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THE RUSSIANS AND ROSS TO A CONCLUSION.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUSSIANS AT ROSS BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE TOO NARROW A FIELD—WILL BUY MORE TERRITORY OR SELL THEIR ESTABLISHMENTS—THEIR OVERTURES ARE NOT WELL RECEIVED BY MEXICAN AUTHORITIES—IN 1834 VALLEJO WAS COMMANDANTE AT SONOMA AND BEGAN TO LOOK SHARP AFTER THE RUSSIANS AT ROSS—THE RUSSIANS OFFER THEIR PROPERTY FOR SALE—INVENTORY OF THEIR PROPERTY—IN 1841 THE RUSSIANS SELL TO CAPTAIN JOHN A. SUTTER AND TAKE THEIR DEPARTURE FOR ALASKA—SUTTER TOOK MOST OF THE STOCK AND SOME OF THE HOUSES TO HIS SACRAMENTO ESTABLISHMENT—BIDWELL AND BENNITZ AT ROSS AS SUTTER'S AGENTS—A TRIP TO ROSS TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO—BENNITZ'S STORY ABOUT SHOOTING A GRIZZLY BEAR—FORT ROSS AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN 1888.

AGAIN we turn to that busy bee-hive of industry, the Muscovite settlement at Fort Ross. We have somewhat in advance of 1830 shown what had been accomplished by that colony. The time had now come when its future existence had to be determined. There was no motive for the Russians to hold an occupancy limited by Bodega Bay on the south and the Gualala River on the north. At best, there was but a narrow bench of seaboard available for either farming or grazing purposes. True, there was a wealth of forest back of this mesa, but they had already learned that this timber was not durable as material for ship-building. They had pretty well exhausted the supply of timber from which pine pitch could be manufactured. Tan bark for the carrying on of their tanneries was their most promising continuing supply for the future. The agents of the Alaska Fur Company had already signified to the California authorities a willingness

to vacate Fort Ross upon payment for improvements. Through the intricate evolutions of red tape this was transmitted to the viceroy of Mexico, and as that functionary took it as an evidence that the Russian colony at Ross was on its last legs, refusal was made on the ground that the Russians, having made improvements on Spanish territory, with material acquired from Spanish soil, they ought not to expect payment for the same. While this is not the language, it is the spirit of the view the viceroy took of the subject. As a legal proposition this was doubtless true, but as a matter of fact, at any time after 1825 the superintendent at Ross had at his command sufficient of the armament and munitions of war to have marched from Ross to San Diego without let or hindrance, so far as the viceroy of Mexico was concerned. These Dons and Hidalgos seemed, however, to consider their rubrics to be more powerful than swords or cannon. As their

overtures for sale had been thus summarily disposed of, the cold, impassive Muscovites pursued the even tenor of their way, and as the lands around Fort Ross became exhausted by continuous farming they extended their farming operations southward between the Russian River and Bodega Bay, and ultimately inland to the neighborhood of the present village of Bodega Corners. At the latter place there were several Russian graves, in the midst of which there stood a Greek cross, long after the Americans came into occupancy. The earliest American settlers in that neighborhood aver that the Russians had a grist-mill some two or three miles easterly from Bodega Corners. Certain it is that the authorities at San Francisco had notification that the Russians contemplated occupation for farming purposes as far inland as the present site of Santa Rosa. These rumors, whether true or not, doubtless accelerated the movement of Spanish colonization in that direction.

