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DRAWINGS BY JOHN WEBBER OF  
NATIVES OF THE NORTHWEST  
COAST OF AMERICA, 1778

(WITH 12 PLATES)

BY

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The third and last expedition commanded by Captain James Cook was one of the most remarkable voyages of discovery in the history of the world.

Early in the year 1776 the two ships—the *Resolution* and the *Discovery*—were, as Captain Cook wrote: “in the dock at Deptford, under the hands of shipwrights; being ordered to be equipped to make farther discoveries in the Pacific Ocean, under my direction.” Everything was supplied and furnished that was believed essential or that would, in any way, aid in the fulfillment of the great undertaking. When all was ready they sailed from England about the middle of July, 1776. Captain Cook was on the *Resolution* which carried a crew, officers and men, of 112. The *Discovery*, a sloop of 300 tons, had 80 men on board and was commanded by Captain Charles Clerke. After many eventful experiences the two ships returned safely and arrived at the Nore, October 4, 1780.

Very extensive and valuable collections of ethnographical material were made during the voyage, and many of the objects are now to be seen in the various European museums. Thirty-four specimens are in the Anthropological Museum, Florence, Italy. Twenty-three of these were secured at Nootka and include garments, ornaments, weapons, and ceremonial pieces. The remaining 11 examples were gathered at Prince William Sound, Oonalashka, and Norton Sound. All were described, and many figured, by Giglioli in 1895.

Doctor Anderson, surgeon on the *Resolution*, who had attended Captain Cook on a previous voyage, probably collected many specimens; he likewise made several vocabularies, one being of the natives of Nootka. After a lingering illness Anderson died August 3, 1778. His death proved a great loss to the expedition.

To quote again from Captain Cook's own narrative: “And, that we might go out with every help that could serve to make the result of our voyage entertaining to the generality of readers, as well as instructive to the sailor and scholar, Mr. Webber was pitched upon,

and engaged to embark with me, for the express purpose of supplying the unavoidable imperfections of written accounts, by enabling us to preserve, and to bring home, such drawings of the most memorable scenes of our transactions, as could only be executed by a professed and skillful artist." This tends to prove with what great interest the drawings were accepted, how very important they were considered, and how skillfully and accurately they must have been prepared.

John Webber, to whom the preceding notes refer, was born in London in 1752. His father was a Swiss sculptor whose name, Weber, became Anglicized to the form used by the son. When quite young John Webber was sent to Paris where he studied under J. G. Wille. He also went to Berne, Switzerland, and there became a student under J. L. Aberli. After an absence of about five years he returned to be with his family in London. He then became a student of the Royal Academy, and the next year, 1776, through the influence of Doctor Solander, was appointed draftsman to accompany Captain Cook on his last voyage. The expedition returned in 1780, and Webber then superintended the engraving of the collection of drawings and sketches which he had made for the Admiralty. The majority of his original sketches were quite large and it became necessary for him to make replicas, reduced to the proper size for the engravers. These were "engraved by the most eminent Artists" and appeared in 1784 to illustrate the narrative of the expedition, entitled: *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, undertaken by the Command of His Majesty, for making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere. . . .* Published by Order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. It was issued in three volumes, the first two having been prepared by Captain James Cook, the third by Captain James King. Having completed his work for the Admiralty, Webber prepared a series of the more important and interesting views, etched and colored, which he published privately. During the years 1784, 1785, and 1786 he exhibited pictures made on the voyage. He was elected A. R. A., 1785, and R. A., 1791. He died at his home in London, May 29, 1793.

The twelve drawings reproduced at this time are believed to have belonged to the Admiralty. Later they were owned by Sir William Campbell who was Governor of New Brunswick, 1831-1835, from whom they passed to his descendants. Five of the original sketches are reproduced for the first time; others were greatly changed by the engravers when first published. The 12 drawings are now in the private collection of the author.

## NOOTKA. MARCH—APRIL, 1778

The expedition reached the Northwest Coast of America late in March, 1778, and found safe anchorage in an inlet which was named King George's Sound. Intercourse with the natives later revealed the name by which it was known to the inhabitants of the villages which stood on its shores and since that day the native name, Nootka, has been applied to the sound. It is about midway on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Captain Cook then wrote: "Were I to affix a name to the people of Nootka, as a distinct nation, I would call them *Wakashians*; from the word *wakash*, which was very frequently in their mouths. It seemed to express applause, approbation, and friendship." The name Wakashan is now applied to the linguistic group to which the Nootka belong.

During the spring of 1778 there were two native villages on the shores of Nootka Sound. One, and evidently the more important, stood near the entrance of the sound, on the northwest shore. "on the side of a rising ground, which has a pretty steep ascent from the beach to the verge of the wood, in which space it is situated." The second village was far distant from the first, in the northeastern part of the sound. Between the two was the site of another, with many houses in ruins but none occupied. The total population of the two occupied villages was estimated at approximately 2,000.

