



19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, CA 95450 ■ 707.847.3437 ■ info@fortross.org ■ www.fortross.org

Title: **Fort Ross- An Account of the Russian Settlement in San Francisco Bay**

Author(s): **Rev. A.P.Kashevaroff**

Published by: *Alaska Magazine*

Source: Fort Ross Conservancy Library

URL: www.fortross.org

Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC) asks that you acknowledge FRC as the source of the content; if you use material from FRC online, we request that you link directly to the URL provided. If you use the content offline, we ask that you credit the source as follows: “Courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org.”

Fort Ross Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) and California State Park cooperating association, connects people to the history and beauty of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks.

© Fort Ross Conservancy, 19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, CA 95450, 707-847-3437

(Reprinted from *Alaska* magazine, 1926. Fort Ross archives.)

Fort Ross

An Account of the Russian Settlement in San Francisco Bay by Rev. A. P. Kashevaroff

There are but few occurrences in the history of the world similar to that which transpired in California in the beginning of the nineteenth century. A small tract of land, hardly known by name, separated by an immense distance from the civilized world, inhabited by savage tribes, had in a short period of time become the center of the most ardent desires and greedy pursuits.

On the shores of this new El Dorado, a little over a hundred years ago, the Russian-American Company had a settlement known as Fort Ross (the English rendition of the fort of the Russians), a settlement of which the outside world knew nothing until California had taken its place among the producers of wealth.

The information which we have from official records and documents is not satisfactorily complete, but is given as it appears.

The Russian-American Company, under Baranov's management, had established posts at Kodiak and Sitka, but had no commercial intercourse with California. Baranov knew of California and the possibility of hunting sea otters on the shores of that country through his contact with the American trading vessels.

In 1806, Resanov, after undertaking his embassy to Japan, made a voyage to California on the ship *Juno*. In California, he was received by the Don Arguello, in the most friendly manner, while Don de Arillaga, the governor of California, made a special trip from Monterey to San Francisco, to meet Resanov.

Resanov proposed to the governor that a reciprocal exchange of trade be established between California and Sitka; the governor could not consent to this, as open trade with foreigners was forbidden by the Spanish government. The governor, however, ordered that Resanov be supplied with the necessary provisions for his ship, while the missionaries supplied him with foodstuffs for Sitka in exchange for goods on board the *Juno*.

Resanov spent six weeks in San Francisco as the guest of the commandante of the Presidio, without reaching any formal agreement for mutual interchange in trade; however he was convinced of the benefits that the young colony at Sitka would derive from trade with California.

The shareholders of the Russian-American Company in St. Petersburg fully shared his opinion and, through their chief representative Buldakov, made a formal petition to the Emperor. The substance of their petition was that California was rich in breadstuffs, cattle and horses; that, on the other side Okhotsk and Kamchatka were sorely in need of cattle, and it was noted that during Resanov's visit to California, several hundred head of cattle had been slaughtered just for the sake of their hides, into which grain was put for shipment, and that the carcasses were thrown away. Further, that California was very short of all kinds of cloth and iron, while Russia had these in quantities; the petition recited that Resanov's visit to California had shown that the Spaniards there could not do without trade with the Russians, and asked that friendly relations be established with the government in Madrid, which, if properly acquainted with the situation, would undoubtedly look favorably upon negotiations to establish trade.

The Russian government entrusted the duty of presenting its offer to Madrid to their Ambassador there, Baron Stroganoff, but circumstances developed to prevent the Baron from carrying out his instructions, and the Russian government then left the further fulfillment of the venture entirely in the hands of the Company.

In 1810, the Russian-American Company addressed a communication to the Spanish Government in San Francisco, in which it expressed the most sincere appreciation for the past friendly intercourse, and begged to be allowed the further privilege of supplying California with cloth and iron in exchange for grains and meat. This communication did not have the desired effect; the Spaniards would not consent to an open and free trade with the Russians, and the Company then resorted to more aggressive methods to gain a foothold in California.

During his visit to the Spanish colony, Resanov had made rather thorough observations of all the unoccupied lands between Point Drake and Nootka Sound. He acquainted himself with the climatic conditions and the fertility of the soil, having in mind the establishment of a post where grain could be raised, and he imparted his idea to Alexander Baranov, then Chief Director of the Company, a highly capable man with great administrative ability and vision for expansion.

