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by

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for

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## FORT ROSS

Still among the remains of old Fort Ross there seems to linger a memory of those strong men who once dwelt there. Uncomplaining, they endured exile, and fearless they and their sea-hardened, skillful hunters, the Aleuts, risked life and limb on hostile shores and waters in pursuit of the elusive black otter. They were drawn inevitably and irresistibly southward after the two things necessary to their success: food and furs. California promised both.

As early as 1803, the Russian-American Company had entered into contracts with Boston sea captains, such as Joseph O'Call, to hunt for otter along the California coasts. The Russians provided the hunters and equipment, while the Bostonians used their ships and pitted their wits against the suspicious Spanish officials.<sup>1</sup> Profits were usually divided equally. These expeditions proved to the company that the northern coast of New Spain was a rich field for exploitation. The glowing reports of rich furs and grazing land, warm climate, and a practically virgin territory for hunting were brought back to Sitka. Many a long winter's evening was

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1. A. Ogden, "Russian sea-otter and seal hunting on the California coast, 1803-1841," in *California Historical Society Quarterly* III, 3:217-220.

probably spent speculating over a possible outpost in California. The Spaniard was weak and the resources were there - why not move south?

Early in spring, 1806, supplies had run very short at Sitka, or Novo-Arkhangelsk as it was then called. No relief could be expected for at least several months. Thus it was that Nikolai Petrovich Rezanof, a high official in the Russian-American Company, decided under the desperate circumstances to start for California. Bread or wheat had to be obtained at all costs. The ship Junona, or June, was fitted out, and a miserable, gaunt, half-starved crew, the best to be had, found to man her. The hardships of that voyage were terrible. Scarcely had they got well out to sea when the weakened men were attacked by scurvy. Soon only about half were able to tend the sails. The condition of the crew made Rezanof look for some port in which to stop.

The nearest anchorage was the Columbia River. It was a difficult landing place, and the men were able only with difficulty to keep their feet, but fresh vegetables and meat had to be found. As the green, tree-studded coast neared it must have seemed like a veritable heaven to the aching eyes of the sick men. However, harsh fortune would not allow the Russians such quick relief from their sufferings. In spite of their brave but feeble efforts the raging wind and strong current would not allow them to cast anchor. Baffled, Rezanof turned

once more out to sea, and sailed to the south.<sup>2</sup>

A month passed by, when hope once more looked before them. San Francisco Bay was sighted by the lookouts. Rezanof felt that it was impossible to go any farther down the coast. On the other hand, to enter San Francisco was a difficult feat. The Spaniards were exceedingly suspicious of foreign ships, for constant smuggling and the wiles of the Boston sea captains had made them wary. A permit, which was customarily obtained before entering, would in all probability be refused or indefinitely delayed. One thing remained, and that was to go in - under the guns of the fort - without asking for authorization. Hence, with the coolness of a born gambler or statesman, Rezanof set the ship's course for the harbor. At once all was activity at the Spanish fort. When the Junona came within hearing distance, commands were shouted to drop anchor. Rezanof had the men begin arranging the gear and appear as if they were trying to drop anchor. Meanwhile he shouted back as respectfully as possible, "Si senor! Si senor!" Each time the command came, Rezanof answered, "Si senor!" When finally they were out of reach of the fort's guns, the anchor was dropped. For the

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2. P. Fikhmanef, Istoricheskoi obozrenie obrazovaniia Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 146.

moment they were safe, but what the outcome might be remained to be seen.

Immediately, Senor Don Luis de Arguello, who was acting commander of the fort in the absence of his father, had himself rowed out to the Junona. Rezanof met him with all the courtesy and tact possible to that wily Russian. After an exchange of the usual formalities, Rezanof told Don Luis that he was proceeding to Monterey, but that violent winds and necessary ship repairs had forced him to enter the first possible port. Furthermore, Rezanof pointed out, he was the person about whom they probably had been informed by the Spanish government. Although Don Luis was forced to admit that he had received no such communication, he courteously invited the plausible Rezanof and the ship's officers to his home. Also, he had fresh provisions sent to the ship, much to the relief and delight of the crew.

Rezanof was not a man to allow so golden an opportunity to slip through his fingers. As guest of the acting comandante much could be accomplished in the way of establishing relations with the California colony that could never be brought about by more impersonal formal negotiations. First of all he gave presents to Don Luis and to all the important persons at the fort in order to win their favor and to disprove the stories, spread by the Boston sea captains, that the Russian colonies were poverty stricken. Also, he expressed the desire to communicate with the governor, in order, if possible, to arrange for the mutual benefits possible to the two neighboring colonies. The immediate result of Rezanof's activities was that the ship was to be allowed to stock with all necessary provisions.

At first, circumstances took on a very favorable aspect for

the newcomers. Communication was sent to the governor at Monterey, and while the governor was unwilling for the Junona to continue to the capital, he promised to go to San Francisco. Another thing which buoyed up Rezanof was his conversations with the padres from the missions. In these he learned that an extensive trade was possible. Many provisions, extremely rare in Sitka, were raised in abundance at the missions and ranchos. Only trading privileges were needed. In fact, California food and climate were so desirable that they had their effects on the crew. Not only did all the sick recover, but some difficulty was experienced in keeping the sailors from deserting.

While waiting for the governor, Rezanof spent a good deal of his time in Senor Arguello's house. Not the least of the attractions was Senorita Concepcion Arguello, one of the lovely sisters of Don Luis. She was considered one of the most beautiful girls in California, and it was through her aid that the Russian cause gained the successes it did. Consequently, in the society of Senorita Concepcion, her sisters, and her friends, Rezanof and his officers had a very pleasant time, with the Russian diplomat becoming particularly attentive to his beautiful hostess.

Finally, on April 7, arrived Senor Don Jose de Arrillaga, the governor. Word had been continually reaching him about the well-mannered, delightful young Russian officers. Consequently, such good friends of the Arguellos

deserved, in His Excellency's opinion, the greatest of consideration. Hence, the day after his arrival, two missionaries went aboard the Jurons to invite Rezanof to an interview with the governor.

The padres were always objects of surprise to Rezanof. He was not quite used to the position and status which they held. When the two priests came, he hinted that at least an officer could have been sent, but they laughed away his prejudice and answered: "Come, come, are the holy fathers worse than officers?" On the way to the governor, Rezanof sounded out his friendly escorts on the subject of trade. They immediately became reticent, and explained that there had been rumors of war. Rezanof explained the impossibility of such a catastrophe in the near future, but notwithstanding, lest untoward accident should occur, he secretly sent back orders to the ship that no shore leaves were to be allowed. The precaution was unnecessary, however, as events later proved.