Describing the village near the entrance Captain Cook wrote: "The houses are disposed in three ranges or rows, rising gradually behind each other; the largest being that in front, and the others less; besides a few straggling, or single ones, at each end. These ranges are interrupted or disjoined at irregular distances, by narrow paths, or lanes, that pass upward; but those which run in the direction of the houses, between the rows, are much broader. Though there be some appearance of regularity in this disposition, there is none in the single houses; for each of the divisions, made by the paths, may be considered either as one house, or as many; there being no regular or complete separation, either without or within, to distinguish them by. They are built of very long and broad planks, resting upon the edges of each other, fastened or tied by withes of pine bark, here and there; and have only slender posts, or rather poles, at considerable distances, on the outside, to which they also are tied; but within are some larger poles placed aslant." Such was the construction of the native habita-

tions. Only slight evidence of divisions within indicated the part occupied by different families. Large chests served to hold "their spare garments, skins, masks, and other things which they set a value upon;" their various utensils, "mostly square and oblong pails or buckets to hold water and other things; round wooden cups and bowls; and small shallow wooden troughs, about two feet long, out of which they eat their food; and baskets of twigs, bags of matting, etc. Their fishing implements, and other things also, lie or hang up in different parts of the house, but without the least order; so that the whole is a complete scene of confusion; and the only places that do not partake of this confusion are the sleeping-benches, that have nothing on them but the mats; which are also cleaner, or of a finer sort, than those they commonly have to sit on in their boats."

The interiors of the native houses evidently proved of great interest. Captain Cook referred twice to drawings of interiors having been made by Webber. Fortunately, both of the original pictures are in this collection and are reproduced. The first was made April 22, 1778. On that day Cook visited the village at the entrance of the sound and wrote: "During the time I was at this village Mr. Webber, who had attended me thither, made drawings of everything that was curious, both within and without doors." The sketch reproduced in plate 2 is believed to have been made at that time. Much interesting detail is shown, including "the construction of the houses, household furniture and utensils, and striking peculiarities of the customs and modes of living of the inhabitants."

After mentioning the condition of the interiors Captain Cook wrote, that, notwithstanding the confusion, many of the houses "are decorated with images. These are nothing more than the trunks of very large trees, four or five feet high, set up singly, or by pairs, at the upper end of the apartment, with the front carved into a human face; the arms and hands cut out upon the sides, and variously painted; so that the whole is a truly monstrous figure. The general name of these images is *Klumma*; and the names of two particular ones, which stood abreast each other, three or four feet asunder, in one of the houses, were *Natchkoa* and *Matsecta*. Mr. Webber's view of the inside of a Nootka house, in which these images were represented, will convey a more perfect idea of them than any description." The original view or sketch to which Captain Cook referred is reproduced in plate 3.

The natives were described as being rather short but not slender. "The women are nearly of the same size, color, and form, with the men; from whom it is not easy to distinguish them." Men and women

wore similar garments, the principal of which was "a flaxen garment, or mantle, ornamented on the upper edge by a narrow strip of fur, and, at the lower edge, by fringes or tassels." It passed under the left arm and was fastened over the right shoulder. "Over this, which reaches below the knees, is worn a small cloak of the same substance, likewise fringed at the lower part. In shape this resembles a round dish cover, being quite close, except in the middle, where there is a hole just large enough to admit the head; and then, resting upon the shoulders: it cover the arms to the elbows, and the body as far as the waist. Their head is covered with a cap, of the figure of a truncated cone, or like a flower-pot, made of fine matting, having the top frequently ornamented with a round pointed knob, or bunch of leathern tassels, and there is a string that passes under the chin, to prevent its blowing off." Elsewhere Cook wrote: "We have sometimes seen the whole process of their whale-fishery painted on the caps they wear." Garments, similar to those just described, are represented in the two drawings reproduced in plate 4 and plate 5. "The flaxen garments," mentioned above, were made "of the bark of a pine-tree, beaten into a hempen state." The account continues: "It is not spun, but, after being properly prepared, is spread upon a stick, which is fastened across to two others that stand upright. It is disposed in such a manner, that the manufacturer, who sits on her hams at this simple machine, knots it across with small plaited threads, at the distance of half an inch from each other. Though, by this method, it is not so close or firm as cloth that is woven, the bunches between the knots make it sufficiently impervious to the air, by filling the interstices; and it has the additional advantage of being softer and more pliable." A frame of this sort is shown at the extreme right in plate 2. Similar garments were made of wool, which "seems to be taken from different animals, as the fox and brown lynx."