In 1808 Baranov fitted out the ship *Kadiak* and sent his assistant Kuskov to investigate the place and select a suitable place for a settlement. On his return from this expedition, Kuskov reported that on the shores of "New Albion", he found a splendid harbor, a beautiful location, suitable for cultivation and agriculture, with abundance of building timber for houses and ships—pine and oak; sufficiency in shrubberies, in fish, in land and sea fowls, and, especially, he had seen numerous herds of cattle and horses wandering through the forests, and he had seen numbers of steers, cows, sheep, goats and deer. The climate was balmy; unfortunately he had seen but few fur bearing animals, and he had not met large numbers of aborigines—those that he saw were disposed to be friendly; he had not noticed the slightest hostility on their part. They had no fire arms like the natives who lived further north and were supplied by American traders.

To the Indians who had shown him service, he had given presents, consisting of glass and wampum beads, clothing and some pieces of iron, and to some he had given silver medals. These medals had the inscription "The Allied Russia" [sic] and were to be worn on the neck suspended by a ribbon—he reported that the Indians who received these medals were greatly pleased.

About this time the Company had received information that some of the American citizens were about to establish settlements on the Columbia River for the purpose of carrying on fur trade with Canton, China. (The Lewis and Clark expedition had founded Ft. Clatsop, on the Columbia River, and John Jacob Astor was beginning his trading expeditions into the Northwest, and endeavoring to negotiate with the Russian Government through the American State Department. Astoria was founded 1811. ["Astoria" Washington Irving: Diplomatic Papers, U.S. State Dept.: Proceedings, Alaskan Boundary Tribunal.]

Foreseeing opposition to themselves from these American interests, the Russian-American Company at once represented to the government, the advisability of having a permanent settlement in California, under the supervision of the government, and emphasized the benefits that would follow. The government did not agree to have such a

settlement under its jurisdiction, and left it entirely to the company to carry out its own trading policies, however, it promised the Company its protection.

With this promise in view the Company, in February, 1812, sent Kuskov to California on the ship *Chirikov* with a party of ninety-five promyshleniki and forty bidarkas with Aleut hunters. To Kuskov was entrusted the selection of a place for the settlement, and on May 15, 1812, he began building the fortress and establishing the settlement of the Russians on the shores of California. The location selected was eighteen miles from the smaller Bodega Bay and about fifty miles from the port of San Francisco.

Three months later, on the 30th day of August, with firing of salutes and the raising of the flag, the settlement was formally opened and named "Russian Fort." The principal buildings were completed and the small band of Russians began its work.

Fort Ross was situated on an elevation of some 114 feet above sea level; there were 116 steps leading to it from the shore. It was laid out in a rectangular shape, with a fourteen foot stockade encircling it, measuring 1190 feet in circumference. There was a blockhouse or bastion guarding each corner, with fifteen guns in all. In this enclosure were the Director's house, the two-story barracks, two warehouses, the kitchen and the blacksmith and other shops. Outside of the stockade were the sheds for bidarkas, the bath houses, and barns for the cattle. The dwelling houses of the Aleuts were also outside of the stockade; these houses were neatly built from California redwood by the Aleuts themselves.

The Aleuts were friendly with the California Indians and soon began to intermarry with them. As the settlement began to take on the appearance of permanency, the Spaniards were disturbed, and so much so that considerable correspondence was carried on between the governor of California and the Mexican Vice-Roy.

But while this was being done, the missionaries and others were doing a thriving trade with the Russians. They supplied the new colonists with livestock, seeds and fowls, against the orders of the government. By order of the Vice-Roy of Mexico, officers from the Presidio visited the establishment a number of times, always demanding to be informed of the reason for the establishment of the fort, and advising Kuskov to evacuate the premises.

Kuskov's answer was that he could not take any action without the consent of his principals, and he refused to comply with the demands.

