

This is the only good and original section of  
the whole sea. Emblems of Nobility  
NISKAE WOOD CARVERS of emblems

### Carvers of the Nass River

(According to CHARLES BARTON, Fahl, head-chief of a Wolf clan, at Kincolith, in 1927)

The Skeena River people [Tsimshyan Proper and Gitksan], until some time ago, had not much [by way of] carving. They imitated the Nass.

The carvers of the Nass, in the past were:

1. Hlaaderh (of Gitwinksihk tribe, Kahade phratry), in my time (Barton was about 65 years old). He died about forty years ago. He was a great man at hewing, with an axe and adze. He had made old-fashioned houses and totem poles. He was considered one of the best carvers. He worked at my father's pole, at Angyede. The pole has been taken down and burnt. The people don't like to have their poles lying down. He made masks and rattles.

2. Old Sqateen (of Gitlarhdams, Wolf phratry) was very good in making masks and rattles, the hasaerh [rattles] with a bird. It takes a good man to make one of them. He carved many of them. I have seen him making them, when he was living at Kincolith [at the mouth of the Nass]. He made them to sell, many of them. This was about 25 or 30 years ago, the last I have seen of him. Must have died about 15 years ago. He was a very old man then. He sold his rattles to the white people.

The bird rattles [hasaerh] were used mostly by the Nass people. The Tlingit and the Haida did not use them in the old days. They had a different kind of [ceremonial] dancing, a different style. They did not know how to use these rattles at first. They don't even get right into it now. I have seen them try, but they don't do very well. The Tsimshyan style of dancing is not exactly like that of the Nass either. But they use the rattles now. I don't think they had them in the old days. They may. It is before my time that they began to dance with the rattles. The Skeena River people now possess them. But not formerly.

Adiyaigwerh introduced dancing with the narhnorh [spirit], where these rattles were used. He was a Kanhada [Raven] of Git<sup>h</sup>sqateen [tribe]. When he gave a narhnork,

to the chiefs he gave them a rattle, and it is then that the rattles were used, not otherwise. The Larhkibu [Wolves] of Gitrateen tried to make a narhnorh themselves, without the permission of the Qanhade, and [one of them in consequence] was killed. This was Adinaw, who was the first one [of them] to try. Adiyaigwerh introduced this [kind of] dancing long before the arrival of the white man. Old Mathew Nass [was among those] who saw the white people come. His brother <sup>was</sup> of Hlederh, who saw the white man arrive, at the time when the Hudson's Bay Company was established at Graveyard Point [in 1831].

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The strangers who used the hasaerh, bird rattles, must have got them from Sqateen, on the Nass. A little before my time, and when I was a boy, there was quite a number of Gitksan [of the upper Skeena River] who lived among the Nass people, about 30 or 40 years ago. They learned the fashion [of using rattles] here. Angyeda and Gitwinksihl [village] were full of them. Some of these rattles were made for the Raven [Qanhade]. Others were made with the Grouse [Pistae'i] for the Gispewudwade [phratry]. More of them were made with the Eagle, to represent the Larhskeek [Eagle or Thunderbird phratry]. The Larhkibu [Wolves] would have the Wasqaws, the Crane.

3. Nakedzai, a third carver, of Gitrhateen, a Wolf, belonging to Angyeda village. He died about 15 years ago, very old. He saw the Hudson's Bay Company come and establish their fort at Graveyard Point. He carved many totem poles and made a great number of masks. One of the poles now lying at Gitlarhdams is by him, a Larhskeek (Thunderbird) pole. I have seen him carve masks, when I was a boy. It was done in the winter time, while not out hunting.

4. Gaagyahl, of Gwanwoq village, a Qanhade, was a good carver, very clever. He made many masks, and died about 30 years ago. He was one of the first who started Kinkolith [village, at the <sup>mouth</sup> north of the Nass], and joined the mission there. He was a very good carpenter after that. He built schooners and plenty of boats. The first schooner on the Nass was by him.

