A Visit to Taholah
Illustrated by Ed Nielson
Dedicated to
Annie Clark Rhoades
This is a true story as told by Annie Clark Rhoades to her daughter Annamea Rhoades Strong, descendents of WA-SE-Quah Indians, Roll Book, Page 28, Statement #16, in April of 1979.

This map shows the route that Annie and her mother took from Bay Center to Taholah.
In the village of Bay Center there lived one hundred and thirty Indian people. Among them was a little six-year old girl named Annie. She was excited about going on a long trip! Momma had said just the two of them would go to Taholah to visit Annie’s oldest married sister Leda and her new baby Albert.

“Annie, get your best clothes together and we will pack our grips,” Momma said. Annie gathered up her best dresses and her garter vest. The hated long black cotton stockings and the bollmers which were kept for special occasions were packed. In the summer months she and her brothers and sisters went barefoot.
It was going to be so good to take a trip with Momma. Just to be alone with her would be nice after sharing her with four other brothers and sisters. There were three other children who lived with their family in the summer. These children had been orphaned and Annie’s father was appointed their guardian. In the winter months the orphans went to an Indian boarding school.
On the day they were to catch the mail boat for South Bend, Annie's father walked them down to the long dock. The mail boat was due from Nachotta at 1:30. In the summer everybody in town liked to meet the boat, especially the kids. The steam whistle blew a sharp toot as it neared the dock. Father bought the tickets and helped with their luggage. No need to worry about Father being left alone with the children because there were older sisters. Besides, Father could cook very well himself.
As they pulled away and headed out into the bay, the Shamrock took the northwest swells easily. Captain Reed was a good Shoalwater Bay pilot. They stopped at Tokeland then headed back to the mouth of the Willapa River. Annie was a little queasy because the choppy water made the steamer roll with the swells.
Annie knew this bay. When the tide was out it left good exposed ground where oysters grew. That was her father’s business. Before all the children came, her own mother had worked on the oyster beds. Many Indian women did this. Annie watched the spray break on the bow of the steamer. She listened to the passengers converse as the boat cut through the waters to South Bend.
It was 3:30 in the afternoon when they arrived. A big treat for Annie was spending the night at the Cassel Hotel. There Annie saw electric lights for the first time. What magic to see light glow from a bulb hanging from the ceiling!
Eating out was also a treat. After breakfast the next morning, they caught the street car for Raymond and took the stage. It was so big and passengers boarded frequently as they wound their way through the farmland of Willapa Valley. Eastward were the sawmill towns of Holcomb, Francis, Walville, McCormick, Pe Ell, Doty, Meskel, Adna and Littel.

At Centralia passengers gave Annie and her mother curious stares noticing that they were obviously Indian. The stage continued on its way through Oakville and Rochester to Grays Harbor and Ocean Beaches. They passed tall forests. Not all the big timbers of fir and spruce had been logged off. At last they reached Moclips. It seemed like a very long ride to Annie and she asked her mother, "Momma, I am tired from sitting. How much farther must we go?"

"Not too much farther, Annie, but this will be different because we will ride in a wagon and sit up with the driver."
"Annie, hang onto the seat. The driver must whip the horses to make a run for the hill. They must pull the heavy wagon." Annie clung for dear life and it felt like the wagon would fall backwards. What a steep dirt bank!
The driver and team stopped at the store. Annie's mother told the driver that her son-in-law would pick up their grips later. "Come child. We will walk to your sister's. It will feel good after sitting so long."

"Yes, Momma, this is a very long trip. Momma, why does Leda live in a cloth house?"

"It is canvas and is called a tent house. See it has a wooden floor and a stove," Momma said.

After Leda greeted them, she made Indian tea for her mother while Annie admired baby Albert. He was a strong looking boy with green eyes. Annie was used to brown eyes. That night a very tired Annie went to bed and fell into a deep slumber, dreaming of all the new places and things she had seen.
Each day, they helped Leda and the baby. Sometimes they visited Momma’s many friends at Taholah. The Joe Cultees, who had lived in Bay Center, told Annie’s mother they were having a Potlatch for her before she returned home. Annie had never seen one. On this day, she would see her mother honored in the special way that only the Indians do.

There were many foods prepared: baked Blueback salmon, smoked razor clams, fried clams, fish chowder, venison, and smoked fish. There were bowls of wild blackberries, huckleberry pies and tasty Indian fry bread. Some of these were adopted white man’s foods. There was much feasting and talking over old times. Then to the big event of the potlatch, the gift giving. Only an Indian can feel the pride of giving so freely of his worldly possessions. Annie’s eyes were wide as she saw her mother receive gift after gift. There were many strings of cobalt blue Hudson Bay trading beads, some mixed with copper balls, some mixed beads of reds, yellows, greens and even black. There were baskets of all sizes and shapes. There were the overlays of rich soft blacks, yellows and whites of bear grass and the pale moss green of Shoalwater Bay sweet grass. There were also the black baskets of the fern root, charcoal and bear grease. Red colors came from berry dyes. Annie’s eyes were wide as more gifts were presented to her mother. There was a carved horn spoon inlaid with mother-of-pearl placed in the eyes of the faces that went down the handle. Annie’s favorite gift was the red head-band. It had red feathers and wampum shells that circled it with bright beads spaced between.

Tomorrow, they would travel back to Bay Center, but that night as Annie went to bed, her room was closed off by a curtain. Leda said to her mother, “Annie is tired from all the excitement, but this is a day she will remember.” And remember it she did, to this very day.
Indians still live on Shoalwater Bay, in the village of Bay Center. Descendants of Chief Charlie and others are still at Shoalwater Reservation. The ocean still roars at the mouth of the green Quinault as it meets the sea, but this way to Taholah is no more.