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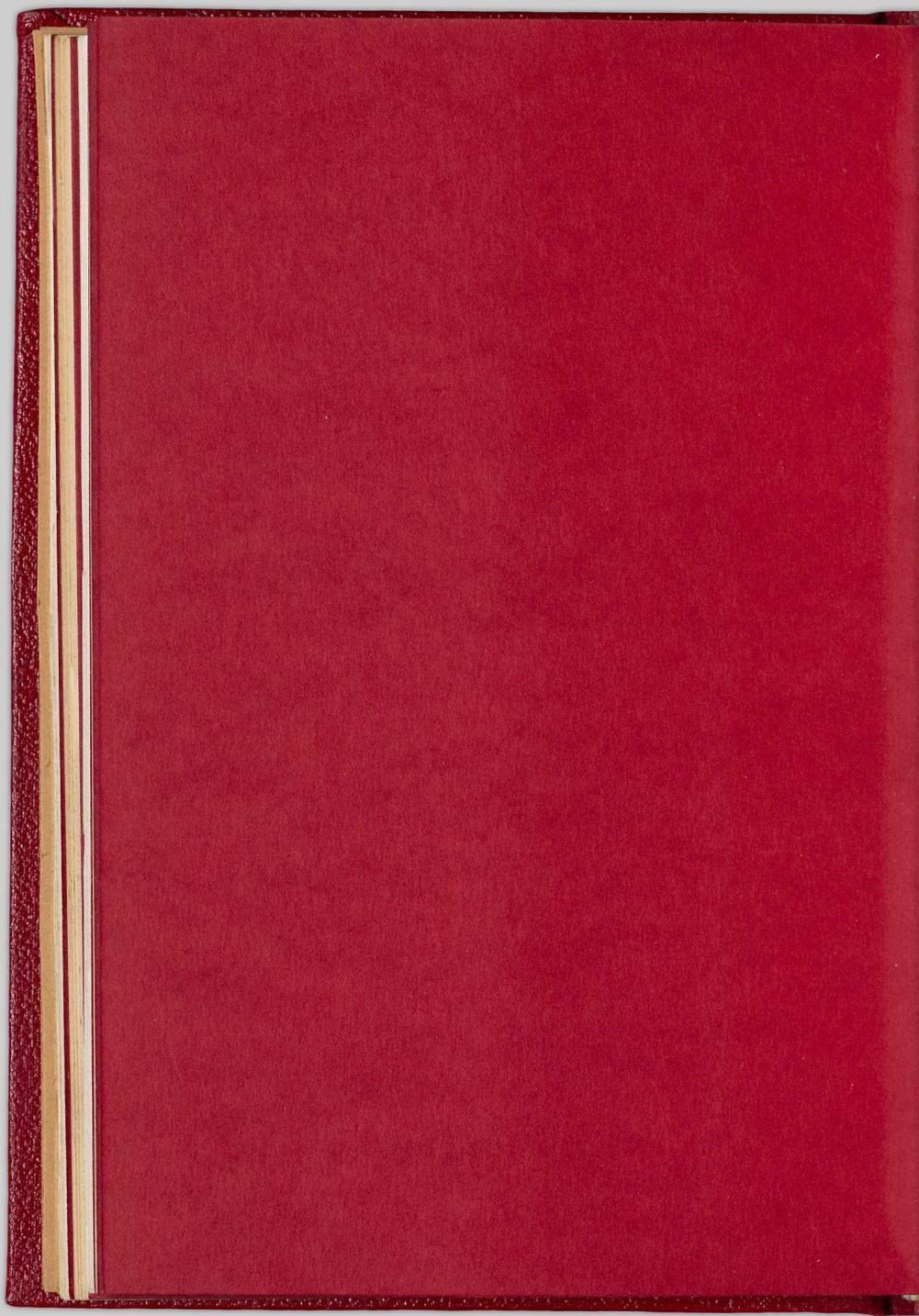
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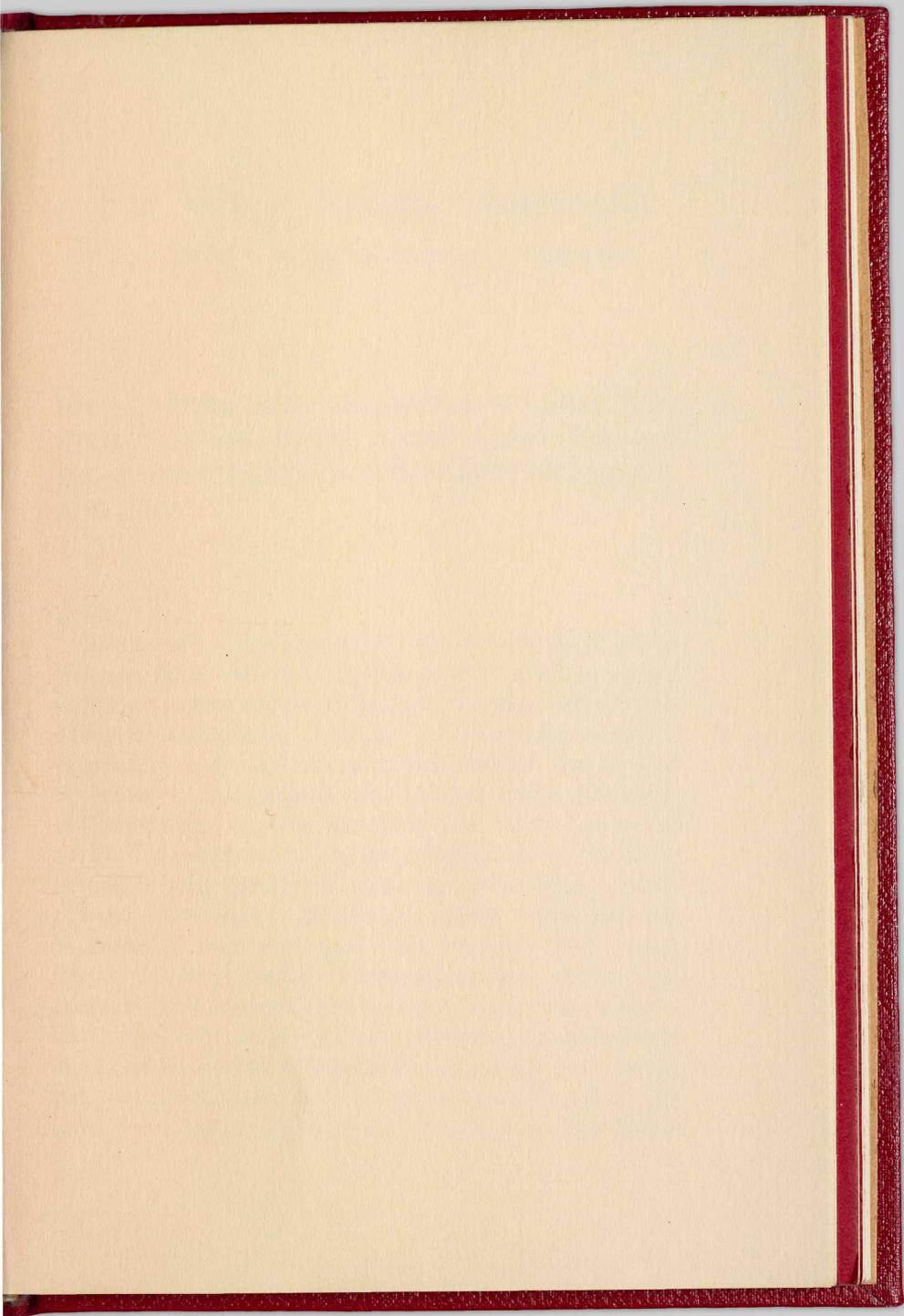
PACIFIC NORTHWEST SERIES

