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SEATTLE'S TOTEM POLE

The following interesting bit of history relating to the famous totem pole of Seattle was written by Harriet Geithmann:

In sunshine and rain Seattle's totemic column in Pioneer Place looks wistfully northward to the last stand of the vanishing Haidas and Thlingits, sculptors of totem poles. Representing not only Seattle's yesterday of rugged pioneering, but the romance of a primitive race, this fantastic fairy tale vividly colored and grotesquely carved out of wood, commands both the interest and respect of Seattleites and the world travelers as well.

To know the romance of this sculptured pillar is to know something of the mystic charm of totemism as expressed by the Indians of Southeastern Alaska.

Before Fort Tongas, a Thlingit Indian village at the head of a picturesque bay in Southeastern Alaska, was abandoned late in the nineteenth century, it harbored a happy tribe. A step above the sandy beach some twenty frame cabins looked out to sea. In their midst stood the imposing residence of the mighty chieftain. In front of these weather beaten cabins towered the totem poles, a brave company of grotesque, sculptured columns, painted and carved from base to crest. Chief among them was the impressive totem pole guarding the chieftain's home.

The chief of Fort Tongas married the Princess "Dsetlen," or "Shining Face of Copper," the comely daughter of Shakes, the illustrious chief of the Seena tribe. It was a happy union. The village reflected it. Years later, "Shining Face of Copper" heard that her sister was ill on the distant banks of the Naas river.

The heroic princess set out at once in her slender canoe and paddled for dear life. In attempting to cross the swirling waters of the river, her canoe was swept into the whirlpool and the princess met her death. Meanwhile her sister died. The journey came to naught. To commemorate the heroism of "Shining Face of Copper," her children and her brothers, at considerable expense, erected this memorial totem pole in front of her Fort Tongas home. This sculptural column tells the colorful story of Indian mythology, in which men at will are transformed into animals in or-

der to achieve their desires.

Reading from the bottom of the totem pole toward the top, the sculptured figures are the raven, the whale, the frog, the mink, the man and the raven again. The fairy tale pictorially expressed in these grotesque figures carved in wood, vivid with paint, has been handed down to us somewhat as follows:

In the ancient village of Kivdokgo a chief and his wife lived happily. Later she became unfaithful and feigned death in order to escape. She was discovered and her lover slain. When their son grew up he and a chum of his, clothed in red and black woodpecker skins, flew up into the sky. They hoped to wed the daughters of the chief up yonder. On the way thither they learned that the haughty chieftain in the sky managed to dispose of all his daughters' suitors. At this time the world enjoyed no daylight hours. The adventurers found a hole in the sky in which there was a fire blazing. Singeing their gay plumage, they flew through and exchanged their woodpecker masquerade costumes for that of sandpipers. The daughters of the chief captured them and carried them into the house. The chief was furious and planned to roast them alive, but the young woodpecker-sandpiper men were too clever for him. Finally, he accepted them as sons-in-law.

The hero of this legend had a son who dropped from the sky and landed near his earthly grandfather's home. The child was soon discovered. He became Nasaku Yethi, the chief of the Raven Clan. He is the man carved near the top of the pole. His relatives deserted him because he was too much of a glutton, and he would have died had it not been for a kind old woman who fed him on crabapples. Then he became a raven, the first figure on the pole. With four other young men disguised as a squirrel, a crow, a robin and a bluejay, he decided to see the world. Later a mink joined them. Along came a whale, the second figure on the pole. He accommodated all six young adventurers in his mouth and to sea they sailed with the wanderlust chugging in their hearts. Then the ambitious raven kindled a fire inside the whale, and when he began to slice the fat off the whale's heart he cut a bit too deep and killed the whale. Later, when the dead whale

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