



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

Title: A journal of a Round the World Voyage on the Sloop Kamchatka

Author (s): Fyodor F. Matiushkin

Source: Fort Ross Conservancy Library

URL: <http://www.fortross.org/lib.html>

Unless otherwise noted in the manuscript, each author maintains copyright of his or her written material.

Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC) asks that you acknowledge FRC as the distributor of the content; if you use material from FRC's online library, 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: "Digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material."

Also please consider becoming a member of Fort Ross Conservancy to ensure our work of promoting and protecting Fort Ross continues: <http://www.fortross.org/join.htm>.

This online repository, funded by Renova Fort Ross Foundation, is brought to you by Fort Ross Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) and California State Park cooperating association. FRC's mission is to connect people to the history and beauty of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks.

By Fyodor F. Matiushkin. From "A Journal of a Round-the-World Voyage on the Sloop *Kamchatka*, under the Command of Captain Golovnin", in Leonid A. Shur, *To the Shores of the New World: From Unpublished Writings of Russian Travelers in the Early Nineteenth Century*. Moscow: Nauka, 1971. Pp. 66-70. Translated from Russian text by Stephen Watrous.

On September 21 [1818, Old Style], we sighted Bodega Bay.ⁱ Four Aleuts who were with us were given presents, and we sent them ashore; in the face of a strong south-southeast wind we reached the entrance and dropped anchor. There is an outpost there, in a rather small cove, which has been named after Count Rumiantsev. A brig with the same name is also there, built by simple promyshlenniks who have no experience in shipbuilding.ⁱⁱ Its navigator, a non-commissioned officer named Tumanin, is also its captain. He welcomed us with a seven-gun salute and soon came out to meet us himself. He was quite pleased to see some compatriots and many acquaintances in his isolation. He and two Russian promyshlenniks live alone here on board ship. There are no buildings at Rumiantsev Bay, except for a single warehouse. Even the natives,ⁱⁱⁱ who lead a roving life, often leave them behind, and they become quite like orphans in this desolate and distant corner of the earth.

This same day I went on shore, and since the entire area was deserted and hilly, I walked along the shoreline. About a mile beyond the anchorage I saw a puff of smoke from behind a small promontory. I climbed it and saw a band of New Albion nomads. They all looked at me, but since I was aware of their peace-loving nature and special affection toward Russians, I approached them boldly and soon noticed our painter in their midst.^{iv} Surrounded by savages, he laughed and played with them, while drawing their pictures. Most of all, he amused them when they saw some one of them on paper. Mikhail Tikhonovich drew many of them just for pleasure, and from these he made two paintings. One represents their chief, lying in a hut of branches and reeds, at the point of death. His wife is in tears, and several men surround his bed. One of them, with a bunch of feathers, seems to be acting both as a physician (for he is pulling straps across the sick man's stomach) and as a priest, telling the sick man's fortune. The other painting shows a woman cooking food. [below]

These people get everything from nature without the slightest effort. Born in a temperate, fair climate, they need no clothing. The men go about completely naked, while the women cover themselves with a coyote skin. The seeds which they gather are quite like rye and provide them with their sustenance. After harvesting, all they need to do is burn the dried out plants, and these soon sprout up again. They prepare for themselves another kind of food from acorns: they crush them and then put them into a pit dug in the sand. Here they leach them a few times until the acorns lose all their bitterness. When toasted, they get a very pleasant taste. Finally, the fish, which they catch with nets, are cooked with herbs. But most remarkable of all are their boats, which are made of rushes. When someone sits on them (not in them, for they are tied together like little floats and you sit on top of them) and sets a net, the whole boat submerges, and sometimes no more than a head is visible above the water.

Since they lead a nomadic life, they regard it as superfluous to make their own utensils, which would cost them much time and labor, and which they could not take along while moving from place to place. As for their weapons, their bows and arrows are crafted to perfection, for they are almost constantly at war with one another. At the tip of the arrow is a sharpened flintstone, which they rub with poison, which they get from some kind of root. They stretch their bows to get the greatest elasticity out of the bowstring. The strength and speed with which they shoot their arrows is extraordinary; once let fly, they instantly disappear from view.

After I walked along the shore a bit more, it began to get dark, and I headed back. The entire expanse around Bodega Bay is completely desolate. On the most distant ridges evergreen stands are visible, but here only low shrubs grow, along with a great profusion of pretty flowers, which give off a pleasant fragrance toward evening. Having exchanged a few trifles with the savages, I hurried to leave their hut, since the large number of insects that live in their huts began to bother me. They multiply to the point where the natives abandon their homes and choose another location just to get rid of them. Except for this kind of uncleanness, which stems from the fact that they have no regular housing, the California Indians are very tidy. They have steam baths, which are never left empty; both men and women rub their bodies with nothing at all.

The sun was almost setting when I reached Port Rumiantsev, where our longboat had been filling up with water. I got on board to go out to the sloop. We still had not been able to cast off, when we met Kuskov and several baidarkas, which had left Fort Ross at our captain's invitation (our four Aleuts had gone there this morning). When we left the harbor, where the water was a smooth as glass, and reached the breakers and then the open bay, the swell of the waves was so great that not only did the rudder pull loose from my hands, but it completely broke off. Only with great effort did we row back to the sloop.

