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Title: **Voyage of the Sloop Kamchatka**

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Published by: Mysl'

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VOYAGE OF THE SLOOP *KAMCHATKA*

Vasilii M. Golovnin. *Puteshestvie na shliupe "Kamchatka" v 1817, 1818, i 1819 godakh* (voyage of the Sloop *Kamchatka* during the years 1817-1819), edited by V. a. Divin, et al. Moscow: Mysl', 1965. Chapter 9 (pp. 171-183) Translated by Stephen W. Watrous.

Ninth Chapter: Voyage from Monterey to Port Rummyantsev [Bodega Bay]; Our Stay there; and the Voyage Thence to Fort Ross, with remarks on New Albion

Thursday 19. September 19 [1818] from 10AM to 3PM, was calm, but light shifting winds arose later on. Putting their direction to good use, we chose a route which brought us close to our destination – Port Rummyantsev.

Friday 20. After midday on the 20th, we passed the rocky islets of the Farallons, skirting the southerly ones at a distance of two miles, such that we clearly caught sight of the Aleuts along the shore, who were living there to hunt seals and sea lions. The clear [172] weather allowed us to make observations to determine longitude with our chronometers according to which we determined the longitude of the southern Farallons and found that they are somewhat farther west than [Capt. George] Vancouver placed them...

Saturday 21. A gentle wind from the southeast allowed us to pass Point de Los Reyes at night, and before dawn on the 21st we were approaching Port Rummyantsev, where we arrived at 6AM, when it became light. Since the southeast wind was getting stronger, however, I considered it necessary to keep under sail, so as to avoid casting anchor in a completely open place, until it fell calm. With this intent I began to beat windward under short sail, and after approaching shore at 8:00, I dispatched our Aleuts to go alongshore in their baidarkas to Fort Ross with a letter for Mr. Kuskov. When the wind abated quickly, about 10:00, we came to an anchorage at a depth of 42 feet [six *sazhens*] and cast anchor at a distance of a mile from the nearest shoreline.

Toward noon we put the sloop on two anchors and immediately sent rowboats off to shore for fresh water [i.e., at today's Campbell Cove] and one-third of the crew to wash their clothes. The open location of the roadstead here is quite dangerous with south winds, and this forced me to finish our business and to leave as soon as possible. That evening, about 8 PM, Mr. Kuskov came to see us. He had seen our sloop from the promontory beside the fort, and supposing it was the *Kuluzov* [expected from Sitka], he had left at 11 in the morning. My letter reached him en route, and he sent an order back to the fort to provide us immediately with fresh provisions, which we needed. The usual trip by baidarka from Fort Ross to Port Rummyantsev takes five hours, but a contrary wind detained Mr. Kuskov for longer than this.

Sunday 22. On September 22 we continued to bring water onto the sloop, and part of the crew washed clothes on shore; toward evening we finished up both these jobs. Meanwhile, we were sent from the fort two steers, ten rams, four pigs, some chickens, and a large number of vegetables. I spent time with Mr. Kuskov today, and he told me all the necessary information regarding the country here.

After dinner we went together to the Indian settlement, or, better put, to their huts, and we saw how they live, what they eat, how they treat the sick through use of slander, and how they play with sticks for gain – all of which will be described later on.... [173]. Moreover, the chief [*starshina*] of the independent Indians, who live around the bay here, came to me with a translator, explained very important matters regarding the

Spaniards' unjust claim to this country, and asked me if the Russians would accept them under their protection and would settle among them. All of this will be described later in greater detail. [Capt. Golovnin leaves Bodega Bay for Fort Ross].

[174] Friday, September 27, 1818. The wind, shifting to the east, did not at first permit us to approach the fort until the morning of the 27th, when we sighted it through the gloom. At 10AM [Russian-American] Company personnel came out toward us in a large boat. Mr. Kuskov sent them for us, supposing that I would come ashore with some of the officers.... [Due to poor weather conditions, Golovnin remained on board, and...] at 5:00 Mr. Kuskov came out to visit us, bringing along various fresh provisions and a copy (for which I had solely come here a second time) of the document [of September 22, 1817] which indicates that the Indians have ceded the land here to the Russians.