He traded with San Francisco and during the year 1815 the turnover amounted to more than 6659 piastres; this trade was carried on by exchange—the Russians supplied tobacco, sugar, iron and copper kitchen utensils, iron in bulk, cloth and wax candles, while the Spaniards supplied grains, peas, meat, tallow, flour and hides. Governor de Sola had misgivings as to the intentions of the Russians and, apprehensive that they would expand northward to San Francisco Bay, and to prevent them from moving north, he had two new missions established, the first, in 1818, named San Rafael, and the second, 1824, San Francisco-Solano. However these missionaries too carried on a brisk trade with the Russians, in spite of the orders prohibiting such trade. Kuskov also sold the missionaries boats which were brought down from Sitka, and also built two large boats for the Missions.

As we have indicated, the settlement was established primarily for the development of an agriculture by which the Alaskan colonies could be supplied with wheat and other grains. Fort Ross, situated on a hilly surface, exposed to the dampness of the ocean, was

not a desirable location for this purpose, and proved a failure from the start. However, the Russians made attempts to till the soil and grow wheat. Those who were with Kuskov knew very little about raising wheat, and because of other occupations in which the men were employed, sufficient attention could not be given to farming. From 1815 to 1829, the yield was only 25,097 puds (poods, 36.07 lbs.). With what grain the Russians could acquire in trade from the missionaries and what was grown at Fort Ross, flour mills were established at Sitka and Kodiak.

Kuskov was able to make an initial venture in cattle raising by a gift of a few head of cattle from the missionaries, at a time when this was strictly forbidden by the Spanish government. Great expectations were entertained for this venture, and the supposition was that it would be very profitable, and that the colonies would thereby be sufficiently supplied with beef; at the beginning it seemed that these expectations would be realized.

The cattle ranged around the settlement with no particular care, and had all the feed from the free fields, which were abundant in grass, but as the land was taken up for tilling and the cultivation of wheat and grains, the feeding of cattle became quite a problem. The livestock began to range further and further away from the settlement; some of it was lost by falling over cliffs; some was driven away and killed by Indians and some by bears. At that rate the increase was not large, but as the years passed the settlement acquired more stock until in 1833, it had 415 horses, 719 head of cattle, 605 sheep and 34 pigs.

The Company received in by-products, a quantity of tallow which was used for candles and soap; hides, which were tanned at the Fort or shipped to Sitka for tanning; some butter and a small quantity of wool. From 68 to 101 pods of butter were churned out each year—this small amount is explained by the fact that milk cows were driven long distances to the settlement and gave but little milk. There was some effort to make from the wool, blankets similar to those made by the missionaries, but as no one really understood this business, it was not long continued. From the cattle and sheep, but little revenue was derived.

The first peach tree was brought to Fort Ross by Captain Benzamen, from San Francisco in 1814. In 1820 this tree was bearing fruit. In 1817, Captain L. A. Hagermeister brought grapevine shoots from Lima, Peru, and in 1818, peach trees from Monterey. K. Khlebnikov, in 1820, delivered a hundred trees comprising peach, apple, pear, cherry; the peach trees began to bear in 1828.

Roses were imported from San Francisco and palms from the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands. Watermelons, muskmelons and squashes did remarkable well in some years. As for potatoes and vegetables, they were very plentiful; all the ships were supplied with fresh vegetables in abundance, and many fruits and vegetables were sent to Sitka.

One of the prime purposes of establishing Fort Ross was to be near the sea otter grounds so close to the settlement. The sea otter was plentiful all along the coast from Bodega Bay and into San Francisco bay itself; on his first voyage to the coast of California, Kuskov on the ship *Kadiak* had procured from his Aleut hunters 1451 full-grown otters and 897 young sea otters. In 1811 he made another trip to Bodega Bay, but found the number of otters so decreased that he penetrated into San Francisco bay, where, with twenty-two bidarka of Aleuts, he took enough to make his trip profitable—his twenty-two bidarkas in three months secured 1160 full-grown and 78 young sea otter just inside the Golden Gate.

During the establishment of the Fort and later, the Aleut hunters were used as laborers in cutting and delivering timber, and were not extensively engaged in hunting. At the same time the decrease of sea otters was very noticeable; official statistics indicate that only 714 full-grown and 163 young sea otters were caught between 1812 and 1815, and the decrease from year to year had shown that this fur was virtually exterminated on the coast of California. In 1819 but ten full-grown and three young otters were caught.