A curious custom prevailed among the men for on certain occasions, so wrote Cook, the face "is variously painted, having its upper and lower parts of different colors, the strokes appearing like fresh gashes; or it is besmeared with a kind of tallow, mixed with paint, which is afterward formed into a great variety of regular figures, and appear like carved work." This is shown in plate 4. "Sometimes, again, the hair is separated into small parcels, which are tied at intervals of about two inches, to the end, with thread."

The drawing reproduced as plate 1 is a beautiful example of the artist's work—a man of Nootka, with the characteristic cap and wearing a heavy skin over his left shoulder, armed with bow and

arrows. The quiver, in which are resting several arrows, opened lengthwise, not at one end. This was not described in the narrative and thus tends to prove the value of Webber's drawings, produced "for the express purpose of supplying the unavoidable imperfections of written accounts." The bands over the ankles conform with Cook's statement that "about their ankles they also frequently wear many folds of leather thongs, or the sinews of animals twisted to a considerable thickness."

The food of the people living on the shores of Nootka Sound consisted, as Cook then wrote, "of every thing animal or vegetable that they can procure." But "their greatest reliance seems to be upon the sea, as affording fish, muscles, and smaller shell-fish, and sea animals." The smaller fish were not only eaten fresh, when taken from the water, but were also smoked and dried, thus preserved for future use, and "sewed up in mats, so as to form large bales, three or four feet square." Broth was made by placing pieces of fresh meat "in a square wooden vessel or bucket, with water, and then throwing heated stones into it. This operation they repeat till they think the contents are sufficiently stewed or seethed. They put in the fresh, and take out the other stones, with a cleft stick, which serves as tongs; the vessel being always placed near the fire for that purpose. This operation is represented by Mr. Webber, in his drawing of the inside of a Nootka house." This refers to the group shown surrounding a fire, in plate 3.

