

## THE ARTISTIC HAIDA: AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

*rewrite*

Already accomplished artists at the time when the first Europeans arrived, the Haida responded to the new conditions of fur trade times by becoming even more productive in sculpture and painting. A sketch of the historical circumstances of the period between the 1780s and 1900 helps to understand the kinds and distributions of Haida art in the world's museums. For a very short period the Haida monopolized the maritime fur trade on their part of the coast, and the result was that they became suddenly rich in new kinds of wealth, and quickly acculturated. *but* It was not many years before the trading ships found their way to the main fur sources on the mainland, and the Haida found themselves by-passed, with only meagre fur sources in their own territories, and found themselves poor. One of their responses was to increase their production of their arts and crafts to trade to the mainland tribes, and to make 'curios' of argillite and other materials to sell to the whites. Another was to travel more actively to the places where the trade was centred - Port Simpson, Sitka, Victoria - with a consequent "spreading of their wares" over a wider area.

The white men *spent on other business, and collected only as* were avid collectors from the beginning. At first they were simply curio-seekers, and were not in the least interested in recording information about the curios, much less their makers. Later they came as *purposeful* collectors for museums, but neither did they show much concern for distinguishing between locally-made and traded objects, nor for learning about the artists. *inadequacy of* The museum records *is a reflection* reflect their shortcomings.

That the art styles of the Haida and their neighbours had already been developed and that most if not all of the art forms were being made before the time of contact has by now been clearly enough established (Holm, 1965, pp. 3-7). <sup>Ketchikan, pp</sup> It remains only to <sup>add</sup> supply some more specific details with regard to the Haida. The historical accounts are clearest for the villages on <sup>both</sup> either side of Dixon Entrance, which were the most frequently visited by the earliest trading vessels. In 1778 Dixon himself, though he did not come to anchor and was not in view of any of the main villages, collected several small objects including the now-famous sculptured wooden bowl which is now in the British Museum (Inverarity, 1950, Fig. 195; Holm, 1965, p. 4).

When later explorers or fur traders took the time to go ashore to the villages they saw several forms of art. The most appreciative <sup>early</sup> account is from the French captain Etienne Marchand and others of his crew, who explored and charted Cloak Bay in August 1791 (Fleurieu, 1801). One of his general comments was that "...what must astonish most, ...is to see paintings every where, every where sculpture, among a nation of hunters" (op cit, p. 419). At Dadens, on the south shore of Langara Island, were two large houses with tall sculptured portal poles, which they described in detail and referred to as "superb portals in sculpture" (op cit, pp. 403). These same poles were mentioned, described and sketched by several early visitors. They were the "great wooden images of Tartanee" near Douglas' anchorage in Henslung Bay in 1789 (Meares, , p. ). Ingraham in his journal for 1791 also described <sup>one of</sup> them (Ingraham, , p. ). John Bartlett in the same year described/them

The entrance was cut out of a large tree and carved all the way up and down. The door was like a man's head and the passage into the house was between his teeth and was built before they knew the use of iron (in Snow, 1925, p. 306).

He also made an atrociously poor sketch of the house and pole (Snow, p. 36; Barbeau, 1950, p. 804; see also Duff, 1964, p. 89). The journal keeper of the Eliza in 1799, who judging from his sketch of Kiusta was a much better

illustrator (in Barbeau, 1950, p. 815), stayed for the night in one of the houses with its owner Altatsee, and in the morning "to save the length of description" (p. 21) made a sketch of the two houses, <sup>but the sketch</sup> which unfortunately seems to have been lost.

At that time Kiusta and Kaigani had no such portal poles, perhaps because they were newer villages <sup>and</sup> used primarily in summer. Other Haida villages of the time did have portal poles: Hoskins, at Masset in 1791, recorded:

...their head villages are neatly and regularly built the houses end with pitched roofs in front is a large post reaching above the roof neatly carved but with the most distorted figures at the bottom is an oval or round hole which is either the mouth or belly of some deformed object this serves for a doorway (in Howay, 1941, p. 233).

By two or three decades later, the main villages had become forests of totem poles. Camille de Roquefeuil, at Masset in 1818, found the village "particularly remarkable for the monstrous and colossal figures which decorate the houses of the principal inhabitants, and the wide gaping mouths of which serve as a door" (1823, p.88). In 1829 Rev. J.S. Green found Skid-egate "almost enchanting"; before the doors of many of the thirty or forty houses stood "a large mast carved in the form of the human countenance, of the dog, wolf, etc., neatly painted (Green, 1915:84). Clearly this form of Haida art proliferated in the prosperous years following the first arrival of the trading ships.