Governor Wrangell, now having control in Alaska, seems to have taken an intelligent view of the whole situation, and realized that unless the company, of which he was head representative, could obtain undisputed possession of all the territory north of the Bay of San Francisco and eastward to the Sacramento, it was useless to attempt a continuance at Ross. To achieve this end the Alaska Company was willing to buy the establishments already at San Rafael and Sonoma. The fact that the California authorities submitted these propositions to the Mexican government, now free from the yoke of Spanish rule, would indicate that by them such a proposition was not considered in the light of a heinous offense. Alvarado was then at the head of the California government and no doubt he looked with great distrust, if not alarm, upon the number of Americans who were beginning to find their way into California. But General Vallejo, who was now almost autocrat on the north side of the Bay of San Francisco, was not, probably, so averse to Americans, as he had already three brothers-in-law of Yankee blood. Through these kinsmen, who were all

gentlemen of good intelligence and education, Vallejo had become well informed in reference to the push and energy of the American people, and hence it is quite certain that he did not favor any permanent occupancy here by any European power. In truth, while the California government had confined itself to wordy pen remonstrances with the occupants of Ross, in 1840 Vallejo seems to have made quite a show of calling Rotchef, the then superintendent at Ross, to accountability for having allowed the American ship *Lausanne* to land and discharge passengers at Bodega as though it were a free port. Some of these passengers, who went to Sonoma, were incarcerated by the irate Vallejo, and he even sent a file of soldiers to Bodega to give warning that such infractions would lead to serious consequences if persisted in. This was the nearest to an open rupture of amicable relations that ever occurred between Spaniard and Muscovite on this coast that we find any record of, and this could not have been of a very sanguinary nature, for it seems that Vallejo and Rotchef were on social good terms afterward.

The proposed acquisition of territory by Governor Wrangell met with no encouragement from the Mexican Government. In reference to this matter Bancroft says: "The intention of the Russians to abandon Ross and their wish to sell their property there, had, as we have seen, been announced to Alvarado, and by him to the Mexican government, before the end of 1840. In January 1841, Vallejo, in reporting to the minister of war his controversy with Rotchef and Krupicurof, mentioned the proposed abandonment, taking more credit to himself than the facts could justify, as a result of that controversy. The Russians had consulted him as to their power to sell the buildings as well as livestock to a private person, and he had been told that 'the nation had the first right,' and would have to be consulted. The fear that impelled him at that time to answer thus cautiously was that some foreigners from the Columbia or elsewhere might outbid any citizen of California, and thus raise a question of sovereignty, which

might prove troublesome in the future to Mexican interests. Vallejo also urged the government to furnish a garrison, and authorize the planting of a colony at the abandoned post. In February, however, Kostromitinof, representing the company, proposed to sell the property to Vallejo himself for \$30,000, payable half in money or bills of the Hudson Bay Company, and half in produce delivered at Yerba Buena. The General expressed a willingness to make the purchase, but could not promise a definite decision on the subject before July or August. Pending the decision, the Russian agent seems to have entered, perhaps secretly, into negotiations with John A. Sutter, who at that time was not disposed to buy anything but moveable property. Meanwhile a reply came from Mexico, though by no means a satisfactory one; since the government—evidently with some kind of an idea that the Russian officials had been frightened away, leaving a flourishing settlement to be taken possession of by the Californians—simply sent useless instructions about the details of occupation and form of government to be established. In July Kostromitinof returned from Sitka, and negotiations were recommended. Alvarado was urged to come to Sonoma, but declined; though he advised Vallejo that in the absence of instructions from Mexico the Russians had no right to dispose of the real estate. An elaborate inventory of the property offered for sale at \$30,000 was made out, but Vallejo's best offer seems to have been \$9,000 for the live stock alone."

In a foot note Bancroft gives the inventory of property offered for sale which is as follows: "Square fort of logs, 1088 feet in circumference, twelve feet high, with two towers; commandant's house of logs (old), 36x48 feet double boarded roof, six rooms with corridor and kitchen; ditto (new) of logs, 24x48 feet, six rooms and corridor; house for revenue officers, 22x60 feet, ten rooms; barracks, 24x66 feet, eight rooms; three warehouses; new kitchen; jail; chapel, 24x36 feet, with a belfry, and a well fifteen feet deep. Outside of the

