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"PAINTING THE PASSING RACE":
Arthur Pitts [1889-1972] on the Northwest Coast

By


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B.A., University of Victoria, 1978


A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

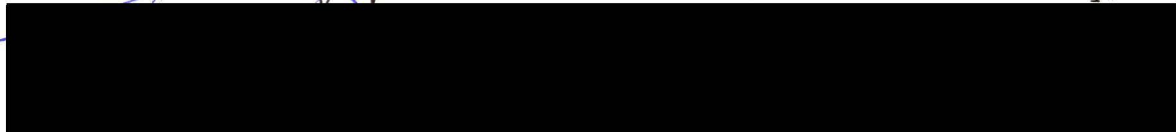
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Abstract

Arthur D.J. Pitts' (1889-1972) major contribution to Canadian art history is his "Indian Collection", paintings of and about the Native people of the Northwest coast. Most of these paintings were completed in British Columbia between 1930 and 1935, although Pitts' interest in depicting people of traditional cultures began in his youth and never waned.

This study is the story of Arthur Pitts, his adventures and his art, focusing primarily on his first fifty years. How did the son of a tailor's assistant, born in South London at the end of the nineteenth century, come to record Native people and cultures in British Columbia and Alaska in the twentieth century? Not only how, but why, is of central interest in this thesis. In the course of the discussion aspects of Edwardian England illuminate the background of Pitts who, while painting well into the middle of this century, was firmly rooted in the Edwardian age.

Chapter One focuses on Pitts' early world. In true Edwardian fashion Pitts sought his first adventures by travelling to other parts of the British Empire, first South Africa, then Canada. In South Africa in 1912-13 Pitts turned his interest in photography to the task of recording Zulu people. Here the seeds of a life-long interest in depicting Native people germinated.

Chapter Two traces Pitts from the trenches of World War I, where he was seriously wounded, through ensuing periods of convalescence, first in England and then on Vancouver Island. Years of art study and efforts to succeed as a commercial artist followed.

Chapter Three concentrates on the period beginning in 1930, at which point Pitts combined his talent for portraiture and his fascination for Native cultures to paint his "Indian Collection". Pitts, like George Catlin, Paul Kane, Edward Curtis, Emily Carr, and many other artists, felt the imperative to record what was commonly believed to be a "passing race".

It was Pitts' intention and fondest desire to capture in watercolour all that he could of the Northwest coast Native people. To this end Pitts travelled over four thousand miles of British Columbia and Alaska, painting at every opportunity.

Arthur Pitts embodied, in his ability to overcome incredible obstacles, the maxim of the Edwardian age, "to struggle and prevail". In his solitary quest, quite outside the mainstream of twentieth century art, Pitts made a lasting contribution with his historically and ethnographically significant visual record of the Salish, Tlinget and Kootenay people. Although his paintings have been held in public repositories for forty years, Pitts' story has been patiently waiting in his journals until now.

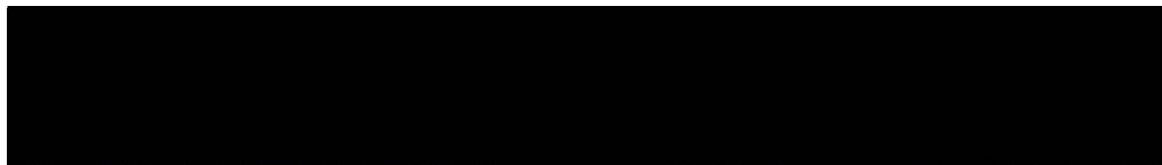
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Photocopies of the Original Arthur Pitts paintings and photograph and Emily Carr paintings are used with the kind permission of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service and the Glenbow Museum. In the thesis manuscript figures 6, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, and 29 are reproduced in colour.

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For Jamie,
with all my love.

Introduction

Arthur David John Pitts [1889-1972], was by birth and inclination an Edwardian Englishman. His passion was to be an artist. From an early age he was interested in history and Native peoples. To this end, once emigrated to Canada, he focused much of his talent on recording in watercolour the Native people and their cultures of British Columbia and Alaska in the early decades of the twentieth century.

I first encountered the vibrant watercolours of Arthur Pitts in the course of researching for an exhibition, *Documenting the Indian Culture of the Northwest Coast; Emily Carr and Others*.¹ At this time a collection of Pitts' paintings had been in storage at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia for twenty five years. Two from this group were selected for the exhibition. Pitts was in the company of other artists, including Emily Carr, who for various reasons, were interested in painting aspects of British Columbia's Native cultures.

For six months I had the pleasure of being surrounded by and working with this exhibition. The two Pitts watercolours were outstanding highlights of the show. A question which had struck me when I first saw Pitts' work was "Why haven't I heard about this artist?" Many visitors that summer asked me the same question. The fact that virtually nothing had been written about Pitts became my

1. This exhibition was open to the public from May through October 1980 at the Emily Carr Gallery, Wharf St., Victoria.

motivation for writing this thesis.

At the time of the exhibition I had the pleasure of meeting Winnifred Pitts, Arthur's widow, who was delighted that his paintings were displayed. I told her how excited I and many other people were about his work and how I felt Arthur Pitts deserved more recognition.

Several years later, when doing graduate work in History in Art, I contacted Mrs. Pitts, expressing my interest in writing a biography about her husband. She gave me her blessing and a large carton containing Arthur Pitts' forty seven personal journals. Daily entries, with infinite detail, from his teenage years to his last, filled thousands of pages of at times barely legible script.²

From this treasure I came, over the course of four years, to know Arthur Pitts. I had first been struck by the magic of the paintings without knowing anything of the artist. Entering his intimate world of the diaries, which he had really only written for the bottom drawer, brought an affection and understanding of the artist and a deeper appreciation of the paintings which had made such an impact on me.

The most challenging task, after deciphering the journals, was the necessary task of limiting the size and

2. In the early 1980s, when she was in her eighties, Edythe Hembroff Schleicher, artist, author and sketching partner of Emily Carr's, made an attempt to write about Arthur Pitts. The difficulty of reading the journals, together with her own failing health, forced her to abandon her project. Her notes are in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service, and although at times a good read, much of her story is fiction.

scope of the thesis. Without doubt Pitts' major contribution to Canadian art is his "Indian Collection", the nucleus of which he created in 1933-34 in British Columbia and Alaska. For this reason I decided to concentrate in my thesis on the first fifty years of Arthur Pitts' life.³

As we shall see, Pitts, having been born in England and living there for good portions of his life, straddled the two countries. One foot was planted in London, the other in British Columbia. For this reason Pitts can not be examined solely within the context of Canadian art. He requires a wider perspective, which includes the expanse of the British Empire, the notion of the Edwardian adventurer and the international group of artists, over several centuries, who for various reasons documented or interpreted Native people and their cultures.

For a clearer understanding of Arthur David John Pitts, born in London in 1889, it is useful to consider the Edwardian Age [1901-1914] in England. Of particular interest is the general cultural background for the generation of Englishmen who, like Arthur Pitts, were born in the Victorian era, enjoyed youth and reached maturity in the Edwardian years and as adults sought their paths in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Some writers, such as Jonathan Rose, consider 1895 the

3. The remaining years, although fascinating, will be written about in depth at a later date in another form.

starting point for the Edwardian period.⁴ The vast majority of historians, however, define the Edwardian age as, logically enough, the years of Edward VII's reign, 1901-1910, plus the remaining years leading up to the summer of 1914. Most are agreed that the Edwardian Age ended when war began.⁵

To some extent it is necessary to trace Edwardian themes to the preceding Victorian age, for most issues were either a result of or a reaction to the years of Victoria's reign [1837-1901]. It is outside the scope of this discussion to assess all the predominant values and cultural influences of Edwardian society but there were certain strong recurrent themes permeating all strata of English society and applicable to Pitts' life which shall be addressed.

In the Edwardian period which is often perceived as the birth of "modern times" a whole range of Victorian assumptions came under attack. Edwardians adopted different attitudes from the Victorians not only towards the problem of governing their Empire but also towards the problem of governing themselves. The relationship of Britain with other countries in the world was re-examined; the whole notion of the British Empire came into question. At home

4. Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1986, p.6.

5. Donald Read, editor, *Edwardian England*, London, The Historical Association, 1972, p.4.

the entire political structure including the role of the state in what had been, in Victorian times, the concern of the family was under review. It was a time when social reform penetrated every fibre of the British fabric. A person's position in society was now no longer fixed at birth. It was suddenly a time when a hopeful array of possibilities was presented. The Victorian reins that had held four generations in check were finally loosened, allowing both men and women but particularly men of the lower classes, such as Arthur Pitts, to pursue new directions with hope and confidence.

Arthur Pitts was a man of the Edwardian era, remarkable for his artistic record of the Native people and cultures in much of British Columbia and Alaska. But although his was a unique quest, the quest itself, to portray the Native people, was not unique to Pitts.

Artists, amateur and professional, have been stimulated to turn their attention to Native North Americans since contact with Europeans was first made.⁶ The artwork

6. Howard Peckham, in the Indiana Historical Society's account of George Winter relates that as early as 1585 John White, as one of the colonists of Roanoke Island, painted the Native people as well as the flora and fauna of what would become the United States. Some of these were published in *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* in 1590. The following year De Bry published a second similar bestseller, *Laudonniere's Florida* with the "Indian pictures of Jacques LeMoyne", who had been in what is now modern South Carolina in 1564-65. Peckham states: "The De Bry pictures of Indians of the Southeast Tidewater were so immediately popular that for the next two centuries they were plagiarized, redrawn, and reinterpreted to illustrate other books dealing with

reflecting that interest includes sixteenth and seventeenth century portraits, eighteenth century historical paintings, nineteenth and twentieth century sculpture, portraits, historical and genre paintings, as well as three centuries of sketches and engravings stemming from explorations.

Virtually any new territory yielded depictions of the discovery and explorations. Images of the Native people of British Columbia, for example, reach back to John Webber's 1778 drawings of Nootka Sound. Naturally the people of the new lands were of keen interest to those who were on the spot and those awaiting news at home, not only family but patrons, scientists, and government officials. Although the original inhabitants of North America were of particular interest to the Europeans who first explored and settled in the New World, the real surge of artistic interest occurred in the nineteenth century. It was not until the era when the Native North Americans were universally considered to be a vanishing race that the rush to "preserve" them on paper and canvas began.

The quickening of interest in this choice of subject in the nineteenth century is an important element in the appreciation and understanding of Arthur Pitts, who was born

explorations of any region in North America east of the Mississippi." De Creux' *Historiae Canadensis*, published in Paris in 1664, offered imaginative renderings of the Hurons and Algonquins. These are but three examples of similar publications; Indiana Historical Society, *The Journals and Indian Paintings of George Winter*, Indianapolis, n.p., 1948, pp.xiii-xiv.

in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when attention to all that was exotic in the Empire had reached its fullest. To document all that led up to this heightened interest would be another thesis, or dissertation, in itself. However, some artists and their works will be brought in by way of example in the course of this discussion.

The response to the exotic and unknown, rooted in a tradition that is part of the human condition, has ranged from positive to negative and often remained ambivalent. In the Victorian and subsequent Edwardian period the attraction to the exotic was part of a romantic strain integral to the age.

The Illustrated London News was founded in 1842 and reflected the Victorian notion of an ever expanding British Empire. Colonial activity and the various "exotic" people of the Empire were featured in every issue. The popularity of *The Illustrated London News* reached across every class. Pitts would have seen it as a young boy in the 1890s, when it featured the work of artists such as Richard Caton Woodville Jr., who presented pictorial stories of the West. In 1890 Woodville was in fact sent out from England by *The Illustrated London News* to record the Sioux uprising in Montana.⁷ Hundreds of artists illustrated for the *News*.

7. James K. Ballinger, *Frederic Remington*, New York, Abrams, 1989, p.27.

William Hind, for a Canadian example, provided two illustrations published in June 1870 of the Native people in Red River [Manitoba].⁸ The great rival to *The Illustrated London News* was the *London Graphic*, which sent out several artists, such as Arthur Boyd Houghton, to sketch the American West.⁹

In America the equivalent to *The Illustrated London News* was *Harpers*, the covers and articles of which were illustrated by such important artists of Native North Americans as Frederic Remington.¹⁰ Only three giants among the nineteenth century periodicals are mentioned here but there were hundreds of publications which featured images of Native North Americans.

The acceleration of the magazine, newspaper and book publishing industries, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, along with the expansion of the transportation systems which made travel more viable, were two historical developments which promoted a surge in pictorial records of Native North Americans.

Concomitant with the growth of the publishing industry was an increased literacy rate. The demand for information and consequent response which is identified as a hallmark of

8. J. Russell Harper, *William G.R. Hind*, Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada, 1976, p.25.

9. *Ibid.*

10. James K. Ballinger, *Frederic Remington*, *op. cit.*, p.12.

Edwardian England,¹¹ was also part of the cultural fibre in North America. More artists were employed as commercial artists than ever before and more were travelling in quest of new and novel subjects.

The interest was often given official support; Charles Bird King, for instance, was commissioned in 1821 by the first head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to paint the portraits of a group of Plains Indians who came to Washington D.C. to confer with President James Monroe.¹²

Much of the artwork focusing on the Native North Americans was heavily influenced by certain stereotypes. Some of the more prevalent were "the blood thirsty warrior", "the heathen about to be saved by Christianity", and "the noble savage". The concept of the noble savage, used first by John Dryden in his 1670 play, *The Conquest of Granada*, was a great source of inspiration for poets, writers and musicians as well as artists. Alexander Pope's eighteenth century poetry had made "lo, the poor Indian" a popular phrase and theme. In the early nineteenth century the immensely popular novel by James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* (1856) kept the idea of the noble

11. Simon Nowell-Smith, editor, *Edwardian England 1901-1914*, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p.3; Donald Read, editor, *Edwardian England*, *op. cit.*

12. Nancy Hathaway, *Native American Portraits 1862-1918*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1990, p.1.

savage before the public. Longfellow wrote:

I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in the woods the noble savage ran...¹³

Illustrations in these publications and periodicals, together with the growing popularity of engravings and lithographs as distinct entities, provided a means for images of Native North Americans to abound. Coupled with this was the birth of daguerreotype image and the ascension of photography through which "realistic" images of the native people were brought to the very interested public.

A reciprocal artistic influence existed between England and her colonies, such as Canada and the United States, not only when it was a colony but afterwards. Born and trained in England at the turn of this century, Pitts would benefit from influences from both artistic traditions. Naturally a whole host of other artists from other countries such as Germany, to name but one, also played a part in what could have influenced a painter from Edwardian England. But given that Pitts emigrated to Canada in 1914 and lived most of his life in British Columbia and that his most prominent contribution to Canadian art history is his paintings of Native Canadians, it is desirable in this thesis to bring in by way of comparison or contrast a selection of North American artists who also painted Native North Americans.

13. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Song of Hiawatha", *The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, London, George Routledge & Sons, 1895, p.113.

From the enormous group of artists in this category a limited number have been chosen for their direct relevance to Arthur Pitts. In Canadian art history greatest attention is given to Paul Kane and Emily Carr for their missions of recording Native people and creating their respective "Indian paintings". For their parallel endeavours American artists George Catlin and Edward Curtis merit a position in the discussion of Arthur Pitts and his "Indian Collection". It is profitable to consider both American and Canadian artists of Native North Americans, primarily because the beginning of this artistic tradition originated two centuries before there was a forty-ninth parallel border. For the Native people who were the topic of the artwork the border was an artificial intrusion. Also as mentioned, Pitts, in Edwardian England, was absorbing influences from the United States as well as from the Colonies, and a good proportion of the illustrations of Native people in the publications of his youth were produced by Americans.

The number of artists, amateur and professional, as well as photographers who have concentrated on Native themes is staggering. For a Canadian example, it would be possible to examine one small geographical location, whether Labrador, Lachine, Regina, Prince Rupert or any place between, and develop a microcosmic history of non-Native representations of the indigeneous people of Canada. I am aware of many outstanding artists who have not been given

space in these pages. In Canadian art history alone there is the whole group of colonial artists, such as Henry James Warre (1819-1898), a recording artist in the service of the military and William Hind (1833-1889), whose documentary paintings and sketches include careful depictions of Native people. In this group there were many amateur painters, scores of whom were women. Mildred Valley Thornton (1890-1967), occasionally compared to and often overshadowed by Emily Carr (1871-1945), dedicated herself to portraying Native people of Canada, particularly in the Prairies and British Columbia.¹⁴ T. Mower Martin (1838-1934) and Frances Anne Hopkins (1838-1919) come rapidly to mind. Also important are: Walter Phillips (1884-1963), whose paintings of the Native people in and around Banff and Fort Garry are at once historically and aesthetically remarkable; Florence Wyle (1880-1956), who in her Toronto studio sculpted models of Indian heads and totem poles; James Henderson (1871-1951), whose life work was Indian subjects of Saskatchewan; John Innis (1863-1941), cartoonist, illustrator, soldier, rancher and painter of life in Western Canada; Edmund Morris (1871-1913), who in the first decades of this century painted and photographed the Natives of James Bay and the Plains on contract with provincial and federal governments;

14. Mildred Thornton, *Indian Lives and Legends*, Vancouver, Mitchell Press, 1966; Roberta Pazdro, "Mildred Valley Thornton: Painter of the Native People", *Canadian Women's Studies* Vol.1, No.3 (Spring 1979), p.104.

J.W.G. Macdonald, friend of Arthur Pitts, whose canvases of *Friendly Cove, B.C.* and *Indian Burial* show not only great talent but a dedication to the theme. These are a few of the many who in an exhaustive study of artists of Native themes would certainly warrant ample discussion.

It must be borne in mind that although photography was not available in a practical form until the 1840s it rapidly grew to rival painting and drawing as a means of recording Native North Americans. As with the earliest examples of sketches and paintings of Native North Americans the earliest photographs were to preserve, in a documentary fashion, "realistic images" of the Native people.

Richard Carr (1818-1888), Emily Carr's father, provides an interesting example of the group of itinerant photographers in the early decades of the art form.¹⁵

By the later nineteenth century there were many inspired amateur photographers whose prime subject matter was Native North Americans.¹⁶

From documentary realism, photography by the 1880s was tending more towards romanticism. Romanticism grew into a movement referred to as Pictorialism in which the aim of photography was to achieve an idyllic, and according to

15. B.C.A.R.S., Richard Carr Diary, July 1836 to November 10, 1881.

16. Nancy Hathaway, *Native American Portraits 1862-1918*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1990, p.11.

Hathaway, "almost painterly image."¹⁷ In this category of romanticists are the pre-eminent photographers of Native North Americans in the nineteenth century: Alexander Gardner, William Soule, Timothy O'Sullivan, John K. Hillers, William Henry Jackson, Laton Huffman, Christian Barthelmess, Edward Stieglitz, Byron Harmon, Boorne and May, Ernest Brown, Carl Moon, Roland Reed, Rodman Wanamaker,¹⁸ and countless others. For an example, there is none now better known than Edward Curtis (1869-1952).¹⁹

In 1900 Curtis began to amass a photo history of the "North American Indian" and by the time he had completed it he had made over two thousand published photographs of eighty western tribes and written the text for his collected notes.²⁰ Hathaway tells us that Curtis took more than 40,000 pictures.²¹

Curtis' extremely ambitious project to visit and record every group of Native people in the United States became his life. His images, which were very popular at the time,

17. *Ibid.*, p.12.

18. Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Vancouver, Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992, p.39.

19. Ralph W. Andrews, *Curtis' Western Indians*, New York, Bonanza Books, 1962, pp.12,23; Nancy Hathaway, *Native American Portraits 1862-1918*, *op. cit.*, p.12.

20. Ralph W. Andrews, *Curtis' Western Indians*, *op. cit.*, p.10.

21. Nancy Hathaway, *Native American Portraits 1862-1918*, *op. cit.*, p.12.

speak for the nineteenth and turn of the century romanticized view of the Native people as a "vanishing race".

As late as 1931 the respected and well published ethnologist Marius Barbeau's view was that "the Indians were doomed to disappear."²² This ubiquitous vanishing race notion²³ continued well into the mid-twentieth century even though the population of the Native people, both in Canada and the United States, had in fact been rising since World War I.²⁴

I have attempted to place Pitts in the context of the enormous group of artists depicting Native people by asking why, in the broadest sense, each artist chose to paint Native people. Interest in the exotic new world, desire to add to scientific knowledge, and providing an historical record of a perceived vanishing race are the three most prevalent reasons.

In the first group were those artists, primarily the earliest group addressed, who were recording images, considered exotic, of the new world. Prior to the 1830s popular art depicted the Native North American as "lovely

22. Marius Barbeau, "Our Indians - Their Disappearance", *Queen's Quarterly*, 1931, p.695.

23. For a full discussion of this theme see Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American, white attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1982.

24. Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, op. cit., p.53.

dark skinned maidens or tall handsome hunters beside some cool forest stream".²⁵ They were romantic creations, generally far from fact, supporting the preconceived notions or stereotypes of the day. The more exotic or unusual the subject the more interest it generated.

This fictive romantic approach was superceded by a documentary one. Artists of the 1840s through 1880s, such as Catlin, Kane, O'Brien, Krieghoff and Verner as well as the early photographers demonstrate the value placed on realistic images. Detail and accuracy were important aspects of this groups' work. Romanticism was still a prominent influence and the stereotype of the "noble savage" provided a *leitmotif*. What shifted the perspective toward Native people during this period was the growing scientific and, more precisely, ethnographic interest. Carl Bodmer provides an example of an artist working for science.²⁶

The early romantic attitude towards unspoiled man in the arcadian wilderness blended with the new scientific

25. John C. Ewers, *George Catlin: Painter of Indians of the West*, Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1955, p.502.

26. For Catlin see Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage*, London and Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1990; for Kane see J. Russell Harper, *Paul Kane's Frontier*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1971; for O'Brien see Dennis Reed, *Lucius O'Brien: Visions of Victorian Canada*, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario, 1990; for Verner see Joan Murray, *The Last Buffalo: The Story of Frederick Arthur Verner, Painter of the Canadian West*, Toronto, Pagurian Press, 1984; for a general survey of these artists see J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: a history*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1977.

interests of the mid nineteenth century giving rise to the historically centred "vanishing race" attitude. Native people were seen and depicted as survivors of a dying civilization. Catlin was an early leader in this direction, which attracted the vast majority of later nineteenth century and early twentieth century artists, including Remington, Russell, Curtis, Carr and Pitts. There is no doubt that it was the concept of "the passing race" which prompted the greatest outpouring of sketches, paintings and photographs of Native people.

The stereotypes applied to Native people by the society spawning the artists shed light on the interests, intentions and level of success of each painter or photographer of Native North Americans. While certain stereotypes, such as the "noble savage", may predominate in a given age, other concepts may also be at play. While prevailing attitudes recede new ones emerge. This provides a unique blend and overlapping of attitudes and suggests why, although it is possible to categorize artists according to romantic, documentary or historical perspectives, it is valuable to examine each artist's point of view individually.

Some of the artists referred to in this thesis, such as Paul Kane, George Catlin and Edward Curtis, have long since been lauded for their works depicting Native North Americans. Far more have remained in obscurity. Arthur Pitts, with dedicated persistence, created a written and

pictorial record of Native people, which while reflecting nineteenth century attitudes, and his personal vision, adds vibrant brush strokes to the collective canvas of Native North Americans.

Chapter 1: The Early World of Arthur David John Pitts
[1889-1915]

Many artists who depicted Native people and cultures have undeservedly languished in obscurity. Arthur D.J. Pitts struggled for recognition of his work through difficult times yet never relinquished his desire to document all he could of what he perceived to be a "passing race". In the introduction we have considered in a general way other artists so committed. In the remaining chapters I ask the reader to exchange binoculars for a magnifying glass and follow the detailed path of Arthur Pitts. His paintings have been in public institutions for almost forty years while the story behind them has been patiently waiting in the yellowing pages of the artist's journals.

England

Arthur David John Pitts was born October 12, 1889 in Bermondsey, South East London, England. He was the eldest of four sons: Dave [born 1891]; Edgar [born 1895] and Raymond [born 1908]. Reflecting on his childhood Arthur wrote in a 1914 diary, "My parents were of the best calibre; deserving every commendation for a considerable upbringing."¹ Although a close and loving family, their

1. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.2. The journal of 1914 is unlike those of other years in that it was begun March 4, 1914 and written as one long narrative, beginning with his birth and ending 120 pages later with events which occurred in May 1915. Rather than the

status in London society at the time was described by Pitts as "humble". It was this humble status which determined the course of Pitts' education and early career. Equally important was the milieu of the Edwardian Age into which he was born.

The Edwardian period was a time of struggle and reform in the social and political arenas. A list of dichotomies grows from a comparison of Victorian and Edwardian policies: policies of Imperialism contrast with those of Liberalism; Victorian attitudes of laissez-faire oppose those of social welfare; Edwardian concern for conditions of workers challenges preoccupation with profitability. Some of these and others such as the rights of the individual as opposed to the necessity of state intervention are common to other cultures and other periods of history. But it was the Edwardians who tackled these conflicts with imagination, vigour, and a determination that situations could and must be improved.

Social reform and political change were accelerated by the victory of the Liberal party at the end of 1905. After decades of Conservative control the sweep of the Liberals

daily recordings which form the other journals, the 1914 journal, subtitled "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", is paginated. For this reason all references to this journal are by page number whereas references to his other journals are by date. There are many overlapping descriptions [but no discrepancies] of events which were recorded in earlier diaries or the first half of the 1915 journal which reappear in the reflections of the 1914 journal, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life".

was a significant demonstration of the optimistic desire for change, improvement, and even to some extent, adventure.

A comparison can be drawn between the Victorian quest for Imperial domination and the Edwardian quest for enhancing the life of the individual. On the home front one of the problems addressed by the Edwardians was the inadequacy of the educational system. Between 1902, and the foundation of the Education Act, and 1907 the number of schools in Britain doubled. According to Donald Read, "Here was a ladder of progression which began to be climbed chiefly by bright lower-middle and artisan class children."² Before 1906 there had been a light network of primary schools, which was strengthened not only by doubling the number of schools, but also by establishing a complementary secondary school network. This greatly improved the standard of education from that year on. Halevy describes the extension of secondary education by Prime Minister Bannerman [the new Liberal leader] as "a social revolution of the first magnitude."³ It was firmly believed that studying in other spheres, such as the Workmen's Institutes and through "such schemes as the National Home Reading Union would actively assist those of

2. Donald Read, editor, *Edwardian England*, [1972], *op. cit.*, p.18.

3. Elie Halevy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol.6 1905-1914, New York, Barnes & Noble, 1961, p.75.

modest origins to rise in the class system."⁴ Arthur Pitts, although he left school at the age of fourteen, was a fine example.⁵ Throughout his life he actively sought to improve his level of education and his artistic technique. Although in his journals Pitts doesn't give any details of his decision to leave school, it is clear that he was anxious to begin his life's adventures. Coupled with this impatience for adventure was an early commitment to art. "I had [by age fourteen] developed a decided keenness [sic] and enthusiasm for artistic work and much desired a berth embodying such duties."⁶

Unfortunately the Pitts family did not have the financial means to provide Arthur with any art schooling. The family's financial picture was worrisome but not desperate. They changed residences many times. When times were bright there was a move up, and often when Father lost his job a move soon followed, presumably for cheaper accommodation. Arthur's father was intermittently employed in various aspects of the tailoring industry. Often a draper's assistant, occasionally a tailor or draper, Arthur's father was rarely steadily employed for more than a year at a time without a layoff. Whether Father would be

4. James Bishop, *The Illustrated London News: Social History of the First World War*, London, Angus & Robertson, 1982, p.86.

5. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, pp.3-4.

6. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1914.

thrown out of work or not hung like a shadow over the Pitts home and may have been key to Arthur's decision to leave school for the work force.

Following his desire for "artistic work" Arthur secured a position as "learner designer" and then stencil cutter with the Permanent Enamel Company.⁷ He remained for only a few weeks when he was, to his great joy, taken on as an apprentice "Show Card Writer" for a period of five years [1905-1910] with Messrs. Clement Newbury's & Co. Ltd., Chiswell St. E.C. London.⁸

Although the earliest extant diary is from 1908, the first of hundreds of references to his painting does not appear until January 13, 1909, with a simple "spent 2 hours on my painting." Later in the year Pitts wrote about enrolling in art classes two evenings a week at the London City Centre School of Arts, Southampton Row, W.C.⁹ He wasn't impressed with what the school had to offer, but he felt that he should avail himself of what opportunity existed.¹⁰ For the remainder of the year Arthur was busy creating his portfolio of designs, primarily black and white

7. *Ibid.*, p.5.

8. *Ibid.*, p.5. A show card writer was in effect a commercial artist. His work ranged from designing to complete colour makeup. Some of his tasks were to make baker's slips, pantomime tickets, banners, programmes and notices.

9. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1909, September 28, 1909.

10. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1909.

sketches, and slowly, as time and funds permitted, he built up his cache of oil paints, canvas, watercolour pigment and other art supplies.¹¹

In the new year he was often struggling with a canvas before or after dinner although he did not mention the subject or the specifics of the difficulties being presented.¹² Painting was not referred to again for the rest of 1910 but in the summer he indulged his mania for old churches, visiting hundreds of them. It is quite likely that he sketched at least some of these; certainly he photographed them.¹³

Pitts regarded these five years of apprenticeship with dissatisfaction as he felt the work at Newbury's was tedious, underpaid, and without sufficient artistic endeavour.¹⁴ Meanwhile his closest brother, Dave, and his best friend, Bert, had won entry into the civil service, which created in Pitts' words, "a further disgust with my lot and a fixed determination to seek fresh pastures on the expiration of my term of years".¹⁵

Fresh pastures in this instance had much to do with the

11. *Ibid.*, October-December 1909.

12. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1910, January-March 1910.

13. *Ibid.*, June-September 1910.

14. Arthur Pitts, Private Journals 1908, 1909, and 1910.

15. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.5.

pervasive influence and scope of the British Empire. By 1837, the first year of Queen Victoria's reign, the British Empire was already vast in size and power but by the beginning of the Edwardian period it had doubled its strength and was at its zenith with a claim to approximately one fifth of the world's land mass and one quarter of the population.¹⁶ By 1901 the British Empire was held to be the largest in terms both of territory and population:

...that the world had ever seen ... embracing 400 million people, more or less. The exact figure arrived at by an imperial census carried out in 1901 was 398,401,404 but as many heads of households in some colonies apparently assumed that women were not important enough to count, the real total was probably a good deal more.¹⁷

For those, like Pitts, born in England in the nineteenth century, the British Empire was part and parcel of their society. Bits of England had been transplanted around the globe and, although not necessarily informed about any of the facts concerning the colonies and their inhabitants, the average person in England knew that theirs was a large and powerful empire. It was common knowledge that "the sun never set on the British Empire".

For boys growing up in the last decades of the

16. V.G. Kiernan, *The Lords of HumanKind*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p.20.

17. Bernard Porter, "The Edwardians and Their Empire", in Donald Read, editor, *Edwardian England*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p.129, citing "Census of the British Empire, 1901" in Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Papers*, Vol.102 [1905], pp.1,xxv.

nineteenth century, the colonies of the British Empire were a part of the romantic adventure myth. Places like Canada, Australia or Africa were portrayed in the literature, photographs and illustrations of the day as exotic, exciting lands. The Colonies were viewed as lands of British opportunity; destinations for adventure, fame and fortune. A large proportion of the literature aimed at the youth of this time, Arthur Pitts included, could be categorized as "Boys' Own Adventures". Escapades in the colonies where the British hero emerges victorious was the recurring theme.

Edwardian youth was imbued with this idealized, romantic attitude even though the British Empire was in fact beginning to wane. James Morris analyzes the British quest for Empire in these terms:

It illustrates a streak in the English instinct - a taste for things foreign and incongruous, a recurrent yearning to break out of our gentle northern setting, all greens and greys, into more vivid places, where fortunes can be made, outrageous enterprises undertaken, and the restrictive rules of scale and conduct flamboyantly disregarded.

...The empire provided terrain for the alter ego as though the British had another people inside themselves, very different from the people that Dickens or Cobden portrayed, who yearned to break out of their sad or prosaic realities and live more brilliant lives in Xanadu.¹⁸

The main aim of the imperial quest was of course to further British interests; the main concern was with profitability. But in the Victorian era and extending into

18. James Morris, *Heaven's Command: An Imperial Progress*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p.8.

the Edwardian period there was certainly an aspect of colonizing for the sake of elevating the level of "civilization", as perceived and defined by the colonizers.¹⁹ But this notion began to fade toward the turn of the century and along with it the extent of the British Empire.

The morality of imperialism as a principle had not been generally questioned, "and only a handful of radicals passionately opposed the right of any one people to impose its rule upon any other."²⁰ 1901 was the year, however, that the British Empire had reached its expansion limit and as Porter concludes:

...no-one seems seriously to have advocated that the British Empire should grow any bigger after 1901; unless it was Major Francis Edward Young-husband, who thought he had conquered Tibet for Britain in 1904, only to be told by the government to unconquer it again.²¹

The halt to imperialist expansion was contemporary with a new political landscape which began with the Liberals ousting the long standing Conservatives in 1906. As one imperialist writer stated in 1909: "The present generation is the first of a new order and looks forward upon a prospect in which the ideas of conquest and expansion find

19. *Ibid.*, p.325.

20. James Morris, *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p.11.

21. Bernard Porter, "The Edwardians and Their Empire", *op. cit.*, p.128.

no place."²²

1906 heralded a fresh new approach of the English to their colonies. Imperialist thinking now included the various particular interests and aspirations of colonial peoples. Just before 1914 the Edwardians were beginning to embrace the notion of commonwealth as a solution to the problems of managing an empire.²³ The outlook was becoming more egalitarian than paternalistic.

At this time the governments of the British colonies were instituting policies which began to show some concern for native rights and cultures. According to Donald Read, these were:

...involving ideas of "trust" and "indirect rule" rather than the unrestrained imposition of Western values. The misconception behind Kipling's famous 1899 view of "the white man's burden" carrying "the blame of those ye better, the hate of those ye guard", was beginning to be realized.²⁴

By the early years of the twentieth century more than half the colonies, including Australia and Canada, were recognized as dominions which allowed all but foreign affairs and defence to be determined and administered by the

22. F.S. Oliver, "From Empire to Union", supplement to *National Review*, vol.53 [1909], p.2.

23. Donald Read, editor, *Edwardian England*, 1972, *op. cit.*, p.15.

24. *Ibid.*, p.16. Kipling's attitudes were firmly rooted in Victorian thinking.

countries themselves. The imperial zenith had passed.²⁵

This waning of the British Empire was slow to be recognized by the general populace. For those, like Arthur Pitts, born in the 1880s, it must have seemed that both the Queen and the British Empire had always been there and always would be.

In 1901 Queen Victoria died and Edward VII mounted the throne. The change of monarch, although perhaps not very significant politically, for it was still a Conservative House of Commons and House of Lords, was certainly significant psychologically. Edward VII provided a marked contrast to the preceding restraint of his mother's rule. With his outgoing nature and curiosity for all manner of new ideas and experiences his reign brought an exuberance to the age. Edward associated with a cosmopolitan cross cultural group definitely not confined to the aristocracy. As Prince of Wales, Edward had travelled widely and, in sharp contrast to Queen Victoria, was as comfortable in Europe as in England. He was also equally comfortable with Liberals and Conservatives, counting the leaders Bannerman and Balfour respectively, among his friends.²⁶

Just as the Victorian age was in part a reflection of

25. Much could be said about the waning of the British Empire but for the purpose of this paper only a few of the aspects of this decline will be taken up in the discussion.

26. Bernard Porter, *The Edwardians and Their Empire*, op. cit., p.44.

Queen Victoria's personality, attitudes, and morality, so too was the subsequent Edwardian age coloured by its monarch, King Edward VII. Edward's optimism and enthusiasm for life radiated through the period. The new king was a keen sportsman and the English population reflected his example. Although the Victorians had made a cult of amateur sport the Edwardians expanded it in every direction. Arthur Pitts in his prime of youth was joyfully caught up in the sports mania. His journals of 1909-1913 are punctuated with references to sport. Association football was professionalized in 1885, a cycling craze struck in 1895 followed by a whole host of manias. Sport, either playing, watching, or with the advent of the popular press, simply reading about it, was all the rage for many. Lawn tennis, golf, and field hockey were among the most popular sports of the upper classes, but as Bishop explains: "...none built up the support and popular interest so much as association football in the winter months and cricket in the summer."²⁷ For the Edwardians the fun and entertainment pendulum had swung away from the restrictive Victorian era. A sense of humour became a desirable trait. Through social reforms, more of the population was able to take holidays and enjoy leisure activities on a regular basis.