The next day, Kuskov, who was Baranov's friend, assistant, and adviser, came to visit the captain. The old man was very happy to see us a second time^v and to present us with fresh provisions again. He spent an entire day with us, while waiting for a baidara^{vi} with foodstuffs to arrive; it reached us only on the following day, due to the strong winds that delayed it. He complained about the Spanish, who had put up all kinds of obstacles to keep his colony from growing (quite naturally) and would not sell steers, cows, and especially horses, to his little settlement. He stated that it was only the natives' attachment to the Russians and their hatred of the Spanish that encouraged him. The Spanish had expanded their hunt for people to Tomales Bay itself.^{vii} By now all the Indian bands

fled for safety under the guns of Fort Ross or to Port Rumiantsev, where they think that four falconets and three Russians can defend them from the Spanish.

Last year when a large number of people gathered at Fort Ross^{viii} and asked for his protection, Kuskov persuaded them to settle in the forests and mountain gorges and then to attack the Spanish unexpectedly. The savages followed his advice and settled in the forests that are visible from Port Rumiantsev, toward Tomales Bay. Once the Spanish became aware of this, they gave up their pursuit.

Moreover, Kuskov complained about Lt. Kotzebue, who invited him to San Francisco and asked him imperiously in the presence of a Spanish official by what right he occupied these lands, which he should have to account for. Afterward he went off with all the Spaniards to his cabin, left Kuskov upstairs, and ordered vodka to be taken out to him on the quarter-decks. The old man spoke with tears in his eyes: "If Mr. Kotzebue did not respect me personally, then why did he lower my reputation in the presence of Spaniards?" Kuskov took out his revenge as follows: when Kotzebue asked him the cost of the food supplies which he delivered to the *Rurik*,^{ix} he replied, "Nothing, when I give them to my countrymen." [The account continues with descriptions of Kotzebue's behavior in Hawaii and Kamchatka.]

We spent a few more days here, so that we could learn from Kuskov certain details about company affairs and take in fresh water,^x which was beset with great difficulties, due to the strong southeast winds which persisted during our entire visit. Bodega Bay is exposed from the southwest to the southeast, and only facing south is it protected by shoals, which extend for about three-quarters of a mile out. With a southeast wind, which is quite dangerous, the waves get very rough.

The very day we weighed anchor the Indian chief sought to pay us a visit. He came out to us in a longboat, wearing two shirts (given as a present to him for some service) and a garland of intertwined grasses. Looking over our ship, he was impressed by its size. Although our captain^{xi} gave him some axes, knives, etc., most important of all for him was a Russian military flag, which he was told to raise as soon as he saw a ship like ours. On such occasions he was promised valuable gifts from our fellow countrymen. This Indian, Valennoela,^{xii} who visited us, is not an elder of the settlement here, but because of the chief's illness, he was chosen by his comrades on account of his bravery.^{xiii}

Langsdorff mentions in his travels that the Californians look quite stupid, but it is hard to agree with this.^{xiv} It seems to me that the face is a mirror of the soul. They are cheerful, open-hearted, and brave [when fighting] against their countrymen, but they are afraid of European firearms, according to what we were told by the Russians who have lived with them for over a year and understand their language. As for the women, some rather attractive faces are found among them. If another European ship should arrive here, they would come across more than one shirt and kerchief that we left for them. The men are not jealous at all, and it seems that women do not join together with them in any formal way but mutual love.

When our guest left us, we weighed anchor and departed.

i Matiushkin calls it "Small Bodega" (*Malaia Bodega*), in contrast to "Greater Bodega" (Tomales Bay) and to "Port Rumiantsev" (Campbell Cove, at the entrance to Bodega Lagoon).

ii Count Nikolai Rumiantsev (d. 1826) was formerly Foreign Minister and presently an important patron of the Russian-American Company. The brig *Rumiantsev* (identified as a schooner by Khlebnikov) was the first major vessel constructed at Fort Ross. Begun in 1816, it was launched earlier in 1818; its capacity was 160 tons.

iii The Russian term *dikie* (literally: savages) is translated here, variously as: natives, wild people, and savages (the latter not necessarily meant as derogatory in Matiushkin's time).

iv Mikhail Tikhonovich Tikhonov (1789-1862) was age 29 at the time of the visit. Born a serf, he was graduated from the Imperial Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg.

v Matiushkin and the *Kamchatka* had briefly stopped at Fort Ross two weeks earlier.

vi The baidara, larger than the baidarka, was used for carrying cargo and more than three passengers.

vii Literally, "Greater Bodega Bay."

viii Matiushkin uses the early term "Slavyansk."

ix Captain Kotzebue's ship, which visited San Francisco in October 1816.

x From the spring-fed pond on Bodega Head, above Campbell Cove.

xi Vasily M. Golovnin, captain of the sloop *Kamchatka*.

xii Golovnin's account of the California visit refers to him as "Valenila"; *Puteshestvie* (Moscow, 1965), p. 178.

xiii Painter Mikhail Tikhonov's sketch of the ailing chief can be found in both Russian and English versions of Golovnin's account.

xiv Georg H. von Langsdorff, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise* (Frankfurt, 1812), p. 142. Langsdorff accompanied Nikolai Rezanov to San Francisco in 1806 as ship physician.