5. Akstaql was a Larhkil<sup>bu</sup>, a Wolf, of Gitlarhdank's village [on the upper Nass]. The Tlingit have known him to be a good carver of totems. He died about 35 years ago, at Angyeda, where he belonged. I have seen many poles at old Tongas that were his work; they are still there [See the Author's book on Totem poles, II]. Most of the poles at Tongas were made by Nass River carvers. Some of them were made by

187° 6. Hikuwa'san (a Wolf, of Angyeda). They<sup>have</sup> put up over 60 years ago [before 1927]. Hikuwa'san died more than 50 years ago. I saw him. He was an old man then. He was a good carver of totem poles. The Gidarans [Tlingit] were not able to carve the "class" (quality) of the poles that the Nass River people made.

7. Leonard Douglas, who now lives at Greenville, is a good carver, who can make masks and totem poles. His Indian name is Ligunesk, a Wolf of Angyeda village, about 60 years old. I have seen him carve totems, at Gwanahaw; they are his; Gwanahaw is now abandoned [one of these poles was collected by the Author for the Museum of the American Indian, New York. It now stands, at the Annex of this Museum]. Douglas carved his totem poles about 35 years ago [before 1927].  $\frac{1927}{35} = 1892$

8. Gitiks, Frank Bolton, Thunderbird, of the lower Nass, is still alive now, in 1927. [He remained a heathen for a number of years, [after the others had moved down to the Mission village of Kincolith]. He must have done a lot of carving. [He, later, carved small totems, and a mask for the Author].

9. Neesmoot, a Wolf of Greenville; he was a Gitginyanih, an up-river man. I have seen him carve spoons, when he was a very old man. He may have carved other things too.

10. Qaguhlan, of Angyeda, a Wolf, was also a great carver. There were lots of them in the old days. Qaguhlan died about ten years ago. He carved masks, hasarh, bird rattles, and chief's headdresses. To make these requires a good carver, because they have to be carved overnight. This carver, at Gitiks, was also very good, about the best, at building boats, two-masted schooners, which were bought by white people at Victoria, and they lasted a long time.

Totem poles must be very old, because the story of Gitrhateen village at its beginning mentions totem poles. In those days, the [Niske] people of the Wolf clans of Gitgigyanih, up the river, and the Gitrhateen<sup>y</sup> fought together. Chief Negwa'on's totem pole [we are told] was left behind at Lakaltsap when the folk ran away. The Karhada [Ravens] told a story, that the <sup>S</sup>laninas once came upon these totems. Neahlem-larhkank stood by the Tsakanaga, a big-nosed Raven, that <sup>by</sup> stood outside the chief's house se... Before the volcano eruption [about 150 years ago ?] [the informant said, 400 or 500 years ago] <sup>1</sup> broke out, there were many other large carvings..., among them a Bear statue on a totem pole. It was chopped off, carried away in a sack on a man's back to keep it from burning.

The workers in the old days did not have the tools to make totem poles. They had no iron. They could use only stone adzes. I have heard [Barton still narrates] of their carving with their stone adzes. [When you go back that far] you don't hear of totem poles. Besides the people did not have the time. They were expert warriors. They fought all the time. Some other [tribes] would come down upon them. They had to be constantly on the watch.

At Larh-Gitrhateen village, they resided for a long period, once, the longest of all anywhere. They were very powerful. It happened probably 200 or 300 years before the Hudson's Bay Company's post was founded on the Nass Point [that is, 1630 or 1520].

The old houses there <sup>had</sup> were more carvings inside ~~the houses~~, in the old days

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lasting a lifetime each  
1 There has elapsed about eight generations<sup>1</sup> since that volcano eruption. And the old Niske lived longer lives than the present generations; they lived until their teeth were worn down to the gums.

than in our time. I have heard stories about this. The darhhanity<sup>3</sup> had four main posts that held up the large beams. These, in our family, were carved out with Ravens, real Raven carvings. My uncles and grandfathers, in those days, were no longer able to understand these as they formerly were. But they spoke of them. I have seen the Tsaganoo, "Nose-of-the-Raven", standing outside the house. The lower and upper jaws formed the porch of the house. The entrance was through the mouth. I have seen it. The people walked out through the beak all the time. When it was first built, a feast was given over it. It stayed there all the time, as it was the only entrance to the house of Neestsawl at Gitlarh'ans. It disappeared more than fifty years ago.