To return to Dadens, early observers also found sculptured human figures commemorating the dead. Chief Altatsee showed the officers of the Eliza a pair of <sup>ancient</sup> images near the two houses and said they "were intended to represent two Chiefs, that were his relatives (or rather they were his ancestors for they looked as if they were upwards of a hundred years of age) that had been killed in Battle (Eliza, p.21). Captain Chanal, an officer with Marchand in 1791, examined a carved figure with its hands placed on an instrument

something like a harp (Fleurieu, p. 418); this may have been another memorial figure. At a village near Kaigani in 1829, Rev. Green saw such a figure associated with a mortuary:

As I was going from house to house, I saw a bust at the mouth of a cabin, curiously carved and painted. I asked what it was. My Indian guide said it was Doglas, a chief of the tribe, who not long since had died in a drunken frolick. He went with me to examine it. He drew back the board which closed the mouth of the tomb. The remains of the chief were deposited in a box, or coffin, curiously wrought, and gaily painted. They usually deposit their dead in similar boxes, though they commonly elevate them several feet from the ground (Green, 1915:66).

That carved chests were used as coffins in 1791 is affirmed in an entry in Ingraham's journal. He examined two grave houses full of coffins, which were boxes "made in the neatest manner, carved and decorated with sea otter's teeth" (in Barbeau, 1950:806). Marchand's crews also saw a type of tomb consisting of four posts bearing two feet above the ground "a sarcophagus wrought with art and hermetically closed" (Fleurieu, p. 408).

Chests used for the storage of supplies and valuables were also seen inside the houses by <sup>the earliest</sup> early observers. The writer of the Eliza journal visited the houses of the chiefs of Kiusta, Dadens and Kaigani (Cunneah, Altatsee and Cow). Chests were drawn forward to the fire for him to sit on, and he was shown the treasures kept inside (Eliza:20,21,23,28). He failed to mention whether or not they were decorated, however.

On the west end of Lucy Island, in Parry Passage between Dadens and Kiusta, was some sort of building which was visited by Captain Chanal in 1791. He at first thought it was palisades, the work of Europeans, but on going ashore found that

they form the enclosure of a platform of moderate elevation, resting on one side against the rock, and supported at certain distances by stakes, rafters, and other pieces of wood forming the frame of a building, well put together and well contrived: he ascended it by a staircase made out

of the trunk of a tree." (Fleurieu, 395)

He saw that it was an old structure and could not have been European-made.

"He here remarked several boxes without a lid, the use of which the islanders explained: these perform the office of a drum from which they draw a sound, by striking with the fist against the outer sides". He did not record whether these box drums were decorated.

But what particularly attracted the attention of the French, and well deserved to fix it, were two pictures each of which eight or nine feet long, by five feet high, was composed only of two planks put together. On one of these pictures, is seen represented, in colours rather lively, red, black, and green, the different parts of the human body, painted separately; and the whole surface is covered with them. The latter picture appears to be a copy of the former, or perhaps it is the original: it is difficult to decide to which of the two belongs the priority, so much are the features of both effaced by age. (396)

Though having the appearance of a fort of some kind, Captain Chanal judged from what the natives indicated "that it was rather a place consecrated to religious ceremonies, or public diversions". Ingraham, the same year, apparently considered it a fort, for he showed the island as "Hippah" Island on his chart of the harbour. James G. Swan, there with Chief Edenshaw in 1883, was told it had been a "doctor's house". Whatever the structure was, the paired mural paintings were like painted house screens later seen in Tlingit houses (Holm, p. 5).

Inside one of the Dadens houses, Captain Chanal saw another painted mural somewhat like those he had seen in the other building, which "occupied the head of the apartment" (418). It was a complex, symmetrical human figure painted in black, red and "apple green". From these descriptions there is no doubt that the distinctive painted style of the Haida was already developed, as well as the style of sculpture, for these examples were aged at the time.

It is also well established from the early accounts that at the time of contact the Haida travelled widely along the coast for trade and war, and that an immediate effect of the <sup>fur</sup> trade was to increase the amount of such <sup>trading</sup> <sup>tempo</sup> journeying. The <sup>trading</sup> vessels quickly <sup>exhausted</sup> overtaxed their local sources of sea otter pelts, and they increased trade with tribes less accessible to the sailing ships, serving as middlemen and trying unsuccessfully to preserve a monopoly. The situation as it existed in 1799 is explicitly clear from the Eliza's journal. Its writer considered Cunneaw of Kiusta to be the oldest and most respected chief on the northern coast:

...indeed we never visited a place on the Coast but what we found they knew him or his tribe by woefull experience, having often made expeditions to the northward when at war, as far as Sheetkah /Sitka/, plundered their Villages and brought of numbers of prisoners (p. 24).