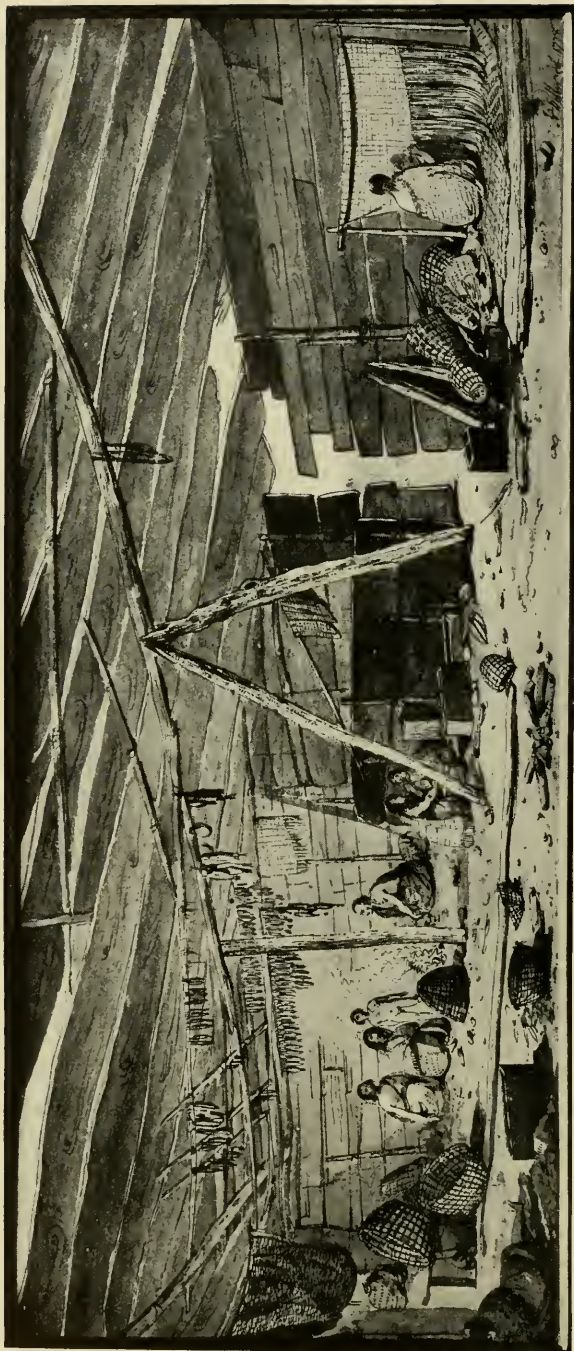




Size 17 by 12 inches

Nootka

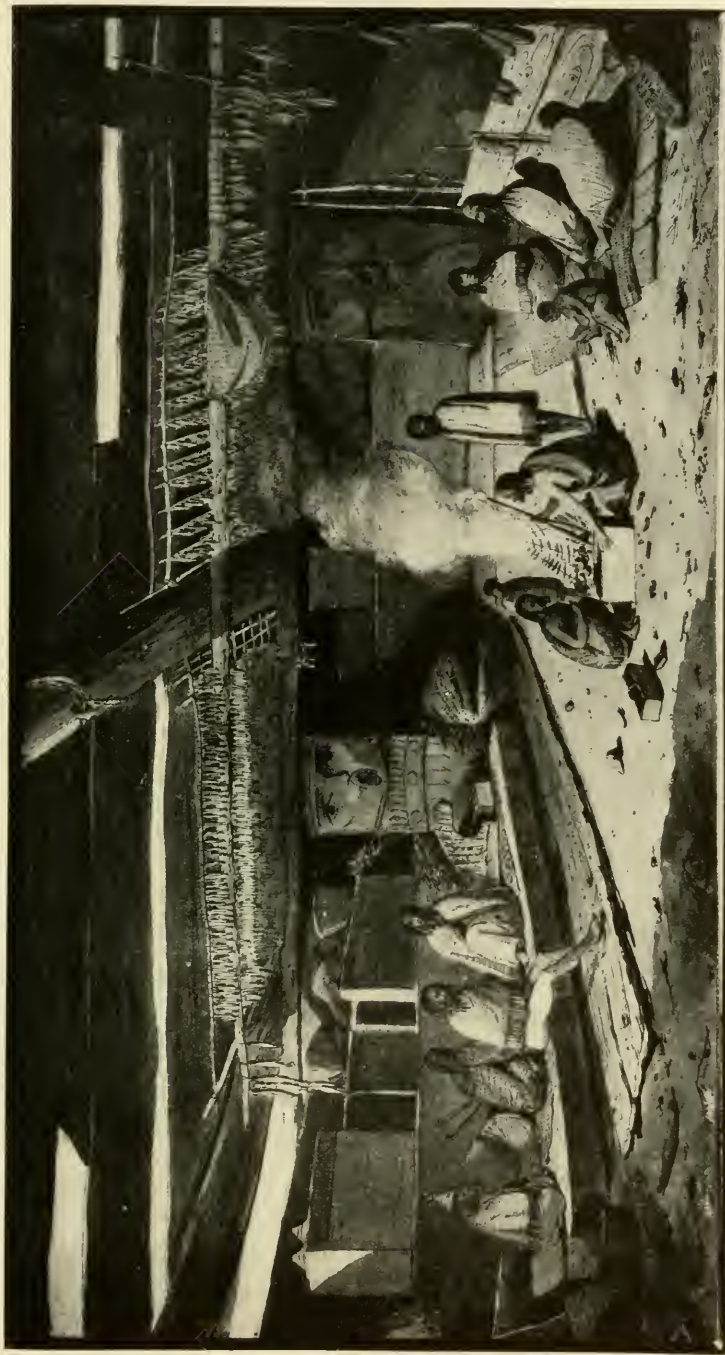
Signed J. Webber, del.



Size 7 by 17 inches

Nootka

Signed J. Webber, del. 1778



Size 10 by 19 inches

Nootka

Signed J. Webber, del. 1778



Size 17 by 12 inches

Nootka



Size 15 by 12 inches

Nootka



## PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND. MAY, 1778

Continuing along the coast the expedition arrived at another inlet to which the name Prince William Sound was given. Here were encountered the first Eskimo to be met when coming from the southward, and they were easily recognized as differing in appearance from the people of Nootka Sound.

Evidently the habitations were away from the shores of the sound, or possibly in some protected cove, as none was seen and consequently no description of a native settlement was given in the narrative. But many of the people visited the two ships, coming in boats of their own make, some of which held more than twenty persons each.

Men, women, and children were dressed alike. All wore "a kind of close frock, or rather robe; reaching generally to the ankles, though sometimes only to the knees. At the upper part is a hole just sufficient to admit the head, with sleeves that reach to the wrist. These frocks are made of the skins of different animals. . . . When it rains they put over this another frock, ingeniously made from the intestines of whales, or some other large animal, prepared so skilfully, as almost to resemble our gold-beaters' leaf. It is made to draw tight round the neck; its sleeves reach as low as the wrist, round which they are tied with a string. . . . Those who wear any thing on their heads, resembled, in this respect, our friends at Nootka; having high truncated conic caps, made of straw, and sometimes of wood, resembling a seal's head well painted." One of the sketches by Webber, made at that time, shows a man wearing a waterproof garment, such as was mentioned, and also a characteristic hat with figures painted in red and black. The second drawing is that of a man wearing a fur garment, "worn with the hairy side outward," and ornamented with a fringe which appears to have been formed of many small tails.