Alexander Baranov, realizing that the revenue from the hunting was gone, turned his mind to what he considered a more profitable venture. He conceived the idea of building ships, and gave orders to establish a shipyard in the settlement. Grudin, who had worked for Lincoln, the Sitka ship builder, was selected as master mechanic.

The Company had not tested the California oak for its merits and did not know whether or not the wood was suitable for shipbuilding, but went ahead and constructed vessels from green timber, which, without due process of seasoning, was later found to be entirely unfit for the purpose. Before the ships left the ways, there were evidences of decay which, once present in the wood, soon made the vessel almost porous. The ships sailing from warm to cold climates became unseaworthy within three or four years; not a single vessel of the four built at the settlement remained in commission more than six years. The following vessels were built at Fort Ross: Brig-Schooner *Rumiantzeff*, 160 tons, launched 1819, used until 1823; Brig *Buldakoff*, 200 tons, built in 1820; cruised along the coast as far as Santa Barbara; made several trips to Sitka, bringing supplies (in 1826 it was so far gone that it was beached and used for storage); the ship *Volga* launched 1822, 160 tons; was in commission until 1827, when it was found so far decayed as to be unseaworthy, and was loaded with wood and sent to the island of Atka, where it was used as a storehouse; the brig *Kiakhta*, 200 tons, was launched in 1824; she was built of pine, with oak ribs and keel. This vessel made several trips up and down the coast; and one trip to the Aleutian Islands.

The shipbuilding venture proved unprofitable, and brought much loss to the Company; it was accordingly discontinued after it had been found that California timber was unsuited for ships. Perhaps if the lumber had been well seasoned there might have been another story to tell.

The Fort Ross settlers made tar from the pine and shipped quantities of it to Sitka. Bricks were manufactured, and many thousands sent to Alaska; barrels were made for salting fish, and kegs for butter.

Economically the venture of occupation in California, from which so much was expected, was a complete failure. Had the management imported skilled farmers from their own country, the result would have been gratifying, but the men who worked at Fort Ross were ignorant of agriculture. The ground was never properly tilled.

In 1833 there were fifty Russians at this post, all artisans with no training as farmers; as for the rest, they were all from Alaska, where farming was unknown. The Russians, together with 88 creoles, 83 Aleuts and 72 Indian laborers comprised the population of the Fort, although as many as 150 California Indians were employed at times. The Russians, creoles and Aleuts were either on salaries or employed as day laborers; the California Indians, working at the settlement were paid in food, clothing, etc.

The settlement was managed locally by a director and two assistants who acted as overseers or clerks, and from their reports we have the figures to show that while maintenance costs increased yearly, the revenue decreased.

Cost of Maintenance, Labor and Tools:

1825: 42,030 rubles; 1826: 41,913 rubles; 1827: 43,199 rubles; 1828: 47,638 rubles; 1829: 43,391 rubles; total: 234, 171 rubles.

Revenue from Furs (Sea Otters, Furseal and Hairseal) caught on Farallon Islands: 1826: 15,967 rubles; 1827: 813 rubles; 1828: 53 rubles; 1829: 2,189 rubles; 1830: 1,667 rubles; total: 20,689 rubles.

Revenue from Agriculture, Cattle, Hides and Manufactured products: 1826: 26,904 rubles 1828: 3,619 rubles; 1829: 16,233 rubles; 1830: 3,097 rubles; total: 43,852 rubles.

Total Revenue: 64,542 rubles.

At a casual glance it is quite evident that Fort Ross was rather a white elephant in the hands of the Russians—it did not help the Colonies in the North; it was rather an expensive burden, yet the Russian-American Company lived in hopes of making it pay.

Captain Hagermeister, 1817, writing to the Chief Directors of the company, said: "We cannot exist without our possessions at Bodega Bay," and Baron Wrangell, being fully acquainted with the disadvantages and the great drain on the finances of the Company occasioned by the maintenance of Fort Ross, strongly urged expansion of the Russian holdings, and recommended that the Company acquire land 200 versts into the interior, and occupy all the space and distance to the northern shore of San Francisco Bay.

According to this opinion, the fertile fields along the River Slovinka (Russian River), protected from fogs and ocean winds, were suited to the successful cultivation of wheat, and provided range for thousands of cattle, while the northern side of San Francisco Bay, he pointed out, had safe harbors for ships.

