

Meeting of Frontiers

Alaska

Teaching Unit: The Alaskan Fur Trade

Roger Pearson

Alaska Geographic Alliance

Institute of the North

Anchorage, AK

Overview:

The eastward expansion of the Russian empire into Siberia and America was integrally linked to the fur trade. By the mid-1600's the Siberian fur trade accounted for approximately 10 percent of Russia's total revenue. Exploitation of resources, not sustained yield, dominated resource extraction. Consequently, new areas and new resources were constantly needed. Russian America and the sea otter became the easternmost great fur resource frontier for Imperial Russia.

This unit utilizes comparative tables, statistical data, maps, original documents, and images to allow students to develop their own impressions of the Russian American fur trade and its impact on the people and landscape.

Standards:

Geography Standards:

- ❖ Geography 1. Students will use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- ❖ Geography 17. Students will apply geography to interpret the past.

Geographic Skills:

- Asking geographic Questions
- Acquiring geographic information
- Organizing geographic information
- Analyzing geographic information
- Answering geographic questions

Historical Thinking Standards:

- ❖ 2. Historical Comprehension: F. Utilize visual and mathematical data presented in charts, tables, pie and bar graphs, flow charts, Venn diagrams, and other graphic organizers.
- ❖ 4. Historical Analysis and Interpretation: C. Interrogate historical data.

Technology Standards: A technology literate student should be able to:

- ❖ Use technology to explore ideas, solve problems, and derive meaning

Essential Questions:

- How was Russian America similar and different from Siberia?
- What impact did the initial fur trade have on the people and the resource environment of Russian America?
- What were the geographic characteristics of Alaska's fur resources?
- How did the Russian American Company get the fur resources to market?

Vocabulary:

Taiga

Deposition

Exploitation

Fur Trade

Promyshlenniki

Sustainability

Instruction:

The fur trade provided the impetus for the expansion of Imperial Russia into what today is Alaska. To gain a better understanding of the nature of the Russian fur trade, it is important to comprehend the similarities and differences between Siberia and the new colonial area of Russian America (Alaska). As a class, have students develop lists of similarities and differences between the two regions.

1. Brainstorm on the similarities between Siberia and Russian America.

For the list of similarities, have students develop answers for a table similar to the one below. For convenience, some general answers are provided in the sample table.

Similarities Between Siberia and Alaska

Feature	Siberia	Russian America
Physical Environment	Tundra and Boreal Forest (Taiga)	Tundra and Boreal Forest
Type of Government	Autocratic Imperial Russia	Autocratic Imperial Russia
Dominant resource activity	Fur Trade	Fur Trade
Common Language	Russian	Russian
Pre-1800 Fur Traders	<i>Promyshlenniki</i>	<i>Promyshlenniki</i>

Sources of information:

Physical Environment: World Atlas with landform, climate, and vegetation maps.

For maps of the region, see: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps/> and also:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/terrestrial.html>

2. Determine the differences between Siberia and Russian America.

Divide students into working groups to develop a table illustrating the differences between the two regions.

To begin, have all students read and discuss in their groups the article by Nikolai N. Bolkhovitinov:

Nikolai Nikolaevich Bolkhovitinov, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences. “Some Results of the Study of the Maritime Colonization of Russian America and the Continental Colonization of Siberia .”

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/european/mofc/bolkhov.html>

Based on Bolkhovitinov’s discussion, have students utilize note-taking skills and develop a table similar to the following illustration.

For a more extensive project, students should make notes within an enlarged table in the format shown below. For an extensive project, students should develop an enlarged table in the format shown below and develop either a PowerPoint presentation or a poster series illustrating the contrasts between Siberia and Russian America.