In his conversations with the governor, Rezanof received his first diplomatic check. The governor was well pleased with the Russian leader personally, but the rumors of war - for Napoleon was then involving the Spanish government in his tortuous policies - and the strict colonial regulations made the governor careful about making any embarrassing agreements with the Russians. Rezanof used logic, eloquence, and friendship, but to no avail. This continued for several days. In the meantime, he, through his connection with the Arguello family - probably principally through Senorita Concepcion - was constantly informed as to the governor's personal opinion and reasons as expressed privately.



However, even with this advantage, he was able to gain no other concession than that supplies could be bought only with money, and that trade in goods could not be allowed. Even that small gain gave promise of being lost, for a period of five days passed without anything being presented to the ship for purchase.<sup>3</sup>

When formal diplomacy seemed useless, Rezanof determined to try a more indirect, and very much more pleasant, procedure. He decided to pay court to Senorita Concepcion. Everything was in the young Russian's favor. Spring, his own romantic position, and glowing tales of the brilliant Russian court all worked together to win the heart of the girl. When he proposed, she accepted immediately. Difficulties soon arose for the lovers, for as he reported:<sup>4</sup>

My offer overwhelmed her parents... religious differences and future parting from their daughter were a thunderbolt to them. They appealed to the missionaries, who did not know what to do. They drove poor Concepcion to church, made her confess, tried to persuade her to refuse me, but her determination silenced all. The holy fathers left the matter up to the Pope, and though I was unable to see the marriage through...I insisted that we be officially affianced.

After Rezanof had established himself as the future husband

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3. Rezanof to the Directors of the Russian-American Company, February 26, 1806, in Tikhmenef, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, II, 233-264.

4. Rezanof to the Directors of the Russian-American Company, February 26, 1806, in Tikhmenef, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, II, 233-264

husband of Concepcion, he had no further trouble in obtaining his cargo. When once the trade was begun, so much came flowing in that the ship was soon filled and much had to be refused. More than 260 tons of goods - wheat, flour, barley, peas, beans, pork, and salt - were loaded, as well as 950 pounds of dried meat. The want at Sitka was thus relieved by the successful mission.

In May, 1806, Rezanof started for Sitka. For him that that was only the beginning of his journey, for he had to travel on to St. Petersburg in order to obtain the consent of the czar to his marriage to Concepcion. On the way, he fell ill and died. As for Senorita Concepcion, she stayed true to her lover's memory. Years she waited, but no word was heard. Bret Harte, the California poet, poignantly described her vigil:

Long beside the deep embrasure, where  
the brazen cannon are,  
Did she wait her promised bridegroom  
and the answer of the Czar;  
Watched the harbor head with longing,  
half in faith and half in doubt,  
Every day some hope was kindled, flickered  
faded and went out.

At length Concepcion, refusing all other suitors, in despair became a nun. Not for thirty-six years did she receive definite word of her lover, and then only to learn of his death. Bret Harte finishes his version of this story thus:

'Died while speeding home to Russia,  
falling from a fractious horse.  
Left a sweetheart, too, they tell me.  
Married, I suppose, of course!

'Lives she yet?' a deathlike silence fell on  
 banquet, guests, and hall,  
 And a trembling figure rising fixed the awe-  
 struck gaze of all.

Two black eyes in darkened orbits glistened  
 beneath the nun's white hood;  
 Black serge hid the wasted figure, bowed  
 and stricken where it stood.

'Lives she yet?' Sir George repeated. All  
 were hushed as Concha drew  
 closer yet her nun's attire. 'Senor, pardon,  
 she died, too!'

After Rezanof's successful venture, the Russians began serious consideration of establishing a settlement on the coasts of California. The head office of the Russian-American Company requested the Czar's government to obtain permission if possible from Madrid for it to trade with the California colony. Also, the company requested Alexander Baranof, its head in Sitka, to direct his efforts to that end. The Russian government informed the company shortly that it could get no answer from the Spanish foreign office; however, it advised the company to proceed if possible.<sup>5</sup>

Baranof dispatched Ivan Kusof, or pie de palo as the Spaniards called him because of his wooden leg, from Sitka in 1808 in the ship Kadiac to explore and hunt along the coast of California north of San Francisco in order to find a suitable place for a colony. Kusof explored Bodega Bay, and spent the rest of the season hunting otter. In 1810, Kusof again started for California, this time on board the Junona.

5. Tikhmanef, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 204-208

but was not able to establish a colony because of the hostility of the natives. The next year, he returned, and this time succeeded in passing part of the winter at the chosen spot and also purchasing the land from the natives for a few trifles while hunting once more for sea otter. In spring, 1812, he again returned to California, this time prepared to establish a permanent colony.

A strip of bare tableland two miles long and nearly a mile wide on the coast about eighteen miles from Bodega was selected. Work was begun on March 15, 1812. The fort was built on a cliff seventy feet above the beach. It was in the shape of a rectangle 300 by 280 feet. The walls were eight-inch redwood timbers, twelve feet high, mortised at the top into horizontal pieces and surmounted by iron spikes. At the northeast corner was an octagonal bastion twenty-five feet in diameter, two stories high and containing fourteen loopholes. At the opposite corner, on the southeast, was a similar structure, somewhat larger, with sixteen loopholes. In the northeast corner was the chapel, also provided with loopholes. Inside the stockade were the commandant's house, soldiers' and officers' barracks, kitchen, warehouses, and jail. Outside were blacksmith shop, tannery, boathouse, cooper's shop, bakery, carpenter's shop, mill for grinding flour, threshing floors, well, stable, sheepcote, dairy house, cow barns, hog pen, corral, sheds, baths, kitchens and houses for the Aleut Indians. When the fort was finished, in 1814, there was said to have been nine buildings

and a well within the enclosure and fifty buildings outside, the whole site containing about one thousand acres.<sup>6</sup>

On September 11, 1812, the czar's birthday, dedication services were conducted at Fort Ross. All ninety-five of the Russians and the eighty Aleut hunters were gathered together at the christening service under the direction of Kuskof. Toasts were drunk to the czar, and the new community began its official existence. Soon the routine of life settled over the fort. Cannons were inspected, reports made, business transacted, and disputes settled from day to day.

