# SHIPS OF RUSSIAN AMERICA

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in History

by

Evguenia V. Anichtchenko

August 2004

**SHIPS OF RUSSIAN AMERICA**

by

Evguenia V. Anichtchenko

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF THESIS _____
Timothy Runyan, Ph.D.

COMMITTEE MEMBER _____
Frank J. Cantelas, M.A.

COMMITTEE MEMBER _____
James P. Delgado, Ph.D.

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Victoria Frede, Ph.D.

COMMITTEE MEMBER _____
Nathan Richards, Ph.D.

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY _____
Michael A. Palmer, Ph.D.

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL _____
Paul Tschetter, Ph.D.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On the morning of October 18, 1867 the tri-colored flag over the main office of Russian-American Company in Sitka began its slow, hesitant descent. With its final lowering to the hands of Alexis Pestchouroff, the Russian era of the history of Alaska was officially over. After almost a century of exploration, trade and settlement, losses and gains, Russians were leaving. They left behind a country which for many of them had become home, their language which slowly but surely was replaced by English, the churches and forts on land and sunken ships in the ocean. Little by little "Russian America" became an outdated, anachronistic term, falling deeper and deeper into the realm of history. For the historians, however, the story of Russians in Alaska seems to have a perpetual appeal. For over a hundred years Russian, American and European scholars have studied different aspects of Russian colonialism in North America, from the intricate matter of the colonists' relationship with the Native peoples to the study of colonial clothing and analysis of the iconography of the Orthodox icons in Alaska. With the fall of the iron curtain, and consequent disintegration of ideological barriers, the study of the subject gained even more vitality. Every year of the last decade brought several books and many articles devoted to the Russians' adventure in Alaska. Very few of these publications, however, focus on the maritime history of Russian America.

It takes only a brief glance at the map of the Russian possessions in North America to realize the importance of the sea for the history of the region. From the first fur-hunting expeditions in the middle of the eighteenth century until the sale of Alaska in 1867, the success and very existence of Russian colonization depended on the colonial

fleet. Ships brought the first explorers and settlers across the ocean, delivered supplies and people from the motherland and carried on trade and commerce. All major settlements of the Russian America were situated on the coast, and even the uniform of the Russian-American Company was modeled after the Russian naval uniform. Why is it then the subject of such importance escaped the attention of the several generations of prominent scholars?

Rather than mere coincidence, this reveals historians' general reluctance to assume that study of seafaring can be self-sufficient. Striped of all the romanticism, the ship is nothing else but an instrument for economic advancement, much like a wheel or a horseshoe. Pursuing the economic and political goals of their owners, ships have been leaving the harbors in order to reach another shore, not for the sake of adventure at the sea. An integral part of general socio-economical development, seafaring, however, has its own very prominent and in some cases dominating role in this development. From the Roman Empire to the reforms of Peter I in eighteenth century Russia, history has many examples of how turning towards the sea changed the destinies of nations. When the European countries started to compete for overseas colonies, the ships assumed even more meaning: as a sole and indispensable mode of communication and exchange between the mother countries and the colonies they transmitted cultures and altered the patterns of societies.

In many instances Russian colonialism followed the typical pattern of European expansion, but several aspects make "Russia's adventure in America" unique. Russia joined the European exploration of the New World relatively late. Russian settlement in

Alaska became the country's first and only overseas colony. Moreover, it was the Russian Empire's first attempt at establishing a socio-political organization of almost exclusively maritime character. Having no access to the ocean through most of its history, Russia claimed its place among the Baltic States only at the beginning of the eighteenth century. For the country that only recently mastered the nearby waters of the Baltic Sea, stretching out for the New World was an ambitious endeavor. The Russian maritime colony was also one of the shortest European colonial experiences: merely one hundred and thirty years passed from moment when the members of the second Bering expedition spotted the mainland of North America to the sale of Russian Alaska. This makes the maritime history of Russian Alaska a topic of tempting equilibrium of chronological compactness and contextual wealth. This work is an attempt to look at the history of the Russian America from the maritime perspective and to examine the role that ships and shipping played in the colony's development.

Despite the lack of systematic study of the subject, material pertaining to the maritime history of Russian America is abundant, although somewhat scattered. Several generations of American, Russian and European mariners, scientists and businessmen published their traveling notes and observations. Contemporary magazines and newspapers announced the departures and arrival of the ships. Finally, the interested researcher can gain access to many number of original documents, preserved in the archival collections of Russian Federation and the United States. Working with these primary sources is a gratifying but also demanding task.

The last decade brought to the scholars of Russian America to a painful realization, that some of the most enchanting accounts of Russian America are nothing but forgeries, composed by a certain Ivan Petrov (Pierce 1968:5). As a research assistant to the famous historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, Petrov was responsible for English translation of the majority of the Russian sources which Bancroft used for his history of Alaska. While most of Petrov's work is trustworthy, a few so-called "translations," such as the diary of the Russian priest Juvenalii and memoirs of the sailor Tarakanov were fabricated from the beginning to the end. Petrov claimed that the Russian originals of both works were published in the contemporary Russian journal *Morskoi Sbornik*, which in reality had no trace of such entries. The issue of Petrov's forgery became one of my special concerns when after a long anticipation I received a microfilm of Bancroft's Library manuscript PK-64 entitled promisingly "List of Vessels of the Siberian Fleet 1714 to 1853, taken from the archives of Okhotsk." To my delight it contained very comprehensive information about eighty-some vessels, with some specific details of their construction, careers and even names of their shipbuilders. My original excitement, however, faded when I came across the remark that the document was "a translation by Ivan Petrov from *Morskoi Sbornik*." This sounded alarming, and I asked Sergei Pavlov, my friend and a bibliographer of the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, to check if *Morskoi Sbornik* indeed contains such article. His negative answer left me no excuse to use the tantalizingly rich data of this tempting, but doubtful source.

Another interesting aspect of working with the primary literature is the variety of the interpretations different sources offer regarding the same matter. Contradicting each

other these accounts pose the need of critical selection of trustworthy information. Pondering the same dilemma when working on the book about his voyage to Alaska in 1826-1829, Fedor Litke wrote:

> It just needs one narrator to shed a brighter light on the favorable side, and another to throw a more gloomy light on the negative side and one and the same race of people can be represented to you on the one hand making light of all danger and heroically defending their country; on the other, being intoxicated by blood like a monster and not knowing any greater joy than the torments of their victims; not making progress along the path of truth and enjoying the benefits resulting from a newborn civilization. <...> The comparison of several contradictory accounts, as much one with the other as against the background of circumstances under the influence of which they were written, is indispensable to be able to found an opinion and get fairly accurate idea about faraway countries and peoples (Litke 1987:44).

Following this thoughtful advice I came to the trivial but important notion that unintentionally or willingly no primary account is free of ideological, social or cultural agenda. Yet, even the most biased reconnaissance of the personal experience contains the historical value, for it allows insight into the mentality of the time. It has been my deliberate strategy to incorporate the fragments of the primary accounts wherever possible in order to both convey the spirit of the époque, and also to distance myself from their not always objective statements.

The main objectives of the research, namely to follow the chronological evolution of the colonial fleet in the general historical context and to analyze the development and structure of the fleet also proved somewhat contradictory. While the first chapter relays the story of Russian discovery and exploration of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska in chronological order, the following three chapters approach the matter differently. The ships of the Russian-American company came from three main sources: colonial

shipyards, purchase, and so-called "round-the-world ships" – the vessels sent to Alaska from St. Petersburg. Each of these categories conveys more information then merely the origin of the ships. Shipbuilding in Siberia and Alaska, discussed in the Chapter II, was a vital part of the Russian initial advance into the region and the manifestation of their intent to remain there. One of the most sophisticated industries in Russian America, it also reflected every aspect of the colonial life. Despite all efforts to produce a sufficient amount of ships, from 1805 until the sail of Alaska the ships of the foreign provenance played an important role in the history of the Russian-American company. Chapter III studies the Russian-American Company's acquisition of the foreign vessels in the context of the international relationship and fur-trade competition. The round the world ships frequently served as research vessels, charting unknown waters and collecting information about the lands and people on route. Their role in international communication and exchange is investigated in Chapter IV. Although for the most of its history, the Russian-American company acquired ships from all three of these sources, the thematic approach facilitated analysis.

The conclusion of this work is an assessment of the role that the Russian-American Company fleet played in the history of the colonies. Could a stronger maritime presence lead to a longer life span of the Russian colonies in America? What were the obstacles in the way of the fleet's development? What was the impact of Russian seafaring and shipbuilding in Alaska? Without answering these questions the overview of the maritime history of the Russian-American Company would hardly be complete.

A few words should be added about the methodology of the research. It is impossible to talk about maritime history without talking about individual ships. Creation of a database of all the ships of the Russian-American Company was the first stage of this research. It proved to be an indispensable tool for all statistical data in this work, and also for revealing general patterns of the fleet's evolution. It still remains a project in progress, awaiting many hours of editing. Instead of making it available to the general public in this vulnerable state, I have attached a catalog of the Russian-American Company ships, containing a description of the vessels' specifications and careers and, where it is possible, visual representations of the ships. More than the database would, this catalog allowed me to incorporate the rich lore of maritime stories, legends and anecdotes, which after all are largely responsible for the strong grip that the sea has on the people's hearts.

## CHAPTER II: FROM SIBERIA TO NORTH AMERICA: EARLY MARITIME HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST

> The discovery of Alaska, which I regarded as a beginning chapter of American history, I found to be a closing chapter of a period of Russian expansion.
>
> -Golder 1960:13

In late August of 1639, a group of thirty-three Russian Cossacks under the leadership of Ivan Moskvitin sailed down the River Ulia in search of new lands (Lebedincev1999: 5). Over the next month the Russians established a little fenced settlement, took hostages from the local tribes, and began to collect a fur tribute in the name of the Tsar. This scenario of invasion was well rehearsed over the previous sixty years of Russia's rapid advance into Siberia. There was, however, one difference: among the sounds of the day in the little fort was one never before heard in the camps of the Siberian explorers: the resonance of the ocean surf.

The discovery of the sea, later named the Sea of Okhotsk, made no immediate impact on either Moskvitin's expedition or the general pattern of Russian colonization in the region. Although "the Russian drive across the Urals to the Pacific was a convulsive process propelled by many pressures and forces that varied in purpose, skill, intensity and duration" (Dmytryshyn 1991: 17), its main goal was always the annexation of new lands (fig.1). Between 1581 and 1700 the Russian crown acquired ten million square kilometers, and founded several dozens Siberian settlements, only two of which, Ulia and Okhotsk, were located on the coast. Even these forts were not initially viewed in any

maritime context. The secret of the inconvenience of the port of Okhotsk, so often lamented by the Russian and foreign seafarers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lay in the simple fact that the fort's location was chosen on the basis of the size of the local sable population (Lebedincev 1999:6), not on the grounds of the navigability of the Bay of Okhotsk. The sea was viewed as a natural limit of land, and thus the terminus of profit.

Often attributed to the country's inability to appreciate the economic and political benefits of seafaring, this situation in reality demonstrated the careful strategy of investment geared to a guaranteed and ample return. Unlike many European countries, Russia did not have to reach overseas for its expansion. Vast territories eastward of the Ural Mountains had all the lure of the New World: land, forests rich with fur-bearing animals, legends of golden rivers and silver mountains, and indigenous peoples incapable of resisting the superiority of Russian weapons. The importance of Siberian furs was the major driving force behind state and private interest in expansion until the beginning of the eighteenth century, but other resources were also actively and successfully sought. Copper and iron deposits discovered in 1660s in the Enisei district were especially important due to the Russian wars with Poland and Crimean Tatars, which demanded increased armaments (Vernadsky 1969:668). Silver was found on the eastern slopes of the Ural Mountains, in Nerchinsk and in the Argun River basin (Vernadsky 1969:670-671). The first century of Siberian exploration brought riches to the Russian Empire comparable to those of the Spanish New World revenue of the sixteenth century, without the perils of the sea. In addition, when the Russians first glimpsed the North Pacific, it hardly offered any apparent options for maritime trade.


Figure 1. Russian Expansion in Asia before 1914 (Hunczak 1974:255-256)

This is not to say that Russia did not realize the importance of sea power in different regions or did not have any taste for seafaring. The sixteenth century saw the country's major effort to secure access to both the Baltic and Caspian Seas. While Moscow's presence on the Baltic lasted only twenty-three years and did not create any Russian maritime presence in the region, the incorporation of the Caspian boosted commerce with Persia, and the khanates of Khiva and Bukhara (Baron 1985:104-105). Another important center of Russian seafaring was located in the northwest of the country, on the coast of the Barents Sea. The population of the White Sea, called *Pomory* ("those by the sea") lived and worked in close relationship

with the ocean. Hunting the white whale and walrus in the White, Barents and Kara Seas they traveled as far as Novaia Zemlia and Spitzbergen (Black 1992:284). By the fourteenth century, local mariners were familiar with the sea route to Norway and Denmark around the Scandinavian Cape (Baron 1985:115). While the extreme difficulty of navigation, combined with six months of frozen sea annually discouraged state interest in fostering any large-scale maritime operations in the region, merchant seafaring continued to thrive.

Not surprisingly, the first Russian oceangoing vessels originated in this region. At the turn of the seventeenth century, three major types of local seagoing vessels are known from documentary evidence, which unfortunately rarely goes further than simply naming them. All three *lodia*, *gukor* and *koch* are conventionally described as solidly built vessels 40 to 60 feet in length, 13 to 22 in beam with the draft of 8 to 11 feet (Black 1992:286, Fig.2,3). Capable of carrying about 60 tons of cargo, the ships were propelled by square sail and had auxiliary oars. The single-masted and decked *koch* was the latest and most sophisticated product of the local tradition, specially designed for sailing in Arctic waters. Fortified with a so-called "ice-belt," an extra layer of outer planking, their hulls bulged, "so when beset by ice the *kochi* would be forced upward rather than crushed" (Baron 1985:120, Belov 1951:63-80). It was the first Russian vessel to have a rudder instead of stern oars.

Due to Russia's physical setting, the most significant Russian water-borne transportation has always been inland navigation. From the ancient times Russian rivers were avenues of economic and cultural exchange. The famous route "from the Vikings to the Greeks" along Daugava and Dniepr Rivers linked the Scandinavian kingdoms with the Byzantine Empire; the ships of Hanseatic Union sailed up the Volkhov River to Novgorod the Great to reach the

main Russian fur, timber and tar market; and the Volga and Don served as vital arteries of the country's internal trade and industries. Utilizing this age-old experience, the government promoted riverine navigation in Siberia, a measure often credited for the speed and success of Russian colonization of the northeast of the continent.


Figure 2. One of the *koch* types. Reconstruction from the collection of the Central Navy Archive (Spasskii 1994:37)

It would, however, be an exaggeration to consider the integration of Siberia an achievement of inland navigation. Running south to north, major Siberian rivers, such as the Ob, Irtysh, Enisei and Lena, offered convenient transport for troops and supplies in these densely forested regions, but naturally could not provide a continuous avenue for eastbound exploration. Instead, state-sponsored Cossacks and profit-seeking merchants embraced a dual mode of operation, moving overland until they encountered rivers, sailing, and moving overland again. The ships were built on the spot by the members of the expedition out of local materials, (naturally not including refined iron).

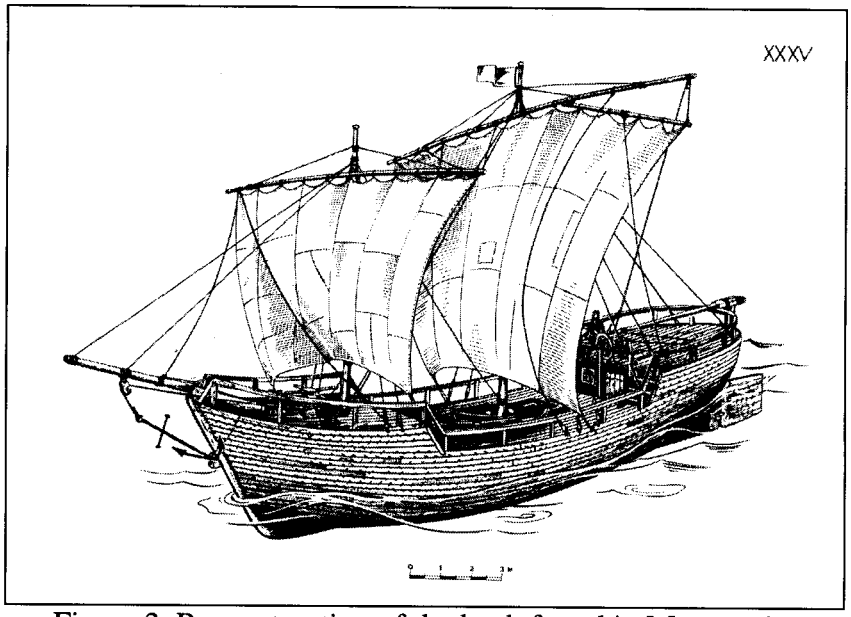


Figure 3. Reconstruction of the koch found in Mangazeia.
(Belov 1980: Plate XXXV)

The ideal vessel for this situation was *shitik* (from the Russian verb "shit' "–"to sew"), a vernacular sewn watercraft popular in the Novgorod and White Sea regions from the Middle Ages until in the early twentieth century. Its base was a single dug-out tree trunk, to which side boards were "sewn", usually by means of willow twigs or whalebone. The seams were caulked with moss. Propelled by oars or square sail, shitiks were decked one-masted vessels about 45 ft long and 16 ft wide with net tonnage of up to 24 tons. Rigging and sails for the *shitiks* were often made of reindeer skins; the anchors were of wood with tie-on weights of stones (Black 1984:79, Fig. 4). A deck cabin, located aft, provided accommodation for the crew, while cargo was stored on the middle of the deck under a triangular shelter (Makarova 1975:107). An English traveler of the late eighteenth

century, Captain James Burney, left an interesting account of the constructional and functional peculiarities of this watercraft:

> On account of the frequency of being enclosed in the Icy Sea by the drift ice, it was customary to construct vessels in a manner that admitted of their being with ease taken to pieces; by which they could be carried across the ice to the outer edge, and there be put together again. Vessels so constructed were called schitiki; the planks were sewed together with twisted osiers, and fastened to the timbers only by leathern straps, in lieu of nails or pegs. The interstices were stuffed with moss, instead of caulking, and the seams were covered with lathes, to prevent moss from being washed out. The name schitiki implies sewn. Notwithstanding the slightness of their construction, they were decked (Burney 1819:64).

The convenience of the light shallow-draft vessel, which could be constructed without iron fasteners, sailed down the river or rowed against the current, beached on the bank, and dragged overland from one waterway to another was greatly appreciated by the Siberian pioneers. The vessel on which Moskvitin reached the Sea of Okhotsk most likely belonged to this type. Three months after the founding of the Ulia settlement, the Cossacks undertook their first voyage along the coast to the mouth of the Okhota River. This short encounter with the sea showed the pressing need for ocean-going vessels, and during the winter of 1639/1640, two 50 ft long *koches* were built in the mouth of the Ulia (Lebedincev1999: 6), marking the beginning of the Russian shipbuilding on the Pacific Ocean.

While the focus on annexation of new lands and fur hunting remained unchanged, the seafaring became increasingly popular mode of transportation. Little by little the Russian pioneers gained familiarity with the new geographical setting of North Pacific. In 1647, Semen Dezhnev sailed his *koches* into the Arctic Ocean from the River Kolyma, doubled the Chukotsk Peninsula and landed at the mouth of the Anadyr River, thus proving that Asia and America are

not joined together. In June of 1648, Semen Shelkovnik, Aleksei Glubokii and 26 Cossacks explored the Northern coast of Okhotsk Sea. In spring of 1651, M. Stadukhin built two *koches* in the mouth of the river Penzhina, sailed to Tauiskaia Guba and founded the Tauiskoe settlement (Lebedincev1999:8). In 1652 Alexei Glubokii compiled the first Russian description of the north-western coast of the Sea of Okhotsk, entitled "Description of [how] to proceed by the sea along the coast from the Okhota River to Inia and Motyklei Rivers and what are the places where, and how long does it take, and what and where rivers fell into the sea, and what and where walrus lives on which islands (Alexeev 1987b:28)."

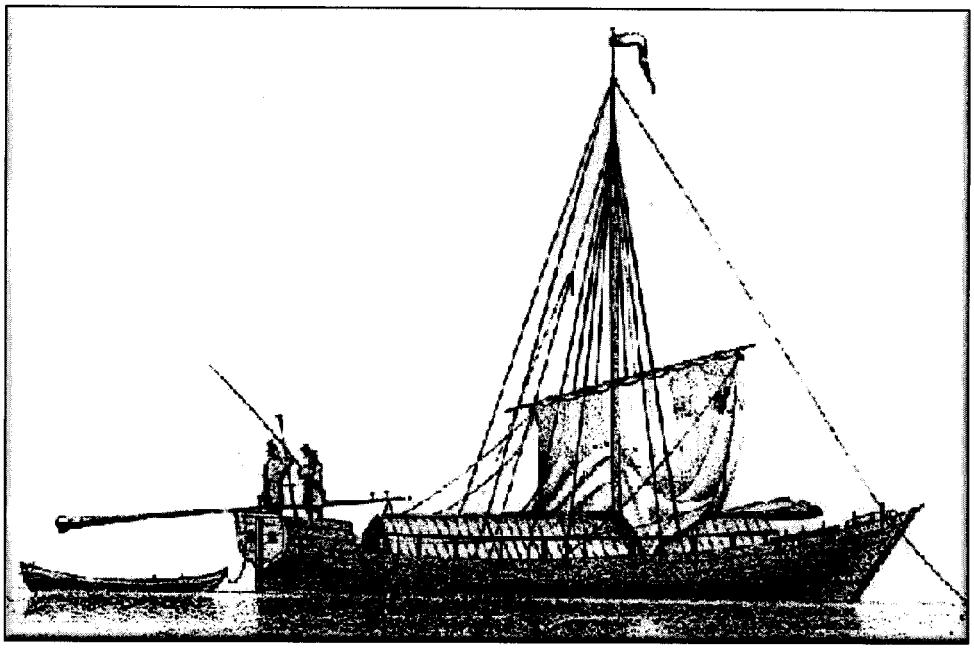

Figure 4. Shitik (Belov 1956:464)

By 1703 Russians had five settlements in North Pacific, three of which (Nizhne-Kamchatsk, Verkhne-Kamchatsk and Bolsheretsk) were located on Kamchatka. All of the settlements were built at river mouths, facilitating access to fresh water and offering an optimal place for shipbuilding. The latter was very sporadic. The nearest regular shipyards to the Pacific coast

were in Yakutsk, the outpost located 500 miles west of Okhotsk on the Lena River. Although Yakutsk could not directly contribute to the shipbuilding on the Pacific, it supplied the eastern outposts with canvas, iron fasteners, caulking material, and ropes (Belov 1956:201). On the Pacific coast, even in major forts such as Okhotsk, the ships continued to be built when and where needed usually by the same people who later took them to the sea. As news about the Russian adventures in the "Icy Ocean" reached sea-minded Tsar Peter I, the state took a more active position in ocean exploration. The year 1714, when "ship-carpenters, seamen and materials for the construction of vessels, wood excepted, were sent from Jakutsk to the port of Okhotsk (Burney 1819:106)," is considered to be the date of birth of Russia's North Pacific Fleet. The first product of this state-sponsored shipbuilding was a *lodia*, which measured as 51ft in length, 18ft in beam and 3.5 feet in draft when loaded. The ship-carpenter Kirill Plotnitskii laid the keel in Okhotsk in May 1714 and completed the vessel in the winter of 1715. Commanded by Henry Busch, a Hollander in service of the Russian Empire, the ship successfully performed the fist direct sea voyage from Okhotsk to Kamchatka and was actively employed in sea voyages until 1727 when she was declared un-seaworthy and burned for iron (Burney 1819:109).

Henceforth, exploration of the North Pacific coasts of Siberia became an ongoing concern of the Russian Empire. It was both the Russian contribution to the European search for the Northern passage to both North America and India, and the country's attempt to familiarize itself with the political and economic advantages that new lands could offer to the growing state. In 1719, Peter I sent geologists Yevreinov and Luzhin to explore and describe the Kurile Islands (Okun 1951:7). Six years later, just a few days

before he died, the Emperor saw thirty-four members of the first Kamchatka expedition setting out from Russia's new Baltic capital.

Historians still argue whether the main goal of this expedition was to confirm Dezhnev's information about the strait between "Asia and America," search for a maritime route to the New World and India, or further exploration of the Kamchatka coast. In any case the venture called for a reliable ship, which the leader of the expedition, forty-three years old Danish-born Captain Vitus Bering, planned to construct in Kamchatka. Navigational instruments, firearms, medicine, craftsmen and crews, plus everything necessary for shipbuilding, save the wood, were transported overland across the length of Eurasia. It took two years to reach Okhotsk. Here Bering made changes in the original plan, and decided to go to Kamchatka by sea. The first vessel needed for this voyage was launched at the mouth of Okhota River in early June of 1727 and christened *Fortuna* (Fortune) (Golder 1960:135-137).

It is not clear what type of the ship one-masted *Fortuna* was. Despite the fact that she was built by shipwrights from St. Petersburg, some sources identify her as "shitik", the above-mentioned vernacular sewn vessel (Gibson 1992:97, Fig.5), while the contemporary sketch of one of Spanberg, a member of the expedition, reveals a rather more modern and sophisticated vessel with fully developed stem and stern, suggesting the likely presence of iron fastenings (Golder 1960: 167). Accompanied by a locally built *lodia*, the *Fortuna* transported the expedition members to Bolsheretsk, the administrative center of Kamchatka. Here, at the mouth of Bolshaia Reka, the explorers again set themselves the task of shipbuilding. This time they were constructing a vessel, which was

to take them across the proverbial severity of the ocean northeast of Kamchatka. The expedition's flagship *Sv. Arkhangel Gavriil* (St. Archangel Gabriel), measuring 60 ft by 20 ft by 7.5 ft (Golder 1960:140), was launched on June 8, but it took another month to manufacture tar and complete the vessel's fitting (Ibid). The same sketch by Spanberg provides the only representation of this ship.

