

**THE ADVENTURES  
AND SUFFERINGS  
OF JOHN R.  
JEWITT**

**CAPTIVE OF  
CHIEF MAQUINNA**



JEWITT'S NARRATIVE

ANNOTATED AND ILLUSTRATED BY

**HILARY STEWART**

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Douglas & McIntyre  
Vancouver/Toronto

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# P R E F A C E

First came across a book titled *The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt* while researching material for my book *Indian Fishing: Early Methods on the Northwest Coast*, published in 1976. Jewitt was a ship's armourer held as a slave by Maquinna, the chief of Yuquot, a village on Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. During his captivity from 1803 to 1805, Jewitt kept a journal, writing a few lines or a paragraph daily to record his observations and activities.

Within a few months of his rescue ship arriving back at Boston, Massachusetts, he published a slim, forty-eight-page volume entitled *A Journal Kept at Nootka Sound*, thought to be an exact copy of his journal. Among many mundane entries, there are a good number pertaining to native village life at the time.

Copies of the *Journal* are now valued collectors' items, with probably less than a dozen still in existence. Even the only reprint from the original, published in 1931 by Charles E. Goodspeed & Company of Boston, Massachusetts, is a rare find, since it was a limited edition of one hundred copies.

About seven years after Jewitt published his *Journal*, it caught the attention of Richard Alsop, an accomplished writer who was one of the Connecticut Wits, a group of well-known authors of the day. Because of his love of adventure and the exotic, he saw the potential for creating a full book from Jewitt's simple but intriguing volume. Alsop worked closely with Jewitt, questioning him intensely to bring out all the details behind the journal entries, and to add further anecdotes, episodes and descriptions of the culture of which Jewitt had been an observant participant.

In 1815, in Middletown, Connecticut, Jewitt's story was published with the lengthy title *A Narrative of the*

*Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt; Only Survivor of the Crew of the Ship Boston, During a Captivity of Nearly 3 Years Among the Savages of Nootka Sound, with an Account of the Manners, Mode of Living, and Religious Opinions of the Natives.* The book is now referred to simply as the *Narrative*.

Narratives of capture and adventurous hardship were popular at a time when people were exploring new lands and broadening their horizons, and interest in discoveries and developments on the northwest coast of North America was widespread. So popular was the *Narrative* that 1815, the first year of publication, saw three editions printed; and by 1817, 9000 copies had been sold. It has continued to be reprinted for over 170 years, in some twenty editions, including a German translation. There have been, in addition, a fictional account written in the third person, children's editions and a novel loosely based on the subject.

My interest in Jewitt deepened with visits to Yuquot on my way to camp on the outer coast of Vancouver Island. Still inhabited, Yuquot had been Maquinna's summer village. Eventually, I acquired a leather-bound, gold-embossed 1851 copy of Jewitt's *Narrative* through Bill Ellis, an antiquarian book dealer and a long-time friend and supporter. When I decided to make the *Narrative* the subject of my next book, he graciously parted with his only copy of the rare *Journal*, and I began two years of research, writing and illustrating that were to prove endlessly fascinating.

As it always does, research brought delights and the unexpected. I visited with Ambrose Maquinna, who claims descendancy from Jewitt's captor and the hereditary title of chief, and though Maquinna knew his people's history and traditions, as a contemporary figure he was more concerned with present-day problems than with the distant past. I also met with Andy Callicum, fifth-generation descendant of Callicum, who



was the second-highest ranking chief at Yuquot. He talked at length about family histories, ceremonies, bad medicine, beliefs, shamans and more, answering specific questions I asked. Talking with both these men enhanced my sense of continuity with the past.

The real surprise of the research came not only with the discovery of a living sixth-generation descendant of Maquinna's young slave, but in finding that he carried the same name—John Rodgers Jewitt. With great anticipation, I met with John Rodgers Jewitt VI, a young man in his early thirties, and discovered that he bore a strong resemblance to the young Jewitt in the early watercolour portrait of him that my research had turned up. "I do look quite a lot like my grandfather," he admitted. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Jewitt VI had long been aware of his connection to his famed ancestor. His mother, Patricia, had given him in Grade 2 a children's edition of the *Narrative*, and he felt a sense of pride at having the same name and being related to the hero in the book. In Grade 8 he was given an 1815 copy of the *Narrative*, "But I really had no idea at all where Nootka or Vancouver Island was—it was just way off, far away somewhere," he said, waving a hand vaguely northward, "and my interest wasn't all that strong. But now that I'm living on the Northwest Coast (and you have rekindled my interest), I want to go to Nootka Sound, take my canoe and go to some of the places mentioned in the *Narrative*."