OBSERVATIONS ON NEW ALBION

The section of the Northwest coast of America called New Albion should be considered as lying between the northern latitudes of 38 degrees and 48 degrees, for the second voyager [to sail] around the world, the English navigator Drake, who gave the American coast its name, viewed its extent from 48 degrees [North] latitude to 38 degrees. At the latter position he found an open bay where he dropped anchor, this was consequently given the name of Drake's Bay. [175] The Russian-American Company's settlement, called Fort Ross, is located on this coast alongside a small stream at a latitude of 38 degrees 33', and 80 [actually 90] miles distant from the Presidio of San Francisco, which constitutes the northern boundary of California. This fort was founded in 1812 with the voluntary consent of the natives, who here are Indians of the same kind that are in California, but are irreconcilable enemies of the Spanish, who they kill mercilessly wherever they meet them. By establishing this settlement the Company intended to hunt sea otter and to take up agriculture, for which the land and climate are quite well suited. Moreover, the vast Bay of San Francisco was, so to speak, full of otter.

Fort Ross comprises a rectangular palisade of tall, thick beams with two wooden towers on its sides, and it is defended by 13 cannon. The construction inside is very good: the manager's house, the barracks, and the warehouses. To the honor of Commerce Counsellor Kuskov, the founder of this establishment, it should be mentioned that there is a draw-well inside the stockade, even though it stands right next to a stream. This is a rather necessary measure for military preparedness in case of hostility with the natives or the encroachments of an external enemy.

Outside the fort are bathhouse and cattle yards. The garrison consists of 26 Russians and 102 Aleuts, of who many are often away hunting. During our stay here, 74 Aleuts were at Cape Mendocino hunting otter, which abound between this cape and Trinidad Bay, although not in large numbers. With such strength, Commerce Counsellor Kuskov, the manager here, does not fear the Spanish and disregards all their threats.

The moment this establishment was founded the Governor of Upper California knew of it as did other Spaniards subordinate

to him. They even helped the Russians, supplying them with their first necessities in horses and cattle, and then maintaining friendly relations and trade with Mr. Kuskov. Missionaries bought various goods from him in cash and in grain; Spanish officials went to visit him, and he visited them – in a word, they lived as two friendly neighboring peoples should live. But this was when the Spanish did not recognize Joseph [Bonaparte, to 1815] as King of Spain. At present, however, when Spain's affairs have reverted to the former system, the new governor [Pablo Vicente de Sola], who arrived here from Mexico, has demanded that the Russians leave these shores, which belong to the Spanish Crown, and if they shouldn't leave, he threatened to drive them away by force.

Mr. Kuskov at first did not know just how to treat him, being unaccustomed to relations of such a kind, and unacquainted with any foreign language [176] besides. But since he well knew how weak and contemptible the forces were that the governor had at his disposal, he gave him the brief, curt reply that he had founded the settlement on the orders of his superiors, and consequently he could not abandon it, would not, and refused to go contrary to the instructions of the same authorities. This made the governor discontinue his demands and threats, and he was satisfied simply that he had prohibited any kind of relations with Fort Ross and had forbidden Mr. Kuskov to hunt sea otter in San Francisco Bay.

In accordance with all common custom, the Russians had full right to settle on these shores, but the Spanish seek to drive them away on groundless and completely empty claims. The Russians founded their settlement with the willing consent of the original inhabitants of this country, with the permission of a people who does not recognize the authority of the Spanish and who have been in perpetual enmity with them. They have conceded [to the Russians] the right to choose a site and to settle on their coast in exchange for a certain payment, distributed to them in various items of trade.

Their friendly disposition toward the Russians, which has continued to this day, clearly testifies that the latter have not taken possession of this land by force. Russian hunters go off alone or in pairs to shoot wild goats in the forest, sometimes stay overnight among the Indians and return unharmed and uninjured. As opposed to this, Spaniards do not dare show themselves unarmed nor in small numbers in their midst, or they will all be killed. These Indians willingly give away their daughters in marriage to Russians and to Aleuts who have settled in their midst, and now there are many of them at Fort Ross. Not only friendship but also family ties are formed this way.

Moreover, the Russians have settled on a coastline which has never been occupied by a single European nation, for not only La Perouse and Vancouver, but many others after them here, such as English and American merchant captains, can testify that north of the Presidio of San Francisco the Spanish have never had a settlement. On the north side of the vast bay of the same name they founded Mission San Rafael three years after our settlement, and they founded it on land belonging to New Albion and not to California. The Indians burned this establishment of theirs. Such are the Russian's rights to the occupation of New Albion.

