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**DISCOVERY OF HUMBOLDT BAY, CALIFORNIA, IN 1806  
FROM THE SHIP O'CAIN, JONATHAN WINSHIP, COMMANDER**

**An Episode in a Bostonian-Russian Contract Voyage  
of the Early American China Trade**

By E. W. Giesecke

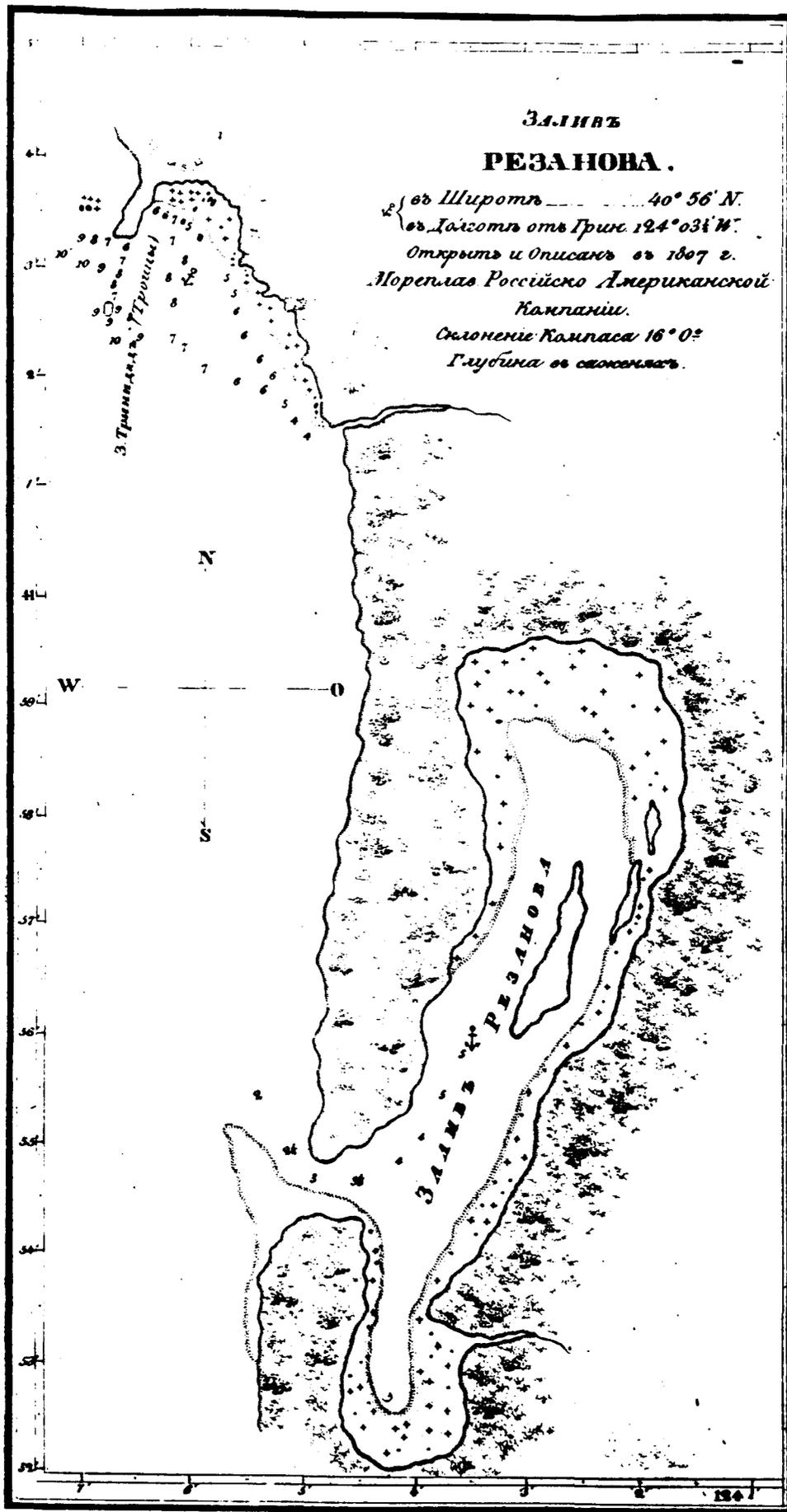
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California Map Society, San Francisco, June 1997

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979.  
401  
GIE Reference



BAY OF REZANOV (HUMBOLDT BAY)

From the Russian Hydrographic Department Chart 1848/49

40°

45

39°

45

39°

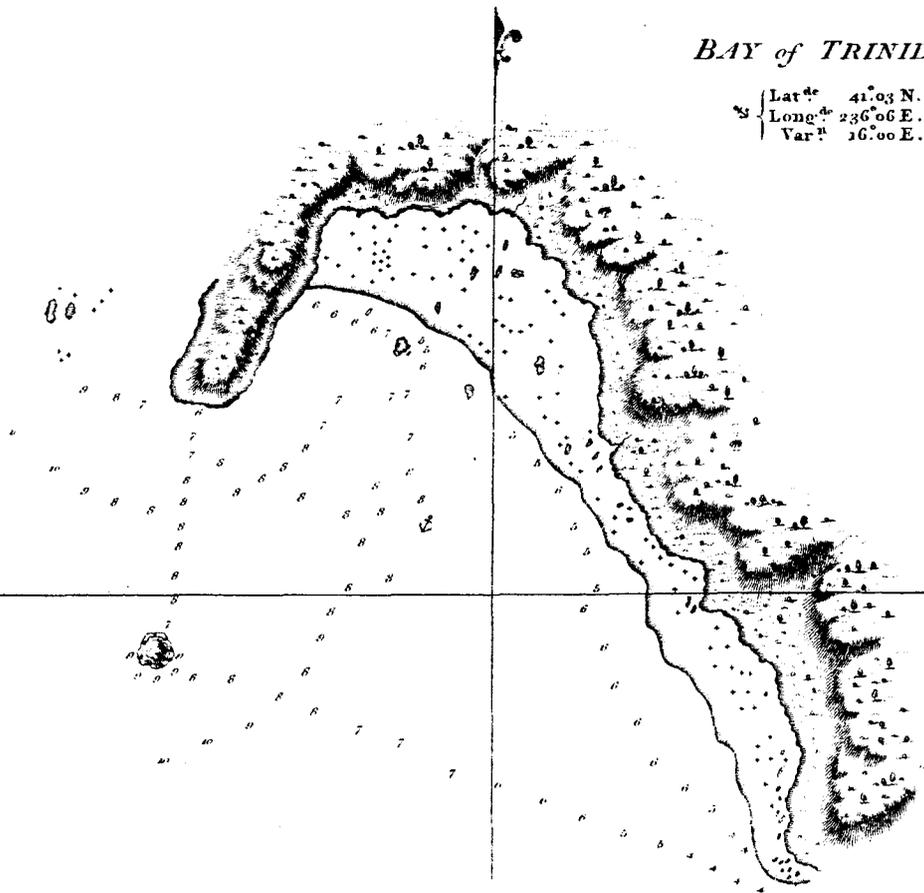
45

39°

38°15'

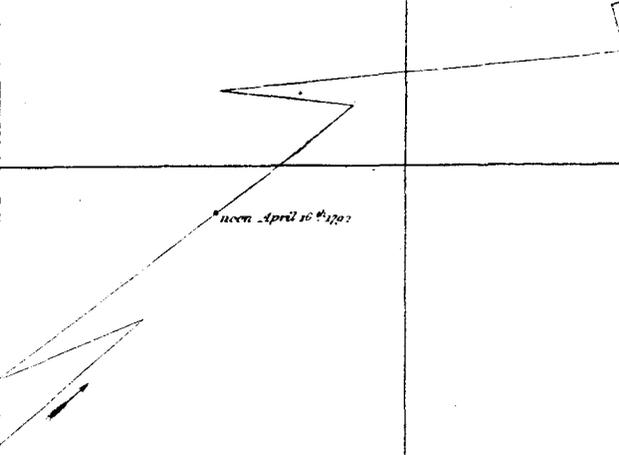
# BAY of TRINIDAD

S	}	Lat <sup>d</sup> 41° 03' N.
		Long <sup>d</sup> 236° 06' E.
		Var <sup>d</sup> 16° 00' E.



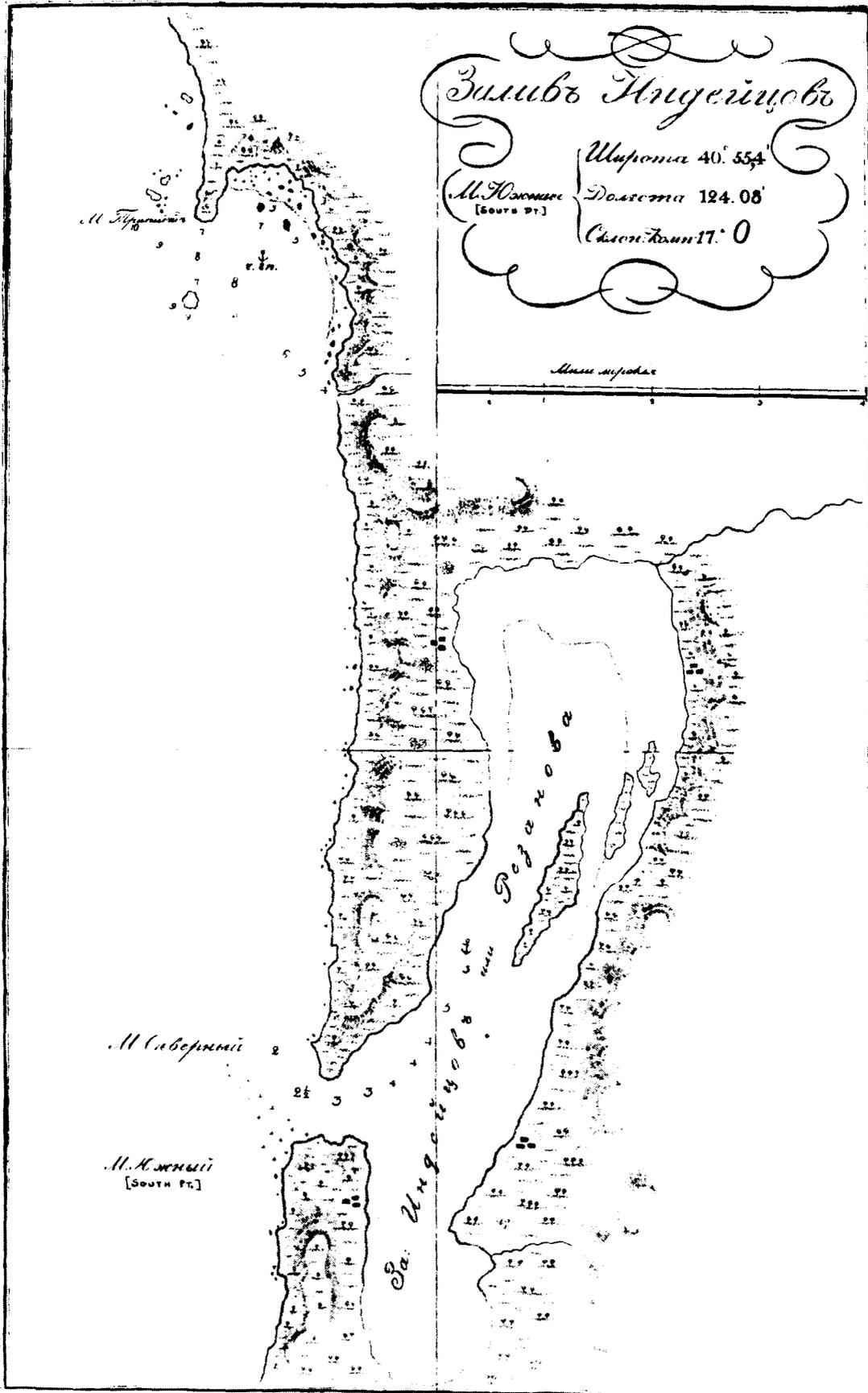
Scale of one Mile.