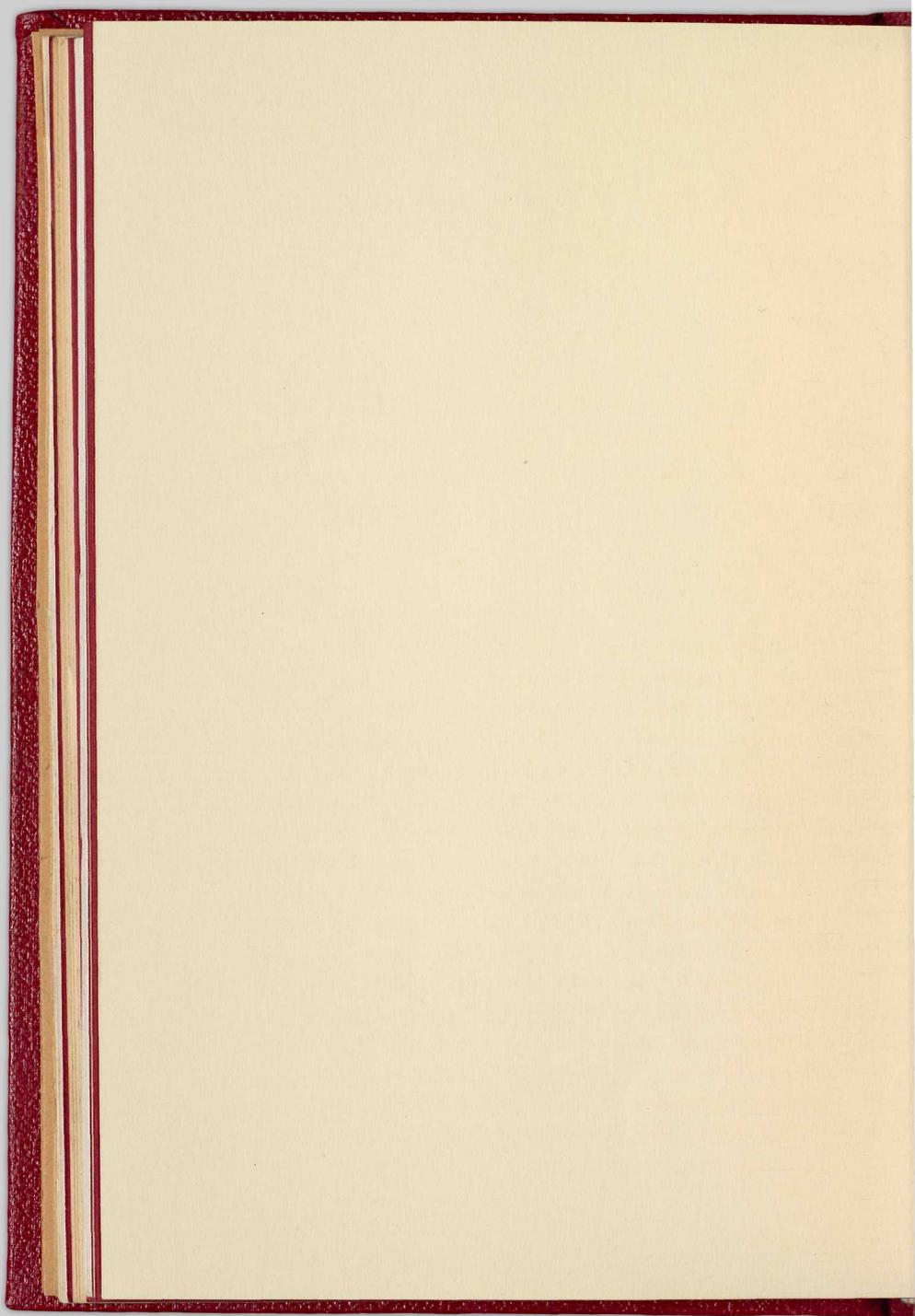
No. 3: LETTER AND MEMORANDUM FROM CAPT.
GEORGE DIXON TO SIR JOSEPH BANKS REGARD-
ING THE FUR TRADE ON THE NORTHWEST COAST,
A. D. 1789.