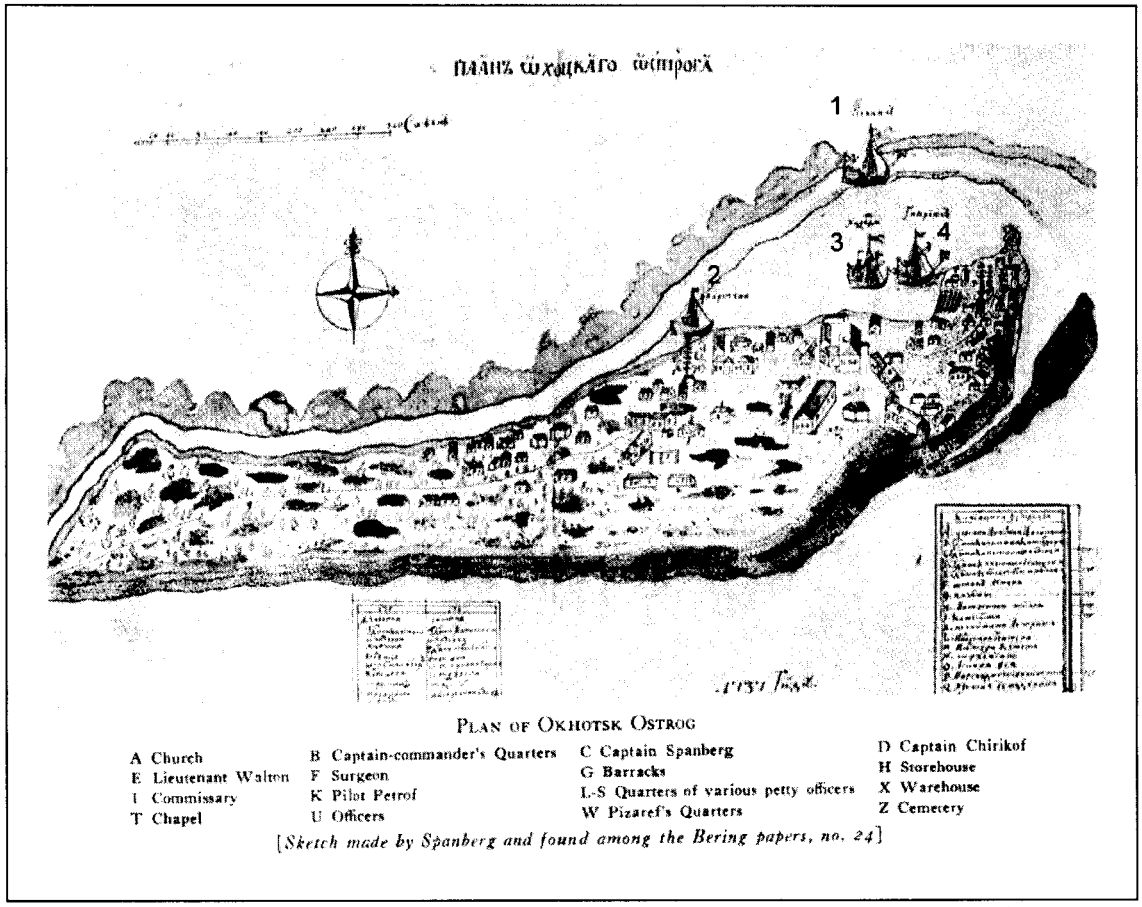


Figure 5. Spanberg's Plan of Okhotsk Ostrog in 1737 (Golder 1960:167) Numeration is inserted by the author and refers to the ships: 1 – the *Mikhail*, 2- the *Fortuna*, 3 – the *Nadezhda*, 4 – the *Gavriil*.

The Herculean efforts of the members of the first Kamchatka expedition bore very humble results. The *Sv. Arkhangel Gavriil* first took to the sea on July 24, 1728. Sailing

north along the Kamchatka coast the explorers rounded Chukotski Cape, but did not proceed further in view of the approaching cold season: the sea in this region was known to freeze as early as September. Less than two months after their departure the explorers returned to Bolsheretsk, and spent another uneventful winter where. In the spring of 1729 Bering undertook a new attempt to sail eastward, but returned only one month later without spotting any land, at which point he considered it necessary to return to St. Petersburg. Both the *Fortuna* and the *Sv. Arkhangel Gavriil* remained in Okhotsk. To many contemporaries the expedition seemed to be a failure: it cost a fortune, lasted more than five years, of which only three months had been spent at the sea, and its only contribution to science was description of the north-east coast of Kamchatka (Gibson (a) 1992:99). Perhaps to offset such opinions, immediately following his return to St. Petersburg Bering started preparation for another, even more ambitious exploration.

This time he proposed to examine the waters between Kamchatka and Japan, America, and along the Arctic coast. To fulfill his vision he planed to construct five vessels in Kamchatka or Okhotsk. Two packet-boats were to be built specifically for Bering's new American venture. The shipwright of the St. Petersburg admiralty, Vasilii Soloviov, was ordered to look for drawings of appropriate vessels. According to the historian of the Russian Naval Archive, Tatiana Fedorova, most likely prototypes of Bering's vessels were either *Mercury* or *Postwagon* (Fedorova 1992:159).

Meanwhile, the ships constructed by Bering for the previous expedition continued their careers in the northern waters. In 1729 the Cossack leader Afanas Shestakof was authorized to explore northern Siberia and "pacify the hostile natives." Fortified by pilots,

mechanics, sailors and geodesists from St. Petersburg, Shestakof employed both *Sv. Arkhangel Gavriil* and *Fortuna*, along with two other ships he built in Okhotsk, named *Vostochnyi Gavriil* (Eastern Gabriel) and *Lev* (Lion). In 1732, as a part of these plans an expedition member, geodesist Gwozdev, was sent aboard *Sv. Arkhangel Gavriil* to look for the "large country" east of Kamchatka. According to the opinion of most scholars, the land he reached and described as a big island was the American coast (Golder 1960:153-163).

By this time the state realized the pressing need for a reliable maritime base on the Russian Pacific coast. In 1731 Pizaref, a former director of the naval academy in Moscow, was sent to Okhotsk to build a port, but when four years later the members of the second Kamchatka expeditions reached the settlement, expecting to find their quarters and some other facilities ready, they found neither. Building on this initial disappointment, the relationship between Bering and Pizaref grew into the open hostility, which hindered, rather than facilitated preparations for the voyages (Golder 1960:173). Perhaps this, along with the inconveniences of the location of the settlement of Okhotsk, influenced Bering's decision to establish a shipbuilding camp outside the fort, at the mouth of the Okhota river. Here the explorers built the camp and all necessary workshops and began construction.

The expedition brought more than 500 people, among them 12 coopers, 10 master carpenters, 10 caulkers, 8 sail-makers and 1 master blacksmith from European Russia and 230 apprentice carpenters and 36 apprentice blacksmiths from Siberia (Pokrovskii 1941:202-04). By the fall of 1737 the keels of the ships were laid. The

irregularity of supplies, which forced Bering to send majority of his people to provision the expedition, and adverse weather conditions slowed the work. It took over two years to complete the vessels. Fitted in the spring of 1740, the ships were launched at the end of the June, on the eve of the Russian-Orthodox holy day of St. Peter and St. Paul, which gave them their names. Both the *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* were copper-sheathed brig-rigged ships with two masts and one deck (Fedorova 1992:160-161). Each ship had a cargo capacity of 100 tons and was equipped with 14 cannons, 3 falconnets, with nearly 700 cannonballs, 10 barrels of gunpowder, and 492 of grapeshot. It is peculiar that along with the rocks the ballast of each of the ships had 90 pounds of "sheet iron" (Fedorova 1992:161).

It was too late in the year to sail to America, and after crossing the sea of Okhotsk, the ships wintered on the eastern coast of Kamchatka peninsula, in Avacha Bay. Petropavlovsk, as Bering named their camp in this convenient bay, eventually became an important Russian outpost in North Pacific. From there on June 4, 1741, two ships sailed out on a new voyage, which became Captain Bering's last adventure. Soon after departure the ships became separated. The *St. Peter* under Bering's command reached the Alaska mainland, and on the return voyage wrecked on Copper Island. Only a handful of his crew survived the hardship of wintering on the island, and managed to return to Kamchatka the following summer on a small boat they built out of the wreckage. Vitus Bering was not among them.

The *St. Paul* under Chirikov also reached the American coast and made a safe return to Petropavlovsk in 1742, bringing aboard the cargo that was to change the history

of the North Pacific. Hunting along the Aleutian island chain, the crew of *St. Paul* encountered an animal which one of the members of the expedition described as "indescribably pretty" (Gibson(a)1992:112). Sold in China for 50 or more rubles per piece, the pelts of sea-otters, as this animal became known in the Asian bazaars and European markets, opened a new era in the history of the Russian Far East, and justified the cost of the second Kamchatka expedition, which equaled approximately one-sixth of the total state income in 1724 (Klyuchevsky 1961:76).

In addition to pointing out this new avenue of the commercial initiative, Bering's expeditions had a major impact on the development of the shipbuilding in the region. By carrying on ship construction in Okhotsk, Bering literally dragged the European shipbuilding tradition across the immensity of Siberia, created the necessary auxiliary workshops, and brought qualified specialists. Besides the vessels required for the voyages to America, in course of the second Kamchatka expedition four ships [the *Arkhangel Mikhail* (Archangel Michael), *Nadezda* (Hope), *Bolsheretsk* and *Sv. Ioan* (St. John)] were constructed for Spanberg's voyages to the Kuril Islands and Japan (Golder1960:221-228). When this epic undertaking ended, the entrepreneurs of eastern Siberia were granted both the tentative sketch of the profitable maritime trade and the means to bring this vision to life. The boom of shipbuilding activities which Okhotsk and Kamchatka saw over next sixty years were in many ways the result of Bering's expeditions.

Following the return of the *Sv. Pavel* the rumors of this newly discovered region's riches caused a wave of short-lived merchant companies, formed with the sole purpose of "enriching themselves through sea otter skins (Berkh 1974:1)." Emel'ian Basov, a

sergeant of the Okhotsk port, equipped the first private fur-hunting expedition to the Aleutians. Lacking necessary finances, Basov formed a company with the Moscow merchant Serebrennikov, the service man Evtikhii Sannikov, the townsmen Panshin and Danila Sosnin, and the peasants Popov and Kholshechevnikov. Together they built a small vessel, identified in the documents as *shitik*, and set out to sea in August of 1743. The crew included two members of the second Bering expedition. Serving as navigators, they brought Basov's *shitik* the *Petr* to Bering Island, where the hunters obtained 1,200 sea otters and 4,000 foxes, all of which were sold in Okhotsk at great profit (Makarova 1975:39).

Between 1743 and 1800 more than 40 companies built about 80 ships for voyages to the Aleutian Islands and the mainland of Alaska. At first they were not stable organizations, but rather groups of people who put their capital together to equip an expedition in hope of ample returns. To manage the distribution of income the partners used a share system: according to his role in the expedition each member of the company had certain number of shares, which in case of a successful voyage were paid after the sale of obtained furs. Usually all shareholders participated in both shipbuilding and the voyage itself. In the Russian Far East these people, who were, depending on circumstances, ship carpenters, sailors, hunters and merchants, became known as "promyshlenniki." This was not a homogenous group of people; many came from settlements in eastern and northern Siberia and were familiar with local seafaring (Black 1992: 280), some came from central Russia (Makarova 1975: 199-206) and had little if any experience with the sea. By the year 1754 the region had three navigation schools,

located in Okhotsk, Irkutsk, and Nerchinsk, which became modest, but consistent sources of trained navigators and other naval specialists for both state and merchant ships (Beloglazova 1998: 86-91).

Building and equipping a ship was by far the most expensive part of preparation for a voyage. While both Okhotsk and Kamchatka had plenty of suitable timber, iron fasteners, canvas, rigging and ropes had to be purchased in Yakutsk. Most of these items were quite expensive: a *pud* (36.11 pounds) of iron, for example, cost 20 rubles, which equaled the average monthly salary of a Siberian Cossack, and cord was twice that much (Berkh1974:13). With most of the food supplies also brought from Yakutsk, a vessel equipped for a fur-gathering voyage cost from four to ten thousand rubles (Makarova 1975:107).

Unfortunately, very little is known about the details of the shipbuilding of the first *promyshlenniki.* Most of the vessels were constructed in the vicinity of one of the three major settlements: Okhotsk on the mainland or Bolsheretsk and Nizhne-Kamchatsk in Kamchatka. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Okhotsk had state-sponsored shipyards, black-smiths and other necessary stores (Alexeev 1957:58), but merchant vessels continued to be built on the shores of the river, near the source of shipbuilding materials. The same mode of operation was in use in Kamchatka. Vasilii Berkh states that freshly felled trees were used for timber, and very few of the builders were familiar with the science of naval architecture (Berkh1974: 13). When assessing the quality of the local craftsmanship, however, one needs to take into consideration that most of our knowledge about it comes from the accounts of officials and travelers who arrived from

the European part of the continent and had little appreciation for the local vernacular tradition. The latter played an important role even after the reforms of Peter I, who tried to limit Russian vernacular shipbuilding, and insisted on the adaptation of European technology. Peter's explicit regulations against building *koches* might be the main reason why this vessel type, so popular with the seventeenth-century explorers, disappeared from the accounts (but perhaps not from the shipyards) of the eighteenth century. At the same time, the fur trade taxes were important state revenue, and local officials supported the merchants' seafaring initiative by providing them with some loans, ship stores and ammunition (Al'perovich 1993:17). It also is likely that the shipwrights of the state yards played some role in the construction of the merchant vessels.

Only a quarter of all ocean-going vessels built in the Russian Far East in the second half of the eighteenth century are identified as certain type in the historical accounts, while the rest of them are referred to as simply "vessels" (Blinov 1957: 9-15). While the small percentage of identified ships does not allow one to draw definite conclusions, there seems to be a chronological pattern in the succession of the vessel types. The largest group of identified ships consists of eight *shitiks*, which were build and used between 1743 and 1753. *Bot,* a Russian adaptation of the Dutch single-masted shallow-draft *bootier* (Black 1980:316), which relied on both sail and oar propulsion, dominated from 1757 until 1778, when five of them are mentioned in the sources. One of the documents of the Central Archive of the Ancient Acts in Moscow provides an interesting account, which supports the date of transition from the vernacular sewn boats to the later more European craft: "In 1757 they began to build boats *boty* or barks *barki* with wooden

reinforcements, or ribs, which to distinguish from the *shitiks* were called "gvozdenniks" [held with nails or pegs] (TsGADA f.199, d.538, ch. II:11, 236-247, cited in Makarova 1975:107)." By the end of the nineteenth century the historical accounts of local shipbuilding start mentioning *galiots*, three of which were built between 1783 and 1785, and one is recorded in 1762. The galiots also originated in Holland and became popular in Russian Azov and Baltic fleets during the reign of Peter I. They measured about 20m in length, 3m in beam, had 3 m depth and carried one or two masts (Gazenko 2001:27-28, Black 1980:316-317).

All three vessel types employed in the Russian North Pacific voyages in the second half of the nineteenth century were not originally designed for long ocean voyages. *Shitiks* were traditionally used for inland navigation, and both *bots* and *galiots* performed best as coastal vessels. Their adaptation to the new physical environment probably brought a fair amount of changes to the traditional design. The documentary evidence provides meager information regarding the specification of these vessels. Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov, the first manager of the Russian-American Company, when asked about the reason for the extreme slowness of the ships of "these first Argonauts," provided a peculiar insight into the local approach to ship construction:

> Formerly all owners of seagoing vessels tried to build them very high, figuring that this way they would have more room for crew and cargo. Most of these vessels had galiot type rigging with short, heavy masts and narrow sails in order to economize on canvas. The rudders were of amazing design with blades at least 1 ½ sazhen long. Putting out to sea in such a ship the navigators soon found that it had no speed at all Believing that a long rudder contributes to the speed of the ship, they added frequently to its length. When two such navigators would meet at some island, the first question after the usual courtesies and

> conversation about sailing would be: "How many times have you lengthened your rudder?"
>
> "During my stay at Okhotsk," continued the esteemed Mr. Baranov, " a clerk of the Shelikhov and Golikov Company came to ask my permission to take eight bottles of French brandy to the shipwright. "Why do you want to give him such a handsome present, brother? He gets a stipulated pay." "This, my dear sir, is unavoidable, for two weeks now I have been asking him to build the galiot *Petr i Pavel* at least one arshin higher, but he refuses and I think a present will help in this case a great deal." "Naturally," continued Baranov, "I put this block-head out of my room, but by doing do I offended all the Company's employees. Only the shipwright, a man skilled in his trade, approved my action."
>
> (Berkh 1974:69-70)

However unsophisticated the vessels of the Far Eastern seafarers may have looked in comparison with European ships, they performed their roles fairly well. Ten or more years of operation was not an unusually long career for the vessels built on the Siberian and American coasts in the second half of the eighteenth century. The high rate of wrecking (virtually one of every four ships was lost to the sea), although naturally related to the quality of the ships should, nevertheless, be assessed in conjunction with both the absence of navigational charts and legendary severity of the North Pacific.

The wrecking of a vessel did not always mean the end of its career. Five ships of the first *promyshlenniki* gained a peculiar "afterlife," when the shipwreck survivors rescued as much of the ship's structure as they could and constructed a new craft out of it. These new ships not only enabled the crew to complete their voyage, but were often used for further expeditions. In October of 1747, for example, a severe storm wrecked the merchant vessel *Perkup i Zant*, at Bering Island. The crew was away hunting when the disaster occurred. Out of driftwood and the remains of Vitus Bering's ship, which had wrecked there 6 years earlier, they built a new vessel, the 32 ft *Kapiton* (Berkh 1974:8-9).

When they finally reached Kamchatka in 1749, the ship was confiscated on the grounds that her iron fasteners came from the wreck of Bering's vessel, which allegedly belonged to the state (Berkh 1974: 18). After seven years of requests and petitions it was given back to the merchants, who immediately sent her to the Aleutians. In 1757 she wrecked again, this time on Kiska Island. Enduring starvation and occasional attacks of natives for a year and a half, the survivors managed to build another small vessel, which wrecked again in a few months (Berkh 1974: 19-20). Another example of the same sort is the *Simeon i Ioann.* She wrecked in 1752 on Copper Island and was reused for construction of the *Ieremiia*, which sailed for fourteen years, until her wrecking on Adak Island offered some prime material for the construction of the next vessel, named *Petr i Pavel* (Berkh 1974: 13-15).

Following the old maritime tradition, the ships were called after the saints whose protection was sought to improve the odds of sailing in the malevolent Pacific waters. It is peculiar that the most popular saints were the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul (Petr and Pavel in Russian transliteration), after whom Bering called his ships. Between 1743 and 1800 two vessels were christened *Sv. Petr*, three *Sv. Pavels*, and five *Sv. Petr i Pavel.* St. Nikolas, patron of all sailors, also held a prominent place in the devotion of the Russian *promyshlenniki.* Eight ships were named *Sv. Ioann,* after such prominent Christian figures as John Forerunner, John the Theologian, and the local saints John of Ustiug and John of Ryl'sk. Naming the ships after celestial patrons was typical for the first stage of the Russian advance towards the American continent: once venturing upon the Pacific Ocean became more familiar and less risky business, the ships started to be called after

landmarks and renowned statesmen. Offering insight into the devotional aspects of seafaring, the ships' names also illustrate the pattern of demographical movement to the maritime outposts of the Russian Far East. As Lydia Black pointed out, "it is no accident that many vessels in the Aleutian trade were named for the saints especially venerated in the Russian North" (Black 1992:80).

The duration and route of the voyages varied at different periods. During the period 1743-1755 fur gathering was carried out not far from Kamchatka, on the Commander and Near Islands, and an expedition took three years on average (Makarova 1975: 49). The merchants usually spent winters on one of the islands when the sea was especially rough and, more importantly, the seasonal cycle of seals brought them to land. The next spring they continued to sail eastward in search for new lands, wintered again for another hunting season, and sailed back home the following spring. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century Russian hunters and traders became acquainted with all islands of the Aleutian chain. The expeditions became longer, requiring sometimes up to eight years, but also yielded greater profits.

The furs were sold in Okhotsk or Bolsheretsk to middlemen, who took them overland to the markets of Central Russia, Europe, and China. Due to its proximity and the continuous demand for furs, China offered the most promising trading opportunity. An official agreement between the two countries, however, banned Russia from Canton, China's most lucrative trading center, accessible to ocean-going vessels. Instead, Russians were allowed to carry on their commerce only in Kiakhta, an inland border outpost south of Lake Baikal. At the same time, English, American and French vessels

enjoyed the conveniences of Canton. In the eighteenth century, however, when the population of the marine fur-bearing animals seemed to be abundant without limits, this did not present a vital danger to Russian commerce. In some ways this commercial rivalry with European countries was even flattering for Russia: for a century the country molded its new identity according to the European paradigm, and nothing proved its success better than the ability to compete in the same markets.

In the Russian Pacific, the development of seafaring followed the same grand design. The achievements of the vernacular tradition were rejected in favor of the European maritime experience. Bering's expeditions of 1725-1843 brought the European maritime culture to the region and showed the new promising direction of regional maritime commerce. Taking full advantage of the latter, the merchants of the Russian Far East, however, were not able, and perhaps were not altogether eager, to match European technology. The Russian Pacific shipbuilding of the second half of the eighteenth century was still indebted to the vernacular tradition, which was probably more cost-efficient, and according to some scholars, better adapted to the specific conditions of local seafaring. With time, the gap between the two different traditions gradually closed: European ship types appeared among the merchant vessels by 1760. The further advance of the European tradition was probably connected with the state's continuous effort to explore the political and commercial potential of the region. State shipyards in Okhotsk produced European-style vessels for scientific voyages to the American continent and Kurile Islands, and probably lent both materials and shipwrights to the *promyshlenniki.* Yet the major force behind the Russian advance in North Pacific and towards the New World was

the private commercial initiative of the merchants. The Pacific maritime trade of the second half of the eighteenth century was probably the most energetic private shipbuilding that Russia has ever witnessed.

## CHAPTER III: BUILDING THE COLONY, BUILDING THE SHIPS

*On the path to monopoly: Shelikhov-Golikov Company*

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century the North Pacific region was tightly incorporated into the sphere of Russia's political and economic interests. The Aleutian Chain, like an oceanic highway, connected Alaska with the Russian Empire. For half a century Russian entrepreneurs ventured these waters in hopes of easy enrichment. As the century came to an end, so did the spell of the Islands: extensive hunting depleted the population of fur-bearing sea-animals and made the voyages progressively more unprofitable. The merchants' initial enthusiasm declined and those who stayed in the trade had to compete with each other for hunting grounds. The dream of a monopoly on the New World fur trade brewed in the heads of many Siberian entrepreneurs, but there was only one who could make it happen, and even he did not live long enough to see his vision come true.

Grigorii Ivanovich Shekihov, an honored citizen of Ryl'sk, started his career in fur trade in 1773 when he arrived in Irkutsk and became an apprentice of the established merchant Ivan Golikov (Fig.6). Shelikhov learned his trade from first-hand experience: over eight years he invested in more then ten companies, forming temporary partnerships with such prominent Siberian merchants as Lebedev-Lastochkin, Luka Alin, Saveliev and Panovs, Kozicyn and Golikov (Shelikhov 1981:4). A keen observer and an energetic businessman, Shelikhov saw the need for change in the organization of the trade. He believed that permanent outposts on the Aleutian Islands and Alaska would make fur-

gathering more efficient, assist in further exploration, and create a precedent against other states' attempts to claim the region. His plan, therefore, was to establish settlements in Alaska, and then petition the crown for an exclusive concession. Giving full credit to Shelikhov's perceptiveness and ardor, one should remember that Russian merchants were well aware of the activities of the East India Companies, both Dutch and English, which inspired the Archangel Whaling Company. The ruling circles of the Russian Empire also gained sympathy for the achievements of European mercantilism. It is peculiar that the first proposal to organize a company with an exclusive monopoly on trade, hunting and establishments in America belonged to the secretary of the Russian Chamber of Commerce, M.D. Chulkov. This proposal was declined in 1780, but many of its suggestions echoed in Shelikhov's plans (Al'perovich 1993:88).

To achieve his ambitious goals Shelikhov convinced Golikov to set up a special company for ten years (Tikhmenev 1978:12). In 1781, with starting capital of 70,000 rubles the Shelikhov-Golokov company built three galiots, called *Tri Sviatitelia* (Three Bishops), *Arkhistratig Mikhail* (Archangel Michael), and *Simeon Bogopriimets i Anna Propochitsa* (Saint Simeon and Anna the Prophetess) (Tikhmenev 1978:12). Constructed at the mouth of the river Urak by Shelikhov and two of his companions, these vessels were typical products of the merchant shipbuilding of the Russian Far East, and as their names imply, needed a fair amount of divine intercession while at sea (Shelikhov 1981:8).

Figure 6. G.I. Shelikhov (Berkh 1974: insert 7)

Sailing from Okhotsk aboard the *Tri Sviatitelia* with his wife and children, Shelikhov reached Kodiak Island, where in 1784 he established the first permanent Russian settlement in the New World. After some bartering and with the help of the ship's guns the Kodiak Aleuts came to tolerate the newcomers, who made their long-term intentions clear with the erection of a fort in Three Saints harbor. Simultaneously with building living quarters, Shelikhov busied his men with ship construction. On January 1786 the first party of workmen entrusted to build boats was dispatched to the nearest spruce forest, nearly 106 miles east of the harbor (Shelikhov 1981:47).

Notwithstanding the growing number of Russian land bases, ships continued to be the most precious asset of the company, offering the Russian settlers protection and mobility.

Not surprisingly, the very first instructions regarding the colonial affairs contained an article regarding the ship maintenance and the health of the seamen. Leaving K. Samoilov in charge of the new Russian establishments in America in1785, Shelikhov emphasized that:

> At the end of the navigational season, even though the harbor is good, the ships should be dismantled. The rigging should be removed to the last piece of rope, and stored in a dry place. The sails and merchandise should be dried and aired often. The masts should be removed to prevent them from rotting. The ships must be pulled up high on the beach and set up properly. A roof must be erected on poles over each of them so that they will be completely covered and protected from rain or snow. In pulling up the ships be careful to raise them level with the shore or higher. To keep the cables from breaking, use inclined planes. Place blocks under the keels so they will not be damaged. If the ships are not taken out of the water and roofs put over them they will become water logged and damp inside, which is harmful for the seamen's health. For this reason the ships must be handled strictly in accordance with this order (...)
>
> See that all the seamen from the three ships belonging to the company have plenty of exercise every day as a protection from scurvy, and to keep them healthy. They must go to work and in their spare times play games. Instead of tea, they must drink a brew made of leaves of green grass that purifies the blood and improves health. Good food must be prepared. Rotten or condemned provisions should not be used (Tikhmenev 1979:12, Figure 7).

In May of 1786 the *Tri Sviatitelia* left Kodiak for supplies and reinforcement. Aboard the ship, Grigorii Shelikhov pondered the future of the newly born colony. In Okhotsk he received unpleasant news: in 1785, following turbulence on Russian-Chinese border Russian trade with China was banned, and the most promising fur market was now out of reach. Disastrous for commerce, this suspension was paradoxically beneficial to the Shelikhov-Golikov Company, destroying virtually all competition. By the time the Chinese border was re-opened for trade in 1792, the company had only two rivals in Pacific waters: the Lebedev-Lastochkin enterprise and the company of the Kiselev

brothers (Allan 1996:24). Meanwhile the company relayed on the services of foreign middlemen, such as the English merchant McIntosh, for its trade with China (Tikhmenev 1978:29).