The highlights of Pitts' apprenticeship years [1905-

27. James Bishop, *The Illustrated London News: Social History of Edwardian Britain*, London, Angus & Robertson, 1977, p.110.

1910] were popular Edwardian activities, which remained important to him throughout his life. They included several short holidays such as the walking trips in Suffolk and Norfolk, his many cycling excursions and his early dabbling with photography which he had actually begun before he left school.²⁸ Several times a week Arthur would cycle for fifty miles after a day's work, always recording the route and time taken as well as any noteworthy items such as 13th Century churches. Often a photograph, either of an ancient building or his travelling companion, usually Bert or Dave, would be taken on the cycling trips. Photography was incorporated into his walking tours as well. For instance, on the first holiday in Lowestoft, Suffolk, in 1908 Arthur took four dozen photographs.²⁹ During the subsequent holidays in Suffolk and Norfolk [1909 and twice in 1910] Pitts indulged in his fascination with architecture in general and old churches in particular. In his travel journal of July 30-August 13, 1910 Pitts included an inventory of 78 towns and villages he encountered and what churches, halls, or cottages were, because of an historical or architectural feature, worthy of photographic work.³⁰

28. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.7.

29. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1908, August 10, 1908.

30. Also included were a vicarage, abbey, fragment of a hospital, priory, house, inn, tower, almhouse, castle, lighthouse, manor house, barn, ruined windmill and all structures in the area with any association to Lord Nelson.

He mentioned that he was photographing on most days, but whether or not he successfully developed and printed everything he noted is not known.

In the winter months football was a consuming passion. He enjoyed playing for several different leagues. In 1908, he played in and won the Eastern Suburban League. He always loved sport of any kind, playing as much as possible himself. As he was working six days a week there was limited time, but hardly a day in his pre war journals lacks a notation of practicing or playing football, cycling, skipping, boxing or some athletic activity. This tremendous energy became increasingly focused on his art over time.

Pitts was also a voracious reader from an early age. Fitting in his daily read was as important to him as his daily walks and sports. He meticulously recorded the number of miles he was logging on his bicycle after every excursion and likewise listed the titles and authors of the books he read, most of which he borrowed weekly, one at a time, from his local library. Arthur's early adult life was characterized by his commitment to improve himself physically, intellectually, spiritually and artistically. There were many of his generation who were of the same persuasion, as the desire to better oneself was one of the hallmarks of the Edwardian age.

We will see a resurgence of this recording of historic buildings twenty five years later, but in watercolour.

He was a true enthusiast for one or two things at a time. This was reflected in his choice of reading material. Although his taste was eclectic, he tended to read an author or subject to the saturation point, then move on to another. In 1910, for example, Arthur "concluded reading politics which have studied during the last two or three months & resolved to have a change. C. Darwin's 'Origin of Species' from library."³¹ He then proceeded to read everything by Darwin over the next several weeks. This was followed by a selection of texts on architecture and English antiquities, military history, works by Dickens and then Zola. Several pages in the 1910 journal are devoted to notes from various books he had studied. There are also lists of anthropological, biological, botanical, architectural and general scientific terms. Also recorded were geological, political, religious and philosophical terms as well as extensive lists of words with which he hoped to augment his vocabulary. Latin translations were occasionally included. In subsequent years Pitts enjoyed a wide variety of literature from Aristotle's *Ethics* and Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* to *Orthochromatic Photography* and *Love Among the Chickens* by P.G. Wodehouse. He relished reading any history book about any age or any culture.

In addition to books Pitts read many of the popular periodicals including *Punch*, *The Graphic*, *Gaiety*, and *The*

31. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1910, April 21, 1910.

Illustrated London News. In Edwardian England one of the most rapidly increasing industries was journalism. The expansion of leisure activity encouraged this development. Nowell-Smith reports that: "Between 1881 and 1911 the newspaper reading public increased fourfold and with that increase was the consequent jump in the number of publications and all manner of employment associated with them."³²

This rise of the popular press naturally had the important effect of creating in the Edwardians a more widely informed generation. In the previous Victorian era daily newspapers such as *The Times* and serious weekly illustrated papers like *The Illustrated London News* were aimed mainly at the well educated man with a reasonable amount of leisure time [perhaps at his club] in which to read them. But, as Bishop explains:

...with the advent of universal primary education in the nineteenth century there was a need for a "busy man's paper". The Daily Mail [first published in the late 1880s] was the first of the popular or "family papers" and with its shorter stories, photographs,, and varied content became extremely popular.³³

A flurry of "family papers" and tabloids of this type appeared about the turn of the century.

There are many references in the publications of the

32. Simon Nowell-Smith, editor, *Edwardian England 1901-1914*, London, Oxford University Press, 1964, p.3.

33. James Bishop, *The Illustrated London News: Social History of Edwardian Britain*, op. cit., p.88.

time to the concept of life. Often it is capitalized. "Life" as a popular literary cliché had a far-ranging influence on Edwardian thought. T.E. Hulme speaking of the Edwardians noted that the intelligentsia had become fixated on a new catchword, "Life":

Once all intellectual life revolved around the word God and then for a hundred years it was Reason, and now all the best people take off their hats and lower their voices when they speak of Life.³⁴

Life, whatever it actually meant, always implied progress, movement and creation, all hallmarks of this age. The apostles of "Life" relished newness and novelty. "Life" was a convenient short hand for the thrilling expansiveness of the period. This dedication to "Life" is an important Edwardian philosophical stance which is found at the base of most activities at this time. "Life" in all its meanings was central to Pitts' motivation in most instances. This enthusiasm for life, and with it a vibrant inquisitiveness, runs as a *leitmotif* through the burst of creativity in literature and the arts in general and the passion for all sorts of new and novel sports and leisure activities. Science and technology benefitted too from this in an increased inventiveness. The mass interest in discovery, expansion, and improvement brought forth such things as the motor car, airplape, X-rays, underground train, escalators,

34. Cited in Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968, p.40.

telephone, typewriter, cross-Atlantic telegraph service, the discovery of radio waves and radioactivity.

Dedication to "Life" rose out of the ashes of the declining Victorian religion. Victorian politics, morality, art, literature, education and even charity had been saturated with religious principles and controversies. Samuel Hynes, among others, maintains that "the decline of religion left an enormous intellectual vacuum behind it."³⁵

Conventional Christianity was losing its grip on the educated and uneducated masses as well by the advent of the Edwardian age.

The primary religion of the English working class of the early twentieth century was a "practical Christianity" that emphasizes charity and brotherhood rather than doctrine or churchgoing.³⁶

A kind of secular religion began to grow in this period. Pantheism is a strong theme in Edwardian literature. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and the whole Bloomsbury Group reflect the shift from the devout to the secular. Individuals and personal relations became increasingly important. In fact E.M. Forster speaking of his generation stated that they "tended to deify personal relationships and expected them to function outside their

35. *Ibid.*, p.22.

36. Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament*, Athens, Ohio Ohio University Press, 1986, p.15.

appropriate sphere."³⁷

The clear message from George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, G.K. Chesterton, J.M. Barrie, James Joyce, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad and other leading and popular writers of the time, all of whom Pitts read, was that the individual could resist, struggle and prevail. Some writers, such as Jonathan Rose, refer to this philosophy as an Edwardian "New Realism" which proclaimed that "life is full of adventure and recompense."³⁸ The Edwardians, or New Realists, affirmed that "the soul of man by sheer effort of will could prevail against any material handicap or social restriction."³⁹

This energetic atmosphere of inquiry pervaded the times. Nowhere was it more evident than in the sphere of art. Victorian insularity had stunted the development of English painting. Many new movements had erupted in France and Germany but very little crossed the Channel. There had been a stranglehold of censors and boards and committees born in Victorian times which was designed to protect the English from foreign evils. The English insular state endeavoured to isolate its people [depriving them or protecting them depending on one's view point] from the arts and philosophies which were to shape the trends of the

37. *Ibid.*, p.77.

38. *Ibid.*, p.54.

39. *Ibid.*, p.54.

twentieth century. The new realism in French fiction, the great Russian novels, plays by Ibsen, French symbolism and Impressionism are but a few of the arts and ideas subjected to the censor's crush. Post-Impressionism was viewed as a foreign threat to native English art. There was also the residual Victorian sentiment which could be found in *Burlington Magazine* in 1908:

Impressionism in France has run its course, and salvation for the next outburst of original talent must be expected from some entirely different quarter. Our national art appears to conspicuous advantage ... chiefly because whether consciously or not, it has avoided the senile peurilities to which we have referred. France may still dominate the world of sculpture but the immediate future of painting seems to be with Great Britain...⁴⁰

As Hynes concludes:

The essential opposition was not to a new technique of painting, however primitive it might seem but to the moral and social implications of the technique, and to its foreignness.⁴¹

In 1897 an important event in English art history occurred with the opening by the Prince of Wales of the Tate Gallery. It was intended to house the great "Public National Collection of British Fine Art". As Hynes relates, the collection did have some fairly good pictures in it but:

...considered as a national and representative collection of British art it was shamefully inadequate; the pomp and publicity of its opening

40. Anonymous, *Burlington Magazine*, Vol.12 [February 1908], p.277.

41. Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, op. cit., p.331.

simply emphasized its shortcomings.⁴²

The controversy which ensued had the effect of stimulating and raising the art consciousness of the general public. The Edwardian mood, the cosmopolitan King and what was developing in the arts on the Continent combined over time to bring the Victorian artistic barriers down.

In the spring of 1905 the French dealer Paul Durand-Ruel brought a large collection of Impressionist paintings to London, the first exhibition of Impressionists in England in more than twenty years.

Attendance was good - nearly 3,000 persons on a single Saturday - but sales were poor; fewer than ten pictures were sold, most of them to foreign collectors.⁴³

So although the directors of the National Gallery and members of the Royal Academy were clinging to Victorian ideals and attitudes, the public was, as in this instance, behaving in a typically Edwardian fashion showing a keen interest in new ideas. The first exhibition of Post-Impressionist paintings in London opened five years later, on November 8, 1910. Curated by Roger Fry, *Manet and the Post Impressionists* included canvases by Manet, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso, Dérain, Vlaminck, Friesz, Redon, Rouault, Signac, and Seurat. Only one other exhibition of Post-Impressionist works had been attempted in

42. *Ibid.*, p.317.

43. *Ibid.*, p.324.

England, in the summer of 1910 at the Brighton Municipal Galleries. Virginia Woolf, in observing the radical changes taking place in England especially around 1910, considered this first major "foreign" exhibit to be a powerful symbol.⁴⁴ The reactions to the exhibition as registered in letters to the editor in various publications provide a microcosm of the inevitable conflict and struggle that accompanies any radical change. The reaction to the exhibit had as much to do with the changing attitudes, especially towards the new relationship with Europe, as it did with painting.

Significantly, this first Post-Impressionist exhibition was followed eighteen months later by a second, also curated by Fry. It was perceived as less controversial, perhaps because of the English painters included: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Wyndham Lewis, Stanley Spencer, Henry Lamb, Eric Gill, Frederick Etchells, and Fry himself.⁴⁵

In the amateur sense art was a popular new pasttime. King Edward VII and vast numbers of his subjects enjoyed sketching and dabbling with watercolours. Similarly, photography was all the rage. The king himself was a keen photographer. The changes in art at this time were being wrought from internal just as surely as from external

44. Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976 [earlier edition 1940], p.346.

45. Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, op. cit., p.340.

influences.

Over the course of his apprenticeship years, Pitts' interest in photography increased, reaching a new intensity in the late spring and early summer of 1910. Temporarily, it outweighed his attention to painting. Very detailed photographic information is included in his writings. Each photograph taken is assigned a number and described in terms of exposure time, aperture setting, distance, time of day, light levels and weather, as well as subject matter.⁴⁶ He noted what he felt were the best choices for certain photographs in terms of light and time of day for example. As with his painting and education in general he learned as he went along. As a self-taught photographer he seemed to enjoy the trial and error approach. Some photographs were successful, others not, and Arthur was always interested in the reasons why in either case.

At the close of 1910 he was finally a certified, full-fledged show card writer.⁴⁷ His wage increased dramatically from 17 to 27 shillings per week, most of which he happily turned over to his mother, as he was still living at home. Feeling free of the constraints of apprenticeship Arthur turned to his canvases, which he hadn't touched for more than eight months while he had been pursuing his photography. Pitts intended to spring from his

46. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1910, June-July 1910.

47. *Ibid.*, December 10, 1910.

apprenticeship to a position where he could use more of his artistic skills. He even applied for a position as ticket writer in New Zealand.⁴⁸ But just as he was feeling optimistic about his future as an artist he was devastated by the sudden death of his sixteen year old brother, Edgar, who had contracted typhoid fever at Christmas. Pitts was severely depressed for months after and was unable to follow through with his earlier ambitious plans.⁴⁹

By the spring of 1911, though, Pitts began to respond to positions being advertised by various firms around the city. Presumably he was a competent artist for he easily jumped from company to company, sometimes to obtain better conditions or hours, and other times purely for a higher wage. Unlike his father, during this time Pitts was never without work.

On February 1, 1911 he was hired as a showcard writer [or in today's terms commercial artist] by Leslie Smith's in St. Paul's Churchyard.⁵⁰ Three weeks later he switched firms, ultimately signing on with Tisdall & Wrikins (Little Tichfield Street) for 37 shillings per week.⁵¹ Few details

48. *Ibid.*, October 4, 1910.

49. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1911, January-March 1911.

50. His hours were 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and his wage 1 Guinea [32 shillings] per week; *ibid.*, February 25, 1911.

51. He first moved to Sparvel's, Baker St., for a raise to 36 shillings per week; *ibid.*, February 25, 1911; *ibid.*, April 3, 1911; *ibid.*, April 24, 1911.

of Arthur's day job were given for the rest of 1911 as he was so immersed in photography.

Pitts, who had previously borrowed a camera from his brother or friend, put down a week's wage [37 shillings] for his own Kodak and "telescopic stand".⁵² His immediate interest was family portraits, especially his closest brother Dave and baby brother Raymond. He was anxious to photograph his journeys as well.

Walking holidays punctuate the working calendar of his immediate post-apprentice years, as they had in his apprenticeship. Along with his best friend Bert, Pitts revelled in walking holidays of Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex especially. Years later, Pitts was to write of the April 1911 holiday in Suffolk and Essex with bubbling enthusiasm:

...we made Alborough [sic], Suffolk having spent a most lovely and fascinating walk across Orford Marshes en route. The extreme desolation of this isolated corner possessing a glorious melancholly [sic] old world charm difficult to surpass and the small village of Orford, with its noble Church and Castle, both of Norman work, cannot fail to delight the antiquarian taste.⁵³

Another memorable walking tour of 170 miles, with camera in hand, was taken in July and August of 1911 with Bert in Suffolk and Norfolk, "the coast line being adhered to throughout." Arthur wrote of it:

O! The glory of the many old Churches and

52. *Ibid.*, July 8, 1911.

53. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.10.

Monastical Buildings we saw, almost unchanged for centuries and situated amidst perfectly congenial scenery we felt, on entering, a closer contact with the romantic medieval ages and a greater respect for such beautiful design and designers.⁵⁴

In this two week holiday of 1911 Pitts created a photographic record of six dozen pictures "consisting entirely of archaeological specimens", primarily old churches. Following the summer walking tour Pitts spent 5 full days developing and printing photos.⁵⁵ For the remainder of 1911, every day, with rare exception, there was a reference to photography. In September Pitts received an honourable mention in the beginner's competition of the publication *A Photographer*, and was taking, developing, and printing photographs at a rapid rate.⁵⁶ His principal subject was portraiture of family and friends. Every few days more photographic equipment or supplies were purchased.

Suddenly in the new year of 1912 Pitts stopped mentioning photography and put painting to the forefront again. From 1909 through 1912 Arthur tended to alternate between these two vehicles of artistic expression. There was an apparent seasonal correlation as well, with photography often the primary artistic activity in the summer and painting in the winter. In 1912, for example,

54. *Ibid.*, p.12.

55. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal* 1911, August 19-23, 1911.

56. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1911.

after a hiatus from January until May 21 photography once again supplanted painting as Arthur's obsession. His first project was to photograph the paintings he had completed over the winter.⁵⁷ Unfortunately the whereabouts of these photographs is unknown.⁵⁸ He then proceeded with photographing, developing and printing portraits: "Two midday photos of Mother and Dave 4 secs each. Taken by window in the kitchen" is a typical entry for the summer of 1912.⁵⁹ Always anxious to improve, Pitts sent samples of his photographs to several publications such as *Photography* and *Focus* for criticism and advice.⁶⁰

In the spring of 1912 Pitts engaged in a flurry of painting activity. In March and April he devoted one day a week to painting both oils and watercolours, but other than choice of medium he offered no details. In May he spent some time every day on his art often painting before going to work in the morning.⁶¹ On May 15 he wrote: "I finish painting (Maiden's Prayer) after about 3 years more or less assiduous toil - Blessed Freedom."⁶² Dogged determination,

57. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1912, May 21, 1912.

58. Personal communication with Mrs. Winnifred Pitts, October 8, 1990.

59. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1912, June 16, 1912.

60. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1912.

61. *Ibid.*, May 1-15, 1912.

62. *Ibid.*, May 15, 1912. This was a copy of a painting he borrowed from his Aunt Grace.

especially when it came to his art, was a constant character trait. Two days later he mentioned revarnishing his last oil painting, "Girl's Head 'Spring'".⁶³ "Maiden's Prayer" was taken in to the framers for an appropriate moulding and at the same time two small "postcard size" watercolours and an etching, all executed by Pitts in 1909 were framed as well.⁶⁴ This was the last painting notation for 1912.

South Africa

Chafing at the monotonous bit of his job, Pitts finally resigned in the summer of 1912 and sailed for Durban, Natal, on August 16 of that year. England was on the verge of chaos. Hynes identifies the years of 1911 and 1912 in England as rife with "sudden and violent outbursts of strikes with more than a million workers on strike in each of these two years. More than a thousand unions were involved in work disruptions."⁶⁵ Close family relatives, including a favourite aunt and uncle, had emigrated to South Africa while Arthur was undergoing his apprenticeship and he mentioned years later how at that time he had longed to go with them to South Africa.⁶⁶

63. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1912.

64. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1912. There is no reference to these works in the 1909 journal.

65. Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, *op. cit.*, p.353.

66. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.4.

This part of the world had received much attention in the decade of Pitts' youth. The Boer War [1899-1902] had initially been regarded as a brief foray necessary to teach the Boers a sharp lesson in British supremacy. For the young men enlisting in the British Army, this was a real-life *Boys' Own Adventure*. But events did not follow the stereotype.⁶⁷ The outcome of the Boer War was a hollow victory for Britain as they had felt the confrontation would be over in a matter of a few months and that the "little fellow" was not really a fair opponent. The fact that the war dragged on for years had a chastening effect and produced a new sense of vulnerability.⁶⁸ The invincibility of the British Empire was clearly called into question.

Pitts was too young to enlist for the Boer War, but ten years later he was ready to leave England on his own adventure to Africa. Arthur arrived in Capetown en route to Durban on September 15, 1912 with 20 pounds in his pocket. His first notations show his immediate interest in what he called "the coloured element", "the rickshaw boys and Kaffir and Coolie populace in general."⁶⁹ He described the

67. Colin Nicolson, "Edwardian England and the Coming of the First World War", in Alan O'Day, editor, *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability 1900-1914*, London, Macmillan, 1979, p.165.

68. Bernard Porter, "The Edwardians and Their Empire", *op. cit.*, p.130.

69. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.24. I am indebted to Dr. Richard Stuart for clarifying the meaning of "Kaffir". It was in general usage

rickshaw boys as "young or old stalwart Zulus" of whom he later wrote:

During and up till the period of leaving Durban I never tired of the Zulu with his child like simplicity and happy demeanour. Yet there is a section of this race for which I retain no interest or pleasant remembrance. I refer to the so called christianized boys frequenting the towns and environments and naturally clustering in numbers around the sea port town. Cunning, avaricious and covetous borne of constant contact with white pedagogues... I found them particularly offensive to the eye.⁷⁰

Arthur's Aunt Aggy, Uncle Will and cousins met him in Durban that afternoon. His routine remained as close as possible to the one he had just left behind in England. Two days after settling in Durban he applied for a position, unsuccessfully, as a ticket writer. Within two weeks, however, Arthur had obtained a small contract for 12 tickets and secured his first position with the South African Railway. This was as "Learner Night Clerk" at Malvern, Natal, South Africa, 10 miles [or one hour] from Durban on the single track railway line to Johannesburg.

Arthur began his twelve hour shifts on October 3, 1912. The first two weeks, while being trained, he was on duty from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday. During this

among the non-blacks of South Africa to refer to anyone black. Pitts did not use it in a derogatory sense, although later "Kaffir" took on that tone.

70. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.26. Pitts considered white contact as detrimental to indigenous cultures, and lamented this fact, both in Africa and North America.

time he learned the telegraphist alphabet and was paid the princely sum of 5 pounds per month plus room and board. Every Saturday night he and his laundry travelled into Durban to Aunt Aggy's. Late Sunday night, after a refreshing break, he returned ready for his Monday morning start. Once trained he was put on the 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift, which changed the timing but not the course of his routine.

Arthur's interest in photography had remained steadfast. With his cousin Wall he had taken and developed photographs in Durban at every opportunity. In Malvern Arthur was shooting, developing and printing steadily. His subjects are described in his journals referring to this time as "local views" and "coolie studies".

Stamp collecting was another main focus during his time in Malvern. Once he arrived he wrote home for his stamp album, no doubt because his one and only work colleague, Chamberlain, was a keen philatelist. Arthur joined the Philatelic Society of Natal and devoted every Monday night to stamps. He also did a little hunting and attended any concert in the vicinity he possibly could.⁷¹ While in Malvern, Pitts applied to the British South African Police force in Rhodesia but was told no positions were available. On February 1, 1913, after four months in Malvern, Pitts was

71. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, October 2, 1913; *ibid.*, October 27, 1913.

promoted to "Station Foreman" at Naval Hill, Colenso, 200 miles north of Durban. The population of Naval Hill was "5 farmers plus natives".⁷²

As Station Foreman Pitts received 15 pounds 1 shilling per month plus free housing and uniforms.

Never before was I so fortunate and well did I realize my own good fortune even at the moment. Having no means of disposing my cash on needless expense my exchequer quickly became flourishing and I was a man of comparative wealth in several months.⁷³

As well as the salary Pitts was delighted with the location, for it was in the area of Boer War battlegrounds. Ladysmith was a mere interesting walk away. Many afternoons were spent exploring the Colenso battlefields and photographing monuments and sites of military and historical interest. He may have painted in South Africa but it is very doubtful. Surprisingly the only reference to painting in 1913 was when, at the end of March, Arthur sent his box of oil colours and easel home.⁷⁴ Content with his position with the railway, he immediately dismissed a job offer from England.

Three months later Arthur received another promotion to First Class Station Foreman. His 12 hour shifts were either 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. or 2 a.m. to 2 p.m. and his colleague,

72. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.47.

73. *Ibid.*, p.48.

74. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, March 31, 1913.

Hinson, took the opposite. His entry for May 21 is typical: "Finished work at 2 a.m. then went for a four mile run. Slept until 8:45 then went for a 2 hr. walk before work."⁷⁵ His principal diet while at Naval Hill was "Mealie Meal", elsewhere known as maize or Indian corn. Arthur mentioned that it was also the staple diet of the native Kaffir people.

Pitts taught himself to swim and dive, and ride a horse bareback, but couldn't quite manage to milk a cow. While on leave in Durban Arthur attended the theatre, the Botanical Gardens, fit in a little boxing and on one occasion purchased a Webley revolver from a friend.

When the Natal Police learned of expended cartridges and orders for ammunition they suspected Pitts of gun running. In the course of questioning Arthur told them that he was very interested in becoming a member of the police force. The interrogation turned into a pleasant visit in which the police gave Pitts a letter of introduction to send with an application to the Police Force.⁷⁶ This was typical of Pitts. He was able to make friends with people wherever he was. In almost any situation he remained charming and optimistic. Interests and needs of the people around him were given high priority.

It suited Pitts completely that his new station mate,

75. *Ibid.*, May 21, 1913.

76. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1913.

Hinson, enjoyed football rather than stamps. Arthur resigned from the Philatelic Society and ordered a football by mail from Durban. When it arrived the two of them spent most of the day with it. Football practice is almost a daily notation in the spring of 1913. Arthur and Hinson made a clearing opposite the railway station for football purposes, and soon after Arthur was invited to join the South Africa Region football league. Several games followed which even when his team lost and he sprained his wrist he described as "very enjoyable".⁷⁷ By the fall he was also playing with the local Zulu people in the evening.⁷⁸

Arthur's passion for walking resulted in long strolls from the station every day with camera in hand, for photography remained a sustaining interest. In the first few months at Naval Hill he took many photographs of landscape and memorials, and some of the native people, most of which he sent home. He and Hinson took portraits of each other as well as self portraits and portraits of "station fellows", meaning the local blacks employed as day labourers for various railway track work. A year later Pitts described his ingenuity at developing his photographs while at Naval Hill:

Easy facilities were offered for development of

77. *Ibid.*, April, 1913.

78. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1913. Dr. Richard Stuart has pointed out that this mixing with the blacks was very rare in that period.

plates whilst on duty. Lights were dimmed in the station building between the train intervals with the use of train lamp, danger glass, as a very adaptable red light; water was obtained from tanks attached to building and of which we possessed ample supply.⁷⁹

By June his daily routine, enlivened only by a little football and photography, was becoming monotonous, until:

At last succumbed to the inevitable, in this instance to the charms of a passing dusky maiden. She cost me 3/ which was decidedly expensive in the circumstances but if regarded in the light of an experience was good value for money.⁸⁰

From his arrival in South Africa Pitts had photographed the native people from time to time, but in the summer of 1913 in Naval Hill this interest intensified almost to the point of excluding all else. Pitts wrote:

[O]n becoming more conversant with their language I began to assiduously study the customs of the Zulu. With this added interest the camera played an important part and I keenly accepted features worthy of record. Although now a degenerate race owing to their constant contact with the white man yet many fine specimens of humanity are found among them particularly in more remote kraals. A raw native in his scanty attire of skin or hide across the loins and plentifully bedecked with beads presents a truly noble sight. Many such are seen crossing the veldt at a swinging trot off to a dance, beer feast, or wedding; functions which are attended by large Zulu communities in vicinity of the event and from afar.⁸¹

In August Pitts photographed every day and developed

79. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.66.

80. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, June 18, 1913.

81. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.51.

his work that evening. Printing was done the following day: "With 2 remaining plates I wandered over to a neighbouring Kraal & photographed that and inmates. For the purpose persuaded the women to partly strip to add to the beauty of the photo."⁸²

As was his common practice he returned the next day and presented the people with their portrait.⁸³ He revisited the village of the local Zulu people referred to as the Kaffir Kraal on several occasions. Most days of August and September 1913 Pitts "tramped across veldt in the search for native studies."⁸⁴ Often he exchanged his portraits for beads and occasionally for other artifacts such as a pot and a mask.⁸⁵ Usually at least one photograph was taken but sometimes he just visited the people and drank "Kaffir Beer" with them. He was pleased to note in his journal that as a result of these trips he was making good progress with the Zulu language. In the journal, once he knew the Zulu word he used that instead of the English equivalent. For example, rather than woman, he wrote *umfazi*. He particularly enjoyed attending the Intombi [another group of the Zulu people] and Kaffir festivities such as weddings and

82. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, August 10, 1913.

83. He maintained this courtesy when he painted the portraits of Native North Americans twenty years later.

84. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, August 20, 1913.

85. *Ibid.*, August-September 1913.

beermaking and found the dancing fascinating. Arthur photographed as much as he could when he obtained permission.⁸⁶ The images were of women, men, and children from every social strata of the community. Pitts was enthralled by the children threshing grain, the women weaving baskets, men building huts, and the chief in his regalia. Dress, habits and any details of their lives interested him. In his diary he described how babies were carried, the designs of huts and how status and wealth were demonstrated.⁸⁷ Pitts also made arrangements for the Zulu people to come to the station to be photographed. [Figure 1]

In Pitts' Zulu photographs, such as Figure 1, one is immediately struck by the natural poses of the people. Pitts did not manipulate the image to conform to a preconceived notion. The photographs of Native North Americans by photographer Edward Curtis provide an interesting contrast. Both Pitts and Curtis felt that as a result of white interference native cultures were rapidly declining and disappearing. Curtis wanted to recreate in his images what he perceived to be the glory days of Native North Americans. All vestiges of white influence are absent from his photographs. The images were for the most part carefully constructed, and often included props, such as

86. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1913.

87. *Ibid.*, September 10, 1913.

headdress or lance, supplied by Curtis.⁸⁸

Pitts' Zulu photographs are honest depictions of the people as he met them. In Figure 1, for example, one can easily imagine his request for the Zulu women to stand in front of his tent. Apparently he did not ask them to put their evidence of white contact, the umbrellas, aside. The candid photograph is charming in its relaxed informality. This is no serious ethnographic study, but rather a record of a group of people whom one young photographer found fascinating.

Originally the photographs of the native people were taken for his own interest and for sending home to his family. It was not a commercial endeavour, although there was one exception of which he wrote:

[A native] called for his Zulu book which I had borrowed. Having stumbled across his kraal during my wanderings I possess a photo of the family. As a favour I promised to print 6 for 2/ but am not anxious for such work.⁸⁹

In most instances Pitts made a duplicate photograph in order to give a copy to the subject. On several occasions Pitts traded the Intombi people a portrait for "bead ornaments".⁹⁰ On another encounter he exchanged photos for

88. Ralph W. Andrews, *Curtis' Western Indians, op. cit.*, p.23.

89. *Ibid.*, August 25, 1913. In company with the 1913 journal is Pitt's own well worn Zulu phrase book and dictionary.

90. For example, *ibid.*, September 2, 1913.

masks.⁹¹ In one instance Pitts "walked across to usual Intombi Kraal with intention of exchanging photos for [a] certain head ornament but was not successful."⁹²

Occasionally Arthur would pay 2/ for someone to pose for him: "Six plates of photos of natives. Inundated by Intimbis during afternoon. Changed four plates under bedcloths & snapped 2 young ladies as they were born. 2/ the price."⁹³ Six days after this session he wrote:

"Snapped 5 plates at the Intombi Kraal however I now possess enough of various native types and intend shortly to conclude this branch of interest."⁹⁴

He continued though with enthusiasm until the end of the month when, always ready to be a friend, he lent his camera and plates to a local farmer. He later reflected back on this period:

Throughout this period and generally my sojourn at Naval Hill my camera was actively engaged recording many features of Zulu life. When first I went into their midst with that intention they showed much aversion for the camera, many disappearing within their huts and could not be persuaded to again emerge. As, however, I persisted on many occasions, they gradually became accustomed to my wholly harmless being and I obtained much success with them. On frequent journeys I was hospitably entertained, asked to

91. *Ibid.*, September 17, 1913. Pitts' widow, Winnifred, said that he had, in his later years, given much of his African collection to his family in England.

92. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1913.

93. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1913.

94. *Ibid.*, October 17, 1913.

enter and drink with them.⁹⁵

When his camera was returned Pitts endeavoured to record the few military and historical sites in the region which he had not already photographed. By the third week in November boredom had set in and he felt that he had exhausted the area's interests. "Am getting restless and yearn for a change" he wrote December 6, 1913 after he had destroyed what he felt to be an accumulation of letters and photo plates.⁹⁶ He did feel though "as a result of my efforts I now possess a good native and war collection."⁹⁷ He sent in his resignation from what he by then regarded as a deadly dull position with the railway, and with his considerable savings of 119 pounds 7 shillings 6 pence left Naval Hill for a brief holiday in Durban. His intention was to sail to another part of the British Empire, the Antipodes, at the end of the month.

But after a week of swimming and relaxing with his cousins, and receiving a melancholy letter from his mother, he decided to visit home first and consequently booked fare on the *Beltavia*, leaving for England on January 11, 1914.

95. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.54.

96. Pitts left no details about this purge. Which plates were destroyed and why was not recorded.

97. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1913, December 6-7, 1913. An album of photographs of the Zulu people taken by Arthur Pitts is now in the collection of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

His 1913 diary concluded that it had been a year:

...of comparative event and change. Much of Boer War interest was seen during my sojourn north [of Durban] and the Kaffir in his raw state afforded a very interesting study. On both phases I centred the camera and obtained a really good record as a permanent reminder of a quiet but nonetheless pleasant deviation from a hitherto tedious and monotonous existence.⁹⁸

Just as his ship was entering British waters Pitts made the startling discovery that his entire fortune of almost one hundred and twenty pounds had been stolen from his berth while he attended a concert on deck. After all the months of monotonous 12 hour shifts through which he had assiduously saved, he was penniless. Arthur was devastated, but blamed only his own carelessness. He had intended to return home, a successful, financially comfortable young man in the course of a world adventure. Instead he was destitute and dependent on his family. He was totally dispirited, but the joy with which family and friends greeted him helped put this setback out of his mind.

Pitts spent seven weeks with his family, visiting old friends, and attending various plays and musicals. He commented that people were very interested in his native curios and how glad he was that they hadn't been stolen as well.⁹⁹ An unidentified but "kindly disposed relative" loaned Arthur twenty pounds and he immediately decided to

98. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1913.

99. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.74.

set sail again.

Canada

Plans to go to Australia inexplicably changed. He wrote that he "suddenly reversed my decision and sailed to Canada by the S.S. Corinthian."¹⁰⁰ The fare was £6 [3rd class] to St. John and £3-15 for the three day train trip to Winnipeg. It was an uneventful crossing and Pitts' initial observations upon landing in Canada focused on the "undulating landscape" and the railway system, with comments on the size of the engine, gauge of the track, etc. He found the scenery and that "glorious stretch of Water, Lake Superior" spectacular.¹⁰¹ Eighteen days from London Pitts found himself "on the borders of the dreary prairie counties of the West" and was decidedly less impressed.

Pitts arrived in Winnipeg at the beginning of April 1914 and on the first day secured employment at the rate of \$25 per month [room and board included], with a young farmer, McDonald, of Fleming, approximately 200 miles west of Winnipeg. On the first morning of farm work Pitts realized that it was a mistake. He had told McDonald that he had no experience at all and yet "unpleasantness arose" when Pitts could not drive the team of four in a straight line for harrowing. Pitts wrote that he was soon informed

100. *Ibid.*, p.75.

101. *Ibid.*, p.82.

he could not remain, "not having shewn, as a greenhorn, a complete knowledge of all that was required".¹⁰²

The next day, April 6, 1914, Pitts signed on for the season with Jackson, a farmer 3 miles southwest of McDonald's holding. It was an ordeal from the start but he refused to quit because he wanted to learn farming skills and more importantly pay his debt to the "kind relative" who had financially rescued him. Working conditions deteriorated with the course of the season until by midsummer his routine was to work from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. with "no spell at all". There were quick meal breaks which only lasted long enough to bolt down the food and return to work. His tasks included ploughing, harrowing with four in hand, haying, stooking and threshing.¹⁰³

Pitts was still on the farm when World War I broke out. He immediately travelled to Moosomin, Saskatchewan, the closest enlistment office, but was told that they were still awaiting orders for mobilization. At the end of six months on Jackson's farm Pitts was paid, and he could hardly wait to go. He had saved \$140.00 from his pay of \$25 per month and gladly spent the \$40.00 to take the train west.¹⁰⁴

Two and a half days from Fleming by train Pitts reached Vancouver. En route he was thrilled with the mountains and

102. *Ibid.*, p.89.

103. *Ibid.*, p.92.

104. *Ibid.*, p.94.

landscape in general. His intention was to enlist in the army immediately upon arrival, but he found that he had to wait three weeks before this would be possible. Meanwhile he thoroughly enjoyed Vancouver. He wrote enthusiastically about the scenery and wonderful day trips that were possible across Burrard Inlet, up the Capilano canyon, the suspension bridge etc.¹⁰⁵ He was fascinated by the Oriental population and enjoyed an evening of "oriental theatre".