Amongst the treasures of the chiefs were white ermine skins from Chilkat, which they received from "Northern Chiefs as a mark of Friendship, when they are trading among them" (28). It was only when drunk that the chiefs would reveal the sources of their traded furs: Altatsee finally told of going "a vast distance to a place inland" where they had to push their canoes up fresh water rapids (the Nass River, which the Eliza soon visited). His <sup>Altatsee's</sup> brother then admitted that most of the skins were obtained from a group called Cockatlanes (Tongass Tlingit), but that he dared not, on threat of death, pilot them there. With another pilot the ship did go to these places, in spite of Chief Cow's warnings that there were no skins there, and that there was so much sickness there that they would lose all their men, and finally a plea not to spoil the market (p. 29). The Haida fears were well founded, as before long the ships passed them by, and brought their brief and prosperous monopoly to an end.

The early years of the maritime fur trade, when ships flocked to the Haida villages, were times of intense interaction. The <sup>first</sup> early encounters set the <sup>mood</sup> tone of relations and the kinds of acculturation for many decades to follow. Where armed conflicts took place, as at Ninstints ("Koyah's", see Duff and Kew, 1957) and Cumshewa, the enmity tended to escalate, and persisted <sup>bad feeling</sup> until about 1860. But where friendly relations were established in the beginning and maintained through the fur trade period, the acculturative effects on the Haida were very pronounced. The villages remained regular ports of call, and sources of pilots and crewmen. Skidegate was one such village. The best example of friendship and early acculturation, however, was with the people of Dixon Entrance who came to be known as the Kaigani. Their ~~initial~~ friendship resulted from the memorable meeting of Captain <sup>?</sup> Douglas and Cunneah, the ranking chief of the area.

In August of 1788, cruising southward, Douglas discovered a harbour at Kaigani which he named Port Meares. Its inhabitants, "the most liberal, unsuspecting and honest Indians he had ever known", helped tow him into the harbour, and he dined three of the chiefs on board (Meares, <sup>friendship</sup>, p. 165). The following June he returned to the area and anchored in Parry Passage, where "Blakow-Coneehaw", one of his friends of the <sup>previous</sup> year ~~before~~, came aboard

and welcomed the arrival of the ship with a song, to which two hundred of his people formed a chorus of the most pleasing melody. When the voices ceased, he paid Captain Douglas the compliment of exchanging names with him, after the manner of the chiefs of the Sandwich Islands" (Meares, p.221).

The chief thereafter greeted ships by crying out "Douglas-Conneha, What's your name?" (Bishop, p. 102). He apparently never missed an opportunity to tell the story. When the Eliza's journalist visited his house in 1799:

the Old man told me a long story about the first vessels that visited the Islands. Cap. Douglass as well as I can learn was the first that visited this port, and laid the foundation for a firm

friendship with the tribe by his kind behaviour towards them, and to this day his memory is much revered among them. Cunneaw and he made an exchange of names, and the Old Man as often calls himself Douglass as Cunneaw, and always if he is asked his name by white people tells them it is Douglass Cunneaw" (p. 24).

The story and the name were passed down with the chieftainship, and later became the property of Edenshaw, who told the tale to all who would listen.

With the name seems to have gone some sort of obligation of friendship with the white men.

The Kaigani chiefs had suits of clothes by 1789, dined and slept aboard the visiting ships, cultivated a taste for New England rum by 1799, served as pilots. In 1825 John Scouler recorded that they were the only natives trusted by the American ships (OHQ:192), though by then the ships also frequented Skidegate. By 1835 many of the Kaigani men had served aboard vessels for sea otter hunting expeditions in California waters, and had visited the Sandwich Islands (Work:20). They became sophisticates early, knew the white man's wealth, and could never again be content to revert to the Haida life they had known before.

(AE) *see Cunneaw had been his "uncle"*

*expectation*

*Jawson  
Swan  
Collison  
Walbran*

*European*

*adding*



It is not the usual view of history to describe the Haida of that period as living in poverty, but by 1825, in terms of the fur trade, they were. Over-hunting had reduced the sea otters in their own waters almost to extinction, and their islands yielded few other types of furs. The trading ships had found their own way to the Nass and other mainland sources. The result was stated with remarkable clarity by John Scouler, who was on the coast in 1825:

In former times, when the sea-otter<sup>?</sup>-abounded, /the Haida/ were among the most wealthy on the coast: since the sea-otter has been destroyed, the Hydahs have become poor, and have been reduced to other plans in order to procure blankets. They fabricate most of the curiosities found on the coast, but their staple article is the potato, which they sell in great quantities to the mainland tribes.... They also manufacture and export canoes (Scouler, 1840:219).