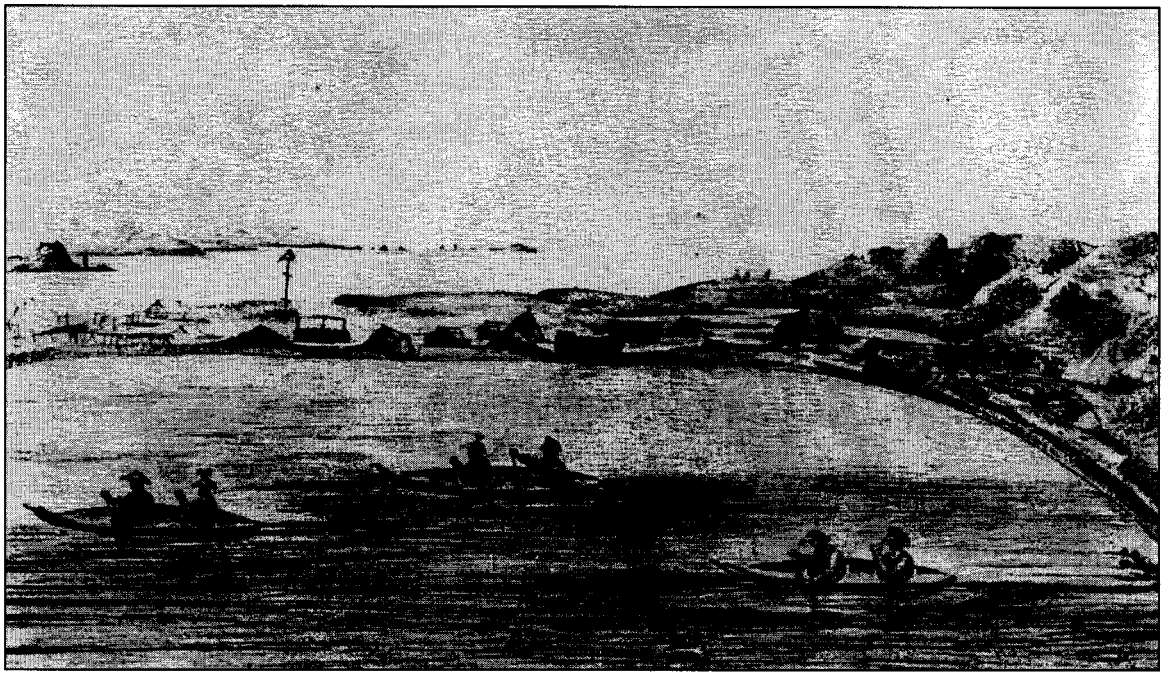

Figure7. Three Saints Bay, Kad'yak, 1790 (Berkh 1974: insert 8)
Note two ship beached for the winter, one on the left is protected by the roof.

Immediately after his return to Irkutsk in 1787, Shelikhov submitted a detailed account of his voyage with geographical maps and plans of the established settlements to Iakobii, the Governor-General of Siberia, asking him for instructions regarding further conduct, and a permission "to send several ships under some suitable flag to Chinese ports in order to trade merchandise for furs or for money" (Tikhmenev 1978:18). At the same time Golikov was granted an audience with the empress when she passed through Kursk. Catherine II was impressed with the achievements of her subjects and invited a proposal for the incorporation of new regions into the Russian Empire (Tikhmnev 1978:21). 1788 saw both Shelikhov and Golikov in the capital lobbying for an exclusive monopoly on the

Pacific fur trade and the government's financial aid. Bribing where other arguments failed, the partners ensured a host of influential supporters, but failed to gain the final approval of the Empress. Catherine II declined their request, and limited her benevolence to awarding both Shelikhov and Golikov swords of nobility and golden medals.

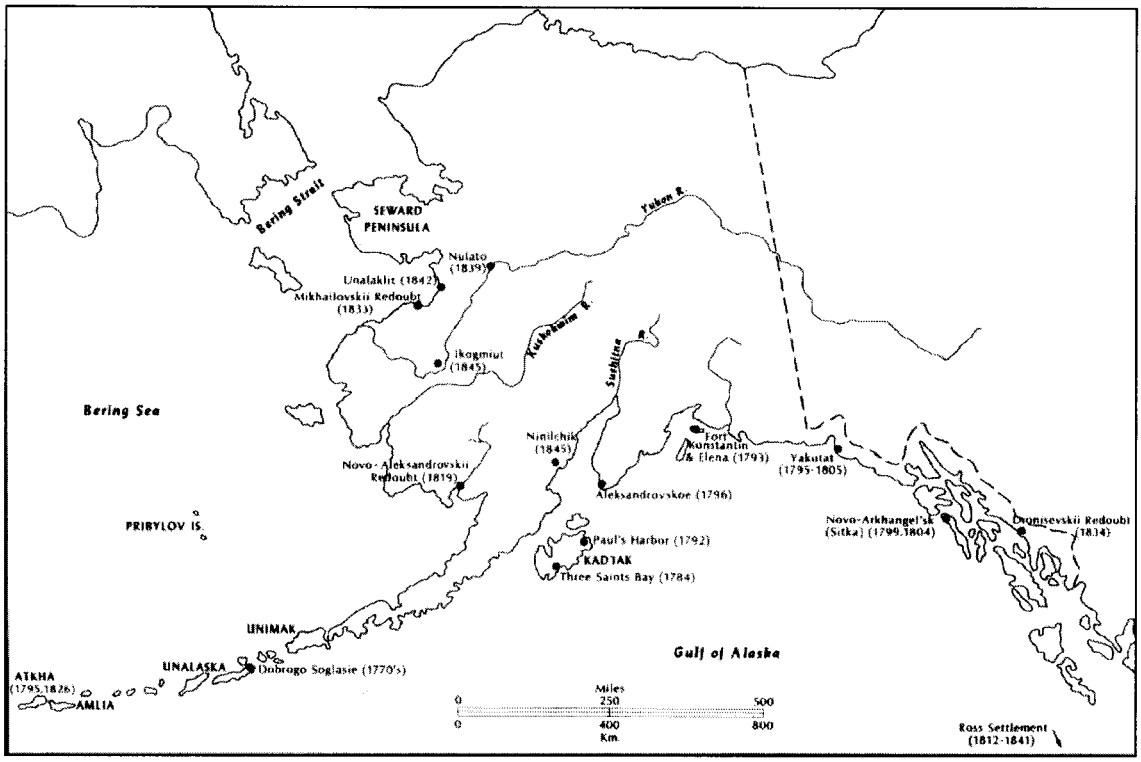


Figure 8. Principal Russian establishment in Alaska (Tikhmenev 1978:2)

Despite the lack of governmental support, fierce clashes with other Russian companies, and resistance by the Native population of Alaska, Shelikhov carried on his plans and by the time he died in 1795 there were seven company settlements and forts in America (Solovjova 1992: 342-343, Fig.8). Nominally Shelikhov established several companies, which worked closely together, sharing ships and supplies. After several reorganizations and mergers the Golikov-Shelikhov enterprise consisted of the Northeastern, North-American, and Kurile Companies. To ensure the companies' swift

operation in America Shelikhov sought two things: an able manager and reliable ships. In 1790, Shelikhov's persuasion and the decline of his own business compelled Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov to accept the position as company manager on Kodiak Island. As soon as the new manager arrived on the island, Shelikhov gave him the task to commence shipbuilding. His choice of shipwright was an Englishman, James George Shields.

Very little is known about this British naval officer in Russian service. Prior to his transfer to Okhotsk together with four of his compatriots, he was a second lieutenant in the Ekaterinburg regiment. Later he found an employment as naval architect and captain in Okhotsk (Pierce 1990:462). In 1791 he supervised the construction of the vessel christened *Severo-Vostochnyi Orel* (Northeastern Eagle), and then took it to America with a load of shipbuilding materials and the following instructions from Shelikhov:

> "Herewith we send you iron, rigging and sails for one ship, which you will build with Shields' help. Using him to advantage, you should also begin two or three other ships of various sizes, bringing them to the point where you can finish them yourselves, without shipbuilder's aid. Everything you need for this will be sent later. Teach the natives to be sail-makers, riggers and blacksmiths (Tikhmenev 1978:33)."

This was a demanding task for the company at the dawn of its existence. All hands were busy with building necessary shops and living quarters in Kodiak. Furthermore, the timber available on Kodiak and Afognak was deemed unsuitable for shipbuilding: there were no large trees, plus local fir had too many knots and was too brittle (Tikhmenev 1979:36). After evaluating local timber resources, Baranov decided to build a shipyard at Resurrection (Voskresenskaya) harbor on Kenai Peninsula (probably at the location of the present Seward Marine Center). Unfortunately, all attempts to discover the remains of this first shipbuilding facility on the Pacific coast of North

America have failed to bring any results. The contemporary sketch of the Resurrection settlement, drawn by the above-mentioned Shields in 1799 (Figure 9. Solovjova 1992: 344:345, Tikhmenev 1978:35) reveals a very marginal shipbuilding facility. The wooden ship slip, located outside of the fort's wooden fence, could accommodate only one ship at a time, and the only workshop of the fort was a smithy.

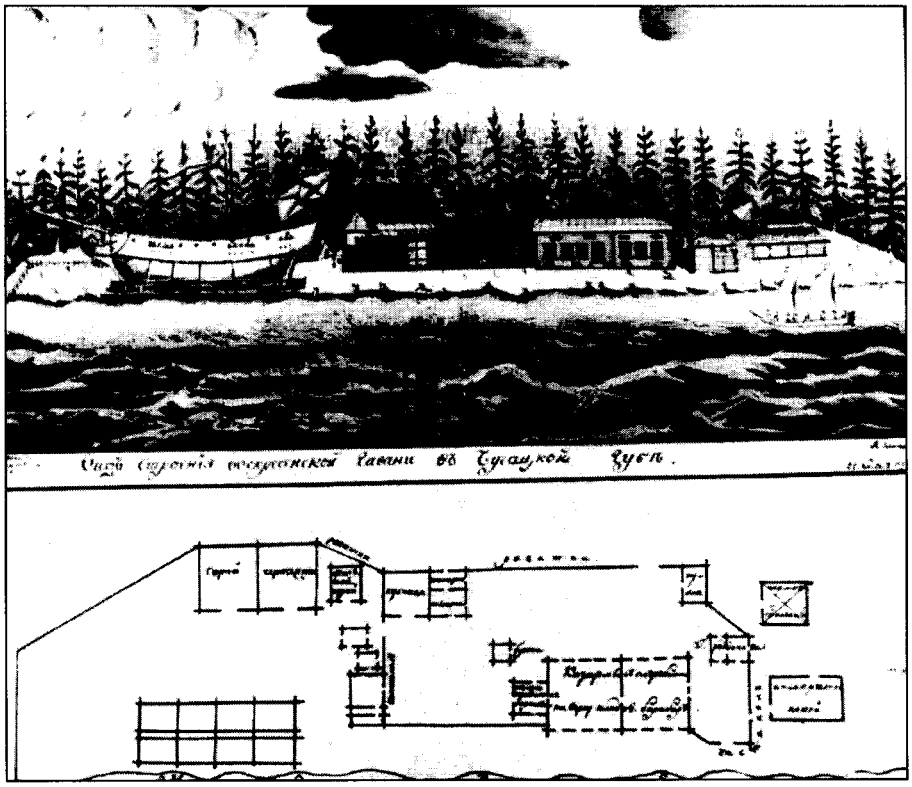

Figure 9. Shields, J.G., Sketch and plan of Resurrection (Voskresenskaya) settlement, 1795 (Solovjova 1992:344).

The first ship constructed in the Resurrection shipyard was the frigate *Phoenix.* Built of local spruce in 1794, she had three masts, two decks, and was 73 ft in length, 23 ft in beam and 21 ft in depth from keelson to the upper deck (Pierce 1990:462). She drew 13 ½ feet and had capacity of 180 tons (Tikhmenev 1978: 33). To make up for the shortage of pitch, paint and oakum, Baranov had her caulked with a mix of pitch, ochre and whale

blubber. After launching *Phoenix* Shields built two more sailing vessels made of fir, the *Del'fin* (Dolphin) and the *Ol'ga* (Olga), each forty feet long (Tikhmenev 1978:33, Figure 8). Besides the constant need for ship stores, shipbuilding was tempered by the growing dissatisfaction of the men, who being accustomed to quiet and monotonous lives, grumbled and wanted to go back to Kodiak (Tikhmenev 1979:36). It is not quite clear weather both the Del'fin and Ol'ga were built in Voskresenskaia yards, or as Lydia Black suggested, they were the production of the yards on Lesnoi (Spruce) Island (Black 2004:146).

Slava Rosii (Glory of Russia), the second settlement with shipyards, was established on Yakutat (Bering) Bay. There were a number of reasons why the stronghold on the Alaskan mainland seemed advantageous to Grigorii Shelikhov: the soil and climate of Kodiak Island resisted any attempts to grow grain, the mainland offered better protection from foreign invaders, and finally, it had timber for ship construction. Instructing Baranov regarding the site of the future settlement, Shelikhov recommended that: "such a settlement will best be established on a good navigable river where shipbuilding lumber can easily be procured, and where the shipyard itself can be located" (Dmytrishyn 1988:435). To man the new settlement, Shelikhov requested the government to provide him with blacksmiths, fitters and founders from the criminals exiled to Siberia (Al'perovich 1993:176). Founded in 1796, Slava Rosii was destroyed by Tlingits Indians nine years later, and only two ships, the 100 tons *Ermak* and 85 tons *Rostislav,* are known to have been built there by the Russian shipwright Ivan Kuskov.

Exploring the natural resources of America, the settlers experimented with producing turpentine and iron. According to Baranov's letter to Shelikhov, by late spring of 1795 the Russians were making such naval necessities as rudder hinges, bolts for fastening anchor chains, ring bolts for docking, windlasses, and anchors (Tikhmenev 1979:63). Despite these efforts, the lack of resources and industrial establishments made shipbuilding in America difficult and the quality of ships low. In 1775, for example, only a few months after the *Olga* was finished, Baranov took her on a voyage to Yakutat Bay, and complained bitterly that, "the main framework is not held together with bolts, but with barbed nails." On the second day at sea the ship sprang a leak and almost sank. After repairs, however, the vessel remained at the sea until 1802 when she wrecked in Yakutat and was burned "to celebrate the conclusion of peace" after the natives' hostile actions against the Russians (Tikhmenev 1978:74). The iron from the *Ol'ga* was used in construction of the abovementioned *Ermak* and *Rostislav* (Fedorova 1973:191). The shortage of naval stores was so pressing that even rotten ropes from the wrecked vessel were utilized after fortification with tree roots, whalebone, and hemp (Tikhmenev 1978:74).

The fact that despite all these upsets, the partners insisted on building ships in America, astonished Shelikhov's contemporaries. Why, indeed, would the newly born company invest so much into shipping the naval stores and manpower across the Pacific Ocean, when they could have build all necessary ships in Okhotsk? Even after all the trouble the New World shipyards were not capable of producing sufficient numbers of vessels. In its formative years between 1784 and 1799 the company's fleet included 9

ships, only one third of which was built in the colonies, the rest were constructed in the Russian settlements of Kamchatka and especially Okhotsk. Naturally, there was the hope that once established, these shipyards would become cost efficient, but there was more to it. The first Russian industry on the shores of America, shipbuilding was a symbol of the company's intentions to remain there, an engagement ring, which made a solicitor rightful suitor, a demarcation line between the reckless exploitation of the temporary visitors and the thoughtful planning of the permanent resident.

The establishment of the shipyards had three important aspects. First, it was a symbolical moment in the relationship with the Native people of Alaska, who during the bloody period of the initial contact with Russians believed that by killing the parties of the Russian fur hunters and burning the ships they could stop the invasion of the white men. Returning again and again in what seemed to be growing number, these men now turned the forest into an ally, building their dangerous watercraft in Alaska. Then, it raised Shelikhov's enterprise above other Russian companies, which used the old mode of operation and consequently lacked any greater missions and plans. And finally, it had an international resonance since the ships of other countries, especially Great Britain and Spain, were now also venturing to Alaskan waters. The Russian shipyards and forts on the land of North America were a non-verbal declaration of the Empire's rights to this territory and the intentions to defend these rights. Thus, preceding the official establishment of the Russian colonies in America, the shipbuilding was its indicative messenger.

*The Russian-American company*

Grigory Shelikhov died in July of 1795 at the age of 47. He was a man of numerous achievements, but many of his undertaking remained uncompleted. He petitioned the government for licenses to trade with Japan, China, India, and the Philippine Islands; proposed building a harbor with wharfs and dockyards at the mouth of the Amur River; advised moving ship- and dockyards from the notorious sand bars of Okhotsk to the Ul'ia and Urak Rivers, and had many plans regarding the future of his American Company (Tikhmenev 1978:39-40). According to the special order of Empress Catherine all the hereditary rights of the Shelikhov's business establishments were transferred his widow, Natalia Shelikhova. With the help of her esteemed son in-law Count N. P. Rezanov, she directed the company from 1795 to 1797. In 1797 the government issued a charter ordering all the fur-trading companies to merge with the United American Company. A year later the continuous efforts of Rezanov brought into life a new ukaz, which brought the United American Company under Imperial protection, "with special privileges, and a controlling interest in the hands of the Shelikhov company" (Pierce 1990:419). Having achieved this, Rezanov came very close to finally fulfilling Shelikhov's most cherished dream, and on August 11 1799 the tsar Paul I signed the first charter of the new monopoly, the Russian-American Company.

According to this first charter, the company received permission to "have the use of all hunting grounds and establishments now existing on the north-eastern coast of America from the 55$^{th}$ degree to Bering Strait, and on the same also on the Aleutian, Kurile, and other islands situated in the north-eastern ocean (...), to establish settlements in future

times (...), and to hold business intercourse with all surrounding powers, upon obtaining there free consent for the purpose, and under our highest protection" (Bancroft 1886:379). Peculiarly, one of the eleven articles of this first charter dealt specifically with timber for shipbuilding: "Though it is forbidden by our highest order to cut government timber anywhere without the permission of the college of admiralty from Okhotsk, when it needs timber for repairs, and occasionally for the construction of new ships, to use freely such timber as is required" (Bancroft 1886a:380). All these privileges were given for a period of twenty years.

Imperial protection had an immediate impact on all spheres of colonial life. From now on the company could hire from all classes of the Russian society, including the state and privately owned serfs. Peculiarly, the company never inquired about having its own serfs. The government authorized the issue of another thousand shares, which were available to all Russian citizens, but were purchased mostly by the high nobility. In 1802, for example, the emperor, empress and the emperor's brother Grand Duke Constantine, each purchased twenty shares and directed the dividends to charity. But the most important outcome of the imperial patronizing was the closer cooperation of the company with both governmental institutions in the Russian Far East and the Russian Navy. The later seemed to be a natural solution to the company's shortage of qualified seafarers and shipwrights, and was to play an increasingly important role in the history of the Russian colonies in America, and in the historiography of the subject. Far away from the glamour of the European capitals, equally well-educated and well-traveled officers often entrusted their

observations to paper, contributing significantly to our knowledge and understanding of Russian America.

In 1802 Rezanov persuaded two promising young naval officers, Khvostov and Davydov, to enter the service of the company. His effort was simplified by the Imperial ukaz, according to which naval ranks could transfer to the Russian-American Company while maintaining their naval record. The memoir of these two good friends is a vivid account of their overland travel from St. Petersburg to Okhotsk, and their adventures in the colonies. After a three-month journey, Khvostov and Davydov arrived in Okhotsk and on August 12, 1802 they embarked on the company's ship *Elisaveta.* The vessel and the general state of the maritime affairs in Russian Far East left deep impression on these off springs of the European naval school:

> The ship *Elisaveta* on which we were to sail for America had already been fitted out, but it had been done so badly that everything had to be done again. This work had little prospect of success because the crew consisted of only one reliable man, bosun Semchin; the remainder were hunters in company employ, in other words men hired in various parts of Siberia for dispatch to America. Many of them had never seen the sea before. To this it should be added that the ship had been built of wood felled in winter, and that all the rigging, the blocks and other mechanical equipment seemed to have been manufactured specially to increase our troubles, not to lessen them. I honestly could not imagine that with the art of navigation at the stage of present development, such bad ships as those in Okhotsk could exist <...> In the evening I met one of the company's older navigators; he had hardly any idea what a compass was, had never seen maps, yet he sailed the sea, albeit slowly, yet safely nevertheless. It was then that I recalled the proverb: Luck is better than a wit (Davydov 1977:82,86).

Khvostov and Davydov's first voyage to Kodiak was full of adventures. After clearing the port of Okhotsk the *Elisaveta* hit a sand bar, later the same day she caught on fire, which combined with the cargo of 50 puds of gunpowder made the crew extremely

uncomfortable. Later in the journey, when ship was on the open sea, the fire burst out again. This time the crew managed to identify the source, for the smoke was coming out from below the stove. "The order was given to cut away the beams below it so that the fire could then be seen, and when it had been extinguished it was discovered that half a beam had already burnt away. Thus the stove had to be broken up to get at the smoldering wood. No one will be surprised that we might have met our ends as the result of such a trifling matter. Sidor Shelikhov, the manager of the company office in Okhotsk, because of his praiseworthy custom of saving every penny he could, had failed to pay 1 ruble 70 kopeeks to the man building the stove. The latter had promised to get his revenge by building on the ship a stove on which no one would cook more than once. The promyshlenniks heard this threat but said nothing to anyone about it. The workman, the vandal, kept his word and by his stupid desire for revenge had almost taken the lives of great many people who had never done him any harm (Davydov 1977:92)." Summarizing his impression of the promyshlenniks maritime affairs, Davydov concluded:

> To their complete ignorance of seamanship must also be added lack of leadership, for the promyshlenniks have absolutely no respect for their skippers, whom they often beat and lock into their cabins. When land is not sighted for a long while they then consult among themselves and replace the skipper; the old one is locked up, and under the new one they dash to any land, wherever it might be. I say "dash" advisedly, for there is no other way to describe how the ships are pulled up on any old beach. The ukaz of his Imperial Majesty, announced by Minister Mordvinov, which allows members of the Admiralty to keep their rank and half-salary enter service with one of the merchant companies, established to develop trade, will provide a means of improving the state of navigation in the Eastern Ocean (Davydov 1977:90-91).

Khvostov's more subtle recommendations for the improvement of the colonial fleet written after a two-year service in the colonies provide some information about the products of Okhotsk shipyards. The ships were galliot rigged, had 40-60 thousand puds cargo capacity, shallow keels and fairly flat bottoms that allowed more cargo capacity, and were suited for the shallow harbors of Okhotsk and Kamchatka. Khvostov advocated the necessity of "sharp" keels so that the draft of the laden ships would be 13 to 14 feet, insisting that "it is better to transport a smaller cargo speedily and reliably than a larger one over a longer period of sailing, and with hazard (Dmytryshyn 1989:49). He also suggested that instead of galliot rigging, the Russian-American Company ships should be fitted as naval brigantines (Dmytryshyn 1989:50), which required more manpower, but also allowed more maneuverability.

Overall quality of the ships launched in Okhotsk in the beginning of the nineteenth century was unquestionably miserable. Another prominent figure of the Russian-American Company, Count Rezanov, gave the following description of the newly built ship *Sv. Mariia*, named after the celestial patron of the Empress Dowager Maria Fedorovna:

> "After leaving Unalashka, July 25th, I arrived safely on Kodiak on the 31st. A severe wind near Ugak the day before demonstrated to us the hopelessness of the new ship Sv. Mariia. The bowsprit, about 30 feet long, was fastened to the ship only to the length of three feet three inches. Heavy seas broke it off along with the stem and we were obliged in quite windy weather to take off the top mast and with great pains entered Chiniak Bay. Such is the shipbuilding at Okhotsk. The ignorance of the shipbuilders there and shameless robbery by company representatives produces worthless ships that cost more than ships built anywhere else. After staying on Kodiak for three weeks waiting for this newest and supposedly best company ship, on its maiden voyage to

> America, to be repaired, I sailed August 20th and arrived at New Archangel the same month on the 26th in a little over five days. Do not attribute this speed to the good qualities of the ship. Luck was with us; we had only the most favorable wind. If we had sailed from Kamchatka on a raft instead of a ship in weather like we had, we would have reached this place just the same (Letter, Rezanov to the directors of the Russian-American Company, from NA, November 6, 1805 Tikhmenev 1979:153)."

Although the Okhotsk shipyards continued to be the main source of ships for the Russian-American company during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the ships' low quality and the high price (15,000 to 25,000 rubles each) compelled the company's board of directors to terminate shipbuilding there (Tikhmenev 1978:60). From 1809 until 1829 all ships built by the Russian-American Company were launched in North America. The geographical disadvantages of the port of Okhotsk contributed to this decision. The town was located on the narrow isthmus between the Sea of Okhotsk and Okhota River. During heavy rains and high tides the river broke through the isthmus, turning Okhotsk into an island and destroying many structures (Dmytrishyn 1989:51). Since the settlement had no room to grow, it soon became very crowded, which led to frequent epidemics. Transmitted by the sailors of Russian-American Company ships, these diseases took more lives of the Native Americans than bullets. In addition, the mouth of Okhota River has always been notorious for its shifting sand bars, which in combination with its shallow depth and swift current caused many wrecks.

### The *Rise of Novo-Arkhangelsk*

The granting of the monopoly coincided and, probably inspired the founding of the new Russian settlement on Baranov Island, the future site of the colonial capital of Novo-Arkhangelsk. The first Russian fort built there in 1799 was destroyed by the Tlingits in

1802. Two years later with the help of the Russian naval vessel *Neva*, Baranov reestablished a Russian presence in Sitka and erected a new settlement at the site of the abandoned Tlingit fort. Offering easy access to rich sources of timber and a convenient harbor, Novo-Arkhangelsk soon became one of the most important centers of colonial shipbuilding. At first the work proceeded with great difficulty, which Nikolai Rezanov, one of the founders of the Russian-American Company, described in his letter to Hieromonk Gedeon, written on September 11, 1805:

> We live very badly, it pours with rain every day, and however necessary the work, one does not feel very enthusiastic about carrying it out. In the mean time a quay is under construction here and slipways have been cleared for two ships, we are felling a little wood and with God's help we shall soon have on the stocks a 16-gun naval brig and an eight-gun tender (the *Avos'*) – plans and sketches for which have already been drawn up (Bearne 1978: 158).