George Vancouver  
May 1793



seen April 16<sup>th</sup> 1793

232°      233°      234°      235°



BAY OF INDIANS (OR REZANOV) -- HUMBOLDT BAY

From Chart 13, Dated 1848,  
of M. D. Teben'kov's Atlas of 1852

DISCOVERY OF HUMBOLDT BAY, CALIFORNIA, IN 1806  
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An Episode in a Bostonian-Russian Contract Voyage  
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The small ship sailed out of the New Archangel (Sitka) harbor on May 21, 1806 heavily loaded. The Americans and the Russians had ushered on board nearly 100 native Aleuts and Kodiaks, 12 native women and three Russian supervisors. The American crew of the ship *O'Cain* (a dozen New Englanders and nine Hawaiians), engaged in the early American China trade, had been preparing for the southbound voyage for a month.

The navigation and logistics efforts to sail this three-masted, 93 foot long vessel challenged the crew, according to the journal. Down the coast, fog banks were frequent in the summer. Rocks and some headlands were poorly charted.<sup>1</sup> Continual summer northwesterlies aimed to drive ships toward the shore.

A revision of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Discoveries, Arlington, Texas, November 1995. The primary change was the incorporation of a new chart received in early 1996 from the Russian Naval Archives in St. Petersburg, a handwritten manuscript of the Bay of Rezanov (Humboldt Bay) dated 1807, apparently not previously seen in the United States.

<sup>1</sup> The principal charts used by northwest coast sea captains in the early 1800s included those drafted from Vancouver's voyages of 1792-4. See George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World...* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1798) 3 vols. and folio atlas. Jonathan Winship Jr., the leading subject of this paper, used his charts and referred, for example, to "Vancouver's Chart" in his personal journal of his 1803-1805 and subsequent voyages, "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*" (ms, private collection), 1806, not paginated.

2      O'Cain

Between the two decks of the 280 ton ship, the crew had stowed 70 baidarkas (skin kayaks) and larger leather boats. To aid in the hunt for the sea otters with their prized silky and dense pelts, each Aleut was given a musket, flint and gunpowder. The natives would be paid for the pelts on a piece basis. Provisions for them on the southbound cruise, mainly 15,300 dried fish and 1,000 pounds of raw whale meat, were taken on board. For trade with southern natives and the Spanish missions, manufactured goods had been stowed.<sup>2</sup>

The *O'Cain's* multi-national crew and passengers had set sail in order to collect the otter skins for the Canton market. Captain Jonathan Winship Jr., a 26 year-old Bostonian, had agreed to a contract with New Archangel, a new binational experiment, having been attempted only once before. This was the beginning period of United States and Russian relations in the Pacific Northwest, the former pursuing a strictly New England commercial interest but the latter's advances down the coast supported by the Tsarist regime. The presence of these two nationalities and the Aleuts on board the ship offered a somewhat incongruous but disciplined tripartite relationship. In this, their decade of maximum expansion to the south, the Russians had strong leadings to the peripheral coast of Spanish California.

This narrative seeks to establish, (1) which nation should receive principal acknowledgement, in this contract voyage of 1806, for the discovery of Humboldt Bay, the 14 mile long body of water between Trinidad Bay and Cape Mendocino; and did Winship relinquish authority to the Russians as would be demonstrated in the command and control

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston 1805.6.7.8" (ms, private collection), May 13, 17, 18, 19 and 23, 1806.

of that cruise; and (2) whether the Russians ever succeeded in entering the bay in a sailing vessel or with a group of small craft as could be suggested by the first charts which were Russian.

The Russians needed a landlocked bay to the south, safe from storms and fog, away from the rocks, and, for the hunters and their baidarkas, plentiful in otter. For eventual colonization they wanted fertile land, and beyond the range of Spanish, shore-bound soldiers.

The *O'Cain* cruised south along the northwest coast in May and June 1806. In that year there was no habitation or settlement of any kind by Euro-Americans on the Pacific shore from New Archangel, the newly established post of the Russian-American Company, south to the Spanish mission at San Francisco Bay. The unoccupied coast north of there was termed New Albion after Drake (1579). It was apparently not known to any pre-1806 explorers to have any large protected and navigable bay.<sup>3</sup>

This paper quotes directly and for the first time from the manuscript "Jonathan Winship Jun<sup>r</sup>, Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston 1805.6.7.8." This journal can be considered the primary source document for the first recorded sighting and exploration of Humboldt Bay. Also, along with Winship's smaller journal which he titled "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*" beginning in 1803 which includes his earlier voyage of 1803-1805 under Captain Joseph O'Cain,

<sup>3</sup> By late in the eighteenth century, Spanish and British charts of the northern California coast showed Cape Mendocino and Trinidad Bay, as for example, on Vancouver's "Chart of the Coast of N.W. America... from Lat. 38° 15'N... to 45° 46'N..." of 1792, George Vancouver, *op. cit.*, folio atlas. But no charts of those nations including Vancouver's or of the United States displayed any enclosed body of water between those two points of land such as would have indicated Humboldt Bay, this omission continuing until the mid-nineteenth century.

these two journals are the only known manuscript sources for the Bostonians' contract system with the Russians in the American sea otter and China trade for the early 1800s.<sup>4</sup>

Winship's 1805-1808 journal reveals that the ship *O'Cain* did not enter Humboldt Bay in June 1806, its channel proving difficult and the risk of being cut off inside apparent. But the ship's crew, Russians and Aleuts did discover and enter the bay in that month. They first discovered it by walking overland from the shore. Then they entered it using ship's boats and baidarkas, and explored it. They surveyed the entrance and the northern and southern arms.<sup>5</sup>

The earliest other records of the discovery of Humboldt Bay in 1806, long-available with one exception, have been limited to a series of Russian charts (the first a manuscript apparently drawn in 1807 and which was just recently received from Russia, and the other two printed beginning in 1848); an accompanying narrative by M. D. Teben'kov<sup>6</sup> in 1852 identifying Winship as the discoverer; and, in the United States, a set of extracts, not

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*," *op. cit.* J.P.C. Winship, *Historical Brighton* (Boston: George A. Warren, 1899), 128, 138. The author of this volume, the primary available source of the Winship family history, was the third child of Jonathan Winship Jr., born in 1832. The once separate community of Brighton has now become part of Boston's east side.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal..." *op. cit.*, June 10, 14, 15 and 18, 1806. Much of the discussion of the discovery, the entrance, and the surveys made of the bay is presented in the latter part of this paper and centers on these dates in the journal.

<sup>6</sup> Teben'kov, Mikhail Dmitrievich, *Atlas Severozapadnykh beregov Ameriki ot Beringova... 1852* (Atlas of the Northwest Coasts of America from Bering Strait...) [and] *Gidrograficheskie zamechaniia k Atlasu severozapadnykh beregov Ameriki... 1852* (Hydrographic Notes, Atlas of the Northwest Coasts of America...), ed. and trans. R. A. Pierce (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1981), 33. Captain First Rank M. D. Teben'kov compiled the atlas and the accompanying notes from his own early voyages in the far northern Pacific and later from ships' charts and log books located in Russian America, Russia, as well as charts of Vancouver and others.. In Teben'kov's *Atlas*, chart 13, which bears a date of 1848 although published with the other charts in 1852, includes a sub-chart of the Bay of Rezanov (Humboldt Bay), named after Nikolai P. Rezanov, government and court official at St. Petersburg and a founder of the Russian-American Company. The pertinence of Teben'kov's chart and notes to Winship's discovery of Humboldt Bay is addressed in this paper following the extracts of the *O'Cain* journal.

always accurate, taken from the Winship journal in approximately 1870 by William Dane Phelps.<sup>7</sup>

### Early Voyages to the West Coast

The earlier voyages of exploration approaching the northern Pacific coast include the Spaniards Ferrelo in 1543, Cermeño's *San Agustin* in 1595, and Vizcaino in 1603; the latter's ship, a frigate named *Tres Reyes*, may have sailed near Humboldt Bay, but there is inadequate documentation.

In the north, the expedition of Bering and Chirikov touched the coast as far south as 56° in 1741. The Russians procured sea otter skins, the demand for which then pushed their maritime advances and fur trade south to the present Alaska. With the penetration of the 1790s came the chartering of the Russian-American Company in 1799.

Spain then resumed her push to the north. Juan Perez sailed up the coast to 55° in 1774. Hezeta and Bodega sighted Trinidad Bay in June 1775, entered it and took possession. The several Spanish voyages heightened that court's claims to sovereignty in the North Pacific. George Vancouver charted much of the coast in 1792-4 and also sailed into Trinidad Bay. But none of them saw nearby Humboldt Bay, the landlocked

<sup>7</sup> William Dane Phelps, "Solid Men of Boston in the Northwest" (ms., Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, n. d. but circa 1870). This manuscript by Phelps (1802-1875), a seaman and captain from Boston, included a few pages on the 1806 voyage of the *O'Cain* and a short description of the discovery of the bay. His references from the Jonathan Winship Jr. journal have been taken as a primary source for those interested in the find. However, they were in some instances inaccurately extracted and transcribed. Primarily, Phelps wrote that the *O'Cain* was "anchored just north of Trinidad Bay, and a party...were sent on shore... They returned and reported...the existence of a sound..." (typescript, 9). The "north" was in error. The journal which has now been studied day by day makes it clear in a dozen or so entries and latitudes given that the discovery was *south* of Trinidad Bay. This and a few other confused extracts by Phelps led some historians to misleading conclusions.

sound 17 miles south of Trinidad whose entrance from the sea was obscured by an imposing bluff to the east.<sup>8</sup>

The Russian Court Chamberlain Nikolai Rezanov from the court of Emperor Alexander I, energetic and intellectual, arrived in New Archangel in 1805. He urged Aleksandr Baranov, Governor of the Russian-American Company, to open trade with California. Both men were spurred on by rivalry with the Spanish, British and Americans, and the Russians had an eye to the pelts and crop bearing lands down the coast.<sup>9</sup> Their fur supply in the north had been greatly depleted by the wholesale slaughter of otters and seals. In 1800, Baranov estimated that at least 100,000 sea otters had been taken from their colonies in the previous decade (an almost irrecoverable number considering the slow rate at which these fine haired animals replenish themselves).