The large boxes with carvings were called hawlgen. In these goods were kept. Certain chiefs used to sit on them, in a feast. For instance, chief Ganugerh, in the old days, used to have a hawlgen to sit on. Wisaiks, one of the Gitrhahla [Isimsyan] chiefs, on Porcher Island, quarrelled with Neeslaranows, Wolf chief of the Gitlan tribe. Neeslaranows<sup>sw</sup> in a feast would always sit on his hawlgen. Wisaik must also have that right; he wanted it, both of them did. Wisaiks made a remark to that effect before a feast commenced. He said, "Ndasenwul-wathyet", which means, "I wonder where it is from that every person is sitting on a hawlgen!" Neeslaranows took this up immediately, and he answered Wisaiks: "Don't you say this, because you are drunk, you, Weesaik. My grandfather always had the right to sit on a hawlgen before anybody else. He was the only one that was ganugerh." After he said this, no one dared to speak. Even the chief that was giving this feast never spoke. He held his peace. Finally he told his lekarhkigyvet [lower class in his tribe] to open some boxes at the back of the house, and he took out twenty blankets. They did so. He called to Neeslaranows, and his lekarhkigyvet went to him with these blankets. That was to call on him to come to this feast a second time. He must come. And they sat him on the box [as he wanted].

On the Nass River, Ande (Wolf, of Gitrhateen) also had the same privilege. He sat on a carved box. The next one that sat on a box was Gaguhlan, who had inherited this privilege from Ande. He was Gatkwasgarhs' nephew. At a feast, he would sit on the box by the host. At the end of the feast, the box was given to him.

Chief's rattle (hasaim semhalasit) for a chief's ceremonial dance, according to Frank Bolton or Tralshait, head-chief of a leading Thunderbird clan, of Gitiks, lower Nass (recorded in 1927).

There was once a hunter on a lake, in a canoe. Many hunters wanted to hunt on this lake. But a whirlpool (antkwililebeks) there, would draw the canoes down to the bottom. This hunter was always watchful about it. At times it was bad, but at other times, mild. He would go out for the hunt only when it was not dangerous.

While he was out, one day, the little bird <sup>as if it is</sup> represented on the body of the rattle came up. Its bill was exactly like the rattle. The carving of a man was also found on top of the bird, and a frog on the tail of the bird, biting the tongue of this man, the tongue sticking out. This bird is called allao, a narbnoq or spirit.

All at once this little bird stood up on the water and shook itself. Its shaking produced a noise just like a chief's rattle. It was then that the hunter knew what the bird was. After he had gone back home he began to make a rattle just like it, exactly as he had seen it. This is how it all began. The bird has also another name; but it is now forgotten.

The rattle acquired by the <sup>cut</sup> father from informant Bolton (for the Royal Ontario Museum) was made by a Woodstee, and it came from the Bella Bella country, down the West Coast. Bolton's brother, Nistsunt, an Eagle, who had gone down to Victoria, had purchased it from the Woodstee, over thirty-five years before. He had only a few occasions when actually to use it at home. Then it passed to Bolton's hands [who was the last on the Nass, to abandon the old customs].

Such rattles were also made among the Niska. The grandfather of the Gispewdwade [phratry], Neesyocst, was taken down to the bottom of the sea by the hagweloq, the monster of the deep. It was there that he saw this being [of the rattle]. As soon as he got back, he began to carve a rattle, just the kind he had seen; it was the saqamsse'-gysk of the Gispewdwade [phratry]. And he went in afterwards making more rattles. Later, rattles were carved by some of the Gitr<sup>h</sup>ateen and the Gitanwilks tribesmen [of the Nass]. The rattle here is the first one [Bolton <sup>see</sup> that was made by a Woodstee and it may have been carved there; at least, it was acquired there. At the

beginning, such rattles were made only by the Niskwa, according to the story.