Cloak Bay, formerly so busy, was no longer an important port of call. In his 1832 journal of the Lama, Captain McNeill gave directions for entering the principal harbours, and of "Hansling" (Henslung Bay near Dadens) he noted "there is but few natives who live here in the fishing season, and the place hardly worth visiting" (McNeill, 1832). The early trade, which had made them wealthy and taught them to want many of the white man's goods, had now almost completely passed them by.  
the Haida

It was not a situation which could be <sup>the Haida could passively accept</sup> passively accepted by the Haida. Their history through the next several decades would indeed be misunderstood except as strong and definite responses to it. As Scouler observed, they took to the growing of potatoes and the fabrication of "curiosities" for sale, and stepped up the production of their specialties such as canoes. In <sup>increased</sup> addition they travelled more, and engaged in other forms of enterprise from <sup>waged more wars,</sup> piloting to prostitution. It was a tragic period of their history, because it reduced them almost to extinction, but it was also a period of their greatest artistic <sup>expression</sup> production.

One hardly thinks of the Haida as horticulturists. Yet aboriginally they had been the cultivators of the native chewing "tobacco" of the northern coast, which they traded to the Tsimshian and Tlingit. In 1789 Captain Douglas saw newly-sown gardens at Dadens. He did not recognize them as tobacco gardens, but assumed they had been planted by Captain Gray of the Washington <sup>who had been there three weeks before</sup> (which was not the case, as Gray had not anchored) on his visit three weeks before), and "from the same benevolent spirit Captain Douglas himself planted some beans, and gave the natives a quantity for the same useful purpose" (Meares:227). Other early navigators did recognize tobacco gardens for what they were: both Hoskins and Ingraham mentioned some on Rose Harbour in 1791. It is not known when the Haida began to take the white man's tobacco in trade, and to smoke pipes. The native tobacco continued to be grown until 1883 (by an old lady at Cumshewa), but no sample of the plant has survived and its exact identity remains an ethnological and botanical puzzle.

see  
Footmark

Turner &  
Taylor

Which of the traders introduced the potato to the Queen Charlotte Islands is not clear.<sup>1</sup> However by 1825 Scouler could say that its cult-

1. Howay attributes the introduction to Gray (1920, Voyage of the Hope, WHQ XI, 1, p7), which may not be the case if he was referring to Douglas' comment above. Dunn (1845:41) said it was an American captain.

ivation was "very general among them" (OHQ:191). Green, in 1829, pronounced them of a "most excellent quality", adding "some years since, a trader left a few English potatoes..., and instructed the natives in the cultivation of them" (Green, pp. 38, 51). The growers sold them to trading ships and took them to the mainland to trade. Dr. Tolmie's journal in 1835 referred to the Massets taking 400 bushels to Port Simpson for sale (Tolmie, ), and Dunn wrote that he had known the Haida to trade 500-800 bushels a season at Port Simpson (Dunn, 1845:41).

*1860 Allet Cooper saw turnips, onions, and potatoes, of good quality, at Verago Sound. Later accounts mention any gardens?*

this

It was the same situation that led to the inception of Haida argillite carving shortly before 1820. The frequent presence of Yankee ships at Skidegate undoubtedly influenced this art form, not just in that they provided a ready market for "curios", but in the forms and iconography of earliest <sup>some of the</sup> example the/carvings. As has been suggested by Barbeau and others, the presence of white sailors engaged in scrimshaw work may have provided the concept of such an art form in the first place. The material is found in only one place, a rockslide-quarry on the side of a mountain some miles from Skidegate. There is no very convincing evidence that the Haida made any use of it before about 1819, which is the earliest established/date of an argillite carving (a sculptured pipe). Who discovered the quarry, and when, remain unknown.<sup>2</sup>

2. Barbeau (1953:2) says: "This soft mineral, it has been recorded, was discovered by white miners at the beginning of the nineteenth century", but he gives no source for the information, and I know of no white miners on the islands before 1850.

*When and why did they quit?*

Museum records make it clear that many were collected during the 1820s.

The earliest forms, curiously, were pipes, which were <sup>however</sup> so elaborately sculptured as to conceal their supposed function and bear no evidence that they <sup>are</sup> ~~they~~ <sup>Fladmark</sup> were <sup>ever actually smoked</sup> actually intended to be smoked. Green in 1829 mentioned that ~~the~~ "Their pipes, which they make of a kind of slate stone, are curiously wrought (p. 86), and Dunn, <sup>referring to</sup> writing about the 1830s, mentioned that "a soft kind of stone is found, resembling slate, which the Indians make into pipes, ornamented with various figures cut upon them resembling men and animals" (1845:411); which conveys <sup>both cum to convey</sup> the erroneous impression that the pipes were smokeable. Carole Kaufmann (ms.) has assumed that the prototype for these curious carvings was a Haida form of sculptured wooden pipe bowl of a kind represented in museum collections from later decades, since several of the earliest slate pipes are of <sup>somewhat vaguely</sup> an oval outline rather than the more common, straight-based "panel" form. However it has not been established that the Haida had adopted the custom of smoking pipes that early, and if they did, whether they made such oval wooden pipes. ?