He allowed me to handle the hefty, leather-bound Bible given to the first John Jewitt and his wife at their wedding in 1809. I also read old, faded letters written with a quill pen on fragile paper. One letter had sealing wax still attached. As I read this correspondence, including several letters from Jewitt to his wife and two letters to him from his stepmother, the past took a leap across time, bringing the now legendary saga of the ship's armourer into the present.

## PREFACE

Jewitt's *Narrative* has remained in print due in part to its astounding story told with simplicity and candour. Equally important is its contribution to our knowledge of the Indian culture of the area. Although explorers and traders brought many changes to the native people's way of life, much of the traditions, technologies and beliefs were still intact at the time of Jewitt's sojourn. His keen observation and attention to detail, his ability to master some of the language, and his genuine interest in the people, their activities and their surroundings are evident throughout his story. He took note of the physical differences between certain tribes, recorded who came from where and what they wore, and described various technologies and food. He counted things: the number of canoes and people arriving, how many boxes or baskets were unloaded, and the quantities and kinds of food and other goods brought ashore. And he measured things: the length of canoes, the size of beams, the dimensions of boxes and the width of planks.

Jewitt also noticed the etiquette practised by villagers in such things as eating, gift giving and the order of seating in canoes; he understood the ranking system, and he witnessed dancing and certain ceremonial practices, paying attention to the masks and other regalia used. To a small degree, he even had a grasp of such abstract concepts as native religion and mythology.

He asked many questions and experienced or heard first-hand accounts of the activities he describes, and his words carry a simple ring of sincerity. Nevertheless, in reading the *Narrative*, it is important to keep in mind that Jewitt brought with him all the moral codes and conventions of his own English and Christian background, and that these often coloured his comments and judgements of a people whom his culture, with all its insular concepts and prejudices, considered savage.

Subsequent ethnographic and archaeological studies

have confirmed a great many of Jewitt's observations and understandings, and there seems little reason to doubt the authenticity of those subjects about which we have little or no other information. Jewitt does make errors in judging distances or naming species of trees and mollusks, and occasionally he fails to understand (or perhaps fails to record) the significance of certain ceremonials, but these and a few other inconsistencies need not detract from the importance and enjoyment of the record he left for posterity.

This new edition includes a full range of explanatory material, including annotations, numerous illustrations and maps, as well as a comprehensive index. The text of the *Narrative* is taken from the 1851 Ithaca, New York, edition, and retains the original spelling and grammatical forms (including mistakes and typographical errors), as well as the nine rather quaint engravings.

My pen-and-ink illustrations of native people are drawn from archival photos of varying dates, with all the people being, as far as is known, Nuu-chah-nulth, except as noted. I have taken certain liberties with some photos, removing or substituting clothing or backgrounds not in keeping for the period in question. Illustrations of actual ethnographical and archaeological specimens, as well as the drawings of people, carry a reference number identifying their source or location, but natural history subjects, drawn from several sources or specimens, do not. The reference key to sources is located at the back of this book.

Most non-native people of early times had little respect for native people and had a stereotyped image of the Indian as a savage bedecked in warpaint and feathers. They regarded the native people either as quaint or as obstacles to the colonization of the new lands. Eventually, over the years, native people had to adapt to the continual changes brought about by the new and dominant society. Now, many of them suc-

cessfully interact with that society, taking their place in politics, law, education, business and the arts, while remaining prideful of their distinctive heritage.

I hope this edition of the *Narrative* by John R. Jewitt will give readers a new and thoughtful insight into the history of British Columbia and its indigenous people, and that they will view this early nineteenth-century saga with a humanistic understanding and sensitivity so often lacking in the populace of the past.

It was archaeologist Jim Haggarty, grinning broadly after hearing of my latest research find, who declared: "Research is such a hoot!"

The surprises and delights in discovering archaeological, ethnological, historical, maritime, botanical, genealogical and other information pertinent to the many aspects of this book have, indeed, often been a hoot. I am indebted to many people with specialized knowledge and skills who gave generously of their time.

Steve and Andrea Lunsford, the former an antiquarian book dealer, gave me a limited facsimile edition of John R. Jewitt's *Narrative*, saving much wear and tear on my 1851 leather-bound edition. Anne Yandle, head of Special Collections at the University of British Columbia Library, allowed me the delight of examining its collection of eighteen editions of Jewitt's *Journal* and *Narrative*.