There were good artists who made it a business to carved and sell them. The price of one, in the early days, was ten blankets, 2½ points Hudson's Bay. Carver's of rattles [still remembered] were the following:

Sqateen (Wolf) and Paatnaqhl (Eagle); Negwawdemgyilelish (Eagle) and Ksedo'l (Wolf), these carvers were all of Gitlarhdamks, up the Nass. Wirhala'ide (Eagle), Qankseewae (Gispew<sup>u</sup>dwade), Gwans (of the same phratry), Kwirhmath (Eagle), and several more of Gitwin<sup>u</sup>ksilk village at the Canyon. At Gitrhateen, the following: Tarhan (Gispew. of Gunwoq), Nagadzeirh (Wolf of Angyeda village), Kwiswilprhe (Eagle, of Gunwoq), Likysnate (Gispew of Gunwoq), Maeksemtemqis (Wolf, of Gitlarhaws), Nalarha (of the same group), and many more. As their rattles sold well, the trade was bound to expand. Gitiks or Bolton [the informant] himself, when young, saw them carving rattles. As you see, it was not the monopoly of a clan or a tribe. The bird's head on the rattle is like a Raven's Qaq. When a rattle was ordered, it was executed just as the purchaser required it. But the little man must always be included. The raven part may be changed; an eagle, for the Thunderbird clan, may be substituted or a grouse (Priste'i) for the Gispew<sup>u</sup>dwade [phratry], or the Crane (Gagaws) for the Wolf. The body of the rattle is not really a bird's body. It is meant for the monster of the sea, the hagwelorh. It was able to swallow down a canoeman and all. The Lilebelk's or Whirlpool is this very bird or the monster's power.

The wood out of which the rattles are made is yellow cedar (skunsa'), or they are made here of maple or hard wood. But at Wadsta there does not seem to be any maple trees.

The carved box of Neesyoq, chief of a Wolf clan at Gitlarhdamks, up the Nass (according to himself). It was called Tsem'iyawrks, "In-pool[of the river]". It was used as a dancing platform, while it was filled with moose skins, which were to be presented to other chiefs, after the hallait or chief's dance. It was used twice by chief Neesyoq. Other chiefs, Negwa'on, Kwarkau, Weesaiks also had similar dancing boxes. Neesyoq's box had been carved, long ago, by Witensu [Edensaw] a Haida of

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Masset. The carving on it is simply a "work of art", saadebis, "to beautify", from butterfly [adebis].

The Sasaw bird on the rattles, according to Alfred Sqateen (in 1927). Here was a specimen carved by old Sqateen, who died in old age about twenty years before (1927). He was a good carver, whom Barton actually saw carving at Kincolith. He made a great many <sup>rattles</sup> during his lifetime, all for sale. Sasaw was the name given to the bird. The old folk had seen and heard it, and it was associated with the little man and other things [as it is on the rattle]. He did not finish this rattle, because, getting well on in years, he decided to change his way of living, and go to Kincolith to stay close to the Mission. This unfinished piece was left at his house at Gitlarh-dams.<sup>k</sup>

A headdress [amhallaait] of Sqateen bore the name of Nigyidihl. The old folk had seen that [supernatural] animal and known it by name--it belongs to the past. It was used as a crest on the head, in the ho'yerh, that is, in the highest grade of chieftainship. A man cannot become a chief without giving a ho'yerh. The last time Sqateen used it was over thirty years [before 1927]. The old man was arrested because he had given a potlatch, and Alfred [the informant] had to complete the feast while his uncle was taken away. So he used the headdress himself, while replacing his uncle at home. He also wore a gushallaait, chief's garment. He appeared before the chiefs who had been invited and gave away presents--a big pile of blankets; <sup>white</sup> before the people [hliyawn]. <sup>people came, it was moon skin</sup> Before making the distribution the chief stood on this pile, facing his guests. His family then would sing the lemaw'a, the song of Harho [recorded on the phonograph]. This headdress [amballaait] was carved over thirty years ago [before 1927] by Charlie Na'us, of Gitwinksihl [the Canyon tribe]. The Ligyidihl must have been a land being, because its hands and feet are like a man's. But the head is like a wolf's [the phratric crest]. Alfred Sqat<sup>ee</sup>in got his chief's name at a hay'erh, as a chief's name is bestowed only on such occasions.