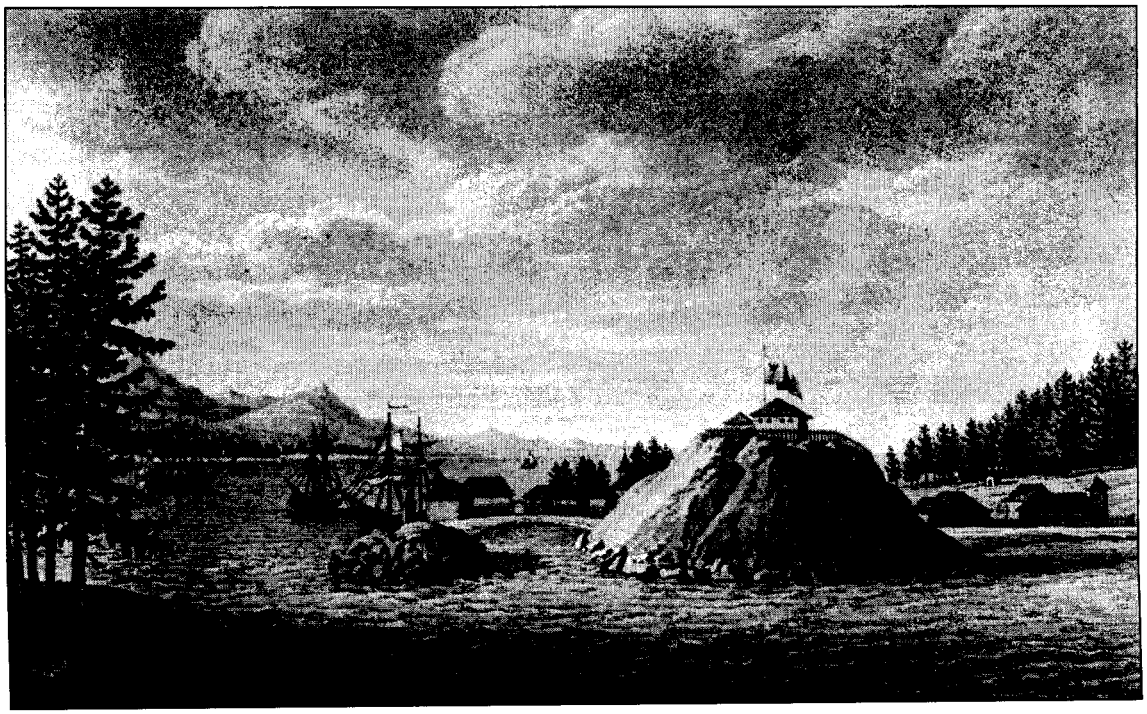

Figure 10. Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1805 by G.H. Langsdorf (Tikhmenev 1978:76)

Both vessels were decent production of two Russian shipwrights, Koriukin and Popov. Count Rezanov characterized them in his report to the shareholders in 1805:

> "Mr. Koriukin and Mr. Popov, ship apprentices, appear skillful in their profession. If kept in hand they are very useful men. The first is a very good draftsman and makes good sketches, surveys and maps and is so exact in his work that he pleases everybody. The second, besides being skillful in his trade, is a good sailmaker and likes mechanics. Because of that he is useful in construction of works of various kinds. When sober they are very easy to get along with, but when drunk they are worse than useless and anything can be expected from their wildness. They have not acquired this ruinous habit, but being young they will do so by indulging too often (Tikhmenev 1979:192)."

This turned out to be a prophetic statement: by 1806 both were fired on grounds of their heavy drinking (Pierce 1990:130). Starting from September 1806 the ships in Novo-Arkhangelsk were built by Lincoln, an American shipwright (Pierce 1990: 310). Until he left Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1809, Lincoln built three ships (the brig *Sitkha*, the three-master *Otkrytie* of 300 tons, and the schooner *Chirikov*), repaired two more company vessels, the *Juno* and *Alexander* and trained a Russian carpenter, Vasilii Grudinin, as a shipwright. Lincoln's departure terminated building of new ships for several years.

The new settlement grew rapidly (Fig.10). In 1808, only four years after it's founding it became the capital of the Russian colonies. The plan of Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1809 reveals fenced settlement with number of workshops, such as blacksmith's and coppersmith's workshops and shipyards. The yards were busy building boats, producing such items as rudder hooks, galley stoves and bells, and repairing the ships. During the period between 1809 and 1821, however, only two ships (schooners *Platov* and *Baranov*) were launched in

Novo-Arkhangelsk. The main weight of colonial shipbuilding at the time was shifted to the new company's yards in Fort Ross, California.

*Fort Ross.*

One of the persistent problems of the Russian colonization of Alaska was the failure to produce a food stock sufficient to support the colonists. Agricultural goods presented a special challenge. Due to the rainy and foggy climate few vegetables, chiefly potatoes, did well in Alaska, and it proved impossible to grow any grain (Gibson 1987(a):82). The fertile lands of Alta California first came to the attention of the Russian-American Company managers during their attempt to establish trade with the Spanish missions at San Francisco and Monterey in 1806. The search for a suitable location for settlement started in 1808 when Ivan Kuskov, an assistant of the company's manager, sailed to the California coast on the company ship *Kad'yak* (ex *Myrtle*) (Essig 1991:5). The Kuskov expedition was a part of the company's broader plan of expansion: the *Kad'yak* left Sitka accompanied by the smaller vessel *Sv. Nikolai* under the command of Bulygin, who was entrusted with the task of founding a settlement on the Colombia river. The wreck of *Sv. Nikolai* aborted the latter plan, but Kuskov returned from California with a rich cargo of furs and information about a potential site. Three years later, after "negotiating" with the local Indians, to the major annoyance of the Spanish authorities, Kuskov began constructing a fort and settlement 20 miles north of Bodega Bay.

Very soon it became clear that the new settlement could not meet the company's great expectations. Due to the tillable soil and frequent fogs the coastal lands were a poor choice for agriculture. In addition the company encountered the manpower problem.

Discussing the problems of Fort Ross Ludwig von Hagemeister, who became the new chief manager of the Russian-American company in 1818, stated, "the workmen sent from Sitka, excluding a few, are the worst of the worst (Zavalishin 1866:np). Native Americans were not accustomed to farming, and the Russian promyshlenniks left Russia precisely in order to escape this "peasant's" occupation. The Californian fur trade also proved to be problematic: the construction and agricultural works kept a majority of workmen on land, plus the best hunting grounds were controlled by Spaniards (Tikhmenev 1978:135). In 1816, perhaps in attempt to offset these disadvantages by finding a new enterprise, the company started to build ships at Fort Ross.

Located by the landing in the small bay to the south of the fort, the new shipyard's facilities included a smithy, dockyard and large shed for working in bad weather. Here in 1816 the former shipwright assistant Grudinin laid the keel for the brigantine *Rumiantsov*, the first ship built in California (Allan 1996:37). The brigantine of 160 tons was build of California oak and remained in service until 1826, when she was turned into a storage facility in Sitka. The ship earned the compliments of the company's authorities, and Grudinin was awarded with promotion and a salary raise. Over the next ten years he built five more vessels: brigs *Buldakov* (200 tons), *Volga* (160 tons), *Kiakhta* (200 tons) and two ships for the missions at San Francisco and San Jose (Allan1996:38). Visiting the Ross colony in 1820 Kirill Khlebnikov, one of the leading authorities on Russian America of his day, left the following account of the local shipbuilding:

> The abundance of valuable trees gracing the hills and valleys was gratifying to behold. The curvature of the various types of oak was such that it will be easy, with the help of templates, to make all the parts needed for the ship. Even in its dimensions, the wood seems destined for

> this use. Two ships have been built and a third is under construction; thus, suitable wood is no longer available in the immediate vicinity, but there is no obstacle to its delivery fro further away. Apart from the type of oak generally used here in ship construction, which does not meet the high quality requirements, there are also varieties whose leaves consist of five pointy lobes (palm, maple, laurel) and other types of trees, but these have not been tried out in shipbuilding despite their excellent hardness and weight. The small plateau at the top of the mountains can furnish material for several ships, and farther on there are entire wooded areas that promise to supply wood for shipbuilding for many years to come. If shipbuilding is to grow, it will require more resources and increased efforts. But nothing is impossible for the mighty hand of a powerful Russian. Towns and villages, and ports and wharves will spring up on the shores of New Albion in the twinkling of an eye! (Khlebnikov 1990:58)

The reality, however, turned to be less optimistic. The ships purchased by the missions in 1826 were also the last ships built in Fort Ross. Even this new source of income did not make up for the problems that Russians encountered building ships in California. The vessels constructed there were more expensive then those built in Sitka or purchased from Americans, mostly "because of the large number of men employed to transport the timber from the remote forests to the shipyards" (Tikhmenev 1978:228). The vessels also had low durability and needed complete re-timbering every five years, which Russians attributed to the low quality of California oak. After the poor performance of the first two ships built of oak, the company tried to use different wood species. Both *Volga* and *Kiakhta* had pine frames and fir planking (Tikhmenev 1978:228) which however, did not make essential difference in the ships' lifespan. Since the same oak was successfully used in the Californian shipyards of the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, the poor durability of the ship was most probably due to the improper seasoning of the timber (Allan 1996:45). In 1827 the decision was made to abandon shipbuilding at Fort Ross

(Tikhmenev 1978:228). Grudinin moved to Novo-Arkhangelsk and was employed in repairing ships (Pierce 1990:181).

*Shipbuilding 1827-1867*

The Californian disaster convinced the company directors of the superior quality of the timber of the Russian Far East, consequently leading to restoration of the company's shipbuilding in Okhotsk (Tikhmenev 1978: 209). Notoriously inconvenient as both port and settlement, Okhotsk was losing its positions as a shipyard ever since the establishment of Novo-Arkhangelsk, but the company's trade and supply lines required a base on the coast of Siberia. The search for a site for the company's new establishment began in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In the early thirties, Aian Bay was identified as potential location. Located 200 miles south of Okhotsk, the bay was protected and deep enough to shelter ships of all sizes (Tikhmenev 1978:230). Although construction did not start here until 1843, the prospect of transfer affected the company's shipbuilding in Okhotsk. The last ship built there for the Russian-American Company was launched in 1831. The Imperial Ordinance of December 2, 1849, abrogated the use of Okhotsk as an official port and terminated the functions of the local maritime board (Tikhmenev 1978:475). Despite the port of Aian's numerous advantages, the Russian-American Company, however, never engaged in systematic shipbuilding there. Only one ship was known to be built there, the schooner *Aian* of 60 tons, launched in 1851.

For about 15 years Novo-Arkhangelsk also faced a period of uncertain future. In 1820 the chief manager Janovskii proposed to move the capital from Novo-Arkhangelsk back to Kodiak. He argued that the poor fur catch and strenuous relationship with the

Tlingits, which consequently forced the company to transfer and maintain Aleutiq workers, made Novo-Arkhangelsk inconvenient and expensive. The board of directors debated over this plan until 1835. Peculiarly, the port's shipbuilding facilities never played any role in this discussion. Instead the final decision to leave the capital at it's present place was largely provoked by the Hudson's Bay Company proposal to establish a settlement near Sitka, which from the officials' point of view threatened the Russian position in Southeast Alaska (Tikhmenv 1978:175).

Figure 11. View of Novo-Arkhangelsk between 1834 and 1835 (Arndt 2003:53)

Meanwhile, potential abandonment made the company reluctant to finance any new construction or maintenance of the existing buildings in Novo-Arkhangelsk. Nevertheless, ships continued to be built there. In 1827 the general-manager Chistiakov commenced building small tenders, which proved particularly useful for the Aleutiq

hunting parties and for coastal sailing. Four such vessels were built on the same plan: the *Unalashka, Bobr, Sivuch* and *Aleut*, all launched in 1827 (Tikhmenev 1978:208). The main productions of the shipyards, however, were rowboats, called *baidara*, three of which were launched here annually. In 1850 Captain Collins of the British ship *Enterprise*, which called at Novo-Arkhangelsk for repair, purchased nine of these small watercraft (Russian American Company 1851:24). Commenting on the conditions of shipbuilding in Novo-Arkhangelsk particularly, and in the colonies in general, the famous Russian explorer and geographer Fedor Litke wrote in 1830:

> The ships that are built here (Novo-Arkhangelsk) do not last very long, either because of the poor quality of the wood of because it is not left long enough to dry before it is used. A type of cypress is used for the ship's frame; fir for the decks and the bridge; and larch wood for the sheathing and, sometimes, also for the bridge. The governors sometimes prefer to buy vessels built in the United States and these are the best ships owned by the company, but the top management found this speculation not to their advantage and decided to concentrate more on on-the-spot construction. Thus, in 1829, a vessel of 400 tons was built in Sitkha. The little one-masted vessels used for coastal trading will, without doubt, always continue to be built here, as will also ship's boats, which are of excellent quality. Efforts were made to build ships in California but the oak was found to be so poor that two ships, which were built of it lasted only for three years. Some ships were built at Okhotsk of very durable larch wood. Needless to say, all ships are reinforced with copper and nowhere is this precaution more essential than here, where wood is terribly worm eaten. It has often happened that ships, which stayed in port for several months at a time found, when they weighed anchor, that the anchor stocks were completely eaten away (Litke 1987:46-47).

After the close of the Fort Ross shipyards the Russian shipbuilding in America was restricted to the shipyards of Novo-Arkhangelsk, which was gradually turning into an impressive North Pacific port with docks, stores and all workshops necessary for shipbuilding and repair (Fig.11). The port had a lumber-mill, chandlery, and a sail-loft.

The workshops were not solely devoted to the needs of the shipyard: blacksmiths also produced agricultural tools, a foundry cast bells for trade with the Californian missions, and copper workers were engaged in producing artifacts for the barter with the natives (Litke 1987: 47). As many port-cities of the time Novo-Arkhangelsk employed old non-seaworthy ships for the storage and working facilities. At different times ten vessels rendered the city their services as warehouses (the *Rumiantsov*, the *Kiakhta*, the *Urup*, the *Polifem*, the *Buldakov, Promysel* and the *Naslednik*), a sail loft (the *Rurik*), and a hospital (the A*metist*).

In 1843 the city's waterfront was improved with a stone pier and a new wooden embankment on a stone foundation (Russian-American Company 1844:26). To facilitate unloading the ships a warehouse was constructed on the pier. It was first tried in 1844 when eight workers unloaded the 750-ton *Nepal* from London in a record tine of 9 days, while previously the same task would take three weeks (Russian-American Company 1845:29). Cast iron and copper ship and machinery parts were produced in Sitka starting in 1852, and the first zinc workshop opened in 1855 (Russian-American Company 1856:50). New facilities accelerated shipbuilding (during the period from 1827 until the sale of Alaska the yards in Novo-Arkhangelsk produced 17 ships), and also opened doors for new technology. In 1839 Novo-Arkhangelsk launched its last sailing ship, brig *Promysel* (Destination) of 75 tons. The same year saw the beginning of the steamship building in Russian colonies.

It is likely that the Russians' decision to switch to steam-propelled craft was inspired by the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company's new paddle-wheeler *Beaver*, the pioneer

steam-propelled craft on the west coast. Only three years later the steamer *Nikolai I*, built in Russian-America was launched in Novo-Arkhangelsk. The 60-horsepower crosshead steam engine for the *Nikolai I,* was purchased in either Boston or New York (Burwell 1999: 104-105), and her hull was made of local cypress by an American mechanic, Edward Moore (Tikhmenev 1978:360). The drawing of the ship by I. Voznesenskii, made prior to 1849, shows that she was equipped with a foremast for auxiliary sail propulsion. The steamer performed well on her trial in the port, but sprung a leak and was doomed unsuitable for use in the open sea when taken from Sitka to Kodiak (Burwell 1999:107, Fig.12). The *Nikolai* actively participated in the coastal fur trade and in 1840 accompanied her predecessor the *Beaver* on route from fort St. Dionysius to Novo-Arkhangelsk.

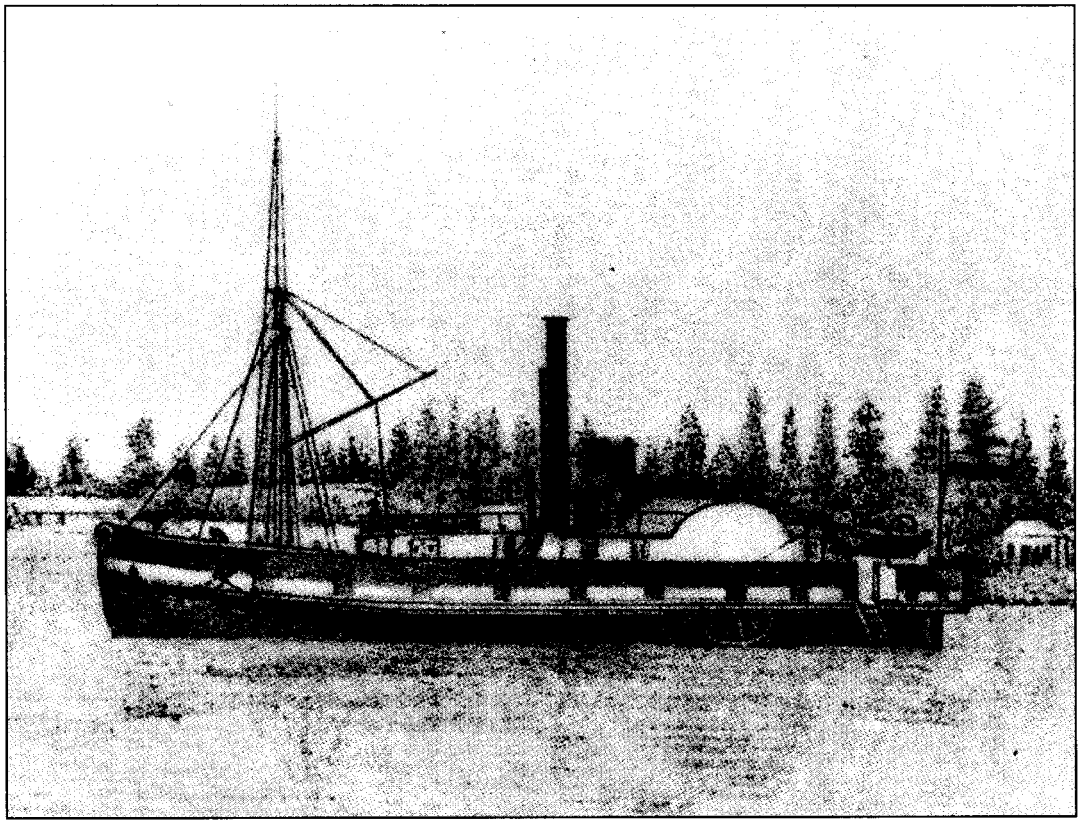

Figure 12. *Nikolai I*, first steamer built on Pacific coast of North America. Drawing by I.G. Voznesenskii (Alekseev 1987:50)

Soon after launching the *Nikolai I*, Moore completed another, smaller steamer, which he named after himself. The 8 horsepower *Mur* was the first steamship built entirely in Russian America. Both boiler and engine were produced in the workshops of Novo-Arkhangelsk. Hudson's Bay Company Governor Sir George Simpson complemented Moore's mechanical and educational talents:

> The workshop of the engineer gratified me most, not merely because Moore was a man of superior ingenuity, but because he had trained five or six Creoles and half-breeds to discharge all the mechanical duties of his business nearly as well as himself. As a proof of the efficiency... the whole of a tug of seven-horsepower was cast and manufactured here, as well as two pleasure boats of two-horsepower each, one belonging to the governor and the other to Moore (Simpson 1847:79)

In 1847 the *Mur* was sold to a Mr. Leidesdorff of San Francisco. Under the new name of *Sitka* she became the first steam vessel to navigate Californian rivers (Kemble 1935:143). Satisfied with her performance, the new owner ordered another steamer of 12 horsepower (Russian-American Company 1848:28). By that time Moore had already left the colonies, and steamship building was supervised by his former assistant, Grigorii Terent'ev (Pierce 1990:361). George Simpson commented on the on-going construction of this new steamer at Novo-Arkhangelsk shipyards in an article in the "Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle" of June 1849:

> At this moment they are building a new steamer, destined, I think, for Mr. Leidesdorff of California. The workmanship appears good and solid, everything for her is made on the spot, for which purpose they have casting-houses, boiler-makers, coopers, turners and all the other requisite for such an undertaking. The boiler is almost completed and is made of copper (Simpson 1849:310-311).

To replace the sold *Mur* the company built the 12 hp paddle-wheel steamer *Baranov,* completed in 1848 (Russian-American Company 1850:26). There is no information regarding the origin of the vessel's machinery. The provenance of engines of next two steamships built by the company in 1853 (new *Nikolai I*) and 1860 (new *Baranov*), are also not clear: Tikhmenev states that both of them were imported from the United States (Tikhmenev 1978:360, Russian-American Company 1853:23), while other sources indicate that the *Baranov*'s 30 hp engine was built in Novo-Arkhangelsk (Golovin 1979:50), and the machinery of the new *Nikolai I* came from her non-seaworthy name-sake (Burwell 1999:109). The last ship built in Russian America was the steamer *Politkofsky*, started in 1862 and finished in 1865. Her engine came from the steamer *Nikolai I*, which wrecked in 1861. She remained in America following the purchase of

Alaska and under different owners paddled North Pacific waters until 1898 (Burwell 1999:110).

Figure 13. Novo-Arkhangelsk no later than 1856. (Arndt 2003:194)

In the last 30 years of its operation the yards produced 1 steam powered sawmill barge of unknown mode of propulsion, 3 sailing ships and 9 steamers. Building and repairing steamships became somewhat of a specialty of the Novo-Arkhangelsk shipyards. When the Hudson Bay Company's steamer *Beaver* stopped in Sitka for repair in 1850, the company's manager stated with a pride that the Russians possessed the only facility on the Pacific coast that could carry on such a project (Russian-American Company 1851:21). The Russian hegemony on steamship building on the Pacific coast, however, was not to last. The California gold rush flooded the west with the ambitious entrepreneurs who quickly recognized the financial opportunities of shipbuilding. At first the Californian shipyards offered primarily repair and assembly of vessels shipped from the East Coast (Cooper 1995:74), but already in the early fifties San Francisco had

several shipwrights building both sailing and steamships. When in 1858 the Russian government was in need of a steamer for use on the Amur River, the choice fell not on the yards in Novo-Arkhangelsk, but on the private San Francisco shipwright John G. North (Cooper 1995:77).

Starting in 1853 colonial shipbuilding ceased almost completely. Between 1853 and 1867 only one ship was constructed in Novo-Arkhangelsk. Visiting the colonies in 1860 captain P.N. Golovin remarked: "New ships are rarely constructed here, and those that are have small tonnage because it is more advantageous and profitable to have them built in the United States, because ships built of oak last five times as long as those that are built of unseasoned wood in New Arkhangel" (Golovin 1979:49). The shipyard was used mostly for repair (Figure 13). The ships underwent maintenance both on the dry docks and in shallow water at low tide. In 1860 the list of the Novo-Arkhangelsk port facilities included a machine shop for repairing nautical instruments, a metalwork shop, a blacksmith shop, carpentry, lathe, cooperage, tannery, ropewalk, paint shop, sailmaker's shop, and finally a copper, iron and zinc casting shop. Located in small and "quite rundown buildings," they nevertheless met all the needs of the port (Golovin 1979:50). The miserable condition of these facilities did not convey a potent maritime industry. After the United States purchased Alaska, the shipyards of Novo-Arkhangelsk fell into decay. The Alaska Times reported in October 1869 that in Sitka "the old ship shed and ways have been removed and the place cleaned up" (DeArmond 1981:77). Writing in 1886, the well-known American historian Hubert Bancroft remarked:

> "Since the time of the purchase, only a few small coasting vessels have been built, though attempts have been made to obtain from Congress

> grants of land and the right of cutting timber in certain localities, ostensibly for ship-building purposes. To procure at a nominal price a few thousand acres of the best timber-lands in Alaska, on condition of building a vessel or two, would doubtless be a profitable speculation, but thus far no sale or lease of timber-lands has been made. It is not improbable, however, that at no very distant day shipbuilding may again rank among the foremost industries in Alaska, for coal, iron, and suitable timber are found in several portions of the territory, within easy access of navigable water" (Bancroft 1886a:693).

*Statistical Analysis of the Russian-American Company shipbuilding*

Starting from the first Shelikhov enterprise until 1867, the company build a total of 58 ships. The most energetic period of shipbuilding coincides with the first two decades in America (23 ships from 1783 through 1805, roughly one ship every year) (See Fig.14). This was the period of exploration, which took a heavy toll both on ships and people. Sailing in the little-known waters with untrained crews, vessels wrecked frequently, forcing the company to build yet more ships. It was also the period when shipbuilding was the only source for the company's fleet. In 1805 the Russians purchased the first foreign made ships, and the dynamic of shipbuilding slowed significantly. The beginning of shipbuilding in Novo-Arkhangelsk in the same year marks the start of a new period in colonial shipbuilding. The Russian-American company felt confident and resourceful enough to terminate the works in Okhotsk in 1809, and for twenty years the company relied on its American facilities. The eleven years from 1805 until 1816 did not see vigorous shipbuilding: only four vessels were launched in Novo-Arkhangelsk, and one in Okhotsk. In 1817 the first ships was launched in new shipyards in Fort Ross. For the next decade (1817-1826) these two yards built 8 ships (6 in Fort Ross and 2 in Novo-Arkhangelsk). Shipbuilding in California was not only expensive, it split the company's

limited labor force and consequently affected the yards' productivity. Once the yard in Ross was abandoned, Novo-Arkhangelsk reached the peak of production with six ships over the three years period between 1827 and 1829. The Okhotsk yards made a short return, producing 3 ships between 1829 and 1831. With the exception of one ship built in Aian, for the rest of the company's existence all shipbuilding was concentrated in Novo-Arkhangelsk, gradually decreasing year after year.

In terms of total number of ships built, it was largely proportional to the longevity of the yards. Consequently, Novo-Arkhangelsk and Okhotsk together launched over 80% of all ships built in the company's yards (Fig.15). The importance of the shipyard, however, does not necessarily correspond with the amount of vessels it produced. Both the Resurrection Bay and Yakutat yards were important as first attempts to engage in the demanding task of building ships in Alaska.