Feature	Siberia	Russian American Co.
When occupied by Russia	Late 1500’s to Okotsk by 1639	After 1799
Location of Settlements	Inland	Coastal
Companies that obtained furs (after 1799)	(Several)	Russian America flag and/or seal http://flagspot.net/flags/ru_rac.html#rac http://www.money.org/sealskin.html
Major types of fur	Sable (Image): http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9064631&query=sable&ct= Indicate why fur was valuable	Sea Otter (Image): http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/marine/seaotter.php Fur seal (Image): http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/pubs/notebook/marine/furseal.php Indicate why fur was valuable
Primary Markets for the fur	Europe (Map showing source, Siberia & European market—use Moscow, London, Paris, Berlin)	China— Kiakhta Canton excluded for Russians only (Map showing source and markets)
Sources of European	Much local farming European Russia	Ft Ross California; US;

Food for Russian settlers		European Russia (Map showing source areas)
Size of Local Population	Make a comparative graph of Siberian and AK populations	For AK, use 80,000 for early 1700's
Size of Russian Population	Make a comparative graph using Bolkhovitinov's 1796 figures for Siberia	Use 500 Russians (Throughout the 1800's the Russian population was under 600)
Transportation to settlements from European Russia	Mostly inland—use of rivers (Use a world map for illustration)	All by sea (Use the same world map)
Size of Area	Use Siberia area East of Ural Mountains (9,653,000 square kilometers)	Use all of Alaska (1,526,000 square kilometers) Make an overlay of Alaska over Siberia using an equal-area map
Political Status Today	Map of Russia emphasizing Siberia --Several Political Regions	Map of USA emphasizing AK --US State

3. What impact did the initial fur trade have on the people and the resource environment of Russian America?

The impact of the Russians can be seen in many ways. The focus of this section is to look at available graphic, quantitative, and documentary information.

3.A. After 1742, as the Russian fur traders expanded further into Alaska, they gained an increasingly large area in which to harvest fur resources. Create a map that shows the regions covered by each of the periods noted. The information is based on the following resources:

Gibson, James R. 1976. Imperial Russia in Frontier America. New York: Oxford University Press.

Makarova, Raisa V. (Translated and Edited by Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly.) 1975. Russians on the Pacific: 1743-1799. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press.

Dates of Expansion Period	Number of Voyages Launched	Area Covered
1743-1754	22	Near Aleutian Islands
1756-1780	49	Aleutian Islands, Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island
1781-1797	21	Pribilof Islands, SC and SE Alaska Coast to Yakutat area

Map Instructions: Use a different color pencil or pen for each time period. For the second period, include also the first period. For the third period, include the first and second periods. Boundary lines should be close to the land areas of Alaska (not far out to sea) as those were the areas where the sea otters and fur seals were caught. A blank map of Alaska is available in the Appendix.

After students develop the sea otter graph in 3.B. below, have them review the map to evaluate how expanding the area of fur exploitation affected the annual pelt harvests.

3.B. Harvesting furs, especially sea otters and fur seals was done mainly by the Aleuts. The Russian *promyshlenniki* collected the furs and transported them back to Russia. This exercise allows students to gain an insight into the annual variations in the fur harvest and the number of vessels engaged in hunting each year.

Activities:

- ❖ Have students make a graph of each of the two data sets.
- ❖ Using the graphs, have students write an analysis of the graphs. A sample table of questions is provided below.

Evaluation Questions	Comments
What were the two highest periods of sea otter pelt harvesting?	
What were the two highest periods of vessels engaged in hunting?	
What factors might explain the variations in the number of vessels hunting from year to year?	
What factors might explain the great variations in sea otter pelt harvests?	
Does there seem to be a strong correlation between the number of vessels hunting and	

the size of the pelt harvests?	
Might the expanded area of exploitation be a factor in explaining the sustained harvest of sea otter pelts? (See 3.A. above.)	
What inferences can you make from the graphs regarding the future sustainability of the fur industry for Russian America?	

Sea Otter Catch in Russian America, 1745-1796

Hunting Season	Number of Pelts	Hunting Season	Vessels
1743-44		1743-44	
1744-45		1744-45	1
1745-46	1830	1745-46	1
1746-47	341	1746-47	1
1747-48	875	1747-48	1
1748-49	752	1748-49	1
1749-50	1260	1749-50	3
1750-51	1694	1750-51	4
1751-52	1694	1751-52	3
1752-53	678	1752-53	1
1753-54	1628	1753-54	2
1754-55	4044	1754-55	2
1755-56	2608	1755-56	2
1756-57	4889	1756-57	4
1757-58	2428	1757-58	6
1758-59	2830	1758-59	4
1759-60	2703	1759-60	9
1760-61	3937	1760-61	10
1761-62	2715	1761-62	12
1762-63	1110	1762-63	10
1763-64	36	1763-64	3
1764-65	1401	1764-65	3
1765-66	1521	1765-66	5
1766-67	1253	1766-67	3
1767-68	3052	1767-68	5
1768-69	3032	1768-69	4
1769-70	3721	1769-70	5
1770-71	1521	1770-71	4
1771-72	1521	1771-72	5
1772-73	3151	1772-73	6
1773-74	2777	1773-74	6
1774-75	2225	1774-75	5
1775-76	1590	1775-76	5
1776-77	1644	1776-77	5