A bag of red paint, anden'mes'ans to paint wood carvings with [according to Alfred Squateen]. The red paint or ochre was applied on the face before going into the hallaait house for a [ritual or] medicine dance. The bag is made of deerskin. The place where the red paint was found, on the other side [south] of the river, was named Anse'mes'ans; it was quite a distance away along the See'aks River, mixed up with lava.

Menaesk's emblems of nobility ←

Menaesk, the headchief of the Thunderbird phratry at Gitlarhdanks on the upper Nass River, gave the following information concerning paraphernalia of nobility which the Author was then securing for the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

1. The Split-Eagle robe or garment (Pahlkut Rskyak) represented the highest crest of the family. It belonged to Menaesk's sister Rganks whose chief's name was Neeskyedeks. This Split-Eagle crest has come down from ages past, that is, the garment with it was made when the informant was still a small boy; he was then <sup>now</sup> 80. The same Split-Eagle was tattooed on his chest, when he was a young man. The blanket he wore over his crest was a buttoned H. B. blanket. Previously the outer garment was all of tanned leather. A song is attached to this crest.

2. The Coat-of-Shell (Gunatsen-tsik) is a robe of cloth decorated with shell [dentalia]. On one side is the same Split-Eagle as above; on the other, the Person-on-Glacier (Gydem-siy'awn), who is described in the family myth; it was a person on the glacier. This crest has come down in the family, and is quite old. The shells, before <sup>they</sup> were sewn on to a robe, were purchased from the Haida; these are found in the sea way north in Alaska, beyond Sitka. They were quite expensive.

3. The Crown-of-the-Gyebelk (Amhallaaiden Gyebelk) was the foremost crown of Menaesk. The bars of the sea-lion on it have been a family possession for generations. But the weasel train <sup>as</sup> her often been renewed. The little carved faces all around are represented just like those first seen on the Gyebelk, according to the adaorh, the myth. It was made by Gansylsa'i, a very good carver of the past, whose reputation has come down to us. He was a Wolf, in the household of Negwa'on and Nalarhae's, on the

upper river (G. gyenit). He must have died way before the white man came. Once in a while, we have cleaned it with sand paper, before it was brought out in a feast; it always is kept looking as new. The blue paint on it is the rhutsa; it was found on the upper river, about 9 miles above here; but the exact spot has been lost. I could not find it, nor have the others. It was mixed with fish eggs, like the red ebhre, before it could be applied. The feathers on the headdress are from the semgysek [flicker], in their natural colour.

4. The Whole-Man (Trhakyawlen-Gyet: one man) a carved headdress, Menesk other crest, as carved by Paet-nærh (a Thunderbird of Gitlarhdams), who preceded the present Menesk as head of the clan, a long while ago. The plaque was made of maple, and it is decorated with native paint. That is different from store paint. It was chewed with cedar bark together with steelhead [salmon] eggs. It is this mixture that makes the paint red. To the glue's<sup>is</sup> added the grænd stone.

5. The haserh rattle. It is not really a family crest, only a picture of what had been seen in the first place. On top of the rattle are a little man and a frog. Every chief has [at least] a haserh. The bird figure hæe is an eagle. It was made by Paet'nærhl, a fine carver who had many to his credit...

6. Mouse-Woman (Ksem'wulanskyies), a narhnoq or spirit carving. It is accompanied by a whistle, to represent her voice, when it is supposed to go round æ<sup>nd</sup> cry for berries it is fond of. It is tied to the head of the chief wearing it. He pulls strings, which move the legs and the arms. It has been shown here [at Gitlarhdams], and a Gitrhateen and Gitwinksihlk. On their way down the river Sqateen would throw it into the river, and Negwa'on is the one who fishes it out, while the others sing a [traditional] song. Tlenarhnoq passed from hand to hands, according to fixed precedents. Kinsaderh, Ksemrhean, and Wisaiks are the next to take hold of it. Then it is Neesy0q. Etc. This always happened when Menesk gave a feast. Should Sqateen give a feast, then it is Menesk that brings Mouse-Woman with him; and there are privileged songs with it. It was made for Menesk by 'Weedeldal (a Fireweed, born at Gitlarhdams,

but he had come from Gitsengalem, on the mid-Skeena. The Mouse-Woman was an ancient  
crest of the family, etc.