

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

Harnessing of the ATOM

AMOS WALLACE, 1967
Western Red Cedar (*Thuja Plivata*)
84.18.001

This totem pole tells the story of the harnessing of the atom. The pole was carved in 1967 by Tlingit carver Amos Wallace of Juneau. His Tlingit name was Jeet Yaaw Dustaa of the T'akdeintaan Clan of the X'áakw Hít Tlingit (Freshwater-marked Coho House). Wallace, an artist who worked in many different media was renowned for his carving and engraving. He died in 2004.

In 1976, the pole was installed here at what is now the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. The traditional method of mounting a totem involves digging a hole for the lower end of the pole to rest in. Rocks line the hole to provide drainage and stability. By 2003, the totem had developed a distinct lean and was in danger of severe damage. It was removed from its original, traditional mount. A new aluminum support post was mounted in a concrete base to provide better stability and prevent further damage. Traditionally, a leaning pole might sometimes be propped up, but once fallen, it is generally left to return to the earth.

Harnessing of the Atom is 15 feet tall and carved of western red cedar. Cedar is the most commonly used tree for carving totem poles because it withstands the elements so well. Decay is natural in totems exposed to the effects of wind, weather, insects and a hard life outside in the Southeast Alaska weather. Due to the organic material, cracks are natural and should not be seen as a flaw in the carving.

<http://www.juneau.org/parkrec/museum/>

TOTEM FIGURES

1. Bald Eagle

The eagle represents the United States and the purchase of Alaska from Russia. It also compliments Raven at the bottom.

2. Russian Priest

The priest represents Christianity and Russian influence in Alaska.

3. Man and Sun

Man is shown harnessing the power of the universe, which is represented by the figure of the sun.

4. Raven

Long ago Raven released the power of the sun, moon and stars for man.