1777-78	2263	1777-78	7
1778-79	2518	1778-79	9
1779-80	1731	1779-80	9
1780-81	1891	1780-81	13
1781-82	2590	1781-82	13
1782-83	2596	1782-83	15
1783-84	2596	1783-84	17
1784-85	2520	1784-85	18
1785-86	2402	1785-86	15
1786-87	3005	1786-87	10
1787-88	2726	1787-88	7
1788-89	2726	1788-89	9
1789-90	475	1789-90	10
1790-91	2815	1790-91	10
1791-92	2460	1791-92	8
1792-93	226	1792-93	7
1793-94	166	1793-94	5
1794-95	4562	1794-95	6
1795-96	166	1795-96	7

*Sources: Adapted from Lydia T. Black. 1984. Atka: An Ethnohistory of the Western Aleutians. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, Table VIII: Computed Estimates of Annual Sea Otter Catch, 1743-1798 Inclusive,” pp. 126-127.

Makarova, Raisa V. (Translated and Edited by Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly.) 1975. Russians on the Pacific: 1743-1799. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press.

3.C. Relations between the Russians and Alaska’s Native groups varied considerably. Most impacted were the Aleuts, since they were the first people the Russian traders met. The Aleuts were also adept at capturing sea otters and fur seals. One of the more unsettling insights into the early Russian-Aleut relations is provided in a series of complaints by the Aleuts. Their complaints were written as depositions, signed, witnessed and officially copied as part of the Billings Expedition which traveled to Russian America during 1789 and 1790.

The depositions are found on the Meeting of Frontiers web site at this url:
<http://international.loc.gov/mss/mtfms/msy/y0010073/y0010073.html>

A translation of the depositions is provided in the Appendix.

The instructor should evaluate the depositions for appropriateness of classroom use.

Questions for class discussion:

- How were the Aleuts used in fur hunting? Did they work as individuals or groups? Were families involved?
- If Aleuts were used for hunting all summer, why might this situation create problems for food availability during the severe winter months?
- What sort of egregious actions were taken against the Aleuts?

- What type of protection or legal recourse did the Aleuts have?
- How might hardships such as those described have affected the population size of the Aleuts?
- NOTE: The actions described in the depositions give one side of the Russian *promyshlenniki* treatment of Alaska Natives. Alternatively, some of the *promyshlenniki* also married Aleut women, had families, and lived peacefully in communities. See also the impact of Veniaminov later under the Russian American Company.

4. Where were the markets for the Alaskan furs and how were the furs transported to the markets?

Getting the fur pelts to markets was not an easy matter. Russia was only allowed two entry points into China, the major market for the pelts. These entry points were both interior, Kjahta (Kiakhtha) and to a much lesser extent, Tsurukhaitu. In contrast, British and especially American traders (known as Boston Men) were able to take furs to Canton (now Guanzhou).

Activity:

The cost and time involved in getting the furs to Kjahta were far greater than getting them to Canton. Have the students compare the trips, each starting from New Archangel (Sitka). They should construct maps to show the routes and make notations on features along the routes, e.g., on land, mountains and rivers and by sea, land areas and ocean currents. (See Appendix for a sample blank map.)

- ❖ For sailing, note possible routes and stopping points (e.g., Hawaii) enroute. Note the approximate distances and length of time the route(s). (Sailing times varied greatly. For class purposes assume vessels traveled 100 miles a day.) What hazards might be faced by the ocean routes?
- ❖ For the land route, travel to Okhotsk (by sea!), then to Yakutsk, Irkutsk, and finally Kiakhtha. Note the potential hazards along this route. Assume that on land the travelers are able to go 10-15 miles a day.