Two pursuits occupied the settlers at Ross: hunting and agriculture. Unfortunately, no very great success was had in either of these ventures. Sufficient time or men could not be devoted to obtaining fur-bearing animals, and besides, the Spaniards were adamant in refusing permission to hunt in San Francisco Bay. Undoubtedly, many times the company heads sighed for some enterprising, dashing young diplomat like Rezanof to solve the problem!

Agriculture fared no better. As a whole the Russians were not very skillful farmers, and no peasants were brought from

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6. E. O. Essig, "The Russian settlement at Ross," in the California Historical Society, Quarterly, XII, 3:191-192.

Russia to fill the needs. The Aleuts knew nothing about raising crops. Also, the farm implements were crude to the extreme. While some success was had in raising vegetables, the damp sea air and fog rusted the unacclimated wheat sown at Ross. Only about one-twentieth of a normal return was obtained at first. There was no intention to abandon Fort Ross, though, for it was so strategically located as to form an admirable base for expansion.<sup>7</sup>

Just before the dedication service, the Spaniards paid Ross a visit. News had constantly been coming to the commandante at San Francisco, Senor Arguello, about Russian activity to the north of San Francisco Bay. In particular, many reports of a ship, stranded long on the beach, were received. As a consequence, the commandante, becoming somewhat disturbed, sent Senor Moraga with seven men to investigate.<sup>8</sup>

Moraga was well received at Fort Ross. He was allowed to inspect the whole plant, and, although there was some difficulty getting good interpreters, friendly communication was carried on. Moraga asked Kuskof about the Russian reasons and intentions in establishing the post. Kuskof explained that Ross was to be used as a food base,

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7. Tikhmenev, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 209-212.

8. H. E. Bancroft, History of California, II, 299-300

And furthermore he pointed out the great benefits which the Californians would receive in trading with the Russians. Senor Moraga was polite and encouraging. He promised to spare no efforts toward obtaining the governor's acquiescence to the project, and after the proper formalities had been observed he and his men departed.

To Arguelle he reported his findings. The vessel in question, he stated, was a small schooner stranded or beached for repairs about eighteen miles above Bodega Bay. There were perhaps eighty men there under the command of Kuskof, he said, and all were in great want of food. The Russians had built a fort, protected by artillery, which apparently was intended as a permanent structure. Moraga was sent on to Monterey, where he made a personal report to the governor and further explained Kuskof's desire for trade.

Trade was indeed desired at Fort Ross. Supplies were running low and men were deserting. By January, 1813, welcome news came, for Moraga returned, bringing with him twenty head of cattle and three horses as gifts, and new hope and life to the little Russian settlement as well. He informed Kuskof that the governor had given his consent to commerce between the two colonies. However, pending official authorization, Russian vessels were not to enter San Francisco harbor. Goods would have to be transferred in small boats. Kusof was jubilant. Slobodchikof was

immediately dispatched to San Francisco to act as agent for the company. From then on, the exchange of commodities between the Russians and the California settlements was practically continuous.

Relations between the Russians at Fort Ross and the California authorities were never really cordial. The viceroy at Mexico City had heard quite early about the Russian activities. Consequently, in the summer of 1813, he wrote to Arrillaga, the governor, instructing him to observe closely the movements of the strangers and ascertain their designs. This, of course, had already been done. However, the viceroy was further concerned lest the Russians were in some manner connected with the Anglo-American advance on California. Such a suspicion might easily arise from the connection of the Boston sea captains and the Russian-American Company in searching for furs. Arrillaga sent the import of this message to Kuskof. Soon another letter arrived from the viceroy, who had received the reports written much earlier and had thus been acquainted with the true state of affairs. This second communication from Mexico pointed out that the occupation of Fort Ross was a clear violation of a recent treaty between Spain and Russia. Consequently, Kuskof was required to abandon the settlement at once. Kuskof did not give any answer to this communication. He insisted that he had no competent Spanish



interpreter in order properly to understand the document. Also, he sent a summary of it to Baranof at Sitka, explaining how he had solved the difficulty.<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1813 Governor Arrillaga died, and with him the Russians lost a friend and protector. Senor Jose de Arguello, who became the new governor, was not nearly so favorably inclined towards the settlement at Fort Ross. In fact, he officially demanded that Kuskof evacuate at once. Kuskof replied that he could take no important action before hearing from St. Petersburg. Relations were further strained by rumors that the Russians were planning to make a sudden attack on San Francisco. Fear and hysteria threatened at any moment to bring armed intervention. Shortly after the demand to dismantle Fort Ross was received, official notification was given that all foreigners were prohibited from trading with California. To make matters even worse, in 1815 Senor Pablo Vicente de Sola arrived from Mexico to become the new governor. Sola was even more hostile than Arguello.<sup>10</sup>

Soon trade and fur-hunting became totally disrupted for the Russians. Russian agents and hunters were arrested and clapped into jail at Monterey. Kuskof pro-

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9. Tikhmenof, Russiansko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 214.

10. Bancroft, California, II, 307.

tested. Sola threatened. Nevertheless, the prisoners continued to be held, and affairs came to a deadlock.

The situation was eased a little by the visit of Otto von Kotzebue to California in October, 1816. Kotzebue was heading a Russian scientific expedition, and stopped at San Francisco. Governor Sola rode up from Monterey to welcome Kotzebue, and also to take advantage of an opportunity to complain about Kuskof's activities. Kotzebue, of course, explained that after all he was merely the leader of an expedition in the interest of science, and by no means did he have any authority over the actions of the Russian-American Company or any of its representatives. Nevertheless, he conceded that the very courteous Senor Don Pablo Vicente de Sola was quite right in maintaining that his government had a grievance. Furthermore, he agreed to invite Kuskof to a conference in order to iron out whatever difficulties would yield to friendly discussion.

A messenger was dispatched at once to Fort Ross. Kuskof agreed to come and a short time later appeared at San Francisco. For three days the gentlemen politely, tactfully and diplomatically fenced for advantage. Finally the results were drawn up in a document which was duly signed and filed away, and the problems were still unsettled. The paper contained an account of the circumstances under which the conference was held. It stated Sola's complaint that the Russians had settled in California territory and

had neglected to obey the viceroy's orders to depart, or for that matter even to have given a definite answer to the governor's letters on the subject. On the other hand, Kuskof refused to make any arguments on the merits of the case or to abandon Fort Ross without orders from Baranof. Finally, Kotzebue, while admitting that he had no authority in the matter, agreed to submit the case to the czar.<sup>11</sup> Kuskof returned to his post somewhat irritated at what he considered unnecessary interference on the part of Kotzebue, but at the same time having at least maintained friendly diplomatic relations with the California government.