Fearing opposition from foreigners then living in California, the Company was apprehensive as to the advisability of taking possession of this strip of land; it feared that the foreign element would create trouble by inciting the Mexican government against the Russians. This unpleasant situation, Baron Wrangell pointed out, would open negotiations direct with the Mexican government, which would be desirable from the fact that the demands of that government for the evacuation of Fort Ross were incessant.

Some time later a friendly correspondence was carried on between Baron Wrangell and General Figueroa, the California governor, who requested the Russian Colonial officials to bring before the Imperial government, the advisability of opening political relations with a view toward the recognition of the newly-formed Republic of Mexico. This correspondence opened an excellent opportunity to discuss a trade treaty between the two governments, as the Spanish governor also asked Baron Wrangell to impress upon his government the beneficial results to his colonies which would follow this friendly political recognition.

The Imperial government found it impossible at that time to take decisive steps, but expressed a desire that friendly relations be continued. It permitted Baron Wrangell to visit Mexico with a view to opening trade relations between Alaska and California, and it advised him to make a thorough canvass of the commerce within the Republic, and ascertain to what extent the colonies could depend upon procuring all necessary supplies there. It desired that the Company's ship should have free entry into all ports, and be permitted to buy all breadstuff and other commodities for the colonies, while the hunting parties should be allowed to hunt for sea otters and seals along the coast and nearby islands; the proceeds from the hunt to be divided according to agreement.

In carrying out these instructions, Baron Wrangell met with disappointment from the very start. When he arrived at Monterey, he learned of the death of his friend General

Figeroa, upon whom he had largely depended for his success. There was also irregularity in connection with his passport, and it was not vised by the Mexican consul.

With the help of the English consul, Baron Wrangell was able to reach Mexico, and here again he met with disappointment. The President of the Republic, General Santa Anna, was in Texas, quelling an insurrection; the Vice-president Barrakan, to whom Wrangell had letters of introduction, was ill and died shortly after Wrangell arrived. When the new Vice-President was elected, Baron Wrangell had an interview with him, but having no official government documents, he could act only as an accredited representative of the Russian-American Company.

In the meantime, the young Republic of Mexico was recognized by England and France and other European powers, while the Russian government failed to extend recognition. This situation was the cause of marked coolness on the part of the Mexican representatives, and so his mission to Mexico was doomed to failure.

Fully twenty years were given to the expansion, the development and the growth of Fort Ross; in all those years the Colony in Alaska received no material gain from their venture. This situation gave rise to the discussion of abandonment.

The Colonial administration had many times pointed out the economic disadvantages of maintaining the Fort Ross settlement, but the Company was still sanguine of future returns that would repay all its investments.

Finally in 1838, Captain Kuprianov, the chief administrator, transported all the Aleuts from Fort Ross to Kodiak, where their services were sorely needed to augment sea otter parties. It was only then that the Company admitted the futility of continuing such a losing venture.

The Chief Directors of the company reported to the Finance Minister in Russia with a complete statement of the yearly losses, and for illustration gave a detailed statement for the year 1837, in which it was pointed out that the maintenance of the settlement for that year had cost 45,000 rubles, while the returns from fur were only 22,000 rubles and from farming and byproducts only about 10,000 rubles. The Company asked permission in 1838 to abandon the settlement; this permission was granted in 1839, and finally acted upon in 1842.

During the two years previous to final abandonment, all movable property was transferred to Sitka, while the real estate and improvements together with the herds of cattle and live stock, was appraised at 150,000 rubles in value.

Captain John A. Sutter purchased this for 30,000 piastres, and according to the agreement entered into, he was given four years to liquidate his indebtedness—thus after thirty years of hard work, the foothold of the Russians on the shore of California came to naught.

Captain Sutter acquired other lands from the Mexican government, and within a decade, the harbor of San Francisco was filled with the ships of all nations, hurrying toward the great California gold strike.

In conclusion, the writer asks permission to quote from a letter written him by a dear friend residing in San Francisco, touching upon the present condition of the fort:

“Here is what Sir George Simpson says about Fort Ross: ‘At the time the Russians were abandoning it in 1842, I found about a hundred souls, men, women and children, all patriotically delighted to exchange the lovely climate of California for the ungenial skies

os Sitka, and that too, at the expense of making a long sea voyage in a crazy old tub, at the stormiest season of the year; but to this general rule there has been an exception, inasmuch as they had lost two days in waiting—but alas in vain—for a young woman who had abjured alike her country and her husband for the sake of one of the dons of San Francisco.’

