

Making a Totem Pole

Kasaan, Alaska. Saturday (June 28, 1902)

from C. Edensa

A large tree was chosen and felled so as to fall on skids, with the most knotty side uppermost or rather a little to one side. This is notched and split as before to above the centre, and a number of men put on who stand on the upper edge. Then the log is turned and the bark removed from what is to be the front. Then with spoon-shaped levers and green skids the log is put into the water. It is moved on its round side, one man riding on top, who calls out how many fathoms are wanted. Then a stick is cut to one fathom and the log measured. But first the back of the log has been roughly hollowed on the spot where it fell. When this deep groove is made, holes are bored through the lip and cords passed through to which cross sticks are fastened to haul by.

Always by families. Chief's sisters' sons come first, or his brothers. Narrow end first. Men also lever behind; gulches are bridged with logs, etc. If desired to turn, big skid near centre. At last with many cries it is got into the water, and tihees family walk up to (?).

Hauled by canoes. Directly opposite the house it is hauled up and placed on skids. Then twon artists previously chosen take charge. Half work done by one and half by the other.

The back edges having been trued, the ends are squared by the method previously described. The curve of the ends is measured from edge to edge with string which is then doubled to give the half or centre of each end. Centres are joined by a rope which gives the centre line of the log, which is now marked with charcoal.

The butt end is now measured for the point to be set in the ground: $1\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms for a large pole. A notch is made to show the extent of this. Next a cord or pliant stick is stretched from side to side along this notch, and this is next used vertically to mark out the height (of body) of the lowest figure, which may or may not be part of man's crest.

The eyes are first carved above body line after being sketched with charcoal, with the use of patterns (oxslap) made of inner cedar bark.

eklatgwa

ski'lekleklewas Edensa' first name