, twenty children present today exercised them on the alphabet and then gave them a pan full of boiled potatoes.

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

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

He next has to take three days out to supervise the digging of the schoolhouse cellar, introducing the Makah laborers to the

N 17, '63  
OK

N 20  
OK

N 24, '13  
OK



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

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

Now Swan catches cold--I have not felt so sick for a year certainly. Jimmy Claplanhoo's health mends and he arrives back at school. The agency's winter larder begins to be questionable: Sometimes we are very short of provisions and have to depend



on our beef barrel, then again the Indians will bring in such quantities of fish and game that there is a surfeit. The agency cattle start dying. Cold damp weather holds and holds. On

December 16 the most remarkable fall of rain I have ever known.

~~It~~ <sup>ing</sup>gurgles to the top of his rain gauges twice, a total of nearly seven inches. A number of the Indians begin another drinking <sup>knockabout</sup> party.

One participant is blasted in the arm with a dragoon pistol, and another comes to borrow a shovel from Swan. He went <sup>to</sup> where old Flattery Jack, Sixey's father, had been buried, and dug up one of his arm bones, which was taken and bound on as splints to the arm of Sixey, the Indians believing that the bone from the father's arm would cure.

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

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



Day fifteen

The stop of this weather on the days, each one made identically  
keen, <sup>tingling</sup> ~~twinkling~~. Rainless hours after rainless hours glimmering past,  
it has dawned on me how <sup>extraordinary</sup> ~~different~~ is this ~~winter~~ dry <sup>time</sup> and cold, as if

I were living in the Montana Rockies again but without the clouting  
mountain-hurled wind. There is a bright becalmed feel, a kind of  
disbelief the weather has about itself. Other years, by now I  
might have shrugged almost without noticing into our regional  
cloak of rain-and-cloud, the season's garment of interesting texture  
and of patterned pleasant sound as well. "Rain again," a friend  
growls. "Right," I say <sup>and</sup> ~~with a faint~~ smile absently. But through  
yesterday

morning, the temperature hung below freezing for four days and  
nights in a row, the longest skein of its kind I can remember  
here, <sup>at the rim of the Sound.</sup> I bury our kitchen vegetable scraps directly into <sup>my</sup> the garden  
<sup>each evening</sup> patch as immediate compost, and ~~each evening~~ the shovel brings  
up six-inch clods of frozen soil, like lowest-grade coal.

But what speaks the weather <sup>even clearer</sup> ~~most clearly~~ is today's renewed  
presence of <sup>birds</sup> ~~birds~~. This morning kindled into warm <sup>er</sup> sun <sup>than we have had</sup> and  
already, Carol minutes gone up the hill to teach her first class of  
the day,

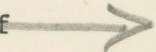
<sup>top</sup> already, just to be out in the fresh mildness, I have walked up  
to the rim of the valley. As will happen this time of year,  
<sup>were</sup> clouds <sup>low</sup> are lined across the southern reach of the <sup>Olympics</sup> mountains  
while clear weather <sup>held</sup> ~~holds~~ the northern end, the Strait country.  
The view west from me <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ bannered in five blues; ~~today~~ the

unclear  
C 30m  
to class



water of Puget Sound in two shades, azure nearest me, a more delicately inked hue farther out; the foreshore of the Olympic Peninsula in its heavy forested tint; the ~~Olympic~~ Mountains behind their blue dust of distance; the clear cornflower sky. Such mornings shrug away time. Vessels on the Sound--freighter, tug harnessed to barge, second freighter, the ivory arrow that is the Edmonds-to-Kingston ferry--seemed pinned in place, and I had to watch intently before my eyes could begin to catch the simultaneous motion of them all, inching on the water. Then as I turned home, the flurry. Robins in fluster at the mouth of the valley, abruptly dotting suburban fir trees and frost-stiff lawns. Motion double-quick, headlong. Airful of flying bodies, a vigor in orbit around fixed beauty of Sound and mountains.

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

These past iced days, I have tried to picture <sup>this valley's</sup> ~~the~~ birds, ~~somewhere in~~ up in the innermost branches, fluffed with dismay and wondering why the hell they didn't wing south with their saner cousins. It occurs to me also that the tan cat, as well as the cold, may be keeping them from sight; that it may be time I invited the cat to be elsewhere for a while. But that the birds one way or another can be willed back, I dare not doubt. A birdless world, the air permanently fallow, is unthinkable. Bushtits must bounce again on the thin ends of 



unthinkable. To be without birds would be to suffer a kind of color-blindness, a glaucoma gauzing over one of the planet's special brightnesses. Bushtits must bounced again out there on the thin ends of

birch branches like monks riding bell-ropes. A fretful nest-building robin--we always have one or two nattering in the trees at either end of the house--must gather and gather dry spears of grass until the beakful bristles out like <sup>tomcat</sup> ~~eat's~~ whiskers. Towhees, chickadees, flickers, juncos, occasional flashing hummingbirds; seasonal grosbeaks who arrive in the driveway and, masked like society burglars, munch on seeds amid the gravel. Besides Carol and the pulse of words across paper there are few everyday necessities in my life, but birds are among them.