By late October 1914 Pitts was able to enlist. "In the interest of patriotism and greater worldly experience" Pitts signed up with the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders of Canada.¹⁰⁶ His pay was \$1.10 per day, in fact a raise from his farm labourer's wage. His first orders, in November, were for him to proceed to Hastings Park, which he described as being 3 miles from town. At this point the Seaforths were merged with the 29th Vancouver Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force. The battalion consisted of 1200 men plus an attachment of fifty mounted men from the Yukon district. What followed was weeks of arduous training which Pitts loved. When on leave he and his friends drank, usually too much, and caroused. Pitts, caught up in the soldier's life, enjoyed Vancouver immensely.

In the seven months in Vancouver Pitts enjoyed football, time to catch up on his reading, clubs, and

105. *Ibid.*, p.96.

106. *Ibid.*, p.100.

various musical performances.¹⁰⁷ He experienced his first Turkish bath and baseball game, both of which he pronounced as unexciting. His parents and friends sent him English papers; *London Illustrated News*, *Observer*, *Graphic* and *Sphere* and books on English architecture and history.¹⁰⁸ On many occasions, usually fairly drunk, he was a.w.o.l. and consequently fined or confined to barracks or both. His drinking became excessive and he recognized it as a problem. Pitts resolved not to drink, and sometimes he was successful.¹⁰⁹ On February 18, 1915 he was pleased to pay off the last of the debt to his relative and pledged to continue sending money home to help out the family, which he did.¹¹⁰

On May 14, 1915 Pitts and his battalion deployed, leaving Vancouver by train for Montreal. They then boarded the *S.S. Missanabie* for a ten day voyage to Devon. On May 30 the battalion took the train north to Shorncliffe, then marched the three miles to their destination at Dibgate Camp.¹¹¹

Back in England Pitts was a soldier waiting to be

107. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal 1915*, January-May 1915.

108. *Ibid.*

109. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1915.

110. *Ibid.*, February 18, 1915.

111. Arthur Pitts, "Illusions of a Wanderer's Life", 1914 journal, p.119.

shipped to the front. For the time being his art and his interest in native people would have to wait.

Chapter 2: The Great War to the Great Depression [1915-1930]

To the Front

Pitts had quickly been to Canada and back without an opportunity to focus on his art or his interest in Native people. The Great War had swept Pitts and thousands of others from their course. In 1914 the Edwardians were certainly attuned to the major conflicts of their time, but far more attention was paid to the economic battles, the expected war with the Irish, or even the tensions with the suffragette movement than to the machinations on the European front that seemed to bring the Great War to them overnight. Most Edwardians were unprepared for the event and would have been less surprised at the time by a full scale war with Ireland. Surprised they were, but not in the least daunted. Paul Fussell explains:

The British plunged into the First World War as a magnificent sport, something not too distant from playing games, running races, and competing in a thoroughly decent way.¹

It was viewed by most that the war would "intensify life for hordes of tired clerks transformed into jaunty soldiers."² The attitude towards war was particularly Edwardian and woefully unrealistic. Having grown up with

1. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, London, Oxford University Press, 1977, p.25.

2. Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament*, *op. cit.*, p.51.

"Boys' Own Adventures" and other forms of romantic quest literature, the war with Germany promised to be the greatest adventure of all:

The experiences of a man going up the line to his destiny cannot help seeming to him like those of a hero of medieval romance if his imagination has been steeped in actual literary romances or their equivalent.³

Much writing about war in the 1900-1914 period was couched in terms of "Social Darwinism", which presupposed the inevitability and even the desirability of conflict, and hinted that the logic of evolution pointed to an eventual titanic contest between the two contending giants; Britain and Germany. According to J. Gooch, "Not only was war portrayed as being inevitable but it was promised to be romantic, exhilarating and short."⁴

This attitude toward war had obvious roots in the Edwardian position *vis a vis* the British Empire. Key to it was the belief that Britain had a special role in the history of the world. Although the idea of the invincibility of the British was shaken by the Boer War, the progressive push in the intervening years leading up to 1914 had all but erased any doubts.

Also bound up with this attitude towards war as sport

3. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, *op. cit.*, p.135.

4. J. Gooch, "Victorian and Edwardian Attitudes to War" in B. Bond and J. Roy, editors, *War and Society I* (1975), p.35.

or adventure was what might be called the diffusion of the public-school ethic. "Playing the game" was one of the codes which was an unwritten Edwardian law. It was because public schools were identified with success and with those heroes who had made Britain pre-eminent that this influence was absorbed at all levels of Edwardian society. The public school codes and values were expressed in the editorials of serious journals as one might expect but as Alan O'Day writes:

...they were also in the popular press, in the textbooks of school children, in advertisements, in the rituals and literature of youth and even in the codes governing the new mass sports. The philosophy of the ruling class permeated to the lowest levels of Edwardian society.⁵

The public schools were organized along military lines with strict rules of conduct, hierarchies and discipline. The emphasis was on the inculcation of military values and stimulation of patriotism. The public school codes and values moulded officers on sight but they were also what the common soldiers, including Arthur Pitts, ascribed to.

Eagerly the first of the young Edwardian men embarked on their great adventure; ready to "play the game" and "keep up their side" having no idea what it would actually mean. They enlisted with excitement, patriotic zeal, and faith that this too represented "Life".

For the spring and summer of 1915 Arthur remained based

5. Alan O'Day, editor, *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability 1900-1914*, op. cit., p.44.

in England waiting for his battalion to engage in the war raging on the Continent. He was stationed at Dibgate Camp, three miles from Shorncliff, Kent, where he was part of the twenty thousand strong Canadian division in the area.⁶

The months passed pleasantly enough. The work was minimal: one day there would be bayonet practice, the next day trench digging or rifle practice, but there was plenty of time for him to read, write letters and enjoy the early English architecture of his surroundings.⁷

On leave he headed home immediately where, joined by Bert and Dave, he played football, rowed in Hyde Park, strolled in the West End or "lounged in the Café Royal, Regent St. & saw much that was unusual & interesting in the world of art & vice".⁸ Pitts began seeing Mary, a friend from childhood [whose surname was never given], and also purchased a "Vest Pocket Kodak" camera.⁹ Mary and photography quickly became Arthur's *raison d'être*.

Arthur purchased a "portrait extension lens" but most of the subjects he noted were "Norman Entrance Tower", "Lighthouse", "Old Romney Church" and other historical

6. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Jan., 1915 to 27 Jan., 1916, June 20, 1915.

7. *Ibid.*, June 5-27, 1915.

8. *Ibid.*, June 21, 1915.

9. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1915. The camera cost £2-10-0.

buildings.¹⁰ He enjoyed these outings so much that he found it difficult to stay on base. Twice that summer he forged passes, once to go out on the town and once to go home for his self-toning paper so that he could develop and print four rolls of film which he had taken on or near the base.¹¹ In both instances he was confined to barracks and fined, but had absolutely no regrets.

In September he once again put his ticket writing skills to work and forged a pass for himself and three friends.¹² After two days of fun in London they managed to return to camp, their absence undetected.¹³ Two days later Arthur was back in London, this time on legitimate leave, visiting his family. He wrote of a stroll with Bert: "Search lights began to play and immediately after saw Zeppelin. Shells rang in her direction & many people became almost panic stricken. The sight was splendid & I was pleased to have witnessed it."¹⁴ The war seemed to him, like so many of his generation, a thrilling adventure. One of his sterling moments in this three and a half month's wait was being reviewed and inspected by the King and

10. *Ibid.*, July-August 1915.

11. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1915; *ibid.*, August 22, 1915.

12. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1915.

13. *Ibid.*, September 6, 1915.

14. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1915.

Kitchener.¹⁵

On September 16, 1915 the wait was over. He was marched to Folkestone Harbour with his 90 pound pack on his back and on to a boat for Boulogne. From Boulogne Pitts and his battalion were immediately shipped to the front. They rode the train south to Cassel, of which Pitts wrote, "pretty scenery. Roughly 12 miles from firing line. Hear guns. Tasted French beer. Slept well through night."¹⁶ After a week of enjoying the village with its interesting old church and playing football with his friends he was ordered to the trenches.¹⁷

Although his first day in the trenches was in the second line there was constant heavy fire from the Germans. Pitts and company were not allowed to answer for fear of firing on their own men in the first line trenches.¹⁸ The routine in the trenches was two hours on and four hours off, and Pitts, although in what must have been a miserable and terrifying situation, simply recorded of his first night: "All night enemy fixed artillery 10 yards in rear of our line; otherwise nothing happened."¹⁹ After his first two days at the line his entry was: "Am now in filthy condition

15. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1915.

16. *Ibid.*, September 18, 1915.

17. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1915.

18. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1915.

19. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1915.

being unable to wash, shave or change. Weather unsettled & rain commenced at evening. Shrapnel fire at close quarters & many stray shells during night."²⁰

Although it was not yet winter Pitts found the trenches intensely cold, so cold in fact that he ran the risk of no man's land searching for and eventually finding enough wood to make a fire for tea.²¹ His first six days were in a word "miserable" and he was "extremely thankful" at the end of them to be relieved by his comrades in the 27th battalion who were housed in dugouts at the village of Kemmel 4 miles distant.

Warm and cozy in his dugout Pitts decided to use this time to learn French. Soon, however, he was back in the trenches where fighting had intensified. The men's schedule had compressed to one hour on and two hours off. They had to contend with extreme cold and rain, fatigue, shrapnel coming directly into the trenches and their fellow soldiers being wounded or killed. Understandably Pitts began drinking more. On his second break from the trenches he was introduced to champagne and reported downing two bottles at his first attempt.²² His diary entries for the remainder of 1915 were brief to the point of being cryptic and his writing became smaller and more illegible with each passing

20. *Ibid.*, September 27, 1915.

21. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1915.

22. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1915.

day. When he was in the trenches he was busy doing "fatigues" of various kinds such as trench digging, supply moving, artillery installation; when he was back in camp he rested, drank or read.²³ If he took photographs or sketched at this time he did not mention it.

Pitts' "first brush with death" came early in 1916 when a piece of shrapnel, which Pitts kept as a souvenir, fell within one foot of his head while he was on detail in no man's land.²⁴ Interestingly enough, from this point the entries in his journals become much more relaxed and descriptive. It was as though he had fought death and won. He also, for the first time, mentioned photographing the men in action.²⁵ The next entry was how wonderful the band concert [in the trenches] was. And then on leave he thoroughly enjoyed "bath, beer and introduction to Johnny Dewar's White Label Whiskey".²⁶ He was obviously very glad to be alive.

Conditions in the trenches became more cramped and more miserable in the early months of 1916. Nonetheless he was enthusiastic about his attacks on the enemy and often volunteered to perform extra sentry duty. Like the other

23. At this time Pitts was reading the works of Kipling, Shakespeare, and Tennyson.

24. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 1 Jan., 1915 to 27 Jan., 1916, January 7, 1916.

25. *Ibid.*, January 8, 1916.

26. *Ibid.*, January 10, 1916.

soldiers on both sides of the conflict Pitts engaged in scrounging for souvenirs in no man's land. One day he located a German "jam tin bomb" with fuse pin still in place. Happy enough with the fuse pin he lobbed the bomb over to the German side of the parapet where it exploded.²⁷ In describing in great detail the full scale attack by the Canadians the following day Pitts added the first sketch of his war journals, that of an English grenade.²⁸ It is a simple realistic pencil sketch of a grenade with fuse pin in place. There is no background or figures. One imagines him confined to a small area devoid of anyone or anything else tangible to draw. There are only a few instances in his career when the subject of his art was not within his reach.

At this time Pitts was in a trench 35 feet from the Germans. He and his comrades "Every moment expected a quick dispatch to eternity", and yet Arthur managed to take photographs of the area and be on guard for fifty sleepless hours.²⁹ Leave followed during which time he enjoyed a leisurely stroll to a nearby monastery at Mont des Côtes.³⁰ From the monastery hill he could see Ypres to the north and Cassel to the south. He photographed gravestones and was

27. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 28 Jan., 1915 to 1 Oct., 1916, January 30, 1916.

28. *Ibid.*, January 31, 1916.

29. *Ibid.*, February 1, 1916.

30. *Ibid.*, February 7, 1916.

excited by the find of a wayside cross which he also photographed.³¹ "Noticing a picturesque monk", Pitts approached him to take his photograph. "Smiling consent, he immediately struck such a pose, so restful & proud & natural that I was astonished."³²

The following day Arthur took another walking tour, this time to Steenvoode, and once again his love of monuments was apparent. He was fascinated too by the lace makers and described the women's work, which he found awe inspiring, in detail.³³ The rest of his leave was spent playing football, reading Robert Service and copies of the Vancouver newspaper, *The Province*, sent by a friend in British Columbia. But these ten days of real enjoyment, made more enjoyable by what they were a relief from, came to an abrupt end with the bombing of the farm where Pitts was billeted. The men were quickly moved to the front near St. Eloi, two and a half miles south of Ypres.³⁴ Soon afterwards they marched to La Clytte, where Pitts was delighted to be able to purchase a French-English dictionary

31. These were wooden crucifixes erected on the roadside, usually 6 to 10 feet tall. Emily Carr painted a roadside cross at St. Efflam in nearby Brittany just 5 years before. This Carr painting, entitled *St. Efflam*, is in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service collection.

32. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 28 Jan., 1915 to 1 Oct., 1916, February 7, 1916.

33. *Ibid.*, February 8, 1916.

34. *Ibid.*, February 16-17, 1916.

to study in the trenches. For most of March Pitts was once again in the trenches at Kemmel where:

We all were thoroughly wet & uncomfortable... Standing in inches of water my feet were saturated and I was very cold throughout the weary guard of four hours [as sentry at entrance of trenches].³⁵

When off duty he found it impossible to sleep, being tormented by rats.³⁶ The diary entries written in the trenches at this time are almost illegible. One water-damaged paragraph was circled by Pitts with the comment "These splashes ceaselessly continue to fall from the dug out roof and dampen everything."³⁷ When not digging trenches or attending grenade school Pitts was busy reading Dickens and playing football.³⁸ On fine days Pitts seized the opportunity to photograph "the Boys".

At the beginning of April Pitts was assigned to a new dugout which he described as "splendid" and to his great joy was given a pair of gumboots and handknit socks.³⁹ Later that afternoon, returning from a detail to collect grenades Pitts noticed "a pungent and not unpleasant smell". He had been gassed, but not to the point of apparent injury. The

35. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1916.

36. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1916.

37. *Ibid.*, March 5, 1916.

38. *Ibid.*, March 1-31, 1916.

39. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1916. In the toe of the socks he found the name and address of the Canadian woman who had knit them. He immediately wrote a thank you note and posted it.

next day in a break from his duties he strolled to a nearby chateau where he photographed and collected wildflowers, enjoying the afternoon immensely.⁴⁰ That night he was caught in the inferno of a "sausage shells" attack, narrowly escaping death on many occasions. Early in the morning of April 16th he was severely wounded in both arms by shrapnel, both forearms broken and virtually blown apart. The same explosion immediately killed the two members of the 27th Battalion with whom he was engaged in conversation.⁴¹ Walking, as no stretchers were available, Pitts slowly made his way back from the front lines and eventually, twenty one hours later, on to the hospital train bound for Boulogne. "My wounds caused considerable pain but deep down within me was a feeling of content and thankfulness to be away from that inferno."⁴² As it had for thousands of others, the great adventure had turned into a horrific nightmare.

Convalescing

From Boulogne Pitts was sent to the Duchess of Connaught Hospital in Tapton, Buckinghamshire. After surgery and a month in bed Pitts resumed his daily strolls and study of French.⁴³ Several pages of his 1916 journal

40. *Ibid.*, April 5, 1916.

41. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1916.

42. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1916.

43. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1916.

were given to his exploration of villages near the hospital. Maidenhead, and more to Pitts' interest Stoke Poges, with its historic churches and literary connections were two of the many he visited.⁴⁴

The advance on the Western Front put a rush on at the hospital to move men along. Pitts, however, remained for after three months of daily massage his wrist and fingers of his right hand "refused to act normally".⁴⁵ His long convalescence frustrated Pitts, but he optimistically maintained that a full recovery would be achieved and he would be able to reach his goal of supporting himself as an artist. The nurses and other men would come and go while Arthur remained. "Probably I shall never see them again which fact even with quite ordinary persons invariably arouses momentary sadness within me."⁴⁶ This comment gives a rare clue concerning Pitts' motivation to paint and photograph portraits. On a personal level portraiture was a way to capture the people in his life. The war had the effect of making each person in his life that much more precious to him.

By July 1916 Pitts' condition had improved to the point where he could resume photography.⁴⁷ He was interested in

44. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1916.

45. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1916. Pitts was right handed.

46. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1916.

47. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1916.

taking portraits of the "local girls" with whom he walked, talked and took to tea. The field of companions was soon narrowed to one in particular, Mrs. Daisy Millen, whose husband was at the front.⁴⁸ Pat, as she and Arthur for whatever reason agreed she should be called, was the first true love of his life. Much to Arthur's distress the relationship, by mutual agreement, remained platonic. Nonetheless he was obsessed by her, forging passes in order to see her.⁴⁹

At the beginning of August the doctors at the hospital operated on Arthur's right arm in an effort to reconnect the severed nerves.⁵⁰ Thinking that nothing more could be done, the medical board transferred him to the Canadian Convalescent Hospital, Hillingdon House, Uxbridge, Middlesex.⁵¹ Two weeks of massage and electric therapy for his arm followed. On September 22 he was dealt a double blow. The medical board informed him that nothing more could be done for him in England, and therefore he would be invalided back to Canada. Then Pat informed him that although her husband had been wounded he had been returned home.⁵² Pitts was depressed by this turn of events which

48. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1916.

49. *Ibid.*, August 30, 1916.

50. *Ibid.*, August 7, 1916.

51. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1916.

52. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1916.

conspired to keep him and the woman he loved apart. It seems from his journal that his solution was to immerse himself in reading. He began with Shakespeare's plays, one after another from *Romeo and Juliet* to the *Tempest*, then read everything he could of Ibsen.⁵³ Soon he was making dates with almost every woman he encountered.⁵⁴ The lack of letters from Pat was losing its impact.

At the beginning of November Pitts was presented with a dilemma. The doctors felt that his right hand would never improve and told him that unless he wanted to be sent to Canada for further treatment they would give him a full discharge.⁵⁵ Pitts wanted to stay in England to be closer to Pat and his family yet he couldn't accept that nothing more could be done for his condition. While considering the options he received a letter from Pat to which he replied that "she could revoke the whole acquaintanceship".⁵⁶ His best friend Bert favoured the Canadian option and finally Arthur's mind was made up. He would go to Canada in the hopes that further treatment would bring about a full recovery.⁵⁷

53. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 1 Oct., 1916 to 17 Feb., 1917, October 1-30, 1916.

54. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1916.

55. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1916.

56. *Ibid.*, November 3, 1916.

57. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1916.

Curiously enough, once the decision was made Pitts began sketching again. He started with pencil portraits of his father and grandfather.⁵⁸ Back at the hospital he sketched his friends there. His other main interest at this time was reading the complete plays by Congreve and novels by Sterne and Fielding.⁵⁹

On leave in London Arthur spent a bittersweet afternoon with Pat and her husband taking in Madame Tussaud's. Arthur decided that as they were happy and Pat's husband seemed "a very decent chap" the situation must be accepted as it stood.⁶⁰

Pitts' friend Bert introduced him to a number of artists in his circle. One in particular by the name of Rowe, who was "an artist to several journals of repute", inspired and encouraged Pitts.⁶¹ Rowe in fact asked Pitts to produce designs which he could use in his work.⁶² Pitts obliged and before leaving for Canada on December 18 he sent Rowe a collection of sketches. While on board the *Andania* Pitts pleased passengers and crew with character sketches.⁶³

58. *Ibid.*, November 19, 1916.

59. *Ibid.*, November 19-28, 1916.

60. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1916.

61. *Ibid.*, December 4, 1916.

62. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1916.

63. *Ibid.*, December 18-31, 1916.

Shipped Home to B.C.

On January 1, 1917 Pitts landed in Halifax, then immediately caught the train for Quebec City, where he was interviewed by an army board.⁶⁴ It was for the board to determine where in Canada Pitts should go for medical treatment and to help him enter a certain trade or profession. He requested to be sent to British Columbia where he wished to pursue "something in drawing or black & white work".⁶⁵ The board complied with both requests, presented Pitts with an "Active Service Button", and two days later he was on a train headed west. There is very little comment about this trip in the journal other than daily entries concerning the weather. In light of this his journal entry made in Medicine Hat, Alberta is all the more significant:

As we proceeded West an Indian Reserve was past South of the line and occasionally a glimpse was obtained of a Blackfoot in his or her picturesque blanket. During my progress along this track I had never seen these people thus clothed & a great sigh escaped me for a camera.⁶⁶

The next day the men arrived in Vancouver where they were given a welcoming reception, then were put on the C.P.R. steamer *Princess Mary*, bound for Victoria.⁶⁷ On

64. *Ibid.*, January 1-2, 1917.

65. *Ibid.*, January 6, 1917.

66. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1917.

67. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1917.

January 14, 1917 he and fifteen others who travelled out from Quebec together reached their destination of St. Andrew's Ward, Military Convalescent Hospital, Esquimalt, B.C.⁶⁸ The very next day Pitts requested and received two days leave. As he had also just received his back pay of \$90.00 he caught the first boat to Vancouver.⁶⁹ Upon arrival Pitts immediately purchased a Kodak no.1A camera complete with portrait attachment and case.⁷⁰ He then made the rounds of galleries, museum and library in the mornings and bars in the afternoons and evenings. He was also seriously attracted to Phyllis Stacey, a Vancouver friend he had met in 1914. Several hours on this first leave, which Pitts successfully managed to extend from two days to twelve days, were spent photographing Phyllis and members of her family.⁷¹

Back in Esquimalt he was delighted to receive almost two hundred dollars in back pay.⁷² He was less delighted to be transferred to Resthaven hospital in Sidney which he felt was "highly remote and altogether too quiet", with only fifty patients in all and over an hour by train from

68. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1917. Esquimalt is a municipality immediately west of Victoria.

69. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1917.

70. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1917.

71. *Ibid.*, January 16-19, 1917.

72. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1917.

Victoria.⁷³

At Resthaven Pitts quickly settled into a routine of sketching, strolling and reading. Several books on psychology and "psychical research" absorbed him for weeks. Occasionally he took the train into Victoria for variety, to borrow books from the library, and to purchase drawing materials. He also enjoyed taking "photo portraits" of some of the nurses at the hospital.⁷⁴

Solitary Pursuit

Having found that there were no art classes available in Sidney, Pitts decided to enroll in the I.C.S. [International Correspondence School] in Toronto for a three year course of caricature and cartoon work.⁷⁵ Pitts also enrolled in a bookkeeping course offered by the Army, to give himself something to fall back on if his dream to be a professional artist was unfulfilled.⁷⁶ Meanwhile he reiterated his desire for artist's work to his vocation officer and was pleased to be issued with drawing materials

73. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1917.

74. *Ibid.*, February 2-9, 1917. Pitts joined the library in Victoria in order to borrow art books. The first loan was a discussion of the work of the nineteenth century British illustrator, Randolph Caldecott; *ibid.*, February 24, 1917.

75. *Ibid.*, February 12, 1917. The cost of the course was \$95 which Pitts contracted to pay at the rate of \$10 per month.

76. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1917.

as a result.⁷⁷ Pitts in turn a few days later produced a show card display advertising the commercial courses.⁷⁸

By mid March Arthur had successfully completed the first lessons of his cartoon and bookkeeping courses, and most days of this spring he was busy with "drawing, bookkeeping and football". He managed to squeeze in some photography and Ruskin as well.⁷⁹

On April 1, 1917 Arthur met Peggy McKenzie,⁸⁰ who had been the fiancée of a member of Pitts' platoon, Faraker, who had been killed the same morning Pitts himself had been wounded. Peggy soon became the love of his life. Trips to the McKenzie farm in North Saanich became increasingly common. In addition to drawing, bookkeeping, football and photography, Pitts frequently added partying and dancing. His life began to brighten with Peggy and the excellent

77. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 19 Feb., 1917 to 10 Oct., 1917, February 26-28, 1917.

78. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1917.

79. *Ibid.*, March 1-30, 1917.

80. Peggy was the granddaughter of William Thomson, the most prominent of the pioneers who had settled in the Mount Newton area of the Saanich Peninsula in 1855. Thomson had spent the winter of 1854 with the Nu-cha-nulth, who almost certainly saved his life by taking him as a slave after a shipwreck. The Native people brought Thomson and fifteen shipmates to Victoria, where the Hudson's Bay Company ransomed them for seven blankets each. Thomson quickly paid off his debt by working for the H.B.C., and then in company with Angus McPhail, pre-empted extensive properties in Mt. Newton, South Saanich; Betty Bell, *The Fair Land*, Victoria, Sono Nis Press, 1982, p.22. Pitts would no doubt have been enthralled by the story of Peggy's grandfather having been "an Indian captive".

results [always 100%] he obtained on the I.C.S. lessons.⁸¹

His contact with Native people at this time was confined to weekly football games with the Kuper Island Indian School.⁸² After a game they would have refreshments and often entertainment supplied by the "Indian Brass Band".⁸³ His interest in the Native people is also apparent in comments such as when describing a drive to Deep Cove and Patricia Bay on the Saanich Peninsula. He wrote "The scenery here abouts is decidedly pretty & becomes interesting owing to the presence of an Indian Reserve there."⁸⁴

The summer and fall of 1917 were spent at Resthaven with Arthur's weekdays occupied with drawing and his correspondence art course in the mornings and bookkeeping in the afternoon. His other interests fit around this schedule with photography and Peggy relegated to weekends. Football, tennis, cricket, dancing and reading of the classics were also part of the summer schedule.⁸⁵

Arthur was pleased with the breadth of instruction he

81. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 19 Feb., 1917 to 10 Oct., 1917, April 1-30, 1917.

82. This was English football, the game known in Canada as soccer.

83. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 19 Feb., 1917 to 10 Oct., 1917, April 23, 1917.

84. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1917.

85. *Ibid.*, May 1-30, 1917.

was receiving from the I.C.S. He studied pen and ink, charcoal, watercolour and oil; landscape, portraiture and caricature. He was thrilled with the texts and materials the course sent to him such as "a 40 lb. parcel which contained 4 plaster casts: a hand, foot & face (actual size) & a very exquisite nude figure of a girl 18" in height."⁸⁶

Presumably the school was equally impressed with Pitts for they sent letters of commendation along with his perfect grades.⁸⁷ Later, the school, stating that he was one of their very best students, asked Pitts for permission to use some of his drawings as promotion for the school.⁸⁸

The doctors by mid-September were pleased with the recovery of Arthur's hand. Hearing of his drawing they asked for a display of his work and "pronounced it excellent".⁸⁹ Two weeks later he was informed that he had been recommended for Class E and a discharge.⁹⁰ He applied for and received a clerical position with the Army at the Esquimalt base.⁹¹ Two days later, on October 11, 1917, he was discharged from Resthaven and began his position as

86. *Ibid.*, June 23, 1917.

87. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1917.

88. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 4 May, 1918 to 4 Feb., 1919, May 22, 1918.

89. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 19 Feb., 1917 to 10 Oct., 1917, September 11, 1917.

90. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1917.

91. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1917.

clerk for the Medical Board at the Esquimalt Base Hospital where he received \$2.00 per day plus room and board in the Esquimalt hospital.⁹² He quickly established his characteristic schedule, forming a football team in which he played his usual centre half position.⁹³

After a hiatus of three weeks Pitts was back working on his I.C.S. course in the evenings and photographing and sketching on the weekends, most of which were spent at the McKenzie family farm in North Saanich. Arthur mentioned sending home photographs of the McKenzie domestics and sketches of Peggy at this time.⁹⁴

He attended the Island Arts and Crafts annual exhibition in Victoria which he thought good for the size of the town but "saw no evidence of genius anywhere."⁹⁵ At the end of October Arthur was officially discharged from the

92. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 11 Oct. 1917 to 3 May, 1918, October 11, 1917; *ibid.*, October 26, 1917.

93. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1917. This team was first called "The Victoria & District" but a few weeks later it was changed to "Returned Soldiers Football Club".

94. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 19 Feb., 1917 to 10 Oct., 1917, October 1-10, 1917; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 11 Oct. 1917 to 3 May, 1918, October 11-November 31, 1917.

95. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1917. Exhibitors in this conservative group included the Crease sisters, Emily Carr's eldest sister Edith, who entered commercially produced china on which she had painted flowers, and a host of amateur artists of Victoria. For a closer look at the Island Arts and Crafts Society the reader is directed to the unpublished index prepared by the author for the British Columbia Archives and Records Service and to Christina Johnson Dean, "The Crease Family Archives: A Record of the Arts in Victoria", M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1980.

Army. After three years he was once again a civilian.⁹⁶

In the winter evenings Pitts worked on his drawing and spent time with Peggy at her family's winter home in Victoria.⁹⁷ She had begun nursing school and like Pitts had little free time.

Football was his main passion and occupation in January and February 1918. The team travelled to Seattle, Tacoma and Vancouver regularly. Pitts and his team won the International Cup and were "toasted and banqueted in consequence".⁹⁸ The Army awarded him a medal for winning the Cup.⁹⁹

The Medical Board moved from Esquimalt to downtown Victoria and with this came a welcome move from hospital. Pitts took up residence in the James Bay Hotel and immediately began to spend more time drawing.¹⁰⁰ He sketched portraits, self-portraits and landscapes. He particularly enjoyed sketching the Olympics and the Sooke Hills from the vantage point of Dallas Road. Interestingly, the same subject and location were those selected by Emily Carr at the time. What he wrote in his journal in the

96. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 11 Oct. 1917 to 3 May, 1918, October 31, 1917.

97. 119 Moss St., close to the waterfront by Beacon Hill Park.

98. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 11 Oct. 1917 to 3 May, 1918, February 9, 1918.

99. *Ibid.*, March 12, 1918.

100. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1918.

spring of 1918 echoes Carr's sentiments as well: "I am steadily growing weary of Victoria & town life & yearn again for the hills and quiet open spaces of the earth where nature's reign is unchallenged and conventions have no sway."¹⁰¹

Pitts spent all of his spare time in June sketching the trees in Beacon Hill Park and portraits of Peggy.¹⁰² About working on one of the charcoal sketches he wrote:

Although feeling the great desire for fresh air I regard this study [of art] as the one thing that matters and which possibly will have a future bearing on my life and a remote happiness. To work at that which is not congenial through life is utter slavery: having solved that problem then life is made more acceptable and can be tolerated.¹⁰³

Pitts' only mention of contact with Native people in the summer of 1918 was on a picnic trip to Cowichan Bay with the McKenzies. He was especially interested in the "Indian War Canoe Race" and photographed as many of the people and as much of the event as possible.¹⁰⁴

Praise continued to flow from the I.C.S. The principal of illustration encouraged Pitts to continue with his art as

101. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 4 May, 1918 to 4 Feb., 1919, May 4, 1918. Pitts did not mention Emily Carr or her work until 1933.

102. *Ibid.*, June 2-29, 1918.

103. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1918. This sounds like the musing of a depressed and fatalistic man. In fact it relates to the state of mind of a man impatient with his pace of advancement and moreso to his characteristic self effacing manner.

104. *Ibid.*, July 1-4, 1918.

he was "far superior to the average".¹⁰⁵ Pitts continued to work diligently on his course for several hours each day throughout the remainder of 1918. He supplemented the instruction books with any he could find in the library. In addition to art books he devoured a range of classical literature. Voltaire, Carlyle, Wilde, Chekhov, Maeterlinck, Raine, Schiller, Molière were some of the writers he concentrated on at this time.¹⁰⁶ The Spanish influenza epidemic which struck Victoria in October was lamented by Pitts for it meant a closure of the library and cancellation of all football games.¹⁰⁷

Pitts himself contracted influenza and was hospitalized for a week in November.¹⁰⁸ Even while in hospital Pitts painted or sketched at every opportunity. He also provided a weekly caricature for *The Canadian*.¹⁰⁹

At Christmas time Pitts was told that his office, the Leave and Furlough Section of the Medical Board, would be moving to Vancouver. He decided that since there were

105. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1918.

106. *Ibid.*, August 1-December 30, 1918.

107. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1918.

108. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1918.

109. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1918. A friend at work, by the name of Henry, had asked Pitts in October to supply a caricature or cartoon each week for his newly launched newspaper. The first cartoon appeared November 9, 1918, and Pitts continued to produce them, even from hospital, until December 1918. Unfortunately, the earliest issue I can locate is March 6, 1919.

virtually no employment opportunities in Victoria at the time he had better move with the office to Vancouver.¹¹⁰

Arthur began at his new work site, Hastings Park, on January 26, 1919. His routine of sketching, painting and reading was altered to accommodate trips back to Victoria at every opportunity. He felt miserable without Peggy.¹¹¹

Still his artwork progressed. He rapidly concluded the I.C.S. assignments for the "Parallel Perspectives" and "Angular Perspectives" and was once again asked by the principal of I.C.S. whether his work could be used as promotional material.¹¹²

In the spring the usual carousing evenings with the boys took a sinister turn with the introduction of heroin and cocaine. He experimented briefly, then swore off them permanently with a promise to Peggy that he would resist any further temptation.¹¹³ Later he adhered to this promise whenever the temptation presented itself.¹¹⁴

Line engravings and cartoons occupied his course work. In addition he did his usual portrait sketches. Photography had become a less common activity and in May Arthur sold his

110. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1918.

111. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 5 Feb., 1919 to 21 Aug., 1920, February 5, 1919.

112. *Ibid.*, February 19, 1919. Pitts was flattered by the request and was happy to oblige.

113. *Ibid.*, April 14-17, 1919; *ibid.*, April 27, 1919.

114. For example, *ibid.*, August 8, 1919.

camera for \$25.00 with the notation in his journal "Have never had good results with it and shall supplant same with sketching".¹¹⁵ This was the first indication that he felt he could supplant photography with his sketching. It speaks of a newly acquired level of confidence in his artistic skills.

Pitts had sought a transfer and promotion to the War Gratuity branch of the Pay Office primarily as it would guarantee a move back to Victoria and Peggy. Early in May, 1919 he was ecstatic to learn he had won the position.¹¹⁶ With six hundred dollars in savings he moved back to Victoria.¹¹⁷ By this time Pitts was totally obsessed by Peggy. He wanted to propose marriage but felt he must first succeed as an artist before he could marry her. He increased his gruelling art course regime and finished the last section, "Original Comic Drawings", on July 7. He completed what was to have been a three year art course in just two years and four months.¹¹⁸ At the end of August he received his diploma from I.C.S. with the highest commendation.¹¹⁹

Although he had completed his course, Arthur continued

115. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1919.

116. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1919.

117. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1919.

118. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1919.

119. *Ibid.*, August 28, 1919.

to spend as many hours as possible each day on his art, whether it was sketching in Beacon Hill Park, the buildings of St. Ann's Academy or St. Joseph's Hospital, or designing and handpainting twenty-four buttons for a dress Peggy was making for herself.¹²⁰ As the work load in the War Gratuity Office was very light, Pitts was able to spend time doing caricatures in the office. His superior, Captain Bonner, "stated [his] caricatures to be of a particularly clever nature advising me to return to London thence to Paris for a course of study."¹²¹ Word had already been given to all single men in the office to look for other occupations as the office was not sufficiently busy. Pitts too had already decided that when this position was terminated he would go back to England for a visit, preferably with Peggy.

As Peggy would not finish her nurse's training until December 1920, Arthur and she decided that when he was laid off he alone would go to England to study art and work. He received his layoff notice for the end of September and was relieved to be in a position for travel and change.¹²² He had managed to save \$1,000, which would certainly take him to England and sustain him until he found work.¹²³

120. *Ibid.*, July 8-18, 1919.

121. *Ibid.*, August 27, 1919.

122. *Ibid.*, September 30, 1919.

123. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1919.