fort: blacksmith shop, tannery, bath-house, cooper's shop, bakery, carpenter's shop, two windmills for grinding, one mill moved by animals, three threshing floors, a well, a stable, sheep-cote, hog-pen, dairy house, two cow stables, corral, ten sheds, eight baths, ten kitchens, and twenty-four houses, nearly every one having an orchard. At Kostromitinof rancho, house, farm buildings, corral, and boat for crossing the river Slavianka. At Knebnikof rancho, adobe house, farm buildings, bath, mill, corral. At Tschernich, or Don Jorge's rancho, house, stone fences, etc. At Bodega, warehouse 30x60 feet, three small houses, bath, ovens, corrals. As this list of improvements was made out by Russian hands it may be accepted as a true statement of the conditions at and in the neighborhood of Ross in the last year of Russian occupation there. The only omission of consequence seems to have been the orchard some distance back of the fort, on the hillside, and a vineyard of 2000 vines at what is designated "Don Jorge's rancho." In reference to this rancho, Belcher in his notes of travel in 1837, mentioned a rancho between Ross and Bodega claimed by a *ci-devant* Englishman (D. Gorgy), yielding 3,000 bushels of grain in good years.

Governor Alvara as well as Vallejo evidently thought that they had Kostromitinof in a corner so far as his ability to sell the Ross property was concerned, and their only real concern was lest he would make a bonfire of the buildings rather than leave them for Mexican occupation. But in this they were mistaken, for a purchaser was found in Captain John A. Sutter. In reference to the sale thus consummated Bancroft says: "Sutter, like Vallejo, had at first wished to purchase the live-stock only; but he would perhaps have bought anything at any price if it could be obtained on credit; at any rate, after a brief hesitation a bargain was made in September. The formal contract was signed by Kostromitinof and Sutter in the office of the sub-prefect at San Francisco, with Vioget and Leese as witnesses, December 13. By its terms Sutter

was put in possession of all the property at Ross and Bodega, except the land, as specified in the inventory, and he was to pay for it in four yearly installments, beginning September 1, 1842. The first and second payments were to be \$5,000 each, and the others of \$10,000; the first three were to be in produce, chiefly wheat, delivered at San Francisco free of duties and tonnage; and the fourth was to be in money. The establishment at New Helvetia and the property at Bodega and the two ranchos of Khabnikof and Tschernich, which property was to be left intact in possession of the company's agents were pledged as guarantees for the payment. It would seem that Alvarado, while insisting that the land did not belong to the company and could not be sold, had yielded his point about the buildings, perhaps in the belief that no purchaser could be found; for the Russians say that the contract was approved by the California government, and it is certain that there was no official disapproval of its terms."

It will be borne in mind that Kostromitinof, who executed this contract with Captain Sutter, was the head officer of the Alaska government while, at the time, Rotchef was manager at Ross. When it came to a delivery of the property Sutter seems to have induced Manager Rotchef to give him a writing ante-dating the contract above referred to one day, in which Rotchef certified that the lands held by the company for twenty-nine years was included in the sale to M. Le Capitaine Sutter of the other effects of the company for the sum of \$30,000. It was upon the shadowy title to land thus acquired by certificate of a subordinate officer who had no power to confirm any such sale, that Russian title to land along the coast became a stalking spectacle among American settlers in after years.

Previous to this sale of the Ross and Bodega property to Sutter, a portion of the former occupants there had been transferred to Alaska stations. Manager Rotchef, together with the remaining employes of the company, took their departure from Ross in the late days of

1841 or early in January of 1842, on board the *Constantine*, bound for Alaska. While all of them, doubtless, had cherished associations and memories of the land to which they returned, we imagine that it was not without sore and sad hearts many of them watched the receding outlines of Fort Ross and the evergreen forests that forms its enchanting back-ground. Thus, in a day, where for nearly a third of a century had been heard the ringing of hammer and anvil; the noisy labor of ship-carpenters and calkers and the din of coopers, a sudden silence fell, seemingly like that which hovered over that quiet spot just south of the fort where a Greek cross marked the last resting place of those who had ended their life-work there. Even the stock that had been reared there were gathered together and driven to the Sacramento valley ranch of Captain Sutter. And as if the hand of fate had turned entirely against Ross, Sutter, by means of a schooner he had acquired in the purchase from the Russians, even carried away from Ross several buildings with which to adorn the inner court of his fort at New Helvetia. This will account for the absence at Ross of many buildings enumerated in the catalogue at the time of sale by the Russians. As Fort Ross occupies a first prominence in the history of Sonoma County it will not be out of place to follow its history to its end in this chapter.