The Spanish base their claims on the right of first discovery and on their being adjacent to these shores. Even if the Spanish had seen this coastline prior to Drake, [177] this [claim] would be open to serious question, for even in most recent times navigators have shown that they knew nothing of the western

lands of North America.... [Golovnin continues to attack Spanish territorial claims to the Northwest Coast].

In an earlier chapter I mentioned already that the chief of the people living near Port Rummyantsev during my stay there came to visit me on board ship. He brought gifts, which consisted of various articles of dress, arrows and domestic implements, and he requested that Russia take him under its protection. Our translator was an Aleut, who had lived for over a year [178] among this people. This chief, named Valenila, actually wanted more Russians to settle in their midst, so that they could defend the inhabitants from Spanish oppression. [Author's comment: Sometimes they also call him *khoibo*, but this word signifies commander or chief; in such fashion do they call Mr. Kuskov *apikhoibo* – great commander.] He entreated me to give him our flag so that, as he put it, when Russian ships appeared on their coastline, he could raise it as a sign of friendship and alliance with the Russians. After this, I do not think it possible to maintain, unless injudiciously or irrationally, that Russians have occupied the lands of others or have settled on the New Albion coast without a single right to do so.

According to Mr. Kuskov's assertion and according to our own observations, the climate in New Albion is excellent and the land fertile. In summer, northwest winds blow for the most part, and the weather is clear and warm; when south winds blow, they are always gentle. Only in the three winter months (November, December, and January) do they blow with great force and does it rain a lot. It is never very cold; during these same months strong thunder can often be heard, along with frightful lightning, especially in December.

The land here produces many crops in abundance. At present, under Mr. Kuskov's direction, the gardens grow cabbage, lettuce, pumpkins, horseradish, carrots, turnips, beets, onions, and potatoes. Even watermelons, cantaloupes, and grapes, which he has not grown for long, ripen in the open air. Very tasty garden vegetables sometimes reach extreme size: for example, one horseradish weighed about 45 lbs. [one pood, 13 lbs.], and they often grow to about 35 lbs. Pumpkins here are sometimes 50 lbs., and one turnip weighted 15 lbs. Potatoes are especially prolific: at Ross their usual fertility is one hundred from a single apple, and at Port Count Rummyantsev 180 and 200 [potatoes] sometimes grow from a single apple, and besides, they plant them twice a year. Those sown in early February are harvested in late May, and whatever is sown in June is ready in October.

Mr. Kuskov has experimented a little with agriculture, but due to a lack of necessary tools and enough workers, [179] and perhaps inexperience too, the harvests have not corresponded to expectations, for this very year the wheat crop gave him only four times the seed, and barley five times.

He also raises cattle and is successful beyond doubt, for the abundant pastures, ponds, and year-round fresh fodder permit a small number of people to manage large herds. He now has ten horses, 80 head of cattle, 200 sheep, and over 50 pigs. These animals are all in fine condition. From the two steers he gave me, the meat alone weighed 1800 lbs. [47 pood]. He has lots of poultry, such as geese and chickens.

As part of his domestic economy, milling and tanning skins for footwear play a role. He presently intends to make his own cloth and is teaching Indian girls who have married Aleuts to spin wool. In a word, Mr. Kuskov knows how to make use of the good climate and fertility of the land. He is a man the like of which the company hardly possesses elsewhere in its service.

Indeed, if men such as Kuskov administered in all of the Company's settlements, then its revenues would increase notably and it would avoid many of the reproaches that its directors [in St. Petersburg] now suffer for no reason.

Besides agriculture, which helps him supply the Company's ships with the best of vital necessities, Mr. Kuskov has been able to make use of the abundance of good timber. At Port Count Rumyantsev, under the direction of simple *promyshlennik* [workman; presumably Vasily Grudinin], who learned to build from an English shipwright at New Archangel [most likely named Lincoln], Kuskov has constructed two sea-worthy ships, a brigantine named the *Rumyantsev* and the brig *Buldakov*, as well as several row boats. [Author's note: they are built of the so-called American {tan} oak, and the decks are made of fir planks.]

Besides all the above-mentioned activities, Kuskov does not lose sight of his main business: sending out parties to hunt sea otter. He has a group living on the Farallon Islands to hunt seals and sea lions, which are sometimes present in great numbers. The latter begin to fight after mid-October, and their coats are thickest and furriest at that time. These islands should more properly be called large rocks, for they actually consist of naked rock, with neither tree-cover, soil, nor fresh water, except from rain, which accumulates in the holes. Wood is found only along the shoreline, washed up by the sea.