The WHITE KNIGHT PRESS

1941







The White Knight Chapbooks

PACIFIC NORTHWEST SERIES

No. 3: LETTER AND MEMORANDUM FROM CAPT. GEORGE DIXON TO SIR JOSEPH BANKS REGARDING THE FUR TRADE ON THE NORTHWEST COAST, A. D. 1789.

Sir:

Having seen in the Papers that a Ship is to be fitted out by Government, to explore some Parts of the South Seas not yet sufficiently known maid it my Business to enquire and find that a Ship for that purpose is Bought and that Lieut. Roberts is expected to have the Command, shall therefore beg leave to lay before you some Remarks that (I hope) may be of Service, as I think there is not the least Doubt she will be sent to the N. W. Coast of America. The first is that she should have two Schooners along with her, of a light Draught of Water capable of being mov'd along with Sweeps by which means they will be prevented from getting on shore when the Wind leaves them — this being the Case 9 times out of Ten under the high Lands on that Coast and where for the most part close in Shore no Ground is to be got at — 100 — Fathoms, this will always intimidate the boldest Navigators on Large Ships and prevent their going sufficiently near, by which means they may pass considerable Inlets. The Second is it should not be omitted

instructing the Commander to examine well that Part of the Sea betwixt America & Japan, being convinced there are Islands and perhaps some of them of considerable Size not yet discover'd, on which I suppose most of the Sea Otter to breed that frequent the American Coast. The Third is that Government will make at least one Settlement on the American Coast. It may be done at a small Expence and in a Short Time will not only maintain itself by the Sale of Furs that may be collected but return a large Overplus to Government. From this Settlement they may with Ease examine not only the Coast but hope they will be able soon to give sum Account of the Interior Country. The Best Place for the above purpose I think at present known to be at or near the North End of Queen Charlottes Island.