Other fur traders were attracted to the Northwest Coast by the publication of Captain Cook's expedition of 1778. It brought to light that sea otter skins, obtained for scraps of iron at Nootka Sound, were sold in Canton for the equivalent of \$120 each. In 1785, British captain James Hanna in the small brig *Sea Otter* sailed for Nootka. In five weeks he had traded goods for a rich cargo of furs; these yielded him a handsome profit in China.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> George Davidson, "The Discovery of Humboldt Bay," in *Proceedings*, vol. 2, no. 1 (San Francisco: Geographical Society of the Pacific, 1891), 6, 7, 16. (Also published separately by that society as *The Discovery of Humboldt Bay, California*, 1891.) Owen C. Coy, *The Humboldt Bay Region 1850-1875* (Los Angeles: The California State Historical Association, 1929), 7. The high bluff which camouflaged the bay's entrance was located on the east shore of the bay. Now called Buhne Point after Captain H. H. Böhne of the 1850 rediscovery voyage, most of the point's elevation has been eroded by weather and by farming and roads built in the area.

<sup>9</sup> P. A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, trans. and ed. Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 94. One of the critical needs of the Russian colonies was wheat, and Rezanov proposed to grow this crop on the coastal lands of New Albion.

<sup>10</sup> James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods. The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 22, 23.

The American Captain John Suter on the ship *Pearl* in 1808 and 1809 collected 6,000 skins on the Northwest Coast and sailed for Macao. With his profits he purchased a desirable cargo for resale in Boston: porcelain, tea, Chinese cottons and silks. This netted him \$206,000 after all expenses and customs duties were paid. The initial value of his ship, fittings, supplies and outgoing cargo had been less than \$40,000.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Bostonian-Russian Contract System**

The contract system between Baranov, then on Kodiak Island, and the New England captains was initiated by Joseph O'Cain in 1803. It was mutually beneficial. Russian participation was of necessity commercial; but their underlying motive was national interest. Sixteen contracts were agreed to over the next decade for the direct hunting of sea otters by the Aleuts and Kodiaks taken on board the Boston ships. The natives used their own baidarkas, usually on California's southern coasts and thus poaching against the Spaniards.

The contracts led directly to the discovery of Humboldt Bay. This would not have taken place at that time without the agreement with which the Boston men hosted and transported the Aleuts, who were under Baranov's employ, along with their hunting methods and baidarkas. Winship would have been limited to bartering for furs with each local group of natives, rather than engaging in the direct hunt.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts 1783-1860* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1921), 70, 71. F. W. Howay, *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785-1825*, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1973), 82. Howay indicated Captain Suter's cargo to Macao as 6,000 sea otter skins, the largest catch on record for a single voyage.

The Winship family participated in the agreements since 1803. Though they had ownership in a half dozen ships, the family was rarely mentioned in Boston among those who were prominent in the Northwest Coast fur trade. One reads of firms such as Sturgis, Perkins, Lamb, Dorr, Boardman and Pope, and Lyman; but not Winships.<sup>12</sup>

The father of Jonathan was Jonathan Winship Sr. of Brighton, a community then a dozen miles west of Boston's center. The family in 1775 founded a beef business and entered into a contract with the Revolutionary Army to supply it with meat. Jonathan Sr. had ten children, four of them active in the maritime trade. In addition to Jonathan Jr., older brother Nathan was on the *O'Cain* in 1806.<sup>13</sup> That they entered the trade was not surprising. The road to upward mobility led to the great natural port of Boston and the sea. The port was closer to the European markets than those of her rivals, but New England

<sup>12</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 358-360. Bancroft quotes Captain William Sturgis that the early American China "trade was confined almost exclusively to Boston [but] attempted unsuccessfully from Philadelphia and New York..." The port of Boston was also the center of news and information as to the sea otter trade, as for example, the locations on the Pacific coast where the animals were still to be found in quantity. When John Jacob Astor initiated his Northwest coast maritime trade in 1809, sending the *Enterprise* out to the Pacific from New York and followed by his ship the *Tonquin* from that city the next year, he was certainly not privy to all of the intelligence reports available in Boston; and this may in part have contributed to the failure of his Pacific Fur Company. The Boston firms most frequently listed with interests in the China trade are also briefly discussed by James R. Gibson, *op. cit.*, 293-294; and F. W. Howay, *op. cit.*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan Winship attempted to settle the Columbia River in June 1810. The journal of this historically important enterprise has survived: William A. Gale, "A Journal Kept on Board the Ship *Albatross*, Nathan Winship, Commander, On a Voyage from Boston to the Northwest Coast of America and China in the Years 1809, 10, 11, 12" (ms, private collection). The *Albatross* was warped 40 miles up the Columbia River to Oak Point where Nathan's crew erected a log structure. But after one week the effort was given up due to the spring flood on the river and aggressive action by the natives due to what they perceived as plans for interference in their established river trade. If successful, this would have been the first United States post on the Pacific Coast. On this voyage, Nathan did not stop at Humboldt Bay. Therefore the journal is not referenced further. J. P. C. Winship, *op. cit.*, 126, 127, wrote that the other two sons engaged in the maritime trade were Abiel, the oldest, who was in partnership with a ship-owning firm in Boston; and Charles, the fourth child, who died in 1800 at the age of 24 on a trading voyage to the Pacific. For a brief but more available biography of the Winships see Dan L. Thrapp, *Encyclopedia of Frontier Biography*, vol. 4, supplemental volume (Spokane: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1994), 553-555.

with its poor soil lacked a native commodity; certainly it had none such as the desirable cotton and grain of the South and the West.

Thus it was with little hesitation that the Bostonians entered the newly opened American China trade in the late eighteenth century upon news of the value of sea otter skins in the Canton market. Boston quickly became the leader in the China trade. Her sea merchant families conveyed an air of optimism to the Pacific shores and northwest, taking early advantage of the economic gains to be found in this unspoiled, last temperate coast.

The ship *O'Cain* was owned in part in 1803 by Abiel, the first born son of Jonathan Winship Sr. Joseph O'Cain was the commander and also a part owner of the vessel on this first voyage. He was older than the Winship brothers, and in view of his leadership role, likely admired by them. O'Cain was born in Ireland of English parents, and he had already appeared in the North Pacific more than a decade earlier.<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., then only 23, was on board this initial cruise of the *O'Cain* in 1803. This was also his first voyage to the North Pacific, of which he kept a brief record in "Particular occurrences."<sup>15</sup> The *O'Cain* was built as a three masted, square rigged ship in 1802 by Elisha Foster near Boston. Its bottom was copper-sheathed, an advantageous practice not yet common in those early years of the Northwest Coast and China trade.<sup>16</sup>

On this first voyage she reached Kodiak in nine months. There, enterprising Captain O'Cain met Baranov. They had already met in 1792 and 1801. The latter wanted

<sup>14</sup> Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary* (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks: The Limestone Press, 1990), 388. For names of ship owners in Boston, the primary source is the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D. C., "Boston Ships' Registries."

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*," *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, 323. Details of ship construction such as copper bottoms were also contained in the ships' registries of the major eastern ports.

more otter skins, that resource being nearly depleted in the north. He also needed supplies such as those brought on the *O'Cain* to Kodiak: dried foods, tools, weapons and ammunition. Deliveries from Russia were unreliable. His posts and men suffered from a severe shortage of most goods.<sup>17</sup> It was not economical for him to continue to build his own ships, and his company had lost several. The Chinese ports with their high demand for skins were generally closed to the Russians.<sup>18</sup>

Captain O'Cain proposed to Baranov in 1803 at Kodiak a new operational mode. The Russian would supply him with the natives and their baidarkas to hunt the otters in the south. With a good catch, the *O'Cain* would return and the production of the hunt would be shared, divided equally between the Russian-American Company and the Boston ship owners.<sup>19</sup>

The captain had found large sea otter populations along the California coast on his cruise north but he needed native hunters. Baranov could not resist O'Cain's offer and he provided 17 baidarkas, 40 hunters and two Russians who would be under the supervision of his trusted assistant Shvetsov. In the exchange of personnel, two of the *O'Cain's* crew were left at Kodiak: Abraham Jones, second mate, who became an interpreter for Baranov until Winship returned in 1806, and George Stephens, cabin boy. The baidarkas were skin boats, hide over frame, and had open hatches for one, two or three hunters. The Russian-

<sup>17</sup> Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov, *The Beginnings of Russian-American Relations, 1775-1815*, trans. Elena Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 181. Glynn Barratt, *Russia in Pacific Waters, 1715-1825* (Vancouver and London: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 126.

<sup>18</sup> Richard A. Pierce, "Russian America and China," in Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett, ed., *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier* (Tacoma: Washington State Historical Society, 1990), 76. Peking permitted trade with Russia at one location: Kiakhta, on a remote plain at the border between the two nations.

<sup>19</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of the Northwest Coast*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, 319.

American Company generally used the two-hatch baidarkas for hunting, but the contract ships carried a few of the other sizes also.<sup>20</sup>

Joseph O'Cain sailed south in October 1803. His passengers hunted at San Quintin Bay, Lower California. When the Aleuts had gathered 1,100 pelts, they returned to the ship with their catch. After embarking, the natives typically set to the task of cleaning and stretching out the skins on frames to dry on deck.<sup>21</sup> The *O'Cain* sailed back to New Archangel in mid-1804. In January 1805 the *O'Cain* arrived in Canton and exchanged furs for China goods, and she returned to Boston in September of that year, having circumnavigated the globe on this, her first voyage, and offering good gains to her owners.<sup>22</sup> The first contract had been a success. Baranov also turned more of his attention to the California coast.<sup>23</sup>

The second contract, the voyage of 1806 in which Humboldt Bay would be discovered, was with the same ship, but under the command of Jonathan Winship Jr., now 26. His brother Nathan was chief officer. Less than a month after the *O'Cain's* first return, it was re-outfitted. It sailed from Boston on October 7, 1805. Winship arrived at New Archangel on May 6, 1806. Relations with Baranov were pleasant. The latter had recently had long discussions with Rezanov who, two months earlier, had sailed for San Francisco

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Particular occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*," *op. cit.*, first four pages. Abraham Jones was at New Archangel when Winship arrived there again in April 1806 and boarded the *O'Cain*, joining its hunting (and discovery) voyage to California. Further information on George Stephens has not been found. Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America: Kyrill T. Khlebnikov's Reports, 1817-1832*, trans. Basil Dmytryshyn and E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1976), vi.