Even after the negotiations, the prisoners held in Monterey remained in jail. Some of the Aleuts had escaped by becoming neophytes in the missions. Most of the rest were held, except a few other Aleuts who were sent to hunt otter for the Californians and simply paddled on out to sea and up to Fort Ross, and the agent Elict who was taken by Kotzebue to the Hawaiian Islands, where he became secretary of state to the native king! However, when Baranof at Sitka heard how affairs stood in California, he dispatched, in 1817, Lieutenant Yakov Fedushkin in the Chirikof to Monterey. Fedushkin was successful in obtaining release of the prisoners, and received a promise that Sola would try

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11. Bancroft, California, II, 309-310

to obtain trade privileges for the Russians.

After these negotiations were over, Fort Ross soon took on new and larger importance. The foreign offices at Madrid and St. Petersburg took up the matter. Count Nesselrode, the Russian minister of foreign affairs, received a complaint from the Spanish ambassador to the effect that the Russians at Fort Ross had established themselves illegally on Spanish territory. The Russian-American Company made haste to reply that there was no proof that the country between San Francisco and the Columbia River belonged to any European nation. All of which left the problem still unsettled. The Russians remained at Fort Ross, with the Spaniards protesting.

Although relations between the Russians and the Spaniards had seemed to reach an impasse, a sudden change came in 1818. At that time a new administration was sent out to Sitka. Also, the California settlements had begun to feel the strong need of trade since the usual commerce with Peru fell rapidly, because of the unsettled state of affairs in Hispanic America. Then, too, the Californians had become used to the newcomers and had largely lost their fear of them. These and several other similar reasons laid the basis for a better understanding between the two peoples.

Foremost in establishing the better conditions was the new governor of the Russian possessions, Hagemeister. Baranof, the man who had directed the company's affairs in the new world for almost three decades, was at last recalled to make way for a younger man and a new set of policies. Whether Ross would finally succeed or not was a question he no longer could help determine. The future lay with the new generation.

Hagemeister proceeded at once to Fort Ross to acquaint himself with the true situation. The post, spread out on its little plain, with the green, wooded hills behind and the clear blue sea in front, must have appealed to the new lord of Russia's western holdings. He at once decreed that the settlement should be expanded. First the Indian chiefs were called into conference, and after solemnly carrying out the usual formalities, he learned by tactful questioning that there would be no opposition to enlarging the Russian holdings. In fact, the Indians considered the Russians more in the light of protectors than as a source of danger.

Much heartened by his experiences at the fort, Hagemeister next decided to see what could be done with the Spanish officials. So, taking Kuskof with him, he visited San Francisco, and there immediately got into touch with the governor. Much to the satisfaction of the new Russian

administrator, a trade agreement was readily made. The governor, Sola, himself offered to buy the whole cargo of Hagenmeister's ship, but the business fell through because Sola did not have sufficient funds, and the Russians were not willing to accept a draft on the treasury at Guadalajara. The new policy was indeed a welcome change to the Russians, for foodstuffs were always needed at Sitka.<sup>12</sup>

Although its affairs were more or less bound up in the tangled skeins of diplomacy, Fort Ross had continued to develop. The strong stockade with its numerous well-loaded cannons made Indians and Spaniards alike wary of any hostile demonstrations. Within, neat and spotless, ranged the quarters of the officers and men. Strangely contrasting to the rough, untaxed frontier around about was that little reflection of the old world. In the commandant's house all was made as comfortable as the incumbent could make it. Thick carpets covered the floors and rich arras hid the rough hewn walls. Books and pictures added their friendly touch. In the windows were panes of glass brought half way around the world from the far-off markets of Europe. In the evening, after a delicious meal prepared by the French chef and served on a table beautifully spread with crystal, china, silver service, and clear burning tapers, the commandant and

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12. Tikhaenof, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 218-220

his official family would sip their fine wine and listen dreamily while the commandant's wife wove a spell of music from the piano in the next room. Anecdotes and witticisms from the czar's court would be told, perhaps becoming slightly threadbare but still listened to with gusto by these exiles in a lonesome and distant land. To anyone suddenly bursting in on this elegantly dressed company smoking their imported cigarettes or tasting their European wine, laughing and talking in their old world courtly manner, or listening to the strains of some old masterpiece, it would come as a sudden shock that here civilization shone so brilliantly while all around stretched an almost unknown and uncharted wilderness. Such was Fort Ross during most of its three decades of existence.

Also, inside the stockade, and adding to the defense of the northeast, was the Greek chapel. It was stoutly built, with loopholes for cannon, and was surmounted by two towers to give the usual church effect. In the interior all was neatness and order. Paintings decorated the walls, and the altar was beautifully appointed. However, until one became used to the sight, the two cannons on either side of the altar gave a somewhat jarring note to the otherwise peaceful interior. Strangely enough there was no priest to attend to religious matters. When the clear-toned chapel bells called the small population of Fort Ross to a baptismal, marriage, or funeral service, it was one of the officers

who had to take charge.

Outside of the stockade were the huts of the Indians, the shops and storehouses of the little settlement, and the vegetable gardens beyond. On the sandy beach below were a boat-landing, a boat-house for storing the frail skin craft of the Aleuts, a store-house for lumber and ship-building materials, and last, but not least in importance to the Russians, was the bath-house for those steam baths so dear to the heart of the Muscovite. Sheltering this little harbor from the northern gales was a small spur of land.<sup>13</sup>

A great deal of activity centered around Fort Ross. Men were tilling the nearby fields, the sound of hammers came from the workshops, and the Indian hunters bringing in their catches or repairing their frail boats and primitive weapons added a touch of the bizarre. The small boats used by the Russians were always a source of wonderment to the Spaniards. There were two types of craft or bidarkas as they were called, but both were made of skins. The larger kind would hold from fifteen to thirty men. They were open and light, but could be used on quite rough water. The smaller bidarkas, often called kayaks, were used more for actually hunting the sea otter and other fur-bearing marine animals.

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13. J. C. Bromilow, "Old Fort Ross - a stronghold of the north," in the California history nugget, III, 3:59.