In reference to the departure of the Russians from Fort Ross, Bancroft says: "One Russian, and perhaps several, remained on the ranches to look out for the company's interests. Sutter sent Robert Ridley to assume charge for him at first; but John Bidwell took his place early in 1842, and was in turn succeeded by William Bennitz late in 1843. Meanwhile most of the moveable property, including the cannon, implements, and most of the cattle, was removed to New Helvetia. The few hundred cattle left behind soon became so wild that if meat was needed it was easier to catch a deer or bear. The Californians made no effort to occupy the abandoned fortress; since having

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virtually consented to the sale of everything but the land, the government had no property to be protected there."

As already stated William Bennitz took possession of the Ross property as Sutter's agent in 1843. He subsequently leased the property, in about 1845, and still later purchased the buildings and fort and became possessor of the Muniz or Fort Ross grant extending along the coast from the Russian River northward to a point just above the present Timber Cove. Mr. Bennitz, with his family, lived at Fort Ross until 1867, when he sold the property and removed to Oakland. In 1874 he went to the Argentine Republic, and died there in 1876.

The writer visited Fort Ross twenty-seven years ago, when the palisade walls of the enclosure were still in good preservation, as also the buildings within, together with the Greek chapel and hectagonal block-houses described above by Duhant Cilly. As even then the country from Bodega to the Gualala River was comparatively unsettled by Americans, we will here introduce our description of the trip as it appeared under the caption of "Editorial Jottings by the Wayside," in the *Argus* of July 30, 1861:

"Leaving Petaluma in the afternoon, a few hours' ride brought us to Bloomfield, where we were greeted by numerous friends; and accepted the hospitality of our old friend W. B. Wood, of the firm of Wood & Arthur. It is hardly necessary to inform our readers that this flourishing village is located in the center of Big Valley; and that the valley and upland surrounding is very prolific in its yield of cereals, 'spnds,' and Republicans. A dress parade, in the evening, of a company of youthful zouaves, who marched to music extracted from a tin can, convinced us that the martial spirit of that village was thoroughly aroused, and that with such a home-guard Bloomfield can bid defiance to Davis and his emissaries.

"At an early hour in the morning, we were galloping down the valley in the direction of Bodega Corners. On either side of the road,

and as far as the eye could scan, was one uninterrupted vista of grain fields, in every stage of harvesting, from the gavels that were dropping from the reapers that were clattering on every hand, up to the shock in the field or the new made stack in the barnyard. Bodega Corners is on the Smith grant, and consists of a hotel, two stores, a Catholic church, blacksmith shop, etc. After passing the Corners we were without chart or compass, having entered upon a region by us unexplored. For several miles our course lay along Salmon Creek, the road in many places being arched over by the tangled wildwood through which it was cut; then taking a bridle trail leading over a mountain that overlooked the deep blue ocean, we followed its zig-zag windings to the mouth of the Russian River. Here we performed a feat only second to that of Moses and his followers crossing the Red Sea with dry sandals: the sea swell having cast up a barrier of sand across the mouth of the river, forming a bridge upon which we crossed, without our steed dipping his feet in water. He evidently regarded it as a dangerous undertaking, for every time the surf, after receding as if to gather strength, would come rolling up hissing and seething, narrowing the space down to fifteen or twenty feet between the deep river on the one hand and the briny deep on the other, he would attempt to take the back track, apparently having lost all confidence in either our prudence or judgment. Across the river, our course lay along the coast; and as Fort Ross was twelve miles distant, without a human habitation intervening, we whiled away the hours by noting the ever-varying landscape or watching the surf as it broke in a long line of white spray against the rock-bound coast; or anon the eye would be relieved by the appearance of a coaster, with full-spread canvas, gliding over the billows with the grace of a sea gull. Passing over a spur of the mountain clothed with a heavy forest of redwood and fir, we entered an opening from whence we looked down upon Fort Ross, on the level plain below.