The oval form of slate pipe, according to Kaufmann's chronology of argillite carvings, persisted only until the 1840s. Panel forms were made from the beginning of the slate industry until the 1860s; from 1840 on some of them drop <sup>ped</sup> any pretense of being pipes (having no bowl and drilled stem) and become just panels. From the beginning the panel pipes were of two different varieties <sup>in terms of</sup> depending on the subject matter depicted. The one shows animal and human forms in a classic Haida style crowded into intricate <sup>groupings</sup> compositions, often <sup>in compositions</sup> of great beauty. The other, which may have begun slightly later than the first and outlasted it by a couple of decades, depicts white men, and parts of ships, and all manner of non-Haida things, in awkward compositions. Some of these, though still flat panels, take an overall form derived from a ship's hull; others have straight bases supporting houses, fences,

farm  
foreign animals, and other subjects, <sup>perhaps</sup> evidently copied from illustrations  
in papers or books. Some of the panels of the latter sort were not made  
made of materials other than  
of argillite, a batch given to the Wilkes Expedition by Hudson's Bay men at  
the mouth of the Columbia River in 1841 are made of wood, painted and inlaid  
with parts in ivory and whalebone (see also Seibert, Figs. 23,24 for a similar  
one in a Moscow Museum). This was "fabricating curiosities" indeed, and they  
served no purpose to the Haida other than to sell.

*maybe  
Sukka?*

The argillite industry therefore began as a sort of Haida scrimshaw  
for the "curio" trade. Pipes and panels were augmented during the 1840s  
and other white peopn uniforms typical of the period  
with statuettes of sea captains, etc. and plates and platters decorated mostly  
and floral most, perhaps from one man  
with geometrical designs; and during the 50s and 60s with flutes. About 1865  
the first model totem poles appear, and these remain the dominant form  
of Haida mythology  
thereafter. Groups of figures, carved chests or caskets, comports and a  
few other forms were made in numbers after the 1880s, and were made by  
some of the artists later to be dealt with.

*We shall return to argillite in more detail. Take off from it to  
get into other art forms!*

*Houseport models 1860-80*

*Totem pole models - 1870-85 > 18"  
1890 - < 12"*

*The craft is still carried on:  
pole models brooches?*

Argillite was not the only medium for Indian curios. From the beginning the seamen had collected as souvenirs any portable items of material culture which the Haidas would <sup>sell</sup> part with. Kaufmann suspects, as others do, that the number of portrait-like face masks collected by the early mariners were more than the number required by the Haida for their own uses. This tribe and others on the coast seem to have made model canoes and figures <sup>doll-like</sup> in early times, and painted paddles and things which they had no hesitation in selling. Even rattles and other semi-sacred objects could be replaced, and would be sold, in some cases.

Haida arts and industries for export included such local specialties as canoes and wooden chests made for trade to the mainland tribes. These items had long been part of their stock in trade when they went on their annual journeys to the Nass to trade for eulachon oil and other products of the mainland, or north to the Tlingit tribes who had no such fine cedar in their territories. Undoubtedly these industries grew as the Haida trade to Port Simpson increased. Many are the stories of the arrival of Haidas in a flotilla of fine new canoes, and their departure for home in patched old hulks dangerously overloaded with the products of their trading. Such was their reputation as expressed in 1858 in the Victoria Gazette (August 18, 1858). The Haida

are distinguished above all others on this coast for their ingenuity and skill in mechanics and the "fine arts". Some specimens of their workmanship... in carving miniatures out of slate, are really creditable as works of art; and their canoes are perfect models of nautical beauty.

High praise indeed for the time.

By the time the canoe industry succumbed to technological obsolescence in the 1890s, Masset had come to be known as "the Clyde of the Pacific".  
*An occasional*  
A small number of large canoes continued to be made on commission until about 1910. With the death in 1969 of Robert Davidson of Masset, at the age of 83, the last of the old Haida skills<sup>ed</sup> in canoe making was gone.

Chests and boxes bearing carved or painted designs were less well known exports through the same period. In addition, with the greater freedom of travel along the coast, Haida artists spend<sup>t</sup> periods at such places as Sitka, Port Simpson, Bella Bella, Victoria and Port Townsend, where they made their wares for sale or worked on commissions for local chiefs. I do not mean to give the impression that the Haida were the only artists on the coast; I do want to explain how it was that their products were spread so far and wide by the time the main surge of museum collectors arrived.

It has to be added that another business which proved lucrative to the Haidas and others from the beginning was female prostitution. When the writer of the Eliza's journal stayed ashore overnight at Kiusta and enjoyed the hospitality of Cunneah and his wife - as he records it - "the Old Woman proceeded to the last offer of Friendship, which was a lady for the night, out of her numerous Seraglio, with which she accomadates all Vessells that stop here!"  
*The offer was declined*  
He declined the offer. In 1829 Green was told by the then chief "Kowe" at Kaigani "that all the young women of the tribe visit ships for the purpose of gain by prostitution, and in most cases destroy the children, the fruit of this infamous intercourse" (p. 68).