To see the Aleuts plying their trade was an unforgettable sight. The kayak was usually made for two people. It was a light, skin covered shell with two openings just large enough for the hunters. Skill born of long practice was needed to manage the tiny craft. Once in these interesting shells, all was made water-tight by the occupant by snugly attaching his sea lion jacket to the rim of the opening. That done, not a drop of water could enter the kayak whatever might occur. Waves broke in the craft and poured harmlessly off. Should it upset, as was often the case, a few deft strokes with the paddles were all that was necessary to bring the kayak to an even keel. In these boats the Aleuts would spend from ten to twelve hours a day scouring the water for signs of the sea otter. Once the prey was sighted, the canoes - for usually from five to fifteen hunted together - would be maneuvered so as to place the animal to the windward; then they would approach, swiftly and silently. As they glided into shooting distance, the man in the stern of the nearest kayak would hold the boat steady while the hunter in front slowly and cautiously would raise his pronged bone spear and with deadly aim would hurl it at the otter. The last act of the drama was only a matter of time. Immediately on being hit, the otter would submerge and for about twenty minutes would remain under water desperately trying to shake off the barb, while all the time his course was marked

by a bladder which had been attached to the spear-head by a long cord. When finally the animal came to the surface for air, he was quickly dispatched, and the hunt began again.<sup>14</sup>

Hunting bases were established on the islands up and down the California coast. The most permanent of these was the post on the Farallone Islands. There seals, sea lions, sea-gulls, and eggs were obtained and sent to Fort Ross. There were many stories told about the various outposts established among the islands. Usually Russian officers were in charge, but that was not always the case. In one instance when the Aleuts alone were sent, it was reported that:<sup>15</sup>

In 1825 a party of twenty-five Aleut hunters made their headquarters on San Nicolas Island. At that time the island was inhabited by some thirty Indian men and twenty-three women. After having a quarrel with the Indians, the Aleuts killed all the men, took possession of the women, and remained masters of the island for almost a year. Then one night, when the Aleuts were in a drunken sleep, the Indian women rose up and killed every one of them.

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14. Ogden, "Russian sea-otter and seal hunting," in the *California Historical Society, Quarterly*, XII, 3:218.
15. E. Lawrence, "Fortunes in otter," in *Fouring topics*, XXV, 2:18.

With the advent of the new administration under Hageneister, agricultural activity was greatly increased at Fort Ross. Schmidt was sent to replace Kuskef, and under the new commandant more attention was given to the soil and less to hunting. The areas for planting and herding were greatly increased. However, all efforts failed to make Fort Ross a success financially.

Among the first things to be developed were the garden and the orchard. Vegetables were raised in abundance, including pumpkins; pickled beets and cabbage were sent to Sitka; potatoes were planted twice a year, although the yield was relatively small. Had it not been for the field rodents, the potato crop might have become very important. There were, too, abundant yields of watermelons. Between 1814 and 1830 many fruit trees and grape vines were set out. These made a very valuable addition indeed to the fare at Fort Ross.

Wheat production was always a disappointment to the Russians. Many methods were resorted to, in order to further agricultural development. For instance, one of the instructions to Baranof stated:<sup>16</sup>

Those half-castes who prove themselves unable to execute the duties of colonial administration, are to be settled at Ross, where agriculture and husbandry may offer them and their families an ample supply for their needs. To encourage them in these pursuits, the company will purchase from them their surplus.

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16. Tikhmenof, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii, I, 224.

Furthermore, seeds and lands were distributed to them. At one time there were about four hundred half-castes, California Indians, and Aleuts at Fort Ross, the greater part of whom were engaged in tilling the soil. Nevertheless, there was seldom ever enough wheat for export. About the most that was accomplished was to make Fort Ross self-supporting, so that the cargoes of the supply ships might be sent on to Sitka without having to leave part or most of their precious foodstuffs at Ross.

After 1826, the yield on the wheat sown at Ross decreased. For the next seven years only about fifteen tons on an average were exported annually. This, considering the size of the enterprise, was an entirely unsatisfactory amount. However, by 1833, the continual cultivation of the fields had so impoverished the soil that crops fell off to a minimum. Wild oats threatened to choke out the grain. Consequently, for several years the land had to be used only for grazing.

Baron Wrangell visited Ross in 1833 and realized that further expansion was necessary. Under his direction two small ranches were established to the south of Ross, between the Russian River and Bodega Bay. The first, called Kostromitinof Ranch, just south of the mouth of the river, contained about one hundred acres. About five miles north of Bodega Bay, at the Russian Gulch, was the Tschernikh Ranch, or Gorgy's

as it was called. There a vineyard of 3,000 vines was set out, and a few fruit trees were planted. The new ranches were provided with the necessary buildings, including the inevitable bath-house.<sup>17</sup>

These changes brought immediate improvement. In 1834, Fort Ross was able to send more than eighty tons of wheat to Sitka, besides other produce. However, that was the greatest export for the rest of the existence of Fort Ross. The next year was a complete failure; the total for the last four years, from 1837 to 1841, was less than 130 tons. Any ordinary wheat farmer today could be expected to do as well or better - and that without an establishment of several hundred people to draw from for assistance! Besides wheat, during the same four-year period, a total of about thirty tons of other produce was exported. Of this, barley, rye, peas, buckwheat, beans, corn, tobacco, and dried bread formed the greater part.<sup>18</sup>

Somewhat more successful was animal husbandry. When Hagemeister became head of the Russian activities in North American, and when Schmidt was sent down to take control of Ross in 1821, there were 187 head of cattle, 736 sheep and 124 hogs. These gradually increased until there were about 3,000

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17. Essig, "Ross" in the *California Historical Society Quarterly*, XII, 3:193-194.

18. Tikhonov, *Russisko-Amerikanskoi kompanii*, I, 353-356.

cattle, 1,000 horses, and 1,000 sheep belonging to Fort Ross when the post was abandoned. Hog raising had been given up as a failure. From its flocks and herds, Ross was able to export to Sitka 108 tons of corn beef and 17,910 pounds of butter besides a good deal of fat, wool, and leather during its last fifteen years.

