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The Totems At Alert Bay

A pleasant run on the Alaska Route, a summer holiday by water from Vancouver brings one to Alert Bay at the north end of Vancouver Island.

At Alert Bay are to be seen the Totem Poles and Indian Community Houses and the remains of the curious tree-burials, popular till recently with the Sitkwas.

The Totems here have long since come to be regarded as one of the wonders of the world as inscrutable in their way as Pyramid and Sphinx. And so it is little wonder that not a week goes by, in summer, but groups of visitors from every corner of the Globe may be seen landing here from both North and South-bound boats to view at close hand these "Sphinxes of America."

The world has always had wood-carvers. But never anywhere at any time "carvings" like unto these Pacific Coast Totems.

The outstanding "points" of the totem, which strike the visitor ashore for a few hours, are overwhelming.

One question:
Who carved them?
Who conceived the idea?
How old are they?

We know it was not till very lately that the Coastal Indians possessed any steel tools. How then was it possible so long ago for them to cut so deep and clean a line as here gives decision to the totem-fact?

All of these questions, and hundreds of others of like nature, after all these years since first the Totem was discovered by the white man, still remain without a definite answer. It is more than half the charm of the Sphinx that she has never spoken. Indeed, half the charm and spell woven of the Totem lies in the stories that every visitor, beholding them, is free to weave to fancy, aided and guided by Tradition.

For though the written word may be wholly lacking "Tradition" has never anywhere woven prettier stories, clinging like graceful draperies trailing off in to these Northern climes, than about these wooden figures of the wonderful Totems, that wind around the shore-roads at Alert Bay.

Here is that marvellous figure, the Thunder Bird, with its eagle-eyes and hinged beak that drops open through which entrance was made to the feast-hall in times of Potlatch.

Tradition has been very busy with the Thunder-Bird. Something about it makes it "the king of the Totems." The story of the Thunder-Bird that lets most light on the Indian character of other days is a gruesome tale of treachery on the part of the



Bear Totem Pole.

Alerts toward their ancient foe the tribes of the Nimpkish.

The Nimpkish folk were invited to a "Potlatch" and burying the hatchet, they came. Only to be murdered and at a time as they wriggled through the Thunder Bird's beak to the feast-hall. The entrance was so narrow and the blow from within so swift and unexpected that not even a sound escaped to warn the men waiting outside. Thus, tradition says "Was done to death every Nimpkish who came to the feast."

Next in importance to the Thunder-Bird comes The Bear, frank-eyed and sporty, carrying between powerful paws the "copper" symbol of Chieftaincy among the Indians to this day.

The chief whom the Bear symbolizes was evidently a hunter-pre-eminently of bears. As a clever hunter he hunted and study a ruin's that in time he himself carved something of the nature of an animal he hunted. The whole set-up of "The Bear" bespeaks geniality and good-humour. No one could think of him giving The Potlatch that annihilated the Nimpkish.

As a true sport, every visitor to

Alert Bay will acknowledge that "The Whale" runs "The Bear" a close second.

And as you look at the harpoon-terminated of the Arctic striders, the giant sulphur-bottom you know that whatever may have been the faults of this action of the house of Sitkwa, "Cowardice" was not one of them. Of all the roads of fancy or ambition can one be imagined that supplies more sport for the money than "The Whale" over an open course? Yet your Coastal Indian of these parts was evidently not afraid to ride.

Eloquent indeed is the simple whale design which spars as wholly unnecessary the written word, mounts guard over the time-worn mound in the graveyard.

To discover the remaining interesting Totems in the Alert Bay gallery is desirable that you make the trip. Otherwise you are altogether lost the unique pleasure experienced by the visitor to these parts of piecing together the various "designs" shown in the Totems and making them into the living chapters of the life that at one time had its being here in this part of our Canada.

LOWER BRIGHTON

(Intended for last week)
Mrs. Lizzie Shaw, Hartland, was visiting her sister, Mrs. Geo. Tedlie last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Wint Dow have returned home after an extended visit to Tracer Mills and Fredericton.

Miss Mina Lane, Upper Woodstock, visited at David Noble's last Monday.

Miss Elva London is visiting friends and relatives at Windsor.

The stork visited this place on October 11 and left a young son at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Milford Noble. Robert Hovey of Greenfield is the guest of his daughter, Mrs. F. K. Brown.

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Nixon accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Nixon motored to Houlton one day last week and spent the day with friends and relatives in Houlton and vicinity.

Mrs. Geo. Nixon gave a party last Friday evening for the young people of this place and a number from Hartland.

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Hallett of Upper Brighton spent Sunday at Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Grants.

Frank Morehouse with his mother and Miss Aurilla Nixon, Perth, were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Nixon.

Our teacher, Miss Jessie Tedlie and her sister Alice attended the Teachers' Institute held at Woodstock on Thursday and Friday of last week.

FRIENDS MEET FOR FIRST TIME IN FORTY-EIGHT YEARS

(Glendale Evening News)
Mr. and Mrs. George McLeod, of 1245 East Colorado street entertained as their luncheon guest yesterday, Dr. J. T. MacDonald of Honolulu, who was a boyhood friend of Mr. McLeod's in New Brunswick, and whom he had not seen for forty-eight years.

Dr. MacDonald is interested in the cure of leprosy and is connected with one of the hospitals at Honolulu. He has been on a leave since March and his visit was especially interesting to Mr. McLeod as he had recently visited their former home in New Brunswick, and since then has made an extended trip to Europe.

Dr. MacDonald will return to San Francisco Sunday and after remaining in that city for about a month will sail for Honolulu to resume his work there.

(Dr. MacDonald's former home was in Waterville and Avondale, Carleton County.)

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