Consequently he booked a second class passage on the C.P.R. steamer *Grampion*, which would embark for London from St. John on November 29, 1919.¹²⁴

For the ensuing two months Pitts concentrated on reading plays, everything from Sophocles' dramas to Shaw's and Wilde's comedies. Plays were often his preferred form of literature. It is worth noting that the expression of this art form is primarily through character development and dialogue rather than pure description. It might be considered the literary equivalent to portraiture, in that the focus is on the individual characters, rather than the background material. The human condition was always of keen interest to Pitts.

During this autumn Pitts once again turned his attention to Native themes.¹²⁵ There is no reason provided by the journal as to why this interest was suddenly in the forefront. He and Peggy visited the Victoria Museum where they enjoyed the "interesting Indian relics". A few weeks later he mentioned working on an Indian study.¹²⁶ Following a discussion with Peggy's father, Kenneth McKenzie, Arthur received from him "an old Indian stone club found on the Blackfoot Mt. Vancouver Island. Needless to say these will augment my collection and will be much

124. *Ibid.*, October 11, 1919.

125. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1919.

126. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1919.

valued".¹²⁷ During the following week he sketched a totem pole in Beacon Hill Park.¹²⁸ Then, on a trip to the McKenzie property in Saanichton, Pitts was anxious to visit the neighbouring Indian reserve:

My real mission commenced at 2 p.m. when I set out for a nearby reserve in order to purchase Indian curios & make sketches if that were possible. On arriving at the Reserve, a distance of 2 miles from Saanichton, I found very few of the inhabitants present, the majority being engaged fishing & in various other pursuits in the district. However fortune aided me considerably & presented to my gaze a typical Indian family occupied on the adjacent shore mending nets & the like. On my enquiries for baskets they invited me into a large barn which I afterwards learned was often used for the purpose of dancing. An hour spent here in produced several baskets & a pair of hand knitted socks made from the raw wool as taken from the sheep's back. Although in addition, 4 baskets were obtained the cost was only \$3 1/2. Before leaving this interesting family I was fortunately able to secure a rough sketch of an old "squaw" squatting around a fire & some smoking salmon hanging on the beams above.¹²⁹

The next day Arthur and Peggy headed out for the other reserve in the area but were prevented from reaching it by a downpour.¹³⁰ However, on the following day they made a successful trip to the Esquimalt Reserve. Although his "enquiries for curios proved fruitless", he was pleased to have made "a good sketch of a Totem Pole adorning one of 3

127. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1919. The collection at this time was comprised of Zulu material such as beads, masks and a shield.

128. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1919.

129. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1919.

130. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1919.

dance houses."¹³¹ He returned for more sketching and possible purchases the next day. Once again he was disappointed in his quest for "curios", as he felt the prices asked were too high, but he was extremely satisfied by a sketch he made of the reserve.¹³²

His next visit, three days later, was out on the Saanich Peninsula again, "At Sluggett's two stations before Saanichton."¹³³ This time he purchased several interesting objects, including:

3 baskets made by Fraser River Indians. One (large) with lead or shoulder strap attached known as a "Mahoy" or similar sounding name, \$3.25. Two small as above, \$2.00. Four gaming dice made from Elkhorn, \$6.75, Matting apparatus [sic], 4 sticks & an embossing article, \$2.00. A wooden device for wrapping wool around \$1.00. Spoon made from horn of cow 60¢.¹³⁴

Total cost was \$15.60 plus \$3.50 for the articles he had obtained on October 21st. This exhausted their stock and Pitts walked home.

While in town to study books on the Native people of B.C. Pitts made two more purchases for his "Indian collection": a large basket with a sea serpent motif and a hat from the West Coast people [presumably the Nuu-cha-nulth, as Pitts was told by the dealer the next day the hat

131. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1919. Figure 25 is of the same site painted in 1934.

132. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1919.

133. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1919.

134. *Ibid.*

was "found on Nootka land"]. On the return visit to the unnamed dealer Pitts was delighted to purchase a small totem for \$7.00. He was told that it had once adorned the interior of a Long House of "the Songhees Indians located near Victoria where the Foundation Ship Yards is now." From the same dealer Pitts purchased a pair of mocassins made by the Huron people of Quebec.¹³⁵

His last month in British Columbia before he sailed to England was spent drawing and painting small watercolours. Peggy's parting gift to Arthur, now her fiancé, was "a little Indian basket from Alaska, a beautiful little thing which I shall long cherish because of the great significance which the gift displayed."¹³⁶

Study in England

The boat had been delayed, but on November 30, 1919 Arthur, his sketches, and his trunkfull of "Indian curios" left Victoria for London. He arrived just in time to spend Christmas with his mother, father and younger brothers.¹³⁷ Immediately following the holiday Arthur went to meet with the journalists and artists who regularly gathered at the Café Royal. One of the artists, Rowe, whom Pitts had met three years earlier, gave Pitts a letter of introduction to

135. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1919.

136. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1919.

137. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1919.

Clifford Turner of the Raleigh Studios. Turner praised Pitts' work, but urged him to specialize.¹³⁸

Arthur began the new year of 1920 by enrolling at the Westminster School of Art in London's Vincent Square, where twenty-one years earlier Emily Carr had studied.¹³⁹ It had been formal and conservative at the turn of the century and Carr had been disappointed with the lack of progress. By 1920 there were several exciting and progressive art schools in London, such as The Slade or the Kensington Art School, but, as Pitts quickly discovered, the school at Vincent Square was not among them.

At the outset Arthur was very enthusiastic. Heeding Turner's advice he decided to specialize in: "Life (nude), Life (costume), Drapery, Composition, Antique, and Still Life".¹⁴⁰ He paid the 15 shillings for the first month's tuition and intended to work there diligently for five days per week for the six month long course. His cartooning he reserved for after school hours. When not working on his cartoons he enjoyed attending exhibitions at the Royal Academy and Derry and Toms, which featured prominent black

138. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1919.

139. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1920; Emily Carr, *Growing Pains; The Autobiography of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, 1966 [2nd edition], p.100.

140. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 5 Feb., 1919 to 21 Aug., 1920, January 5, 1920.

and white artists.¹⁴¹ [Illustrators and cartoonists]

Throughout January Pitts noted a steady improvement in his work to the point where he felt confident enough to send in two "black and white line sketches" to the Art Editor of *Pan*.¹⁴² Pitts supplied two sketches, one for the cover and one for the text of "Gaumet's Guide to London", much of which had been written by his friend Bert Burnup.¹⁴³

At art school, life work, both nude and costumed, was by far and wide the most interesting aspect of his training. Arthur felt that he was making good progress under the instruction of Lawrence, but still *Pan* returned Pitts' sketches with a rejection notice.¹⁴⁴ Although disappointed Pitts immediately sent off a second set, but a month later these too were returned.¹⁴⁵ This was the beginning of a long and painful struggle for Pitts to sell his sketches in London. When not working on his own drawings, paintings or cartoons Pitts attended galleries to learn all he could, and be aware of what was before the public. In early April, for example, he enjoyed the afternoon at an Augustus John exhibition at the Alpine Club Gallery. Of it he wrote: "I

141. *Ibid.*, January 26, 1920.

142. *Ibid.*, January 27, 1920.

143. *Ibid.*, February 29, 1920. Pitts was paid 5 guineas for the pair.

144. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1920.

145. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1920.

was rather impressed by the certain character depicted in his portraits but his effort was so obvious that it somewhat detracted from the result. However the view was particularly instructive."¹⁴⁶ Contrasting sharply are his comments made two days later following an hour at the Mansard Galleries where Group X was exhibiting: "Their display is the last word in appalling modernism and astounded me by its wretched appeal for notoriety. Obviously these men are not artists but sheer commercialists."¹⁴⁷ Pitts was conservative in his tastes. The art he appreciated and emulated was of a bygone day.

As his six month course drew to a close, Pitts was encouraged by the comments of W. Base, the leading instructor at his art school and Clifford Turner, an agent, who like Base was impressed with Pitts' work. Base however felt that the work held artistic but not necessarily commercial value. Turner, on the other hand, suggested Pitts send his work to the *Bystander* and similar papers.¹⁴⁸

In mid August Pitts had three of his sketches accepted by a gallery, the Byron Studios in London.¹⁴⁹ This helped soften the blow from yet another rejection by *Pan*. But the

146. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1920.

147. *Ibid.*, April 9, 1920.

148. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1920; *ibid.*, July 28, 1920.

149. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1920. Byron Studios was located at 8 Fanenden Ave., East Central London.

initial three and a further two sketches accepted in September did not sell and Pitts plunged into depression. He felt he was "passing through all the stages of a starving artist" and that as an artist he would never be able to support himself and Peggy.¹⁵⁰ He was perturbed for the art editors of *Pan* and *Passing Show* felt his work was very good and yet they could not use it.¹⁵¹

Pitts was further depressed upon visiting his Uncle Will, who was "living the life of an unkempt recluse, dirty and cold" trying to write a compilation of all the "actors and actresses since the 16th century".¹⁵² Perhaps Pitts saw himself in Uncle Will, caught in a miserable existence engaged in an overwhelming obsession.

At the end of November Pitts took his sketches to *London Mail*, *London Opinion*, and every other door he could find on Fleet Street, in the hopes of selling even one sketch to a newspaper, but to no avail. 1920 is summarized in his journal as "the blackest year in my 31 years". He had gone through his entire savings trying to break into the London art world.¹⁵³

As Peggy graduated from nursing school in Victoria, and

150. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Aug., 1920 to 21 Nov., 1921, October 30, 1920.

151. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1920.

152. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1920.

153. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1920.

Bert was called to the Bar, Pitts decided to give London one last effort and made the rounds of publishers in London. Their consensus was that his work was good, but "too much resembled other men's works".¹⁵⁴ He tried his hand at poster work, but it too was fruitless. Pitts consoled himself with trips to the British Museum.¹⁵⁵

Once more there was a glimmer of hope when Leynour, Art Editor at the Amalgamated Press, admired Pitts' sketches and recommended he contact an agent by the name of Massey whom Leynour felt would certainly be able to help Pitts.¹⁵⁶ But once again Pitts' hopes were dashed when Massey failed to provide any work.

Pitts felt that his art was steadily improving, but he had reached the point where he had no money and although he still had some paint he was unable to purchase any paper.¹⁵⁷ He picked up a fretsaw and some wood at home and carved out and painted a caricature. His friends and family were very enthusiastic and even placed a few orders for the 6 inch high fret designs.¹⁵⁸ But by this time Pitts, having been repeatedly discouraged by art agents, had

154. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1921.

155. *Ibid.*, January 26, 1921.

156. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1921.

157. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1921.

158. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1921.

"reached the end of [his] tether" and admitted defeat.¹⁵⁹ He began focusing on finding a means for returning to British Columbia where even if he were to be desperately poor he would at least have Peggy. With Britain bordering on economic chaos, Pitts felt it could not be worse in Canada.¹⁶⁰

The depression gripping England in 1919-1921, made more severe in the spring of 1920 by the Miner's Strike, resulted in thousands of unemployed. When Pitts applied to the Canadian Aid Representative he found there were "900 destitute men waiting for assistance to go back to Canada".¹⁶¹

Pitts spent these spring days producing wooden fretwork caricatures of sports figures, such as Suzanne Lenglen, the tennis champion of the day.¹⁶² At the end of May he left a quantity at two sports shops on consignment. Four of the caricatures sold in the first week and the shop managers wanted more, but Pitts had already decided to leave England. A friend, Art Calder, who was emigrating to his uncle's ranch in Kamloops, B.C., offered to lend Pitts \$50 for passage.¹⁶³ He packed up all his artwork and against the

159. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1921.

160. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1921.

161. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1921.

162. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1921.

163. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1921.

wishes of close friends and family left London for Liverpool and sailed for Canada.¹⁶⁴

Cartooning from Victoria

On July 7, 1921, Pitts was back in Victoria and joyously reunited with Peggy. His friends were impressed with his fretwork and placed orders at \$2.00 each for personal likenesses.¹⁶⁵ His destitute financial situation was temporarily relieved by the arrival of \$540 from the Canadian government, a pay out of his disability pension he had applied for months previously.¹⁶⁶

Pitts immediately set about preparing cartoons and sketches which he sent on speculation to the local papers, the *Daily Colonist* [Victoria] and the *Victoria Times* and those in Vancouver, the *Province* and the *Vancouver Sun*.¹⁶⁷ He also applied for positions as showcard writer with the Hudson's Bay Company and a freelance commercial artist.¹⁶⁸ By the fall he regularly sent "humourous drawings" to American publications such as *Life* and the Toronto-based periodical, *Valerian*.¹⁶⁹ He continued with his caricatures

164. *Ibid.*, June 24, 1921.

165. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1921.

166. *Ibid.*, July 20, 1921.

167. *Ibid.*, August 1-19, 1921.

168. *Ibid.*, August 27, 1921.

169. *Ibid.*, September 20, 1921.

in fretwork, selling on order to friends, but this brought in little money or satisfaction.

In October Pitts joined the Victoria Sketch Club, which provided a model, sometimes costumed and sometimes nude, at the regular weekly meetings.¹⁷⁰ In December he joined the Island Arts and Crafts Society.¹⁷¹ Pitts was buoyed by the fact that finally one of his sketches had been purchased. The *Veteran*, to which he had submitted two images at the end of October, used one in their November issue, and forwarded Pitts a cheque for \$5.00.¹⁷²

He redoubled his efforts and sent several sketches out to agents and magazines, such as *Judge*, in New York. His style, which he had referred to in the fall of 1921 as being "finely realistic and somewhat sketchy", had evolved to "a more ambitious style introducing a wealth of detail which requires judicious treatment in order to prevent confusion".¹⁷³ He felt that his new style was far more convincing. This opinion was shared by William Menelaws, a

170. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1921.

171. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Nov., 1921 to 20 Oct., 1923, December 2, 1921.

172. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Aug., 1920 to 21 Nov., 1921, November 21, 1921; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Nov., 1921 to 20 Oct., 1923, December 5, 1921.

173. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Aug., 1920 to 21 Nov., 1921, November 1, 1921. Pitts stated that he was temporarily modelling his technique on Montgomery Flogg; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Nov., 1921 to 20 Oct., 1923, February 8, 1922.

well respected B.C. artist who was also a member of the Victoria Sketch Club and the Island Arts and Crafts Society. Menelaws urged Pitts to continue with his art at all cost.¹⁷⁴ Throughout the spring and summer of 1922 Pitts worked on sketches, averaging two every three days, which he sent to the various publications. All but one, which was published in the April issue of *Judge*, were rejected and returned.

Pitts' friend and roommate at the time, Art Calder, was interested in photography and had purchased an enlarger the previous Christmas. As Pitts was discouraged by the number of rejected sketches he once again turned to photography, particularly portraiture.¹⁷⁵ He did not mention whether he thought he could turn photography to commercial success. I think it was more an enjoyable diversion. He continued to work up sketches and began to send them to his brother Dave who in turn tried to interest London publishers.¹⁷⁶ At the end of April the Sketch Club hired "an Indian boy" as the weekly model and Pitts' interest in Native themes was rekindled.¹⁷⁷

Finally Pitts was able to enjoy a London success. *Gaiety* bought six of his sketches [similar in content to the

174. *Ibid.*, February 17, 1922.

175. *Ibid.*, April 12, 1922.

176. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1922.

177. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1922.

later *Maclean's Magazine* cartoons, Figures 2 and 3] at £1-1-0 each: "Assistant Editor thought the drawing was exceedingly good but the jokes not".¹⁷⁸ This provided the much needed boost and impetus to increase his artistic effort which he did. In addition to his own work Pitts devoted time to researching other artists. He borrowed the *Punch* magazines of 1880 from Peggy's grandmother in which much of Charles Keen's work appears.¹⁷⁹

But acceptance and payment for a sketch were rare notations for the remainder of 1922. Byron Studios in London, which had taken five of his sketches on consignment two years earlier, agreed to show nineteen of his works in August of 1922.¹⁸⁰ *Gaiety* purchased six sketches in the fall. When Pitts received the six guineas payment he was down to his last \$1.30 and living on porridge and rice.¹⁸¹ He was by this autumn living in Peggy's family's summer place, as he was no longer able to pay any amount of rent in town. The unheated cabin was located on the Saanich Inlet forty minutes walking distance from the McKenzie property on Mt. Newton Cross Road on the Saanich Peninsula. *Gaiety* purchased eight more sketches between mid December and the

178. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1922.

179. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1922. Pitts' cartoons at this time were very similar in content and style to Keen's.

180. *Ibid.*, August 17, 1922.

181. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1922.

end of January, but the £1-1-0 payment per sketch minus the costs of paper and postage barely kept Pitts alive. By mid February Pitts found himself surrounded by waist deep snow with neither wood for his stove nor food for the pot. He swallowed his pride and threw himself at the mercy of the McKenzies, who agreed to the temporary arrangement of his earning room and board in the big house by chopping wood.¹⁸²

The highlight of the spring of 1923 was an invitation to a gathering of Native people at the reserve at Brentwood Bay. Pitts had helped a Native man with a leaking canoe and in the course of conversation had been told about the impending dances.¹⁸³ With two friends, Doug Nimmo and Cyril Connorton, Arthur was admitted to the "long hut" the next night. His description was more extensive than for any other event in the year:

The dance was staged in one of the "long Huts" around which a platform ran the entire length. Two huge fires burnt at equal distances in the centre of the room which was cleared for dancing. The onlookers, Indian all, ranged along the aforesaid platforms of all ages & sizes & numbered about 200. The ledge was paralleled with the onlookers on which a constant banging of sticks was maintained. Their voices swelled in a monotonous but quite tuneful dirge throughout the performance ably assisted by four or five drummers who thumped upon a skin apparatus with a tone much resembling the tenor drums. The dancers were variously arrayed in the manner seemingly of various birds & animals whose antics they

182. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1923.

183. *Ibid.*, February 22, 1923.

apparently challenged... It was an experience that I would not have missed for tis seldom that one is able to witness such in this neighbourhood owing to the steady descimating [sic] influence of civilization. The odour of fish, smoke & perspiration accompanied the above proceedings but were quite acceptable & almost appreciable.¹⁸⁴

Arthur spent the next day first sketching, then painting an impression of the dances. He was satisfied that it would "serve admirably for future painting reference". Cyril was so taken by the image that Arthur painted a duplicate for him.¹⁸⁵

Throughout the spring of 1923 Pitts sold the odd sketch here and there. His success rate improved over the summer, especially with *Gaiety* magazine, which purchased over twenty of his sketches between May and July.¹⁸⁶ But it was still a meagre return for a consistently grueling effort. Nonetheless, he had sold enough sketches to English publications to be able to vacate the summer cabin at the beginning of July and rent a flat in town. He wanted to be near Peggy, who was working as a nurse at St. Joseph's hospital.¹⁸⁷

By the fall, purchases by *Gaiety* and other publications tapered off. But Pitts was bound and determined to succeed

184. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1923.

185. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1923.

186. *Ibid.*, May 4 to July 20, 1923.

187. As it was summer Pitts may well have been asked by the McKenzies to vacate the cabin although this isn't mentioned in his journals.

as an artist and responded to this turn of events by resolving to break into the "American Illustrator's Market". He quickly sent two sketches to *The Art Magazine* in Michigan.¹⁸⁸ They replied enthusiastically, seeking permission to publish both sketches.¹⁸⁹ A month later they appeared.¹⁹⁰ The editor of *The Art Magazine* also wrote to Pitts to inform him of a commercial position available with the Crescent Engraving Company in Muskegon, Michigan. Arthur applied for this without delay.

Meanwhile a friend at city hall helped him secure a temporary position as a property assessor. It was the first job, apart from his art work, in four years, and he "heartily detest[ed] the routine".¹⁹¹ Nonetheless he was happy to have the \$44 he earned in the eleven day job. Pitts applied for a "Pen & Ink" illustrator position in Chicago, but 1923 came to a close with no job offers from the United States.

Early in 1924 Pitts, resilient as ever, decided to concentrate on a new venture; that of commercial designs for Vancouver studios. To this end he sent some sketches to his old friend Art Calder who was working in Vancouver for an

188. *Ibid.*, October 10, 1923.

189. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1923.

190. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1923.

191. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1923.

advertising agency, Crawford Harris Service.¹⁹² Art's boss commissioned two advertisements for Caledonia Whiskey from Pitts, and all involved were impressed with his art work.¹⁹³

Vancouver

Through brother Dave's continuing efforts in England three more publications, *Windsor*, *Passing Show*, and *Liverpool Weekly Sketch*, purchased sketches.¹⁹⁴ *Gaiety* continued to buy one or two sketches a month as well. But as Pitts could continue with the eight British publications from Vancouver as easily as Victoria, and as, thanks to Art Calder, work was forthcoming in Vancouver, Arthur moved to Vancouver at the end of February 1924.¹⁹⁵ Arthur and Art shared an apartment and in the first week Art told Pitts that the "Advertiser's Engraving Company" on Richards Street, Vancouver, needed an artist and that he had recommended him for the job.¹⁹⁶ Pitts rushed over with his

192. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Oct., 1923 to 31 Jan., 1927, January 9, 1924.

193. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1924; *Ibid.*, February 8, 1924. The ads appeared in the February 15, 1924 issue of the *Vancouver Sun*.

194. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1924.

195. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1924.

196. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1924.

portfolio and was accepted as the firm's new artist.¹⁹⁷

Arthur was ecstatic. He would be paid \$40 per week to do what he had been doing, virtually for nothing, for the past four years. The starving artist days had come to a close. Pitts was finally a bona fide, employed commercial artist.

In just two months Pitts had earned a raise to \$195 per month, which was beyond his "wildest dreams". Most of his work was advertisements with the occasional menu card or brochure.¹⁹⁸ In his spare time Pitts continued to fire off sketches to *England* and *Gaiety* continued to buy one or two a month. Pitts was focused on paying off the debts he had incurred during the lean years of 1922 and 1923. By the end of August he had cleared away the debt of \$464.¹⁹⁹

Now debt free and gainfully employed, Pitts was at long last able to marry Peggy. On September 22, 1924 they wed near the McKenzie property at St. Stephen's Church, a picturesque church Pitts had often sketched. Following the family celebration the newlyweds caught the boat to Vancouver to begin one of the happiest chapters in their lives.²⁰⁰

Pitts worked long hard days for the Advertiser's

197. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1924.

198. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1924.

199. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1924.

200. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1924. Pitts vowed Peggy would never need to work again, and she did not until she resumed nursing in London during World War II.

Engraving Company. On Sunday, usually his only free day, he and Peggy would take an excursion, such as to Stanley Park or Capilano Canyon, and Pitts would sketch or paint. Sometimes in the evenings he would sketch the buildings visible from a window of their apartment.²⁰¹ In the summer after dinner they would often stroll to the waterfront where Pitts would happily sketch the boats, the oceanscape or Peggy. At the end of September, 1925, Art Calder purchased a 30 foot cruise boat which they all enjoyed. Excursions by boat became the preferred Sunday entertainment.²⁰²

Hoping to improve his water colour technique, Arthur enrolled in twice weekly night classes offered through the newly formed Vancouver School of Art.²⁰³ Many evenings and most Sundays were spent painting. Once again he mentioned his preference for the classes using a model where he could concentrate on the head and shoulders.²⁰⁴ One of his favourite instructors was Charles Scott. Arthur attended an exhibition of Scott's works and was pleased and impressed by

201. From September 1924 through 1925 they lived in the Caroline Apartments in a flat which cost Pitts \$50 per month.

202. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 23 Oct., 1923 to 31 Jan., 1927, September 27, 1924.

203. *Ibid.*, October 2, 1925. The cost was \$10 for the six month session.

204. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1925.

his watercolours.²⁰⁵

Just before Christmas Arthur's father died of pneumonia at the age of sixty-two.²⁰⁶ Arthur promised himself to send more financial aid to his mother and with this goal in mind he accepted as much after hours contract work as he could find to augment his wage of \$50 per week.

Art school finished at the end of March. Scott's positive assessment of Pitt's work encouraged him.²⁰⁷ Throughout the spring he continued with his rigorous painting schedule. A highlight of this time was an exhibition which Pitts found "exceedingly interesting". It consisted of etchings by Whistler, Seymour Hayden, Charles Keen, Corot and Rembrandt. He mentioned wanting to purchase the Rembrandt.²⁰⁸

Morley, an old Army buddy and fellow commercial artist in Vancouver, invited Arthur and Peggy to his family's home in Sechelt for the long weekend in May 1926. They caught the Union steamship to what Pitts described as "a small

205. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1925. From 1925 the staff of the Vancouver School of Art were the leading painters of the West Coast. Charles Scott [1886-1964] was the first director and the one responsible for hiring Frederick Varley, Jock Macdonald and William Weston, all prominent Canadian painters in their own right. See J. Russell Harper, *Painting in Canada: a history*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p.294.

206. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 23 Oct., 1923 to 31 Jan., 1927, January 5, 1926.

207. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1926.

208. *Ibid.*, April 24, 1926.

settlement mostly peopled by Indians whose houses cluster around a church on the green. The surrounding country is typical of B.C. with the open sea bordered by Vancouver Island before one."²⁰⁹ He felt that the hours he spent painting the Native community were extremely profitable as well as enjoyable, and that he had in fact produced his best sketch to date.²¹⁰

This was an important sketching trip, albeit a brief one, for not only was it the first to a native community since July of 1923, but it inspired Pitts to once again concentrate on the Native theme. For the month following Pitts spent every spare moment producing paintings and duplicate sketches from this one weekend's sketching trip. Seventeen years earlier Emily Carr had similarly travelled by boat from Vancouver to Sechelt with watercolours in hand, where she too had painted the Native village with enthusiasm.²¹¹

Pitts' next sketching trip was to the Native community of Alouet, thirty-four miles by Art Calder's boat from

209. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1926.

210. *Ibid.*, May 24, 1926.

211. Her watercolour, *Sechelt, B.C.*, is in the collection of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of Pitts' Sechelt paintings are as yet unknown. Another curious Carr connection is that Ada Morley [perhaps a relative of Pitts' Morley] was Emily's companion on her 1912 sketching trip in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Vancouver.²¹² His work on Native themes was then temporarily halted while he completed a large commission for British Columbia Houses Ltd. This was a large painting, for display at B.C. House in London, of a proposed Vancouver housing development.²¹³

As soon as this commission was finished Pitts and Peggy took a three week holiday. Arthur described the 400 mile trip in an old Ford roadster as "one of the most diverting and interesting trips I have undertaken".²¹⁴ The journey was from Saanichton, where four friends and relatives hopped in, through Duncan and Parksville, up to Campbell River and Foster Landing, "camping in the rain and having fun."²¹⁵ On the day they travelled from Lower Campbell Lake to Elk Falls and back to Campbell River "a stay was made at an Indian Reserve alongside the river where one solitary totem pole reveals the comparative splendour of the Indians' Past. All around were tumbled down houses & desolation. I made a sketch which was unable to finish."²¹⁶ The next day was enjoyably spent sketching at "an old deserted Indian

212. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 23 Oct., 1923 to 31 Jan., 1927, June 20, 1926.

213. *Ibid.*, July 31, 1926.

214. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1926.

215. *Ibid.*, August 17, 1926.

216. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1926. This sketch was finally completed and was referred to again on February 14, when he mentioned sending the painting to his mother; Arthur Pitts, Journal, 1 Feb., 1927 to 9 June, 1932, February 14, 1929.

Reserve" at Big Qualicum River.²¹⁷ The last day of the holiday was spent painting the East Saanich Reserve from the foreshore. This was the only instance of any opposition by the inhabitants, but as Pitts spoke with the people of the Reserve they agreed to let him stay and paint which he did with vigour for the remainder of the day.²¹⁸

For the next month Pitts devoted as much time and energy as he could manage working on sketches and paintings of the Native themes, primarily people, totems and villages of his August holiday.²¹⁹ Many of these images were reworked over the remaining fall and winter months.

His job at the Advertiser's Engraving Company was so demanding in the early part of 1927 that, although chafing at the bit, it was not until the Easter break in April that Pitts was able to visit another Native community. In mid-April while at Saanichton for the holiday he and his young friend and aspiring artist Cyril:

set out for a neighbouring Indian Reserve near the cabin in quest of old Indian Graves reported to be in that vicinity. We at length discovered them in a much dilapidated state but the square boxes containing the bodies, which were broken on being deposited there, were in a fair state of preservation. The lids had been removed from two of them revealing the wrappings of cedar bark. We restrained our curiosity [sic]. Some rather good examples of Indian carving were resting in and

217. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 23 Oct., 1923 to 31 Jan., 1927, August 19, 1926.

218. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1926.

219. *Ibid.*, September 1-30, 1926.

around the boxes, the entire group of which were quite well concealed beneath trees. We both made a futile effort to paint but the subject was so difficultly situated & the weather so cold very little success attended our efforts. However I was quite satisfied with our little expedition.²²⁰

Pitts worked on sketches from this visit for the remainder of the holiday. Back in Vancouver over the next three months fresh sketching material came from the odd day trip to North Vancouver, Deep Cove, Howe Sound, or Stanley Park. Unfortunately, Pitts did not always provide much information in his journal about what exactly he was painting. Whether or not he went to the Reserve when he mentioned going on a sketching trip to North Vancouver is a matter of speculation. But in July when he and Peggy, as usual, travelled to Saanichton, Arthur was more specific about his painting activities. The first day he spent sketching in the orchard and three of the following five days he was sketching on the beach "near the Indian Reserve".²²¹ There was no mention of portraits, however; these were views of the area.

For the remainder of the summer and fall of 1927 Pitts worked in Vancouver with only the evenings in which to paint. His work load had dramatically increased as he was doing his own art work as well as assuming the managerial

220. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Feb., 1927 to 9 June, 1932, April 14, 1927.

221. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1927.

functions for his boss, who for a variety of reasons was usually absent. In mid September the owner of the Advertiser's Engraving Company fired Pitts' boss and offered the position of manager to Pitts. Just before his 38th birthday Arthur accepted. This meant an increase in pay [to \$60 per week plus 5% of profits], a recognition of the responsibilities he had been shouldering for months plus, ironically enough, a diminished work load, for he would be able to hire another commercial artist for the advertising layouts.²²² Pitts was thrilled for it meant he would have more time to paint.

With his new found wealth Pitts indulged in his passion for antiques, purchasing several Jacobean chairs, chest and a settle [an older term for settee] through the winter. He also purchased, among various Toby jugs and candlesticks, two Bartolozzi coloured prints.²²³

His sketching trips in 1928 were primarily day trips to North Vancouver, Howe Sound, Lulu and Sea Island, Pitt Meadows, and Marpole. In the Vancouver area it was the Japanese fishing village of Steveston which he found particularly interesting. Once again the annual summer holiday on Vancouver Island included sketching trips to Native communities in Saanichton, which really excited

222. *Ibid.*, September 19 to October 6, 1927.

223. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1928; *ibid.*, February 25, 1928.

Pitts.²²⁴ The holiday was all too brief and Pitts, once again back in Vancouver, had to be content with local sites for sketching material. He also made several duplicate sketches from earlier work, including "Indian Reserve" sketches.²²⁵ With his birthday gift from home Pitts received 150 sketches which he had sent to his family over the years.²²⁶

Under Pitts' management the engraving firm turned record profits and between his salary and profit sharing Arthur was able to build a sizeable nest egg. He and Peggy enjoyed a fashionable, modern apartment and the company of many friends. Hardly an evening went by, at this time, without an impromptu gathering of some sort where drinking and either dancing or stimulating conversation was enjoyed.

Pitts continued his usual schedule, painting a little in the evenings and as much as possible on any day off from the firm. In mid February 1929 Pitts sent two finished watercolours to London: *The Totem Pole, Campbell River*, for his mother, and *Pitt River* for his brother Dave.²²⁷

At this time Pitts, an avid moviegoer, attended his first "talking picture". His response reveals an important aspect of his character, and his art: "I deplore the

224. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1928; *ibid.*, August 22, 1928.

225. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1928.

226. *Ibid.*, October 12, 1928.

227. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1929.

horrible modern where romance is granted such a tardy reception."²²⁸ History and romance were the tenets of his creed. Pitts showed his reverence for the past in his often idealized depictions of Native people and his record of their villages, many of which were abandoned generations before.

The wharves in Vancouver at False Creek and Steveston had romance and it was to these locations that Pitts went in search of subjects as soon as spring arrived in 1929.²²⁹ The first Sunday in June Pitts "armed with [my] sketching apparatus walked to Kitsilano Indian Reserve where quite a broad rapid sketch was secured in the evening light. I was fairly well pleased with the result in its broad free treatment."²³⁰ The rest of the week was spent on sketches derived from this first, successful one.

The annual summer vacation began in Saanichton as usual but then took a new direction, east. Pitts and Peggy, her two sisters, Mid and Doris, and Doris' baby son Bill all piled into their friend Bob Bryden's open Ford and he drove for six days through southern British Columbia east to Cranbrook.²³¹ Of the portion of road between Spence's

228. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1929.

229. *Ibid.*, April 28, 1929; *ibid.*, May 12, 1929; *ibid.*, May 26, 1929.

230. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1929.

231. *Ibid.*, August 11 to August 17, 1929.

Bridge and Merritt Pitts wrote, "terrible road clinging to side of mountain with constant fear of meeting another car".²³² Apart from the "single track with a crumbling edge" and "the precipitous drop on our left" what Pitts recorded as the highlight of the day's travel was the fact that, "The way lay through a big Indian Reserve. A fine picturesque type of Indian many of whom rode horse back. Scattered throughout the valley were numerous grave patches. It was said many were buried thus as a result of the epidemic of '18."²³³ On the return trip from Cranbrook Pitts and Peggy took the train west from Golden. As usual Pitts was particularly interested in "Indian districts" of Lillooet and Lytton. During the stop at Lytton Pitts went to the river bank to watch the Native people fish from a "platform high above the Fraser".²³⁴ In Yale the following day he spent the available time in the "Indian cemetery [sic]". They arrived back in Saanichton on August 31 having covered 1440 miles of British Columbia in nine and a half days. Pitts was well supplied with new material for his winter months of painting.

Before winter closed in Pitts managed two more sketching trips; one to nearby Hollyburn Mountain, and the

232. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1929.

233. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1929. Epidemic of '18 was a reference to the influenza strain that hit British Columbians, Pitts included, that winter.

234. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1929.

other to Sechelt, again at the invitation of Myles Morley.²³⁵

Most of Pitts' energies in the early months of 1930 were directed to the firm, where he managed to increase the profits every month.²³⁶ He did, however, contribute to the exhibition of B.C. artists at Spencer's in March, and the Advertising Exhibition at the Hudson's Bay Company department store.²³⁷

His wide social circle at this time included the deBecks, the Hunts, and the Cunninghams, all of whom had summer cottages not far from Vancouver by boat. Several sketching trips were made to Buccaneer Bay and Hood Point on Bowen Island, as well as up the North Arm and First Narrows. Several members of the group of friends had large boats for such excursions.²³⁸

In the summer evenings in Vancouver Pitts was absorbed in sketching such subjects as False Creek and the Old Hastings Mill site. He was excited to paint "the first sluice erected in Vancouver".²³⁹

Work was beginning to "drop off" at the engraving firm, but Pitts decided to proceed with the annual summer

235. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1929; *ibid.*, September 14, 1929.

236. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1930.

237. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1930; *ibid.*, May 31, 1930.

238. *Ibid.*, May 11-June 18, 1930.

239. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1930.

vacation. Again Bob Bryden and his car were pressed into service for the trip from Saanichton to Port Alberni. In Port Alberni the party caught a boat for Ucluelet and Tofino, on the west coast of Vancouver Island.²⁴⁰ They were booked into Major Nicholson's Hotel situated on 160 acres across from Tofino. Pitts began painting immediately, and was thrilled to head out the next day "by Indian canoe" to visit the nearby islands.²⁴¹ Major Nicholson took the party in his boat to "Wicaninich [sic] where we found the remains of an old Indian village. I made an ineffective effort to paint. Nic decided that we should inspect a cave nearby where laid the coffin of an early Indian settler. We peeped into the interior of the box and saw a mummified Indian partly exposed."²⁴² The next day Pitts, Major Nicholson and ninety-two year old Captain Thompson went down Tofino Inlet by boat and walked through the bush to Long Beach.²⁴³ Before leaving for Port Alberni, Peggy purchased some "fine Indian baskets" to add to the Pitts collection.²⁴⁴

The sketching holiday continued from Port Alberni by

240. *Ibid.*, August 17-18, 1930.

241. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1930.

242. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1930.

243. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1930. Many of the islands on Tofino Inlet were for sale for \$50 each!

244. *Ibid.*, August 22, 1930.

car to the east coast of Vancouver Island, with stops at Cumberland, Comox, Union Bay and Duncan, where Pitts enjoyed flurries of sketching activity before returning to Vancouver at the end of August.²⁴⁵

September was spent working on his holiday sketches as time permitted. Arthur and Peggy attended the Sportsmen's Show mid month of which he wrote:

Terrribly crowded but well worth the visit owing to a display by the Lumey [sic] Indians from the Islands around Bellingham, Puget Sound. They sang & danced in early Indian costumes. One extraordinary old Chap over 90 years of age was particularly fine to watch with his dancing knowledge of a past race. Well worth the visit by reason of the latter.²⁴⁶

Pitts was absorbed by his Native "curios" and paintings from his west coast holiday. Meanwhile in the autumn of 1930 the great depression was tightening its devastating grip on the North American continent. At the Vancouver Engraving Company work had begun to slacken over the summer, but Pitts did not voice any concern over threats to his very comfortable lifestyle.²⁴⁷

The depression first hit close to home when his long time friend, Art Calder, was dismissed from Cleland Bell where he had been a successful commercial artist for more

245. *Ibid.*, August 23-26, 1930.

246. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1930.

247. The Vancouver Engraving Company was the new name of the former Avertiser's Engraving Company.

than seven years.²⁴⁸ Two days later Pitts' world came crashing down when Rorke, one of the owners of the engraving firm, as recorded by Pitts, "brought in a certain Yankee, Eaton by name, whom he at once introduced as the new manager from that moment. I was positively astounded. Rorke, the Swine, then requested me to show this fellow around the shop."²⁴⁹

A week later Pitts left the firm. The new manager offered him a position as a free lance artist which Pitts refused. He wrote in his journal that he had no idea why he was replaced.²⁵⁰ As he had always been conscientious it seems that behind the scenes, in view of the weak economic base, the owners may have attracted new capital which had strings attached. After seven years of a generous and steady income and the attendant comfortable lifestyle Pitts was, like thousands of others in the fall of 1930, suddenly forced onto the streets. Once again he was faced with the struggle and challenge to become a professional freelance artist.

248. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Feb., 1927 to 9 June, 1932, October 14, 1930.

249. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1930.

250. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1930.

Chapter 3: Struggle and Prevail: the Creation of the Indian Collection [1930-1972]

Freelance Artist

It had been difficult for Pitts to sustain himself in the twenties when the economy was relatively bouyant. Now it was the depression and opportunities were even harder to obtain.

The week Pitts left the Vancouver Engraving Company he was hired as a free lance artist for Zenith Engraving.¹ At first it seemed Pitts would earn close to an equivalent wage, but as the weeks progressed into the winter of 1930-1931 this steadily dropped until by April 1931 he was working just as many long hard hours for twenty per cent of his manager's salary.²

But Pitts remained optimistic and resilient as ever. He had an ever increasing circle of devoted friends from whom came the occasional commission for a portrait or watercolour of their home. Pitts met both the dynamic artist and student of Emily Carr's, Max Maynard, and the noted designer and painter, J.W.G. Macdonald.³ Macdonald,

1. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Feb. 1927 to 9 June 1932, October 27, 1930.

2. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1931.

3. Pitts met the Maynards in January and the Macdonalds in March 1931. Thereafter they met regularly at their Badminton Club; *ibid.*, January 1, 1931; *ibid.*, March 6, 1931.

as Pitts learned over a bottle of whiskey, was the design master at the Vancouver School of Applied and Decorative Art.⁴

The Pitts' financial picture vastly improved at the end of April with the increase of Arthur's disability pension. A retroactive cheque of \$623.25 and the assurance of a regular \$25 per month pension was an outstanding windfall.⁵

The first sketching trip of the season was a journey to "an Indian village little known to Vancouver, South of Ladner".⁶ Pitts spent most evenings for the next two weeks working on two sketches from this visit. Twice before the end of May he returned to the area and "Musquam [sic] Indian Reserve" for a quick sketch.⁷

Freelance work was barely trickling in over the summer. Pitts was delighted to have placed in the top ten artists in a contest for a Clark's Soup Company label. With the distinction came the equally important prize of \$50.00.⁸ Little freelance work and fine weather meant that Pitts was

4. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1931. Two years later Jock Macdonald and Frederick Varley of the Group of Seven left the Vancouver School of Applied and Decorative Art to start up their own school. It failed in 1935 due largely to the depression.

5. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1931. At a medical review at the end of February Pitts' doctors had recommended an increase in his pension due to the severity of damage to his right hand in particular.

6. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1931.

7. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1931; *ibid.*, May 31, 1931.

8. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1931.

able to take many day trips for sketching purposes. He spent several days at his favourite old haunts of Stanley Park, English Bay, Lulu Island, Steveston and made initial forays to Twig Island and the Japanese fishing village at the end of Dunbar Street in Vancouver.⁹

At the end of July, as usual, Arthur and Peggy holidayed at the McKenzie property in Saanichton. Arthur seized this opportunity to paint at the nearby Tsartlip Reserve. He also spent a day at Senanos Island, where he searched for "Indian relics". For the most part though, Pitts indulged a fascination for painting arbutus trees and the landscape of nearby Bannockburn farm, Peggy's grandfather William Thomson's property.

Pitts, pleased with this recent work, took eight sketches into Harry Hood to be framed:

[Hood] was much impressed with my work & considered I should go far as a watercolourist. Regarded several as gems. Owing to the depression he said it was practically useless for him to take any as they represent purely a luxury. People were not purchasing such. Advised me to make application to the Art Gallery for exhibit purposes.¹⁰

9. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1931 to July 22, 1931.

10. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1931. Pitts had just sent in his \$5 to become an annual charter member of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Harry Hood was an artist and owner of the Art Emporium, a centre for B.C.'s *avant garde*. He too had initially been trained in his native England at the South Kensington School of Art. His early landscapes reveal a traditional approach. Later he benefitted from the French Impressionist influence. Pitts did not mention in his journals what about his paintings had so impressed Hood.

The Vancouver Art Gallery had just opened and Pitts was among the first group of chartered members. But it was the exhibition of British watercolourists at the Pacific National Exhibition which Pitts found very stimulating and very instructive.¹¹

Local scenes of harbour, fishing boats, friends' cottages and city structures were subjects for Pitts' work until once again in October he was able to visit Vancouver Island. This time Pitts and Peggy went to the McKenzie Jr.'s property near Duncan.¹² Shortly after arriving Pitts went to:

The Indian Reserve near Duncan where is an old stone church built about 60 years ago & long since fallen into disuse. Unfortunately the board I always use was out of stock & that which was obtained proved a very poor substitute & considerably affected my work. The resultant sketch of a good subject was quite poor although can possibly work it again.¹³

By "good subject" Pitts was referring to the juxtaposition of the Church and the long house, architectural symbols for the intrusion of "the white man" on Native civilization. In Pitts' painting the wooden long house is in a state of deterioration, yet by being placed in the foreground and built up with a subtle array of colour,

11. *Ibid.*, August 29, 1931.

12. *Ibid.*, September 18, 1931.

13. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1931. This painting is in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service collection, pdp 1455.

magnificently outweighs the small stone church of the middle distance. Pitts' point of view is clear. He focuses on the Native presence and heritage with Christianity diminished and pushed into the distance. Another artist may well have taken the opposite angle of the site, enhancing the stone church and moving it to the foreground of the painting while a derelict long house remained in the background. The message of "progress" and march of Christianity could be conveyed. Pitts abhorred both these notions. Pitts returned the next day but on the third day reluctantly returned to Vancouver in the hopes that some work had come to him at Zenith, which it had.¹⁴

This brief sketching trip provided enough material to keep Pitts inspired for weeks. One painting of the reserve near Duncan was completed with Pitts declaring it "One of my most intelligent paintings".¹⁵ By this I would expect him to mean that the draughtsmanship was flawless and that composition and point of view inspired the viewer to contemplate a particular aspect of the Native culture. The written description does not identify the precise painting referred to, so more analysis is impossible. When J.W.G. Macdonald saw this painting among others, Pitts modestly wrote: "Macdonald of the Art School called to see my work &

14. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1931.

15. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1931.

considered it good. Left at 1:30 a.m."¹⁶ For the next month Pitts concentrated on painting an image of the C.N.R. hotel from his apartment kitchen window. Pitts later submitted this completed watercolour entitled *The Hotel*, along with *The Bridge* to the B.C. selection committee for the National Gallery's proposed "All Canadian Exhibition" at Ottawa.¹⁷ When Hood had these paintings in his gallery to be framed he praised them highly, but Pitts did not record the specifics of the praise.

Pitts also at this time purchased a new camera and was thrilled with the results.¹⁸ But painting and sketching were not suspended, as in the past, while photography became the passion. This time the camera was definitely a hobby and painting his life's work. And although between the beginning of November and the end of December there are more than fifty references to sketching, drawing or painting there are only two notes about photography, one of which is the initial testing and the second six weeks later: "took photographs of family at Christmas dinner".¹⁹

Before leaving for the short Christmas vacation in Saanichton with Peggy's family, Pitts spent the afternoon at the new Vancouver Art Gallery. Although mildly pleased with

16. *Ibid.*, November 15, 1931.

17. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1931.

18. *Ibid.*, November 2-3, 1931.

19. *Ibid.*, December 25, 1931.

the previous month's exhibition of permanent collection pieces this December show of American artists led him to write: "not very much impressed".²⁰ The new show, Citizen's Loan Exhibition, which opened in January 1932, he did applaud. It is fair to assume that the first and third exhibitions, being rather conservative, were more to Pitts' Colonial artistic taste than the modern, more progressive American Artist's show sandwiched between them.

In March Pitts began a series of portraits which actually began with a successful self portrait experiment prompted by the arrival of a new box of exquisite and expensive paints from Vienna which Macdonald had been able to purchase for Pitts.²¹ Peggy was his patient and constant model for many paintings over the subsequent months. Pitts also painted portraits of friends such as Sammy Stewart, James Butterfield, Myles and Gerald Peters, Bob Bryden, J. Manley, Frank Taylor, Bob Forrest, Bill Hunt and members of Peggy's family.²²

Meanwhile Pitts was extremely encouraged by a positive reception of his work by *Maclean's* magazine. This Canadian publication purchased the two sketches Pitts had sent on speculation for \$7.50 each [Figures 2 and 3], and urged him

20. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1931.

21. *Ibid.*, March 5, 1932.

22. *Ibid.*; and Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, March 19, 1932 to December 24, 1932.

to send them more.²³ In these cartoons Pitts is indebted to illustrators such as Charles Keen, who employed a rich level of detail. Two weeks later *The Western Home Monthly* also accepted two of Pitts' humorous sketches, paying him a total of \$10.00.²⁴

Local work came to Pitts in abundance in the form of catalogue work for Spencer's department store. Pitts spent a good portion of the summer months drawing boots and shoes.²⁵ In September once the pages were completed he was assigned other parts of the catalogue including the "tobacco articles" and the back cover.²⁶ During the entire summer and fall he devoted his spare time to painting portraits, with the exception of a landscape painting in Buccaneer Bay.²⁷ Even during the habitual August holiday in Saanich, Pitts worked on one portrait after another.

Mrs. Angel of Angel Engraving invited Pitts to join her small firm, sharing space, work and overhead.²⁸ At the end

23. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Feb. 1927 to 9 June 1932, May 16, 1932.

24. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1932.

25. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, June 25 to August 20, 1932.

26. I have searched for this catalogue, but without success.

27. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 1 Feb. 1927 to 9 June 1932, June 5, 1932.

28. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, September 23, 1932.

of September he agreed.²⁹ Unfortunately work was in short supply and Pitts, unable to pay half the office rent in January, was relieved to be asked for a painting in lieu.³⁰

Portraiture remained Pitts' consuming passion for 1933 and 1934. Most evenings, whether in the company of friends or alone, he was occupied with one portrait or another. By this time he had made at least one study of every friend, not to mention numerous paintings of Peggy and himself.

John Mallman, brought to the Pitts flat one evening by a mutual friend, was a commercial artist working out of New York City at the time and a member of the Canadian Society of Water Colour Painters. Pitts wrote that Mallman thought that his "work was good & worthy of recognition" and invited Pitts to join the Society and exhibit with the other members in Toronto.³¹

In February 1933 J.W.G. Macdonald visited and having looked at Pitts' portraits urged him to exhibit. Unfortunately, he said, the Vancouver Art Gallery was booked until April 1934.³²

The comments and encouragement of these two artists prompted Pitts to apply to the Canadian Watercolour Society.

29. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1932. Pitts actually occupied the premises as of October 3, 1932.

30. *Ibid.*, January 1, 1933.

31. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1933; *ibid.*, February 3, 1933.

32. *Ibid.*, February 5, 1933.

He sent the portraits of James Butterfield and Bob Bryden as well as three others to the secretary treasurer of the Society who was at that time the well respected and noted artist, Charles F. Comfort.³³

Pitts took time to attend any exhibits he could in Vancouver. He found a showing of the works of John, Orpen and Sargent at the Vancouver Art Gallery most enjoyable, but did not specify what appealed to him.³⁴ He recorded without editorial comment attending the "Victoria and Island Painting Exhibit" at the same locale in the spring and the display of ancient Chinese art in the summer.³⁵

There was a brief flurry of work from Spencer's and the *Province* but this died down by the spring of 1933. Once again Pitts paid Mrs. Angel the office rent in the form of a painting.³⁶ Less commercial work simply meant more time for portraits. Pitts purchased five different colours of drapes to use as background.³⁷ Portraiture was now a serious long range commitment. Humourous sketches and

33. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1933. Pitts enclosed sufficient postage for the return of the 5 paintings; 84 cents. The portrait of James Butterfield, a writer for the *Province*, is in the possession of Butterfield's son, Phillip Butterfield, in Alberta; personal communication, James Butterfield, the son of Pitts' friend.

34. *Ibid.*, August 6, 1932.

35. *Ibid.*, March 8, 1933; *ibid.*, June 11, 1933.

36. *Ibid.*, May 23, 1933.

37. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1933.

cartoons had been shelved.

Charles Comfort replied to Pitts inviting him to join in the Canadian Society of Water Colour Painters' Annual Exhibition in November.³⁸ Pitts was elated and immediately began selecting portraits from his collection.

The Richmond Arts invited Pitts to exhibit at their gallery on Hornby Street in Vancouver for the middle two weeks of July.³⁹ Reta W. Meyers, the art critic for *The Province* [Vancouver], wrote:

An unusual exhibit of watercolour portraits is to be found displayed. This is the work of Arthur D.J. Pitts of Vancouver. It is not often that an artist undertakes portraits in watercolours, for it is a difficult medium to handle in obtaining a likeness. But Mr. Pitts has a facile touch, and his portraits are remarkably alive...⁴⁰

A comparable "very decent Press Notice" appeared in the *Sun* as well.⁴¹ According to Pitts, Manning, the owner of Richmond Arts, praised his work and told him that his "pictures had attracted more attention than any other previous exhibit."⁴²

Pitts and Peggy decided in June that because their

38. *Ibid.*, June 5, 1933. Emily Carr had also been invited to exhibit, which she did.

39. *Ibid.*, July 7-11, 1933.

40. Reta W. Meyers, "In the Domain of Art", *The Daily Province* [Vancouver], July 15, 1933, p.10.

41. Miss Milligan, "Art Notes", *The Vancouver Sun*, July 15, 1933, p.3.

42. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, July 20, 1933.

financial situation was so bleak they would give up their major expense, ie. their flat in Vancouver, and move to Saanichton temporarily, where they could manage rent free.⁴³

They had been entertaining the idea of an extended visit to Alaska since the spring, when Peggy's brother Murray McKenzie came for a holiday from his dental practice in Craig, Alaska.⁴⁴ Arthur and Peggy planned to board a ship to Alaska from Seattle in mid August which meant Arthur could spend the intervening weeks in Saanichton concentrating on his painting.

He set to work immediately on what would become his mission for the next two years. Combining his passionate interests in portraiture and Native culture, Pitts decided to focus on painting a collection of portraits of native people of British Columbia and Alaska.⁴⁵

The idea of forming an "Indian Gallery" was one many artists had acted upon in the past. George Catlin, Paul Kane, Edward Curtis and Emily Carr are four revered North American artists who worked with this goal in mind. Catlin (1796-1872) was well known in his day, and immensely

43. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1933. Before he left Vancouver, Pitts gave Jenner at Spencer's a portrait of his wife "in recognition of his service to me"; *ibid.*, July 20, 1933. He also gave a painting to Mrs. Angel as a parting gift; *ibid.*, July 22, 1933.

44. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1933.

45. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1933.

influential long after, for his Indian Gallery, painted principally in the 1830s. Like many painters and photographers to come, Catlin dedicated himself to "rescuing from oblivion the looks and customs of the vanishing races of native men in America".⁴⁶ After opening to rave reviews in New York Catlin took his collection of Indian paintings to London for a successful five year exhibition. While there he published extensive accounts of his travels among "the Indians".⁴⁷

In Canada, Paul Kane (1810-1871) similarly travelled and painted images of Native people. Like Catlin, Kane too took his "Indian Collection" to London, and similarly published a bestseller *Wanderings of an Artist among the Indians of North America* (1859).⁴⁸

In the early part of the twentieth century Edward Curtis, a highly esteemed American photographer and Emily Carr, a pre-eminent Canadian painter, independently developed their own "Indian Gallery". Curtis (1869-1952) began amassing a photo history of the North American Indian in 1900. Hathaway tells us that Curtis took more than

46. John C. Ewers, *George Catlin: Painter of Indians of the West*, op. cit., p.485.

47. For a study of Catlin, see Brian Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage*, op. cit.

48. Fred Jacob,, *A Portfolio of Canadian Art*, Toronto, Rous & Mann, 1926, p.36.

40,000 pictures of more than eighty "tribes".⁴⁹ Between 1907 and 1930 Curtis produced lavish volumes of his photographs.⁵⁰ Like Catlin before him and Emily Carr at the same time, Curtis pledged himself to a self-proclaimed mission:

So I want to produce an irrefutable record of a race doomed to extinction, to show this Indian as he was in his normal, noble life so people will know he was no debauched vagabond but a man of proud stature and noble heritage.⁵¹

In the year Curtis wrote this, Emily Carr (1871-1945), on a trip to Alaska was inspired to dedicate herself to documenting the Native people and cultures of British Columbia. She wrote of her more than two hundred Indian paintings:

I glory in our wonderful west, to leave behind me some of the relics of primitive greatness. These things should be to we Canadians what the ancient Briton's relics are to the English. Only a few more years and they will be gone forever into silent nothingness and I would gather my collection together before they are forever past.⁵²

Carr offered her Indian Collection, most of which had been painted in 1912, and included Figures 4 and 5, to the Provincial Government of British Columbia in 1913. The

49. Nancy Hathaway, *Native American Portraits 1862-1918*, op. cit., p.12.

50. Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American, white attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy*, op. cit., p.208.

51. Ralph W. Andrews, *Curtis' Western Indians*, op. cit., p.23.

52. Kerry Mason Dodd, *Sunlight in the Shadows: The Landscape of Emily Carr*, op. cit., p.7.

suggestion was shunted among bureaucrats, finally falling to noted anthropologist Dr. Charles Newcombe for his recommendation. The Provincial government declined the offer on the basis of Newcombe's opinion that Carr's paintings were not anthropologically correct in every detail.⁵³ Yet ironically, in 1966, when the British Columbia government purchased the collection of Newcombe's son, Willie, it contained most of Carr's original Indian collection, which now forms the nucleus of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service Carr collection.

Pitts, like others before him, thought there was commercial promise in painting an "Indian Collection", but his main motivation was his personal fascination with the theme and the first hand experience it would bring. His first step in developing such a collection was a visit to David La Tasse, the chief of the local Tsartlip band, to arrange for a sitting the following day.⁵⁴ The next day Pitts wrote:

Mid drove me to the Reserve at 9:15 where found David La Taase [sic] waiting for me. His wife a full blooded squaw produced his regalia when I commenced work at 9:30. He is a very fine old Indian & made a splendid model. His wife who spoke quite good English said he was 107 years old & a Songhee [sic] Indian from Victoria. He described his early battles & I was asked to feel the deep scars on his head prove [sic] of at least

53. B.C.A.R.S., Newcombe Papers, C.F. Newcombe to Francis Kermode, January 17, 1913.

54. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, July 28, 1933.

one fight. She is a Cowichan Indian & apparently his second wife. I painted him within the house which was comparatively clean. I finished the sitting in 2 1/2 hours & left them with a promise to present them with a duplicate. Spent afternoon working up latter.⁵⁵

Pitts was occupied with these two portraits for the next several days and when they were completed he returned to the Reserve, "where we met La Taase [sic]. I presented him with the duplicate picture with which he was extremely pleased. Did not want me to sell mine to the papers lest the people laughed at it."⁵⁶ [Figure 6] This portrait is one of two extant of David La Tasse. The second is in the possession of Pitts' family, now in Wales. Figure 6 is a half length portrait whereas the other is head and shoulders only. Pitts more often worked in the half length portrait style. It gave him the opportunity to record the dress of the subject as well as include such items, as in this instance, the staff of the chief. Frequently in Pitts' portraits, as in Figure 6, the person's head is turned to a three quarter view, although there are examples of full frontal [see Figures 7, 10, and 21] and profile images as well. In most of Pitts' portraits both eyes of the subject look out from the picture plane. Often the gaze will not be directed at the viewer, but rather to some point on a far horizon, which serves to distance the viewer from the

55. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1933.

56. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1933.

subject. As we see in Figure 6, this aloofness adds to the notion of the subject being in another world. It is reminiscent of Curtis' nostalgic photographs of the chiefs staring out past the viewer. The impression of past glories or at least a bygone day is created by the remote, contemplative pose.

In Figure 6 Pitts has included one of the buildings on the Tsartlip Reserve. He rarely included a background in his portraits. The reason for it here is not strictly context, although it does serve that purpose. The building itself interested Pitts to the point where twenty five years later he devoted an entire painting to it.⁵⁷

Alaska

On August 16, 1933, Pitts and Peggy caught the boat to Seattle as the first stage of their trip to Alaska. While in Seattle they enjoyed the new Fuller Museum in Volunteer Park. Thrilled by what he perceived to be exotic Pitts wrote, "A remarkable display of Oriental relics. The Jade Room was wonderful."⁵⁸ They also visited the New Washington Hotel to view an exhibition of Sydney Lawrence, a painter from Alaska. Pitts found the content of the Alaska

57. This painting is in Mrs. Robert Forrest's private collection. I am indebted to Mrs. Forrest for graciously allowing me access to her Pitts' collection.

58. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, August 16-19, 1933.

landscape works most interesting and rated the artist's technique as "quite good in a broad realistic manner".⁵⁹

Pitts himself managed to fit in a landscape, in this case an urban landscape of downtown Seattle, before boarding the *Zapora* for Alaska on August 22, 1933.⁶⁰ The following day as the boat was just off Nanaimo on its passage north Pitts made another sketch "from the stern looking forward".⁶¹

Pitts found the trip so fascinating that he barely slept for fear of missing any of it. His principal interest was in the Native villages, especially since they were of groups, such as the Coast Tsimshian and the Bella Bella, which he had only read about. "Passed Bella Bella about 4:30 a.m. An Indian village opposite a large canery [sic]. Also saw Indian house (Burial) with Totem & seeming headstones against the house."⁶²

He was disappointed that the ship didn't stop at Metlakatla the night of August 25. It would have given him the opportunity to witness the Tsimshian village artificially created by the missionary zeal of the nineteenth century lay preacher, William Duncan. Pitts would have seen the remains of Duncan's "Christian Utopia"

59. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1933.

60. *Ibid.*, August 20-21, 1933. The location of this painting was "Heather & 4th Ave" but Pitts did not specify which buildings.

61. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1933.

62. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1933.

and neo-Gothic church, and the descendants of the Tsimshians from Port Simpson Duncan had resettled there.⁶³ Pitts would have deplored the whole notion of a model village and what he would have regarded as "White interference" in Native cultures. On the following day they did tie up for an hour and a half at Hydaburg. Pitts described it as "a charmingly situated village (Indian) in shallow channel. I made a rapid sketch - saw a very interesting graveyard surrounded by totems".⁶⁴ That evening they arrived at their destination, Craig, Alaska.⁶⁵ Craig is located on Prince of Wales Island, traditional land of both the Tlingit, the predominant Native group on the Alaska Panhandle, and the Kaigani Haida, a branch of the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands. The northern half of Prince of Wales Island is generally considered Tlingit, and the south, Kaigani Haida.

The first morning in Craig Pitts went in a rowboat out to a small nearby island where he found a "quaint Indian Graveyard ... The dead are marked by a small cluster of tiny houses. I intend to make a sketch of such a unique

63. For more information on Metlakatla and William Duncan see George Woodcock's *Peoples of the Coast*, Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1977, pp.203-204.

64. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, August 26, 1933.

65. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1933.

subject."⁶⁶ Back in Craig his first sketching subject was the view of the town from its wharf. This was soon followed by a portrait of his brother in law, Murray McKenzie. He was anxious to paint portraits of the Native people but most were at work in the nearby cannery and he had to wait out the end of the fishing season.⁶⁷

Pitts spent three days on a sketch of the cannery and two on a portrait of a "half breed Hyda [sic] girl".⁶⁸ [Figure 7] Here is an example of a Native person being portrayed in non-traditional dress. The Haida girl is of interest without any accoutrements. The study is of her head and it is her personality and direct gaze which give strength to the painting. She is not contemplating her past, but is an immediate and tangible representative of another culture. The direct gaze and artist's attention to the face alone is reminiscent of Carr's *Louisa* [Figure 5]. Carr's watercolour portrait of 1912 speaks for her genuine interest in Native people as individuals. *Louisa* was actually Clara Russ, who along with Jimmie, served as a guide on her trip to Cha-Atl, Tanoo and Skedans in the Queen Charlotte Islands.⁶⁹

66. *Ibid.*, August 27, 1933.

67. *Ibid.*, August 27-29, 1933.

68. *Ibid.*, August 31, 1933.

69. Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1987, p.131. Carr habitually renamed people, especially those she was fond of.

In Pitts' first week in Craig he had completed five paintings. In preparation for Pitts' mission to paint as many of the Native people as possible, Murray secured for him two "good articles, one a hat, the other a staff, equipment in readiness for a sitter. Wonderful relics."⁷⁰ The use of props was standard practice for photographers, such as Edward Curtis. The same article, such as a blanket or headdress, can be seen in various different portraits.⁷¹ Painters such as Catlin have also mixed and diminished the veracity of the image in this way. As we shall see, the use of props was rare in Pitts' work. I have mentioned every instance of it, but they are exceptions. He much preferred painting people with their own costumes, headdresses and articles. He was careful to state whether the accoutrements of his sitter were borrowed or not. If his subject did not have any authentic artifacts Pitts sometimes relied on other items to emphasize the Native origin of the person. Pitts was thrilled that Princess Da-a-jad Yeltatzi [Mrs. Anderson] came for her sitting with her own "costume" and ermine headdress. [Figure 8] Not only did he execute her portrait but he devoted a painting to her button blanket as well. [Figure 9] A feature of Figure 9 is the faithfully rendered totem pole in the corner. This is the only example of the

70. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, September 3, 1933.

71. Christopher Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1982, p.65.

addition of a totem pole in a Pitts portrait. He used it appropriately, as the woman in the portrait was a Haida princess. The totem may or may not closely relate to Princess Yeltatzi's own story. Certainly the Yeltatzi family did possess poles in the Queen Charlotte Islands. In Figure 8, and moreso in Figure 9 Pitts focuses on the button blanket and turns the wearer to show the robe to advantage. In Figure 8 the turn of Mrs. Anderson's right arm highlights the killer whale design. Figure 9 can barely be classed as a portrait, for only a small portion of her face is showing. The blanket is shown to advantage, and comes to life, through its draping on the figure. Similarly Pitts chooses to paint the fascinating ermine Haida headdress as it was meant to be used, that is, adorning the head of a princess.

While sketching the boats in the harbour the next day Pitts met "Willie Vadel [sic] the Tklinket [sic]", also known as "Hunchback Thlinket [sic]", who agreed to a portrait. After two and a half hours of painting Pitts declared this image to be one of his "best Indian portraits to date".⁷² [Figure 10] Pitts did not elaborate on this, but an accurate representation, in which the personality of the individual radiated from the work, was important to him. As usual he made a duplicate sketch the next day for Willie to keep. On seeing this sketch, Caledon Frank Luff agreed that Pitts should paint his eight year old daughter. Once

72. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1933.

this portrait and a duplicate were completed Pitts went in search of Mrs. Andersen in hopes of persuading her mother to sit for a portrait.⁷³ Mrs. Andersen agreed to bring her mother. In this instance no props would be required for they would bring their own regalia. When the two Haida women appeared later that day the mother, Mrs. Gardener [Princess Kaljusie Yeltatzi], changed into her own treasured dance robes. This daughter of a West Coast Chief was "a very striking subject which filled me with enthusiasm. She wore the Bear Hat & robe & painted the lower part of her face red with streaks of black."⁷⁴ Pitts worked happily for three hours and resumed the following day for several more until the portrait was complete. [Figure 11]

In Figure 11 is an example of one of the advantages Pitts had in his selection of watercolour painting for the medium. By choosing watercolour painting rather than photography for his portrait collection Pitts had the obvious advantage of colour. Especially in this instance, where the subject had painted her face "red with streaks of black", pigment was essential in an accurate depiction. Colour, particularly the dramatic contrast of red and black, is a dynamic and central aspect of Northwest coast artistic traditions. For Pitts colour was also important. Even in the years when his livelihood was in black and white

73. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1933.

74. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1933.

sketches for cartoons he spent his leisure time painting in clear colour.

As he had promised himself two weeks earlier, Pitts returned by rowboat to the island five miles from Craig to sketch the burial ground.⁷⁵ From its inception, Pitts' Indian Collection was not exclusively portraits of Native people. He recorded the villages, totem poles, community houses, canoes and virtually any tangible aspect of Native culture he could. Satisfied with his sketch Pitts returned to Craig where he met two elderly Haida women interested in posing for him. One of them, "Mrs. Young, appeared in glorious regalia & I made fair progress during afternoon. She attempted a Hyda Dance & Song & related many tales of the past."⁷⁶ The next day she and her daughter returned and:

...brought a Moose Hide with design worked in Moose Blood which had been burnt in. I made a quick sketch of her standing showing Killer Whale design on back. Spent major portion of the light upon this sketch in poster effect which looks quite well.⁷⁷

By poster effect is meant here that he painted out the background a uniform colour, as in Figure 9. It may also be a reference to a deliberate flattening of the subject,

75. *Ibid.*, September 13, 1933. The resulting watercolour, *Tlingit Graveyard*, is now in the collection of the Glenbow Museum [Figure 12].

76. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1933.

77. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1933.

giving it a more two-dimensional quality through a diminished modelling. Pitts mentioned enlisting "two Indians one of whom is wearing the hat & stick tomorrow" for a "dancer's sketch".⁷⁸ This was the first notation of the props being used. Pitts spent two days on this painting, then began a portrait of "Peter Nathan, a full blooded Hyda [sic] [who] made an appearance as appointed and sat from 2-4 p.m. He said he found sitting very tiresome & I found him a very restless sitter."⁷⁹ Over the next two days Pitts concentrated on the "Thlinket Graveyard" sketch. When it was finished he wrote that it was "one of my best landscapes".⁸⁰ [Figure 12] Accurate representation in so far as the painting repeating what Pitts himself saw was an important feature of any work he deemed successful. In Figure 12 the integration of textures from still water to smooth stones to rough brush is a pleasing element of the work. Draughtsmanship was always the foundation of his painting, and when he was pleased with the results one can assume that he was pleased with the perspective and composition, where placement of elements was exactly on the picture plane in an arrangement that suited him.

78. *Ibid.*, September 17-19, 1933. One of the men was Peter John who maintained that "his grandfather was a Tklingit Indian Chief of Taku. He is part Thlinket & Hyda."; *ibid.*, September 22, 1933. †

79. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1933.

80. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1933.

Pitts reworked old sketches and made a few new ones of "the hat" [his prop] and frog designs. Murray brought a willing and ready subject for a portrait: "a quarter breed, a handsome chap of 21 years" and Mrs. Sewell, who, in the context of a pioneer wife of Northern Alaska, agreed to sit as well. The "quarter breed" was likely Charles Nelson [Figure 13], as this painting is dated September 24, 1933, the day after this journal entry. Figure 13 serves as a fine example of a successful portrait in which, although the subject is turned slightly from a full frontal pose, he looks directly out at the viewer. Here utmost attention is paid to the face, particularly the eyes, and his contemporary clothing is sketched in with a minimum of brush work. Apart from portraits Pitts also demonstrated his long standing interest in boats by painting "Brailing in a Seine Boat". For this Pitts "secured certain amount of detail from Indian Fisherman Gideon Duncan."⁸¹

Pitts began studying and working up sketches of Tuxecan from photographs his brother in law had. Two paintings were completed and Pitts was anxious and determined to visit the village itself. Before the week was out he had arranged the trip. On October 6, 1933 Pitts and Murray left by troller, first stopping at "Little Skukum Chuk" or Tuanet Channel, two and one-half hours out from Craig:

There we came upon a Medicine Man's Grave house

81. *Ibid.*, September 29-30, 1933.

surrounded by two Totems. We penetrated into the house through a large rent in the roof & saw another lean to roof beneath. Through an ample opening saw his skeleton partly covered by a blanket. The bones were moss covered & the head was missing. I made a rapid colour sketch before the rain fell & also took the precaution of making two snaps. I do not trust the camera however. We continued our journey past the Tlinget [sic] Grave & saw further scanty evidence of early Indian habitation.⁸²

At mid day the troller reached Tuxecan in Tuxecan

Passage:

...in a beautiful spot. To our great excitement saw numerous Totems dotted about the Village situated between a high bluff & another hill. The clearing is much overgrown by 2nd growth. The beach extended about 300 yards through which two creeks pass. We quickly lunched and went ashore. There was such a Totem display that I did not know which way to turn so busied myself making one or two snaps in dull weather. We counted about 45 totems with evidence of about 10 at least rotting in the ground. Very little remains of their house other than pillars of hard beam cedar supporting huge hewn cedar roof logs. The foundations nevertheless could be easily traced in numerous community houses. A row or street extended from one end to the other. I lost no time commencing a pencil sketch ... Secured two pencil sketches. It is my intention to make such sketches only & work them up later.⁸³

The men spent the evening talking about the Indian Village which Pitts wrote was "melancholy beautiful in the moonlight across the way. I made frequent trips to the deck almost fully expecting to see lights ashore or a passing canoe."⁸⁴

82. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1933.

83. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1933.

84. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1933.

Early the next morning Pitts was rowed ashore where he made five more pencil sketches. Murray and Jimmie, a Haida, who owned the boat, arrived at midday to dig and uncovered a "very interesting stone axe, old trading beads & several other interesting little articles from the Community house sites."⁸⁵

Arthur and Murray had been told that the Tlingits cremated their dead:

We soon received confirmation of the fact. A totem had fallen disclosing a niche about 20 inches by 24 inches. In it we found ashes & fragments of bone all wrapped in a Cedar bark mat. I secured a little of the rotting mat. All the totems contained the same aperture over which was nailed several boards. In most cases they have fallen from the standing totems but saw two with boards still in place. These totems must be of tremendous age as in one we saw a large tree growing about 4 feet in diameter which had split the totem in two, obviously having grown through the rotting centre. We naturally assumed the tree to be about 200 yrs old hence the village must have been established several centuries ago. We learned the village was abandoned in 1900 for which the medicine men were responsible. The village was laid low by measles & as a cure the medicine men ordered the natives to plunge into the water. This is fatal to measles hence the natives assumed the waters were bewitched & migrated to Klawak & other sites.⁸⁶

Pitts gathered sketches for about ten paintings and practiced more of his amateur archaeology. On measuring he found the floor of the community house to be fourteen inches

85. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1933.