Valuable research assistance came from: Sister Thelma Boutin, Archives of the Sisters of St. Ann; David Dodge, supervisor, Gordon MacMillan-Southam Observatory; David Griffiths, Underwater Archaeological Society of British Columbia; Jim Haggarty, head of archaeology, British Columbia Provincial Museum; Stephanie Hewlett, staff biologist, Vancouver Public Aquarium; Bill Holm, former curator of Northwest Coast Indian Art, Burke Memorial Mu-

seum; Ruby Hunt, board of directors, Donington School; Joy Inglis, anthropologist; Peggy Martin, volunteer, Vancouver Museum; Nora McLaren, librarian, Vancouver Museum; Alan McMillan, archaeologist, Douglas College; Jay Powell and Dale Kinkade, professors of linguistics, University of British Columbia; June Power, master graphoanalyst; Michael Robinson, president, Arctic Institute of America; librarians at the Vancouver Public Library, and Alan Whitney, captain of the *Darwin Sound*. Heather Stewart valiantly assisted with my research at the British Museum Library and other institutions.

I received courtesies from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; the British Columbia Provincial Archives; the Oregon Historical Society; the National Archives in Washington, D.C.; the National Maritime Museum, London, and especially the Ethnology Division of the British Columbia Provincial Museum.

Hupquatchew (Ron Hamilton), a Nuu-chah-nulth artist, gave me helpful insights into his culture; Ray Williams, resident of Yuquot, provided historical and cultural information, as did Andy Callicum, formerly of Yuquot; Chief Ambrose Maquinna of the Moachat Band allowed me the privilege of meeting a descendant of the legendary Maquinna of Jewitt's time.

Linguist Barbara Efrat, Manager of Special Projects in the Special Cultural Programmes Branch, B.C. Government, and W. J. Langlois, former head of the Aural History Division of the B.C. Provincial Archives, gave me permission to quote from their interviews with

Nuu-chah-nulth elders Winnifred David of Port Alberni and Peter Webster of Ahousat, as published in *Sound Heritage*, Vol. VII, No. 1. Richard Inglis, Curator of Ethnology, British Columbia Provincial Museum, gave generously of his time, advising me on a variety of subjects and reviewing the manuscript.

Neil Henderson was instrumental in locating John R. Jewitt V, who put me in touch with several other family members, all of whom have been most responsive to my requests. John R. Jewitt IV, who is in his nineties, wrote me with family information; Edith Williams, great-great-granddaughter of John R. Jewitt I, loaned me her photograph of his portrait with permission to use it, and provided me with a family genealogy; Patricia Jewitt, mother of John R. Jewitt VI, sent me details of their ancestor's 1809 Bible; Sally Jewitt Street Ramage, another great-great-granddaughter of the famed armourer, enthusiastically pursued Jewitt memorabilia.

My meeting with John Rodgers Jewitt VI, great-great-great-grandson of the captive Jewitt, and examining his collection of family memorabilia, was the high-point of three years of engrossing research.

To all of the aforementioned, and those not listed who have been a part of this book, my deep appreciation and very warm thanks, for without your generous help, abundant energy and continued interest, my contribution to this volume would be meagre indeed.

Hilary Stewart

PART I  
BEGINNINGS

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## BEGINNINGS

Walking along the beach of Friendly Cove gave me a strange feeling. I was conscious of my footsteps sinking into the wet sand and gravel, leaving imprints that the incoming tide would erase. There would be no mark of my having passed that way, just as the village fronting the beach held no visible mark of the drama played out between Jewitt and Maquinna, though my sense of it was strong. At the south end of the beach I walked up the sloping pathway, flanked by high banks of black earth, noting the finely crushed clamshell and fire-cracked rocks embedded in it. This was midden soil, the compacted accumulation of soil and household trash that told of lengthy human habitation. Standing on the deep midden deposit was the almost deserted village of Yuquot.

A man came to the door of the first house of the single row of houses. It was Ray Williams, whom I had met on previous visits to the cove. Exchanging greetings, I said I was glad to see that he was still living in the village: his was the last remaining family there. "It's my home," he said, "I don't ever intend to leave," and there was a ring of permanence to his words. We talked a while, and I asked for and received his permission to walk through the village.

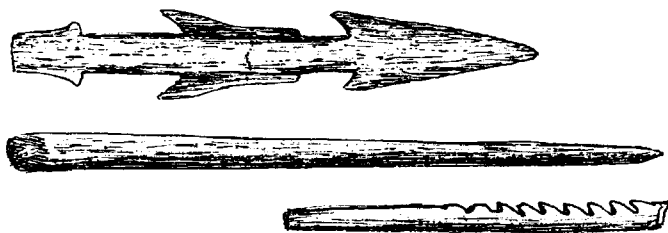
I walked along the pathway edging the bluff, aware that I was in the same village where, early in the nineteenth century, John R. Jewitt and Maquinna had lived as slave and master for three summers. On the beach below me, a mature bald eagle left the fish carcass it had been devouring and flew over the village, across the neck of land to the beach on the other side, and disappeared. This fertile land had once been a low gravel spit connecting the rocky islands at one end of the village, where a lighthouse stood, to the land mass on the