Agriculture, grazing, and hunting were not the only pursuits. Some manufacturing and ship building were engaged in. The mechanics at Ross were able to make things of a quality acceptable to the California markets. Rowboats, wheels, cooking utensils, various kinds of iron work, and other articles were supplied to the Californians. Until the trade with California was opened to the world, about \$3,000 a year was realized by Ross through its commerce. Ship building, on the other hand, was much less successful. Four ships were built, but the unseasoned wood and the use of redwood made these boats a constant source of trouble. Bitter experience taught the Russians that it was more satisfactory and much cheaper to buy their vessels from others or build them at Sitka.

In all, it can be said that Fort Ross was nothing but a drain on the Russian-American Company. Unrestricted trade with California would have been more valuable in many respects. In fact, the company offered early to abandon the post if it could receive commercial privileges instead. For practically all of Fort Ross's existence it cost from three to four times more than it returned. Consequently, the hope that it would

form an important food base was never realized. Fort Ross, economically, was a failure.

Besides the economic troubles, there were constant diplomatic difficulties. Still, notwithstanding the tense and sometimes strained character of the official relations, actual personal and unofficial contacts between the Russians and the Californians were almost always very cordial. Visits by the Spaniards to Fort Ross were fairly frequent, and friendly hospitality was always extended. That fact accounted for so much seeming paradox: as, for example, when religious ornaments were presented by the Russians to the new mission of San Francisco Solano, even though that mission had been established largely to check the Russian expansion. The two peoples always lived together without rancor or discord.

Time and again representatives of the California government would be dispatched to the Ross settlement. First the usual question: "Upon what authority have you established this post?" would be asked. The Russian commandant would formally and courteously evade the query. Usually, a period of six months would then be given in which to evacuate the post. This information would be gravely received and the promise would be made to inform St. Petersburg of the matter. After that had been accomplished the commandant and the Californian officer would speak of other things of more personal

interest, and perhaps even sample a little Russian wine. Finally regretful farewells would be said, and the Californian would return to San Francisco while the Russian commandant would go back to his quarters. Both would make their official reports, and promptly drop the matter. Furthermore the officer at San Francisco would continue to use Fort Ross butter in food cooked with Fort Ross cooking utensils. The whole transaction was very convenient and legal, and all remained friends.

From another quarter, diplomatic opposition also arose. The United States began to fear Russian expansion on the Pacific Coast. To add to the suspicion of the young republic, a rumor became current that Spain had ceded to Russia a strip of territory on the Pacific Coast 800 miles long in return for assistance promised against revolting Hispanic America. When, in 1822, the czar issued a ukase which in effect sought to close the North Pacific to foreign ships and to establish the undisputed supremacy of Russia in the northwest coast, alarm at Washington greatly increased. Consequently when President Monroe delivered his famous message to congress in December, 1823, part of it was clearly designed to halt the Russian advance. This attitude on the part of the executive of the vigorous North America republic went far towards causing the czar to lose interest in the California venture.<sup>19</sup> Fort Ross, opposed from every quarter, a failure

19. R. C. Glass, A history of California, in the American period, 29-33



economically, and at such a great distance from St. Petersburg, had little but abandonment to hope for from the future.

During the latter part of the Russian occupancy in California, from about 1823 to 1841, a very curious situation developed. The Russian and Californian authorities actually hunted for furs in partnership! This, of course, was not a continuous relationship, but nevertheless, quite frequent. Regardless of the seemingly insurmountable diplomatic difficulties, these bargains were struck from time to time. Trained hunters and the necessary equipment were furnished by the Russians, while the Spaniards gave the legal permission for the enterprise. Proceeds were divided according to the various agreements. Thus a difficult situation was compressed. The practical Californians, realizing that the Russians would hunt otter anyhow, in this way procured some return for the depletion of their resource.<sup>20</sup>

If Fort Ross were ever to achieve any amount of success, it had to expend its holdings. More and better land had to be found, and some amount of security had to be attained. With the passing of each year, this possibility became more remote. Settlers were drifting into California from the United States, foreshadowing what soon changed from a small trickle to a rearing flood. Even the Californians were moving

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20. Ogden, "Russian sea-otter and seal hunting," in California Historical Society, Quarterly, XII, 3:234-237

into a new territory. First Misión San Francisco Solano was established, in 1823, and then its ranches and holdings began to spread out fan-like into the country approaching Fort Ross. Each step north by the Spaniards meant one step less which could be taken by the Russians.

By 1833, the governor of California began seriously to consider establishing settlers north of San Francisco Bay. A young officer, Senor Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, was sent to note the various possibilities. He was, ostensibly, interested only in buying some rifles, saddles, and other supplies for San Francisco. Nothing, however, was immediately forthcoming from the incident. Vallejo's report was not in the least alarming as to sinister Russian activities, and as for the settlement, that was postponed.<sup>21</sup> However, a beginning had been made towards a more aggressive policy on the part of the Californians.

These new movements were not lost on the Russian-American Company. Reports were sent constantly from Fort Ross, and in 1836 Kuprianof, the chief administrator of the colonies, reported that newcomers from the United States were settling and developing ranches in the vicinity of Fort Ross. This, he pointed out, seriously impaired the chances for expansion. The company heads replied that the problem would have to be handled

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21. A. M. Cleveland, *The north bay shore during the Spanish and Mexican regimes*, 88-91.

locally, but that, "No efforts are to be spared to  
retain the territory already occupied."<sup>22</sup>

Gradually the company became convinced of the uselessness of Fort Ross. Expenses had been rising while receipts had been falling off. There was little chance of giving Ross a political significance, for it had never gained recognition from any world power. Furthermore, it was of little strategic value to the Russian possessions because of its distance from the Sitka settlements. Finally, since Spain had lost her hold on the New World, trade could be carried on unrestricted except for local regulations; so a food base was not longer such a pressing problem. These considerations settled the company's resolve to withdraw from California. Consequently, the executive council asked for the necessary permission from the czar. In April, 1839, the decree was issued to the effect that the settlement at Fort Ross was to be broken up, its population apportioned among the other colonies, and all unnecessary articles and implements were to be sold at San Francisco.<sup>23</sup>

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22. Tikhmenef, Russiisko-Amerikanskoi Kompanii, I, 365.

23. Ibid., I, 365-366.

The official death sentence of Rezanof's and Baranof's experiment in California had been signed.

Rotchef, the commandant at that time, learned of the decision. He at once began to take steps necessary for the change. First the offer was made to sell the equipment to the Hudson's Bay Company for \$30,000, but the negotiation failed. Then Rotchef notified the Californian government of the determination to abandon Fort Ross, and proposed that Mexico should buy the property. The governor was, of course, interested, and asked for detailed information. In the meantime he informed the Mexican government of the new proposal. However, affairs continued to drag along without any agreement being reached.