5. What did the fur trade look like? In addition to the data and the documents relating to the Russian American fur trade, it is also important to have a visual impression of the trade. The Meeting of Frontiers web site provides a number of images that help illustrate major elements of the trade—the animals and the fur harvests, maps of the area, communities, and the people involved in the industry.

Have students examine the following set of images from the Meeting of Frontiers web site and write a commentary on how the images are linked to the fur trade as it has been examined in the above four exercises.

Image 1: Plate showing two Aleut baidarkas. UAF Collections. (Alaska: Native Peoples of Alaska) <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfaknative.html>

Image 2: Plate showing Pribilof Island fur seals and Aleut hunters. UAF Collections (Alaska: The Alaska Fur Trade) <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfaknative.html>

Image 3. Plate showing Maimachin, China. UAF Collections (Alaska: The Alaska Fur Trade) <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfaknative.html>

Image 4. Plate showing St. Michael's Redoubt. (Alaska: The Alaska Fur Trade) <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfaknative.html>

Image 5. Plate showing Grigorii Shelikhov. (Alaska: The Russian Colonization of Alaska) <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfakrcol.html>

Assessment:

From 1742 through 1798, the Russians explored and exploited vast areas of coastal Alaska. The materials and exercises presented above give some insights into the nature and extent of the Russian entry into the region. Russian governance of Alaska changed dramatically in 1799 when the Russian American Company was established. Czar Paul granted a charter for the Russian American Company. In making this decision to do so, he had to rely on his advisors.

Using the information from the materials presented in this unit, have the students prepare a "Background Report" for the Czar on Alaska and the fur industry. The report should be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation or similar format (e.g., use of an overhead projector).

Provide the students with a scoring guide at the beginning of their work so they will understand the expectations of the project.

References:

Black, Lydia T. 1984. Atka: An Ethnohistory of the Western Aleutians. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press.

Chivigny, Hector. 1971. Lord of Alaska: Baronov and the Russian Adventure. Portland: Binford & Mort.

Gibson, James R. 1976. Imperial Russia in Frontier America. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, James R. 1990. "Russian America and the China Market." Pacifica, 2(2): 35-79.

Gibson, James R. 1992. Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841. Toronto: McGill-Queens.

Jones, Dorothy. 1980. A Century of Servitude: Privilege of Aleuts Under U.S. Rule. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. This book is available free on the web at:
<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/HistoryCulture/Aleut/Jones/jonesindex.html>

Makarova, Raisa V. (Translated and Edited by Richard A. Pierce and Alton S. Donnelly.) 1975. Russians on the Pacific: 1743-1799. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press.
Pierce, Richard A. (Ed.). 1990. Russia in North America: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Russian America. Fairbanks, AK: The Limestone Press.

Richards, Rhys. 1991. Captain Simon Metcalfe. Fairbanks, AK: The Limestone Press.

Smith, Barbara S and R.J. Barnett (Eds). 1990. Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier. Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society.

APPENDIX

1. Complaints of the Native Population of Alaska
2. Blank Map of Alaska
3. Blank Map of the Pacific Region

APPENDIX 1: COMPLAINTS OF THE NATIVE POPULATION OF ALASKA

NOTE: The following document is found on the Meeting of Frontiers web site:

<http://international.loc.gov/mss/mtfms/msy/y0010073/y0010073.html>

Below is a draft translation of the transcript that is shown on the web site. The language used is not modern Russian but late 18th Century Russian. Consequently, the translator has had to make some educated guesses as to the wording. The Library of Congress will eventually publish a finalized translation.

COMPLAINTS OF THE NATIVE POPULATION OF ALASKA

[Trans.Note: Five depositions, signed, witnessed, and officially copied as part of the Billings Expedition]
June 1789, July 4, 1790

II-23

[1789]