<sup>21</sup> Adele Ogden, *The California Sea Otter Trade, 1784-1848* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941), 97, 130.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>23</sup> Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America, op. cit.*, 6.

in order to obtain grain and furs and, if possible, establish trade with the Spaniards. But Rezanov and Baranov were considering not only trade but adding additional posts at the Columbia River and southward. (After a discovery or entry, the Russians buried copper plaques in the ground bearing the inscription "Land of Russian Possession.")<sup>24</sup>

By mid-May, Winship had received an agreement to take on the baidarkas, the 112 Aleuts and their three Russian supervisors. The head of the latter was Sysoi Slobodchikov, *promyshlennik* (hunter, trader, Russian employee).<sup>25</sup> They would stop first on the unoccupied California coast north of the Spanish settlements to search for otters. Their later place for dropping off the hunting parties was to be the island of Cedros off Lower California. Then the ship would return to New Archangel.<sup>26</sup>

Jonathan Winship's journal ran daily from noon to noon. The following entries are those most pertinent to the discovery of Humboldt Bay:

<sup>24</sup> K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, Chief Manager of the Russian Colonies in America*, ed. and trans. Richard A. Pierce and Colin Bearne (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1973), 59, 60, 71. P. A. Tikhmenev, *op. cit.*, 96. Glynn Barratt, *op. cit.*, 237.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal...", *op. cit.*, April 23 to May 29, 1806.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, August to November 1806. Jonathan left the hunting parties at Cedros in August 1806 under supervision of Nathan, his brother, and Slobodchikov, the Russian commander. On September 17, Jonathan arrived in Hawaii. In October, he sailed the *O'Cain* northnortheast across the Eastern Pacific and arrived at New Archangel on November 9, 1806, entering in his journal, "Saluted the fort with 5 guns and had the same number returned. Heard that O'Cain (Joseph) had visited the place and taken Mr. Barranoff to Kodiak and had made a contract - to take a quantity of furs...to Japan." (Joe O'Cain on the *Eclipse* had no success in trading in Japan, though he did at Canton, and was subsequently shipwrecked in the North Pacific on Sanak Island, at the head of the Aleutian Islands. He survived and later returned to Kodiak, but he died in 1809 in an attempt to salvage the wreck.) The summer 1806 voyage of the *O'Cain* has also been briefly mentioned by P. A. Tikhmenev, *op. cit.*, 110, 111; and K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, op. cit.*, 60.

Jonathan Winship Jun<sup>r</sup>  
Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North  
Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston  
1805.6.7.8

Jon Winship Jun <sup>r</sup>	Master
Nathan Winship	Chief Officer

Monday, 7 Oct<sup>r</sup> 1805. At 10 AM hove short at 12 got under way [from Boston]

[Sailed around Cape Horn as far as 60° S in January 1806)

[Sunday, 30th March Whyteete Bay] Ship [on board] Mr. Clark as third officer.

Ship'd two seamen and 4 Sandwich Islanders...<sup>27</sup>

22 April 1806 Saw the land... Cape Edgecombe...<sup>28</sup>

23 April ... Standing in for Norfolk Sound ... Kodiak Canoes came along side.

From them I learnt that Gov. Brannoff was at the main establishment viz.

New Archangle which happens extremely fortunate for me. Immediately

<sup>27</sup> Mr. (George) Clark, who had been living in Hawaii and who was taken on board the *O'Cain*, was to be instrumental in the subsequent discovery of Humboldt Bay. As to the "4 Sandwich Islanders," a later entry (April 17th) identified nine Hawaiians on this leg of the voyage. They would serve as supplementary crew, a common practice in that era. For most of the month of April 1806, the ship was sailing north to New Archangel (present Sitka).

<sup>28</sup> The cone-shaped Mount Edgecumbe is visible from sea long before the cape is sighted. Both are located on the northwest of Sitka Sound.

dispatch'd the Canoes to inform the Gov. of my arrival ... and after an absence of 198 days from Boston we expressed the extreme Felicity of Thanking the Almighty for protecting us in perfect safety - without meeting with any one accident ... at 10 PM directly two Canoes came along side bringing ... Mr. Slobeskoff [Slobodchikov] for a pilot from the Governor ...

Saturday, 10th May. ... This day the Govr determined to let me have as many Canoes as he can supply with the provisions for six weeks -- to visit New Albion there to let them remain and return again ...

The 19th day of May continued. Latter part of this day the people employ'd in stowing the Russians' Goods and receiving the Natives' stores, arms and other necessary articles -- 4 Canoes and 1 large leather Boat were received on board. Hoisted the Long Boat and Pinnace on board.

Transactions and Remarks, Wednesday, 21st May 1806. Employ'd in making preparations for sea -- all our intended hunters came on board. At 10 the Governor and other Gentlemen came on board to take leave and bid us farewell. At 11 weigh'd and proceeded down the western passage -- with the assistance of several Russian boats towing.

Ship O'Cain to the Coast of New Albion --

[Remarks - Thursday, 29th May 1806 -- Southbound at 47°N]

The Russian Commander this day took an exact account of every Indians equipment... deliver'd out to each one a musket - the 2d and 3d Russians employ'd in making Cartridges - - -

15 O'Cain

Tuesday, 3rd June 1806 - At Sea

Agreeable to the request of the Russian Commander, I stood in for the Land - ... At 3 pm Mr. Jones in a three oar'd Canoe accompanied by two -- two oar'd [Coe ?] went on shore at Cape Foulweather when the natives had made a smoke and landed in a small cove capable of containing small craft - on the north side of the Cape.<sup>29</sup>

Thursday 5th June -- ... The Head Russian attended by the other Canoes proceed on to Cape Orford. The Coast hereabouts has that beautiful appearance that it has to the northward by being interrupted by many sandy cliffs --<sup>30</sup>

Transactions and Remarks At Sea, Tuesday, June 10th, 1806

...at 7 saw the Land bearing from NE to SE distance about 6 miles ... and the fog increasing very fast... I ordered the sails to be furled and the stream anchor let go in 22 Fathoms. ... Morning more clear ... at 7 am dispatch'd 2 Canoes for the Land. at 9 they again returnd bringing the most pleasing intelgence - Viz that otter were seen in the greatest plenty - they landed and traveled athwart a mile of Land about 1 1/2 miles in width - when they discover'd a very spacious Sound... The part of this Lake or rather inlet of the sea -- is situated in the Latitude of 40° 52' North Latitude.<sup>31</sup> At 10 am the

<sup>29</sup> Captain Winship was southbound along the present Oregon coast, experiencing strong ocean currents (according to the June 1 entry). On June 2, the latitude recorded was 40° 52'N. The small cove at which some of the crew landed (in order to ascertain the feasibility of trade) was likely Whale Cove on the immediate north side of Cape Foulweather; it offers the only sheltered beach on the cape.

<sup>30</sup> Cape Orford, so named by Captain George Vancouver whose charts were used by the Winships, is now called Cape Blanco. It is located a few miles north of the present town of Port Orford on Oregon's southern coast. On this day and the next, the *O'Cain's* small boats searched the shore but were not able to find a sufficiently large harbor or bay for a trading anchorage.

<sup>31</sup> This latitude actually marks the end of the north branch of Humboldt (Arcata) Bay.

Head Russian and the clerk attended by Mr Clark and four other Canoes - the whole party consisting of 18 persons - went away with an intention of discovering the entrance into the Sound. Cape Mendocino was seen bearing by compass - S by W - and Rocky Point N by West -- and the nearest Land East - distance 6 Miles. Our Indian Hunters this day I believe experience Perfect happiness.

Wednesday, 11th June 1806 At 2 nearly calm - at the same time saw our party of discoverers returning... They overtook the Ship - they had not been able to find the entrance into the Sound - continuing their [ ? ] about 15 Miles to the Southward - they had seen about 30 otters two of which they caught... Meridan gain a view of Trinidad Bay...

Thursday, June 12th, 1806. ...after taking 2 tacks we brought into [Trinidad] Bay - having soundings regular from 15 to 8 Fathoms -- at 3 came too with the Best Bower in 7½ Fathoms ... the small Island in the offing bearing by compas SW by W - The Southern point of round bluff - WNW.<sup>32</sup> -- My Brother, Mr. Jones and the Russian Commander went away in the Jolly Boat - discharg'd all the Canoes. ...The Russians and Hunters encamp'd on the Shore trading with the Natives for Sea otter skins and other different kinds of skins...

Trinidad Bay Saturday 14th June [1806] ... At 8 PM Mr Clark, Second Officer return'd accompanied by the party of Hunters - Having been fortunate

<sup>32</sup> This description of Trinidad Bay agrees with contemporary and present charts. The *O'Cain* remained at anchor there while the newly discovered sound to the immediate south was explored, and trading and hunting continued, all with the use of their ship's boats, baidara and baidarkas.

enough to discover two entrances into the Sound one of which he survey'd finding from 2<sup>Fhm</sup> 2<sup>ftt</sup> to 7 Fathoms.<sup>33</sup> this Sound divides itself into two arms - one of which takes a Northern and the other a Southern direction. the one to the Northward they survey'd - the Southern one they calculate extends a great distance ... Mr. Clark judges that he saw five hundred inhabitants. I went on shore to see the otters and found them of an excellent quality.

Sunday 15th June 1806 Afternoon I sounded the Bay of Trinidad and round the southern side of the Rocky Point. the whole party preparing for a grand inspection to the new Discovered Sound... My Brother, the Russian Commander attended by 50 Canoes sett out for the New Sound...

Trinidad Bay June 18th, 1806 At 3 am my Brother return'd from the sound - being suspicious of the Natives ... which fellows threaten'd to attack them after they had encamp'd for the night in the Sound. My Brother and the head Russian thought it most prudent to withdraw and retreat to the ship as soon as possible as the natives were collecting from every quarter. they had during their stay in the Sound survey'd the Southern Branch, found that it extended about [blank] miles generally pretty shoal water...

Trinidad Bay June 19th 1806 At 1 P.M. I left the Shore accompanied by the Russian commander and came on board to dine - shortly after my Brother, Chief Officer came off and gave the alarm ... shortly after Mr Jones dispatch the pinnace to inform me that the Indians were going to commence hostilities

<sup>33</sup> See subsequent text for discussion of the "two entrances," one of which may well have been a river estuary.

18 O'Cain

... The Russian Commander gave orders for the party to leave the shore and stay along side of the Ship... Long boat getting of water...

Trinidad Bay Friday 20th June ... Received on board all the Canoes concluding to try our fortune to the Southward...

21 June 1806 Trinidad Bay at 4 am call'd all hands... At 1/2 past 10 weigh'd anchor and made sail - by our run we determined the Latt of the entrance into the Sound to be in 40° - 47' North -- in running for this entrance it is necessary to make the land several miles to the Northward and keep the continental shore close on board - then steering for a high bluff point of Land you will be in the sound before it is expected.<sup>34</sup>

Following the time period represented by these brief extracts, the *O'Cain* landed the hunting parties on Cedros Island, Lower California, in August 1806. Then she sailed to Hawaii, then again to New Archangel for more natives and baidarkas. Winship returned non-stop to Cedros Island in March 1807 and the Aleuts and Kodiaks continued their otter hunting until mid-summer. On 9 August 1807 the hunters reembarked, and the *O'Cain* sailed from Cedros Island with 149 Indian men, 13 women, 3 Russians (not Slobodchikov who had taken a schooner to Hawaii in June 1807), a total on board of 192. The crowded ship sailed directly to New Archangel.

Back at that Russian post in September and October 1807, Jonathan divided the catch of 4,864 sea otter pelts. Then he proposed a new contract, this time to Deputy

<sup>34</sup> Compare Winship's latitude with that of today's actual entrance into Humboldt Bay at 40° 45½'N. In the summer, both the surface winds and the ocean surface currents are predominantly from the north and northwest.

Governor Kuskov. But the latter demurred and replied that he had no power to do so in the absence of Baranov.<sup>35</sup> The *O'Cain* then sailed from New Archangel to Hawaii and Canton. After Winship had exchanged the otter skins for China goods, the ship was coursed westward through the Indian Ocean and on to Boston.

