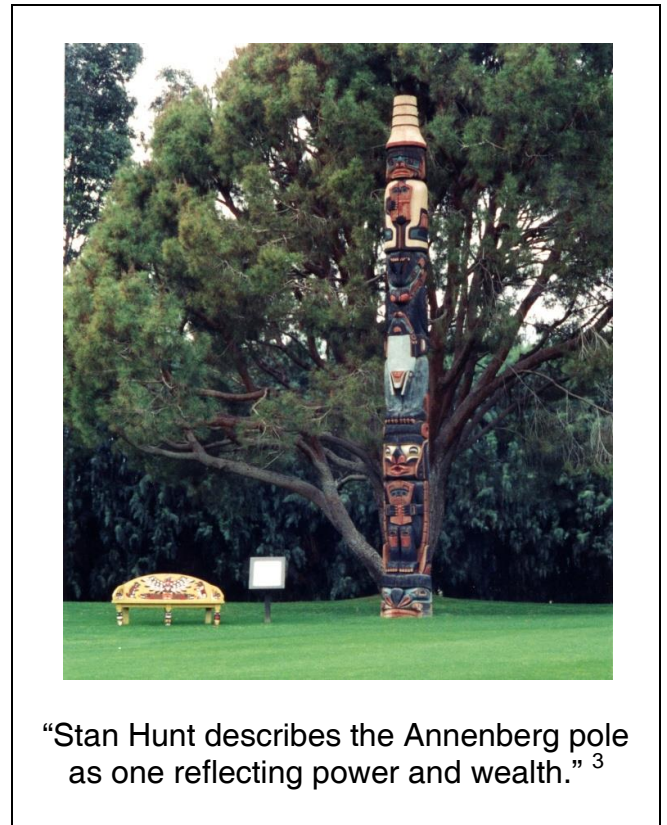


**Henry Hunt (1923–1985)**  
Fort Rupert, British Columbia  
Totem pole, 1976  
Red cedar, paint  
Height: 30 feet  
Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.187

**Description:**

A totem pole is a monument composed of a single log of red cedar and carved with self-made tools by First Nations peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Poles are used for different purposes. House frontal poles often serve as doorways into domestic dwellings. Other poles are used as mortuary poles, memorial poles, welcome poles, shame poles, and as supporting columns inside houses. The choice of which figures, or crests, to display on a pole depends on the family's lineage and right to use the crests as well as the purpose for the pole.<sup>1</sup> Often, totem poles mark a family's lineage and validate the powerful rights and privileges that the family held.<sup>2</sup>



“Stan Hunt describes the Annenberg pole as one reflecting power and wealth.”<sup>3</sup>

**A Totem Pole for Sunnylands:**

In 1972, while in residence at the Winfield House, Walter read an article about totem poles in *Natural History* magazine titled “Out of the Silence.” He wrote to Amon Carter that “The idea of getting a great old historic totem pole for my estate, “Sunnylands” in the southern California desert, is rather appealing” and inquired where he might “obtain a pole of distinction.” In a letter dated in March 1976, Admiral Mickey Sterling, Flag Officer of Pacific Coast, is cited as an instrumental link in Canada to the commission of the Annenberg totem pole.<sup>4</sup>

Jake Warren visited Sunnylands in January of 1976 and in March he sent a descriptive explanation about the Sunnylands totem pole with a letter. Walter responded, “Thank you for...the remarkable history of the Kwakiutl totem pole which I am very pleased to have. As a matter of fact, I think I shall have an enlargement of this description placed near the base of the totem pole so that if anyone is interested in learning the significance of any of the various carvings, they will have a first-hand authoritative description.”<sup>4</sup> The description reads:

**Kwakiutl Totem Pole carved by Henry Hunt**

All the figures on this particular pole represent creatures which were claimed as crests by the Hunt family of Fort Rupert, British Columbia. The prerogative to display such crests is traced back through clan genealogy to an ancestor who obtained the right to the crest through some mythical or supernatural experience with the creature represented.

The figures, from top to bottom, depicted on the poll are as follows:

**KWAKIUTL CHIEF.** The chief indicates the noble lineage of the hunt family. As marks of his wealth and position, he wears a chief's hat, a chilkat blanket as obtained from the Tlingit in southeastern Alaska through marriage, and holds a shield-like copper plaque known as a "copper" to his chest. The copper was an object of wealth and functioned in much the same way as banknotes of large denomination do in our society. Each time a copper was displayed at a potlatch, its wealth increased to the amount of money and blankets distributed at the end of the potlatch.