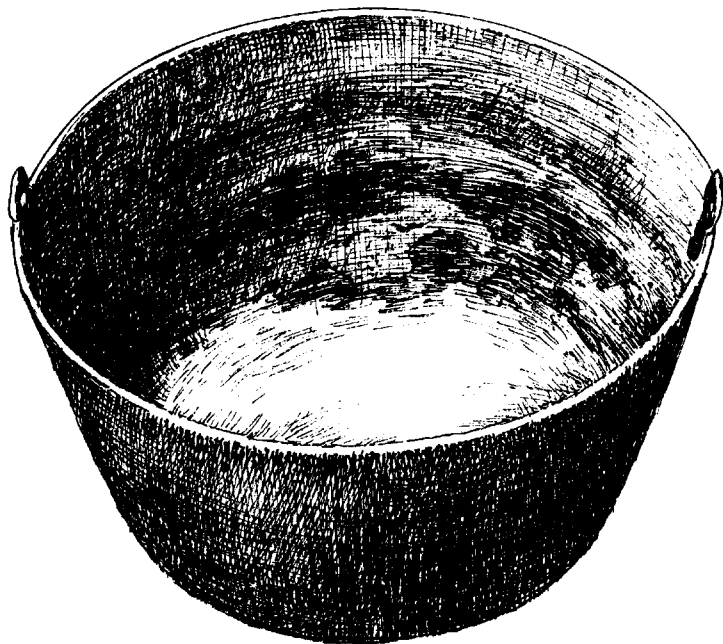
*John Rodgers Jewitt the first, holding his book; from an original watercolour portrait, artist unknown. Note scar on his forehead. Courtesy Edith Williams.*

other. The buildup of midden was 5.5 m (18') deep. In 1966 an archaeological excavation uncovered the remnants of human activities, resources and skills in a time sequence unbroken for about 4500 years. The hunting and fishing gear, the tools, and the implements of bone, stone and shell reflected the cultural continuity of a people well adapted to coastal living. Near the surface, archaeologists found evidence of the recent intrusion of a new and very different culture: fragments of a glass tumbler, earthenware mugs, a rusted gunlock and glass beads were among items identified as being of English, Spanish and French origin.

I looked beyond the tangled blackberry bushes at the bluff edge and across the sound that opened to the Pacific Ocean. Bands of wispy clouds wrapped some of



Some of 5000 artifacts unearthed during 1966 excavation of Yuquot, archaeological site number DjSp 1. Artifacts dating between 1000 B.C. and A.D. 800. Top: Shouldered harpoon head, bone or antler, may have been used for hunting sea mammals. Centre: Probably salmon harpoon foreshaft, whalebone Bottom: Barbed arrow point, bone, tip missing.



Copper cooking pot, capacity 6.8 L (1½ gal.), found by Rod Palm in Friendly Cove at location where, according to native history, the Boston was beached. The trade value of such pots lay in their material rather than their function. Drawn from photograph by Edmond Hayes, courtesy David Griffiths.

the distant mountains, and the ocean swell was gentle. My mind slipped back to 1778, and I envisioned Capt. James Cook's sailing ships "standing up the sound," as he put it. He named that body of water King George Sound, then later wrote, "but I afterwards found, that it is called Nootka by the natives." Thus did the village at the entrance to the sound become known as "Nootka," as did the island on whose shore it sat. But in 1792 the Spanish seafarer Esteban José Martínez wrote in his journal: "I do not know through what error this island has been given the name of Nootka, since these natives do not know the word and assure me that they had never heard it until the English began to trade on the island."

It is not difficult to see how the mistake was made, and various versions of the story explaining how the error came about are repeated along the coast. Winnifred David, recalling aural history in the 1970s, told linguist Barbara Efrat and W. J. Langlois that two canoes with paddlers, sent to take a closer look at Cook's ships, had tried to direct the white strangers to their villages: "They started making signs and they were talking Indian and they were saying: nu-tka? icim, nu-tka? icim, they were saying. That means, you go around [to] the harbour. So Captain Cook said, 'Oh, they're telling us the name of this place is Nootka.' . . . So ever since that it's been called Nootka. . . . But the Indian name is altogether different. It's Yuquot that Indian village."

No one knows when the village was first called Yuquot, since the hectic fur-trading era caused enormous upheaval and jockeying for position among the different villages and their chiefs, but many seafarers of history knew it by that name. A variety of spellings over the years tell of their attempts to transcribe it into English, and these include: Yokwat, Yogwat, Yucuat, Youkwat, Eughuot, Uquat, Yuquatl and Ycoatle. The name is derived from *yukwite*, meaning "to blow with the