“On July 4th, 1925, the old Russian church at Fort Ross opened its doors again to worshippers after almost a century of rest. Father Vladimir Sakovich, rector of the Russian Orthodox church at San Francisco, chose this day in compliment to America, to celebrate the first liturgy in the old Fort since the early Russians sold their Fort to Captain John A. Sutter. Father Sakovich celebrated the liturgy this year, and plans to say the liturgy there each year on this date.

“And now for my visit to the old place: It was an Alaskan day of sun and fog, and sunbeams striking down through the fog on the lazy old green Pacific rolling along the coast—a coast much like that about Kodiak, with round treeless hills, and then a mountain covered with redwoods (in Kodiak it would have been spruce).

“We drove along a mountain road that clung to the steep side, high above the sea, and could look down at the kelp beds and the flocks of black seabirds floating there. Finally we looked ahead and saw a flat place backed by a hill of redwoods. It looked just the kind of a place a Russian could choose to build his settlement (I was judging by Alaska.) And, sure enough, a moment later, we saw the little church, with the Governor’s House (properly a barracks) and the ruined blockhouse near it.

“That is all that remains of old Fort Ross. You can see by the pictures of the Governor’s house—now undergoing repairs and renovations—that it was built exactly like the Russian houses in dear old Sitka. I climbed out of the car and rushed toward the Governor’s house as if to my mother.

“The clapboarding had been removed to insert new legs about the foundation, and the long porch that you Sitka people used to have on your houses, had also been taken away temporarily. We went through the old rooms that had seen so much romance and terror from Spaniards and Indians.

“A friend with me, who is a sailor, said the whole place had been put together by sailormen—ships carpenters. The Californians have just awakened to the fact that they should preserve all this.

“The old church is made of redwood planks, up-ended and put together with great ship spikes. We found it pitifully barn-like inside, and very small, but built to conform with the plans of all Russian churches. The great hewed planks had been once whitewashed but now the whitewash is worn away. Dried ferns tacked to the walls spoke of the decorations made for the last service held there in July, 1926.

“It was a sad-looking little church, and the very ugliest Russian church I’ve ever seen. You know all over Alaska, the Russian churches are beautiful. I was quite downcast—but maybe this was because the little place has been so long neglected.

“Despite all this it fairly vibrated with the romance of the Russians—there is a Russian feel in the air at Fort Ross—air clean and bracing as that of the Aleutians. And out in front on the little point seen from the Governor’s house, are the remains of an old hoist that they used for swinging up freight from the beach below. And there is a sort of roadbed still visible coming up from the beach on which the Aleuts—with backloads of
‘At the time the Russians were abandoning it in 1842, I found about a hundred souls,

men, women and children, all patriotically delighted to exchange the lovely climate of California for the ungainly skies of Stick, and that too, at the expense of making a long sea voyage in a crazy old tub, at the stormiest season of the year; but to this general rule there has been an exception, inasmuch as they had lost two days in waiting—but alas in vain—for a young woman who had abjured alike her country and her husband for the sake of one of the dons of San Francisco.’ On July 4, 1925, the old Russian church at Fort Ross opened its doors again to worshipers after almost a century of rest. Father Vladimir Sakovich, rector of the Russian Orthodox church at San Francisco, chose this day in compliment to America, to celebrate the first liturgy in the old Fort since the early Russians sold their Fort to Captain John A. Sutter. Father Sakovich celebrated the liturgy this year, and plans to say the liturgy there each year on this date.

“And now for my visit to the old place: It was an Alaskan day of sun and fog, and sunbeams striking down through the fog on the lazy old green Pacific rolling along the coast—a coast much like that about Kodiak, with round treeless hills, and then a mountain covered with redwoods (in Kodiak it would have been spruce).

“We drove along a mountain road that clung to the steep side, high above the sea and could look down at the kelp beds and the flocks of black seabirds floating there. Finally we looked ahead and saw a flat place backed by a hill of redwoods. It looked just the kind of a place a Russian could choose to build his settlement (I was judging by Alaska.) And, sure enough, a moment later, we saw the little church, with the Governors House (properly a barracks) and the ruined blockhouse near it.