COPY

On the first of June 1789 at 7:30 of the day living on the island of Unalaska the “sedanaiche” [Sedanka Islands] inhabitants the aleuts Toyen [Toien, Chief] Alganalinag, in Russian Mikhailo with comrades, through the interpreter the Aleut Saguyakh named previously by the Russians Martyshka, and by baptism Ivan Chuloshnikov and the woman Anshieyess, named by the Russians Matrioshka, and by baptism Akulina, were questioned about what had been done to them by the hunter - traders [promyshlenniki] on company ships and by their leaders [peredovchiki], showed in response to the report of sergeant Buylov in the journal [ship’s log], that during the time of the overwintering of the ships by the companions, on which was the navigator Ocheredin, and the ship of the Tula gun maker under the student navigator Izmaylov and the “baydarshchik” [captain of a baydar] Gogolev, when that ship captained by Lukanin was on the islands of Unikhak [Unimak?] and Sannax [Sanak], was it actually them, the leader [foreman] Lukanin and between Ocheredin supported by Polutoviy [who had] an argument about the division of a bridge [scaffold?] for trading, and Aleuts, which were to work for whom. And by force by Ocheredin and Polutov were taken by a forceful hand, as many Aleuts and girls as they needed. And during the wintering over they sent three hunting Aleuts in high winds, from which one of the Sedaniina [Sedanka islander women], one living on the Fur Seals [Pribiloff Is.], one kunginskiy,[Kungin Island?] a total of three persons drowned.

At their departure from Unalaska to Aleks [Alaska?], Ocheredin and Polutov took forcibly more than one hundred hunting Aleuts with wives from all the islands and

villages. Gathering [stealing] from what remained on the islands baydari, arrows, parkas and food supplies and placed what they had taken on the islands of Sannakh [Sanak], Ungu [Shumagin Islands], Unimak and Kodiak, and only the smallest number returned, and those were the ones who had wives; and the others after being there four years died from hunger and a small number of the married ones were left on the islands of Sannakh and Aleks. Of the remaining inhabitants because of the removal of the hunting men, the baydari and parkas, there remained only the elderly, the very young and for the most part women suffering from a great hunger from the taking of the stored food which because of the weather could no longer be hunted, all traces were lost again and at last everyone died from hunger, and from this all these settlements were emptied.

During the time this company was on Unalaska the Aleuts in artels [labor gangs] were required to catch seal [sivuchey] from them meat, strips of klavtak [lavtak, hide for baydari] half of which is taken for the company, and their throats used for shoes, everything is taken all for the company, which later issues them for catching fur seals [bobry], and also the baydarshchik [baydar captain] Pshenichnoy treated [post'pal] the islanders, tyrannically took by forceful hand Aleut girls and wives kept for fornication, whipped them with straps, and beat [them] with sticks [rods] unmercifully, from their number and held in his artel, two Ugama[k – or Unga?] women, two Akutan Aleuts, and one inhabitant of the Seal [Pribilof Islands], and two other Aleuts were flogged, tyrannically, to death. And in addition sixteen girls from Alitan, Kigala, Unimak, and Akutan [islands] also banished by Plashki die from starvation. The baydarshik Lazarev often took the food from the hunting Aleuts of the island of Kigalik [Uliaga] and of the island of Unalaska to the Mikushin [Makushin] settlement, and finally it was taken when the hunting season had ended, in the late fall. This it was after the time when the islanders could not do more hunting because of the late // time of the year and the continuing new winds, and because of this in two months there died from starvation in this robbed villages of both men and women, more than three hundred persons.

This same company of Polutov and Pankov sent the hunter Ivan Tarasov, named in the Sharanyg company, who with force took all sorts of things from the Aleuts, including robes [saftani], and from the women the beads from table cloths [shkatel' = skatert'?] and bags, and other things and paid nothing for them. The workers Popov and others living on the Seal [Pribilof Islands] treated those living there, the "itsevki" [Cape Izigan, SW corner of Unalaska Island?] the same as had the baydarshik Pshenichnoy and his company had acted, and thus tyrannized the women, stabbed to death all the girls with spears without exception, and two of the men Aleuts. The worker Ivan Bryukhanov of the same [makush] also undertook robbery, beating, beating an Aleut with the point of a spear [kon' aleut' kop'em zakolot'].

Afterwards there were on the islands of Unalaska [District] the trading vessels the leaders [perevodchiki – leaders of a group of hunter-traders] Delarov, Cherepanov, Nagayev, and from the Orekhov Company the leader Shishayev with navigator Potap Zaykov. And for a short time the Company leader Shelekhov put in, [and] sent that same summer the Delarov group for overwintering and taking the best of the Kingalga[?], Uniman [Unimak?], Alyaks [Alaska Peninsula] men, sent these to the island Kodiak, and from

the Orekhov ship Shishayev and Zakav captured many Aleuts, kept here and taken with them, up to thirty men and up to twenty women, who during these times did not return. And Cherepanov and Nagayev remained on those islands.