To quote again from Captain Cook's narrative: "The men frequently paint their faces of a bright red, and of a black colour, and sometimes of a blue, or leaden colour; but not in any regular figures; and the women, in some measure, endeavoured to imitate them, by puncturing or staining the chin with black, that comes to a point in each cheek." Men wore their hair short, "cropt round the neck and forehead," but the women allowed theirs to grow long. Both men and women perforated their ears in several places, "in which they hang little bunches of beads, made of the same tubulose shelly sub-

stance used for this purpose by those of Nootka. The *septum* of the nose is also perforated, through which they frequently thrust the quill-feathers of small birds, or little bending ornaments, made of the above shelly substance, strung on a stiff string or cord, three or four inches long, which give them a truly grotesque appearance. But the most uncommon and unsightly ornamental fashion, adopted by some of both sexes, is their having the under-lip slit, or cut, quite through, in the direction of the mouth, a little below the swelling part. . . . In this artificial mouth they stick a flat, narrow ornament, made chiefly out of a solid shell or bone, cut into little narrow pieces, like small teeth, almost down to the base or thickest part, which has a small projecting bit at each end that supports it when put into the divided lip; the cut part then appearing outward. Others have the lower lip only perforated into separate holes; and then the ornament consists of as many distinct shelly studs, whose points are pushed through these holes, and their heads appear within the lip, as another row of teeth immediately under their own." These curious ornaments are clearly shown in the two sketches by Webber.





Size 15 by 12 inches

Prince William Sound



Size 17 by 12 inches

Prince William Sound

## NEAR ICY CAPE. AUGUST, 1778

By the middle of August, 1778, the two ships were in the far northern waters, beyond Bering Strait in the Arctic. At noon on the 18th they were in latitude  $70^{\circ} 44'$ . To quote from the narrative: "We were, at this time, close to the edge of the ice, which was as compact as a wall; and seemed to be ten or twelve feet high at least. But, farther North, it appeared much higher. Its surface was extremely rugged; and, here and there, we saw pools of water.

"We now stood to the Southward; and, after running six leagues, shoaled the water to seven fathoms; but it soon deepened to nine fathoms. At this time, the weather, which had been hazy, clearing up a little, we saw land extending from the South to South East by East, about three or four miles distant. The Eastern extreme forms a point, which was much incumbered with ice: for which reason it obtained the name *Icy Cape*. Its latitude is  $70^{\circ} 29'$ , and its longitude  $198^{\circ} 20'$ . The other extreme of the land was lost in the horizon; so that there can be no doubt of its being a continuation of the American continent. The *Discovery* being about a mile astern, and to leeward, found less water than we did; and tacking on that account, I was obliged to tack also, to prevent separation.

"Our situation was now more and more critical. We were in shoal water, upon a lee shore; and the main body of the ice to the windward, driving down upon us. It was evident, that, if we remained much longer between it and the land, it would force us ashore; unless it should happen to take the ground before us." This was the scene sketched by Webber, the *Resolution* leading with the *Discovery* "about a mile astern."

The following day, August 19, the ships were in the midst of much drift ice, with great masses just beyond. "It was not so compact as that which we had seen to the Northward; but it was too close, and in too large pieces, to attempt forcing the ships through it. On the ice lay a prodigious number of sea-horses; and, as we were in want of fresh provisions, the boats from each ship were sent to get some." A small group of "sea-horses" may be seen on the ice to the right in the drawing.

The ships were turning southward, to avoid the ice and to seek other lands. On September 2, they passed Eastern Cape and continuing down the coast of Asia arrived in the Bay of St. Lawrence.

Thence they "steered over for the American coast; and, at five in the afternoon, the next day, saw land bearing South three quarters East, which we took to be Anderson's Island, or some other land near it. . . . On the 6th, at four in the morning, we got sight of the American coast near Sledge Island; and at six, the same evening, this island bore North,  $6^{\circ}$  East, ten leagues distant; and the Easternmost land in sight North,  $49^{\circ}$  East. If any part of what I had supposed to be American coast, could possibly be the island of Alaschka, it was that now before us. . . ."

The expedition soon reached Norton Sound. Here they remained several days and had intercourse with the friendly natives from whom they secured a quantity of fish, both fresh and dried. "The dwellings of these people were seated close to the beach. They consist simply of a sloping roof, without any side-walls, composed of logs, and covered with grass and earth. The floor is also laid with logs; the entrance is at one end; the fire-place just within; and a small hole is made near the door to let out the smoke."

Sailing from Norton Sound, "on the 17th in the morning, with a light breeze at East," they sighted many islands, encountered shoal water, and after an uneventful voyage "at length, on the 2d of October, at day-break, we saw the island of Oonalashka, bearing South East."



Size 16½ by 24½ inches

Near Icy Cape, August 18, 1778. "The *Resolution* heaving through the ice with the *Discovery* in danger in the distance."

Signed J. W. Hebbel, del.



## OONALASHKA. OCTOBER, 1778

The ships touched at Oonalashka on the voyage northward, and just three months later again came in sight of the island. This was October second when they reached a bay some ten miles west of Sanganoosha, "known by the name of *Egoochshac*." Many natives lived on the shore of the bay, they visited the ships "bringing with them dried salmon, and other fish, which they exchanged with the seamen for tobacco." The following day, October 3, the ships continued on to Sanganoosha Harbor where they remained until the 26th of the same month. There was a small village a short distance from the harbor where, it is quite probable, Webber made his drawings.