[180] The animals here [in New Albion] are the same as in California, with the one difference that in California the bears are all brown, and consequently of no value. But around Trinidad Bay, in New Albion, there are many black ones, whose fur is quite valuable. There is a similar abundance of wolves, and the forests are full of them, sometimes even black ones. There are bobcats here, too.

The shoreline here does not abound in fish. Almost the very same species are found as at Monterey, and these have been mentioned in my comments on California [ch. 8]. But Mr. Kuskov told me that the river between Port Rumyantsev and Fort Ross, called the Slavianka, has sturgeon, similar to ours in appearance but much inferior in taste.

The Indians of New Albion are the same people as the inhabitants of California, with perhaps a few nuances in character, customs, and language which are imperceptible to a European. In general, they are gentle, peace loving, and good-natured. The ease with which the Spanish have subjugated them and rule the best areas of their land with very weak forces, which the inhabitants could have wiped out in a single night, had they so conspired, is an indication of their peace-loving nature. But the cruelty which the Spanish often employ against them and which till now has not produced a general insurrection or conspiracy testifies to their gentle disposition. They even have a high conception of justice. For example, they formerly made it a rule – and even now some tribes among them hold to it – to kill only as many Spaniards as Spaniards killed of them. The Spanish often send out soldiers to catch Indians, whom they employ at the presidios for various difficult and menial jobs and always keep fettered.

The baptized Indians belonging to the missions cannot be used for such jobs, unless in punishment for some wrong, as determined by the missionaries. The soldiers catch them with lassoes wound of horsehair. Galloping at full speed toward an Indian, the soldier throws the lasso over him, one end of which is attached to his saddle. Forcing him to the ground, the soldier drags him a certain distance so that he becomes exhausted. After

tying up the Indian, the soldier leaves him be and gallops off after another one. Once he catches as many as he needs, he drives them to the presidio with their hands tied.

By the same method the Spanish soldiers here catch wild horses, steers, and even bears. Two men pursue an animal from opposite sides; they throw their lassoes almost simultaneously, and once this is done, they turn their horses in opposite directions. Stretching their lassoes in this way, they have the animal in their hands [181] and can kill it on the spot or lead it by their lassoes wherever they please. But when rounding up Indians with lassoes, they rarely kill them. After all this, their fellow tribesmen seek a chance to take vengeance, and when and wherever they succeed in capturing Spaniards, they slay as many of them as were killed of their comrades and let the rest go free.

Nowadays, however, the Spanish have exasperated them so much that they spare no one. This is especially true of the New Albion Indians. Friendly, peaceful initiatives toward them on the Russians' part have served well; instead of hunting them and putting them in chains, Russians often give them various items, which, even though insignificant, are valuable in their eyes, and they even, as mentioned above, marry their daughters.

Such sensible behavior from Mr. Kuskov quickly demonstrated to the native inhabitants the differences between the two nations. Proportional to their devotedness to the Russians, whom they esteem as friends and brothers, their hatred has increased toward the Spanish, who consider the Indians as no better than cattle.

The Indians of New Albion, just like those in California who live free, wear no clothing except a band around the waist. Only during cold winter weather do they wrap themselves up in the skin of some animal: deer, wolf, etc. Their attire consists of a headdress made of feathers and of headbands made of grasses and flowers. Spears and arrows are their weapons.

They do not care about cultivating the land for their livelihood, but rather they made use of the free gifts of nature. Moreover, they are not discriminating in what they choose to eat: without the slightest aversion they eat the meat of all the animals they catch, all kinds of fish and shellfish, and even reptiles, except for poisonous snakes. Their chief plant food comes from acorns, which they store for winter, and the grains of wild rye, which grows here in great abundance. To gather these grains they use a rather easy, but strange method: they burn an entire field. Being quite dry, the grasses and ears burn quickly, yet the fire cannot destroy the grains and only singes them. Then the Indians gather and eat them, as is. They burn wild rye mostly at night, and for this reason one can always determine where their camps are located, when approaching shore.

Besides fish and shellfish, they mostly catch wild deer, for their method of killing them is quite simple and easy. An Indian places a deer's head over his own and wraps himself in deerskin. In such guise he sneaks up to a herd of these animals, which these people can imitate very skillfully, in moving and jumping. Once [182] within the herd, it is not hard for him to kill as many deer as he wishes with his arrows.