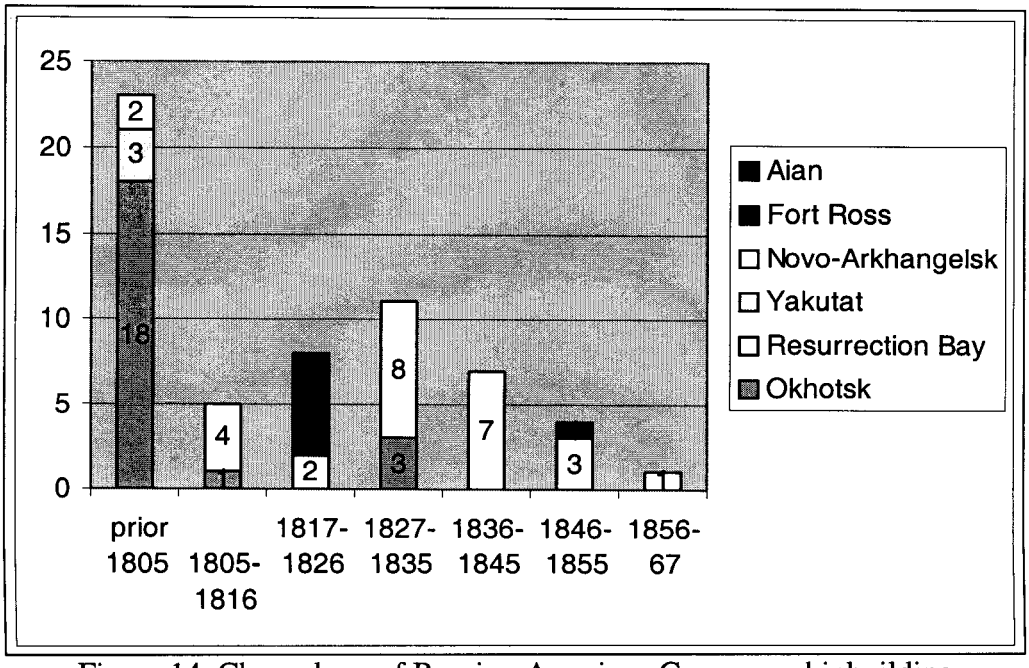


Figure 14. Chronology of Russian-American Company shipbuilding (Anichtchenko, August 2004).

Overall shipbuilding had a surprisingly marginal place in the overall managing of the company ever since the initial exploration gave place to systematic exploitation. The shipyard in Fort Ross was an industry that grew from the failure of other undertakings. Despite the fact that after 1826 Novo-Arkhangelsk was the only active yard, it was almost abandoned. Finally, the plans for the new company's base in Aian had no mention of shipbuilding. Moreover, throughout its entire history, the Russian-American Company displayed very moderate attempt to turn shipbuilding into the avenue of additional income. It closed the shipyards at Ross the same year they sold their first ships, and failed to pursue commercial shipbuilding when Novo-Arkhangelsk was the only place in the Pacific coast of North America capable of producing steamers.

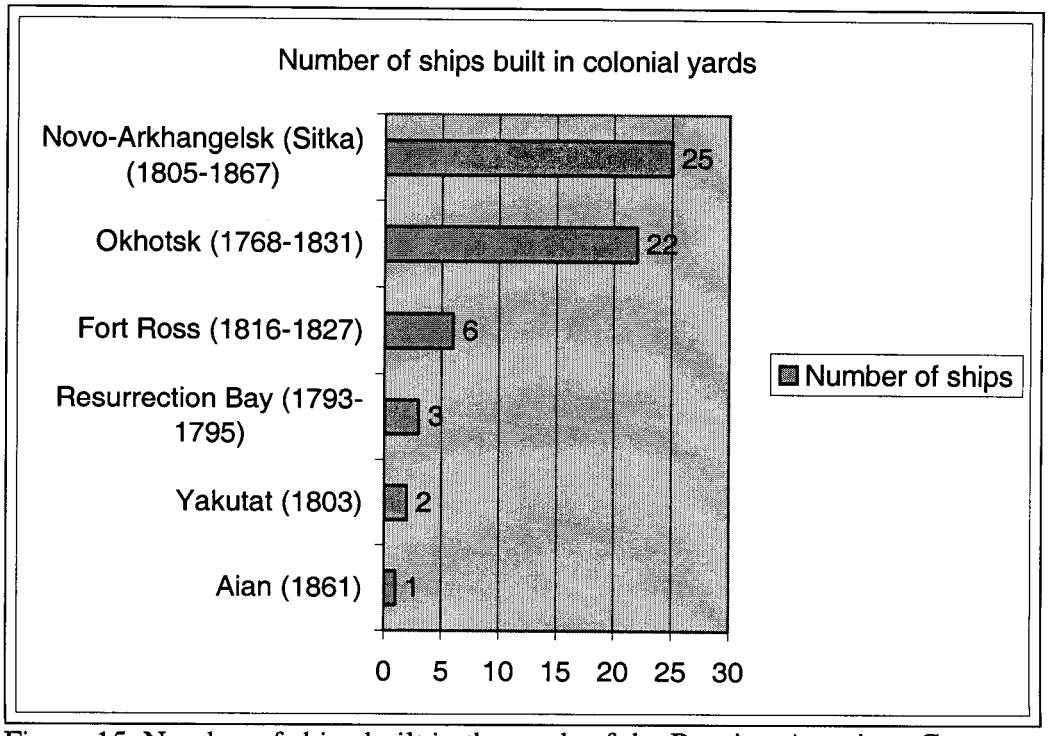


Figure 15. Number of ships built in the yards of the Russian-American Company (Anichtchenko, August 2004)

Paradoxical from the first glance, such a casual attitude towards shipbuilding was deeply rooted in the phenomena of mercantilism. The Russians went to Alaska in hopes of easy profits via the fur trade, and ships were simply their means. They built ships out of necessity, when the situation made such demanding undertakings feasible, and obtained them from other sources when they could. The most important function of the colonial shipyards from 1805 until 1867 was repairing and maintaining the existing ships, not building new ones. Even when there were opportunities to make money selling the products of their yards, it was labor- and time-consuming income. Like any other mercantilist, the Russian-American Company wanted to get rich easily and quickly.

## Chapter IV: PURCHASED VESSELS

Like many colonists and pioneers, Russians began their American adventure lured by captivating visions of virgin territory: untouched lands and seas, which awaited a daring explorer to offer their fabulous riches. And like many before them they were to find out how elusive this image was. Soon after they started to venture upon the North Pacific, overcoming the elements and engaging in fights with the Natives, they encountered another misfortune: European and American competition. Interaction between different countries in this region, however, went far beyond sheer rivalry. For the Russian-American company its counterparts in the New World soon became providers of ships for the Russian colonial fleet. Later in its history the company also began to purchase foreign made ships in Europe. More than anything else, these so called "round the world ships" illustrate the relationship between Russian America and the industrial, economic and political centers of European Russia and Western Europe, and full attention to this important topic is given in chapter IV. Ship acquisition in the colonies portrays different aspects of the history of the Russian-American company, such as the *real-politik* of North Pacific trade. This chapter seeks to establish the role played both by political and economic elements in Russian-American company ship purchases in America.

Spain, England and America entered the North Pacific fur trade soon after Russia. Spanish Captain Juan Pérez reached Alexander Archipelago and obtained some sea-otter skins in 1774, the same year that Shelikhov established the first Russian permanent settlement in Kodiak (Gibson 1992b: 18-21). English and American fur trade in North

Pacific waters began shortly after Captain's Cook's third voyage. The first British vessels arrived on the Northwest Coast in 1785; three years later they were followed by the Americans (Malloy 1998:25-26). Despite their synchronized entry, all three countries had differing aims. The Spaniards' interest was largely strategic. Repelled by the region's climate, they desired the North Pacific coast to remain a wild and unexplored buffer sheltering their Californian possessions (Gibson 1992b:18). Independent English traders possessed both the economic initiative and maritime capacity to engage in the North Pacific trade, but were severely handicapped by the monopoly of the East India Company and the South Sea Company. American maritime trade, on the other hand, seemed to have virtually no obstacles and was rapidly gaining force. Seven American ships ventured to the region in 1791, ten in 1800, twelve in 1810 and fourteen in 1820 (Malloy 1998:27). The pattern of their trade was a classic triangle: goods manufactured in New England were bartered for furs in North Pacific, which were sold in China, and teas, silks and other Chinese luxury items were shipped back to New England. The majority of American ships were from Boston, and the "Bostonians" soon became the Russian nickname for all citizens of the United States, while the term "American" was applied exclusively to the Native population.

As the number of Yankee vessels grew, so did the Russians' frustration. Not only did the "Bostonians" collect pelts that otherwise would fall in the hands of the Russians, but the hottest items of their barter were firearms, which Natives consequently used against the colonists. When Baranov urged the foreigners to restrict their trade to less dangerous merchandise, they replied that "having come more than fifteen thousand miles in search

for profit, they had to market whatever paid best" (Tikhmenev 1978:62). American merchant ships, not hostile native tribes, were the reason for the first proposal to patrol the waters of the Russian America with two naval vessels of 16 guns each (Dmytryshyn 1989:49).

However uncomfortable the situation was for the Russians, their relationship with both Americans and British in colonial waters remained fairly cordial. To the dissatisfaction of the company's board of directors, foreign ships frequently called at colonial ports and even relied on Russian assistance for repairing their vessels. In 1794, for Example, the Russians aided an English ship at St. George Island (Tikhmenev 1979:57). Although the name of the ship is not known, only one British ship, the *Jenny* of Bristol, is known to have traded on the Northwest coast in 1794 (Ogden 1975:156). Out of the spirit of brotherhood of the sea, and probably for some monetary reward, the settlement manager Ivan Popov supplied the crew with fresh meat and took care of three sick Englishmen. His humanitarian actions, however, did not gain any praise from the company's head office in Okhotsk. Instead, Popov was accused of assisting British "thievery", and dismissed from his position (Pierce 1990:408). A year later Shelikhov reproached Baranov for befriending the captain of the English ship *Phoenix* during her stay in Chugach Bay: "The ship you met was in serious danger from natives, but you warned them. I don't think that you would have had such friendly assistance if you had happened to be at Nootka or California. Probably we would have had to say farewell to you, and would never have seen you again" (Tikhmenev 1978:57). Despite these

warnings British and American ships continued to call at the Russian settlements, and one such visit opened a new page in the relationship between the alleged rivals.

On May 9, 1805 the Bostonian ship *Juno*, of 206 tons, dropped anchor in the port of Novo-Archangelsk. Dispatched from Bristol, Rhode Island in August of 1803, she had a long and perilous voyage around Cape Horn, and needed some maintenance. The captain, John D'Wolfe of Rhode Island, enjoyed this break, impressed with both the scale of the company's plans and Baranov's alcoholic hospitality. After several months of the fur trade in the Alexander Archipelago, he returned to Sitka as an old friend (Pierce 1990:130). This time he encountered Count Rezanov, who arrieved in Novo-Arkhangelsk shortly after the *Juno*. Determined to end the Bostonians' trade with natives, Rezanov also saw multiple benefits in acquiring D'Wolf's ship and plotted quite a scheme to achieve it. His letter to the Board of Directors conveyed the following picture:

> "Immediately after my arrival I asked the Bostonians to show me their papers. They brought them to me and I made them understand politely that our Sovereign is interested in this country and that soon they will be stopped from trading with the natives. At the same time I proposed to them that trade with us will be profitable for them. After that my first care was the construction of a wharf. The energy with which we began the clearing and unloading of materials for the construction of a navy brig and a tender, made the Bostonians think. We were watching the reaction produced and when we saw them inclined to abandon the trade with the Kolosh, (...) I did not let this opportunity pass from us (Tikhmenev 1979:158)

The company acquired the ship with all her cargo for 109,821 rubles ($65,000) and the company's small vessel *Ermak*. In addition, the *Juno*'s cargo of fur was delivered to Canton aboard the company's vessel *Rostislav* (Pierce 1990:130). It was certainly a great deal for Americans. The cash alone was four times that of a new vessel built in Okhotsk.

Justifying the expenses Rezanov pointed out that the shortage of the food stock in Novo-Arkhangelsk due to the lack of the ship to deliver it, made the acquisition unavoidable. Moreover, he insisted that the purchase had multiple advantages. It prevented the guns, powder and other merchandise falling into the hands of the Tlingits, and reduced the number of foreign ships in the region. It spread rumors of permanent Russian occupation of this territory and of the arrival of the Russian navy, that consequently should have both stopped other "Bostonians" from trading there, and made the natives more tractable. The ship's artillery strengthened the arsenal of Novo-Arkhangelsk. Moreover, Rezanov assured the board, Captain D'Wolfe agreed to trade with the colony, bringing the supplies it needed from Boston at prices advantageous to the Russians. Finally, the fleet of the Russian-American Company was adorned with "a good new ship with good sailing qualities, built of oak, sheathed with copper, purchased with all rigging, sails and armament" (Tikhmenev 1979:158-159).

Peculiarly, D'Wolf's recollection of the sale of the *Juno* was drastically different. According to him, after Rezanov's arrival "several days were passed in festivity and mirth, and business was entirely suspended." The prospect of selling the ship surfaced during a conversation with one of the officers regarding the inconvenience of building large ships in the colony, and the deal was cut in the jocose atmosphere of the festivities (Pierce 1990:130). The price was right, especially because *Juno* was by no means a perfect new vessel. During the preceding year she was battered by storms at Cape Horn, suffered a collision at Valparaiso, and struck a rock in the Alexander Archipelago. Although the *Juno*'s cargo of beef, pork, flour, bread, rice, sugar, molasses and rum

indeed saved Novo-Arkhangelsk from starvation (D'Wolf 1861:89), Reznov's reasoning over the purchase of the Juno seems vulnerable in several other points. As the story goes the Juno was returning after the trading season with good cargo of furs. Consequently, if D'Wolf indeed had firearms to trade with Natives, he had probably already bartered them by the time Russians purchased the ship. Then, although D'Wolf's life was indeed for a while connected with the Russians, never once did he deliver goods from Boston to Russian America after the sale of the *Juno*. Instead, he sailed to the Sea of Okhotsk, crossed Russia overland, spend several months in St. Petersburg, sailed back to Boston and later on sailed from Boston to St. Petersburg on a trading voyage (Pierce 1990:131). His maritime adventures made a strong impression on his nephew, Herman Melville, who mentioned him in his famous novel "Moby-Dick" (Malloy 1998:117).

Whatever the true course of events, the purchase of the *Juno* opened a new source of ship acquisition and intensified interaction between the countries competing to establish a presence in the Pacific Northwest. For Russians, the trade with American and British vessels was an important source of many necessary supplies. The agricultural and industrial efforts of the colonists were unable to satisfy their most basic needs, partly due to the climate and remoteness of Alaska, and partly because the main bulk of the company's working force was involved in fur gathering. Starting from 1803, the Russian-American Company and Americans started to dispatch joint sea hunting parties for which the company provided the hunters, baidarkas and trade goods, while the "Bostonians" furnished ships and crews (Gibson 1976:157, Pierce 1990:497).

In 1806, one such voyage resulted in the acquisition of another foreign-built ship. A group of Aleut sea otter hunters sailed aboard the American vessel *O'Cain* to Baja California, where the Russian captain Pavel Slobodchikov quarreled with her owner, Jonathen Winship, Jr. Slobodchikov left the vessel and "for 150 sea otter skins, his crew's share of the *O'Cain*'s hunt, he purchased from two Americans a schooner of 45 tons, that he christened the *Sv. Nikolai*" (Owens 1985:28). Most probably the vessel's original name was the *Tamana*, built for the Hawaiian king Kamehameha I in 1805 and named after his Queen. William Shaler and Richard J. Cleveland acquired the ship later the same year as a partial payment for the *Lelia Byrd* (Malloy 1998:162). Slobobchikov and his crew took the *Sv. Nikolai* to Novo-Arkhangelsk via Hawaii, where king Kamehameha presented the Russians with colorful feather helmet and clock for Baranov, of whom he heard from the American captains. Two years later the wreck of this ship aborted Baranov's plans to create a settlement on the Columbia River, allowing the American John Jacob Astor to gain a foothold on the Pacific coast, ultimately deciding the fate of the Oregon country (Gibson 1976:11).

Both the *Juno* and the *Sv. Nikolai* were unplanned acquisitions made when the need arose and opportunity offered. This remained the company's main strategy of ship purchase in America until 1850. Consequently, most purchased ships came to Russian attention while trading or hunting in Alaska, Hawaii or California. Not surprisingly, with few exceptions the vessels purchased in America were built in the United States. The only British ship bought in the colonies was the *Myrtle* (renamed the *Kad'yak*), purchased in 1807. Just like the *Juno*, she was acquired in Sitka with all her cargo and twelve

cannons, which were especially important for the colony. This time, however, Baranov paid only 42,000 Spanish piasters ($42,000). Later, the company also found it advantageous to pay for purchased ships with furs, and in 1813 three "fully equipped copper-sheathed" American vessels of 250 tons each were bought with sea-otter skins (Tikhmenev 1978:149).

The beginning of the second decade of the nineteenth century was a turbulent time in both Europe and America. At the same time when Napoleonic wars brought Russia and Great Britain together in their struggle against France, Britain and America engaged in the War of 1812 in the New World. For American traders, the fear of the British navy patrolling the region combined with the gradual decline of the trade. The lifting of Jefferson's 1807-09 Embargo Act, which had prohibited American vessels from leaving Atlantic Seaboard ports, prompted a tidal wave of voyages, depleted the hunting grounds and flooded Canton with furs (Gibson 1992b:59). In addition, independent American traders found it increasingly difficult to compete with John Jacob Astor's newly founded Pacific Fur Company, with its settlement at the mouth of Columbia River. This was especially true after 1810, when Astor signed an agreement with the Russian-American company to be the exclusive supplier for their Alaskan colonies. Ship owners and captains alike were looking for the ways of reducing their losses. Surprisingly, the Russian-American Company was one of them.

Despite the fact that the American government was at war with Russia's ally Great Britain, Baranov's relationship with American traders remained pragmatic (Barrat 1981:174). When it was advantageous to the company, he offered American captains an

opportunity to remain in the trade by sailing under the Russian-American flag, or to abandon the business by selling their ships to the company. During the period from the beginning of 1812 until the end of 1813, the Russian-American Company purchase four ships: the *Truvor*, the *Amethyst*, the *Lady* (*Lydia*), renamed *Il'men*, and the *Atahualpa,* which became the *Bering*. The purchased ships belonged to different owners, although Captain Thomas Meek was involved in sale of two of them. Most of the ships were not new (the *Amethyst* was nine and *Atahualpa* thirteen years old) and some were in miserable conditions. In 1812, for example, the company purchased the three-master *Truvor,* which soon proved un-seaworthy and the company lost money on its purchase, even though the price had been very low (10,000 roubles or $5,000) (Tikhmenev 1978:149). Two years before the Russians bought the *Amethyst*, her initial owners declared her unable to sail and were more than happy when Peter Dobell offered $6000 for her (Malloy 1998: 71, Ogden 1975:164). Despite these examples, Russians held the products of American shipyards in high esteem, and admitted them to be "so superior in everything to our own vessels of local construction (Anonymous, n.d.:3)."

By 1814 the political conflicts resolved, but the north Pacific fur trade showed no signs of improving. With the help of experience and flexible trading policies some merchants managed to make a profit, but the overall decline of the trade for the independent traders was unavoidable. The Russian-American Company was a convenient buyer for ships leaving the business. In 1819 Boardman and Pope sold to the Russians the ten-year-old *Brutus*, renamed the *Golovnin* (Malloy 1998:82). The situation became even more difficult when in 1821 the Russian Tsar Nikolas I passed a resolution prohibiting

foreign vessels from visiting and trading in the Russian territories in North Pacific north of 51° north latitude, or from the northern point of the Island of Quadra & Vancouver to the southern point of the Island of Uruss. (Malloy 1998:41). In 1824, however, Russia and United States signed an agreement allowing Americans to trade in the region for a period of ten years. As the fur trade became increasingly unprofitable, many ship owners turned their attention to more profitable ventures. As Gibson remarks, "at least one-half of the coasters in 1829 went to Sitka only to sell supplies and did not trade elsewhere on the coast at all" (Gibson 1992:61). In 1825, ship owners Nathaniel Dorr and William Blanchard sailed the *Lapwing* (later *Okhotsk*) directly to Sitka, where the cargo brought specifically for Russian-American Company was sold together with the vessel for furs (Malloy 1998:121). Peculiarly, ships sold to Russians in this period were much newer. The *Arab* (later *Baikal*), acquired by the company in January 1824, was five years old, the above-mentioned *Lapwing* ventured the sea for only three years prior entering the company's service, and the brig *Tally-Ho* (later *Chichagov*), purchased in 1827, was just over two years old (Malloy 1998:160).

Perhaps the most unexpected ship acquisition in the history of the Russian Alaska was a small vessel, which the company named *Fortuna.* She was sighted in a state of distress at sea near Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1819. Aboard the vessel were seven Hawaiians, who told the following story:

> Spanish insurgents had impressed them as sailors from their home islands and had placed them aboard two frigates. [They] had bombarded Monterey and San Francisco and at Monterey had taken this schooner as his lawful prize and placed the Sandwich Islanders and three Europeans aboard it, the Spanish crew having escaped. During an uprising on the frigates, the commander and

> other officers were killed. The Europeans aboard the schooner took what cargo they could and transferred it to a frigate, ordering the Sandwich Islanders to follow them Under the command of one of the islanders who barely knew how to use the compass, the schooner fell behind. After an eighty-two-day voyage they found themselves, not at the Sandwich Islands as their new skipper had intended, but at Novo-Arkhangelsk, having only a two-day supply of provisions and several casks of fresh water left (Tikhmenev 1978:150)

The "Spanish insurgent" was Captain Bouchard, a Frenchman by birth fighting for the independence of Chile under the Argentine flag. His two ships, the thirty-eight gun frigate *Argentina* and the twenty-six gun *Santa Rosa, Libertad* plundered the Californian missions in the fall of 1818, and assaulted Monterey on November 21st (Bancroft 1886: 225-228). On their way from the Hawaiian Islands, where the ships were outfitted, the privateers encountered "a brig in ballast, which had run away and discharged her cargo before being taken"(Bancroft 1886: 226). Nothing is known about the mutiny aboard of Bouchard's ships, but some sources indicate that both vessels made it safely to Lima, where Bouchard died five years later (Bancroft 1886b:247).

To commemorate the unusual circumstances of acquisition the Russians christened the new vessel *Fortuna*. The schooner was re-timbered with 26 new frames with riders, reinforced with breasthooks and hanging knees, and sheathed with copper (Arndt 2003:18). The mast and spars were also replaced, and the old ones, made of mahogany, were used in the construction of a new altarpiece for the Sitka's Cathedral of the Archangel Michael (Arndt 2003:20).

From 1827 until 1839 the company did not buy any American vessels, relying on the production of the colonial shipyards and round-the-world ships. On August 10, 1839 Arvid Etholen boarded one of these ships, the *Nikolai*, heading for Novo-Arkhangelsk to

become the new company manager. An experienced officer and energetic manager, he started his work before arriving in Alaska: during the stay in Rio de Janeiro he bought a Boston-built brig of 190 tons, renamed the *Grand Duke Konstantin*, for 65,000 rubles (Tikhmenev 1978:521, Pierce 1986:24, Golovin 1979: 146). It proved to be a good choice, for despite her very active career at sea, she was still in service twenty years later (Golovin 1979:146). The next ship, the *Kniaz Menshikov* (*Prince Menshikov*) was built in Salem, Massachusetts, and acquired in a like manner. A company agent bought her in Honolulu in 1846, loaded her with cargo bought in Hawaii, and sailed to Sitka.

Although all of the American ships purchased by the company were built on the East coast, the first one actually purchased there was the four hundred ton *Elena*, bought by Lieutenant Chistiakov in New Bedford in 1823 for round-the-world expeditions (Tikhmenev 1978:213). Starting from the 1850's, the East coast became the place where the Russian-American company acquired the majority of its American ships. The one hundred seventy-ton brig *Velikii Kniaz Konstantin* was built and purchased in Boston in 1850. The same year the company commissioned its first ship in United States. The *Imperator Nikolai I* was built in New York for the company in 1850 "from white ironwood, oak and yellow pine, with copper sheathing" (Golovin 1979:146). The ship had a peculiar, but somewhat logical voyage to Alaska: instead of going directly to Alaska, she first sailed to Kronshtadt, loaded there with supplies for the colonies and then went on the "round the world" voyage to Novo-Arkhangelsk (RAC 1851:13). Another ship also commissioned in New York was the wooden screw steamer of 500 tons *Alexander II*, finished in 1855. The company's only ironclad, the screw steamer *Velikii*

*Kniaz Konstantin,* was commissioned and build in the yards in Newcastle the same year. She cost 285,600 rubles, but was already in bad condition by 1860, as Golovin describes:

> "her hull has not been painted since she was purchased in 1856, and only rarely has it been tarred, thus a large part of the plating has rusted. In 1859 when she was returning to Sitka she began to leak and would have sunk if it were not for the fact that she had double-hull construction. In this condition she managed to reach the island of Attu where she underwent three months of partial repair, and this manner she finally managed to reach Sitka (Golovin 1979:42).

In the 1850's the East coast without a doubt presented better choice for newly built ships then the West coast. In 1849 and 1850, the California gold rush brought a tidal wave of ships to the Pacific coast. Once they reached the shore, passengers and crew alike jumped the ships to try their luck on the rivers of California. The masts of abandoned ships filled San Francisco harbor. It is peculiar that the Russians, who regularly ventured to California waters, never used this wealth of abandoned vessels to their advantage. The only ship they bought in San Francisco was the two hundred eighty seven-ton bark *Nakhimov* (former *Siana or Cyane*), built in Baltimore in 1848, and purchased in 1854. Possible explanations lay in the obvious difficulty of contacting the owners of abandoned vessels and the specific requirements Russians might have had for the ships. In the approach of the Crimean War Russian-American Company was looking for armed ships with large cargo capacities, which probably was a rare type among gold rush ships. Thus the Russians became customers of the shipyards of Maryland, Massachusetts and New York, which also had the capability to build such technologically advanced ships as ironclad screw steamers. The war also provided additional motivation for purchasing American ships. While according to the agreement signed with the

Hudson Bay Company at the outbreak of the Crimean War, the territories of both Russian and British possession in the New World remained neutral, their fleets could not leave port without danger of meeting the enemy. "Under such circumstances, wrote Tikhmenev, the ship *Siana* under the American flag, made voyages safely where formerly company ships had been used. The Imperator Aleksandr II, a new screw steamer of 500 tons, built in New York, arrived in San Francisco in 1854, also under the American flag, and sailed from there to the colonies where it was used in the same manner as the *Siana*" (Tikhmenev 1978:329).

From 1805 until 1867 the Russian-American Company acquired 18 foreign-made ships in America, constituting 22% of all ships of the Russian-American Company. All but one were built in the United States. In comparison with the production of the colonial yards, purchased vessels tended to have larger tonnage (150-1200 tons), and with few exceptions were three-masters. Chronologically there were two peaks of acquisition: 1812 through 1814, and 1854 through 1856. In the larger historical context both these periods correspond with the two most serious international conflicts of the period: 1) the Napoleonic wars and the War of 1812 and 2) the Crimean War. The reasons for the first peak are explained above and lay largely in the selling initiative of the American traders whose business was getting increasingly unprofitable. The second peak might reflect the efforts of the Russian-American company to fortify its fleet at the time when British navy was a frequent and dangerous visitor in North Pacific waters. By this time not only bigger industrial yards built the ships cheaper than Novo-Arkhangelsk, but they also fitted them with artillery, which the Russian America did not produce itself and could not bring from

continental Russia because of British patrols and the shortage of Russian naval ships, involved in different theaters of military operations. The period between 1827 and 1839 when no ships were purchased is the same time when the colonial shipyards were most active. Since no other political or economic reason prevented acquisitions during this period, this can indicate that at least during this time the Russian-American company preferred shipbuilding as the main source of maintaining the necessary amount of ships. Although not necessarily most cost efficient, as the most demanding colonial industries, shipbuilding improved the company's image in the eyes of both investors and the international community.