Describing the people of Oonalashka, Captain Cook wrote: "These people are rather low of stature, but plump and well shaped; with rather short necks; swarthy chubby faces; black eyes; small beards; and long, straight, black hair; which the men wear loose behind, and cut before, but the women tie up in a bunch." And referring to the dress: "Both sexes wear the same in fashion; the only difference is in the materials. The women's frock is made of seal skin; and that of the men, of the skins of birds; both reaching below the knee. This is the whole dress of the women. But, over the frock, the men wear another made of gut, which resists water; and has a hood to it, which draws over the head. Some of them wear boots; and all of them have a kind of oval snouted cap, made of wood, with a rim to admit the head. These caps are dyed with green and other colours; and round the upper part of the rim, are stuck the long bristles of some sea-animal, on which are strung glass beads, and on the front is a small image or two made of bone. They make use of no paint; but the women puncture their faces slightly; and both men and women bore the under lip, to which they fix pieces of bone. But it is as uncommon, at Oonalashka, to see a man with this ornament, as to see a woman without it. Some fix beads to the upper lip, under the nostrils; and all of them hang ornaments in their ears." Many of the peculiar details of dress, mentioned in this brief description, are shown in Webber's graphic sketches.

The habitations of the natives evidently proved of much interest. "Their method of building," so wrote Cook, "is as follows: They dig, in the ground, an oblong square pit, the length of which seldom exceeds fifty feet, and the breadth twenty, but in general the dimen-

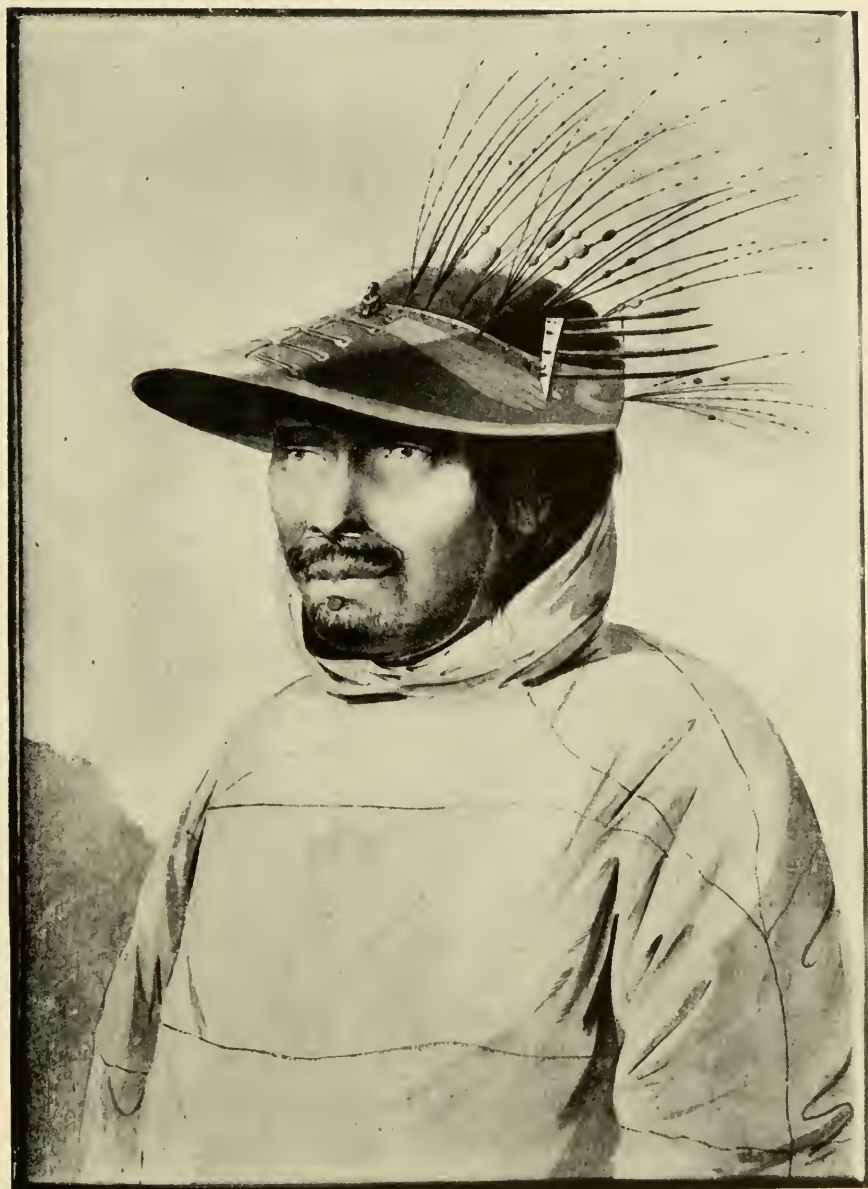
sions are smaller. Over this excavation they form a roof of wood which the sea throws ashore. The roof is covered first with grass, and then with earth; so that the outward appearance is like a dunghill. In the middle of the roof, toward each end, is left a square opening, by which the light is admitted; one of these openings being for this purpose only, and the other being also used to go in and out by, with the help of a ladder, or rather a post, with steps cut in it. In some houses there is another entrance below; but this is not common. Round the sides and ends of the huts, the families (for several are lodged together) have their separate apartments, where they sleep, and sit at work; not upon benches, but in a kind of concave trench, which is dug all round the inside of the house, and covered with mats; so that this part is kept tolerably decent. But the middle of the house, which is common to all the families, is far otherwise."

