

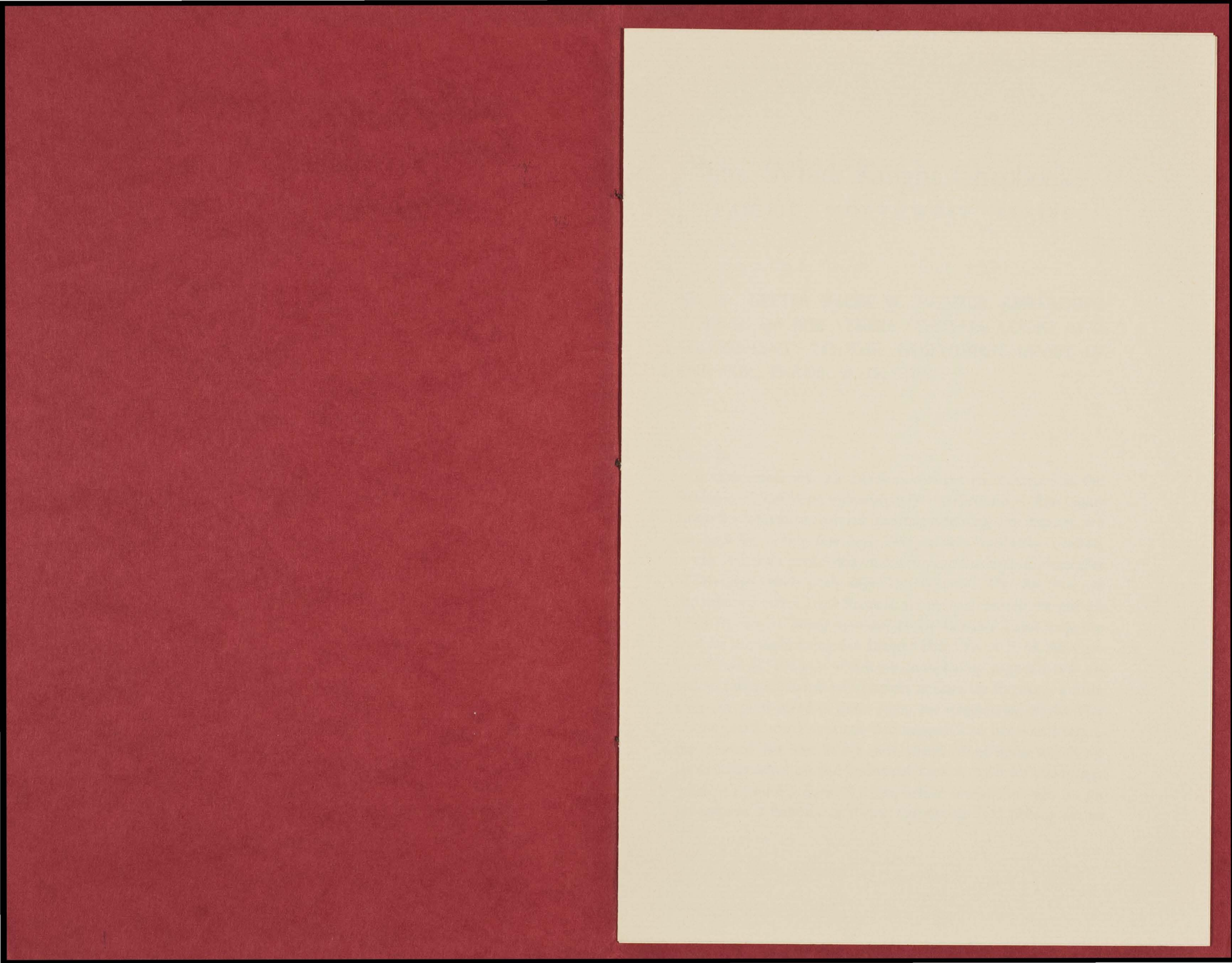
The White Knight Chapbooks

PACIFIC NORTHWEST SERIES

No. 2: LETTER FROM W. HUNTER REGARDING
VOYAGE OF THE VESSELS "CAPTAIN COOK" AND
"EXPERIMENT" TO THE NORTHWEST COAST IN
THE FUR TRADE, A. D. 1786.

The WHITE KNIGHT PRESS

1940



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Dear Sir:

In December we left Bombay & went to Batavia — in the Straights of Sunda we unfortunately ran aground — after Lightning the Vessell we got off without receiving any damage, we lay here but a very few days, being a very unhealthy climate.