# CHAPTER V: ROUND THE WORLD SHIPS

The tenth of July, 2004 was an uneventful day in Kodiak, Alaska. Overwhelmed by the 85 ° F temperature, unusual in these parts, the city slowed its rhythm and looked forward to the evening breeze. There was no sign of any festivities, with the exception of exaggerated beer consumption justified by the heat. Yet, two hundred years earlier, at the dawn of July 1804, the settlement at St. Paul harbor rejoiced: for both Russian settlers and the crew of the newly arrived *Neva*, it seemed to be the day to remain in the memory of the onlookers. After a 400-day voyage the first Russian overseas passage from the imperial capital of St. Petersburg to Russian America was completed. In a more pragmatic sense the 370-ton *Neva*, loaded with food and other supplies, and armed with 14 cannons, represented satiation and security, while the newly tried route opened a promising line of the supply and communication between the colonies and the mother-country. For Johann-Anton von Kruzenshtern, it was the day when his dream of ten years came true.

An offspring of a noble Baltic family of distant German origin residing in Russia, Johann-Anton (or Ivan Fedorovich in the Russian adaptation of his name) tied his life with the sea when he was only fourteen years old (Barratt 1981:108). His talents and determination assisted his fast advancement, and the chain of coincidence directed his path to North Pacific. During his first appointment as a midshipman on the naval ship *Mstislav* he served with Iakov Bering, a relative of the ill-fated leader of the first Russian expeditions to the New World. Later he was sent to sail aboard English naval vessels as a

Russian volunteer and visited North America, the East Indies and China, where according to his own words his attention "was particularly excited by the importance of the English trade with the East Indies and with China" (Kruzenshtern 1814: xxiv-v, Barratt 1981-109). Wishing to ensure Russia's participation in this lucrative trade, he believed that the Russian-American Company was ideally situated to carry such exchange, and if a stronger Russian maritime presence could be established in the Pacific it would open the route to Canton. Convinced that the main obstacle was the lack of qualified mariners and sufficient ships, Kruzenshtern proposed that:

> Two ships should be sent from Cronstadt (sic!) to the Aleutic (sic!) islands and to America, with every kind of material necessary for the construction and outfit of vessels; and they should likewise be provided with skilful shipwrights, workmen of all kinds, a teacher of navigation, as well as charts, books, nautical and astronomical instruments (Kruzenshtern 1814,1: xxv-xxvi).

Minister of the Marine N.S. Mordvinov approved the proposal, and extended voyage's agenda. The official representative of the company in St. Petersburg, court chamberlain Rezanov insisted that the ships would also load food stock and various other supplies to the colonies. He himself was to join the expedition as a company official and Russia's first envoy to Japan. Geographic, hydrographic, astronomical and ethnological observations were also among the tasks to be performed by the crew. Propelled by the joint efforts of the Ministry of Marine, and the company's office in St. Petersburg, preparations for the expedition proceeded swiftly. When it came to purchasing vessels, however, an unexpected delay occurred. No suitable vessels could be found in Russia. Although Kruzenshtern's requirements for the ships remain unspecified, they must have

been fairly high, for neither Hamburg nor Copenhagen managed to satisfy them. Finally, the suitable ships were found in London, where the 450-ton *Leander* and 370-ton *Thames* were purchased for 20,000 pounds. Renamed as the *Nadezhda* (Hope) and the *Neva*, they were outfitted in Kronshtadt and left for Russian America on June 6, 1803. Kruzenshtern accepted command of the *Nadezhda*, and entrusted the *Neva* to Yurii Fedorovich Lisainskii.

Even before the departure, the expedition's joint character revealed its drawbacks. Naval and mercantile elements did not always get along and neither did captains of the ships with the company's representatives aboard. Poor instructions regarding the subordination were not the only cause for the dysfunctional relationship. From the very beginning of naval involvement in Russian-American Company affairs, the participants of this mutually beneficial undertaking had very different motivations. The company wanted the expeditions to be exclusively commercial, while the navy's links with the higher levels of government charged the voyage with a political agenda. For Kruzenshtern the company's participation in the voyage was confusing, and even intrusive, although unavoidable:

> In the fitting of my ships, it was necessary to provide for the different objects of the voyage, the combination of which was attended with many inconveniencies. The ship belonged indeed to the Emperor and was destined for the embassy; but it was allowed to the American Company to lade it with their goods. Of this lading and of the many presents destined for Japan, I could obtain no previous information. With regard to the latter, I continued in ignorance until the last moment. I was in roadstead and effects were still arriving, which I was not a little puzzled how to stow (Tikhmenev 1938:155-156).

The relationship between the state and private participation in the voyage was so unbalanced, that the sources have no unanimous opinion even regarding the ownership of the vessels of the first Russian circumnavigation. Contradicting Kruzenshtern's above-cited statement, N.A. Ivashintsov in his *Russian Round-the-World Voyages*, published in 1849, stated that both ships were owned by the Russian-American Company, but "as a mark of His Majesty the Emperor's especial interest in the undertaking, they were permitted to fly the naval ensign" (Ivashintsov 1980:1). The company tried to monopolize the expeditions completely, leaving to Kruzenshtern the role of mere ship's commander, while the board of directors congratulated itself with the invention of a new improved method of transporting European goods to the colonies (Tikhmenev 1978:69-70).

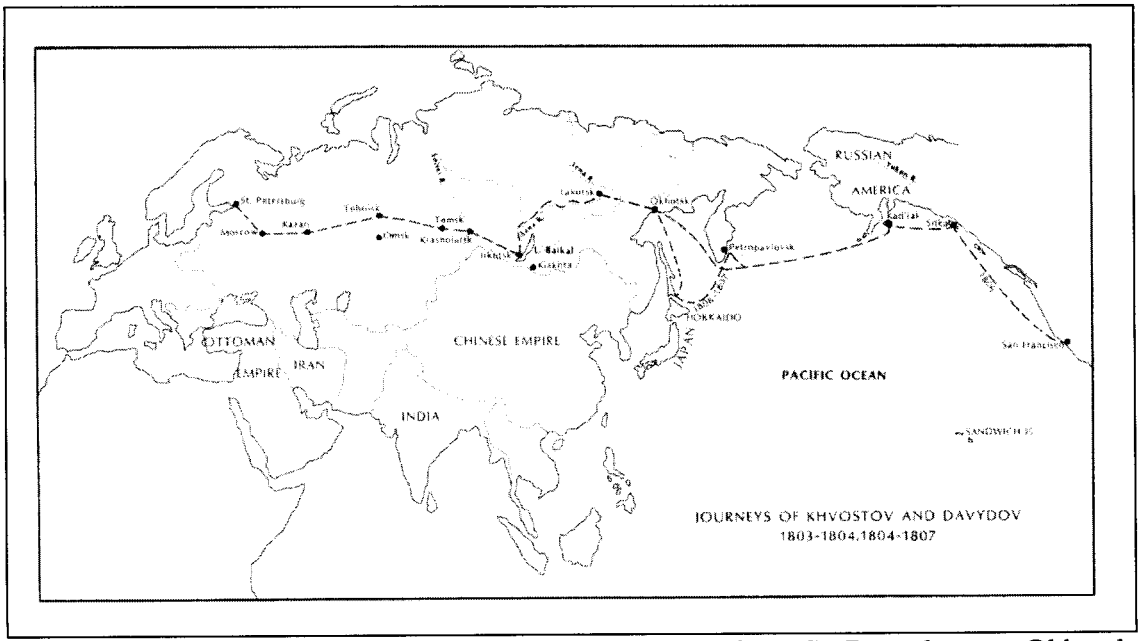


Figure 16. Overland journey of Khvostov and Davydov from St. Petersburg to Okhotsk (Davydov 1977: n.p.n.)

There was indeed a long pressing need to find an alternative to slow and dangerous route across Siberia. In 1802 it took Khvostov and Davydov five months to travel from St. Petersburg to Okhotsk with just personal luggage (Fig.16). For horse and sledge caravans, loaded with cannons and anchors, the travel from European Russia to the company's outpost in Okhotsk lasted over a year and much of the cargo never reached the colonies, perishing in the impassable tundra and marshes (Tikhmenev 1978:69). The first idea of sea voyages from St. Petersburg to America, however, belonged neither to the Russian-American Company officials, nor to the Captain Kruzenshtern. Already in 1732 two other representatives of the Russian Navy, count Nikolai Golovnin and Vice-Admiral Thomas Saunders advised the empress Anna Ioanovna to send Russian ships to Kamchatka to assist Bering's expedition and to carry on independent exploration there. He argued that such expeditions would be cheaper and faster then overland transportation of necessary supplies and materials, and would also "greatly assist with the naval education of the young officers and sailors"(Dmytrishin 1988:90-95). It took sixty years and Kruzenshtern's ardent personality to bring this idea to fruition.

The *Neva* and the *Nadezhda* sailed together around Cape Horn as far as Hawaii, where they parted ways (Fig.17). The *Neva* sailed northeast to Kodiak, while the *Nadezhda* headed northwest and on July 2nd called at Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka. Several months later, after an unsuccessful attempt to establish an official relationship with Japan, the *Nadezhda* reunited with the *Neva* in Canton. The crew of the *Neva* had its share of adventures: during the fourteen months in the colonies, the ship not only participated in trading voyages, but made a punitive expedition to Sitka Island "to wrestle

back from the Kolosh [Tlingit] the settlement of Arkhangelsk" (Ivashintsev 1980:11). Both ships called at Kronshtadt in July of 1806, thus completing the first Russian round-the-world voyage.

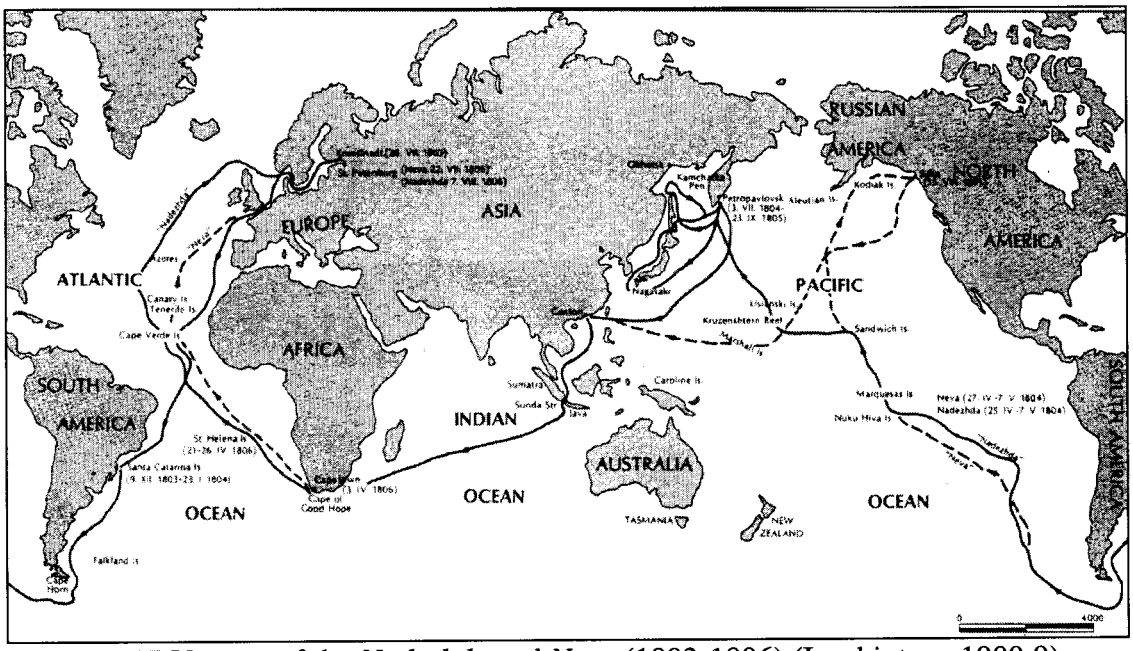


Figure 17.Voyage of the *Nadezhda* and *Neva* (1803-1806) (Ivashintsov 1980:9)

The expedition's results satisfied both the company's board of directors and the Russian government. Although profits from the sale of the company's furs in Canton were much smaller then anticipated, access to this lucrative market had tremendous financial potential. Despite the futile mission to Japan, the flag of the Russian Empire made its first appearance in many foreign domains. Besides, the expedition made a significant impact in the state of geographical, hydrological and ethnographic knowledge about the regions visited. In recognition of his services to the scientific world Kruzenshtern was made a honorary member of such scientific institutes as the Russian Academy of Science and Universities of Derpt, London, Göttingen and Paris (Nozikov 1940:73). For the Russian-American Company, however, the biggest achievement of the

first round-the-world voyage was confirmation of the possibility and efficiency of supplying the colony via the sea. The company began preparations for the next voyage almost immediately after the arrival of the *Neva* and the *Nadezhda*. It was decided that the ships would remain in Russian America for four years, protecting the settlements "from hostile actions by the natives or various foreigners" (Tikhmenev 1978:108). Only three months later the *Neva* was again under sail heading for the colonies, this time under the command of the Captain Ludwig Von Hagemeister. In nine months she safely reached the colony, but the return voyage never took place: in January of 1813 on a voyage from Okhotsk to Novo-Arkhangelsk, the ship was lost in a storm (Tikhmenev 1978:148).

Stirred by the success of the first expedition, the Imperial Navy decided to provide an escort for the *Neva's* second venture. Once again finding and outfitting a vessel capable to undertake such demanding voyage proved to be challenging. The Russian-built navy sloop *Diana,* under the command of Lieutenant Golovin, was ready only at the end of March 1807. With the *Neva* long gone the sloop was loaded with 216,000 lbs of various supplies for Kamchatka and Okhotsk, and entrusted with the new task of surveying the Pacific coast of Russian possessions in Asia and America. Golovin's voyage was exceptionally unlucky. First he encountered a two-week long storm at Cape Horn, and decided to change course and go to America around the Cape Good Hope. At Simon Town the British authorities arrested the *Diana* and held the ship for 13 months because of "the Russian break with England," which also banned Russian trade from Canton. The ship eventually escaped and reached the Russian colonies, only to fall into captivity

again, this time on Japanese island of Kunashiri, where she stopped for water during a survey of the southern Kuriles (Ivashintsov 1980:19).

Despite the discouraging case of the *Diana,* the Russian Navy continued to play an active role in the round-the-world voyages. Between 1807 and 1849, nineteen naval vessels made their voyages to the coasts of Russian America. While most of them had scientific or political agendas, their holds carried cargo for the colonial settlements, and their guns halted illegal foreign trade in Russian territorial waters. Overall two thirds of the ships carrying passengers and supplies from Europe to the colonial settlements in the New World were naval vessels of the Russian Empire (Ivashintsov 1980:iii). Naval involvement in the affairs of Russian America, however, went far beyond these services. The well-educated and widely traveled officers of the round-the-world voyages were keen observers and articulate critics of many of company's failures. The company's cruel treatment of the Natives, the miserable state of the colonial fleet, the lack of competent seafarers among the "merchants" of the Russian America and many other issues were voiced in their dispatches and memoirs and received wide attention both in St. Petersburg and Europe. In the colonies the officers often considered it to be below their dignity to follow the orders of the "simple merchant" Baranov. In July 1815 a confrontation between him and Mikhail Lazarev, the Captain of the *Suvorov*, became so heated that Baranov ordered the guns of Novo-Arkhangelsk to fire at the ship (Barratt 1981:175). As a result of these tensions the company's board of directors, located in St. Petersburg, decided to remove Baranov from his position, and from 1818, when

Lieutenant Leontii Hagemeister replaced him, all managers of Russian America were naval officers (Gibson 1991: 97).

Growing ties with the navy and the regularity of communications between the colonies and the capital, brought by round-the-world voyages, changed the perception that Russian statesmen had about Russian America. As Ilya Vinkovetsky points out,

> "the ports of Russian America and Eurasia's Pacific Coast, which had been previously thought of as part of the Russian Empire's remotest frontiers, came to be re-conceptualized in the eyes of the country's thinkers and bureaucrats as place with better access to St. Petersburg than the continental towns of Siberia and much of the rest of interior Russia" (Vinkovetsky 2001:1-2).

A natural result of such re-conceptualization was increasing governmental control over the Russian-American Company. If in the first charter of 1799 the colony was described as a commercial corporation answerable to the emperor, the next one stated that it was both a commercial enterprise and "a governmental authority" (Mazour1944: 168-73). Not coincidently the governmental provisional committee, composed of the Minister of the Navy, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, and representative of the Ministry of Finance (later named the Council of the Russian-American Company), was organized in the wake of the first round-the-world voyage (Sarafian 1970:2-4). Eventually these changes affected the very character of the Russian colonies. Instead of an entrepreneurial enterprise, it became an administrative body and the agent of Russian Far East politics. In accordance with the new vision, the ships of the company became involved in governmental tasks, such as provisioning Petropavlovsk and the exploration of the Amur region (Tikhmenev 1978:330).

The Russian-American Company did not always rely solely on naval vessels for its round-the-world voyages. Over a period of fifty-four years, it equipped and sent fourteen ships from Europe to the colonies, all of which were purchased abroad. The pattern of European purchases was determined chiefly by economic factors. From 1803 until 1819, the company relied on the production of British shipyards. The only French-made ship in the company's service, the 337-ton *Suvorov*, which sailed for America in 1813, was most probably a prize of the Napoleonic wars (Barratt 1981:174). The first German ship, the *Elizaveta*, was acquired in 1820 in Hamburg. During the seventh round the world voyage, on the way to the Cape of Good Hope, she encountered violent storms which caused her irreparable damages and forced the commander of the expedition to sell her for a nominal price. The *Elena*, built in New Bedford, Massachusetts and purchased to fill the void, became the company's first round-the world ship of American provenance. Two ships purchased in 1837 and 1840 (the *Nikolai I* and the *Naslednik Aleksandr*) were constructed in the Finnish city of Åbo (Turku), only 450 miles from St. Petersburg. In 1850 the company began purchasing "manufactured goods and certain supplies for the colonies" in Hamburg (Tikhmnev 1978:328). In addition to low prices for supplies, both Hamburg and nearby Lübeck offered an affordable source of suitable ships. In the beginning of 1851 the former governor of the colonies and later member of the Russian-American Company board of directors, Arvid Etholen, visited Hamburg and commissioned Johann Christian Friedrich Schütt to purchase local goods and ships for the Russian-American company (Russian American Company 1852:10). With his help during the period from

1851 until 1856, the Russian-American company purchased three vessels in Hamburg and two in Lübeck (Fig.18).

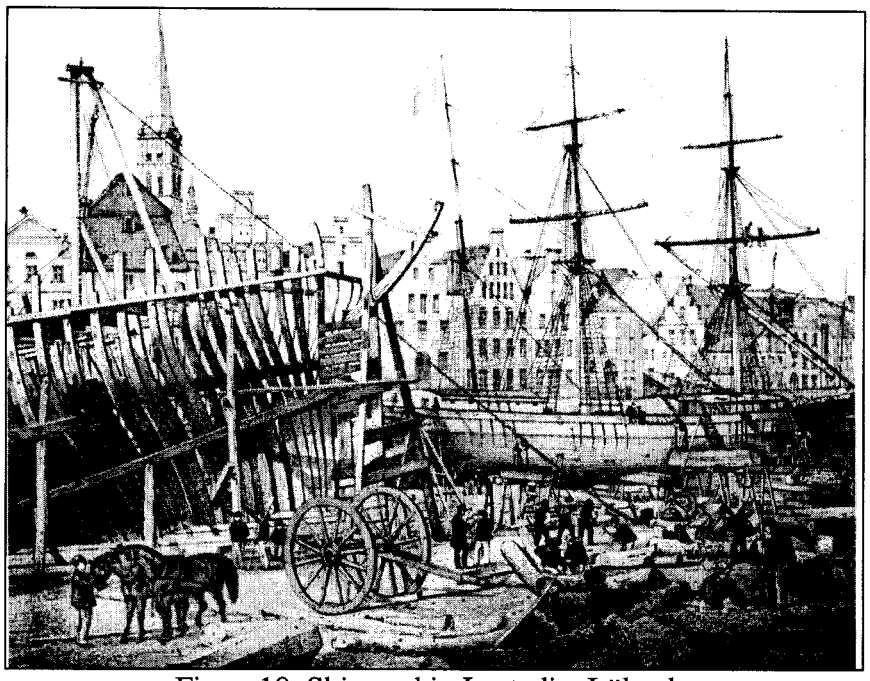

Figure18. Shipyard in Lastadie, Lübeck.
Lithography by unknown artist, 1870 (Pietsch 1982:26)

None of the sixteen vessels acquired for the round the world voyages was made in Russia. While the company's documentation does not offer any explanation why the colonies did not rely on the products of the domestic shipbuilding, there are probably three main reasons. First of all, during the first half of the nineteenth century Russia was involved in several wars, which forced the country's shipyards to concentrate on naval needs. Secondly, Russian shipyards had very little experience with building merchant ships capable of venturing on the open ocean. Finally, there was a matter of price: the highly industrialized shipyards of England, Germany and America were more efficient and offered more affordable ships.

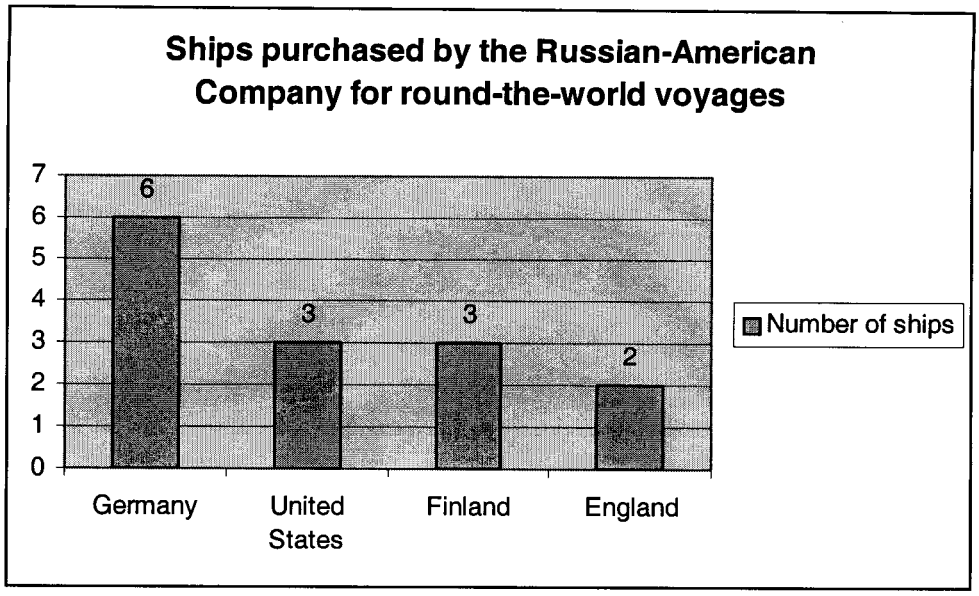


Figure 19 Foreign ships purchased by the Russian-American Company for round the world voyages (Anichtchenko, August 2004).

Wherever they were purchased, the ships always left for the colonies from Kronshtadt, where they were loaded with the main bulk of the cargo and manned with naval officers and sailors. Sometimes the company provided its own recruits, but more often the necessary number of sailors were taken from various government vessels that happened to be in Kronshtadt at the time. Since the consent of the captains of these ships was a necessary condition of the agreement, the sailors of the company's round-the world ships were often ones whom previous captains were happy to be rid of (Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennui Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota Rossii 1848: n.p.n.). After leaving Kronshtadt, the ships usually made at least one European stop to buy provisions and the equipment that could not be found in Russia. For example, during the preparation for the voyage of the naval brigs *Moller* and *Siniukhin* the admiralty could not locate any spare atlas of the Atlantic Ocean and the ships were recommended to obtain one during their

stop in England (Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota 1826: n.p.n.).

The route via Cape Horn was considered to be the fastest, but because of favorable winds and better explored coasts more expeditions preferred to go to Alaska around the Cape of Good Hope and return via Cape Horn (Gibson 1976:77). On the route around Cape Horn the ships made regular stops in Rio de Janeiro and Valpariaso. When traveling via the Cape of Good Hope, they would either go through the Sunda Straits and then call at Manila, or stop in Sidney and proceed to Marshall Islands.

From the time when the Russians were denied trading in Canton the main purpose of the round-the-world voyages was supplying the colonies. Cargo constituted of provisions (grain and sugar) and bulky items that colonies could not produce themselves (textiles, metal items, anchors, tools, glass and earthenware utensils)(Gibson 1976:82). Naturally, bringing goods from European Russia was not the only solution to the problem of colonial supply. Neither was it the most cost efficient. Both British and American traders could offer the same supplies cheaper and deliver them more often than Russian round-the-world expeditions, but their presence in the colonial waters weakened the Russian attempt to monopolize the North Pacific fur trade, and as such was highly undesirable. Round the world voyages, therefore, were another weapon in the battle for Russia's exclusive rights to the North Pacific furs.

In 1821 this battle seemed to be won: with the ban on all foreign trade in Russian colonial waters, Russian political ambitions were fully satisfied. In this triumphant spirit, new plans were conceived: naval officer Dmitrii Zavalishin proposed the annexation of

California and Amur (Barratt 1981:227). The victory, however, proved to be short-lived. By 1825 the Russian Emperor Alexander I, concerned with the international reaction, signed new conventions with both United States and Great Britain granting them rights to hunt and trade in the region. Despite the fact that the renewed trade with foreigners deprived the round-the-world voyages of any economical sense, the company's head office decided to continue sending the ships from Kronshtadt "in order to harmonize political and practical considerations"(Gibson 1976:88). From now on it was decided to send only those goods that the British and Americans overpriced or did not offer.