Although the majority of their bowls, spoons, baskets and other objects of daily use were of their own make, bits of metal and iron kettles and pots were obtained from the Russians with whom they had been in contact some years. The women made "mats and baskets of grass, that are both beautiful and strong."

Fire was produced in two ways, "by collision and by attrition; the former by striking two stones one against another; on one of which a good deal of brimstone is first rubbed. The latter method is with two pieces of wood; one of which is a stick of about eighteen inches in length, and the other a flat piece. The pointed end of the stick they press upon the other, whirling it nimbly round as a drill; thus producing fire in a few minutes." But although fire was so easily obtained, fire places were not seen "in any one of their houses. They are lighted, as well as heated, by lamps; which are simple, and yet answer the purpose very well. They are made of a flat stone, hollowed on one side like a plate, and about the same size, or rather larger. In the hollow part they put the oil, mixed with a little dry grass, which serves the purpose of a wick. Both men and women frequently warm their bodies over one of these lamps, by placing it between their legs, under their garments, and sitting thus over it for a few minutes."

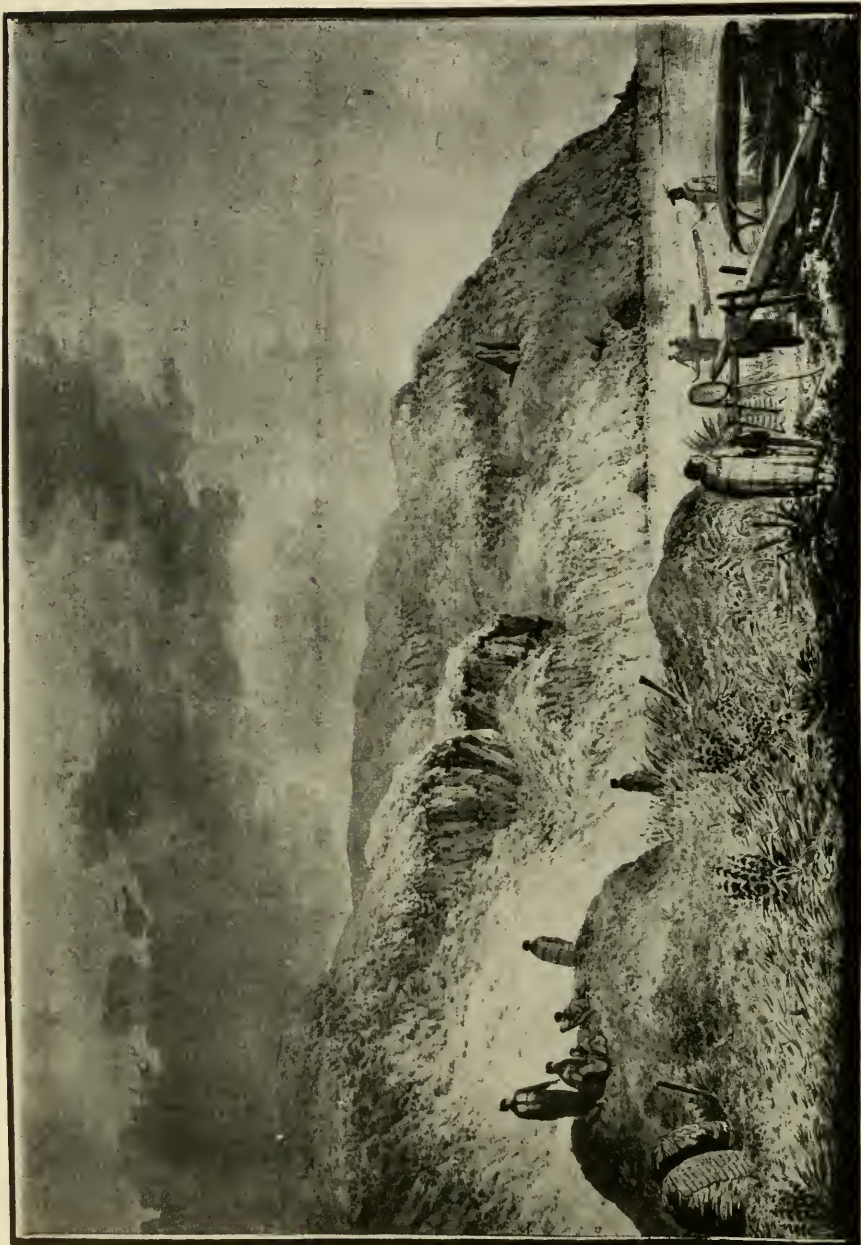
The boats, many of which are shown in plate 10, were described as "the smallest we had anywhere seen upon the American coast; though built after the same manner, with some little difference in the construction."