In the summer of 1840, an incident occurred which threatened to disturb the peaceful relations between the Californians and the Russians. It all arose out of the enterprise of a shrewd Yankee skipper. A certain Josiah Spalding, master of the Lausanne, conceived the idea that Bodega was a free port belonging to Russia. Thus he might land there, unload some passengers he was carrying, and conclude his affairs in California - all without having to pay anchorage or other duties. Rotchef, engrossed in

the weighty matters concerned with winding up affairs at Fort Ross, left on business for San Francisco without ejecting the canny captain.

Complications were not long in developing. Senor Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo at Sonoma was soon startled by the visit of four of the passengers demanding passports. The good don at once began imagining every kind of sinister possibility. Armed strangers were abroad in the land. Bodega was practically abandoned by the Russians. A foreign vessel was lying in that harbor free from all restrictions. Indeed, the situation demanded immediate and drastic action!

Vallejo sent Ensign Lazaro Pena with a guard of soldiers to Bodega Bay. Pena's instructions were comprehensive. He was to see that all persons who had landed re-embarked. Also, those in charge of the vessel were to be warned to land no goods on penalty of being treated as smugglers. Furthermore, Pena was directed to collect tonnage dues on the Lausanne at the rate of \$1.50 per ton, and to remain at the port to see that the orders were carried out.<sup>24</sup>

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24. M. G. Vallejo, Documentos para la historia de California, 1769-1850, IX, 183.

A short time after Pena had gone to Bodega Bay, Captain Spalding accompanied by several persons from San Francisco stopped at Sonoma. The time was certainly not very well chosen for a visit to Vallejo! Vallejo refused to let Spalding's companions proceed, and called upon the captain to pay his tonnage dues. Spalding insisted that Bodega Bay was a Russian port, for which he had the confirmation of the commandant at Fort Ross. However, if the proper authorities should decide the question differently, Captain Spalding agreed to pay the fee. Under those conditions, Vallejo allowed Spalding to depart, but an understanding with Rotchef at Fort Ross became, to the Californian, necessary.

Instructions were sent to Ensign Pena to state clearly and unequivocally to Rotchef that Bodega Bay belonged to Mexico, not to Russia. Though the use of it by the Russian-American Company had been tolerated, still it was only by the tacit consent of the Californian government. Consequently, since Rotchef had exceeded the bounds of his privileges, it had been necessary to send in troops to enforce the law. This, then, was the message which Rotchef received upon his return. The anger of the otherwise agreeable and polished commandant blazed. Not only did the presence of Pena's men raise Rotchef's wrath, but the copy of Vallejo's order, made by a subordinate in the absence of the commandant, was not even as diplomatic as that of Vallejo's original. Rotchef raised the Russian flag and defied all the power of Mexico to haul it

down. Pasa was ordered to leave at once, which that officer only too gladly did. Finally, when the Lausanne, the occasion for the furors, sailed, it left a few foreigners at Bodoga. These Rotschef agreed to aid in reaching their destination, which was Sacramento. Vallejo did not interfere, but warned Rotschef that he would be responsible for his acts.

Repercussions from the affair were felt as far as Sitka. Kuprianof, himself, on his way to Russia, having been replaced as governor, failed to obtain accord between Vallejo and Rotschef. Rotschef insisted that he had been insulted and that the Californian's message had contained an order for his arrest. Vallejo denied that such a demand had been made, but held that Rotschef had far exceeded his authority. After a few months, however, when both parties to the dispute had had time to consider the situation a little more calmly, good relations were restored. Since Ross was to be abandoned anyway, there was no point to making anything serious out of the incident.<sup>25</sup>

During 1841, the business transactions in connection with the sale of the Russian holdings were completed. All did not go as smoothly or swiftly as had been hoped by the Russians. This was due largely to the intentional delay on the part of the Californian government. It was hoped and more or less expected by Vallejo that the fort would be abandoned soon, even without purchase by the Californians. This would save

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25. Bancroft, California, IV, 175-176.

the large expenditure. However, the delay only assured that the bargain would go to someone else. Soon John A. Sutter and Jacob P. Leese began bidding. Leese's offer was \$25,000.

Commandant Rotechef, in September, visited Sutter's Fort. While there he persuaded Sutter to return with him to Fort Ross. Conditions were found favorable, and a price of \$30,000 was agreed upon very quickly. The stipulations were that the sum was to be paid in four yearly installments. The first two of \$5,000 and the third of \$10,000 were to be made in produce - wheat, peas, beans, soap, suet, and tallow - at an agreed-upon rate. The last sum of \$10,000 was to be in coin. The whole transaction was sanctioned by the Mexican government.<sup>26</sup> Sutter at once sent for the movable property, which, except for the loss of a few cattle, arrived safely at his ranch.

Meanwhile the Russians set sail for the north, leaving their holdings, which were described as follows by a contemporary:<sup>27</sup>

The fort of Ross with its beautiful gardens is in a superb situation; there exists nothing more picturesque nor grander than the forests of gigantic pines which encircle it. Ross appears as a quadrilateral of eighty meters frontage, at the center of which is stationed the house of the governor, those of the officers, the arsenal, the barracks, the magazines, and a Creek

26. M. Castro, Documentos para la historia de California, I, 57-59.  
 27. E. Duflot de Maffre, Exploration du territoire, de l'Oregon, des Californies et de la Mer Verteille, exécutée pendant les années 1840, 1841 et 1842, II, 13-14



chapel surmounted by a cross and a belfrey of very attractive appearance. The enclosure, formed by thick timbers, is four meters in height; it is pierced by openings protected by cannon, and at opposite corners two hexagonal bastions are erected, of two floors, and armed with six guns. The other principal establishments, such as of Kostromitinof, Vasilii, Klebnikof, and Don George Tschernick, the employment buildings, the farmhouses, the guard-house and the houses of the officers are surrounded by gardens and built of wood adorned with very pretty ornaments. These houses, called isba by the Russians, resemble the Muscovite villages. At the port of Rodega there are only two or three small dwelling-houses of pilots and the chief of the port; but the magazines are large; they serve to hold merchandise, the grains, the barrels of meats, the hides, and the naval rigging and apparatus.