On Feb. 9 we proceeded on our voyage through the Straights of Mecasso when both ships ran aground. On the 16th we thought we saw 4 large Proes in shore upon which we got all ready in case of being attacked & the Captain Cook took the lead for the night being the Largest Ship. At 10 P. M. the Captain Cook fir'd a gun which we immediately suppos'd was attack'd, call'd all hands to Quarters & bore up for her — a little after she fired another gun. From the irregularity of the Fire we suppos'd some accident had happen'd to her — still standing toward her she fir'd a shot ahead of us upon which we hauled our wind on the Starboard Tack & try'd for soundings when we found 3 fathom water, before our anchor was let go we were in 8 fathom. A strong Current & Tide Ebbing set us

upon our anchor which struck her severely several times, try'd to heave the anchor up but found the cable cut between the ship's bottom and the anchor, sounded the well and found 2 feet water in the hold. The captain went on board the Captain Cook to acquaint the Commadore of our situation which we thought very desperate having then 4 feet 6 inches water in the hold & gaining on us with both pumps going, sent our boat to assist the Captain Cook as we did not think it would be possible to keep our Vessell afloat when she came off the ground. This bank is about 2 miles off the shore at the mouth of a large river on the N. E. side of the Island of Borneo. In the morning, the tide rising, hoisted our topsails & Floated off the bank, got a fothering Sail under her bottom which enabled us to keep free & stood in shore. We were happy to see the Captain Cook following us having got off without receiving any damage; being in doubt whether we should be able to repair our ship fit for going to sea, came to anchor close in Shore, the boats were sent to reconoitre for a place to heave the Ship down, she return'd with very favorable currents, their being no inhabitants in the place & that we could land our stores with safety.

On the 22nd we began to land our stores, & unrig the Ship; on the 28th, hauled the ship close in shore & got the tackles ready for heaving & we hove her keel out within three feet of which we found 9 holes in her bottom by striking on the bell of the anchor as the place where we hove down is entirely open to the sea. The Carpenter agreed with the Captain that plugging the holes would be perfectly safe till we arriv'd at Macao, putting a plank would be a work of 3 or 4 days. Capt. Lowrie & some of his officers went to explore the Coast. In their Cruise they found a piece of a canoe & several other strong indicators that the natives visit this part of the Island some part of the year. The Carpenters having finished, haul'd off the bank, got all our stores in.

On the 7th March we put to sea with the C. Cook. This bay was named Hard Labour by the people. We made the Sulphur Islands the only Land we saw after leaving Celebes & on the 27 June we arriv'd in Nootka Sound.

We were some days there before we found our Ship Cove & when we did it was not thought a proper place for the Ships. After examining the harbor on the N. W. side of the Sound the ships anchor'd there & lay till July 27. We found the people answer Capt. Cook's description of them so accurately that I shall say nothing of them except to clear the doubt that they are cannibals. We have reason to suppose it is only their enemies they eat for we found some bodies deposited in a basket lying on the ground covered with leaves. They are excellent curers for some of our Gentlemen carried some heads with them which keep perfectly dried. One day they brought the head & arms of a man they had just kill'd & offer'd them for sale.

We left our Doctor here by his own accord; he will be of great service to the natives in curing their young children of the scab. He cur'd some when we lay here, which the people seem'd greatly surpris'd at and very gratefull; they promis'd to make him very fat by the time we return'd & gave him a wife.

On the 27th we left Dr. Mackay in great spirits & stood toward Prince Williams Sound. We Coast'd it along & explored that part of the Coast not seen by Capt. Cook. We discover'd a very extensive sound which got the name of Queen Charlotte's Sound in Lat. 51.00 N. & Long. 131.26 N. E. from Greenwich, a large Island to the Northward of it was call'd Scott's Island. These are the only discoveries we made in this long voyage.

We arriv'd at Prince Williams Sound the 30 August & came to anchor in Snug Corner Cove. We heard on our arrival that a ship had been attack'd by the natives of this sound with about 200 boats; it is suppos'd they would have cut them off

but they put them on their guard for they told them they would attack them on such a day.

They kill'd many of them & wounded more which made them draw off finding Grape Shot of more weight than their bows & arrows. This affair had intimidated so much that we never could prevail on any of them to come on board; they brought us plenty of salmon but no other fish. Our boat was sent up the sound to trade; in all their trips they never could find the habitations of the inhabitants.

Having got the ships wooded & water'd on the 14th Sept. we sailed down the Sound. This day we part'd company with our Consort, her destination being the Island of Maidenai, a small island off the S. W. End of Beennis Island where it is reported there is Copper. We anchor'd under Cape Hineing-brooke where Captain Cooke first anchor'd. Here we saw no inhabitants.

On the 16 we left the N. W. coast of America & on the 14 of Nov. we anchor'd in Macao Road, a very extraordinary passage of 57 days, to the happiness of all on board. Most of our men dying of the Scurvy we have been laying here a week and are not yet determin'd what we are to do, there being a great many Furs in the China Market & the China men say they have plenty. There are now 6 ships on the coast, all for furs. You will suppose the quantity they will get when we got between 4 & 500 skins & only one ship had been there before us & she was not at Nootka for what reason I cannot say. We got more skins there than at any other place on the coast.

Our ship goes back if it is only to fetch the doctor. I shall leave here and go back to Bombay for 45 Rupees a month will never make a fortune.

W. HUNTER

Macao Road
Nov. 21, 1786

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