I am Sir your most Obedient Hbe Servant

Oct. 20, 1789
N. 6 James Street
Covent Gardin

GEO. DIXON

MEMORANDUM FROM CAPT. DICKSON TO BANKS

Sea Otters Skins by the King George & Queen Charlote 2552, some Marmott, Land Otter, and Beavers.

The Russians are settled in Cooks River, and at Beerings Bay. The Spaniards are making Settlements somewhere a little South of King Georges Sound.

The French Ships on discovery have been at Macao, sold some skins, and are gone to the Northd. but whether to the Coast of America or Japan, is not known.

Captain Dixon surveyed, all along the Coast betwixt Woody Point and Cape Edgecombe, and thinks that it has very much the appearance of the Archipelago Islands, said to be seen by Admiral de Font. There are many deep Inlets; the main he thinks, he has not seen, and is convinced that Cape Edge-

combe is an Island. Captain Dixon is almost certain that the land at King Georges Sound is an Island, the Northern entrance round Woody Point, and the Southern one to the Southward of Point Breakers. He thinks the best way would be, to Establish a Settlement about the Latitude of 53. North, as no Europeans had been there before him, nor could he have procur'd skins at any other place.

The Mouth piece sent to Sir Joseph Banks, is used there by the married women; Capt. Dixon thinks they are intended to disfigure the females that in time of war, if they are taken by an Enemy they may not be induced to keep them alive. The young women at first use a small copper pin which they change and increase by degrees, to prepare for the wooden mouth piece, which they insert in the lower lip as soon as married by a cross incision, and is afterwards constantly used, and deforms the face in a terrible manner.

Memorandum of Sea Otter's Skins brought to China by
Europeans from the North West Coast of America

1786	By the Sea Otter	China	about	550
	By the Experiment	Bombay	"	650
1787	By the Fly	China	"	400
	By 2 French Ships	France	"	1200
	By the Sea Otter	Bengal	"	500
	By the King George & Queen Charlotte	England	"	2550
	By a Ship from Europe Captain Barclay	Ostend	"	4000
		Total about		9850

*See Dixon's
Remarks
Dixon's Memoirs
Vol. 1, p. 31,
Dec 31, 1790.*

A Vessel from Bengal call'd the Nootka & one from China are Suppos'd to be lost on the N. West Coast & all the other Vessels brought small Beavers Skins & the French Ships some Black Bears.

NOTE

There is such a marked disparity between the number of skins given in the above list and the numbers given by Dixon himself in his *Voyage Round the World, 1785-8*, (pp. 316-21) as to suggest that Dixon gave his list to Banks from memory.

The cargo of Hanna's *Sea Otter*, as mentioned in Dixon's book, was limited to 50 skins collected around Nootka, where Guise and Lowrie had already bought up most of the supply. H. H. Bancroft, *Northwest Coast*, vol. 1, p. 174, says that Hanna got 50 at Nootka and 50 on other parts of the coast. Yet Dixon in his book states (pp. 316-17) that Hanna sold his skins for \$8,000, or about the worth of 200 prime skins.

The skins from both the *Experiment* and her consort, the *Captain Cook*, according to Dixon's book (p. 318) amounted to 604 and were sold for \$24,000.

No vessel named the *Fly* appears in any of the other accounts covering this year.

The "2 French Ships" were apparently those of La Perouse's expedition. Dixon says in his book (p. 320) that these ships did not collect in the Nootka region, as the skins they sold at Macao in January, 1787, were of the inferior sort shipped to China by the Spaniards of California, and brought no more than \$10,000.

The *Sea Otter* of Bengal, Captain William Tipping, was lost somewhere west of Prince William's Sound. In the above list Dixon may have confused it with a companion vessel, the *Nootka*, which despite his note above reached port safely and according to his book (pp. 318-19) sold a cargo worth \$14,242.

The number of skins shown for Dixon's own expedition agrees almost perfectly with that given in his book—2552—and brought a price of \$54,867 (p. 321). This number is probably the only one Dixon could have given correctly offhand.

The number shown as the cargo of the *Imperial Eagle* is preposterous. Dixon says in his book (p. 320) that Barclay collected 800 skins, worth \$30,000.

Clearly, anyone accepting the Dixon memorandum would get a completely erroneous idea of the fur supply from the northwest coast in the years 1786 and 1787.

A. Grove Day

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