### **The Conduct of the Discovery**

The Winship discovery of Humboldt Bay in 1806 was apparently carried out with reasonable thoroughness, with the journal mentioning his crew's "surveys" of three different areas. According to the June 14th entry, Mr. George Clark, Second Officer, was the first Euro-American of record to enter the bay. With his party of hunters he had entered by small boat from the *O'Cain* (which since June 12th was anchored in Trinidad Bay and which was to remain there until her departure from the northern coast on June 21st). Clark's party by the 14th had discovered the entrance and surveyed it, finding a minimum depth of two fathoms, two feet. Once inside Humboldt Bay, the party surveyed the north arm on the same day. This included a few line soundings toward the north and shoreline sketches around that entire branch, both as would be required to produce the earliest Russian chart. Jonathan Winship went ashore to the bay at least twice, according to his journal entries of June 14 and 19. Nathan Winship, Slobodchikov and "50 Canoes" entered the "New Sound" on June 15 and remained until the 18th. During these three days, the two of them and their native boatsmen surveyed the southern branch and

<sup>35</sup> This shipment and catch of furs was authored by Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America, op. cit.*, 6. Baranov was absent from New Archangel for two years. He had sailed for his former headquarters on Kodiak Island in September 1806 and returned to New Archangel at the end of August 1808; see K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, op. cit.*, 65-70.

apparently made the shoreline sketch that also appeared later on the chart. That Jonathan, the *O'Cain's* commander, knew it was a new discovery is recorded in his journal for June 15th: "...the whole party preparing for a grand inspection of the New Discovered Sound." The first entrances and the surveys were carried out from among the boats carried on the ship: a "large leather boat" (obviously a baidara, Aleut-made with sea mammal hides capable of carrying 20-30 persons and/or freight); a jolly boat (the smallest of the ship's own boats and carried at the stern); a pinnace (longer and narrower, rigged for sail); and the longboat (the ship's largest boat, approximately 24 feet in length, and mounting a swivel gun as suggested by a June 19th entry; a heavy work boat). All four are mentioned in the journal for the *O'Cain's* southbound cruise.<sup>36</sup>

The cruise of 1806 was novel. Its interactions of Americans, Russians and Aleuts, as well as coastal natives encountered, suggest a microcosm of the overall national relations and movements along the Pacific coast in those decades.

As to credit for the discovery of Humboldt Bay, it is clear from the June 10 and 14 entries that, though Mr. Clark led the first water entrance, the crew had discovered it on the 10th when two canoes (baidarkas, whose occupants were not described but obviously included Aleuts) had landed on the ocean beach and the crews had walked east approximately one mile and sighted the bay. The June 10th "day of discovery" entry

<sup>36</sup> The Winship parties' first entries into the bay by water and the three areas that they surveyed are recorded over a period of five days. Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal...", *op. cit.*, June 14 through 18, 1806. The four boats carried on the *O'Cain* are mentioned in a number of that journal's entries, beginning with (in the order of boat type listed in the narrative) May 19 and June 12 and 19. The journal is silent on the specific types of boats used between June 14 and 18. However, the bay's discovery by water, reported on June 14th as having been accomplished by Mr. Clark and a party of hunters, was likely carried out with the baidara, or (less likely) with the pinnace. The jolly boat was in use by Nathan at that time, and Mr. Clark's leading of the Aleuts into the bay suggests the need to employ the latter's skills with leather boats. Use of the pinnace would well have required more than one trained seaman and the journal for June 14 infers Mr. Clark had departed alone with the Aleut hunters. The longboat's heavy weight and its typical use by a commander for emergencies discounts its employment by Mr. Clark at that time.

revealed that Jonathan himself had "at 7 am dispatch'd 2 Canoes for the Land." This and similar entries suggest that he had not delegated authority for landings and that those manning the canoes and making the discovery were under his immediate authority. Though the *O'Cain* was under contract to Baranov, the voyage was entirely a commercial pelt hunting venture. Jonathan Winship did not turn over command and control of the ship to Slobodchikov. He did, however, respect the request of the Russian commander to turn into the land when it was "agreeable" to him, and to disembark the baidarkas. As example, while southbound and having neared Cape Foulweather on the present Oregon coast on June 3, 1806, he wrote in the journal, "Agreeable to the request of the Russian Commander, I stood in for the Land..." Three small boats were sent to shore.

The *O'Cain* since June 12th had been tacking as far as six miles offshore, maintaining her sea room for safety against the winds and currents as well as to supply and protect the shore parties. But on that day she had stood in for Trinidad Bay 17 miles to the north of the new bay's entrance and came to anchor there. The ship itself did not enter Humboldt Bay nor was a crossing of the bar ever attempted on her, according to the journal.

On June 14th Mr. Clark sighted and reported two entrances into the newly discovered bay. This presented a problem. The solution may be that Clark's party came upon the estuary of Mad River (at present located five miles north of the north arm or Arcata Bay) just prior to his discovery of the actual entrance.<sup>37</sup> Their subsequent interior

<sup>37</sup> Warren Heckrotte, "The Discovery of Humboldt Bay: A New Look at an Old Story," *Terrae Incognitae* 5 (1973):37. Heckrotte suggested that a connection between Mad River, inland, and the north arm of Humboldt Bay may have existed 200 years ago. Recent geological studies of the bay area by Gary A. Carver and others have shown considerable submergence around the margin of the bay due to seismic activity. Current observations show that the Mad River channel is still changing its course.

survey of the north arm on June 14th resulted in no further report on a "second entrance." Pertinent entries in Jonathan's journal subsequent to that date imply only one entrance and which Winship recorded on June 21st as 40° 47'N (very close to the present accepted position).

### **The First Charts**

Whatever charts the Winships may have drawn in 1806 have not been found. Though they may well have told others in Boston of their geographical discovery, there is no record that they reported it to the United States government or other organizations. Knowledge of the bay was then limited to a small number of Americans and Russians and not passed on. It remained unknown to those in our westward movement, thus subject to a rediscovery more than 40 years later.

The first known charts (Russian) have been preserved in St. Petersburg. The Naval Archives in that city sent this writer in 1996 the earliest, a copy of the 1807 manuscript chart, previously mentioned, of the Bay of Rezanov (Humboldt Bay). This has apparently not been seen in the United States. Its caption is, in part (translated): "PLAN showing the entrance from the sea into the Bay of Rezanov south of Cape Trinidad, newly discovered and described [charted] by seamen of the Russian-American Company in the year 1807, with indication of depth in *sazhen*, the anchoring place..." The chart was sent by Tat'iana Fedorova, Deputy Director of the archive. In her clarification (given through Professor Lydia Black, University of Alaska Fairbanks), she emphasized that it was truly drawn in

1807 and gave some evidence thereto.<sup>38</sup> This is the earliest known Russian chart of California. It shows their involvement in Humboldt Bay by suggesting Slobodchikov's participation in Winships' 1806 discovery.

In 1848 the Hydrographic Department in St. Petersburg printed a sub-chart of the bay on to a larger map of the west coast. This sub-chart has nearly identical features with the manuscript chart: it credits the discovery to members of the Russian-American Company in 1807; the bay was titled Rezanov's Bay; eight soundings were shown for the entrance channel and up into the northern arm; and only one entrance at 40° 55'N was charted. Additionally the printed label is nearly identical to the 1807 manuscript chart's *lower right label* (added later) with the same latitude, longitude and compass variation. These similarities plus others suggest the older chart as the source of the printed Hydrographic Department map. The latter was compiled in the capital by Aleksandr Kashevarov, explorer and naval officer.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Tat'iana S. Fedorova, Dep. Director, Navy Archives of Russia, St. Petersburg, letter to author, with copy of 1807 chart enclosed, 20 January 1996. Lydia T. Black, Professor, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Tat'iana S. Fedorova, joint letter to author, 12 March 1996. The second letter represents a further evaluation of the 1807 chart from a meeting of the two in Fairbanks in early March, with the results and comments thereof sent to the author. The two strongly affirmed an 1807 drafting date for this chart. Fedorova obviously applied her knowledge of the Naval Archives classification and filing system in her letters. The file code appears to be the written six digit number in the stamped box, upper right hand corner, just off the chart. Her letter included orthographic indicators of an early drafting date. She differentiated two handwriting styles and their time periods. The inscriptions on the upper right, both inside and outside the box, she ascribed to an early, e.g., 1807, style. The inscriptions at the lower right, not boxed, as well as two words overwritten into the upper right box, "Zaliv Rezanova," (Rezanov Bay), are, she indicated, in a later "mid-nineteenth century authorship." Fedorova gave a spelling example: the word "zaliva" (bay) is an archaic form and appears in the first or original draft of the chart, at the upper right just below the box. The later usage is "zaliv," she added, and appears, as mentioned above, in the two inserted words "Zaliv Rezanova" which were part of the writing added in mid-century.

<sup>39</sup> The Russian charts' latitude for the entrance was consistently different from that of Winship's last entry. See note 34. Marvin W. Falk, "Mapping Russian America 1790-1867," in Richard A. Pierce, ed., *Russia in North America* (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks: The Limestone Press, 1990), 115. Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, op. cit., 88.

The third Russian map of the bay, also a sub-chart and dated 1848, appeared in an atlas by Captain Teben'kov in 1852. It was drafted at New Archangel by M. M. Kadin and engraved there by K. Terent'ev.<sup>40</sup> The Teben'kov atlas was accompanied by his *Hydrographic Notes*. In this he wrote: "According to the colonial documents of the Russian-American Company [the bay] was discovered by citizens of the United States. In 1806 a sea otter hunting party of Aleuts, under Slobodchikov, there on an American ship under the command of Winship, was met by hostile natives. ...its entrance is unsuitable for large vessels and with strong SW winds it is impossible for any kind of vessel. The depth of the entrance is two sazhen, and...the ocean waves break up into surf."<sup>41</sup>

Besides having the majority, though not all, of the common features of the two preceding charts, the Teben'kov map has a unique similarity with the 1807 chart in showing the location of five native inhabitations (marked by small squares) in the same locations. Counting up all of the common features, both the Teben'kov and the Hydrographic Department charts appear to have a common source and this can be said to be the 1807 manuscript chart.

### **Significance of the Charts' Internal Consistency and Map Data Borrowed from Another Source**

All three charts show a considerable degree of internal consistency, notably a nearly identical shoreline for both the ocean shore and inside the bay, with the same configuration. The three also have the common features mentioned above. Even a major

<sup>40</sup> Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, 209, 503, 505.

<sup>41</sup> M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, 33.

error appears the same on all. George Davidson pointed out that the distance shown from Trinidad Bay to "the entrance [of Humboldt Bay on the Teben'kov map] is eight and a half miles by the given scale; but it is seventeen and a half miles on the chart of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey."<sup>42</sup> The same error in distance (or scale) appears on the other two charts.

It is meaningful to offer, therefore, that the consistency of the features of all three charts, 1807 to 1848, infers the absence of a new survey in the intervening four decades. (This assumes that the drafting date of the Russian manuscript chart was 1807 as evidenced.) Any new Russian survey would otherwise show significant changes, e.g., in correcting the scale.

Most interesting is that the plurality of *new* data on the two 1848 printed charts *not* to be found on the 1807 manuscript version is the hydrographic data for Trinidad Bay. Some time prior to 1848, the Russian chart makers added a more detailed configuration of that bay, more than three dozen depth measurements on the Hydrographic Department map (and less than half that number added on to that of Teben'kov's), and an anchor sign; accordingly these data were from an outside source.