"Before proceeding further, it may not be

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out of place to inform our readers that Fort Ross was founded some fifty years ago by Russians, who settled at that point for the purpose of capturing sea otter; which pursuit they followed for perhaps twenty years. Aside from the fort buildings, enclosed by a high and substantial palisade wall over one hundred yards square, there was, at one period, some sixty dwellings; but they have crumbled and passed away. After they left this coast, the property changed hands several times; but was purchased by the present proprietor, Mr. Bennitz, eighteen years ago, and he has been in occupation ever since.

As we descended the slope toward the Fort we felt as if approaching a spot entitled to a prominent place in the antiquity of our State. The Greek church of Russian architecture that forms one corner of the quadrangle; the two-story rectangular sentry-house of solid hewn timber, forming the diagonal corners of the palisade, and with loop-holes for cannon and small arms; and the massive gates which protect the front entrance; conjured up to our mind conjectures of the scenes of which it was the theater, long, long years ago.

Having a letter of introduction to Mr. Bennitz, we dismounted, and the ponderous gate yielded to our pressure and swung back creaking upon its rusty hinges. All the appointments inside were in keeping with those without; strength and durability predominating over the ornamental. The substantial dwelling, the outhouses ranged around the square, the well in the center, the four huge mastiffs of the St. Bernard and Newfoundland breed that fondled around us as we approached the dwelling, completed a picture that came nearer our conception of the surroundings of some of the old feudal barons than anything we ever experienced before. We presented our letter to Mr. Bennitz, who is a very intelligent German, and he at once extended to us the hospitality of his mansion. Mr. Bennitz lives in a world by himself; having a domain that extends from the mouth of Russian River, eighteen miles up

the coast, and untenanted except by his *vaqueros*, who are stationed at various points to take care of his stock. His isolated position deprives his children of the advantages of a public school; but to atone for this he has employed a private teacher, competent to impart instruction in both the English and German languages.

Refreshed by our night's sojourn at Fort Ross we continued on our journey up the coast. The first place worthy of note above the Fort is Timber Cove. Here, our late fellow-townsmen Mr. Kalkman, is located, and in company with Mr. Snaple, owns a mill which is turning out about 25,000 feet of lumber every twenty-four hours. Two schooners were taking in cargoes of lumber for San Francisco market. The proprietors have constructed a substantial railway extending from the mill half a mile up the cañon, down which they bring saw-logs on a car.

Four miles above Timber Cove we passed Salt Point. Duncan's mill used to be located at this place; but has been removed to a point two miles distant from the mouth of Russian River, in consequence of which this Point has lost considerable of its importance, as is manifest by its group of tenantless houses; but its quarry of excellent stone, considerable of which is being shipped to the navy yards at Mare Island, may give new vigor to the place.

Four miles beyond Salt Point we passed Fisk's mill. This mill cuts about 8,000 feet of lumber daily. Its supply of timber is inexhaustible; and we hope its proprietors may reap the rich reward which their enterprise merits.

By noon we had reached a distance of twenty miles above Fort Ross, and we stopped for refreshments at the Ranch House of Bealer, the claimant of the German grant. Here is a stretch of plain extending up and down the coast for ten miles, that is unsurpassed in beauty of location or fertility of soil anywhere between Point Reyes and Point Arenas. The plain varies from one-quarter to two miles in breadth, and with just sufficient incline from the foot hills to the beach to afford a splendid sea view. The mountains bordering it are covered with a

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perfect wilderness of forest, of incalculable value.