Until the late 1840's, the need for goods from European Russia remained marginal. The company's agreement with the Hudson's Bay Company and trade with California were sufficient to meet the needs of the Russian colonists. In the late 1840's the situation changed. First, the inflow of gold seekers increased the prices on food supplies in California, and subsesquently the Hudson's Bay Company refused to renew its agreement with the colonies (Tikhmenev 1978:327). Under these circumstances the round-the-world voyages once again began to play an important role in provisioning Russian America. Since no naval vessels were made available, the company resumed the well-tried but expensive practice of purchasing ships in Western Europe. The alternative to purchasing ships was found in 1845, when the company first experimented with the system of chartering foreign ships. The 470 -ton *Sitkha,* built in Abo and manned with a Finnish crew, arrived in Novo-Arkhangelsk on April 15, 1847 (Russian-American Company 1847:18). The system proved to be advantageous for the colonies, and according to Tikhmenev's observation, "demonstrated the possibility of outfitting company ships for

round-the-world voyages economically, giving command to private skippers instead of to navy officers and having much smaller crews (Tikhmenev 1978:327). The company continued to charter Finnish ships until the last days of operations in America.

The success of cooperation with the Finns probably also played a role in the Company's decision to form a whaling partnership with several Finnish ship owners. The Russian-Finnish Whaling Company, founded in 1849, was subsidized by both the Russian-American Company and a grant from the Russian government. Despite the promising beginning, the Whaling Company was not successful. The outbreak of the Crimean War made it difficult to sail in both colonial and European waters. In addition, the Finns were diligent but inexperienced whalers, and the company operated at no profit. It was finally closed in 1861 (Tikhmenev 1978:325).

The last round the world ship, the *Veliky Kniaz' Konstantin*, was purchased by the company in 1856 in Newcastle, Massachusetts. By that time, the term "round the world ship" had lost its original meaning, as these vessels were intended to sail only once to the colonies, and remain there for the duration of their working life. Throughout the history of this undertaking, these vessels had only a marginal economic intent. Rather, the round the world ships were meant to serve the political ambitions of the Russian Empire. Perhaps the most important and lasting impact of the round the world voyages was to diminish the perceived distance from the Imperial center of St Petersburg to the peripheral life of the Russian colonies in America.

# CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

Through seventy-five years of operation in the North Pacific, the Russian-American Company owned eighty vessels, acquired from three different sources: colonial shipbuilding, purchase in America, and European acquisitions. Each avenue of fleet formation was initiated by specific combinations of economic and political circumstances and in addition to the general commercial meaning carried its own ideological charge. 66% of the ships were built in colonial shipyards (Figure 20). In spite of the obvious difficulties of building the ships in the remote American colonies, it was one of the company's most consistent efforts: both its first and its last ship were launched in the colonial yards. Hardly a balanced strategy of cost efficient acquisition, the shipbuilding of Russian America was a manifestation of the mercantilist principle of supporting domestic industry, and a projection of colonial ambitions (not coincidently all shipyards of Russian America, from the Resurrection Bay to Fort Ross, were placed at the frontiers of the Russian possessions).

The acquisition of foreign vessels initially came as a solution to the ever-pressing problem of provisioning the colonies. Both American and European ships came to Russian-American Company officials' attention as the bearers of much needed supplies. Despite the general tension between the Russian-American Company and the subjects of the United States and Great Britain in North Pacific waters in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the colonies depended on trade with foreigners and maintained an active relationship with them. During the initial contact Russian colonists gained appreciation of the vessels built on the east coast of the United States, and later in the

history of the company began to commission ships directly from New York and Massachusetts.

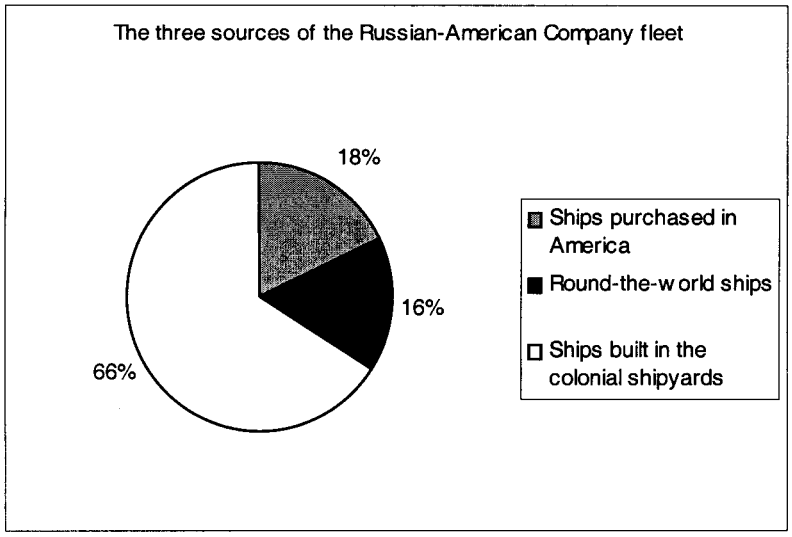


Figure 20. The three sources of the Russian-American Company fleet Anichtchenko, August 2004

While the ship acquisition in America demonstrated the gap between the purity of mercantilist principles, as they were perceived in the capital, and the reality of the life in the remote American colonies, the round-the-world voyages achieved a somewhat opposite effect. Regular circumnavigation assisted firmer incorporation of Russian America into the broader context of imperial politics, which eventually handicapped the company's commercial initiatives. As only a small number of the round-the-world ships actually belonged to the Russian-American Company, their number is not representative of the dynamics of circumnavigation.

The development of the Russian-American Company fleet was dominated by the economic and political needs of the colonies. The company's failures, however, could

hardly be attributed to the fleet's insufficiency. Shipbuilding and seafaring were by far most successful undertakings of Russians in America. In 1860 Captain Petr Golovin remarked: "the company deserves full credit for the fact that all of the ships are well maintained, and those which go around the world are meticulously cared for, in spite of the fact that all of them are commercial ships" (Golovin 1979:43). The company's efforts in charting the coasts of Alaska and in recruiting experienced navigators reduced the rate of wrecking. From 1837 until the sale of Alaska in 1867 only two company' ships wrecked in the colonial waters. Safety at sea, not the decline of colonial seafaring, is responsible for the diminishing number of ship acquisitions in 30-s and 40s (Figure 21).

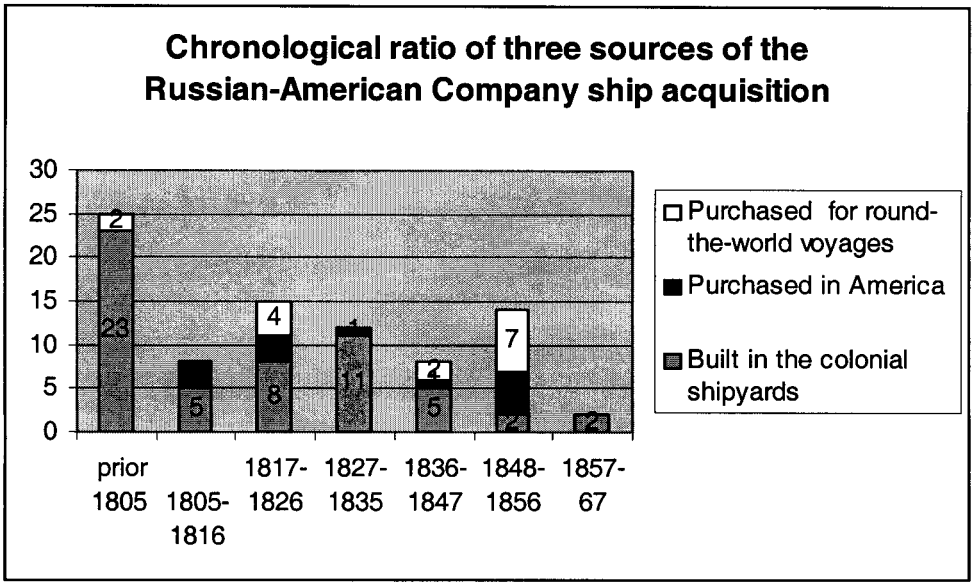


Figure 21. Chronological ratio of three sources of the Russian-American Company ship acquisition (Anichtchenko, August 2004)

Peculiarly, this drastic improvement happened soon after officials undertook a number of attempts to improve employees temperance. In 1845 the main office ordered a

halt to the sale of alcohol in the colonies. According to an eyewitness, when this prohibition was announced at a public meeting of colonial employees, many people "upon hearing this could not repress tears" (Makarov 1849:33). Since total sobriety had a devastating effect on the employees' spirit, two years later the company abandoned prohibition, but established a limit of weekly consumption (Sarafian 1970:114).

As it has been discussed in previous chapters, the period from 1848 until 1856 was the time when Californian gold rush, annulment of the contract with the Hudson's Bay Company and the Crimean War forced the company to acquire ships for both protection and provisioning of the colonies. In this situation foreign acquisitions were an optimal source, and as the statistic demonstrates, the officials of the Russian-American Company utilized it actively (Figure 21).

Although the total number of ships employed by the Russian-American company was not overwhelmingly impressive, the fleet's performance in fulfilling its mission of colonial trade was very satisfactory. There were, however, factors that restricted the fleet's participation in colonial affairs. As described in Chapter One, according to the agreement reached with China, the only Russian access to this major market for Alaskan furs was the inland trading outpost of Kiakhta. The ships therefore participated in this important trade only partially: they delivered furs from Alaska to the ports of Okhotsk and Petropavlovsk, leaving the rest to the long overland routes. Likewise the valuable cargos of teas, obtained in China, were in many cases sent to Russian markets overland across Siberia. Watercraft, therefore, were mostly engaged in two other areas of colonial

life: communication between the various outposts, and, once again, bringing supplies from Europe, Hawaii and California.

The California Gold Rush, which destroyed one of the company 's most important lines of supply, also opened some new financial opportunities, such as the ice trade. In 1852 the *Bachus,* a vessel belonging to the American Ice Company, arrived in Sitka and purchased two hundred fifty tons of ice at the attractive price of seventy-five dollars per ton (Tikhmenev 1974:335). The next year Russians began ice shipments to San Francisco that would eventually reach 1,200 tons annually. This new commercial initiative demanded year round participation of two company vessels. Despite its success, the ice trade was not enough to solve the company's financial problems. In addition, the Crimean War proved the incapability of the Russian Empire to protect its American colonies. Under the double pressure of both political and economic considerations, in 1867 the Russian Crown signed the sales agreement with the United States.

At this time the Russian-American Company fleet consisted of ten vessels, only two of which had less than a ten-year career at sea. Three of them were sold to interested parties in America; the other seven sailed back to Russia. Many prominent guests attending the annexation ceremony remarked on the excellent conditions of the port of Novo- Arkhangelsk. Within the first ten years under American rule, the splendor of the Russian "Venice on the Pacific" passed into oblivion.

Writing in 1957, the Russian historian Okun offered the following outline of the history of the Russian-American Company: "in the first period of the Company's existence there was peltry but no order. In the second period there was more order but

less peltry, and finally, in the third period, there was perfect order but the treasury was empty" (Okun 1951:225). In many senses the development of the company's fleet fits this description. It started as a random collection of vernacular vessels and developed into a reliable body of ships built to the latest standards of European and American shipbuilding, but without the economic impetus this success was not to last.

# REFERENCES CITED

## Unpublished archival sources

ANONYMOUS

n.d. *Kratkaya Istoricheskaia Zapiska o Sostoyanii Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii* [A Brief Historical Note on the Condition of the Russian-American Company"] Arkhiv Geograficheskogo Obschestva, raz.99, op.1, no29, St. Petersburg.

ARCHIV DER HANSESTADT LUBECK, AHL

1851-1852 Kanzlei 8, folder for years 1851-1852, Lubeck.

ARCHIV DER HANSESTADT LUBECK, ALTES SENATSARCHIV INTERNA

n.d. Lastadie 4/13, N 16, Lubeck.

BANCROFT LIBRARY MANUSCRIPT DEVISION

1855 List of Vessels of the Siberian Fleet, 1714 to 1853, Taken from the Okhotsk *Archives, Published in Morskoi Sbornik, 1855, p,12-210* [sic!] In Ivan Petrov's hand-writing. MSS PK-64. Microfilm.

TSENTRALNYI GOSUDARSTVENNYI ARKHIV VOENNO-MORSKOGO FLOTA ROSSII

1826 O possylke v 1826 godu k Rossiisko-Amerikanskim koloniiam 2-h brigov I otpravke v Kronshtadt dlia etikh brigov materialov. *Ispolnitel'naia Ekspeditsiia pri Admiralteiskoi Kollegii* [ Regarding the dispatch of two brigs for the Russian-American Company in 1826, and on the sending to Kronshtadt the materials for these brigs], fond 131, opis' 1, delo 1583.

1848 *Perepiska s Inspektorskim departamentom I komandoi ekipazhei o naznachenii matrosov na korabl' Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii "Tsaritsa"* [Communications with the Department of Inspections regarding the appointment of sailors on the Russian-American Company ship *Tsaritsa*. July 19 –August 25, 1848. fond 930, opis'46, delo 96.

## Published Primary Sources:

BEARNE, C., trans.

1978 *The Russian Orthodox Religious Mission in America, 1794-1837.* Transl. From the Russian Edition. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

BERKH, V. N.

1974 *A Chronological History of the Discovery of the Aleutian Islands or the Exploits of Russian Merchants, with a Suppliment of Historical Data on the Fur Trade.* Trans. by D. Krenov, ed. by Richad A. Pierce. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

BLACK, LYDIA, Trans.

1979 The Journals of Jakov Netsvetov: The Atkha Years. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

BURNEY, J. Captain F.R.S.

1819 *A Chronological History of North-Eastern Voayges of Discovery, 7 the early Eastern Navigations of the Russians.* Luke Hansard & Sons, London.

DAVYDOV, G.I.

1977 *Two Voyages To Russian America, 1802-1807.* Translation from the Russian Edition (St. Petersburg, 1810-1812) by Colin Bearne. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

DMYTRYSHYN, B., E.A.P. CROWNHART-VAUGHAN, T. VAUGHAN

1988 *Russian Penetration of the Siberia and North Pacific Ocean: Three Centuries of Russian Eastward Expansion. Vol.2:To Siberia and Russian America 1700-1797.* Oregon Historical Society Press, Portland.

1989 *Russian Penetration of the Siberia and North Pacific Ocean: Three Centuries of Russian Eastward Expansion. The Russian American colonies, 1798-186: a documentary record.* Oregon Historical Society Press, Portland.

D'WOLF, J.

1861 *A Voyage to the North Pacific and A Journey through Siberia.* Cambridge, Massachusetts.

GOLOVIN, P.N.

1983 *Civil and Savage Encounters: the Worldly Travel Letters of an Imperial Russian Navy Officer 1860-1861.* The Press of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

1979 The End of Russian America:Captain P.N. Golovin's Last Report 1862. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Basil Dmytrishyn and E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughan. Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

GOLOVNIN, V.M.

1979 *Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819.* The University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

IVASHINTSOV, N.A.

1980 Russian Round-the-World Voyages, 1803-1849, With A Summary of Later Voyages To 1867. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

KHLEBNIKOV, K. T.

1976 *Colonial Russian America: Kyril T. Khlebnikov's Report, 1817-1832.* Translated by Basil Dmytrishyn and E.A.P. Crowwnhart-Vaughan. Oregon Historical Society, North Pacific Studies Series, Number 2, Portland.

KRUSENSTERN, A.J.

1814 *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1803, 4, 5 & 6, by Order of His Imperial Majesty Alexander I, on Board the Ships Nadezhda and Neva.* Translated by R.B. Hoppner. 2 v., London.

LITKE, F.P.

1987 *Voyages Around the World.* The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

OWENS, K. N., Ed.

1985 *The wreck of the Sv. Nikolai: Two Narratives of the First Russian Expedition to the Oregon Country: 1808-1810.* Western Imprints, The Press of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

PAVLOV, A.I., Ed.

1957 *K Istorii Rossijsko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii: Sbornik Dokumental'nyh Materialov.* [On the History of the Russian-American Company: Collection of the Documents] Krasnoyarskii Pedagogicheskii Institut, Krasnojarsk.

POKROVSKII, A., Ed.

1941 *Ekspeditsiia Beringa: sbornik dokumentov* [Bering's expedition: A collection of documents] Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie NKVD SSSR, Moscow.

PIERCE, R.A., Ed.

1976 Documents on the History of the Russian American Company translated from the Russian Publication of K Istorii Rosiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii (Sbornik dokumental'nyh materialov). The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

1984 Russian-American Company. Correspondence of the Governors Communications Sent: 1818. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

RUSSIAN-AMERICAN COMPANY

1845 *Otrchet Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, Glavnago Pravleniia za 1844 god.* [Annual report of the Russian-American Company, Head Office, for year 1844], St. Petersburg.

1848 *Otrchet Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, Glavnago Pravleniia za 1847 god.* [Annual report of the Russian-American Company, Head Office, for year 1847], St. Petersburg.

1852 *Otrchet Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, Glavnago Pravleniia za 1851 god.* [Annual report of the Russian-American Company, Head Office, for year 1851], St. Petersburg.

1853 *Otrchet Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, Glavnago Pravleniia za 1852 god.* [Annual report of the Russian-American Company, Head Office, for year 1852]. St. Petersburg.

*1856* Otchet Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, Glavnago Pravleniia za 1855 god. [Annual report of the Russian-American Company, Head Office, for year 1855]. St. Petersburg.

SHELIKOV, G.I.

1981 *A Voyage To America, 1783-1786.* Transl. From The Russian Edition of 1812, by Marina Ramsay. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

SIMPSON, GEORGE

1847 *An Overland Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842.* Lea and Blanchard, Philadelphia.

1849 Sitka, *Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle*, June, 310-311.

TIKHMENEV, P.A.

1938 *Supplement of Some Historical Documents to the Historical Review of the Formation of the Russian-American Company.* Translated by D. Khrenov, Seattle.

1978 *A History of The Russian-American Company.* vol. 1. Transl. from Russian Edition (St. Petersburg, 1861-1863) by R.A. Pierce and A.S. Donnely. University of Washington Press, Seattle and London.

1979 *A History of the Russian-American Company*, vol.2. Documents. Translated by D. Khrenov, ed. by Richard Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

ZAVALISHIN, D.

1866 *Delo o Koloniy Ros. Universitetskaya Tipografiia*, Moscow.

**Secondary Sources:**

ALEKSEEV, A. I.

1957 Okhotsk-kolybel' russkogo tikhookeanskogo flota [Okhotsk- the cradle of the Russian Pacific Fleet], Khabarovsk.

1987(a) *The Odyssey of a Russian Scientist: I.G. Voznesenskii in Alaska, California and Siberia, 1839-1849.* Ed. by R. A. Pierce. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario & Fairbanks.

1987(b) *Beregovaia Cherta* [The Coast]. Knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, Magadan.

AL'PEROVICH

1993 *Rossiia I Novyi Svet (posledniia tret' XVIII veka)* [Russia and the new World: last third of the XVIII century. Nauka, Moscow.

ANDREWS, C.L.

1934 Russian Shipbuilding in the American Colonies, *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 25, 3-10.

ARNDT, KATHERINE and RICHARD PIERCE

2003 A Construction History of Sitka, Alaska as Documented in the Records of the Russian-American Company. Sitka National Historical Park, Sitka.

BANKROFT, H. H.

1886(a) *History of Alaska.* A.L. Bankroft & Co, San Francisco Publishers, San Francisco.

1886 (b) History of California. Vol.2 1801-1824. The History Company Publishers, San Francisco.

BARON, S.H.

1985 Shipbuilding and Seafaring in Sixteenth Century Russia. *In Essays in Honor of A.A. Zimin.* Slavica, Columbus, Ohio.

BARRATT, GLYNN

1977 Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825. University of British Columbis Press, Vancouver.

BELOGLAZOVA, S.B.

1998 Is istorii Morskogo obrazovaniia v Sibiri I na Dal'nem Vostoke: navigackie shkoly XVIII veka [From the history of the naval education in Siberia and Far East: navigation schools in the XVIII century], *Historical-Cultural Contacts between Aborigines of the Pacific Coast of North Western America and North Eastern Asia.* Russian Academy of Science, Vladivostok, pp. 86-97.

BELOV, M.I.

1956 *Arkticheskoe moreplavanie s drevneishikh vremen do serediny XIX veka* [Arctic seafaring from the ancient times until the middle of the XIX century] Morskoi transport, Moscow.

1980 *Mangazeia:Mangazeiskii Morskoi Khod* [Mangazeia: Mangazeia's Seafaring], Gidrometeoizdat, Leningrad.

BLACK, LYDIA

1983 Record of Maritime Disasters in Russian America, Part One:1741-1799. *Proceedings of the Alaskan Marine Archeology Workshop: May 17-19, 1983.* Alaska Sea Grant College Press, Fairbanks, Alaska, pp 43-55.

1984 Atka: An Ethnohistory of the Western Aleutians, Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

*1991* Opening up Siberia: Russia's "window on the East," in *The History of Siberia: from Russian Conquest to Revolution*, ed. by Alan Wood.Routledge. London and New York, pp 57-68.

*1992* "Promyshlenniki...who were they?" *Bering and Chirikov: the American voyages and their impact.* Ed. by O.W. Frost. Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage, Alaska, pp 279-290.

2004 Russians in Alaska 1732-1867. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks, Alaska.

BURWELL, MICHAEL

1999 The Steamer Politkofsky. *The Sea Chest, Journal of Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society.* 32(3), March. Seattle.

DEARMOND, ED

1981 *Lady Franklin Visits Sitka, Alaska 1870. The Journal of Sophia Cracroft, Sir John Franklin's Niece.*Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage.

DMYTRISHYN, B.

1991 "The Administation Apparatus of the Russian Colony in Siberia and Northern Asia, 1581-1700" in *The History of Siberia From Russian Conquest to Revolution*, ed. by Alan Wood, Routledge: London and New York.

ESSIG, E.O.

1991 *The Russian Settlement at Ross. Fort Ross:California Outpost of Russian Alaska 1812-1841.* Ed. by Richard A. Pierce. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario, pp. 5-25.

FEDOROVA, S.G.

1973 *The Russian Population in Alaska and California, Late 18th Century -1867.* Trans. By R.A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly. The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario:Fairbanks, Alaska.

1978 *Problemii Istorii I Etnografii Ameriki (Russkaia Amerika I Tot'ma V Sud'be Ivana Kuskova).* Trans. By Stephen Watrous. Nauka, Moscow.

GAZENKO, V.N.

2000 *Voennyi parusnyi korabli Rossii* [Naval Sailing Vessels of Russia], Astrel', Moscow.

GOLDER, F.A.

1960 *Russian Expansion on the Pacific 1641-1850.* The Arthur & Clark Company, Cleveland.

GIBSON, J.R.

1976 *Imperial Russia in Frontier America: the Changing Geography of Supply of Russian America, 1784-1867.* Oxford University Press, New York.

1986 Tsarist Russia in colonial America: critical constraints. *The History of Siberia. From Russian conquest to Revolution.* Ed. by Alan Wood. Routledge, London.

1992 a Supplying the Kamchatka Expeditions, 1725-30 and 1733-42. In *Bering and Chirikov: the American Voyages and their Impact.* Ed. by O.W. Frost. Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage, Alaska, pp 90-116.

1992b *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods. The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841.* University of Washington Press, Seattle.

HUNCZAK, T., Ed.
1974 *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution.* Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

KEMBLE, JOHN H.
1935 First Steam Vessel to Navigate San Francisco Bay, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 14(2), June, pp 143-146.

KLYUCHEVSKY, VASILII
1961 *Peter the Great.* Trans. Liliana Archibald. Vintage Books, New York.

LEBEDINCEV, A.I.
1999 "Nachalo osvoeniia russkimi zemleprohodcami severnogo poberezhia Ohotskogo moria," [The Beginning of the Russian pioneers' exploration of the North coast of the Okhostk Sea] *Istoria, Arkheologiia i Etnographiia Severo-Vostoka Rossii. Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk*: Magadan.

MAKAROVA, RAISA
1975 *Russians on the Pacific 1743-99.* The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

MALLOY, M.
1997 *"Boston Men" on the Northwest Coast: The American Maritime Fur Trade 1788-1844.* The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.

MAZOUR, ANATOLE
1944 The Russian American Company: Private or Government Enterprise, *Pacific Historical Review*, XII June, 1944, 168-73.

OGDEN, ADELE
1976 *The California Sea Otter Trade 1784-1848.* University of California Press, Berkeley.

OKUN, S.B.
1951 *The Russian-American Company.* Harward University Press, Cambridge.

PIERCE, R.A.
1968 New Light on Ivan Petrov, Historian of Alaska. *Pacific Northest Quarterly* 59(1) January, University of Washington Press, Seattle, pp1-11.
1972 *Alaskan Shipping, 1867-1878. Arrivals and Departures at the Port of Sitka.*
1983 Record of Maritime Disasters in Russian America, Part Two: 1800-1867. *Proceedings of the Alaskan Marine Archaeology Workshop, May 17-19, 1983.* Sea Grant College, Fairbanks, Alaska.

1984 *The Russian-American Company, Correspondence of the Governors, Communications Sent: 1818.*The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.
1986 *Builders of Alaska: The Russian Governors 1818-1867.* The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario.
1990 *Russian America: A Bibliographical Dictionary.* The Limestone Press, Kingston, Ontario

PIETSCH, ULRICH

1982 *Die Lübecker Seeschiffahrt vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit.* Museum fur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte der Hansestadt Lübeck, Lübeck.

POKROVSKII, A., ED.

1941 *Ekspeditsiia Beringa (Sbornik dokumentov)* [Bering's Expedition:documents], Glavnoe Arkhivnoe Upravlenie NKVD SSSR, Moscow.

SOLOVJEVA, KATERINA

1991 Fortified Structures of the Russian-American Company. Bering and Chirikov: The American Voyages and Their Impact, Ed. by O.W. Frost. Alaska Historical Society, Anchorage.

SPASSKII, I.D.

1994 *Istoriia Otechestvennogo Sudostroeniia, v.1: Parusnoe Sudostroenie IX-XX vekov* [History of the Russian Shipbuilding, v.1: Sailing Shipbuilding IX-XX centuries], Sudostroenie, St.Petersburg.

VERNADSKY, G.

1969 *A History of Russia, Vol.V. The Tsardom of Moscow 1547-1682.* Yale University Press, New Haven and London.

VINKOVETSKY, ILYA

2000 Circumnavigation, Empire, Modernity, Race: The Impact of Round-the-world Voyages on Russia's Imperial Consciousness. *Meeting of Frontiers Conference*, Fairbanks, Alaska, May 17-19, 2001. Proceedings on-line www.loc.gov/rr/european/mofc/vinkovetsky.html

**Dissertations and theses:**

COPPER, DIANE E.
1993 From Small ways to Big Business, Ship Construction on the United States's Pacific Coast, 1850-1900. MA Thesis, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

ALLAN, JAMES M.
1994 *Fort Ross Cove: Historical and Archaeological Research to Identify the Remains of California's First Shipyard.* MA Thesis, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina.

SAFARIN, WINSTON, L.
1970 Russian-American Company Employee Policies and Practicies, 1799-1867. PhD Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles.