Study has now shown that these added data for Trinidad Bay match almost exactly those of Vancouver's 1793 inset chart, with the same shoreline, soundings and anchor sign

<sup>42</sup> George Davidson, *op. cit.*, 12.

location.<sup>43</sup> Though Vancouver's depth measurements were more numerous, the Russians copied those that they used, and these were identical for depths and positions.

Two findings can then be presented: (1) the considerable degree of consistency among the three charts; and (2) the obvious borrowing of data from Vancouver for the later two maps. These would appear to preclude any second or intervening survey. Nearly all of the 1848 charts' features can be attributed to the 1807 manuscript version and the borrowed data for Trinidad Bay.

The supplier of data for all three Russian charts of Humboldt Bay can be narrowed. The apparent source is the *O'Cain* discovery voyage of 1806. The head Russian on this voyage, as indicated, was Slobodchikov. He had accompanied Nathan Winship and others to and into the bay (June 10, 12 and 15). He possibly participated in the surveys of the bay, or at least the data was shared with him. He was known to have submitted at least one report to Baranov of the 1806 voyage, and had drawn other maps.<sup>44</sup> This Russian could have provided the survey data of Humboldt Bay to Russian managers, such as to Baranov when he returned to New Archangel from Hawaii in August 1807.

<sup>43</sup> George Vancouver, *op. cit.*, "Chart...of the Coast of N. W. America...from...45° 46'N..." with inset of the "Bay of Trinidad." This view of Trinidad Bay was sketched by Mr. Joseph Whidbey who was there on the *Discovery* in May 1793. In their copying, the Russian map makers obviously disregarded the one foot difference between their *sazhen* and the fathom. See subsequent narrative regarding the borrowing of chart data between one cartographer and another. See also W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Voyage of George Vancouver 1791-1795* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1984), vol. 1 (of 4), 132.

<sup>44</sup> M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, 34. Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America, op. cit.*, 6. A. I. Alekseev, letter to V. K. Sparks, Fortuna, California, 2 March 1973. In this letter, Alekseev, Doctor of Historical Sciences in Russia, wrote: "We also know that in the years 1806-08 Sysoi Slobodchikoff drew maps of some regions of the shoreline, but these were never found."

**Slobodchikov and Kuskov Voyages, 1807 and 1808**

This return date of 1807 by Slobodchikov may offer a solution to the problem of the 1807 "discovery and description" year on the manuscript chart. Its Russian draftsman could well have assumed that the year was the same as his return date. In any event the "1807 discovery" chart date appears to be in error. There was no Russian ship on the Northern California coast in that year, according to all available records. This includes, in all likelihood, Slobodchikov's voyage on the schooner *Nikolai* in 1807, which had been offered as a candidate for a Humboldt Bay visit that year. That voyage, therefore, warrants examination. He purchased the schooner in Lower California and sailed directly to Hawaii, Kodiak and New Archangel. This cruise was greatly restricted in terms of time and crew. He apparently had no opportunity to visit Northern California. His sailing from Cedros Island "for the Sandwich Islands" (approximately 2,500 nautical miles) was on June 17, 1807, according to the Winship journal for that date. His arrival date in Hawaii would have been in early July. Assuming a departure date of mid-July from Hawaii, his arrival in Kodiak (approximately 2,400 nautical miles) can be estimated as mid-August in order for him to reach New Archangel by the known arrival date of August 22, 1807. Even with non-stop sailing, Hawaii to Kodiak, this represented fast traveling, especially in view of his undermanned crew: "...one foreign sailor...a runaway, and several Aleuts who had no idea whatsoever about navigation."<sup>45</sup> The *Nikolai's* next voyage south (without Slobodchikov) was in 1808 but it reached no more distant point than the Olympic peninsula of present

<sup>45</sup> P. A. Tikhmenev, *op. cit.*, 111.

Washington state where it was wrecked on November 1. These sources appear to rule out a visit by the schooner to Northern California in 1807 or 1808.

In October 1808, Baranov sent out the ship *Kodiak* under the navigator Petrov and his trusted assistant I. A. Kuskov. The latter was instructed to "send Slobodchikov to a bay which is not more than 20 miles south along the coast [from Trinidad Bay] and ... explore and make careful measurements of the entrance and the interior of that bay..."<sup>46</sup> Putting in at Trinidad Bay in November, Kuskov found "neither sea otters to hunt nor wares to be bartered for among the savages...[and] went to Bodega on December 15."<sup>47</sup> Kuskov's subsequent report resulted in the selection of the Bodega area for the new Russian colony (Fort Ross), and their interest in more northerly settlement sites waned in subsequent years. For the short visit by the *Kodiak* to Trinidad Bay in November 1808, several sources have claimed that Slobodchikov journeyed from there to nearby Humboldt Bay pursuant to Baranov's instructions for him to do so.

A. I. Alekseev, Russian historian, wrote that it was "definitely known that (Slobodchikov) called at Rezanov Bay (Humboldt Bay)" in 1808, and that he "placed on its shores a copper plaque bearing the Russian Emblem" to signify possession of the land. But Alekseev gave no source.<sup>48</sup> Another historian of the 1930s, S. B. Okun, had written "In 1808 the peasant Sysoy Slobodchikov placed iron marker no. 1 in Trinidad Bay, at latitude 41° N..."<sup>49</sup> More recently, R. A. Pierce of the University of Alaska Fairbanks picked

<sup>46</sup> Basil Dmytryshyn, E. A. P. Crownhart-Vaughan and Thomas Vaughan, ed., *The Russian American Colonies 1798-1867* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1989), 167.

<sup>47</sup> K. T. Khlebnikov, *Baranov, op. cit.*, 71, and *Colonial Russian America, op. cit.*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> A. I. Alekseev, letter, 2 March 1973, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> S. B. Okun, *The Russian-American Company* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 121.

up on Alekseev's and Okun's assertions and suggested that Slobodchikov entered Humboldt Bay again in 1808.<sup>50</sup> It would be easy to believe that he would travel there those few miles during the month that the *Kodiak* was anchored in Trinidad Bay. He would have been able to guide the Aleuts in small boats to the entrance based on his 1806 experience in the bay with the Winships.

These notions of Alekseev and Pierce that Slobodchikov reentered Humboldt Bay in 1808 now appear ungrounded. A recent publication from Moscow of a contemporary report confirms that he did not reenter. In that, Kuskov, who was on board the *Kodiak*, wrote to his superior, Baranov, on October 5, 1809 (paraphrased):

In 1808, Kuskov was in the vicinity of Cape Trinidad hoping to rendezvous with Bulygin (*Sv. Nikolai*). In the meantime, he decided to check the depth soundings obtained previously [1806] and sent out all of his Aleuts (Kodiak and Fox Islanders) in baidarkas, under the same Slobodchikov. They were unable to enter "Slobodchikov Bay" because heavy surf was running along the entire shore under south winds, but it was especially strong at the entry into the bay. Slobodchikov had to return to the vessel. Kuskov left the

<sup>50</sup> Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, 475.

"Trinidad roads" December 7 [Julian calendar, then 11 days behind the Gregorian], setting course for Bodega Bay.<sup>51</sup>

Though Kuskov with all of his native sea otter hunters may have intended a visit to Humboldt Bay in 1808, his report indicates that they and Slobodchikov did not enter the bay by small boat. Nor, of course, did the *Kodiak* enter. No evidence of any survey work there by the Russians or Slobodchikov in 1808 has been discovered.

### **Links: Winship Journal and Russian Charts**

A few further similarities and links between the Winship journal and the Russian charts can be identified which point to the 1806 voyage as the primary source of these charts. The sounding of the minimum depth at the entrance to Humboldt Bay is identical between the Winship journal and the Russian maps: two fathoms two feet by the Winships (surveyed on June 14, 1806), and two *sazhen* on the Russian maps.<sup>52</sup> A *sazhen*, which is Russian, is the equivalent of seven feet. Thus the soundings are the same, both, in

<sup>51</sup> I. A. Kuskov, "Report, I. A. Kuskov to A. A. Baranov, New Archangel, 5 October 1809," Document No. 129, in *Rossiisko-Amerikanskaia Kompaniia i izuchenie tikhookeanskogo Severa 1799-1815* (The Russian-American Company and the Exploration of the North Pacific Ocean 1799-1815), (Moscow: The Academy of Sciences, 1994), vol. 3, 201-203. The original of this report is in the manuscript division of the Russian State Library, Moscow, in the history of Russian antiquities section, Acts P.32,D.15, Folios 1-2, draft. The writer, Ivan A. Kuskov, a member of the Russian-American Company, was assistant to Baranov. In 1809 Kuskov, having returned to New Archangel on the ship *Kodiak* under navigator Petrov, and having surveyed Bodega Bay, lauded that site for its likely productivity and as a possible location for a colony. Trinidad Bay, on the other hand, had been known, e.g., from Vancouver's visit, as being too open and exposed to southern winds. Kuskov became manager of the settlement at Fort Ross from 1812 to 1821. (The report was also published earlier, in English and Russian simultaneously, with the English translation slightly different than given in this narrative, and it was listed as: N. N. Bashkina, et al., eds., *The United States and Russia: The Beginning of Relations 1765-1815* (Washington, D. C.: Department of State, 1980), 594-598.)

<sup>52</sup> M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, 33.

other words, 14 feet. Mariners would know the difficulty of obtaining identical soundings of a turbulent channel at different tides and even slightly different locations.

As already mentioned, the survey work on the bay was performed by the Winships in 1806. Jonathan Winship also surveyed Trinidad Bay and Rocky Point on June 15, using one of the *O'Cain's* boats. The probable report to Baranov by Slobodchikov (and perhaps his assistants) could have contained enough information from the Winships so that, late in 1807 the manuscript chart could have been drafted. Four decades after the manuscript chart, the Hydrographic Office and Teben'kov issued their printed maps. It is significant that Teben'kov in his *Hydrographic Notes* attributed the discovery of Humboldt Bay to Winship and did not report a subsequent entry into the bay by anyone else. He also wrote that the entry into the bay "was met by hostile natives," which incident corresponds to the account in the Winship journal for June 18 and 19, 1806.<sup>53</sup> In his accounts of other discoveries, Teben'kov usually listed the source, such as the name of the navigator or nationality. He also collected ships' logs, commanders' reports, sketches and charts (Vancouver's and other British, Spanish and "some" from the Russian government) to prepare his maps and in so doing often credited these sources. For Humboldt Bay, the only references that he offered were Winship in 1806 and "colonial documents."<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 33.

### **Russian-American Company Records**

Despite the pieces of information now being released from Russia, there is an overall lack of documentation on the early years of the Russian-American Company. This is true even after the availability of several new collections in the last two decades. These include: the books of Limestone Press, associated with the University of Alaska Press and written or edited by R. A. Pierce; the Shur collection of the Rasmuson Library at that university; and publications of the Oregon Historical Society.

It is generally accepted that most of the records of the company were lost and that the logbooks of the Russian-American Company ships were not preserved. The company archives in New Archangel, originally marked "secret" by Baranov's orders, were eventually turned over to our Department of State, then to the National Archives. But they contained very few remaining documents for the time of Baranov's rule, 1801-1817. The latter was surmised to have taken his entire archive with him when he sailed from New Archangel in 1818, but he died on the way. His records disappeared when his ship arrived at St. Petersburg and are now believed to have been destroyed.<sup>55</sup>

### **Post-1808 Voyages**

One must still have reviewed the records that are available in this country for any indication of a possible Russian (or other) ship entering or coming near Humboldt Bay.