“Ten miles more had to be traversed up the coast before we turned our face homeward; and Chris. Stingle, of the Ranch House, volunteered to act as our guide and companion. We were soon dashing pellmell over the plain up the coast; Chris. in the meantime entertaining us by relating hunting adventures and pointing out spots where he had killed elk, bear, or other game of lesser consequence. Five miles brought us to the crossing of the Gualala River, where we entered Mendocino County. Here the mountains closed in upon the beach, and timber stood so close upon the brink that if uprooted it would fall in the surf below. Up to this point we had found the roads and trails reasonably good, but those five miles from the Gualala to Fish Rock were the concentrated essence of break-neck roads. Deep gorge after gorge lay athwart our way, and in many places a false step would have precipitated both horse and rider down to certain destruction. Before reaching this point we had been so indiscreet as to inform our companion that we had had considerable equestrian experience, and as he took the lead and did not dismount, a sense of honor prompted us to remain in the saddle even at the risk of our neck.

“At Fish Rock there is a mill in process of erection, in which will be placed the machinery formerly used in the Perkins mill, Bodega. This is a good location, there being an inexhaustible supply of good timber and a secure harbor for vessels to lay while receiving cargoes of lumber.

“We returned to the Ranch House that night, and as tired as we were, we did ample justice to the bachelor fare of Chris. and his two companions. In the morning we were in saddle bright and early, and accompanied by our companion of the previous day, who accompanied us several miles on our return, started on our way down the coast. We had rode about two miles when the practiced eye of Chris. spied a grey fox between us and the beach. It allowed

us to approach within forty paces, when a shot from our revolver warned it to seek safety in the chapparel on the foot-hills half a mile distant. The chase across the level plain was spirited and exciting, our horses seeming to enjoy the sport, strained every nerve to overhaul his fox-ship, and succeeded several times in doing so and attempted to jump upon him, but with the cunning, characteristic of his tribe, by tacking and doubling he finally outgenerated us and reached cover. So ended our fox chase. A few miles further on we parted with our companion and continued on our course down the coast alone. At night-fall we were again welcomed to the hospitality of the Fort Ross mansion. The next day being the Sabbath, the rest for which it was set apart was needed by both ourself and our jaded horses, but as circumstances rendered our immediate return necessary, we bade our host and his excellent lady good-by at eight o'clock in the morning and at eight o'clock in the evening arrived in Petaluma, having rode forty-five miles mostly over a very mountainous country.”

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At the time of our visit to Fort Ross above described, Mr. Bennitz related to us many thrilling adventures in connection with his residence there. Some years later we wrote a series of California sketches entitled “Wayside Memories” and one of the sketches under the caption of “A Random Shot” was a recital of an occurrence near Fort Ross, as related to us by Bennitz. We reproduce it here:

“Said Mr. Bennitz: ‘At the time I purchased the Fort Ross property there were around and in the neighborhood of the Fort a large number of Indians. Voluntarily they have become almost a part of the estate and as obedient to my orders as if mind, soul and body. I then raised a large amount of grain, and had thousands of head of cattle, which gave me ample opportunity to utilize the labor of these untutored aborigines. As my influence over them mainly depended on the kindness and consideration with which they were treated, I let no opportunity pass to give them evidence of my

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regard for their pleasure and welfare. They, like all Indians I know of, were passionately fond of personal decoration, and for ornamentation prized nothing more highly than the plumage of birds. One day my Indians were noticing some vultures, or California condors, on the pine trees some distance up the mountain side back of the Fort, and I overheard them expressing a wish that they had some of the feathers.

“Saying nothing I quietly took my gun and sallied forth, determined if possible to gratify their desire. By tacking backward and forward along the mountain side I gradually worked my way up to the trees where the vultures were. The heavy foliage of the pines prevented my getting a ready view of the game I was seeking. With my gun cocked and the muzzle pointing up I was moving quietly side-wise with eyes peering into the canopy of boughs, when I was startled by the breaking of a stick close to my right.