Generally, the local inhabitants, as with all other uncivilized peoples, lead an idle life. To while away the time, of which they have so much they don't know what to do with it, they have invented a game. They slice a few small sticks, and one of the players, sitting on his knees, constantly juggles them at utmost speed. Meanwhile, he shouts, sings, and makes faces, trying to be funny, so as to distract the attention of his opponent away

from his hands, which he uses to hide a few sticks in the grass in front of him, when he thinks the moment favorable. Suddenly he puts his hands with the rest of the sticks behind his back. His opponent has to guess how many sticks are in the grass. If he fails, then he loses; if he guesses right, he wins. They are so attached to this game that at Port Rummyantsev, after we gave them tobacco and other trinkets in exchange for various curios as gifts, they sat right down under our very eyes and began to gamble away from each other the objects we gave them. They have other games similar to this, but I did not see them.

Of their religion I can say nothing, but I know that they believe in the supernatural activities of their sorcerers or shamans, as Siberian peoples call them. At the above-mentioned port, I saw how one such shaman cured a sick man. Sitting on top of the man in a hut, he constantly uttered something in a singsong voice and sang, waving in various ways a stick, which he held, with feathers attached. Also in the hut was the sick man's family, who at certain times answered him and helped him sing. This went on before us for over an hour, and as we left them the shaman kept on with his efforts.

New Albion has only one major drawback for the establishment of a colony: there is not a single safe and convenient shelter along the whole expanse of this region's shoreline. Port Rummyantsev [Bodega Bay], lying at latitude 38 degrees, 18 minutes, is shielded from all winds and is completely secure, but with its shoals [in the bay, just off Bodega Head] it is suitable only for the smallest ships. Its roadstead is fully open from the south.

Greater Bodega Bay [i.e. Tomales Bay] is also shallow at its estuary. Drake's Bay, Trinidad Bay, and a few others can serve as mooring places in summer, when strong winds from the south are gone.

The rivers flowing into the ocean within the boundaries of New Albion, though large and deep, are at their mouths either very shallow or have banks of alluvial sand and silt which [183] often shift and make an exit or entrance not only quite difficult but even very dangerous. An example is the river that flows into the ocean at 46 degrees, 18 minutes North Latitude, which the Spanish call Rio de Los Reyes, and the citizens of the North-Eastern American Republic call the Columbia. Here is the proper place to say that the Russians who settled in New Albion have discovered with a short time rivers, bay and mountains totally unknown to the Spanish. As evidence, it is not necessary to mention all the discoveries made by Russians in this country, but it will be enough to cite the following examples.

The Spanish did not even know of two large rivers flowing into the north side of San Francisco Bay [Sacramento, Napa, Petaluma rivers], and even the boundaries of the bay itself were unknown to them. but the Russians were there several times and found that the bay extended northward, parallel to the entrance of Tomales Bay [at 38 degrees 10 minutes, and 38 degrees 15 minutes, respectively]. Of the rivers that flow into this part of the bay, one runs from the northwest [Petaluma] and the other from the northeast [Napa and Sacramento]. The first of them, according to Indian lore, comes from the same large lake [Clear Lake] that the Slavianka River flows from [almost, but not quite]. Along the second, Russians have traveled over 60 miles [100 versts] and have found there a high, glowing, fire-breathing mountain, the existence of which the Spanish had never heard [possibly Mr. Shasta, visible on a clear day somewhat north of today's Sacramento].

The Indians assert that from this same [Clear] lake still a third great river [the Eel] flows to the west, which, judging by their words, should be one of those discovered by Russians just last year about 12 miles north of Cape Mendocino and emptying into the [Humboldt] bay. This bay is divided into two arms and is wide enough, but shallow. Two large and three small rivers flow into it, all abounding in fish, among which are sturgeon and salmon; there are many seals in the large rivers.

Along the shores of the [Humboldt] bay and the riverbanks grow enormous forests, mostly of fir and alder. They are vast in number and are valuable for construction. Between this bay and Trinidad Bay [now a lagoon] there is another bay [Arcata] larger than the first, into which two big rivers flow [Elk and Mad Rivers, the latter with perhaps a different mouth today], along which Russians have been. Along for a distance of 45 miles [70 versts], from Cape Mendocino to Trinidad Bay, there are four large rivers and three small ones. On Spanish maps only one of them is designated by name: Rio de Los Tortolas [turtle doves]. This clearly shows how little this country is known to the Spaniards. All the while they make claims to it as their own lawful possession!