86. *Ibid.*, October 7, 1933. Placing the split totem at a date around 1733 means that it was carved shortly after European contact and much earlier than commonly believed.

below the surface which confirmed his notion and excitement about this being an ancient site.⁸⁷ They then headed for home, a distance of 35 miles. It had been a remarkable and exciting journey. Pitts had a treasure trove of new material to keep him painting for weeks to come. On arriving in Craig, Pitts wrote of Tuxecan, "the approach to the village as it was first viewed was one of the most interesting moments of anticipation in my life."⁸⁸

Pitts set straight to work painting Tuxecan. Figures 14, 15 and 16 are the results of the trip. Totems or totem groups were the main themes, but an imagined Medicine Man demanded to be painted as well. Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this rare example of an imagined theme is unknown. The Tuxecan watercolours have much in common with those done by Emily Carr on her sketching trip to the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1912. The totems are shown in the context of the natural landscape and not treated as isolated ethnographic studies. In the background of Carr's totem paintings of 1912 there is a greater range of colour, and in *Haida Totems Cha-Atl* [Figure 4], for example, a Fauve palette is skilfully employed to give an impression of the village. Carr had just returned from an eighteen month

87. Dr. Victoria Wyatt pointed out that this was often the intentional design of the floor and may not be an indication of such an ancient site.

88. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, October 7, 1933.

study period in France which, through contact with Post-Impressionist painters, had broadened her artistic horizon. Pitts, in a much more conservative and literal approach, painted the landscape with a more limited palette. There are no red, blue or purple blades of grass, such as Carr freely and effectively used in her composition. Yet while the backgrounds of Pitts' Tuxecan works are conservative in palette, the brush work is less so. The trees and grass have a spontaneity found in similar works by Carr. Both artists were interested in the cultures of the Native people, and for this reason the totems are depicted in their intended setting, not as isolated carved objects.

Both Pitts and Carr felt they were being accurate in their recording of the poles, yet in comparisons with photographs of the sites there are many instances where their work falls short of ethnographic veracity. With both artists some poles have greater detail than others. Figures 15 and 16 are good examples of Pitts concentrating on the details of the poles. It must be borne in mind that in both Pitts' Tuxecan and Carr's 1912 Queen Charlotte Islands watercolours, the initial sketches were done relatively rapidly, and some detail could easily be lost. The totem on the extreme left of the group in Pitts' Figure 14 is very unclear and is portrayed as being in shadow. Perhaps Pitts shifted his light source in the watercolour to account for the lack of definition in the pole. In Figure 15, *Whale and*

Bear Totem, Tuxican, Pitts chose to paint the scene from the point of view of one in the village itself rather than from the shore as a visitor or intruder would see it. The contrast of the misty, soft and distant landscape with the immediate and powerful totem adds to the dynamic impact of this successful and intriguing painting.

One more sketching trip was made with Jimmie and his boat, this time to Klawak, on the northern end of Prince of Wales Island.⁸⁹ Pitts took six photographs and made rough sketches of the village. The next day, after seven and a half weeks in Alaska, Peggy and Arthur caught the *Zapora* for the return journey to Seattle.⁹⁰

Vancouver Island

On the trip down Pitts continued to work on the Tuxecan sketches and once back in Saanichton he quickly established a routine which allowed him most of the day to work on his "Indian Collection". "Will cut wood, pick apples etc around the ranch until 10 a.m. rising about 7:30 & devote remainder of day to work."⁹¹

One of his friends, Bill Hunt,⁹² bought one of the Klawak paintings and Pitts was keen to enter the entire

89. *Ibid.*, October 17, 1933.

90. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1933.

91. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1933.

92. Not related to the Hunt family of Fort Rupert.

group in the Willows Fair Exhibition in Victoria.

Unfortunately this was a late entry and therefore received no press coverage.⁹³ The paintings went from the Willows Exhibition to Sommers' Gallery and Framing Shop on Fort Street. This exhibition produced little result for as Pitts explained:

The papers refused to grant publicity owing to the fact that Sumers [sic] never advertised in their columns. Owing to the lack of publicity they only accepted \$5.00 for the week's exhibit. Somer [sic], who has dealt with pictures for years said that my work was much superior to Watt an English portrait artist until recently in Victoria.⁹⁴

Pitts continued to work on his "Indian Collection" making new paintings and duplicate sketches. [Figures 15 and 16] He was also reading and making notes about Native cultures in British Columbia.⁹⁵ He made a trip to the Victoria Museum to identify and learn more about the artifacts he had collected. He was delighted that the stone chisels which he "had secured in Craig" were "indeed adzes and the depression therein are for purpose of tying the thongs."⁹⁶

Pitts took the twenty four "Indian paintings" which he felt to be the core of his collection to McKelvie, an editor

93. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, October 27-28, 1933.

94. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1933.

95. *Ibid.*, November 7-16, 1933.

96. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1933.

at the *Daily Colonist* newspaper in Victoria:

He thought I possessed a wonderful collection & suggested I attempted to sell the entire lot to a museum in New York. Gave me the name of the leading ethnologist in Canada living in Victoria who in turn could give me the correct address in New York one W.A. Newcombe formerly curator of the Victoria Museum.⁹⁷

W.A. Newcombe was certainly a good lead to give Pitts but as was and is often the case the reputation of Charles Newcombe, the eminent ethnologist, spilled over and enhanced the reputation of his son William. By November 1933 Willie was no longer associated with the Museum having left earlier in the year under a cloud of accusations. Apart from his friendship with Emily Carr, for whom Willie framed paintings and ran a host of errands, he was by this time almost a recluse and certainly not an influential player in the museum collections game of the thirties.⁹⁸ He did however, have a wealth of knowledge in anthropology and a keen interest in the Native people and their cultures.

Pitts telephoned Willie Newcombe the next day and was "treated very decently". Newcombe expressed interest in seeing Pitts' work and suggested sending one or two photos along with a letter to "G.G. Heye, Museum of the American Indian Foundation, Heye Museum, Broadway, 155th Street New

97. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1933.

98. For more information on the Newcombes the reader is directed to Douglas Cole's excellent *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, Vancouver, Douglas & McIntyre, 1985, pp.280-285, and Paula Blanchard's *The Life of Emily Carr*, *op. cit.*, pp.163-164.

York".⁹⁹ George Heye a few years earlier may well have purchased Pitts' collection but this was the depth of the depression and the Museum's wallet was flat. The timing couldn't have been worse for Pitts. But optimistic as ever he fired off four photographs of his "Indian Collection".¹⁰⁰

Newcombe invited Pitts to come to his house where they engaged in lively conversation about the Native peoples. Newcombe showed Pitts early photographs of Tuxecan which Pitts found particularly interesting. Newcombe, upon examining Pitts' Tuxecan paintings, declared that they were very well done and advised Pitts to visit Lieutenant G.T. Emmons and Emily Carr.¹⁰¹ These were high recommendations, for Emmons was an eminent authority on the Tlingit and a collector of North West Coast art on an international scale, and Carr was the foremost British Columbia painter of this theme. A photographer, Young, was at Newcombe's at the time, and was equally enthusiastic about Pitts' work. Pitts reported that Young said it "compared favourable [sic] with E. Carr's of similar subjects" and "should be

99. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, November 29, 1933.

100. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1933.

101. *Ibid.*, December 1, 1933. For further information about Emmons the reader is referred to Douglas Cole's *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, *op. cit.*

recognized".¹⁰² Young also suggested that he contact Fairbairn, a watercolourist who had an interest and appreciation for Native culture, a reputation as a local authority on the Haida people of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and also happened to be the secretary to the Lieutenant Governor. Pitts quickly arranged a meeting with Fairbairn who "was quite impressed with my work & particularly the Indian Heads."¹⁰³ Later in the day, Pitts placed a small exhibit of his "Indian Paintings" in the A.A. Brown Insurance office window on Government Street and Sommers asked Pitts to mount another exhibit in his framing shop.¹⁰⁴

Pitts was encouraged by these events and decided to augment his "Indian Collection" by working up paintings from previous sketches. He devoted every spare moment to painting and was so satisfyingly engrossed with the project that when the Heye Museum returned his photos and wrote that they "only collected Indian relics & Indian workmanship" Pitts took the disappointing news in stride.¹⁰⁵

1934 opened with a renewed attempt to interest a major gallery in his paintings. He sent photographs and letters

102. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, December 1, 1933.

103. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1933.

104. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1933.

105. *Ibid.*, December 18, 1933.

to the American Museum of National History in New York and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.¹⁰⁶

Apart from adding to his "Indian Collection" Pitts completed a few commissions; four drawings of the Pacific coast for Frank Taylor's advertising company in Vancouver and two portraits of Robbie Burns.¹⁰⁷

At the end of January Pitts made arrangements to witness a dance at the Tsouet Reserve:

I met the Indian at 5:45 & went at once to a large Community House where the dance was in full swing. There were about 5 dancers covered with sheep wool streamers seated on a dias holding lances or staffs. Skin drums & stick beating made an incessant noise to the accompaniment of their singing. 2 huge fires burnt one at each end of the house, the smoke issuing through apertures in the roof. The dances were wild and primitive with the incessant intoning of the natives. At one fire the women were preparing for a feast. We only stayed about 50 mts when an Indian guide thought it better that we should go but sufficient time had been spent to secure material for a good sketch. One would never imagine that one was only a dozen or so miles from Victoria.¹⁰⁸ [Figure 17]

Figure 17, *Saanich Indian Dance, Tsawout*, is one of Pitts' most atmospheric and expressionistic works. The monochromatic tones are effectively employed to convey the smokey and mysterious environment. Figures are sketchily composed, yet with enough information to give meaning to

106. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1934; *ibid.*, January 25, 1934.

107. *Ibid.*, January 6, 1934; *ibid.*, January 20, 1934. Pitts painted the first Burns portrait for Mrs. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., which was admired by Mr. Kenneth McKenzie Sr., who ordered one for himself.

108. *Ibid.*, January 30, 1934.

each. How the wool strands of the dancer's cloak echo the curls of smoke in the centre of the painting shows Pitts' sensitivity to the interpretations inherent in the dance.

While working on sketches from this event Pitts received a letter from the Royal Ontario Museum "displaying a gratifying interest & enquiring prices of individual & collective pictures".¹⁰⁹ After careful consideration Pitts prepared a price list which ranged from \$20 to \$30 per painting and sent it in reply. Meanwhile Pitts decided to make a duplicate of each of his "Indian paintings" "lest they are lost to me forever".¹¹⁰ This task occupied most waking moments for the next six weeks at which point Pitts took a brief break to paint St. Mary's Church, the Truly Rural Hotel, and the McKenzie home, Bannockburn, all of which were located in Saanichton.¹¹¹

Erna Gunther, curator of the Washington State Museum at the time [and later director of the Seattle Art Museum], wrote to Pitts stating that she had no money to purchase his paintings but was extremely interested in his work. She had also been enthusiastic about Emily Carr's art and had purchased some of her work. Gunther asked permission to approach the "director of the Henry Art Gallery in the Campus [University of Washington] as to the possibility of

109. *Ibid.*, February 6, 1934.

110. *Ibid.*, February 8, 1934.

111. *Ibid.*, February 19-24, 1934.

an exhibition" and to retain his paintings in the hopes of such an exhibition.¹¹² Of course in his reply Pitts agreed to an exhibition and kept his fingers crossed that it would happen.

Pitts continued working on his "Indian Collection"; *General Aspect of Taxica, approaching from the south* [Figure 18], is dated March 14, 1934. This is a very successful, dynamic work, comparable in content and interpretation to several of Emily Carr's 1912 Queen Charlotte Island paintings. It also shares features in common with some of Carr's 1928 paintings completed following a sketching trip to the Naas and Skeena River areas. It is reminiscent of those, such as *Kitwancool*, in which a telescopic view of the totems is employed. This focus and compression of the subject matter, in this case totem poles, adds to the power of the work. In Carr's career there was a specific turning point; the Indian paintings of 1928 are dramatically different from those done in 1912. This turning point was Carr's inclusion in the exhibition, "Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern", sponsored jointly by the National Museum and the National Gallery of Canada. When it opened in 1927 Carr, who travelled to Ottawa to attend, was well represented, with twenty six paintings, rugs, and pottery,

112. *Ibid.*, March 25, 1934. On February 6, 1934 Pitts mentioned that his friend Wilhelmina Brodie was going to make enquiries on his behalf in Seattle. Pitts doesn't record writing to Gunther prior to this correspondence.

all employing Native themes. Even more important than taking part in this exhibition was the contact with other exceptional painters. The Group of Seven, particularly Lawren Harris, had a profound effect on the course of her career. When she returned to Victoria Carr was buoyed with enthusiasm, and feeling the support of other Canadian artists she embarked on the most prolific stage of her career.¹¹³ At this time Mark Tobey, the American artist and teacher, and Lawren Harris, of the Group of Seven, encouraged Carr to paint her personal vision of Native themes as opposed to documenting them. Two years later they independently suggested that she turn to the landscape of British Columbia rather than Native themes. Carr agreed.¹¹⁴ Much can be written about these years, but as tantalizing as that is, it is decidedly off the topic of Arthur Pitts. The point here is that in Carr's paintings of poles those done in 1912 are clearly distinct from those of 1928, and that the influence of two gifted artists is part of the reason why. So what explanation is there for Pitts' Tuxecan paintings, where most bear a resemblance to Carr's 1912 paintings of the Queen Charlotte Islands, yet one, Figure 18, is more akin to Carr's 1928 paintings, where

113. Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1966, pp.5-20; Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.169-181.

114. B.C.A.R.S., Carr Papers, 1929 correspondence, Lawren Harris to Emily Carr; Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.194.

poles are brought to the immediate foreground? Those of Tuxecan which Pitts executed before meeting Willie Newcombe at the end of 1933 are a consistent group. The exception, Figure 18, was painted after viewing Newcombe's photographs of Tuxecan. It is possible that the composition of Figure 18 owed something to the eye of the [Charles] Newcombe camera. It is also possible that Pitts viewed a Carr sketch or painting at Newcombe's, although Pitts did not mention such in his journal.

In addition to his "Indian Collection" Pitts painted a few more buildings in Sidney as well as Saanichton, such as the Sidney school, the Curry family home, St. Stephen's Church and Bannockburn again.¹¹⁵ Accompanied by Peggy, he travelled to Vancouver to visit friends and paint. Pitts exchanged a portrait of Don Brodie which he had painted on this trip for an "Indian drum & small papoose which will considerably enhance my collection."¹¹⁶

Reading Conrad, gardening and painting portraits of friends, relatives and Native people occupied Pitts for the spring and early summer. Still trying to sell his "Indian Collection" Pitts wrote with photographs included to the

115. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, March 27, 1934.

116. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1934. Collection here referred to artifacts; "Indian Collection" was a reference to his paintings along a Native theme, a good proportion of which were portraits.

Smithsonian Institution.¹¹⁷ The Smithsonian responded positively to Pitts' work but as he had heard so often, they had no money to spend.¹¹⁸

Pitts had donated a painting to the Pioneer Society in Saanich for its fund raising raffle. At this event he once again met Willie Newcombe, who in the course of conversation suggested that Arthur write to the eminent ethnologist C.M. Barbeau in Ottawa.¹¹⁹ As always, Pitts quickly followed this up with his customary letter with photographs of his paintings.¹²⁰ Barbeau deserves credit for the part he played in bringing Emily Carr's work before the public. He had heard of Emily Carr from the Tshimsian people in the Skeena region where she had painted in 1912. Barbeau promoted her work to the director of the National Gallery, Eric Brown, insisting that she be given exhibition space. Brown and Barbeau visited Carr in Victoria separately in 1926 and were ebullient in their praise of her Native theme paintings. In 1927 the aforementioned "Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art: Native and Modern" opened in Ottawa. Emily Carr, Lawren Harris, J.E.H. MacDonald, A.Y. Jackson, Frederick Varley, as well as works by Native

117. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1934.

118. *Ibid.*, June 2, 1934.

119. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1934.

120. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1934. The results of this correspondence are noted below, pp.177, 180-181, and 186-187.

artists were included. Barbeau was also instrumental in interesting a number of artists in the subject matter of the Northwest coast. Langdon Kihn (1898-1957) is one example. Kihn was trained in New York and taught by the German artist Winold Reiss, who Edwards writes had "been inspired to emigrate from Munich to the United States by James Fenimore Cooper's novels, and subsequently painted portraits of Native people."¹²¹ It was through Marius Barbeau that Kihn obtained his first commission with the Canadian Pacific Railway. Two years later Barbeau and Kihn were sponsored by the Canadian National Railway and the National Museum of Canada to do field work in the Skeena River area of B.C. Subsequently Kihn's paintings served as illustrations for several of Barbeau's many books on Canadian Native people.¹²²

Portraits, botanical watercolours and paintings of historical buildings kept Arthur busy and interested between visits to Native communities where he discovered his favourite themes.¹²³ Between a brief visit to the Tsouet reserve on the eastern side of the Saanich Peninsula where

121. G.J. Edwards and G.T. Edwards, "Langdon Kihn: Indian Portrait Artist", *The Beaver*, 315, 3 (1984-85), pp.4-11.

122. *Ibid.* For example Kihn's portraits of the Stoney and Kootenay people, which he painted in 1922, were published in Barbeau's popular *Indian Days in the Canadian Rockies*, a book which Pitts had enjoyed.

123. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, June 12-17, 1934.

one painting of the village was produced¹²⁴, and more extensive sketching trips later in the summer, Pitts indulged his historical interest by reading all he could find on the pioneer families of Saanich and looking for any remnants of their early settlements. On one occasion Pitts:

...drove to Larry Hogan's farm in order to see the remains of what is reputed to be the first house in Saanich owned & constructed by one MacPhail. He settled there in 1855, 3 months before the arrival of Thompson [sic; Peggy's grandfather]. He is reputed to have been the first white settler on Saanich Arm. Discovered the cabin of Hudson Bay construction obviously incorporated into the granary. Most of the original uprights & beams remain but most of the side boards which slid into grooves cut into the uprights have been removed. It was constructed very solidly & practically without a nail. I made a pencil sketch from the only available angle.¹²⁵

Arthur returned to "McPhail's Cabin" twice making additional sketches and then visited a remote section of the West Saanich Reserve which Pitts referred to as the "Pagizan Indian Reserve" and was excited to discover:

...the largest Community House I have yet seen & despite the difficulties of design made a fair sketch. I saw one family living in the old manner on a ledge of one Community House. Introduced to the chief John Williams, a fine looking Indian.¹²⁶

Four days later a sketching trip was made, first to the Somenos Reserve near Duncan, Vancouver Island, then to the nearby Quamichan Reserve where Pitts:

124. *Ibid.*, June 19, 1934.

125. *Ibid.*, June 22, 1934.

126. *Ibid.*, July 7; 1934.

...found a splendid subject. A dance house with interior support totems upon the outside of house. Sat down in the continued gloom & worked well for 3 hours at a subject which presented very much interest.¹²⁷

Two more sketches were completed on site the next day; one showing the village of community houses with attention to the "Potlatch poles" outside and the other a close up view of the "Potlatch poles":

While there an Indian told us to enter his Dance house & sketch a Totem (wall) if we so desired. Entered the place & was wonderfully thrilled by sight of a Wall totem the full width of the house at one end. A glorious subject despite the gloom.¹²⁸

With great eagerness Pitts spent hours working on the Wall Totem. Two days later he declared that this painting was his masterpiece, his best to date.¹²⁹ [Figure 19] This wall totem, *Ceremonial Screen in Community House*, shows once again Pitts' interest in Native works in context. Other artists might have selected a portion of the screen or the screen alone with particular attention to the designs. Pitts responds to the function of the work, placing it in

127. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1934. A 1934 watercolour, *House Poles on Totems at Quamichan Reserve* in B.C.A.R.S. matches this description.

128. *Ibid.*, July 13, 1934.

129. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1934. Although in his journal Pitts describes this as a wall totem, the painting which by date and location corresponds is *Ceremonial Screen in Community House*. I agree with Pitts that it is his masterpiece. This and Figure 23, another masterpiece, are the two Pitts paintings selected for exhibit at the Emily Carr Gallery, as mentioned in the introduction.

the intended setting of a dance house. The structure itself delighted Pitts, and more so the wall totem, the first and only one he saw extending the entire length of a house. Not only was the wall totem a rare object, but it was still part of a cultural activity.

Pitts next turned his attention to finding, then sketching, an "Indian Fish Weir". This completed, he went to visit:

Manson George, an Indian, to seek confirmation concerning several House Totems as revealed to us by another Indian, David. It proved to be correct & he graciously gave us permission to enter & work & to our delight on entering discovered 7 wall totems carved into the upright beams. I pounced upon the first three & completed the drawing.¹³⁰

Figure 20 is a resulting painting. Again, attention is given to the structure containing the artwork. Sufficient detail is depicted by Pitts to confirm that the animals depicted are land otters. Native informants told Pitts that these animals had a spiritual link with the shaman. Pitts returned to the Fish Weir and the Quamichan Native village to sketch on the following three days. Pitts mentioned painting a portrait of an elderly Native woman and also being praised by Smythe, "a local authority on Indian Folklore", for his painting abilities and his Wall Totem watercolour in particular.¹³¹ Pitts was finishing up this sketching trip with one final painting of a house frontal

130. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1934.

131. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1934.

pole when:

...an Indian asked us to look at his canoes. Inside a community house was a racing canoe and one in course of construction. I asked permission to paint & went ahead furiously. Practically finished at 7 o'clock feeling quite jubilant.¹³²

Before returning to Saanichton Arthur returned to Somenos Reserve, a two mile walk from the McKenzie Jrs. There he witnessed a gambling game which he soon after sketched from memory.¹³³ A friend of the family and local doctor, Clem Bissett, came to see Pitts' paintings. Greatly impressed he suggested that Graham, the Indian Agent, see them, with the purpose of an exhibit in the Duncan Hall in conjunction with their Fall Fair.¹³⁴

This sketching trip had been a tremendous success. Pitts returned in an exuberant state with twelve completed paintings to add to his Indian Collection.

Arthur was no sooner home than he set off for the closest Indian Reserve, the Tsartlip, to find an "Indian Grave" which he described as:

Quite an interesting relic with ancient carving adorning the outside. 2 coffin boxes alongside are an excellent example of Early Indian work. The wood being bent on 3 sides & lashed with Cedar roots. The same system was applied to the house construction. It is my intention to paint this

132. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1934. This painting, *Racing Canoes*, is in B.C.A.R.S.

133. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1934. Pitts' *Game of Slo-Tel*, a watercolour inscribed with a description of how the game is played, is also in B.C.A.R.S.

134. *Ibid.*, July 21, 1934.

structure & add another valuable picture to my collection.¹³⁵

We will see that he did complete the painting of the grave two months later. [Figure 23] Through his sister in law, Doris, who lived there, Pitts' Duncan paintings were to be exhibited in Kimberley, in the Kootenays, towards the end of August.¹³⁶

Kootenays and Back

Just before embarking on another major sketching trip, to south eastern British Columbia, Pitts prepared a set of ten duplicate paintings of his Alaska works and sent them to his brother-in-law Murray, now in Ketchikan, in the hopes of selling any or all.¹³⁷

Pitts and Peggy caught the boat to Seattle and from there by bus travelled to Spokane, Washington. He mentioned being very interested in the topography of Washington State's Columbia River Valley and wanting to do some paintings of it. The beautiful landscape would have appealed to his romantic sensibilities. The history of pioneer settlements would have added a further attraction, but greatest of all would be the notion of pristine wilderness as yet untouched by Europeans, but home to the

135. *Ibid.*, July 29, 1934.

136. *Ibid.*, August 9, 1934.

137. *Ibid.*, August 10, 1934.

Native people.

From Coeur D'Alene they travelled by car north to Kimberley. Upon arrival Arthur went to the mission on the Kootenay Indian Reserve. There, Father Patterson felt that the Native people would pose for Pitts if he offered 75¢ or \$1.00 for each subject. He was directed to find Komena, who in turn would introduce Pitts to Chief Eustace. On his way to find Komena Pitts encountered:

...a Tepee [sic] with an old squaw seated in foreground. Made rapid sketch of an hour with fair result. If I can only establish my self in the neighbourhood I could add splendidly to my collection but it will prove difficult.¹³⁸

Establish himself he did, for two days later he was invited to the Mission to meet Chief Eustace and Stanley Comeau, a prominent Native figure. Of this visit he wrote:

The older men continue to wear their hair in two braids one over each shoulder & very few motors are observed. The horse continues to play an important part in their life. The squaws carry their babies in quaint cradles on their backs. I espied one & quickly arranged to paint her. I offered her 75¢ which was readily accepted. The baby created certain difficulties but secured sufficient of a sketch in 1 1/2 hours to satisfy my purpose. We then lunched & went to Stanley Comeau['s] where we found him in readiness. He presented a most picturesque figure & I feared that it would be difficult to tackle in one setting. He informed me that a previous artist gave him \$1.00 an hour which however I was not prepared to pay. Worked furiously for 2 1/2 hours & secured sufficient for my purpose. Gave him one dollar which however he accepted. His wife consented likewise to pose next week. He showed us a beautiful buckskin coat for \$5.00 which might procure later. Tarried a while with his grandson

138. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1934.

& then away well satisfied with the day's work.¹³⁹

The next day was devoted to a portrait of Stanley Comeau [Figure 21], then it was time for the Chief's sitting. In *Stanley Comeau* [Figure 21] Pitts once again used the half length portrait in order to emphasize the elaborate designs and features of Comeau's dress. Again, as we saw in *La Tasse* [Figure 6], the Native man looks out from a face of experience to some distant horizon. The viewer is asked to contemplate this living link with the past. The treatment of Comeau's left eye is not a technical imperfection. Pitts noted in his diary that as the result of an old injury this eye was clouded. Brian Dippie has pointed out a resemblance between this portrait and the work of Winold Reiss.¹⁴⁰ Reiss' illustrious student, Langdon Kihn, painted this group of Kootenay people when he visited them in 1922. It is possible that Reiss' influence filtered to Pitts through Langdon Kihn whose work Pitts saw in Barbeau's books and possibly elsewhere.

It is obvious that the hat, though not traditional dress, belongs in the portrait as part of the story of Stanley Comeau. It could speak for a partial integration with the whites, a Kootenay in transition. Even though there is evidence of white influence through the dress, much

139. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1934.

140. Dr. Brian Dippie, personal communication, July 30, 1993.

as we saw with the umbrellas of the Zulu women in Figure 1, Pitts captures in the person the essence of the cultural group. It is interesting that, unlike Curtis or Verner, Pitts never insisted on removing all traces of white involvement. Pitts left early in the morning for Cherry Creek and met Chief Eustace:

[He] consented to dress. He looked well in his buckskin & beads with large sombrero hat worked likewise in beads. I work [sic] furiously upon him for 2 hours 50 mts & was fairly satisfied. Offered him \$1.00 but his dignity quite effronted [sic] so decided to give him \$2.00 in accordance with his demand. Better to remain in good terms with that member of the community.¹⁴¹

Having completed the Chief's portrait [which is now in B.C.A.R.S.] Pitts next went to Stanley Comeau's ranch where his seventy nine year old wife sat for a portrait: "She appeared in a gorgeous coat & head gear wonderful to paint but necessitating a furious speed. Took the precaution to photograph her twice as a record of costume."¹⁴² This was the second note of using a photograph to aid in the completion of a painting. The first had concerned his last, hasty trip to Klawak earlier in the year. Pitts exhibited the first four of this group of paintings, *The Squaw and the Tepee*, *Stanley Comeau*, *Papoose*, and *Chief Eustace* at the Horticultural Society's exhibition in Kimberley, arranged by

141. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, August 21, 1934.

142. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1934.

Peggy's sister, Doris.¹⁴³ Meanwhile he worked on completing the portrait of Mrs. Comeau and began another of Chief Eustace which, rather than Pitts' usual head and shoulders format was this time a full length portrait.¹⁴⁴ During this time Pitts spent his evenings reading Barbeau's books on Totems and the Gitskan people.¹⁴⁵

Pitts was elated by two letters he received at the end of August. Graham, the Indian Agent from Duncan, was so enthusiastic about Pitts' Duncan Pictures that he proposed an exhibition there in September. The second letter was from Barbeau expressing his interest in the "Saanich Grave", which he asked Pitts to purchase on his behalf.¹⁴⁶ During the first week in September the Native people began streaming into the area to bring their children to the Mission School. Pitts worked at a fevered pitch painting a different portrait each day. The paintings over the next week included an "Indian Baby & Cradle", Charley Whitehead [who was serving as Pitts' translator] "in a wonderful headdress & trousers", "31 year old Indian man who looked exceedingly well in his feather dress", "Seymour Williams fine old Indian in beads & Eagle dress", John Aas, "Isidore

143. *Ibid.*, August 24, 1934.

144. *Ibid.*, August 26, 1934.

145. *Ibid.*, August 18-30, 1934. He was also reading Locke's *The Morals of Marcus Odeyne*.

146. *Ibid.*, August 31, 1934.

the former Medicine Man" and "Barnaby, Barnaby (White Sun).¹⁴⁷ Of the last Pitts wrote:

I wandered to the village with my kit and met a very old Indian. He was looking for me. Wanted me to paint him. Accompanied him to his house where his things were obtained. He dressed himself in a wonderful buckskin suit. One of the best figures I have yet seen.¹⁴⁸ [Figure 22]

With Figure 22, *Barnaby, Barnaby, White Sun*, Pitts has turned the chief almost to profile position. The viewer must be a distant observer and admire from afar rather than have eye to eye contact. In this instance the subject is not looking out of the picture plane but is totally contained within his own world, out of the viewer's reach. It is almost a three quarter length portrait, which again not only allows more of the traditional dress to be depicted, but also awards the figure more of the available space. Pitts has composed the painting with the chief's eyes in the top third of the image, subtly suggesting that the viewer is looking up. This perspective, combined with *Barnaby, Barnaby, White Sun's* steadfast and dignified expression, serves to emphasize his rank as chief. The bright colours lend an air of celebration to the portrait. This is in vivid contrast to the monochromatic and rather depressing portrait of *La Tasse* [Figure 6]. Like Figure 6, the portrait of *Barnaby, Barnaby, White Sun* is another

147. *Ibid.*, September 2-8, 1934.

148. *Ibid.*, September 8, 1934.

instance of Pitts painting someone he felt to be a precious example of a "passsing race". The pose, expression and dress have much in common with portraits by other nineteenth and twentieth century artists, including Kane, Catlin, Verner, Emily Carr and Mildred Valley Thornton. This painting by Pitts is also reminiscent of illustrations commemorating the North American Indian so ubiquitous in the publications of later Victorian and early Edwardian England.

Pitts' paintings demonstrate an interest and appreciation for both the people and any costume or artifact which adorned them. It was critically important to Pitts that his portraits show detail and that the details be accurate. He often asked his models to leave a headdress or blanket after the sitting so that he could be certain that in finishing the painting all aspects would be correct. It is a testimony to the rapport Pitts had with the Native people that they always agreed to lend him these treasures. Needless to say Pitts always treated the articles with the utmost care and returned each personally as soon as possible. The issue of who actually owned any of the costumes or articles that accompanied the sitter did not seem important to Pitts.

Father Patterson was impressed with Pitts' recent paintings and asked to take eight paintings to be exhibited

at "The Big Indian Faire" at Kamloops.¹⁴⁹ Pitts and Peggy struck camp and returned to Kimberley. Before packing up his twenty one paintings of the trip and catching the train back to Vancouver Arthur took the time to exhibit his recent paintings to any interested people in the community, and write to Father Patterson for further information about some of the Native people he had painted.¹⁵⁰

Back in Vancouver Pitts kept a long standing appointment with Mary Lipsett, who had asked to see Pitts' "Indian Collection". Pitts said that she had "the largest private collection of Indian curios in Canada" and that she thought that Pitts' work was good. But he didn't think she knew anything about art so "her opinion meant nothing".¹⁵¹

Pitts' first order of business after returning to Saanichton from this five week sketching trip was to sketch the "Indian Grave" again at the local reserve. He spent two full days on site and two more working up a painting from the sketch. Pitts sent the completed painting to

149. *Ibid.*, September 6, 1934. Pitts naturally agreed. After the exhibition they were returned via one of the Brothers from the Cranbrook Mission.

150. *Ibid.*, September 17-19, 1934. Many people did come to view the work. Pitts did not record the specific kinds of information he requested from Father Patterson.

151. *Ibid.*, September 28, 1934. Mary Lipsett, wife of a Vancouver ship chandler, made a large collection of argillite, which is now in the Vancouver City Museum; Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage, op. cit.*, p.293.

Barbeau.¹⁵² In this remarkable watercolour [Figure 23] is an example of Pitts' extraordinary achievement. While meticulously recording accurate detail he infused the subject with life. *Saanich Indian Grave, Tsartlip Reserve, B.C.*, is vibrant, swirling with energy, drawing the viewer into the vortex of the image. There is a perfect integration of the grave with the forest to which it will soon return. Through technical skill, colour, contrast and composition the subject is given masterful treatment. Through Pitts the grave magnetically holds the viewer, insisting on contemplation of all it represents. For Pitts it was a valuable relic of a vanishing culture.

Pitts set to work painting a duplicate of *Saanich Indian Grave, Tsartlip Reserve, B.C.*, and duplicates of *Stanley Comeau* and *Chief Eustace* for Father Patterson, who had offered Pitts \$35 for these plus "a teepee scene".¹⁵³ After taking two weeks to mount all and frame some of his Kootenay paintings, Pitts was once again off on a sketching trip, this time to Duncan. Pitts had written to Graham, the Indian Agent, expressing an interest in "painting ceremonial

152. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1934.

153. *Ibid.*, October 5-9, 1934. The three paintings were then shipped to Father Patterson. Making duplicates of his paintings seemed to be a natural and enjoyable part of Pitts' painting routine. In some instances, as with the portrait of Stanley Comeau [one of which is in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service collection and the other in the Glenbow Art Gallery and Museum collection], the earlier painting, in the Glenbow collection [Figure 21] is more successful than the duplicate.

types".¹⁵⁴ Graham arranged for Mrs. Abram Johnny and Joe Duncan to sit for him. Pitts waited for Mrs. Johnny to "secure her costume then spent 2 1/2 hrs sketching her." "Joe posed in a goat hair blanket with a feathered kind of headdress." Pitts spent 2 1/2 hours sketching Joe as well and then paid each of them 75¢.¹⁵⁵ The next day Arthur hired Dominic Joe "who wore a unique hairdress" for a similar arrangement.¹⁵⁶ This watercolour is in B.C.A.R.S. and shows that the hairdress in this instance is composed of long locks of human hair fashioned into an elaborate wig form.

Arthur drove to the Quamichan Reserve the following morning where he sought "the man in the mask" he had heard about from Dominic Joe. "Willie of the Mask insisted on 50¢ an hour rather than 35¢ and a picture as well." Pitts agreed and sketched him for three hours as "his dress & mask was very outstanding".¹⁵⁷ [Figure 24] There are few paintings of full length portraits but in Figure 24, as in Figure 9, it is the costume, not the wearer, that is the focus of the painting. He understands that the mask is made more interesting by placing it in context. Through the dancer the robe and mask come to life. Again it is not a

154. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1934.

155. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1934.

156. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1934.

157. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1934.

detailed ethnographic record, but a portrayal of an aspect of a particular Native culture.

In Duncan, Pitts hired "a typical squaw in bright coloured handkerchief & shawl" [for 40¢ per hour], then trotted down the trail to the nearest reserve. Arthur was:

...taken to the cabin of a very old man, 92, according to repute & arranged he should call at the office [Indian Agent] in the a.m. Thence I proceeded to the house of Manson George who agreed upon tomorrow afternoon in costume. Neither have a mask but they will augment my collection well if they appear.¹⁵⁸

When the older model arrived Pitts was thrilled to discover that he was "undoubtedly a board type or flat head Indian: very rare types today."¹⁵⁹ The two and a half hours spent sketching him quickly vanished.

Kenneth Duncan, a prominent local citizen for whose family the town was named, came to view Arthur's paintings and immediately offered him the opportunity to exhibit at the Duncan Historical Society.¹⁶⁰ Pitts agreed with pleasure.

Before returning to Saanichton Pitts had time for one last portrait, Joe Duncan's daughter "in costume".¹⁶¹ Once again Pitts brought home a wealth of sketches and impressions for further exhaustive reworking, but before two

158. *Ibid.*, October 25, 1934.

159. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1934.

160. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1934.

161. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1934.

days had passed Arthur was off to another reserve, this time the Songhees in Victoria. He had visited this reserve once before in 1919 and sketched the solitary totem he had found then. He was surprised and pleased to find it again fifteen years later and lost no time in sketching it [Figure 25] and a Native man "shaping a canoe".¹⁶²

The woman and child in Pitts' Figure 25 are not mere adjuncts to the totem pole. Pitts conveys a subtle message in his portrayal of the scene. The woman passes wearing non-traditional dress. The child, similarly attired, is depicted emerging from a Native dwelling, which with glass in the windows and English-style shingling on the roof represents a modified Native culture. The totem pole in the centre of the work represents a purely Northwest Coast Native creation.

In Figure 25 Pitts successfully combines his interests in Native people, their poles and their houses in a way most reminiscent of several of Emily Carr's early British Columbia watercolours. The figures of the woman in the foreground and the child emerging from the house in the background are, in scale and level of detail, comparable to Carr's portrayal of Native people in 1912.

From her earliest childhood Carr was interested in the Native people. Early pencil and ink drawings of a

162. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1934.

documentary nature, *The Ucluelet Sketches* executed in 1898¹⁶³ attest to her appreciation and desire to record Native people. Portraiture and caricature were two forms of artistic expression that can be found throughout her long and productive career. Although best known for her paintings of the British Columbia landscape and totem poles of Native people, in that order, Carr was also a portrait painter. In the B.C.A.R.S. collection alone there are plenty of examples of her particular attention to portraits of Native people.¹⁶⁴ [Figure 5 is one example]

Carr's paintings of 1912 often have Native people as a focal point in much the same way that her French paintings of the previous two years featured Breton people in their natural setting. The well known *Indian House Interior with Totems* in the Vancouver Art Gallery collection is a good example of Carr's portrayal of the Native people, whom she shows in harmony with house and totems. In *Memalilaqua, Knight's Inlet* the composition integrating the people, landscape and housefront totems is firmly organized.¹⁶⁵

163. Several of these Ucluelet sketches are now in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service collection.

164. For example, the exhibition, *Portraits of her People* [1983], curated by Kerry Mason, was on display for six months at the Emily Carr Gallery and six months at the McMichael Gallery in Toronto. Viewers were generally surprised and pleased to discover this aspect of Carr's great talent.

165. These two paintings are reproduced in Doris Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr*, Vancouver and Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre, 1979, pp.46-47.

In Carr's 1928 Native theme paintings she simplified and intensified the composition. There are many examples,¹⁶⁶ where in 1912, as with Pitts' Figure 25, there is the long house, totem pole and figure, while in 1928 one totem is usually singled out for a particular dramatic treatment. The figures are eliminated from the scene along with much of the detail in an effort to underscore the central focus. Carr was as attracted to Native people as ever. For example, the fine watercolour, *Mrs. Douse, Chieftainess of the Kitwancool*, which was painted on the spot in 1928, shows Carr's keen interest in the individual people. As with any successful portrait the character of the subject is compelling.¹⁶⁷

Early in November 1934, at long last, Pitts wrote:

Barbeau returned my pictures [meaning sketches and a finished watercolour of the *Saanich Indian Grave*, Figure 23] with letter. Stated that he had recommended the picture to the directorate at Ottawa but their funds were completely exhausted. Gave me delightful comment & had passed picture to the Government photographer enclosing me a picture [meaning photograph] which was quite good. Such publicity helps very considerably. Thus a reproduction of my work appears at the National

166. See for instance the reproductions of Carr's paintings in Doris Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr*, op. cit..

167. Three of Mrs. Douse's granddaughters from Kitwancool visited the Emily Carr Gallery when this work was included in a portrait exhibition. They immediately went to the far wall saying "There's Grandma"; personal communication, August 1983. This watercolour is in the B.C.A.R.S. collection, and is reproduced in several texts, including Dan Francis' *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, op. cit., p.37.

Museum.¹⁶⁸

Pitts worked on various components of his "Indian Collection" retouching, mounting and framing in preparation for two upcoming exhibits: the first for the Duncan Historical Society and the second, a public exhibition in Saanich.

Pitts happily travelled to Duncan with his collection of paintings and mounted a two day exhibition. His writings show no sign of bitterness or disappointment that despite the time, effort and expense involved there were only seven members of the Duncan Historical Society in attendance for opening night. Although an adjunct to the Historical Society's viewing the previous evening the public exhibition had a much greater attendance, which naturally pleased Pitts, and two positive write ups in the *Victoria Times* and *Daily Colonist* [Victoria] newspapers appeared.¹⁶⁹

Before returning to Saanichton Pitts took the time to visit the Joe family. Rita Joe agreed to be the subject of a portrait [now in B.C.A.R.S.] and donned "rather a unique Goat Hair Headdress & Buckskin Tunic".¹⁷⁰ Pitts spent two hours painting her and when the light gave up returned the next morning for a further two hours work. Pitts paid Rita

168. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, November 6, 1934.

169. *Ibid.*, November 20-22.

170. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1934.

Joe \$1.45 and headed back to Saanichton.

The next day Pitts, assisted by Peggy and a large group of friends, covered two and a half walls of the Sanscha Hall with sixty of his "Indian Paintings".¹⁷¹ Pitts, in his usual modest way wrote, "They presented quite a satisfactory effect."¹⁷²

Pitts was surprised by the overwhelming turnout for this exhibition:

All were loud in their praise & astonishment. Mrs. Cree (of the Provincial Archives) is determined I must exhibit in the Main Library of the Archives after Christmas & intends to inform B.C. House of my collection in order that an exhibition could be held there. Other people waited to give me addresses in England I might visit. One Mrs. Stevens lent me a book on the Indians & the Buckles gave me totem pictures [meaning photographs]. It was really quite a successful event and I was in constant demand. Newcombe was present & we conversed for a lengthy period. The evening was spent recounting the day until 11:30 when all set out for the Hall & helped me to secure the pictures. Bed at 2 a.m.¹⁷³

The next day Pitts was once again hard at work augmenting his "Indian Collection" with another sketch of Cowichan people. He began yet another portrait of David La Tasse [Figure 6] and when it was completed he worked on a new sketch, and third variation, of La Tasse.¹⁷⁴

Tony Paul of Tsartlip came to visit Pitts and expressed

171. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1934.

172. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1934.

173. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1934.

174. *Ibid.*, November 27-29, 1934.

interest in seeing the entire collection. Two days later Pitts went to Paul's house where various "pictures" were shown to him. It is not specified whether these were photographs or sketches. Pitts regularly used "pictures" for either item.¹⁷⁵ Pitts borrowed one of these pictures and spoke with several members of the Native community. Pitts concluded that "they were dour towards the white men, and rightly so", but it was necessary to try and interview them. Pitts was determined to learn as much as possible and to be truthful in his interpretation of the Native people.¹⁷⁶

Pitts was invited to visit Martin Cooper, "an Indian dancer" whose wife:

...declared that no Indian Dancer would sit for me among the Songhees or Saanich Indians. A great insult to their people. However talked to her for 15 minutes & might have accomplished a little good work.¹⁷⁷

Pitts made a brief visit to the Tsartlip Reserve and continued work on his existing sketches including those for a portrait of Tony Paul [now in B.C.A.R.S.]. A highlight of these weeks was an evening spent at Newcombe's house

175. I have been careful to use "photograph" where photograph is specified, but when it is unclear, as in this instance, Pitts' own "picture" is used. It was most likely a photograph he borrowed in this instance.

176. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, December 2, 1934.

177. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1934.

"enjoying his collection immensely".¹⁷⁸ Pitts eagerly settled down beside the radio the following night for a lecture "On Indians". He was disappointed and distressed that it was a poor and inaccurate discussion.¹⁷⁹

In search of new subjects Pitts once again walked to the Tsouet Reserve. Chief Pilkie and his wife agreed to pose over the course of several days.¹⁸⁰ Pitts completed a portrait of Tony Paul, another of "The Kootenay People", and the Esquimalt Totem. Pitts took the portrait to the Tsartlip Reserve to show Tony and to return "T. Paull's [sic] picture & 75¢ for the loan to his granddaughter". Pitts was pleased to meet Tony Paul's son, Baptiste, "huge fellow, boxer & wrestler", and quickly made arrangements for him to pose.¹⁸¹ The resulting painting was completed early in the new year.

In the hopes that it would somehow advance his career Pitts was pleased to spend the day showing his paintings to Miss J. Woodworth, daughter of the C.C.F. leader in Ottawa. She had been brought by mutual friend and neighbour Doug Nimmo and Pitts reported, "was exceedingly interested".¹⁸²

178. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1934.

179. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1934. Pitts did not elaborate.

180. *Ibid.*, December 9-10, 1934.

181. *Ibid.*, December 16, 1934; *ibid.*, December 23, 1934; *ibid.*, December 28, 1934.

182. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1934. Unfortunately nothing came of this.

This is an example of the constant support that Pitts received from his large number of friends.

January 1935 was for the most part devoted to the "Kootenay Indians" section of Pitts' "Indian Collection". This work included another head and shoulders portrait of Art Comeau and a full length portrait of Barnaby, Barnaby, White Sun [Figure 26], based on "film and notes recorded at time."¹⁸³ Figure 26 is a full length portrait of White Sun which is, as we saw in Figure 22, a tribute to the "noble savage". Here Barnaby, Barnaby is depicted in pristine and authentic Kootenay wilderness. Pitts provides a visual record of the living chief White Sun, while at the same time expressing the romanticized view of how it was before the coming of the white man. Again the pose and attention to details of dress is consistent with the works of a number of artists depicting Native North Americans.

Before the end of January 1935 Pitts had brought the total of finished paintings in his "Indian Collection" to seventy four. Three of these were the commissioned works sent in September 1934 to Father Patterson who returned them as he "had no money with which to pay."¹⁸⁴

Pitts attended a very stimulating talk by W.A. Newcombe, in contrast to the disappointing radio lecture of

183. *Ibid.*, January 17, 1935. This is the third and final notation of employing a camera as an *aide memoire*.

184. *Ibid.*, January 22, 1935.

the previous month. The two of them continued their discussion for hours after the lecture.¹⁸⁵ Later in the month they met at what turned out to be "a very poor address by the artist Landemeer, an Englishman of the Alwanah variety."¹⁸⁶ At the conclusion of Landemeer's talk, the president of the Island Arts and Crafts Society asked Pitts if he would like to speak, but he declined. In doing so he might have missed a golden opportunity, for Emily Carr was sitting attentively in the audience. Had he not been so painfully shy, and spoken of his "Indian Collection", his travels or even his sincere interest in the Native people, Carr may have warmed to him and a mutually beneficial association and friendship could have developed.¹⁸⁷

Instead, quietly after the meeting adjourned, Pitts "met Miss Emily Carr and Mrs Bullen whose acquaintances we might further."¹⁸⁸ Newcombe then invited Pitts for coffee, which immediately changed to going for a "few beer at Half Way House", not an activity Carr would have engaged in. Pitts

185. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1935. The lecture was given at the Wesley Hall in Sidney.

186. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1935. This was sponsored by the Island Arts and Crafts Society.

187. Both Winnifred and Raymond Pitts separately expressed to me that had Pitts not been so painfully shy he most certainly would have been a very great artist.

188. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, January 25, 1935. Rose Bullen, also a watercolour artist, was a long standing member of the Island Arts and Crafts Society.

recorded meeting Emily Carr but a search of Emily Carr's journals reveals that she didn't mention meeting Pitts.¹⁸⁹

By 1935 Carr was focused on the spirituality in nature. Her works of this period are almost exclusively landscapes, with the exception of the occasional portrait of her maid, a friend, or her monkey. But, like Pitts, throughout her long and prolific career Carr remained keenly interested in the Native cultures of British Columbia.

Staunchly Canadian of Canadian painters, Emily Carr was born in Victoria and trained first in San Francisco (1890-1893), followed by five years of intermittent study in England (1899-1904), and a final eighteen months in France (1910-1911).¹⁹⁰ Before her trip to France Carr had travelled up the coast from Vancouver to Alaska. During this 1907 journey Carr was enthralled by the Native villages en route. In Alaska she came in contact with the successful American painter Theodore Richardson, who spent his summers painting totems and Native people of the Northwest coast and his winters finishing his works, exhibiting and selling them

189. B.C.A.R.S., Emily Carr, Carr Papers, Unpublished Journals, January 1-31, 1935; Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1966.

190. Kerry Mason Dodd, *Sunlight in the Shadows: The Landscape of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1984, p.vi-vii.

in New York.¹⁹¹ According to Carr, Richardson praised her work and helped her strengthen her commitment to Native themes. Carr wrote in her private journal and later in her book, *Growing Pains*, that: "We passed many Indian villages on our way down the coast [of British Columbia]. The Indian people and their Art touched me deeply. By the time I reached home my mind was made up. I was going to picture totem poles in their own village settings, as complete a collection of them as I could."¹⁹² Carr, like Verner and so many other American artists was "working for history", and wanted to capture on paper and canvas a race perceived to be vanishing. Unlike Frederick Bell-Smith or Frederick Verner, for example, Carr wanted a new means for reaching this goal. She felt that the conservative academy approach, which she had been taught at both the California School of Design and later at the Westminster School of Art, was not an adequate mechanism for portraying the Native cultures of British Columbia. In the hopes of finding a "fresh seeing", as she called it, Carr travelled to Paris in 1911, where she had heard the "new art", Post-Impressionism, was taking the art world by storm.¹⁹³ Actually the first few of the storms were over by the time Carr arrived in 1911, but the

191. Michael S. Kennedy, "Alaska's Artists: Theodore J. Richardson", *Alaska Journal* 3 (Winter 1973), p.40.

192. Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1946, p.283.

193. *Ibid.*, p.284.

training she received at the Académie Colarossi, and then with John Duncan Fergusson, broadened her vision and gave her the means to return to British Columbia and paint it and the Native cultures with a fresh approach.

Emily Carr was filled with enthusiasm when she returned to Victoria in 1911 and prepared for her extensive sketching trip to the Queen Charlotte Islands and Skeena River area the following summer. This sketching trip of 1912 was extremely productive.¹⁹⁴ Carr returned to Vancouver, rented Drummond Hall at the University of British Columbia and exhibited over two hundred works including the well known *Haida Totems*, *Cha-Atl* [Figure 4] and *Tanoo, Q.C.I.*. Carr felt that her collection of "Indian paintings", as she referred to them, was extremely valuable as an historical record and offered to sell the collection to the Province of British Columbia in 1913.¹⁹⁵ As was previously mentioned, the purchase was not made until after her death, and then it was only a partial one.

After this burst of creative energy, mitigating factors such as a depressed economy, diminished personal financial resources, World War I, and what Carr perceived as a rejection of her new French-influenced style curtailed her

194. Kerry Mason [Dodd], "Travels With Emily", *Beautiful British Columbia Magazine* Vol.24, No.1 (Summer 1982), pp.36-46.

195. The letters in the British Columbia Archives and Records Service concerning the possible transaction make very interesting reading.

project to document the Northwest Coast Native cultures.¹⁹⁶

Carr did continue to paint sporadically while struggling to make ends meet running a boarding house, raising sheep dogs, hooking rugs, and making pottery for the tourist trade.

Most of her sketching trips of this period were only across the street to Beacon Hill Park, where incidentally Arthur Pitts was sketching on occasion at this time.

The great turning point in her career came in 1927 through a visit by Eric Brown, the director of the National Gallery of Canada. Marius Barbeau, the great ethnologist who had met Carr previously and purchased three paintings, had urged Brown to seek Carr out when he was in Victoria in an effort to have her contribute to an exhibit for the National Gallery in Ottawa. *The Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern* which opened in December 1927 in Ottawa and travelled to Toronto and Montreal featured twenty six of Carr's 1912 paintings and also her rugs and pottery.¹⁹⁷ In all three media the subject was Native art. Villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands such as Yan, Cha-Atl, Skedans and Tanoo were the subjects of most of the paintings; totem poles and house fronts were the predominant elements. The exhibition was a great success, but more importantly for

196. Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.227-240.

197. Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.9-18; Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.313-318; Paula Blanchard, *The Life of Emily Carr*, op. cit., pp.169-181.

Emily Carr, Barbeau had provided the catalyst for her to connect with other Canadian artists who were similarly committed to painting Canada in a Canadian way. Canadian subject matter, principally its landscape and people, were paramount to the Group of Seven and other associated artists who would soon join the Group and enlarge it to become the twenty-eight member Canadian Group of Painters. Of the Group, Lawren Harris, whom she first met at the 1927 Exhibition, was by far the most inspiring to Carr. He encouraged her in her mission of recording the Native cultures of Canada's west coast.¹⁹⁸ Carr was also thrilled and astonished by the work of other artists participating in this Canadian West Coast Art exhibition.¹⁹⁹ Previously unknown to Carr, several had been following a similar, although in most cases short-lived, passion for painting Native themes and had made sketching trips out west to some of her beloved Native villages. Just the previous year, for example, the Group's A.Y. Jackson had visited the Skeena River with Barbeau. Carr wrote of Jackson's work:

I loved his things, particularly some snowthings of Quebec [not in the Exhibit but later at his studio] and three canvases up Skeena River [which were in the exhibit]. I feel a little as if beaten at my own game. His Indian pictures have something mine lack - rhythm, poetry. Mine are so downright. But perhaps his haven't quite the love

198. It was also Harris who in 1930 encouraged her to turn away from the Native themes which he felt she had explored fully and concentrate on the landscape of British Columbia.

199. B.C.A.R.S., Emily Carr Papers, Unpublished Journal, 1927.

in them of the people and the country that mine have. How could they?²⁰⁰

Barbeau had encouraged a host of other Canadian artists to explore Native themes. The 1927 Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern exhibit stimulated many artists in addition to those actually taking part. In the non-Native portion of the exhibit Emily Carr's work was hung alongside that of Lawren Harris, Edwin Holgate, A.Y. Jackson, Frederick Varley, Walter J. Phillips, Florence Wyle, Pegi Nicol, Annie D. Savage, Langdon Kihn, and Paul Kane. All but Kane were living at the time; all but Langdon Kihn were Canadian.²⁰¹

Following the exhibition Carr, now 56 years old, returned to Victoria and renewed her vow to paint as complete a picture of the Native people as possible. To this end, the following summer she embarked on the second most prolific sketching trip of her career. She travelled first to the Skeena and Nass River areas in northern British Columbia and then in equally difficult conditions to the remote villages of the Queen Charlotte Islands. In the 1928 paintings Carr showed many of the same villages and poles she painted on her 1912 trip, but with a simplified yet powerful composition. There is less detail yet more

200. Emily Carr, *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr*, Toronto, Clark Irwin, 1966, p.5.

201. National Gallery of Canada, *Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern*, Ottawa, 1927 [Catalogue in B.C.A.R.S., Carr Papers].

intensity.

Carr's genuine respect for and interest in the Native people found a creative outlet even after 1930 when her main painting focus was that of the landscape of British Columbia. In later life, when ill health confined her to bed and away from the forests she wished to paint, Carr comforted herself with writing, especially about her trips to various Native villages in British Columbia. This was the genesis of her first book, *Klee Wyck*, published in 1941. Not only her writing but her crafts display a love of Native life. The rugs she hooked were with few exceptions depictions of frogs, ravens, and killer whales following Native designs. Her pottery was of the same Native themes and she went as far as signing them "Klee Wyck" [meaning laughing one], the name she had been given by the Nu-chah-nulth people when she visited Ucluelet in 1898.²⁰²

At the time of her death in 1945 Carr's studio was filled with painting of the native people, baskets, mostly Salish, which she had collected over the years and other treasures relating to her life long interest in the Native people. Fortunately most of her paintings are now in the collections of Canadian public institutions. Over 500 works by Emily Carr are in the collections of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service and the Vancouver Art Gallery

202. Emily Carr, *Klee Wyck*, Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1941, p.9.

alone.

In early 1935 Pitts continued working assiduously on Duncan, Kootenay and Alaska sections of his "Indian Collection". He spent one day digging in the midden he and his brother in law came across at Bazan Bay, near Sidney:

It was possible to assume the actual sight of the village. Although we dug for more than 2 hours discovered nothing more than the skeleton of a dog, part of a human skull & fragment of sharpening tool.²⁰³

He returned to the Tsouet Reserve "in quest of subjects" and received a promise to pose from one dancer.²⁰⁴

With seventy five completed paintings in his "Indian Collection", plus an unspecified but sizeable number of artifacts to accompany it, Pitts cashed in a portion of his life insurance policy to finance a trip to England.²⁰⁵ It had been his plan for years to take Peggy to England and a dream for sometime to have a major exhibition of his "Indian Collection" there.

Pitts continued his efforts locally. He had every intention of returning to British Columbia at a later date:

Our wanderings in search of Indian subjects, so rapidly vanishing, took us over 4,000 miles in British Columbia and Alaska, and my one desire is to return to those very remote and fascinating

203. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, February 6, 1935.

204. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1935.

205. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1935.

regions once more, ere such priceless relics of the past fade into total obscurity.²⁰⁶

Whether it would be one year or ten depended on the success or lack thereof he encountered in England.²⁰⁷ As previously arranged, Pitts took nine of his paintings to Mrs. Cree at the Provincial Archives. She agreed to an exhibit "after Easter" and suggested Pitts contact Alec MacDonald for exhibiting at B.C. House in London. From the Archives Pitts went to Sommers, who "was quite impressed & deplored the fact I had none for local sale. Informed him would duplicate the collection for about \$25.00 each. He said they were worth \$75.00. Wants other small pictures if I have them."²⁰⁸

Pitts set about painting duplicates of his Indian Collection to leave with Sommers. His only excursion at this time was to the nearby Tsouet Reserve, where he had been told a large dance was being held. The Native people asked him and his two friends to leave so they did, but Pitts "saw sufficient to make a possible sketch" which he

206. Arthur Pitts, "An Artist Among the Indians - III", *Canada's Weekly*, London, England, p.496.

207. All furniture was being left in storage in Saanichton; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, April 25, 1935. Also Pitts borrowed a trunk for their trip which indicates that he did not plan to be gone indefinitely; *ibid.*, June 3, 1935.

208. *Ibid.*, March 2, 1935. Carr's exhibition paintings, few of which sold, were offered for \$100 to \$200 each, although she privately sold her smaller oils on paper to friends for \$5 or \$10.

worked on for the following week and produced a finished painting as well. The sketch is in B.C.A.R.S. It never troubled him when he was asked to leave a dance as he understood that as a white he was an intruder on the ceremony. He always considered it a privilege to be present, even briefly, on such an occasion.

Pitts, having for weeks investigated various routes and ships available for their impending trip to England, finally booked passage on the *M.S. Seattle*, expected to leave from Vancouver on June 6. It was chosen on the basis that it was "the longest [journey] therefore most interesting" option to Pitts.²⁰⁹ This done, he set about culling his accumulation of worldly goods, spending an entire afternoon burning old letters.²¹⁰

At this time Carr was in the habit of mounting a spring and fall exhibition of her work in her home and studio on Simcoe Street. Pitts and Peggy made a special trip to Victoria to attend the spring 1935 showing. Although it is likely that Pitts would have seen examples of her work at Newcombe's home and also in various Island Arts and Crafts Exhibitions in Victoria, this was the first solo exhibition of her work Pitts had seen:

Peggy and I paid a visit to Emily Carr's exhibition in her studio at Simcoe Street of the West Coast & B.C. Indians. Her work is of

209. *Ibid.*, March 26, 1935.

210. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1935.

considerable historical worth much of it having been executed in 12 or 13 [1912 or 1913] when many houses were standing in the Queen Charlottes. She possesses quite a flair for design although is something of a showman. Her detail, rather essential in such matters leaves much to the imagination.²¹¹

Interestingly this opinion echoes that of Charles Newcombe, who was asked by the Minister responsible, in 1912, whether it was advisable for the Province of British Columbia to purchase Carr's paintings:

Summing up, I am of the opinion that if the colours could be toned down in new copies & if certain details of size & accuracy were corrected under proper supervision, many of Miss Carr's studies might be of interest and value as decorative wall paintings.²¹²

As already mentioned, the degree of detail varies in both artists' work. It would be possible to take an example of Carr's Indian Collection showing as much attention to detail as usually demonstrated in the work of Pitts. On the whole though, it is true that Pitts did give greater attention to a realistic depiction of the poles. There is a strong similarity between Carr's 1912 "Indian paintings" and Pitts' 1933-35 "Indian Collection" particularly in their respective watercolours of deserted Native villages. The landscape in Pitts' works reflects a traditional academic approach. This is less so in Carr's, as it is in the

211. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1935.

212. B.C.A.R.S., Add. Mss, Charles Newcombe to Dr. H.E. Young, December 1912. On Newcombe's recommendation the Province did not purchase Carr's collection of paintings at this time.

landscape that the Fauve palette and short brush strokes are evident. Both Pitts and Carr in 1912 take a literal stance in their subject matter. Their intentions are the same; to record something of the Native cultures as faithfully as possible.

In April 1935 Pitts was shocked to read in the newspaper that the Indian Grave at Tsartlip which he had painted had disappeared. He felt responsible, "having created the desire in Barbeau's breast. The grave now reposes at Ottawa." Pitts had sent Barbeau a copy of his painting, but had not considered that the theft of the grave might be the result.²¹³

Pitts spent several weeks culling his reference files, reading "Indian books", reworking old sketches and giving away some of his work. "I find it comparatively easy to bestow my work gratis upon the public but to sell is another question."²¹⁴

The B.C. Historical Association invited Pitts to hold a one evening exhibit at the end of the month, but this time Pitts felt it wouldn't be worth the time required to prepare it.²¹⁵ Yet when he read in the morning paper that there

213. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, April 1, 1935.

214. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1935. The "Indian books" included Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* and Rev. Charles Moser, *Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island*.

215. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1935.

was a large boulder and cavern called Thunderbird's Lair where Native women and children resorted in time of war Pitts sprang into action:

Calling at Bannockburn we sought information from Alex. Thomson. He gave us the necessary direction but it was obviously difficult to find. Very fortunately we had not commenced long on our journey when we met Rich who was most willing to accompany us. The first part of the journey along a fairly good Road occupied one mile to the cabin of John Dean. We saw a racing canoe partly constructed which had been abandoned. Our journey thence for another mile was not easy to follow through deer tracks & salal bushes. Eventually after about 1 1/2 hrs we reached our destination. The Thunderbird Lair situated amidst many trees in a hollow & at a spot very difficult to locate. Its shape peculiarly resembled a whale & was dropped in its present site by the Thunderbird according to Ancient Legends of the Indians. We tarried there long enough for me to make 2 rapid sketches.²¹⁶

This was, in Pitts' estimation, well worth the effort. Before leaving for England one final sketching trip was made to the Tsartlip Reserve. Pitts completed a landscape, "probably one of my best Indian landscapes", and made arrangements for Jimmie Jim to sit for a portrait.²¹⁷ Once this portrait was finished Pitts attended to the inundation of requests for sketches from various friends. Most of these were paintings of their homes, for which Pitts charged \$35. As a farewell gesture Pitts and Peggy held a three day

216. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1935. Unfortunately the whereabouts of these sketches is unknown.

217. *Ibid.*, May 6-7, 1935. A portrait of Jimmy Jim by Pitts, dated July 1935 is in B.C.A.R.S.

exhibition and party for their friends and neighbours.²¹⁸

England and Exhibitions

Arthur and Peggy left on their briefly delayed voyage the evening of June 13, 1935. The *Seattle* arrived in New Westminster in the middle of the night, which failed to deter eleven close friends from coming aboard to encourage a *bon voyage*.²¹⁹ The next day they began sailing south along the coast, stopping first in San Francisco, then Los Angeles. Along the west coast of Mexico Pitts records sketching in a desultory manner.²²⁰ When they reached San José, Guatemala, Pitts became very interested: "The locals are a mixture of Spanish & Indians. We loaded 300 sacks of coffee during which time several sketches were made."²²¹ These sketches became paintings over the next few days. The next stop was Cristobal, Panama, where Pitts spent a delightful afternoon sketching in "the native quarter".²²² Similarly at Puerto Colombia, Colombia, where again they stopped to load coffee Pitts was busy sketching the people and their "characteristically thatched house[s]".²²³

218. *Ibid.*, May 19-20, 1935.

219. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1935.

220. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1935.

221. *Ibid.*, June 29, 1935.

222. *Ibid.*, July 2, 1935.

223. *Ibid.*, July 4, 1935.

Puerto Rico and Haiti he also found fascinating, appealing to his sense of Edwardian adventure. There is no mention of "recording passing races" here. It is the Edwardian taste for the bright exotic which stimulated him to paint. Pitts and Peggy had a marvellous time on board, making friends with all and sundry. Such interest was shown in Pitts' work that he agreed to unpack his Indian Collection and give an exhibition on board. One passenger [unnamed in the journal] was so impressed with his work that he gave him Noel Coward's address and insisted Pitts call on him.²²⁴

The ship arrived at Le Havre, where Pitts and Peggy enjoyed the sights, particularly the churches and museums.²²⁵ In Antwerp Pitts spent an afternoon sketching an old door. The trip on the *Seattle* ended in Rotterdam, where a boat took passengers on to England.

Pitts' reaction to England was ambivalent. Although delighted to see his family and introduce his wife to them, he wrote, "England seemed unfriendly. I felt inclined to turn tail & run at all speed to other parts. My desire to travel remains very constant & being tasted of it again it is my desire to continue."²²⁶

224. Pitts thanked him profusely and was pleased to be given such a commendation, but there is no evidence that he did follow this lead. It would seem out of character for him to do this as he was reserved as well as modest.

225. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, July 18, 1935.

226. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1935.

Pitts' first artistic endeavours in England were family portraits, first his five year old nephew David, then his brother Raymond. He and Peggy rented a flat in London and turned to the task of exhibiting the Indian Collection as Kane and Catlin had done with their respective "Indian Galleries" a century earlier.²²⁷ Pitts first met with Charles E. Tripp, publisher of the *Morning Post*, who was interested in his painting collection, but more interested in his adventures.²²⁸ He suggested that since "the moneyed people" did not return to London until mid October, it would be useless to have an exhibition before then. Instead, he suggested Pitts should write about his encounters with the Native people for publication in the newspaper.²²⁹ Pitts immediately set about doing this, producing 10,000 words in eight days.²³⁰ He took the article to Tripp, who liked it but said it should be a book, and consequently telephoned Grayson of Grayson & Grayson Publishers.²³¹ Unfortunately nothing more came of this.

Through a friend, arrangements were made for Sir W.

227. The flat was at D-5 109 Elgin Ave., Maida Vale, London W.9.

228. Tripp's son was a close friend of Pitts' brother Dave.

229. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, July 21, 1935.

230. *Ibid.*, July 22-29, 1935.

231. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1935. Grayson & Grayson were located on Curson St, Picadilly.

Goscombe John, R.A., a sculptor, to review Pitts' work. John felt the paintings were good, gave Pitts a letter of introduction to the Fine Arts Society and promised to send a helpful friend, Sir George Clausen, to see Pitts. Pitts was delighted by the prospect, for he greatly admired Clausen, considering him to be a leading British painter both in oils and watercolour.²³²

A week later a rejection letter arrived from the Fine Arts Society. It didn't feel that "an exhibit of North West Coast subjects would be successful", but suggested trying the commercial gallery, Brook & Connells.²³³

Pitts, accompanied by a mutual friend, went to the St. John's Wood studio of Gregory Brown, whom Pitts regarded as the "foremost Poster Artist in England." Brown, like John and Clausen, was impressed with the "Indian Collection" and advised Pitts to approach the Imperial Institute and other London galleries.²³⁴ At the Imperial Institute three days later Pitts found that all the "Empire Countries" were represented, and that the Canadian exhibit was not among the

232. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1935. Clausen (1852-1944) trained at South Kensington art schools from 1867-73, then worked in the studio of Edwin Long. R.A. Clausen himself became R.A. in 1908 as a proponent of realism, and continued to uphold the traditions of the late nineteenth century Royal Academy throughout his long career; Harold Osborne, editor, *The Oxford Companion to Art*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, p.247.

233. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, September 11, 1935.

234. *Ibid.*, September 18, 1935.

best:

There is only a small case of Indian objects represented & my pictures would certainly enrich the interior. However it must be regarded as a last resource owing to its absolute lack of publicity.²³⁵

Two days later Pitts made a concerted effort to interest a commercial gallery in his "Indian Collection". Connells of Conduit St. was his first stop. They were booked until the following spring and said that all other galleries in London were as well, and furthermore that the subject matter wouldn't sell well. This was the opinion shared by the Brook Galleries, Coolings, Redferns, Ackermans and the Walker Gallery, which he also visited this day.²³⁶ He then approached the British Empire Society of Arts, which offered Pitts a glimmer of hope for exhibiting the next summer at the Imperial Institute. The director, D.I. Lewis, advised him to contact B.C. House, a possibility which Pitts had conceived of months earlier. He in fact had an appointment with the Agent General McAdam the very next day. McAdam was excited by Pitts' work, but rather than offer him exhibit space, he suggested Pitts contact A.C. Bossom, "a wealthy collector of northwest curios".²³⁷

235. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1935.

236. *Ibid.*, September 23, 1935.

237. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1935. Twenty years later the A.C. Bossom collection was purchased by the National Museum of Canada, thereby returning many west coast artifacts of British Columbia. Lt. George Emmons had purchased most of these on Bossom's behalf. The screen which Pitts had painted in 1934

Rather than being discouraged at what could be perceived as a runaround, Pitts was becoming more excited about the prospect of a new artistic project. He had begun reading *London Lanes* by Alan Stapleton, and was feverishly taking notes as the subject of Old London had long fascinated him.²³⁸ Pitts decided to do a series of watercolours on the old buildings before they were lost to the wrecking ball. As with his "Indian Collection", Pitts had an intense desire to record a subject of not only romantic but historical value.

As he began on his new artistic mission, the "Vanishing London" series, Pitts was exuberant and energetic. Most of October he made a foray to seek out old and famous buildings, "all very interesting and set aside for my painting campaign."²³⁹ When he wasn't sketching, or in some instances photographing, these buildings, Pitts was reading and researching about them. He took photographs when buildings were either in the process of demolition or soon to be demolished, so that he would have something from

[Figure 19] disappeared shortly afterwards, and a screen of the same description was purchased from Emmons by Bossom at about this time. The reader is directed to Douglas Cole, *Captured Heritage: The Scramble for Northwest Coast Artifacts*, op. cit., for a thorough treatment of Emmons' involvement in the development of collections of Native artifacts for various people and institutions.

238. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, September 28, 1935.

239. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1935.

which to sketch at a later date. Just as with his elderly Native models, the totems and deserted Native villages, he was acutely aware of his race against time.

Buildings of immediate concern were Montague House, an old tobacconist shop, St. Bride's Church, the buildings in Whitehall Gardens and Fetter Lane, shops in Mayfair, and "what appeared to be pre-fire houses."²⁴⁰

Although energetically pursuing this theme Pitts had by no means discarded his "Indian Collection". Early in October he received an invitation to the *London Illustrated News*. With high hopes he took one hundred and thirteen "Indian" paintings [unframed of course] to the editor. He was "very interested but said it couldn't be run for 6 mos. or a year & owing to the Abyssinian Question there is not the space etc. - wonderful collection for an exhibition etc."²⁴¹ Soon after Pitts received an invitation to call on Chisman of the Suffolk Galleries. Chisman was keen on the collection, but advised Pitts not to exhibit unless he possessed close to £100 sterling with which he was prepared to gamble. Chisman suggested going to the Arlington Galleries, of which he was a partner, where the rent would be less, £25 per week for a two week show, which would include production of a catalogue and publicity. Chisman's friend Buchel, a portrait artist who praised Pitts'

240. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1935.

