

4 STORY TOTEM

JOHN WALLACE, 1940

WESTERN RED CEDAR (*THUJA PLICATA*)

JDCM 84.19.001

Natives of Southeast Alaska have made totem poles such as this one for thousands of years.

This pole depicts four Haida clan stories. It was carved in 1940 by master carver John Wallace of Hydaburg. Described as “the last of the professional Haida totem-carvers,” Mr. Wallace demonstrated his art before thousands at the World’s Fair in 1939. His father was also a carver and as a boy, in the 1880’s, John helped him carve the totem pole which is now in the lobby of the State Office Building.

In 1963, the Rotary Club presented the *Four Story Totem* to the City of Juneau. It is 35 feet tall and is carved of red cedar, which is commonly used for carving totems. Western red cedar is native to the southern part of Alaska’s panhandle and grows 70-130 feet tall with a diameter of up to six feet.

Traditionally, totem poles have been carved for different reasons: to show family lineage; to illustrate experiences or teach history; to honor the dead; to proclaim contracts; to publicly ridicule someone into paying a debt.

Until the 1930s little was done to preserve totem poles in Alaska. In 1937 the U.S. Forest Service began to collect data on the location and condition of existing poles. In 1938 the restoration of Alaska’s totems became a Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) project. Many old poles seen throughout Alaska, were saved as a result of this program.



TOTEM FIGURES

THE MONSTER FROG

Frog
Man
Raven

THE MAN WITH THE FISH TRAP

Bear
Chief
V-Shaped Fish Trap
Black Bear

CHAA ‘WANK’ AND THE LAND OTTER MAN

Shaman holding a Land Otter

THE SHAMAN AT ISLAND POINT TOWN

Black Oystercatcher Rattle
Octopus
Halibut
Halibut-hook baited with supernatural
Mouse and it’s Spirit