Now that Cherepanov and Nazayev Company which is here, even though they do not act with that inhumanity, tyranny and murderous behavior (which was all described above), but they detain us, take as much as possible, take in trade animals against our will for the preparation of food and without any sort of payment. We receive from the Cherepanov company for one fur seal [bobr] caught by us a pot or shirt – a foulard or “dabova” [type of cloth?], or a knife, or a kerchief [shawl], or “strukh” for making needles [arrows?], or “kogolki” up to ten threads, or tobacco up to five, up to six, it happens also up to ten leaves for a fur seal [bobr], with the giving of each of these things for a seal there is added a handful of beads, and that is what this company in consideration of maintaining us who are being burdened, so (do) the Nagayev (company) and especially the navigator Mukhoplyev.

Secondly. Between these two companies the difference is this, that the Cherepanov company in sending some to seal hunting, ‘though even if none is caught, provides us with some beads and keep in their storehouse [kasor], they give in any case even though our hunting for the company is less, in the storehouses [kasor] kept by them they give no clothes, so that those sent always to catching fish and other things go naked and from the very bad maintenance, and actions many ran from that Company and entered the Cherepanov Company, so that they would be under their protection and would no longer have to tolerate their unbearable life.

Not the least we have to endure the taking of our girls, wives, daughters and sisters in general by all the companies except for the one of Panov, which when here properly [conducted itself] in comparison with the other past and former companies concerning the maintenance of our girls and the inhuman actions regarding them, which we not only could not prevent, but also in no way could we even complain about this. Knowing the completely animal desires of those hunters, and being compelled to tolerate (but to no avail) and fearing that action which happened before during the presence of the leader [perevodchik] Solov’yev, who the islands of Unalaska, Sannak, Akun, Akutan, Asutan, Kiginga – all completely emptied [of people], and the men he shot through with weapons. And not satisfied with this: finally, being angry, he placed next to each other several people, and experimented with his weapons how many could be killed with just one bullet. [Trans. Note: Supposedly, Solov’yev lined up fourteen Aleut men head to head, and the bullet passed through twelve of them.] And thus, though the hunters from every company were known to act with violence against us, but when that sergeant Buylov appeared here to collect yasak [tribute in furs], evidently such actions by the hunters was prohibited by the government, and he promised us that upon his return to a place in Russia in the future such behavior towards us [nan’] on the part of the hunters would not occur. But and even until this time we have seen no relief whatsoever.

And as we have now learned that the ship which has arrived here is not a company [ship], but has been dispatched by the Russian Sovereign [feminine] and the commanders, more

than the leaders and navigators on the company ships, who we considered as being great lords based on their severity in behavior, thus and because they also have declared this about themselves. Just as if there were no commanders greater than they. Seeing now [that] the baydarshiki and hunters are submissive to you, we no longer worry about describing the injuries caused by the hunters and the company members, and in addition we ask for protection from them.

This regular deposition [dopros] is attested by College Registrar Gavriilo Yermilin in the position of secretary.

[_____]

On the 15th day of June 1790 on the island of Naga the hunter – trader the Irkutsk townsman [meshchanin] Yegor Purtov on a baydar of the ship of the merchants of Kursk, Golikov and from Rylsk Shelekhov was questioned and declared that he was not present at the taking of the island of Kodiak, but arrived as that Shelekhov was departing, and about the presence of the Greek Delarov on this island and on the Big [Alaska Peninsula] [and] nothing about the circumstances of that company he could not show, other than that some islanders being on that same island were being used for hunting animals in a group [naryad] of the company of our bosses, for their catch they were paid from the items described below with a shirt or a kamle(ka) or other similar goods. According to rumours which have come to us, that as if he, Shelekhov, declared to the principle government that up to 20,000 people were found on the islands in his possession, and as if in fact up to five hundred people of these islanders had been brought into paying tribute [yasak], and as if just about all the Russians by their own desire wish to settle on these islands and remain there as permanent residents. These rumours which have come to us are not correct, and but in addition // our desires, as man islanders on the islands in this entire district can not be found to be more than up to three thousand persons, and tribute payers not more than fifty.