Size 17 by 12 inches

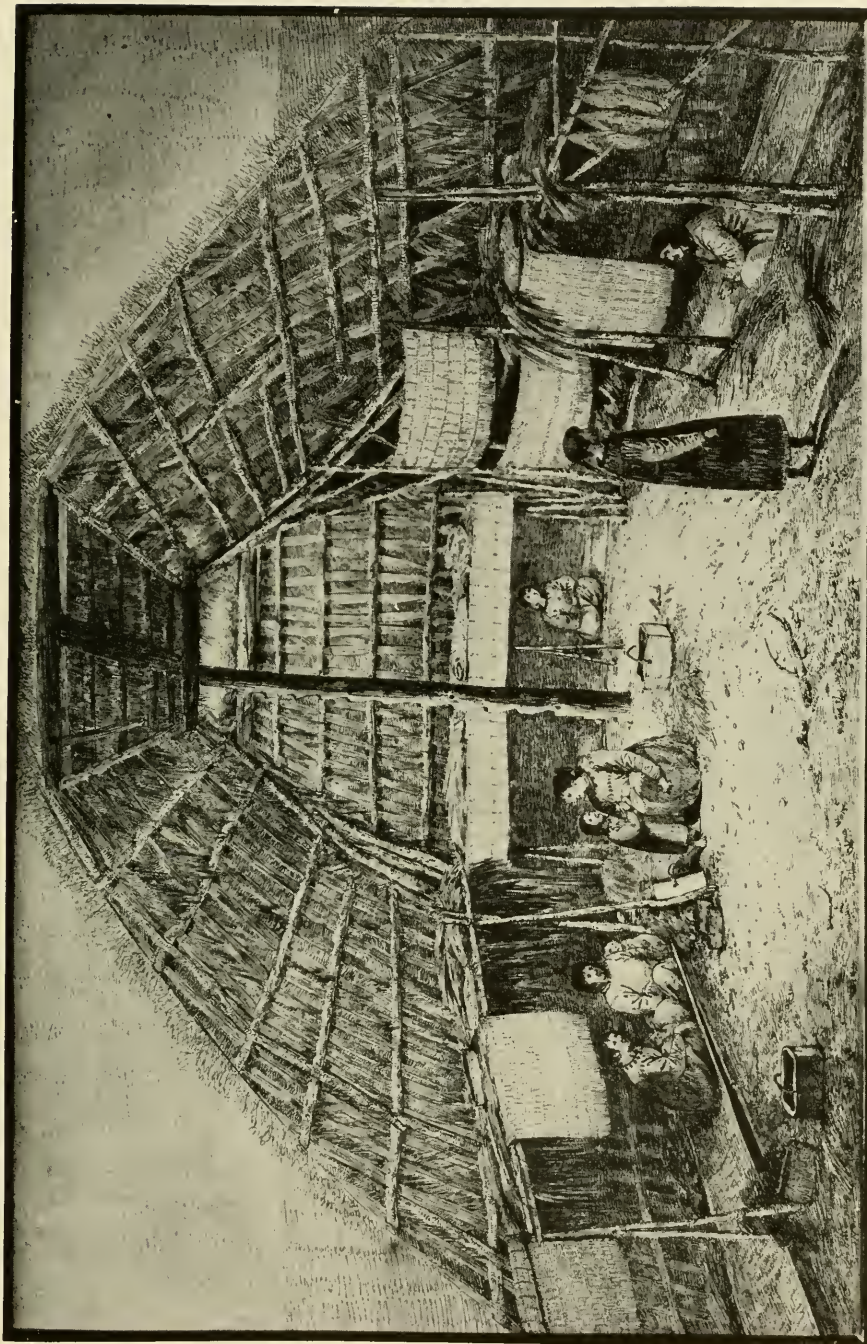
Oonalashka



Size 16½ by 24½ inches

Oonalashka

Signed J. Webber, del. 1778



Size 12 by 19 inches

Oomalashka

Signed *J. W. C. B. C. R.*, del. 1778



Size 17 by 12 inches

Oonalashka