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Title: Extract of the Accounts of the Directors of the Russian American Company

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"*Extrait Du Compte Rendu de la Direction de la Compagnie Russe-Américaine, pour les deux années terminant le 1er janvier, 1842.*" [Extract of the Accounts of the Directors of the Russian American Company for the two years ending the 1st of January, 1842].

Translated by Glenn Farris

The following short extract was published in the *Journal de St. Pétersbourg* in its "*Supplément d'Intérieur*," on October 31, 1842, pp. 153-154. It offers a stark, bottom-line explanation of the decision to sell the Russian American Company's California base to John Sutter, including specifics of the earnings and expenses associated with Fort Ross. An interesting comment was the note that due to the political upheaval in Mexican California in 1837 [actually it had begun in 1836 with a series of revolving door California governors] that it became necessary to augment the military force at Fort Ross by a considerable amount, that raised the annual expenses from 45,000 to 72, 000 rubles. This may help explain the apparent increase in the number of Europeans at Fort Ross in the last years of the colony.

Subsequent to the comments about Fort Ross is an interesting statement of the simultaneous construction that took place at New Arcangel (Sitka). The implication is that this was made possible in part by eliminating the high expense of maintaining the California establishment. In all, this short piece provides an interesting footnote to the history of Fort Ross and Russian America in general during this period of transition.

Among the most notable dispositions, executed in 1840 and 1841 in the Russian possessions in America, we cite first the abandonment of the Colony Ross, established in 1812 on the coast of New Albion. This establishment had been formed in the hope that the cultivation of fields in this part of America where the climate is less severe [than in Alaska], would offer an easy means to provision the other colonies situated more to the north on an arid coast. At first the sea otter were found in great numbers in the vicinity of [Fort] Ross, so much so that the hunt and the commerce in pelts seemed to promise enormous economic returns.

However, it did not turn out that way. The fields and the prairies that the Company had been able to acquire were not extensive enough. Since they were situated at an elevation considerably above the stream banks, surrounded by rocks and precipices, these fields were too difficult to access, not to speak of the proximity of the ocean. The frequent fogs on this coast would often have disastrous results on the harvest. Soon the sea otter became rare in these places and the result was that the expenses to maintain this establishment rose to 45,000 rubles and for the period of 1825 to 1829 this became a considerable excess over the revenues that were returned to the Company which were barely 38,000 rubles annually by counting the value of the pelts as 29,000 rubles and the agricultural produce worth 9,000 rubles.

Later, in 1837, the political troubles that beset California, forced the Company to reinforce the Ross garrison so that the annual costs of this colony rose to 72,000 rubles, while the revenues dropped to 8,000 rubles, the value of the products of the land since the sea otter had become extremely rare on this part of the coast to the degree that the trade in pelts ceased entirely.

In these circumstances, the establishment and the surrounding fields were sold in 1840, with the authorization of the government, for a sum of 30,000 piastres to M. Sutter, a Swiss by birth, who had established himself in California.

Having rid itself of the need to support this onerous colony, the administration could continue more actively all the work undertaken with the goal of further developing the port of the growing city of New Archangel, headquarters of our colonies. A mill, some bath-houses, four wooden houses (of which two were on stone foundations and had two stories), a bridge on the Malyshevka and some embankments along this river have been successively built in the course of two years at the expense of the Company. Also constructed were a magnetic and meteorologic observatory, furnished with all the necessary instruments, and in the sea, not far from the bank, a pavilion set on pilings to measure the difference between high and low tides. A new inclosure wall [stockade] begun at the same time, will offer more room in the fortress.

Since 1833, a time when only 847 inhabitants (591 men and 256 women) were counted, that is: 406 Europeans, 134 Aleuts, and 307 creoles (that is to say, children of a Russian father and a native mother), the population of this city has grown considerably, having increased at the end of 1841 to the following figures:

Europeans	427 men	61 women	488
Creoles	298 men	300 women	598
Aleuts	60 men	77 women	137
Total	785 men	438 women	1,223