When the Hudson's Bay forts were built along the coast, it was Haida and Tlingit women who were preferred by the men as wives. Later, in the great annual migrations south to Victoria and other southern settlements, prostitution and the marriage of women to white men was so general that although the proceeds helped create many a fine totem pole back home the practice contributed to the disastrous decline of Haida population until their conversion to Christianity in the 1880s.



Such were the products specialized in by the Haida when their fur supplies dwindled: potatoes, argillite and other curios, specialized local industries such as canoes and boxes, and new enterprises from piloting to prostitution. Yet there is another of their responses which has to be understood: in order to stay in with the action they became compulsive travellers and all too often emigrants. The Hudson's Bay Company established no fort on the islands, although there was a very small post at Masset from 1853 on. The post most accessible to the Haida was Fort Simpson, established first in 1831 at the mouth of the Nass and moved in 1834 to the mainland coast south of the Nass where the native village of Port Simpson still exists. The Nass had always been the main center of trade of this part of the coast, where all surrounding tribes including the Haida met each spring while the eulachon fishing season was on. The Haida did not have rights to fish there, but traded when they were not at war. The establishment of Port Simpson gave a powerful additional incentive to these trading expeditions, and in fact <sup>being more accessible</sup> became a more easily accessible center for trade of all the the northern tribes; in which role it remained pre<sup>2</sup>eminent for several decades. Visits to the fort, especially in the early decades, remained incursions into foreign territories, and the Haida were as often embroiled in wars as they were engaged in peaceful trade. In addition, they continued to probe north as far as Sitka and south as far as Bella Bella, earning a deserved reputation as the scourges of the coast.

One of the greatest population movements on the coast, as yet too little described known, was the immense annual exodus of the northern tribes (the Haida most of all) to Fort Victoria between 1858 and 1862. The sudden and exciting growth of Victoria as a result of the Fraser River gold rush in 1858 was undoubtedly a main stimulus. It was a long and perilous journey through enemy channels, to be undertaken only by strong fleets of canoes, with the full expectation that <sup>waters</sup> and <sup>of</sup> intention of raiding and being ambushed. The Haida already had their reputation as warriors, and they lived it to the full. There are even stories that they felt themselves capable of taking Victoria itself on their first visit (eg St. John, 1876, pp. ), presumably in 1858. *Beans says 1858*

The Victoria Colonist provides quite detailed information on the arrivals and doings of these northern fleets. In 1859, for example, the newspaper recorded on April 23rd that 80 canoes containing 1000 Haidas had arrived from the Queen Charlotte Islands. On May 14th, according to a letter on file in the Provincial Archives (Woolsey, 1859), the Indian encampments north of the town were disrupted by a brief shooting war between 600 Haidas and 200 Port Simpson Tsimshians, in which several people on both sides were killed or wounded. According to the account, about 4000 spectators watched the action from high ground <sup>on</sup> ~~just north of~~ the town's northern outskirts. On a crude sketch map, he showed not just the Haida and Tsimshian camps, but camps of "Stikines", "Georginas" (Tchachini or Kasaan Haidas of Alaska?), "Bella Bellas" and Cowichans. The other tribes armed themselves and stood ready to fight the Haidas, who were regarded as the common enemy, and shortly after the battle most (or all) of the Haidas left town. The Colonist of June 27 reported that there had been fights between the Haida and Cowichans up the coast.

Some Haidas wintered in Victoria that year, and more arrived in the spring of 1861. On April 5 the Colonist reported that 54 canoes of Haidas and Stikines had arrived, and on June 12 "a large number of Haidas arrived from the Queen Charlotte Islands", and "it is said over 1000 warriors are on their way down". The Fort Simpson Journal entry for June 14 noted that "a large fleet of Hydars" had arrived there, including "Edensaw, Wehar, and Neestakannah"/who were the chiefs of Kiusta, Masset and Skidegate, respectively/<sup>at Nanaimo on their way down</sup>. The arrival of 80 Haida canoes in ~~Victoria~~ was reported in the Colonist of July 31. Stories on August 4 and September 1 told of the northern Indians leaving in large numbers for home.