“One look was enough to set every hair of my head on end! Not much over the length of my gun from me stood, erect on its hind feet, a grizzly bear of monster size—at the time he seemed to me ten feet high! By impulse, I wheeled, brought my gun to a level, and without any attempt at taking aim, fired. The bear pitched forward upon me and we fell together—my gun flying out of my hands, and some distance away. I was frightened beyond the power of language to express. The bear and I had fallen together, but I had given myself a rolling lurch down the mountain which, for the moment, took me out of the reach of his dreaded jaws. This advantage was not to be lost; and I kept going over and over without any regard to elegance of posture, until I had got at least two hundred yards from where I fell; and when I stopped rolling it was a problem with me which I was most, dead or alive.

“I ventured upon my feet and looked cautiously around, but could see no grizzly. To borrow a miner's expression, ‘I began prospecting around.’ I had an earnest desire to get hold of my gun, but a dislike to the neighborhood in which we

had parted company. With the utmost caution I worked my way up to a position overlooking the spot where I and the grizzly together fell. To my surprise, and gratification as well, there lay the bear stretched at full length, and dead. My random shot had proved what seldom occurs to grizzly bears, a dead shot. That, said Mr. Bennitz, knocking the ashes out of an elegant meerschaum, ‘was the biggest scare of my life.’”

While we have carried our chapter descriptive of Ross beyond the limits of Russian occupation we feel warranted, on account of its historic surroundings, in tracing its history to a conclusion in this chapter. As already stated, William Bennitz sold the Ross property in 1867. Charles Fairfax and a man named Dixon being the purchasers. They managed the property for a few years, when Fairfax died. In winding up the estate and business of the firm it became necessary to sell the property. J. W. Call became the purchaser of the upper and much the larger proportion of the ranch, on which stands the old Fort Ross buildings; and of the southerly end Aaron Schroyer bought a large tract. These gentlemen are practical in their ideas of business and the property is now so handled as to yield a profit. After a lapse of twenty-seven years we visited Ross in October, 1888. We found a great change from conditions as they were when Bennitz lived there. Through the very center of the grounds once enclosed by a heavy stockade, now a county road runs. The Bennitz residence is converted into a public hotel, and a building once used as quarters for Russian officers is now a saloon. In an outside building is a store and postoffice. The towers in what was the diagonal corners of the fortress are now roofless, and, in consequence of the worm-eaten condition of the logs are canting over, and it is only a question of time when they will topple to the ground. The Greek chapel yet stands erect with roof and belfry in fair preservation; but is no longer used for holy purposes. Even the Russian cemetery to the south of the fort, that was quite plainly visible

twenty-seven years ago is now nearly obliterated. Accompanied by Mr. Call we visited the old Russian orchard half a mile back from the fort. The fence made of heavy split boards by the Russians is still in fair preservation. We entered and plucked Spanish bellflower apples from trees planted by the Russians, back of 1820. The twenty or thirty apple, plum and prune trees yet standing are moss-covered and their bark honey-combed by the busy bills of birds. We went back still further and took a walk through the redwood forest of new growth that has sprung up from stumps of trees first cut by the Russians when they settled at Ross. Not over half a dozen of the old redwood forest trees are standing in the grove, and but for the fact that the stumps are there yet from

which the present forest sprang, we should not have recognized it as a forest growth of the present century. The trees have made marvelous growth. Having a pocket rule with us we measured a tree that was four and a half feet in diameter; and we were assured by Mr. Call that there were trees in the grove full five feet in diameter. This grove is, doubtless, of from sixty to seventy-five years' growth. We are thus exact and explicit in reference to this forest of new growth because we know there is a widespread fear that in consequence of the rapidity with which our redwood forests are being converted into lumber, that species of timber will ultimately become extinct. Right there, overshadowing old Fort Ross, is the refutation of such fallacy.