**BEAR HOLDING SEAL TO ITS CHEST.** The myth relating to this particular configuration remains obscure. The figures represented are a grizzly bear and a seal.

**TSONOQUA.** The third major figure from the top of the pole represents Tsonoqua, the wild woman of the woods. She is a cannibal giant and carries a basket on her back in which she places children she captures. She takes these children home to eat but in most versions of the myth, the children manage to escape. She is characterized by sleepy eyes, pendulous breasts, and a black, hairy body. Her lips are pursed forward, indicating her characteristic cry "u, huu, u, u." In this case the Tsoniqua holds a copper as an indication of wealth.

**SISIUTL.** The bottom figure on the pole is a Sisiutl, a double-headed serpent. This creature can change at will from mythical to human form. The central face at the base of the pole is somewhat humanoid in form and indicates the human dimension the creature can take. Yet note the recurved "horns" that rise above either eyebrow. From either side of this face stretch serpents, seen in profile. The scaly body, recurved horn and projecting tongue are all evident in the carving. Further attributes of the sisiutl are described in the following passage from Franz Boaz, foremost Kwakiutl anthropologist.

"... the sisiutl, the fabulous double-headed snake, which has one head at each end, a human head in the middle, one horn on each terminal head, and two on the central human head. It has the power to assume the shape of a fish. To eat it and even to touch or to see it is sure death, as all joints of the unfortunate one become dislocated, the head being turned backwards. But to those who enjoy supernatural help it may bring power; its blood, wherever it touches the skin, makes it as hard as stone; its skin used as a belt enables the owner to perform wonderful feats; it may become a canoe which moves by the motions of the sisiutl fins; its eyes when used as sling stones, kill even whales. It is essentially the helper of warriors."<sup>4</sup>

Former estate manager, Linda Brooks, remembers hearing from other staff that "Mrs. Annenberg wanted something placed at the end of fairway #5 where it turned right at the dog leg so she could know where to hit her ball..." and that "a totem pole was suggested when the British Consulate General visited from Canada."<sup>5</sup> Research is ongoing as to the exact details regarding Jake Warren's role in inspiring the commission.

In 2010, the Trust contracted Associated Mount Makers to deinstall the totem pole for restoration. "The original mount had been 15+ feet of additional tree submerged below the surface. During the deinstallation, the decorative, above-ground portion of the pole, pirouetted off the submerged base saving the deinstallers a lot of digging. There were enough cells of rot in the pole to tip the decision toward an external mount."<sup>4</sup> This external mount which currently supports the totem pole is visible from the back of the piece.

The Sunnylands Trust commissioned the Hunt family to restore the totem pole. Henry Hunt's son, Stanley, daughter-in-law, Lavina, and grandson, Jason, sought to restore the formline and the original colors which had drifted over years of maintenance. According to Jason Hunt, understanding the formline, or where and how the designs originally came together, is the most important aspect of re-painting a totem pole. "The colors used are very specific...mostly very bold. I seem to remember when we got there they were a little more pastel which made things quite a bit off as to the intended finished piece."<sup>4</sup> "Totem poles have rules about the colors applied. Greens, grays, reds, and blacks all have very specific places that they need to be applied."<sup>3</sup> "The Hunts primed, painted, and oiled the pole with 2 coats of linseed oil."<sup>4</sup>

In April 2012, Sunnylands and the Hunt family held a traditional dedication and re-raising ceremony, involving traditional Native American performances in regalia on the historic estate. The first 100 visitors that arrived to the Center & Gardens the morning of the event were given wristbands to later attend the dedication, which was held on the fifth fairway of the golf course. Storytelling and wood carving demonstration by the Hunt family followed at the Center & Gardens.<sup>4</sup>

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1. "Totem Pole Restoration." *Stanley C. Hunt, Master Carver Kwakiutl West Coast Native Art*. Stanleychunt.com & NISA.com, 2009. Web. 10 March 2015. <[http://www.stanleychunt.com/index.php?p=1\\_2\\_Totem-Poles](http://www.stanleychunt.com/index.php?p=1_2_Totem-Poles)>.
  2. Huang, Alice. "Totem Poles." *Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca*. First Nations Studies Program, 2009. Web. 10 Mar. 2015. <<http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/culture/totem-poles.html>>.
  3. Nichols, Kimberly. "Family of Craftsmen Works to Restore Pole." *The Desert Sun* [Palm Springs] 12 May 2010, Across the Valley sec.: B6. Print.
  4. Original notes, newspaper clippings, and marketing material from the Sunnylands Archive: Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.187
  5. Brooks, Linda S. "Totem Pole Question." Message to Kacey Donner. 8 March 2015. E-mail.