Each farm has bath-houses, large dwelling lodges for the Indians, wind and hand mills, granaries and tobacco dryers. The great workshops of carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers and marine carpenters are situated below Fort Ross, along the little creek where the vessels anchor.

Quiet and solitude settled over the stockade and buildings. The deep-voiced Russians and their sure-eyed hunters were gone. In silence, alone and deserted, Fort Ross awaited the decay and ravages of future ages.

Memory of the Russian occupation remained, not only the ruins of the settlement, but also in other things. California's state flower, the "California poppy" was first described to the scientific world by Adelbert von Chamisso, a naturalist, who accompanied Otto von Kotzebue in 1816. He named the flower after his friend and collaborator, Johann Friedrich Eschscholtz, as Eschscholtzia californica. Two other scientists, I. G. Vonnosensky and G. Tschernikh, on June 12, 1841, scaled the most prominent peak in the neigh-

berhood of Ross. They planted a copper tablet there to commemorate the event, and named the mountain St. Helena in honor of the patron saint of the Empress of Russia. Fort Ross, Russian River, and Russian Gulch also remain to remind the traveler of the Russian occupation.

For a few years immediately following the departure of the Muscovites, little was done by Sutter to care for the property of Fort Ross. A number of buildings and most of the movable goods had been transferred to New Helvetia, as Sutter's Fort was called. The Greek chapel was occasionally used as a storehouse for hay, and what livestock remained were allowed to run wild. In 1845, William Benitz, in partnership with Major Rufus, leased the place from Sutter. Even then, the shadow of the old Mexican and Russian controversy hovered over Fort Ross. The Muniz Rancho, which included the old Russian settlement, was granted in 1845 to Manuel Torres by Governor Pio Pico. However, the title was easily quieted by Benitz, and things went along smoothly for a while.

Throughout the period from 1841 to 1859 Sutter was shipping grain to San Francisco to pay his debt. The last of the \$30,000 was not delivered until eighteen years after the sale, despite the four-year contract. The fulfillment of his obligation brought little advantage to Sutter, however, for after quieting the Muniz title Benitz refused to

pay his rent any longer. Benitz did, though, try to settle Sutter's claim by a payment of \$6,000, but his successors, William Muldrew, George R. Moore, and Daniel W. Walty, had to engage in a lengthy litigation before their deeds were accepted as legal. Sutter, then, realized only Benitz's payment for his Russian claim. In that way Fort Ross, first bought from the Indians for an amount reported to be three pairs of breeches, three hoes, two axes, and four strings of beads, later, by a price of \$30,000 represented mostly by wheat, finally received a clear and undisputed title for only \$6,000.<sup>28</sup>

Not until the coming of George W. Call did Fort Ross regain something of its old activity. When Call gained possession of it, he soon established a thriving little village. But how Kuskof or Hotechef would have felt if they could have seen the change which had come over their spotless, enterprising post! The greater part of the stockade was gone. The public road passed through the middle of the enclosure from east to west. The old buildings which remained were being variously used as a saloon, a hotel, and a storehouse, while the chapel had become a stable! The bastions, which had once held shining cannon and felt the brisk tread of soldiers' feet, had been turned into pigsties.

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28. T. Gregory, History of Sonoma county, California, 27-28

and were moss covered and tettering. The other buildings included a blacksmith shop, a store, a meat market, and a post and telegraph office. The postoffice was established in 1877 by Call, who became the first postmaster. Transportation was furnished on land by a stage route and by sea from the little harbor at the foot of the cliff, at which several different boats touched regularly. One important change had been made which would have amazed the Russians. A chute had been built from the cliff to the landing. By the use of this device, ships could be loaded with great rapidity.<sup>29</sup>

With the passing of years, interest was aroused in the historic old fort. It was feared that the post might pass forever from the memory of man unless some action were taken to preserve it. Had it not been for the age-resisting quality of the redwood timbers from which Fort Ross was built, in all probability the Russian structures would have long since fallen into obliterating decay. Mr. Call, himself, took the first step in the direction of restoring the Russian fort. He replaced the fallen-in roof of the church with new grooved timbers and also renewed the underpinning and interior.

Matters became more acute, however, in 1906.

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<sup>29</sup>. Munro-Fraser, History of Sonoma county, 377-378.

At that time an earthquake occurred which seriously damaged Fort Ross's buildings. The church was badly weakened, and the cupola fell to the ground. As a consequence, a few years later one of the inhabitants who had spent his boyhood at Fort Ross undertook to repair the damage. All the people of the locality were called upon to assemble on a certain date to begin the work. A dance was to be held at the end of the day. By all accounts, the only ones who nobly answered the summons arrived just a little before the dance was to begin.<sup>30</sup>

On May 23, 1906, the chapel and 3.01 acres of land were purchased by a fund raised by the San Francisco Examiner, and then transferred to the state. The total price was \$3,010. By 1917 the chapel had been restored, although differing very slightly in details from the original, and in 1925 services were held on July 4. This became an annual affair. In 1926 the Historic Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons of the Golden West dedicated a bronze tablet marking the chapel. In 1930 the fort was placed under the care of the State Division of Parks. Since then restoration has progressed steadily until part of the old fort today (1936) looks much as it did at the time of Russian occupation.

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30. S. J. Chase, California coast trails, 261-263.

One and a quarter centuries have passed since the dashing romantic Rozanof sailed into San Francisco Bay, captured Dona Concepcion's heart, and opened the way for the establishment of a new colony under His Imperial Majesty, the Czar of Russia. Three different nations in turn have held the post which he established. Only in recent years has society taken steps to preserve this historic spot in a manner fitting and honorable; and now a person with a little imagination, during the twilight hour when shadows deepen into substance, can sit upon the little hill overlooking old Fort Ross and see once again a scene surpassingly picturesque and intriguing, though fanciful. The Aleuts with their frail kayaks, and wild attire, land on the little beach, deposit their catch, and swing their crafts over their shoulders to place them on higher ground for greasing. Around the stockade half a hundred cooking fires twinkle, and in the windows of the commandant's house the light from wax tapers casts a gleam over wraith-like figures in the stockade. In a moment the vision fades. Perhaps it was only the reflection of the full moon on a few bright objects and a fog bank coming in from the sea, but in effect, if not in reality, old Fort Ross has lived again. Regretfully one leaves it to its legends and memories, goes down the hill to the waiting automobile, and enters once more the tempo of the twentieth century.

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