<sup>55</sup> Svetlana G. Fedorova, *The Russian Population in Alaska and California, Late 18th Century to 1867* (Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1973), 31-32. Marvin W. Falk, *op. cit.*, 116.

This search focused on the period after the Winship visit of 1806 (and Kuskov's of 1808) and before mid-century. Such a Russian visit was assumed by George Davidson and other writers.<sup>56</sup>

Other Russian voyages did result in some charting of the present-day California coast, but apparently not to the north of their Ross colony. I. M. Kislakovskii, navigator on the *Kutuzov* in 1817, drew maps of the coast from Fort Ross south to Monterey and one of Bodega Bay. Captain V. M. Golovnin of the Navy sloop *Kamchatka*, on his globe circling voyage of 1817-1819, charted small parts of the coast, e.g., the Farallon Islands off San Francisco Bay. His vessel did not stop on the coast north of Bodega. Between 1817 and 1832 at least one Russian supply vessel sailed each year between California (Bodega, San Francisco or Monterey Bays) and New Archangel.<sup>57</sup> But they apparently had no need for ventures to other areas of New Albion after the settlement of Fort Ross, and any delay or accident to a ship delivering agricultural products to their northern colonies could not be risked. As to American or other nations' ships on the coast, none is known to have entered or approached Humboldt Bay before 1850.

<sup>56</sup> George Davidson, *op. cit.*, 15, wrote that "We may assume after Winship's discovery of the Bay...(that) other Russian vessels...visited it." Some later writers followed this lead, e.g., Warren Heckrotte, *op. cit.*, 39, 40, wrote "a yes answer" as to his own question "did Slobodchikov guide the *Kodiak* into Humboldt Bay" (in 1808). But subsequent publications, 1980 and 1994 (note 51), of the 1809 Kuskov report show that this was not correct. Neither the *Kodiak* nor its boats entered the bay. I. A. Kuskov, *op. cit.*, 201-203. As to physical hazards, see also note 41.

<sup>57</sup> A. I. Alekseev, *The Destiny of Russian America 1741-1867*, ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks: The Limestone Press, 1990), 197-199. For Golovnin's plotting of the Farallones, see M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, 34. The Russian ships trading between California and New Archangel after 1817, as well as the quantity of agricultural products shipped north, are given in Kiril Timofeevich Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America*, compiler Svetlana G. Fedorova, trans. Serge LeCompte, trans. and ed. Richard Pierce (Kingston, Ontario and Fairbanks: The Limestone Press, 1994), 102, 108, 109. This excellent reference on the Russian-American Company also lists the foreign (American or European) traders on this coastal route, beginning in 1818. These lists do not include voyages by native baidaras which were also used for supplying the northern colonies.

Other factors also made an entry by ship into the bay most unlikely. The entrance to the bay was not tested by a large vessel, and Winship had not risked taking the *O'Cain* in. The Russians with less than reliable crews on some of their voyages would have been less inclined to chance the entrance. (For example, from the Kuskov report to Baranov in 1809, mentioned earlier, others would have known that Slobodchikov was kept from entering Humboldt Bay the year before.)<sup>58</sup> The fear of a hostile encounter such as experienced by the *O'Cain's* crew and hunters camping in the bay in 1806 may have been a further deterrent to any passing Russian ship, whose commander would instead desire to remain outside and maintain sea room.

### **Surveys, Other Sources of Charts, Anchorages**

No charts or sketches survived along with the Winship journals. However, all available evidence suggests that the survey of Humboldt Bay made by the Winship brothers was sufficient to enable preparation of the first (1807) Russian chart. Thus, it is helpful to scan for some sources of charts of that period.

As to surveys in shoal water and in sheltered areas, soundings for depth were taken from small boats, usually along the general line of the shore. Rocks and other dangers displayed the adjacent bottom. To set the positions of the soundings, points such as geographical features of the land were determined. Preferably three horizontal angles were obtained. Bearings were taken with the boats stabilized or anchored; they were also taken from shore. Anchoring the boat where the first series of bearings were to be made

<sup>58</sup> I. A. Kuskov, *op. cit.*, 201-203.

(the point of departure) was important for accuracy. Ships' largest boats typically employed grapples and some type of anchor to hold position. Vancouver preferred to use two boats for surveys. The position of one was determined relative to the other. With only one boat, alternate bearings from the water and from the land were most useful. Alternately, a straight line course could have been rowed or sailed and the log line streamed to estimate distance, with the time known. Points determined were plotted. Observations and sketches were then combined to produce draft charts. In addition to the compass and protractor, early models of the sextant or octant were employed. (The latter had generally replaced the backstaff or sea quadrant used in the American colonial period.)<sup>59</sup>

On the *O'Cain*, any of the four boats carried could have been used for the survey. The pinnace had the most speed and was easy to row. The baidara was stable and also had speed when a considerable number of Aleuts were available to paddle. This stability would have aided observations taken from the water, and this plus the natives' rowing power would have made it the prime candidate for the first entrance across the unknown bar and the survey of the northern arm as reported in Winship's journal for June 14, 1806.

Chart makers employed a spectrum of sources, besides surveys, for their work. They gave credence to other charts and observations when these appeared to be based on sufficient data. Vancouver's charts of the early 1790s were a major source for the Russians. The latter also developed portions of charts from atlases, notably those of G. A. Sarychev of 1826 and Teben'kov of 1852. As already discussed, Teben'kov wrote that

<sup>59</sup> Nathaniel Bowditch (originally by), *American Practical Navigator* (Washington: U. S. Naval Oceanographic Office, 1966), 41, 42, 857-859, 863, 864. Bowditch (1773-1838) first rewrote an earlier work and published his original edition of *The New American Practical Navigator* in 1802. After the 35th edition under his name, the U. S. Navy Hydrographic Office purchased the copyright in 1868 and has updated the book since that time. W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (of 4), 46-48, 82, 96.

his charts originated from a host of documents, such as sketches and logbooks, and published sources such as printed charts and journals. He frequently referenced the charts of Vancouver, as well as Spanish and British maps and materials.<sup>60</sup>

Examples of borrowing by one chart maker or surveyor from another are numerous. Mentioned earlier was the copying on to the two 1848 Russian printed maps of Humboldt Bay the hydrographic data of Trinidad Bay from Vancouver's 1793 chart. Vancouver in turn copied from a Russian chart sections of Kodiak Island and the Bering Sea where his ships had not sailed. He also used the charts of Quadra and Malaspina to draw most of his coastline of Vancouver Island.<sup>61</sup>

Anchor signs and other hydrographic markings were included within this borrowing. This is of interest because all three of the Russian charts of Humboldt Bay display an anchor sign, at the same location, in the north arm. The *O'Cain* did not enter the bay; thus some writers have assumed the anchor sign signified a Russian ship. The information already reviewed does not support this; for example, both Golovnin's and Teben'kov's writings judged that the bay was not suitable for large vessels. Anchor signs, along with other data, appear to have been copied liberally by Teben'kov in the preparation of his atlas. Included in his 38 charts plus insets were five charts and eight insets of old California south of Bodega. These show a total of 18 anchor signs. Because this was under Spanish, then Mexican, jurisdiction and as Teben'kov wrote of his use of Spanish charts, it is reasonable to assume that some of these anchor signs were not from Russian

<sup>60</sup> Marvin W. Falk, *op. cit.*, 112-119. A. I. Alekseev, *op. cit.*, 202, 203. M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, 3, 4, 32-36.

<sup>61</sup> W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (of 4), 241; vol. 4, 1286, 1287.

visits but were recommended or prospective markings for their own future purposes.<sup>62</sup> The *American Practical Navigator*, originally by Nathaniel Bowditch, defines an anchorage as "where a vessel anchors or may anchor," and an anchorage chart as one "showing prescribed or recommended anchorages."<sup>63</sup> The use of recommended anchor signs thus appears to have been fairly common. On the Russian charts of Humboldt Bay, the sign does not appear to require that a ship had actually anchored there.

### **Possible Later, Small Boat Voyages to Humboldt Bay**

One or more small boat excursions to the vicinity of Humboldt Bay, however, in the following decades for the purpose of hunting is documented. Baidarkas or baidaras manned by the skilled Aleuts with Russian supervisors appear to have journeyed that distance. These miniature squadrons originated from the Bodega colony, Fort Ross. Indeed, Slobodchikov himself would have been in a position to lead them in 1813 or later, had he had such direction. For in those years he had become clerk and agent to manager Kuskov at the Ross settlement. In 1813-14 he made at least two baidarka or baidara voyages, but south rather than north, to San Francisco Bay for trade with the Spaniards;

<sup>62</sup> M. D. Teben'kov, *op. cit.*, charts 14-18, pp. 34, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Nathaniel Bowditch, *op. cit.*, 910. Writing recommended and/or prospective anchorages was apparently common also for the Winships. In his first journal, Jonathan Winship, Jr., "Particular Occurrences, Ship *O'Cain*," *op. cit.*, circa 1806 but pages not numbered, recorded details of a half dozen suggested anchorages, over a number of pages. These were for various bays along the coast of Spanish California. He had received the information through conversations with other sea captains. The sequencing of this journal shows that he wrote these for his possible future use or for that of others.

and in 1820 he visited Santa Barbara, and San Francisco again in 1822.<sup>64</sup> There seems to be no information that he undertook a later journey northward, for example to Humboldt Bay.

But other Russians were reported to have led small boat voyages northward from Bodega. One group of Russians and Aleuts journeyed to a bay "situated about 20 versts [kilometers, approximately] north of Cape Mendocino" in 1817, according to Golovnin, of the *Kamchatka* who anchored at Bodega in August 1818. He wrote that the bay visited in the north had two arms and was shallow with two large and several smaller rivers running into it. His report also mentioned another larger bay, this one even closer to Trinidad Bay and "also visited by the Russians."

One year later, in 1818, during the stop by Golovnin in late summer at Bodega and Fort Ross, another small expedition to the north was ventured. He wrote "during our stay here, 74 Aleuts were at Cape Mendocino hunting for otters which are found between that cape and Trinidad Bay." A second account of that 1818 trip was given by K. T. Khlebnikov, administrator for the Russian-American Company in New Archangel. He reported that a group of 38 baidarkas was sent to Trinidad Bay in July 1818. But just short of their destination, a gale forced the boats to seek shelter, and they anchored in a bay with two branches. Here, a Russian-led party ran into active native defenses and fighting ensued.

<sup>64</sup> P. A. Tikhmenev, *op. cit.*, 136, relates Slobodchikov's 1813 trading venture to San Francisco, and Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1886), 302, 304 and 373 identified two manuscript sources for the promyshlennik's travels on the central California coast in 1813-14. K. T. Khlebnikov, *The Khlebnikov Archive*, ed. and trans. Leonid Shur and John Bisk (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1990), 89 and 122 identify Slobodchikov's excursions to Santa Barbara and San Francisco Bay in 1820 and 1822 from Ft. Ross. Ed. Shur also gives Slobodchikov's year of death as 1828. Khlebnikov in this volume (86, 87) also mentions the use of baidaras, the large leather and frame Aleut boats which were often commanded by *promyshlenniks*, for transport between the Ross colony and New Archangel, a distance of approximately 1,500 miles. None of these vessels was mentioned, however, to have stopped in the vicinity of Humboldt Bay.