241. *Ibid.*, October 9, 1935.

technique, suggested he contact Selfridges, Heals, Harrods and Joey's of Whigmore St. to secure an exhibition.²⁴²

Pitts immediately went to the Arlington Galleries. The partners Chisman and MacDonald were anxious to book an exhibit date for him. Pitts, however, declined for he was afraid to stake £50 in a gamble which would deplete his capital completely. Pitts went to Selfridge's as advised and was jubilant when they offered him exhibit space for January 1936. They would publicize the exhibit as historical and ethnological subjects.²⁴³

Dave Pitts encouraged his brother to approach Foyles, which he did; meanwhile Selfridge's and Pitts couldn't come to terms on the selling price of the "Indian Collection" paintings. Pitts wanted a range of twelve to twenty pounds, but Selfridge's felt their customers had a three guinea threshold.²⁴⁴ Without acrimony, the proposed exhibition was cancelled by mutual agreement. Seal, with whom Pitts had been negotiating at Selfridge's, offered to contact Whiteley's and recommend Pitts for an exhibition. The result was a tentative arrangement for a show in mid January 1936.²⁴⁵

242. *Ibid.*, October 28, 1935. Selfridges, Heals, Harrods and Joey's were the London equivalent of Canadian department stores, such as the Hudson's Bay Company and Eaton's.

243. *Ibid.*, November 1, 1935.

244. *Ibid.*, November 11, 1935.

245. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1935.

Just before Christmas Pitts returned to the Arlington Galleries, where he was surprised and delighted to see an exhibition by Alister MacDonald, "One hundred and one pictures of Old London". They ranged in price from six to fifteen guineas and nine had been sold in the first week. The message wasn't lost on Pitts; there was a market for his "Vanishing London" series.²⁴⁶

1936 began auspiciously with a confirmation from Whiteleys for an exhibition of his "Indian Collection". On the suggestion of Hainsworth, his contact at Selfridge's, Pitts took his 10,000 word article and some "Indian pictures" to *Canada's Weekly* where he was warmly received. The first of three articles appeared January 10, of which Pitts said, "The cut of *La Tasse* is terrible but they reprinted word for word approx. 1,600 words of my article."²⁴⁷ Terrible though the reproduction is Pitts did not lodge a complaint or ask for reprinting. He was

246. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1935.

247. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1936; Arthur D.J. Pitts, "An Artist Among the Indians - I", *Canada's Weekly*, January 10, 1936, pp.435-436. The reproduction of *La Tasse* is so poor that it can only be viewed as negative publicity for Pitts. Much was lost in the translation from painting to newspaper. I had a sinking feeling when I saw the article, having been familiar with the original. The second article printed a week later included an equally poor reproduction of *A Cowichan Woman*; Arthur D.J. Pitts, "An Artist Among the Indians - II", *Canada's Weekly*, January 17, 1936, pp.463-464. The third and last article featured a faithful reproduction entitled *White Sun* [Figure 22] in the publication; Arthur D.J. Pitts, "An Artist Among the Indians - III", *Canada's Weekly*, January 24, 1936, pp.495-496.

grateful for any recognition.

In the midst of preparing a catalogue, making red gummed paper patches for hoped for sales and mounting his paintings, Pitts learned that Canada's High Commissioner Vincent Massey would be attending opening night and that McAdam, Agent General of British Columbia would officially open the show. A thousand invitations had been printed; two hundred for Whitley clients, two hundred and fifty for B.C. House and Pitts to distribute and five hundred for the subscribers of *Canada's Weekly*.²⁴⁹ The exhibit opened on January 13:

The place was well filled & we filed into our places. MacAdam [sic] addressed the assembly quite well & as he declared it open the curtains were dragged aside quite dramatically. I was interviewed by Southam's, the Canadian Newspaper people, the two local Bayswater Rags, the News Chronicle, while I understood the others were present. McAdam & I were photographed twice while the crowd bugged about... I was not greatly pleased with the final proceedings & there were no enquiries about pictures. I felt rather depressed so purchased a small bottle of Scotch.²⁴⁹

The next day Pitts was chagrined that no mention of his work appeared in the press. He wrote to the art critics of the *London Times*, *Morning Post*, *Express* and *Herald*, inviting them to review the exhibition. Critics from the *London Times* and *Morning Post* responded, and in fact favourable

248. Who would have seen the dreadful reproduction of Pitts' painting of *La Tasse* and perhaps been prejudiced against attending.

249. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, January 13, 1936.

reviews appeared in both the *Times* and "a Bayswater Paper": "Marriot, the art critic [for the *Times*] gave me about 150 words which was exceedingly good & made my exhibit worthwhile."²⁵⁰ Marriot wrote, "the primary interest of the watercolours ... is ethnographical but they have also a good deal of artistic merit. Mr. Pitts draws very well and his use of watercolour is remarkably direct and free."²⁵¹

Pitts couldn't have had worse luck, for the write up appeared on the very day King George V died. The death of the King sent the population into mourning and Pitts felt the bell had tolled for his exhibit as well. For three days there was a constant queue of thousands of people filing past the body of King George lying in state at Westminster Hall. Pitts and Peggy spent three and a half hours in the pouring rain for a turn to pay their respects to this well-loved monarch. Despite the king's death, many interested people did attend the exhibition of Pitts' "Indian Collection".

The first paintings to sell had been entered as an afterthought because there was space for three of his "Vanishing London" works. *The Huguenot Shop* sold for ten guineas to a Mrs. Walters, who returned a week later and

250. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1936.

251. Andrew Marriot, "Exhibition of Water-colours", *The Times* [London], January 21, 1936, p.17.

bought *Peel House* from the same series.²⁵² In both instances Pitts immediately worked up a duplicate painting to take the place of the sold one.

Pitts reported a steady flow of visitors over the three week period, including Earnshaw from the Wellcome Institute [Euston Road]: "He liked my work & I only hope his people are sufficiently impressed to purchase the entire collection."²⁵³ The exhibit closed on February 3, 1936. Pitts concluded that "The results have really been quite satisfactory & the publicity received from the Times and Post exceedingly favourable as it was, was much more than I dare anticipate."²⁵⁴ Pitts felt that the public was very interested in the subject of old London buildings, judging from the fact that two of the three paintings of this theme had sold. One of the Indian pictures sold, but Pitts did not make a note of its title in his journal.

Pitts decided that his next exhibition would be a series of paintings of old London buildings. Lambert, a successful London illustrator who had attended the show, encouraged Pitts to consider illustration, explaining that

252. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, January 24, 1936.

253. Arthur Pitts, Private Journal, 28 Jan. 1936 to 24 Aug. 1938, January 30, 1936.

254. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1936. The positive review had appeared in the *Morning Post* on January 25, 1936.

he felt Pitts' talent lay in that direction.²⁵⁵ Although once again very busy adding to his Vanishing London collection, Pitts did take the time, once his exhibition was over, to attend the Regent Advertising Club, where he met Robinson, the art editor of *Good Housekeeping* and *Nash* magazines. Unlike Lambert, Robinson felt his work didn't really lend itself to illustration, but he invited Pitts to do a sample illustration of a story, which he did.²⁵⁶

Pitts was anxious to augment the Vanishing London series. Every day he worked on this collection. The buildings in Adelphi Terrace, Wardrobe Court, Salisbury Court and every "quaint old pub" he could find occupied him throughout the spring, so that by the beginning of June Pitts had completed thirty eight paintings of London's historical buildings.

Pitts was buoyed by a very flattering article on his Whiteley's exhibition which had appeared in both the *Edmonton Journal* and *The Daily Province* [Vancouver].²⁵⁷ At the same time he learned that a reproduction of one of his Native portraits, *Mrs. Young*, had appeared in the *Alaska*

255. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 10 June 1932 to 27 Jan. 1936, January 9, 1936.

256. Pitts had taken two paintings from his Indian Collection and two from his Vanishing London series to the meeting.

257. A.C. Cummings, "B.C. Indian Painting", *The Daily Province* [Vancouver], February 1, 1936, p.6. Pitts received news of these on February 19 and February 24 respectively, and fired off a thank you note to the art critic; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 28 Jan. 1936 to 24 Aug. 1938.

Sportsman.

Just in case there was a market for his illustrations Pitts produced two, both called *Modern Boy*, and together with two paintings from his Indian Collection and four from his London series, presented them for a brief exhibit at Fleetway House.²⁵⁸

A printing firm, Wood, Rozelaur and Wilkes Ltd., saw potential in Pitts' "London & Indian Paintings" for cigarette cards. Pitts left five sketches with them but wondered whether selling his work this way, for between five and ten guineas, would "damn me in the eyes of Bond St."²⁵⁹

Pitts continued to attend any exhibitions he could. Of the Royal Society of Water Colours exhibition he wrote, "There were 190 pictures including all the leading men but I was not induced to change my style by what was seen."²⁶⁰ Instead he headed off to obtain further visual details of the Old Osborne Hotel, which would result in number 25 of the Vanishing London series.

Pitts made the round of Bond St. galleries to exhibit his London series, but was gravely disappointed that except for Coolings they showed no interest. Coolings offered Pitts space, but it would cost him twenty five pounds per

258. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1936. Unfortunately, none of the eight sold.

259. *Ibid.*, March 10, 1936. He didn't need to worry long, for the firm in the end decided not to use the images.

260. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1936.

week and Pitts was absolutely broke.

Foyle's elevated his spirits with their offer of exhibit space in the summer. Pitts accepted at once, for although Foyle's took a thirty three and a third percent commission on all sales, they assumed all expenses and didn't charge for exhibit space.²⁶¹ Toward this end and also his exhibit with the British Empire Society in late May, Pitts worked feverishly completing pictures of Mark Lane, the Old Snuff Shop, Middle Temple Lane, Lincoln's Inn and St. Martin's Lane. What little time he took away from painting he spent at the National Gallery, the Tate, the National Portrait Gallery, or the Victoria and Albert Museum.²⁶²

The British Empire Society accepted two of Pitts' paintings, *Middle Temple Lane* and *St. Bart's Close*, for inclusion in the Imperial Institute exhibition in South Kensington. Pitts then paid 2/6 entry fee for each, and hoped that the selling price of ten guineas each would be met.²⁶³

Out of the blue Pitts received a letter from Agent General McAdam suggesting that Pitts exhibit in the C.P.R.

261. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1936.

262. He habitually went to the National Gallery on Saturdays, when there was no admission charge. At the Tate, Pitts found Whistler very disappointing, but Sargent and the French School were of great interest to him; *ibid.*, May 9, 1936.

263. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1936.

windows. While he was pursuing this avenue, the exhibit at the Imperial Institute came to a close with a dire result for all the artists involved; not one of the four hundred paintings had sold!²⁶⁴

Pitts was able to exhibit ten "Indian pictures" in a showcase in B.C. House in early June, but by August, lacking even a single offer to purchase he dejectedly retrieved them.²⁶⁵

The Vanishing London series was his main artistic focus throughout the spring and summer of 1936. Saville Row houses, those in Middle Temple Lane, Lamb House, and Nell Gwynne's House were some of those executed in London. There was one sketching trip made to Lyme Regis, Dorset, where Pitts worked up several sketches of early seventeenth century houses.²⁶⁶ On his return Foyles confirmed his exhibition of Vanishing London would open July 21. By mid July fifty paintings were ready and he turned his attention to publicizing the event. *Cavalcade* and *Evening News* interviewed Pitts, then published favourable reviews.²⁶⁷ Despite this, a disappointingly small number of visitors

264. *Ibid.*, May 31, 1936.

265. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1936.

266. *Ibid.*, June 30-July 3, 1936. Bob Forrest, Pitts' longtime friend from British Columbia, paid for Peggy and Arthur to join him for this brief holiday. Arthur in exchange gave Bob a portrait of *The Kootenai Chief*.

267. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1936.

attended the show in the first week. The next week the *Yorkshire Observer* and *Birmingham Gazette* also promoted the exhibition, but still there were no sales. Attendance increased slightly in August, from an average of forty to just over sixty people per week, and Foyles offered to extend the exhibit until September 19. Meanwhile Pitts continued to research, sketch and paint more historical structures in London. As each one was completed, it was hung on the wall at Foyles.²⁶⁸

During this period Pitts visited the London Museum, Lancaster House, the British Musuem and the Royal Academy, arranging his times to coincide with free or at least reduced rate hours. Of the Royal Academy summer exhibition Pitts wrote:

I was greatly heartened on entering the Water Colour Room. There is little indeed of outstanding merit & it leaves me puzzled how some obtained entry. I became almost disgusted when my own lack of success was considered.

On September 21 Pitts sadly removed his exhibit from Foyles. One thousand "catalogues" had been taken by visitors, and of this group three hundred and twenty one people signed the visitors' book.²⁶⁹ Pitts counted eighty "exceedingly good comments", but there was not a single sale. Pitts felt that, because he could not induce the art

268. *Ibid.*, July 30 to September 18, 1936.¹ By the end of the show eight paintings had been added.

269. The catalogue was a one page handout with titles and prices of paintings.

critics from the big London dailies to attend the exhibit, a snobbery barrier existed and hampered the success of the show. Foyles wasn't Bond Street. He also recognized that 1936 was a very difficult year for most people. Several visitors had told Pitts that they wanted to buy a painting but they just didn't have the money. Pitts empathized with them, for his financial picture was very bleak as well. He had been happy to sell his whole stamp collection for one guinea so that he could buy Peggy a pair of long needed shoes.²⁷⁰

For the remainder of the year Pitts continued to build up his collection of historically noteworthy structures. By Christmas of the following year they numbered ninety seven.²⁷¹ He managed to sell a few of these and some "Indian Collection" duplicates to friends and family. But his dream of exhibition sales was not yet realized. *The Sphere* reproduced four portraits from his "Indian Collection" in a full page spread, entitled "Among the Redskins of N.W. America".²⁷² Tenacious as ever, Pitts persisted with his study and sketching. He decided that if he couldn't sell work from either series he would pursue

270. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 28 Jan. 1936 to 24 Aug. 1938, September 17, 1936.

271. *Ibid.*, December 15, 1937.

272. James Montague, "Canada Still Pays the Indian for his Land", *The Sphere* [formerly *The Graphic*], September 17, 1938,, pp.450-451. A three sentence description of the person and "tribe" accompany the images for which Pitts received £4 each.

other channels, most notably a return to illustration and humorous sketches. Months of struggle in this field finally resulted in intermittent sales.

Success and Home

A hand-to-mouth existence continued until the end of 1938, when finally he was able to support Peggy and himself through sales of humorous sketches to *Punch*, *Windsor*, *Gaiety* and *The Sketch*. Fougasse, *Punch's* art editor, put Pitts in touch with Reginald Rouse, who was established as a wizard of captions. The ensuing partnership was a brilliant success for both. With Rouse's captions and Pitts' sketches art editors snapped up the cartoons.²⁷³ [Figures 27 and 28] Between 1938 and 1947 Pitts sold over fifteen hundred humorous sketches or cartoons to the above and other publications.²⁷⁴

When World War II erupted Pitts was disappointed to be too old for active duty. Nevertheless he energetically served in the Home Guard on the south coast of England from 1940 to 1944.²⁷⁵ Just after the war, in 1946, Pitts had

273. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 25 August 1938 to 22 May 1940, October 1938 to December 31, 1940.

274. "Sought for Collections: Haida Record Important Art", *Colonist*, March 26, 1955. This decade alone merits a book, but is outside the scope of this thesis, which concentrates on Pitts' first fifty years.

275. Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal*, 25 August 1938 to 22 May 1940; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal* 25 May 1940 to 7 Aug. 1941; Arthur Pitts, *Private Journal* 8 Aug. 1941 to 31 Oct.

his first great commercial success with the sale of one hundred and eighty "Vanishing London" paintings to the dealers, Puttick & Simpson Ltd., New Bond St. London.²⁷⁶ Finally the success he had yearned for in coming to London a decade earlier was his. The sale of the collection enabled Pitts and Peggy to return to Vancouver Island in 1947 and also fulfill his dream of painting more of the Native cultures of the Northwest coast. Figure 29 is an example of the paintings from his return trip to Alaska in 1947. Compared with the pole paintings of a dozen years earlier there is little evidence of a change in style or interpretation. It is still a photographic realism that pervades his work. The composition and palette is carefully worked out and tightly controlled.

Pitts thought that since his reputation was established with several British publications he would be able to continue as an illustrator and cartoonist for them, but the distance proved to be too great a hurdle. Success in this arena began to slip away and Pitts, once again, returned to the sale of paintings for his livelihood.

Pitts finally did sell his original "Indian Collection", but ironically it was not until he brought it back to Victoria. Through Norfolk Galleries the collection

1943; Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 1 Nov. 1943 to 7 July 1947.

276. "Arthur D.J. Pitts", Norfolk Galleries, Victoria, B.C., September 2, 1954 [artist's chronology; two page hand out].

of seventy seven paintings was sold to two institutions. Fifty one watercolours of British Columbia significance were purchased in 1954 by Willard Ireland, for the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, at \$62.50 each.²⁷⁷ For the same amount the remaining twenty six paintings, of Alaskan subjects, were purchased by Eric Harvey for the Glenbow Art Gallery and Museum in Calgary, Alberta.²⁷⁸

The Norfolk Gallery on Broad Street, Victoria, served as Pitts' agent throughout the nineteen fifties. Several successful exhibitions were held.²⁷⁹ Pitts joined the faculty of the Norfolk School of Art, associated with the gallery, and quickly discovered his new side line career as an art teacher enormously satisfying. Soon he became the instructor for the sketch group of the Saanich Peninsula Arts and Crafts Society as well.²⁸⁰

Pitts settled into a comfortable and enjoyable routine of painting, exhibiting and teaching. His happiness became clouded by Peggy's failing health. His wife and best friend

277. B.C.A.R.S., Paintings, Drawings and Prints, Briefing notes and correspondence between Mrs. Pitts and Provincial Archives; Arthur Pitts, Private Journal 13 March 1954 to 1 March 1956, August 16, 1954.

278. *Ibid.*; Moncrieff Williamson, "Famous Water Colourist Arthur Pitts Settles Here", *Victoria Daily Times*, June 8, 1958, p.6; Personal interview with Winnifred Pitts, October 30, 1990.

279. "Sought For Collections: Haida Record Important Art", *Daily Colonist*, March 26, 1955.

280. Margaret Belford, "Creativity Breeds Content", *Daily Colonist* [Victoria], May 21, 1978, p.12.

of more than forty years died in 1959 after a lengthy hospitalization.

Pitts continued with teaching and painting. For subjects he often reworked earlier sketches, both of the historical buildings of London and of Native themes. In his last two decades [1952-1972], again sharing an artistic course with Emily Carr, a large proportion of his paintings were of the British Columbia coastal landscape, particularly the shoreline of the Saanich Peninsula.²⁸¹ His last group of paintings demonstrated his fascination with the arbutus tree. In these as with his earlier works drawing was the foundation of the watercolours. Detail remained a primary concern for the focal point of the picture, yet looser brushwork prevailed in the background. As with Carr a single tree became a potent symbol, but for Pitts it was a portrait of nature. Carr's tree paintings in the thirties are generally expressions of spirituality. Pitts painted a more literal depiction. After his experiences in the trenches of World War I, Pitts' only religious interest was in the architectural significance and historical merit of church structures.

Although interested in a wide range of artists' work, Pitts never ventured into the modern world of abstraction. On modern art Arthur explained in a interview that he:

281. Within walking distance of his home at 959 Mt. Newton Cross Road, Saanichton.

...personally was immediately responsive to certain patterns and colors in abstract painting [and that] he was prepared to allow that many of the non-objective works are sincere, but that they fail to communicate their meaning to the public through ordinary visual method.²⁸²

He preferred a direct, literal association with his viewer. He wanted the audience in London to see what Chief David La Tasse looked like. The portraits also relayed messages of the individual personalities, but the interpretation by Pitts remained in check. Accurate draughtmanship was for him the most important element.

One of Pitts' students, Winnifred Regan, with whom Pitts shared many interests, became a sketching partner, good friend, and in 1961, his wife. Together they took several extensive sketching trips, including three to Italy,²⁸³ several on Vancouver Island and one to the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1966, where Pitts painted the remaining totems and villages of the Haida.

Five years later Arthur Pitts died at the age of eighty two, painting until the end.²⁸⁴ His interest in the Native people and their cultures never waned. It gave him lasting satisfaction that portions of his "Indian Collection" were

282. Moncrieff Williamson, "Famous Water Colourist Arthur Pitts Settles Here", *Victoria Daily Times*, June 8, 1958, p.6.

283. Pitts was particularly interested in any evidence of the Etruscan civilization. The vernacular buildings in Tuscany were a frequent subject for his Italian watercolours.

284. Personal interview with Winnifred Pitts, October 1, 1989. Pitts died February 13, 1972 in Resthaven hospital, where he had convalesced from his war wounds in 1917.

in the permanent collections of the Glenbow Art Gallery and Museum and the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. With his paintings he had made a valuable contribution to the visual record of the Native North American people.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Arthur D.J. Pitts deserves recognition as a significant British Columbia artist. On a solitary quest, imbued with the optimism and enthusiasm of the Edwardian age, Pitts struck out to make a life for himself, one full of adventure and artistic endeavours.

From his youth, travel and recording what he encountered with camera or brush provided the means for adventure and artistic expression. On his first journey abroad, to South Africa in 1912, Pitts' inherent interests in history and Native people and cultures were stimulated. What began as an amusing and leisurely pastime of photographing the Zulu people quickly turned into a passion for recording as much as possible about these people. While still a very young man, beginning to hone his skills as an artist, Pitts joined the large group of non-Native artists who focus their artistic energy on various aspects of Native cultures.

As a young boy in Edwardian London, Pitts had been made aware of traditional peoples, from other parts of the British Empire in particular, through the enormous numbers of newspapers, periodicals and boys' adventure books. The illustrations for these brought the work of such notable artists as Catlin, Kane and Remington to the young Arthur Pitts. Documentary art about Native people also reached the Edwardians through the extremely popular medium of

photography.

Inherent in these images were the stereotypes about Native people. In the course of the thesis the rise, fall, and mutations of stereotypes were addressed briefly in the overview of non-Native artists. Like Kane and Catlin before him Pitts ascribed to the notion of romantic adventure. For these artists the Native people were interesting because they were of another world. Pitts' keen interest in history added another dimension to his documentary art, that of preserving what was believed to be a "vanishing race". In this regard his attitude and motivation resembled that of Edward Curtis and Emily Carr, who were "working for history". Pitts, like Carr, was genuinely interested in Native people as individuals, and so shed many of the stereotypes of his age.

Pitts' budding interest in documenting Native people in South Africa would most certainly have bloomed sooner than it did were it not for the mitigating factors of financial disaster followed by the demands of World War I.

The theft of his South African savings ultimately resulted in his emigrating to Canada as a farm labourer. Although an adventure of a sort, for Pitts it was not romantic in the least. The gruelling experience left no time for his art. It did, however, inadvertently prepare him for the harsh conditions of the battlefields of France, the scene of his next "adventure".

At the front Pitts was forced to confront reality. Brushes with death, the loss of friends, and the shattering of his arms altered Pitts' consciousness. If anything it renewed his determination to live "Life" in the Edwardian sense. Although initially unable to hold a pencil, Pitts tenaciously renewed his vow to become an artist.

During the long months of convalescence, first in England, then Canada, he worked toward this end, studying and sketching hour after hour. Through a correspondence art course he made great advances and felt confident that he would succeed as a commercial artist. He focused on illustration and cartoon work for publications in North America and Britain, first from B.C., then in England. Years of struggle resulted in little success. Back in B.C., where although destitute he could be near his fiancée, Pitts eagerly accepted a paying position with an advertising firm in Vancouver. With financial worries eliminated and the love of his life, Peggy, now his bride, Pitts embarked on a phase of relative ease. In Vancouver he resumed painting excursions. By 1924 the lives of Native people resurfaced as a favourite theme. But Pitts was consumed by work at the office, leaving little time for his painting.

The world wide depression of the nineteen thirties struck Pitts along with millions of others. Always ready to turn adversity to advantage he viewed his unemployment as an opportunity to paint more, and he did just that.

Pitts devoted himself in the early 1930s to his longed for goal of being a successful artist and documenting Native people and cultures. To this end he travelled more than four thousand miles in British Columbia and the Alaska panhandle sketching and painting at a furious pace. He had a plan similar to that of several artists before him. Catlin, Kane, and Carr, for example, had focused on creating an "Indian Gallery" or "Indian Collection". Pitts had a similar dream. He knew other artists in the past had been able to make a career of painting Native themes. With determination and hard work he should be able to succeed in this as well.

Over three years and a staggering number of sketching trips Pitts did amass his "Indian Collection" of one hundred and twenty one paintings. It had been his desire to sell it as an entity to a major museum. When his attempts in this area failed he decided to take the collection to England for exhibition and sale, hopefully to an institution.

After much effort Pitts, to his great joy, finally exhibited seventy paintings of the "Indian Collection" in London in 1936. Although there was much fanfare and attendance was good, the collection as a whole was not purchased. In fact only three paintings sold.

Pitts, although disappointed by the lack of sales, was delighted to have had the exhibition. The exhibit itself was a success, only the sales were a failure. Timing was

against Pitts, for it was still the depression and most artists were struggling. Had the "Indian Collection" been purchased by a collector or foundation Pitts would have continued along his favourite artistic course, documenting Native peoples. He had dreamed of selling the collection to finance more sketching trips in British Columbia and Alaska.

With a wife to support and only a meagre disability pension cheque from the Army, Pitts had to be pragmatic. He temporarily turned from his "Indian Collection" and began amassing his "Vanishing London" series. He saw this as a popular theme among commercial galleries in London, and personally had sold two paintings of this type exhibited with his "Indian Collection".

After a tremendous effort, this collection too was exhibited, but failed to generate any sales. As a last resort, because there was a ready and tangible market if only he could break into it, Pitts reverted to cartoons. He worked tirelessly, until finally late in 1938 his work was accepted by *Punch*. As the economy improved this led to further work from various publications. Success spawned success and he was soon able to sell paintings as well as cartoons.

As was his life long pattern a measure of success usually prompted a change in course. In 1947 the Pitts returned to the Saanich Peninsula of British Columbia, which remained their permanent home.

Pitts immediately resumed his painting of the Native peoples with sketching trips to reserves close to home and Native villages as far away as Alaska. He was now able to nourish his fondest artistic interest. Whether his "Indian paintings" sold or not he was now financially able to devote himself to his passion for chronicling Native cultures.

Ironically, as soon as he entered this blissful state, his Indian Collection did sell, twenty years after its creation. He would not have asked for better repositories for the work in which he had invested his heart and soul. Between them the Provincial Archives of British Columbia and the Glenbow Art Gallery and Museum in Calgary purchased the entire group. Pitts would have continued on his self appointed quest of the Native culture even if he had never sold the "Indian Collection", but the sale gave him a tremendous source of satisfaction and a renewed self confidence in his work. It validated what he had always firmly believed to be an extremely important artistic mission.

Travelling his own course Pitts had remained aloof from modern art movements both in North America and Great Britain. He preferred the artistic traditions of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. He preferred to look back at the people and places of ages past. Historical significance was requisite for his favourite subject matter. For this reason even in portraiture he would choose an

elderly person over a youth, for the inherent stories of the past. Metamorphosis of vision and abstraction of form, of central concern to so many twentieth century painters, did not interest Pitts.

Although painting well through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, Arthur Pitts' feet were decidedly planted in the nineteenth century. The forces of the Edwardian era, particularly the truth of the self-taught, self-made "adventurer" with wide ranging interests, were far stronger than any other influences on the direction of his art.

In the course of this thesis many vistas of further investigation have opened up before me at almost every turn. Currents of art in England and abroad in the late nineteenth century and the Royal Academy artists are but two of the tantalizing topics which could easily take this thesis in another direction. Naturally much more could be said of the Edwardian period, of other non-Native artists of Native North Americans, or of other approaches to Pitts and his work. For example, a full ethnographic assessment of Pitts' work would be a fruitful undertaking. These and other avenues of enquiry are outside the scope of this thesis, which is intended to be an initial study of the life and art of a remarkable unsung painter. Context sections and extraneous questions were limited according to their relevance to Pitts' story.

Although necessary, as the first fifty years of Arthur Pitts' life form the framework of this thesis, it was still difficult to limit the details of his later years. Many parts of his earlier life, such as his World War I experiences and his struggle to break into the cartoon market, first in the twenties and later in the thirties, offered temptations to expand on the material presented here. Perhaps the most enticing was the quickening of the West Coast school of painters in Vancouver in the nineteen thirties and forties. Pitts, through his association with the Vancouver School of Applied and Decorative Art, Charles Scott, Charles Comfort, and Jock Macdonald, was on the periphery of the group before he left Vancouver in 1933. But the creative activity that occurred in Vancouver while Pitts was in England is not strictly relevant to his story. At a future date I do want to return to this fork in Pitts' road, to explore this period [1930s-1940s] of Western Canadian art history in depth.

The reader will no doubt have noticed how difficult it was for me to keep Emily Carr on the sidelines. As mentioned, Pitts' watercolour portraits, scenes of Native villages and paintings of totems are comparable to those done by Emily Carr prior to 1920. Although both were prolific in their paintings of the Native cultures of the Northwest Coast, Carr and Pitts for the most part recorded different areas and different cultural groups. Carr's

"Indian paintings" are predominantly of the Haida, Kwakiutl and Tsimshian people, villages and poles. Pitts' "Indian Collection" is primarily of the Tlingit, Salish, Cowichan and Kootenay groups and aspects of their cultures. Pitts and Carr make a complementary contribution to the composite study of Northwest Coast Native cultures. The many parallels between Pitts and Carr compel me to write about them in another context. A comparison of these two artists could have formed the thesis, but I felt bound to a biography of Arthur Pitts first and foremost. Emily Carr's story is well known through biographical and autobiographical works, as it should be. Pitts' has been resting undeservedly in obscurity. Much more can and will be said about his painting and his solitary adventure.

The "Indian Collection" of Arthur Pitts merits a significant place among the congregate of visual images focusing on Native North Americans. The aesthetic and ethnographic value of Pitts' art cannot be denied. The superb draughtsmanship, handling of colour and sensitivity for the subject matter place Pitts in the company of important Canadian artists.

The story of Arthur Pitts is long overdue. It is my sincere pleasure to acquaint the reader with this modest, unassuming and thoroughly significant British Columbia artist. It has been a satisfying and extremely interesting project to research the life and works of this remarkable

painter, especially since, through his journals, so much of the story has come directly from Arthur himself.



Figure 1. Arthur Pitts, *Zulu people*, Colenso, Natal, 1913, photograph, South Africa Photograph Album, British Columbia Archives and Records Service [hereafter cited as B.C.A.R.S.]



—Drawn for *Maclean's* by Arthur Pitts.

Mistress: "And, remember, we breakfast every morning at seven."
New Cook: "All right, mum, but if I ain't down you needn't wait for me."

Figure 2. Arthur Pitts, cartoon, pen, ink and watercolour, *Maclean's Magazine*, July 15, 1932, p.61.



—Drawn for Maclean's by Arthur Pitts.

"Could you take that green tie, with the red spots, out of the window?"
 "Certainly, sir. Very pleased to take anything out of the window."
 "Thanks. The horrible thing worries me every time I pass. Good morning."

Figure 3. Arthur Pitts, cartoon, pen, ink and watercolour, *Maclean's Magazine*, August 1, 1932, p.53.



Figure 4. Emily Carr, *Haida Totems, Cha-Atl*, 1912, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 5. Emily Carr, *Louisa*, 1912, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 6. Arthur Pitts, *La Tasse*, 1933, watercolour,
B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 7. Arthur Pitts, *Hyda Indian Girl*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 8. Arthur Pitts, *Princess Da-a-jad Yeltatzi*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 9. Arthur Pitts, *Blanket of Hyda Princess*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 10. Arthur Pitts, *Willie Vandell*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 11. Arthur Pitts, *Princess Kaljusie Yeltatzi*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 12. Arthur Pitts, *Tlingit Graveyard*, 1933,
watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 13. Arthur Pitts, *Charles Nelson*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 14. Arthur Pitts, *Taxican, Tlingit Indian Village*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 15. Arthur Pitts, *Whale and Bear Totem*, Taxican, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 16. Arthur Pitts, *Totem Pole, Taxican - II*, 1933, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 17. Arthur Pitts, *Saanich Indian Dance, Tsawout*, 1934, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 18. Arthur Pitts, *General Aspect of Taxica, approaching from south*, 1934, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 19. Arthur Pitts, *Ceremonial Screen in Community House, Quamichan Reserve, Duncan, B.C., 1934*, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 20. Arthur Pitts, *House Poles at Quamichan Reserve: Cowichan Indians*, Duncan, B.C., 1934, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 21. Arthur Pitts, *Stanley Comeau*, 1934, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.



Figure 22. Arthur Pitts, *Barnaby Barnaby, White Sun*, 1934, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 23. Arthur Pitts, *Saanich Indian Grave, Tsartlip Reserve, B.C.*, 1934, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 24. Arthur Pitts, *Willie Tochqua in dance costume: Cowichan Indian in Saw Bill Duck Dancing Mask*, Duncan, B.C., 1934, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 25. Arthur Pitts, *Totem Pole carved and erected by West Coast, V.I. Indians, erected at Songhees Reserve, Esquimalt, 1934*, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 26. Arthur Pitts, *White Sun, Kootenai Indian*, 1935, watercolour, B.C.A.R.S.



Figure 27. Arthur Pitts, cartoon, pen, ink and watercolour,
Punch or the London Charivari, September 2, 1938,
p.489.



"I wish I'd known this was going to happen, I'd have cut them a few sandwiches."

Figure 28. Arthur Pitts, cartoon, pen, ink and watercolour, *Punch or the London Charivari*, January 11, 1939.

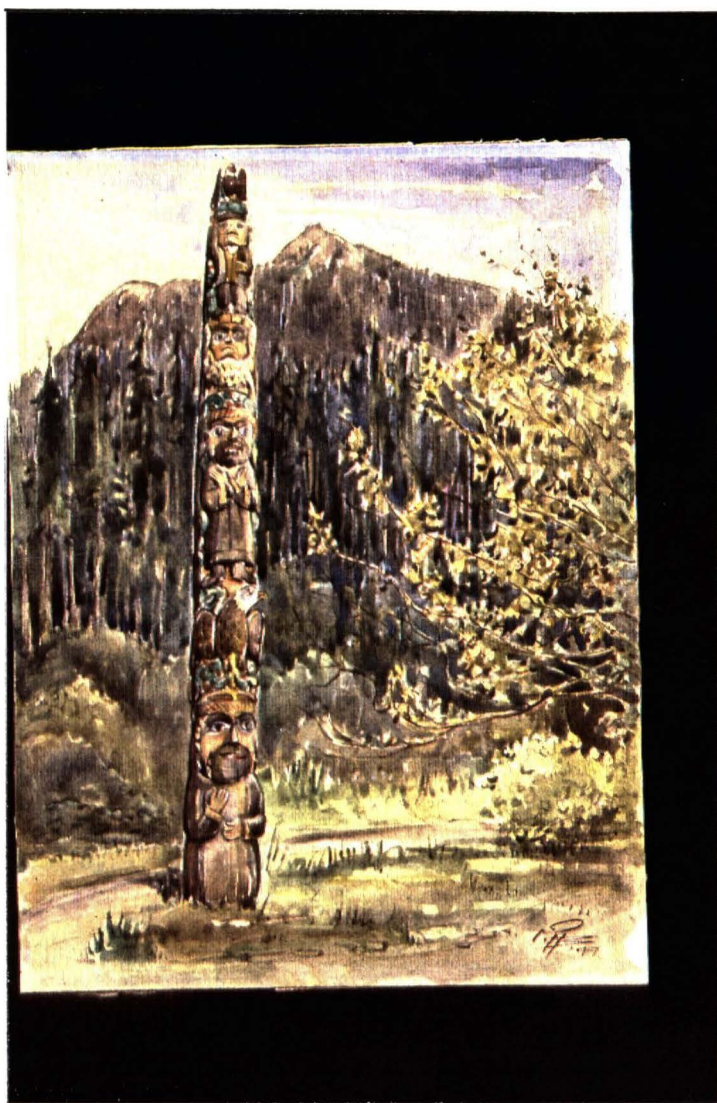


Figure 29. Arthur Pitts, *Chief Skowl Totem Pole at Ketchikan*, 1947, watercolour, Glenbow Museum.

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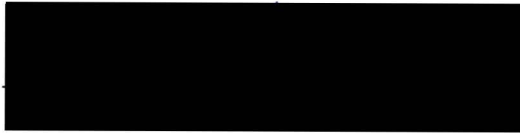
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