# APPENDIX: CATALOG OF THE SHIPS OF THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN COMPANY

1. Ships built in colonial yards:

***Ioann Predtecha* (John Forerunner)**

The ship was built in Okhotsk in 1768 for the company of Popov and Peloponisov. In 1779 she was purchased by the Golikov & Shelikhov Company (Pavlov 1957:12). The tonnage, dimensions and type are not known. Shelikhov used the vessel for trading in the Fox and Pribilof Islands. Shelikhov's establishment there, Predtechenskaia Company, was named after the ship (Tikhmenev 1978: 37, Makarova 1975:85). She wrecked on St. Paul Island in the autumn of 1791, allegedly due to a mistake by the navigator Shirokov. Survivors and part of the cargo were delivered to Okhotsk aboard the *Sv. Simeon* in 1794 (Tikhmenev 1978:37).

***Arkhistratig Mikhail* (Archangel Michael)**

This vessel was a galiot, built in Okhotsk in 1781 (Tikhmenev 1978:12, Pavlov 1957:20). No construction details are available. The ship conducted at least four voyages to America in 1783-1789 (Olesov), 1790-1792 (Bocharov), 1792-1794 (unknown), 1800 (Mukhoplev) (Black and Desson 1986: 18, 19). On its last voyage the *Arkhistratig Mikhail* sailed from Okhotsk for Unalaska and Kad'iak with supplies and twenty-seven workers. The captain Mukhoplev and his mate failed to set the correct course and ran aground near Bolsheretsk. The survivors repaired the vessel during the winter and after a two-month voyage arrived at Unalaska, where the ship was "driven ashore by a violent

wind" (Tikhmenev 1978:63). The *Arkhistratig Mikhail* wrecked, but part of the cargo was rescued (Pavlov 1957:20, Tikhmenev 1978:63).

### *Tri Sviatitelia* (Three Bishops)

This vessel was a galiot, built in Okhotsk and armed with five 2.5-pound cannons (Shelikhov 1981:36,39, Tikhmenev 1978:12). She sailed to America in 1783-1786 under G.Izmailov, in 1787-1789 under Delarov, Izmailov and Bocharov, and in 1790 under Bocharov (Black and Desson 1986: 16, 17,18). During the last voyage the crew encountered a shortage of water due to leaky barrels and attempted to land on Unalsaka. Bocharov entered Kasheega Bay on September 27, 1790 and anchored there. On October 1, a severe storm broke from the north and threw the ship on a reef (Ramsay 1976:101, Black 1983:49). The survivors, among whom was Aleksandr Baranov, built three baidaras, two of which set out to explore "the north shore of Alaska Peninsula" (Tikhmenev 1978:29), the third sailed to Kodiak, where it arrived on 27 July 1791.

### *Severnyi Orel* (Northern Eagle)

The *Severnyi Orel* was built by James Shields in Okhotsk in 1791 or earlier (Tikhmenev 1978:33). In 1791 she sailed from Okhotsk to Kodiak carrying materials to build a ship and Shields himself. Later the ship was actively engaged in colonial trade and exploration, including a survey of Chil'kat Bay on Sitka (Baranov) Island. She wrecked on Suklia (Montague) Island in August 1799 on a return voyage from Yakutat to Kodiak under navigator Talin (Tikhmenev 1978:59, Black and Desson 1986: 18-19).

### *Tri Ierarkha* (Three Bishops)

This vessel was built between1791 and 1794 in Okhotsk. She had two decks and was 63 feet long. In August of 1794 the ship left Okhotsk for Kodiak, with the first religious mission aboard. *Tri Ierarkha* remained at Baranov's disposition until 1796, when during a return trip from Yakutat to Kodiak she was "overtaken by a violent storm and driven ashore in Kamyshak Bay, with the loss of two men and two women, and much of the cargo, which consisted of furs and other goods "(Tikhmenev 1978:45). In 1797 Baranov tried to repair her, but this proved to be impossible, and the ship was burned for iron (Tikhmenev 1979:29).

***Sv. Simeon***

*Sv. Simeon* was a galiot, built before 1783, probably in Okhotsk. No construction details are known. The ship completed three voyages from Okhotsk to the American settlements (1783-1794, 1794-1798,1798-99) (Black and Desson 1986: 17, 19, 20), and wrecked on St. Paul Island, without loss of crew or cargo (Tikhmenev 1978:59).

***Sv. Ekaterina***

This vessel was probably built in Okhotsk in 1793. She was 51 feet long, and had 1 deck (Tikhmenev 1978:36,64, 74). The ship was actively engaged in colonial trade and the conflicts with natives in 1801, and remained in service until 1812, when according to the company's documents she was "disassembled" at an unknown location (Pavlov 1957:20).

***Dobroe Predpriiatis Sv. Aleksandry* (Good Enterprise of St. Aleksandra)**

Built in Okhotsk in 1794, the ship was originally owned by the wife of Grigorii Shelikhov, Natalia Shelikhova, who sold her to the company in 1797 for 70,000 rubles

(Tikhmenev 1978:49, 51). In 1802 she wrecked at the mouth of the Urak River, Kamchatka (Tikhmenev 1978:64).

***Sv. Apostoly Petr I Pavel I Chudotvorets Nikolai* (Apostles Peter and Paul and Nikolas, the miracle worker)**

The only information available about the ship is the tentative place and date of her wrecking. The ship was lost in the autumn of 1797 on the coast of Kamchatka (Tikhmenev 1978:51).

***Sv. Dimitrii***

This ship was built in Okhotsk in 1799, no construction details are known (Tikhmenev 1978:59). She was in the service of Shelikhov's company until her wrecking on Umnak Island en route from Okhotsk to Kodiak in October of 1803 (Tikhmenev 1978:68-69, Pierce 1983:60).

***Feniks (Phoenix)***

Described as a three-masted frigate with two decks, 73 feet in length, 23 feet in beam, 79 feet on deck, 21 feet in depth from the keelson to the upper deck, the *Feniks* was built in Voskresenskaia Gavan' (Resurrection Bay) by the British employee of the Russian-American Company James George Shields. In place of iron, pitch, paint and oakum, needed for caulking and painting Baranov invented a composition of fir pitch, ochre and whale blubber. Completed in September 1794, the frigate became the first Russian ship entirely built in America (Pierce 1990: 462-463). Under the command of her builder, George Shields, the vessel ventured North Pacific waters until the fall of 1799, when she

perished en route from Okhotsk to Kodiak, taking the lives of 88 men including the newly consecrated bishop Ioasaf (Tikhmenev 1978:59). The loss of the ship was attributed to an epidemic outbreak among her crew. The exact location of the loss was never determined. She was last sighted on October 28 near Unalaska. At the end of May 1800, pieces of wreckage washed ashore on Kodiak Island. In the autumn of the same year, the ship's rudder was discovered near Sitka. Wax candles, barrels and leather bindings of the liturgical books were collected in various settlements of Russian America (Bearne 1978: 174-175). There are two depictions of the ship by James Shields: a watercolor of the Voskresenskaia shipyards with the frigate still on the slips entitled *A view of the buildings of the Voskresenskaia Gavan'* and dated 1795(Figure 9), and a watercolor *View of launching the frigate Feniks in the Voskresenskaia Gavan' in 1794* (Black 2004:146).

***Ol'ga***

40-ft long one-master with 1 deck, sometimes identified as a cutter, built of fir by James Shields in 1795, either at Resurrection shipyards (Tikhmenev 1978:33), or on Spruce Island (Pierce 1983:60). She was in company's service until 1804, when the "dilapidated" ship was burnt at Yakutat to celebrate the conclusion of peace with the local native people (Tikhmenev 1978:74, 521).

***Del'fin* (Dolphin)**

A sister-ship of the *Ol'ga*, the *Del'fin* was completed by Shields in 1795 in the same yards. In 1795, commanded by Shields, she surveyed the shores between L'tua Bay and

the Queen Charlotte Islands. How she ended her career is not known, but by 1804 she was no longer on the list of company vessels (Tikhmenev 1978:69).

***Rostislav***

The *Rostislav* was a 41 foot long, 85 ton vessel built by Kiskov in 1804 in Yakutat, with the iron from burnt *Ol'ga* and also utilizing the "rotten ropes" from this vessel, "with tree roots and whale bone mixed in with the hemp for greater durability" (Tikhmenev 1978:74). The *Rostislav* was loaned to Captain D'Wolf in 1805 for transporting furs off the *Juno*, recently acquired by the company, to Canton (Pierce 1990:130). The further career of the ship is not known. Representation: *Sketch of Novo-Arkhangelsk* by Lisanskii, 1805 (Black 2004:163, Figure 20).

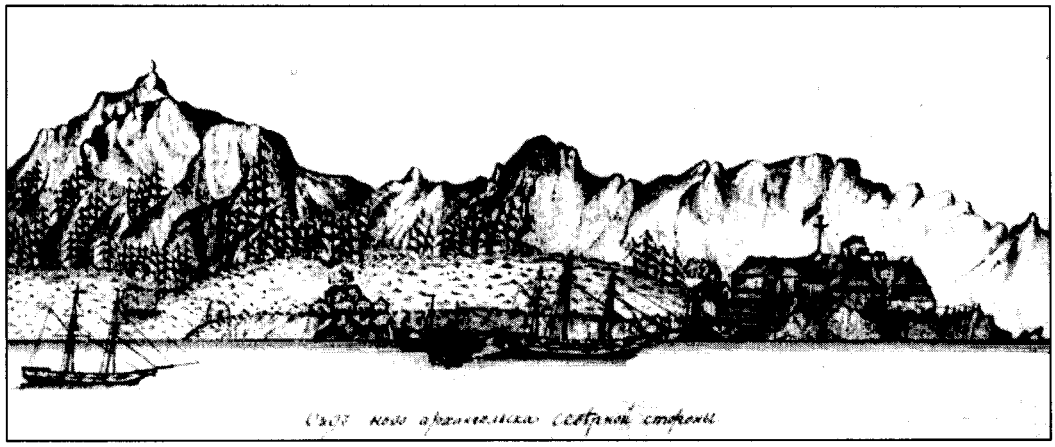

Figure 22. Sketch of Novo-Arkhangelsk by Lisanskii, 1805 (Black 2004:163)

The three-masted ship is the *Neva*, the two-masters are the *Ermak* and *Rostislav*.

***Ermak***

The Ermak (52 feet in length, 100 tons) was built by Kuskov in Yakutat of local timber and iron from the *Ol'ga* (Tikhmenev 1978:74). In 1805 she was traded in addition to $65,000 for the Captain D'Wolf's ship *Juno.* Representation: *Sketch of Novo-Arkhangelsk* by Lisanskii, 1805 (Black 2004:163, Figure 20).

***Sv. Petr i Pavel* (St. Peter and Paul)**

This vessel was built in Okhotsk in 1801(Tikhmenev 1978:59). Dimensions and tonnage are not specified. Immediately after launching she was ordered to deliver a government cargo from Okhotsk to Kamchatka. The ship wintered there and sailed to the colonies during the next season. After 8 years in service, the vessel was turned into a warehouse, probably in Okhotsk (Pavlov 1957:21). Peculiarly, *Sv. Petr i Pavel* is not mentioned in Tikhmenev's list of company vessels in 1803 (Tikhmenev 1978:69).

***Zakhatiia i Elizaveta***

This two-master of 150 tons was built in Okhotsk in 1802 (Tikhmenev 1978:59). The *Zakhatiia i Elizaveta* made an impression on the Russian naval officer Davydov, who traveled aboard the ship in 1802: "the ship had been built of wood felled in winter, and that all the rigging, the blocks and other mechanical equipment seemed to have been manufactured specially to increase our troubles, not to lessen them. I honestly could not imagine that with the art of navigation at the stage of present development, such bad ships as those in Okhotsk could exist!" (Davydov 1977:82). In 1804 Nikolia Khvostov assumed command of the ship and took her to Okhotsk for the dispatch of rich cargo of

furs (Tikhmenev 1978:68). The ship was lost in 1805 on her return voyage from Kodiak to Novo-Arkhangelsk under Midshipman Karpinskii off Cape Tonkii, Kodiak Island (Tikhmenev 1978:95, Bearne 1978: 160-161).

***Sv. Kniaz Aleksandr Nevskii*** *(St. Prince Alexander Nevskii)*

This two-masted brig of 115 tons was built in Okhotsk in 1802 (Tikhmenev 1978:59, 69). The ship had a very active career sailing under navigator Vasilii Petrov to different colonial settlements as both a cargo vessel and an instrument of intimidation of the native population (Tikhmenev 1979:142,149). In 1807 she was re-timbered in Novo-Arkhangelsk. The brig wrecked in the Kurile Islands in 1813 while proceeding under navigator Petrov from Russian America to Okhotsk with a cargo of Chinese and American goods (Tikhmenev 1978:149, Pavlov 1957:21).

***Sv. Mariia Magdalina***

Built in Okhotsk in 1804, the *Sv. Mariia Magdalina* failed to impress Nikolai Rezanov, who boarded the ship in the summer of 1805 and left the following description of her performance:

> After leaving Unalashka, July 25th, I arrived safely on Kodiak on the 31st. A severe wind near Ugak the day before demonstrated to us the hopelessness of the new ship Sv. Mariia. The bowsprit, about 30 feet long, was fastened to the ship only to the length of three feet three inches. Heavy seas broke it off along with the stem and we were obliged in quite windy weather to take off the top mast and with great pains entered Chiniak Bay. Such is the shipbuilding at Okhotsk. The ignorance of the shipbuilders there and shameless robbery by company representatives produces worthless ships that cost more than ships built anywhere else. After staying on Kodiak for three weeks waiting for this newest and supposedly best company ship, on its maiden voyage to America, to be repaired, I sailed August 20th and arrived at

> New Archangel the same month on the 26th in a little over five days. Do not attribute this speed to the good qualities of the ship. Luck was with us; we had only the most favorable wind. If we had sailed from Kamchatka on a raft instead of a ship in weather like we had, we would have reached this place just the same (Letter, Rezanov to the directors of the Russian-American Company, from NA, November 6, 1805 Tikhmenev 1979: p. 153)."

The ship made regular voyages to Okhotsk and was lost in 1816 at the mouth of the Okhota River. Due to the strong contrary winds the vessel was unable to enter the port for several days. The captain dropped an anchor, but the wind drove the ship out to sea and the captain cut the cables and ran her aground.

**Konstantin**

Built in Okhotsk in 1804 and sometimes identified as a cutter (Tikhmenev 1978:59, 520), almost nothing is known about the *Konstantin's* career except that she was still in service in 1816 (Pavlov 1957:22).

***Avos'* (Forward)**

This vessel was a tender built by Koriukin and Popov in Sitka in 1806 and armed with 8 unspecified guns. In summer of the same year following confusing instructions of the Count Rezanov, the *Avos'* sailed to the northern Japanese Islands, where its crew plundered the local Japanese villages. On its last voyage under Captain Sukin in 1808, the ship was carrying cargo and dispatches when she wrecked near Unalaska Island (Tikhmenev 1978:147).

***Sitkha***

This two-masted brig was built by the American shipwright Lincoln in Novo-Arkhangelsk out of local cypress (Tikhmenev 1978:147). Although she gained the

highest compliments of the company officials along with a bonus of 2000 rubles for her builder, the *Sitkha*'s career was short. After a stop in Kodiak on her route from Sitka to Okhotsk, she encountered contrary winds and was forced to land in Petropavlovsk (Bearne 1978:163, 186), where the company commissioner unloaded the furs, loaded the *Sitkha* again with the goods imported from Canton, and sent her to Nizhne-Kamchatsk. Upon entering the mouth of the Kamchatka River, she hit a shoal, "rolled over on its side and just as the crew had succeeded in abandoning the ship, was blown to sea by a strong wind" (Tikhmenev 1978:147).

***Chirikov***

A schooner of 120 tons, the *Chirikov* was built in Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1809 by Lincoln. The *Chirikov* was actively engaged in colonial trade and provisioning. In 1820 the schooner was repaired in Sitka (Arndt 2003:19). She was turned into a storehouse in Sitka by April 25, 1825 (Arndt 2003:40).

***Otkrytie (Discovery)***

This 3-masted brigantine of 306 tons was built by Lincoln in Sitka in 1809, and armed with 4 three-pound cannons (Tikhmenev 1978:148, Pierce 1990:310, 1984:32). In 1816 Lieutenant Podushkin took her to Monterey. In October of 1818 the brigantine undertook a voyage to Hawaiian Islands (Pierce 1984:26-30). The *Otkrytie* was still active in May 1822 (Arndt 2003:37), but her further career is not clear.

***Finlandia***

This 150-ton brig was built in Okhotsk in 1809 to replace the lost *Mariia Magdalina.* In the summer of 1818 a murder occurred , "of which in the opinion of the officers there, retired navigator' mate Demidov, then commander of that vessel, cannot cleanse himself of suspicion" (Pierce 1984: 77). The entire crew was sent to Okhotsk for investigation (Pierce 1984:11). The ship received new masts and deck boards in April of 1818. (Pierce 1984:87). In 1820 the ship underwent further repair in Sitka (Arndt 2003:19) In the spring of 1828 she went on her last voyage carrying lumber to Atka and Unalaska accompanied by the *Volga.* Chief manager P.E. Chistiakov wrote regarding this mission: "due to their conditions those vessels would be reduced to remaining here as an irretrievable loss, but there, due to the shortage of timber, a vessel's hull and masts and spars will furnish great benefit" (Arndt 2003:45). Representation: Plavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29, Figure 23).

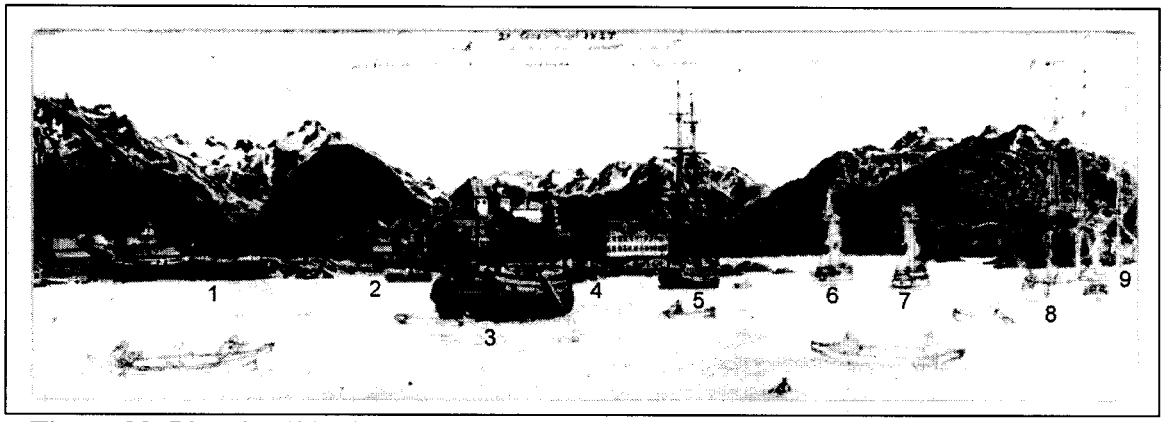


Figure 23. Plavel Mikhailov, View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827 (Arndt 2003:29). Across the top of the watercolor are written the names of the vessels depicted

1- beached Ametist (Amethyst), 2 – Baranov, 3-Buldakov, 4-Fortuna, 5 – Chichagov, 6-Kiakhta, 7 – Finlandiia, 8- Okhotsk, 9-Volga.

### *Rumiantsev*

*Rumiantsev* was a brigantine built by Grudinin in Fort Ross in 1818, also referred to as "galiot". The evidence regarding her tonnage is contradictory. Litke states that she had 80-ton cargo capacity, while Khlebnikov rates her at 160-ton displacement (Khlebnikov 1861:116). She was built of Californian oak, probably unseasoned, explaining the rapid rate of timber decomposition. The ship sailed under the command of Lieutenant Livoron, until 1823 when she was abandoned in Sitka (Alan 1996:38).

### *Baranov*

*Baranov* was a schooner, or cutter of 30 tons, built in Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1818 (Tikhmenev 1978:150, 519). In 1821, under the command of Khromchenko, the *Baranov* surveyed Hagemeister Strait and Norton Sound (Tikhmenev 1978:176). Representation: Pavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29), which shows the *Baranov* still in the water. By 1831 the ship is not present on the list of colonial vessels (Arndt 1002:59-60). Representation: Plavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29, Figure 23).

### *Platov*

The *Platov* was a schooner of 30 tons, built in Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1818 (Tikhmenev 1978:150), also identified as cutter and "longboat". Very little is known about the vessel, except that she was probably abandoned by the beginning of 1826, when Chief Manager P.E. Chistiakov informed the Main Office that: "In the time of my predecessor the galiot

*Rumiantsev*, longboat *Platov*, and some oar-propelled vessels were excluded from capital due to their dilapidation. On assuming my position, I ordered both vessels to be razed and used for firewood" (Arndt 2003:41).

***Buldakov***

This vessel was a 200-ton copper-sheathed brig built by Grudinin in Fort Ross and launched in 1820 (Bancroft 1886:640, Tikhmenev 1978:228). The ship was actively employed for colonial services, bringing grain from California, and sailing with various tasks between the settlements of Russian America. In 1822, Chief Manager Chistiakov took the brig for an inspection of Unalaska and the Pribilof Islands (Arndt 2003:37). In 1826 the ship was deemed unseaworthy and was turned into a storage facility (Khlebnikov 1976:116). Representation: Plavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29, Figure 23).

***Volga***

The *Volga* was a brig of 160 tons, built by Grudinin in Fort Ross and launched in 1822. She was 60 feet long with pine frames and laurel (cedar) hull planking (Tikhmenev1978:228, Bancroft 1886:640). The ship frequently sailed between Sitka and California, supplying the colonies. In 1827 the ship's career at sea was over and the company sent her to Unalaska to be used as a storage vessel for lumber (Khlebnikov 1976:117). Representation: Plavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29, Figure 23).

***Kiakhta***

The Kiakhta was a brig of 200 tons, built by Grudinin of fir with oak sternpost and keel, and launched in 1824 (Khlebnikov 1976:117). In 1832 she was hauled ashore, roofed and turned into a storehouse (Arndt 2003:73) in Novo-Arkhangelsk (RAC 1843:32, Tikhmenev 1978:210). Representation: Plavel Mikhailov's *View of Novo-Arkhangelsk, September 21, 1827* (Arndt 2003:29, Figure 23) and *Delineatio oppidi Novi-Archangelscensis*, which dates between 1837 and 1840 shows the location of the *Kiakhta* at the time when she was used as a port facility (Arndt 2003:90).

***Unalaska***

A tender with single deck built in Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1827, no information about this vessel's tonnage is known (Tikhmenev 1978:208). This type of vessel was particularly useful for Aleut hunting parties. She was re-sheathed and caulked in 1831 (Arndt 2003:62). In 1835 the tender delivered four Japanese shipwreck survivors to Iturup Island (Tikhmenev 1978:339). By 1842, she was being used as a warehouse in Sitka (Russian-American Company 1843:32)

***Sivuch* (Sea Lion)**

The *Sivuch* was built in 1827 or later in Novo-Arkhangelsk on the same plan as the *Unalaska, Bobr, Karluk* and *Aleut.* She was used as a hunting boat until 1831 when she wrecked on Atka and was broken up for iron and wood "for local needs" (Tikhmenev 1978:209-210).

***Karluk***

The *Karluk* was built in 1827 or later on the same plan as the *Unalaska, Bobr, Sivuch* and *Aleut.* She was used for hunting parties and other needs on Kodiak. In 1830 while en route to Katmai the tender was overtaken by a storm and wrecked in Uganak Bay on the northwest side of Kodiak Island. Both cargo and crew were saved (Tikhmenev 1978:209).

***Bobr* (Beaver)**

The Bobr was built after 1827, but before the spring of 1831 in Novo-Arkhangelsk on the same plan as the *Unalaska, Sivuch, Karluk* and *Aleut.* By 1842 she was being used as a port facility (Russian-American Company 1843:32).

***Urup***

The *Urup* was a 300-ton three-master built in Novo-Arkhangelsk in 1829, sometimes identified as sloop (Tikhmenev 1978:209). In 1838 she was used as a platform for steam boiler assembly for the steamer *Nikolai I* (Arndt 2003:85). Representation: *Delineatio oppidi Novi-Archangelscensis*, which dates between 1837 and 1840, and shows the location of the *Urup* at the time when she was used as a grain storage facility (Arndt 2003:90).

***Aleut***

The *Aleut* was a tender of unknown tonnage with one deck, built on the same plan as the *Unlaska* (Tikhmenev 1978:208), and finished in Novo-Arkhangelsk in spring of 1831. The vessel underwent extensive repair in 1836 (Arndt 2003:83). By 1842 she was used as a port facility, probably in Sitka (Russian-American Company 1843:32).

***Aktsiia***

This 50-ton schooner was built in Okhotsk in 1829 (Tikhmenev 1978:209). From 1829 until 1831, under the command of the Creole navigator Klimovskii, the ship surveyed Shantar Islands (Tikhmenev 1978:186). By 1842 she was serving as a storage facility at an unknown location (RAC 1843:32).

***Polifem***

*Polifem* was a 180-ton brig, built in Okhotsk in 1830 (Tikhmenev 1978:209). In 1838 the brig accompanied the northern expedition which charted the coast of the Beaufort Sea. At the end of its career, the ship became a storage facility in Novo-Arkhangelsk (Russian-American Company 1843:32). Representation: shown as a hulk in the bay west of Castle Hill in Sitka on the *Plan of Novo-Arkhangelsk, the Principal Port of the Russian-American Company, 1845* ( Russian-American Company 1845: insert).

***Sitka***

This 230-ton sloop was built in Okhotsk in 1831(Tikhmenev 1978:209). In 1836 the vessel, commanded by Captain-Lieutenant Mit'kov, undertook a trading voyage to Chile, where the Russians sold timber and purchased salt and flour (Tikhmenev 1978:219). In

1841 her masts were removed and she became a storage facility for Novo-Arkhangelsk (Arndt 2003:113).

### *Nikolai I*

The *Nikolai I* was the first paddle-wheel steamer of the Russian-American Company, built by American mechanic Edward Moore. The 60-horsepower crosshead steam engine for the *Nikolai I* was purchased in either Boston or New York (Burwell 1999: 104-105). The keel was laid on June 5, 1838 in Novo-Arkhangelsk. She was 132 feet long along the deck and 120 along the keel, 20ft wide across the deck and 40 feet of total width including the side projections (Sic!) (Arndt 2003:85). She was used chiefly for trade with native settlements around Novo-Arkhangelsk and for towing ships in and out of Sitka harbor. In 1852 the *Nikolai I* was disassembled and one year later her engine was placed on a new vessel under the same name (Burwell 1999:109). Representation: *Steamer Nikolai I*, drawing by N. Voznesenskii, 1843 (Alekseev 1987:50, Figure 12).