The Fort Ross party returned to its base on September 11, having secured only a token number of sea otter pelts. Because Khlebnikov concluded his report by locating the bay's two branches as "northwest and northeast of Trinidad Bay,"<sup>65</sup> it was not likely Humboldt Bay since that bay lies to the south, and therefore the bay that was actually visited in 1818 must remain not clearly identified.

Though conducting this effort at hunting by baidarkas to the north, the Russians had already begun to focus on Bodega for colonization after Kuskov's favorable report to Baranov of 1809 concerning that area. With construction of the Ross settlement in 1812, it received their singular attention and began to tax the company's resources. This waning of interest in New Albion was coupled with writings such as that by Golovnin in 1818 that the north coast did not possess a safe harbor, indicating perhaps that no Russian vessel should be sent there. Other factors discouraging further exploration included the virtual extinction of sea otters there, the low agricultural production at Fort Ross resulting from the

<sup>65</sup> V. M. Golovnin, *Around the World on the Kamchatka, 1817-1819*, ed. and trans. Ella Lury Wisnell (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 162, 169, 170. Although Golovnin did not write "1817" as the time of the first visit northward, he did use the term "last year," p. 170. Since his ship was at Bodega Bay for only a few weeks in the late summer of 1818, he must have meant 1817 for that small boat voyage. Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian America*, *op. cit.*, 109, also suggests that the bay was visited "when they first stopped there in 1817." As to the other bay, closer to Trinidad which was also visited by the Russians (the year was not given by Golovnin), ed. and trans. Ella Lury Wiswell in an insert (p. 170) writes that this was Humboldt Bay; but she gives no documentation. For the voyage north in 1818, Kyrill T. Khlebnikov, *Colonial Russian American*, *op. cit.*, 108-109, provides the chief source, and it is supported by V. M. Golovnin p. 162. Khlebnikov cites Somoilov the toion (native chief or tribal elder) who led the Russian and Aleut group from the Ross settlement, that the bay visited was large and divided into two branches, one located to the northwest of Trinidad Bay and the other to the northeast. Given this scant information, the most logical identification of this bay of 1818 is Big Lagoon and Stone Lagoon north of Trinidad Bay. (This article does not include or use the probably fraudulent account of a small boat voyage from Bodega Bay to near Humboldt Bay in 1824 as written by Zakhar Tchitchinoff (Zakhar Chichinov), *Adventures in California... 1818-1828* (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1956), 12-24. The account was from Ivan Petrov, a translator and writer for H. H. Bancroft in the 1870s. It centered on a fictitious character named Vasilii P. Tarakanov, Petrov's supposed source and Chichinov's supposed companion on the adventure. This invention and others by Petrov have been established as false by Professors Morgan Sherwood and Richard A. Pierce. The Petrov concoctions are discussed by Kenneth N. Owens in his (and trans. Alton S. Donnelly) *The Wreck of the Sv. Nikolai* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1985), 7, 77-87; see also Richard A. Pierce, *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, 88.)

coastal weather (heavy moisture and fogs) and the reluctance of the Russian *promyshlenniks* to promote farming, and the ongoing antagonism of the Spanish authorities in the south. Further, the Russians in 1819 began expanding to the north to areas still abundant in furs, such as to the Nushagak River north of the Alaska Peninsula.<sup>66</sup> Following the baidarka visits or near visits of 1817-1818, Humboldt Bay apparently remained unvisited. The Russians finally abandoned Fort Ross and California in 1844. They sold Alaska to the United States in 1867.

### Summary

Humboldt bay was rediscovered in 1849 by a land party led by Josiah Gregg. They marched over the coast mountains from the upper Trinity River inland, searching for a water route to the ocean and reached the shores of Humboldt Bay on December 20.<sup>67</sup>

Large ship entrances into the bay may not have taken place until the period of settlement, when in 1850 the schooner *Laura Virginia* under Lt. Douglass Ottinger first crossed the dangerous and shifting sandbar. Even so, in the next five years, 12 ships were wrecked in attempting to gain entrance.<sup>68</sup>

Only the Russian manuscript chart of 1807 and sub-charts of 1848 showed the bay until 1850. All other known charts displayed only an unbroken line for the coast from Cape

<sup>66</sup> V. M. Golovnin, *op. cit.*, 169. P. A. Tikhmenev, *op. cit.*, 135-142. As to the renewed effort (to the area of present Western Alaska), Svetlana G. Fedorova, *op. cit.*, 135, 136, reported the enthusiasm for the "still unexplored lands, rich in furs" where the Anglo-American growth would not inhibit them.

<sup>67</sup> George Davidson, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>68</sup> Susan Pritchard O'Hara and Gregory Graves, *Saving California's Coast. Army Engineers at Oceanside and Humboldt Bay* (Spokane: The Arthur C. Clark Company, 1991), 16, 17.

Mendocino north to Trinidad Bay. The first known chart of Humboldt Bay by an American was that by Lt. Ottinger made early in 1850 and which was little more than an outline sketch of the bay with some 40 depth soundings. (The actual soundings were at least partly made by second officer H. H. Böhne who preceded the *Laura Virginia* into the bay and had sounded the bar.) Ottinger's sketch was published in a San Francisco newspaper in April 1850.<sup>69</sup> The first U. S. Coast Survey chart showing the bay was published in 1850, but the bay was roughly sketched and was not from a survey. That agency then surveyed the bay in 1851 and published its first detailed hydrographic chart the same year. Commercial maps of the west coast and of California began to include Humboldt Bay as early as 1852. But no United States maps have been found which show the bay prior to that mid-century mark.

The bay was named after Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), German naturalist, statesman and explorer of South America, Mexico and Asia. Lt. Ottinger and another sea captain with him gave it this name upon their 1850 entry. Despite Ottinger's belief at that time, there is no known documentation that the Baron ever saw the bay. Nor is he believed to have seen the Humboldt - the emigrants' celebrated river in northern Nevada - also named after him.<sup>70</sup>

The Winship voyage on the *O'Cain* stands as enabling the first recorded entrance into Humboldt Bay by Euro-Americans and the first interior survey, when in June 1806 Mr.

<sup>69</sup> Lt. Douglass Ottinger, "Sketch of Humboldt Harbor," in *The Daily Journal of Commerce* (San Francisco: April 26, 1850), and republished in Walter C. Schafran, *The Northwest Coast of California and Humboldt Bay* (Eureka: The Humboldt Bay Maritime Museum, no date), 31.

<sup>70</sup> Dale L. Morgan, *The Humboldt, Highroad of the West* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc., 1943), 6, 7.

Clark, Second Officer, led a party of hunters in small boats into this, the second largest land-locked bay on California's coast.

The Winship brothers, Jonathan and Nathan, their crew, the Russians and the Aleut and Kodiak natives all participated in the discovery. But the *O'Cain* was not sailed into the bay, and no record has been found of any other ship, Russian or other, taken in prior to 1850. Jonathan's journal, which revealed surveys of the bay made by his small boats in 1806, is the only known document which identifies such surveys and these seem likely therefore, and because of the other evidence given, to be the primary source for the first known charts, which were Russian. The transmitter of the data for these charts was likely Slobodchikov who, according to the journal, participated in at least one of the surveys during the course of the 1806 discovery.<sup>71</sup>

For his 1805 to 1808 voyage, Jonathan Winship and his crew on the *O'Cain* had carried out the second successful fur trading contract with Baranov, discovered Humboldt Bay in that pursuit, and had circumnavigated the globe. The ship reached Boston on June 15, 1808 with a promising cargo of teas, nankins, silks and other China goods. According to Winship's final entry for the three year voyage, the distance that he and his crew sailed was 68,120 miles.

End

<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal...", *op. cit.*, June 15 and 18, 1806. These entries identify "the Russian Commander" as being included with Nathan Winship on the survey of the southern branch of the "new Discovered Sound."

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# Discovery of Humboldt Bay, California, in 1806 from the Ship *O'Cain*, Jonathan Winship, Commander<sup>1</sup>

An Episode in a Bostonian-Russian Contract Voyage  
of the Early American China Trade

E. W. Giesecke

The small ship sailed out of the New Archangel (Sitka) harbor on May 21, 1806 heavily loaded. The Americans and the Russians had ushered on board nearly 100 native Aleuts and Kodiaks, 12 native women and three Russian supervisors. The American crew of the ship *O'Cain* (a dozen New Englanders and nine Hawaiians), engaged in the early American China trade, had been preparing for the southbound voyage for a month.

The navigation and logistics efforts to sail this three-masted, 93-foot-long vessel challenged the crew, according to the journal. Down the coast, fog banks were frequent in the summer. Rocks and headlands were poorly charted. Continual summer northwesterers aimed to drive ships toward the shore.

Between the two decks of the 280-ton ship, the crew had stowed 70 baidarkas (skin kayaks) and larger leather boats. To aid in the hunt for the sea otters with their prized silky and dense pelts, each Aleut was given a musket, flint and gunpowder. The natives would be paid for the pelts on a piece basis. Provisions for them on the southbound cruise, mainly 15,300 dried fish and 1,000 pounds of raw whale meat, were taken on board. For trade with southern natives and the Spanish missions, manufactured goods had been stowed.<sup>2</sup>

The *O'Cain's* multi-national crew and passengers had set sail in order to hunt and collect sea otter skins for the Canton market. Captain Jonathan Winship Jr., a 26 year-old Bostonian, had agreed to a contract with New Archangel, a nearly new binational experiment, having been attempted only once before. The Americans, Russians and Aleuts on board offered a somewhat incongruous but disciplined tripartite relationship. The Russians also had strong leadings for exploration and maritime expansion along the Pacific Northwest coast and to the periphery of Spanish California.

This narrative seeks to establish, with an approach to finality, (1) which nation should receive principal acknowledgement, in this contract voyage of 1806, for the discovery of Humboldt Bay, the 14-mile-long body of water between Trinidad Bay and Cape Mendocino; and did Winship relinquish authority to the Russians and how this was demonstrated in command and control of that cruise, and (2) whether the Russians ever succeeded in entering the bay in a sailing vessel or with a group of small craft to make (or imply) a territorial claim.

<sup>1</sup> A revision of a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the History of Discoveries, Arlington, Texas, November 1995. The primary change was the incorporation of a new chart received in early 1996 from the Russian Naval Archives in St. Petersburg, a handwritten manuscript of the Bay of Rezanov (Humboldt Bay) dated 1807, apparently not previously seen in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Winship Jr., "Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the North Pacific Ocean, from there to China back to Boston 1805.6.7.8" (ms, private collection), May 13, 17, 18, 19 and 23, 1806.

document known which identifies these surveys as a source for the first known charts, which were Russian.

For his 1805 to 1808 voyage, Jonathan Winship and his crew on the *O'Cain* had carried out the second successful fur trading contract with Baranov, discovered Humboldt Bay in that pursuit, and had circumnavigated the globe. The ship reached Boston on June 15, 1808 with a cargo of teas, napkins, silks and other China goods. According to Winship's final entry for the three year voyage, the distance that he and his crew sailed was 68,120 miles.