“That is all that remains of old Fort Ross. You can see by the pictures of the Governor’s house—now undergoing repairs and renovations—that it was built exactly like the Russian houses in dear old Sitka. I climbed out of the car and rushed toward the Governor’s house as if to my mother.

“The clapboarding had been removed to insert new legs about the foundation, and the long porch that you Sitka people used to have on your houses, had also been taken away temporarily. We went through the old rooms that had seen so much romance and terror of sea otter taken from under the very nose of the padres in San Francisco bay and the Farralones—used to come up to the warehouse near the Governor’s house.

“It is strange to see this little church so different in style from the adobe Missions the padres were building at the same time. It looks foreign down here, very picturesque. There is no trace of the stockade that once surrounded the fort; the old orchard that the Russians planted is still there.

“The apple trees of the Russians at Fort Ross have brought a crop regularly every year for 113 years. In 1925 the yield was large. These trees escaped all the blight of California and the old timers say it is because a Russian priest sprinkled with Holy Water when he planted them.”

(IV) KASHEVAROV, ANDREI PETROVICH (Andrew Kashevarof) (1863-1940), son of Petr Filippovich, a priest, and Mariia Arkhimandritov. Like his father and his brothers Lavrentii, Nikolai, Vladimir and Vasili, Andrei became a priest. At the age of seven, he entered the Bishop's School in San Francisco; in 1880, at 17, he returned to Alaska and became a lay reader and teacher in the school at St. Michael's Cathedral and Sitka, with the right to wear the dalmatic. In 1881-1886 he taught parish schools at Sitka and San Francisco, gratis. In 1887 he was appointed teacher of English in the Indian school at Sitka. In 1889, by his petition, he was readmitted to the clergy and appointed song leader in the Sitka church. He also taught English and singing in the Kolosh (Tlingit) church school at Sitka. In 1893 he was transferred to Killisnoo, to hold a similar position. Later that year he acquired a wife, 18 year old Martha Bolshanin, and his first parish, the village of Nuchek, with orders to open a parish school there, plus Prince William Sound and part of the Aleutian chain. He covered this vast area by baidarka, as time and weather permitted. In 1897 he transferred to Kodiak. Three years later, in 1900, he was transferred back to Sitka as teacher of the parish school, and in 1904 was ordained priest. In 1905 he was appointed director of the Parish School, in 1906 he was rewarded with epigonation and appointed rector of the Sitka Cathedral. In 1908 he was rewarded with the pointed biretta, and in 1909 was appointed Dean of Alaska churches. In 1910 he was sent to Jackson, California, where he worked for a year with Montenegrin miners, then in 1912 was transferred to the Seattle parish for a year, and then to Juneau. In 1913 he was rewarded with the upright biretta. In 1916 he was appointed a permanent member of the Alaska Ecclesiastical Consistory, and in 1917 was promoted to the rank of archpriest.

In 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, Father Kashevarov's salary as a priest was cut off. He lived precariously as a part-time music teacher, customs officer, clerk at the weather bureau, and librarian in the office of the Governor, in addition to continuing to serve as the parish priest. Eventually he approached the Territorial Legislature with the proposal that the legislators commission him to assemble a collection of Eskimo and Indian artifacts, and to establish a Territorial Museum and enlarged Historical Library. The proposal was approved, and in 1920 he was appointed curator of the Territorial Library and Museum. He was able to use his great knowledge of Alaska geography its history, and of the native people in his new position. Thousands of tourists felt his warmth and enthusiasm as he explained his treasures and their interest and esteem may have been a factor in his decision not to accept the highest honor the Church had to offer. He had been made an Archpriest, had received the archbishop's palista and mitre (the highest recognition the church can bestow on its non-celibate members). When his wife died in 1931, he was offered the post of Bishop of Alaska, but declined because of his desire to continue his other work and interests. The church thereupon made him an archimandrite, an honor almost as great, and less demanding. He continued his work at the Museum until his death on 3 April 1940, after suffering a stroke. Born while Alaska was still under Russian rule, he was a favored speaker at Alaska Day celebrations, and recognized widely as an authority on Alaska history.