Another perspective on the summer migration of 1860 is available from an account of a trip ~~na~~ to the northern villages made by HMS Alert (Cooper, 1860), written by the harbourmaster of Esquimalt. The vessel was one of three ships of war sent that summer to tour all the coastal villages and persuade the Indians to cease their warfare and slave-taking, especially during their annual trips to Victoria. If one single event should be chosen to symbolize the imposition of the Pax Britannica on the coast, this was it. On July 31st, on the way north, they met at Nanaimo the Haida fleet of Chief Edenshaw. The Alert went <sup>on</sup> to the Queen Charlottes with the intent of visiting all of the villages. At "Laskeek" (Tanoo), Cooper recorded, the Indians "appear anxious to live at peace with all in order that they can make their annual visit to Victoria unmolested". The population of the village was judged at 400 souls, but many were away "at Victoria, or on their way thither". At Skidegate the chief "Estercana" /it would appear that although he had accompanied Edenshaw to Port Simpson (see above: Neestakannah) he had not gone to Victoria/ beseeched them to "write down and tell Mr. Douglas and the Man of War to send all my people home, I wanted

to build a large house this summer and nearly all my people are away at Victoria."

Later the ship visited Virago Sound, where a chief "Conday" had just returned from a visit to Sitka. Then on September 8 she proceeded to Parry Passage and visited Edenshaw's village of Kiusta, which was completely abandoned. They went ashore

*went on shore*  
to the village, which is a very large one, but on our landing it bore a melancholly and desolate appearance, as not a soul was to be seen, the houses covered inside and out with rank vegetation, bearing the resemblance of having been deserted some time. The chief 'Edensaw' we met at Nanaimo on our way north who is at this time probably at Victoria with the whole of his tribe. This circumstance is suggestive of great difficulties in case of any trouble arising at Victoria, ...inasmuch that they would not have provided a winter stock of provisions.

The weather being fine, the Alert *took the opport. to pay an official* paid a ceremonial visit to Sitka. Cooper found that the Indians there were so influenced by the market and attractions of Victoria that they withheld their furs from the Russian-American Company. He predicted that they would make an alliance with the Haida: "an event not at all improbable as interchanges between the tribes are of more frequent occurrence than formerly" (witness Conday's visit), and join the annual migration to Victoria. The annual voyages of Edenshaw's people to Victoria were at least 600 miles each way, and the Sitka people would have had to travel an additional 250 miles each way.

Several questions about these incredible journeys remain unanswered. What indeed did they do about provisions en route, and about the next winter's food supply? Booty from raids on the villages along the way may have been substantial. By saving their furs to sell on the Victoria market they may have increased their incomes. There was some work at jobs in Victoria and other settlements, and there was the general prostitution. In addition, however, there must have been a considerable amount of making and selling of curios; that is, a considerable incentive to the arts.

The calamitous smallpox epidemic of 1862 (devastated the northern tribes and) put an end to their fearsome power and their great annual voyages. The story of how It began in Victoria in April and spread into the camps of northern Indians, who were then driven out by the authorities to carry it with them up the coast, has been told elsewhere (Duff and Kew, 1957, p. ). ~~Its effects~~ All the northern tribes (with the one exception of the Christianized Tsimshians who had just moved to Metlakatla) were decimated, and the Haida as badly <sup>among</sup> as the worst. From Victoria, it looked as though they would be totally extinguished, and the Colonist, on June 12, 1862, printed a sort of epitaph, entitled "Good Bye to the Northerners". A gunboat had been sent to Cadboro Bay and had "supervised the embarkation for their homes of about three hundred Northern Indians". On the request of the chief, "Edensah", the vessel escorted them past Nanaimo, where the Indians were waiting to settle some old scores against them. The story concluded:

1862 { How have the mighty fallen! Four short years ago, numbering their braves by thousands, they were the scourge and terror of the coast; today, broken-spirited and effeminate, with scarce a corporal's guard of warriors remaining alive, they are proceeding northward, bearing with them the seeds of a loathsome disease that will take root and bring both a plentiful crop of ruin and destruction to the friends who have remained at home. At the present rate of mortality, not many months can elapse 'ere the Northern Indians of this coast will exist only in story.

? later ? { The epitaph did prove to be <sup>somewhat</sup> premature. Yet the cumulative effect of all these causes was to bring the Haida perilously close to extinction. In the 1830s, ~~based~~ <sup>had been</sup> on the best estimates, there were more than 6000 Haidas in a dozen large villages on the Queen Charlottes; by 1882 ~~they were~~ when the first reserves were surveyed, they were <sup>reduced</sup> down to about 900, scattered <sup>remnants</sup> in nine villages; and by 1900 they had congregated in just two, Skidegate and Masset, and numbered only about 600. (1360 in 1969)

detailed

We are spared any knowledge of the small pox overkill in Haida villages. Outside visitors were very few during the 1860s and early 70s. The prediction of their complete disappearance was premature. The epidemic did break them as a power, but did not stop their visits to Victoria and did not stop their productivity as artists. The contemporary accounts of the Haida present us with a conundrum: in European eyes they had fallen into a life of debauchery and vice, yet it was in this period that they produced some of their most magnificent <sup>art</sup> totem poles.