And Swan, ~~when~~ with his name which the Indian woman at Shoalwater had said is like our word Cocumb, a big bird: birds perpetually

aviate across his horizons. Time upon time I marker incidents of birds in his pages. This forenoon, the tenth of July of 1865 at Neah Bay, I saw a kingfisher fluttering in the brook and supposed he had a trout which he could not swallow. On going to him I found he had driven his bill into an old rotten stick with such force as to bury it clear up to his eyes...hard and fast. I took him with the stick to the house and called Jones <sup>and</sup> Phillips to see the curiosity. It was with difficulty that his bill was pulled out again. Two years previous, in the same week of July: I discovered a dead Albatross on the beach yesterday which had a large dogfish which it had swallowed partially

[Karen: this is a partial chunk, which ends here -



Day seventeen

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

4# —  
OK 8/10, 164  
4# —  
# Sunday, Jan. 10- Russian Jim came in this evening and requested me to intercede with his squaw who has recently left him and try and induce her to return. Jim told me that when any one came to my door at night I should always ask "Who is there" for the Skookums sometimes came to people's doors and did mischief. I told him I was not afraid of the power of the air at all. He said I had a skookum tumtum, a brave soul.

# Monday, Jan. 11- This is my birthday 46 years old. Cleaned up the school house today, piled <sup>the</sup> lumber and placed things in order.



I shall be glad when the building is completed for the constant interruption I have and the various duties I am called on to perform prevent my giving that attention to the children I wish to. I have no time that I can call my own or in which I am not liable to interruptions except evenings and then I am generally alone, but I can find <sup>but</sup> little time to write, for ~~my~~ <sup>my</sup> sight is getting too poor to attempt writing much except by daylight.

The Indians think I have a skookum tumtum to live alone in this great house. I do not suppose one of them would dare sleep here alone for anything, they are so afraid of spirits. I think the spirits of the earth are more to be feared, both spirituous liquors and <sup>evil</sup> ~~evil~~ prowling Indians, but I don't apprehend any danger <sup>s</sup> or alarms from any source and ~~think~~ thus far never <sup>have</sup> ~~had~~ been more peacefully situated.

4# Jan. 12- Yesterday was my birthday and as I was born in 1818 I am consequently 46 years old.

# Tuesday. Today took an inventory of government property for Mr. Webster. Billy Balch came in this evening and gave me a very lucid explanation why the spirits of the dead did not molest me. He says that it is because we have a cellar to the house and a floor over it, but in Indian houses there is nothing but the bare ground or sand, that when any of the Indians are alone in a great house and make a fire and cook, that the <sup>e</sup> ~~mem~~lose or dead come up through the earth and eat the food and kill the Indian, but he thinks they can't come up through our floors, although he says he would be afraid to try to sleep alone here, for there might be some knot holes or crack in the floor through which they could come.

Billy also related an interesting tradition. He says that... "ankarty" but not "hias ankarty", that is at not a very



09  
remote period the water flowed from Neeah Bay through the  
Waatch prairie, and Cape Flattery was an island, that the water  
receded and left Neeah Bay dry for four days and became  
very warm. It then rose again without any swell or waves and  
submerged the whole of the cape and in fact the whole country  
except the mountains back of Clioquot. As the water rose ~~there~~  
those who had canoes put their effects into them and floated  
off with the current which set strong to the north. Some drifted  
one way and some another and when the waters again resumed  
their accustomed level a portion of the tribe found themselves  
beyond Nootka, where their descendants now reside and are  
known by the same name as the Makahs or Quenaitchehat. Many  
canoes came down in the trees and were destroyed and numerous  
lives were lost. The same thing happened at Quillehuyte and  
a portion of that tribe went off either in canoes or by land  
and formed the Chemakums at Port Townsend.

4 There is no doubt in my mind of the truth of this tradition.  
The Waatch prairie shows conclusively that the waters of the  
ocean once flowed through it, and as this whole country shows  
marked evidences of volcanic influences there is every reason  
to believe that there was a gradual depression and subsequent  
upheaval of the earth's crust which made the waters to rise and  
recede as the Indian stated. The tradition respecting the  
Chemakums and Quillehuyte I have often heard before from both  
those tribes.

4# Wednesday, Jan. 13- Very heavy surf during the night and this morning,  
showing there must have been strong winds outside the cape  
recently. At 8 p.m. Jackson and Bob came to the door and  
informed me that a vessel had run on the rocks on the north end  
of ~~Waadde~~ Waadda Island. I went out on the beach and saw a



4#  
light in that direction, but after watching it some time I concluded it was as likely to be a vessel at anchor in the harbor as one on the rocks. The Indians refused to go off to ascertain, as the wind was blowing too strong, so I came back to the house and after going up to my room in the upper part of the turret, where I had a better chance to judge, I concluded from the appearance of the light that it was the U.S. Rev. Cutter Joe Lane who has been expected here with Mr. Smith, the keeper of Tattache Light.

OK # Thursday, Jan. 14- My surmise last evening proved correct, It was the cutter Joe Lane which arrived. Mr. Webster came down and breakfasted with me and then went on board the cutter in a canoe with five Indians who afterward conveyed him to Baadah.

4# Yowarthl (Doctor) brought one cord oven wood today. Paid him 12 buckets potatoed. Went to Baadah this p.m. Mr. Webster gave me a letter to send to the cutter, which I sent by Hopestabe (Yachah) who carried it and delivered it safe. Wrote this evening to Professor Henry and enclosed letter in meteorological report. Wrote also to Caleb Swan, New York and C.H. Swan, Boston.

OK # Friday, Jan. 15- 7:30 a.m. the cutter got under way and stood out of the bay bound to Barclay Sound in search of bark Narramissic, said to be lost or missing... She may come here again on her return but if the wind is fair she will not, but continue on to Pt. Angeles.

OK # Saturday, Jan. 16- Went to Baadah to pay off Indians. Peter says that a short time since a Quillehuyte Indian named Towallanhoo came across by way of the Hoho river and from thence down on foot to Baadah where he arrived at night and reconnected Mr. Webster's premises and then passed on to Waatch. This may account for the Indians asking me if I was not afraid to be alone in this great house and also the reason why Russian Jim

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