The prevailing view <sup>of the time</sup> is well expressed by M. St. John, a literate gentleman who was in the party of <sup>the</sup> Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, ~~which~~ paid a quick visit to Skidegate in 1876. The Charlottes were little known at the time, and St. John had not been there before, although he had known the Haidas of earlier years in Victoria. His comments are typical:

1876 { During the last few years a great change has taken place in the once fierce and intractable Hydahs... /Their early visits/ to Victoria gave them a taste for the debauchery of civilization, to which they have yielded themselves unreservedly, and before which they will go down like withered reeds. They have abandoned their predatory excursions, and now, taking their young women with them, they set out for Victoria, timing their visit to be there during the season when the miners are arriving from the interior. During their stay in their own homes, much of their time is spent in carving bone, slate, or silver ornaments - the latter being worn in great profusion by the women - for sale in Victoria. (St. John, 1877, pp. 35-6).

The visitors had difficulty in reconciling <sup>such a</sup> that view of the people with the splendor <sup>they saw in Skidegate village</sup> of the array of huge wood sculpture in Skidegate. They ~~had~~ arrived at the village late in the evening, and had the enchanting experience of coming to it not knowing what to expect and seeing it first by moonlight.

The houses themselves were partially lost to view in the shadow of the hills, but the ascending columns in their varying heights rose clear above them in the moonlight, and gave the village the appearance of an Eastern city with innumerable minarets (p. 25).

Next day at dawn they went ashore again. The village consisted of about forty houses in one continuous line, and was almost deserted. What impressed them most was

...the array of carved cedar pillars and crested monuments that rise in profusion throughout the length of the village. In the centre of the front face of every house was an upright pillar of cedar, generally about forty feet high.... From base to top these pillars had been made to take the forms of animals and birds, and huge grotesque human figures.... The carvings were in some places elaborate, and in many places coloured. Some of the pillars, a few yards in front of the houses, were surmounted by life-size representations of birds or animals, the token of the family, coloured in a fanciful manner.... The main and tallest pillars, however, were those of which one formed the centre of each house, and through which entrance was had into the interior.

...I can hardly exaggerate the surprise which was generally felt at this unexpected spectacle...an Indian town of such indisputable age, with such evidences of dexterity in a branch of art.... Again and again it was asked where did the ~~Haidas~~ Hydahs obtain the models from which they have copied, since they never could have seen what they have carved about their dwellings (St. John, pp. 28-30).

How could such monuments be created by such people? How could one understand their "deserting a splendid home to live by the practice of vice and die from the effects of gin"? (p. 51). "They will probably soon be extinct", the same writer wrote in another place. In contrast with the Tsimshians, who has become "sons of the Church", they had chosen to adopt "the vices of civilization", and were now peaceable and resigned to their gradual disappearance. (St. John, c.1886)

It was by no wide margin that the Haida did escape extinction. In the 1830s there had been about 6000 of them in a dozen large villages on the Queen Charlotte Islands. By 1882, when the first reserves were surveyed, they had been reduced to about 900, scattered remnants in nine villages. By 1900 they had all congregated in two, Skidegate and Masset, and numbered only about 600. It was a perilously close thing, and they have recovered to the point where they now number about 1350.

Conversion to Christianity, the remaking of their lives by the strong-willed missionaries of Anglican and Methodist faiths, began for the Haida in 1876 and was completed by 1890. The years before their conversion, the 1860s and 70s, were for them a strange paradox of glory and corruption, cultural <sup>growth</sup> climax and cultural decay. There were the examples of Metlakatla and Port Simpson just across on the mainland side. There the Tsimshian had forsaken their old life and arts, but they seemed freed of the plagues disease and alcohol that were decimating the Haida, and were prosperous in new ways. The Haida abhorred some of the changes but envied others. They asked for missionaries and the new order they brought.

With conversion, the things considered pagan ceased to be made, ceased even to be kept. No more old style houses were made after the mid-1880s, which meant no more carved houseposts or portal poles. The practice of burial in the ground put an end to mortuary poles. Shamans, the first target of the missionaries, ceased to hold sway, and gave up their rattles, charms, soul-catchers. Daggers, clubs, clan helmets went with war. The social structure crumbled - <sup>few</sup> no more chiefly robes, staffs, headdresses, feast dishes.

But not all of the old arts were tainted with paganism. Canoe making, box making etc for a while were necessary crafts. The artists were heir to a long tradition of art for sale as well as art for use; those whose careers spanned the pre- and post-Christian decades (few, as the population was small) dropped some old media and concentrated more on new: slate carving, jewellery making, and the making of models and specimens for collectors. In slate they <sup>miniatures of</sup> carved some things they were no longer carving in wood, like totem pole (models) <sup>portraits of the past</sup> and chests-caskets, and portraits of figures of the past: shamans in groups etc. Also new, Victorian things like comports, caskets, dishes.