And any of those of the Russians who wish to settle in these places may do so, and moreover marrying on these islands, and having children with the local women, and about the validity of my testimony firstly about the number of islanders may be shown by the sub-navigator [podshturman'] Gavriilo Pribylov who was on the ship of the merchant ship captain Lebedev Lastochkin, from whom it may be seen from his journal [ship's log] about which he did not fail to report finally when he was in Okhotsk. And it is more correct to state why these company employees or its officials [poverennyye] will declare, why we have these unpaid debts, and have no means whatsoever when returning from here before the ending of the company. These envisage, our company man Shelekhov stated, that we all will remain on the seven islands forever. As I under my sworn duty may state, that those forced to be kept here have stayed only until the expected from the state's direction maritime secret expedition, now that if its ship will be in the harbor and inquire in detail about everything, and it keeps our independence not only will everyone agree to return to Russian wharves, but we all unanimously decided to return, but if at your arrival in Kodiak no hopes will be promised to us, then we have unanimously

decided to return, against the efforts [pressures] of those company employees on the ships, to the Russian coasts, where it will be that we must report about everything in detail, and moreover, clearly about everything as to how the seizure of the islanders into dependency on them, and also about the payment to them by groups [naryad] and for the hunting [fishing] activity equally about all can be shown by our foremen [nachalniki] leaders [peredovshchiki] and baydarshchiki [baydar captains]. And I about everything stated by me have reported the dry truth, about the number of those islanders stated to have been brought into tribute paying five hundred persons I completely can not demonstrate, but only about the collection of tribute from fifty persons I do confirm, about this and will sign [attest].

On the original the Irkutsk townsman Yegor Purtov signed for the entire deposition [dopros]

I sign, having confirmed [this copy] with the original, College Registrar Gavriilo Yermilov.

[

The day of July 1st 1790 on the island Kodiak navigator of the rank “unter officier” Gerasim Grogor’yev son Izmaylov regarding the deposition (dopros) of the sub-physician Bryutyukov was asked and stated, upon the arrival of Shelekhov on the islands here he authorized also power to himself, that he [could] execute and hang islanders and believing Russian subjects without any declaration, and he, Izmaylov, not having heard and not knowing, brought islanders to Kodiak, when they did not agree to give hostages they were beaten by Shelekhov and Russian workers, approximately up to two hundred persons, islanders of both sexes, and so frightened [upovatel’no], that many of them out of fear threw themselves off of the cliff into the water and on baydars, and also drowned. This we learned when afterwards they were thrown out of the sea onto the shore. Six Russian persons were wounded under this fight, from two and up to three hunder persons of both sexes were taken by us as prisoners, and from the number of them condemned by Shelikov were selected from the others from six to ten old men, and completely I can not remember, which were taken into the tundra and pierced through with spears. And the remaining people were held about a month and a half in the harbor, and some of them were rewarded with different presents.

And that same Shelekhov selected from them one toyen, who compared to the others was more honored, and all the women and small children were assigned to his care. And when the husbands began to go to the wives, and fathers and relatives to the children, that Shelekhov returned each to his own, and finally also the remaining he released freely.

When islanders in five baydary were sent to seek the inhabitants, when under attack by the islanders five Russian persons were wounded, and from there side were killed (as was learned about afterwards) twelve persons. Upon the return journey by these baydary to the harbor there were found two island persons who were seen before by me with gifts

from me, which were given for taking letters to Shelekhov, but they took them and gave [them] to that Shelekhov, they received from him others also for bringing to me. But these letters they kept to themselves, making earlier on those baydary (on which I, Izmaylov, was the leader) an attack, and were among the number of the revolters. But since they had not success, so appearing themselves and brought the letters sent to me, these two persons were also seized by me and taken to the harbor, and so that they would be whipped by Shelekhov or others with ram rods of whale bone, and one that Shelekhov shot with a pistol one person, who after being finished with a spear, for what crime I do not know, only that not at this time, but at the time there was no shooting and no blows, in my absence, when two persons came from other islands evidently as if they were sent from their Toiens for a meeting with the Russians, in order to have friendship and trade with them, and afterwards, when they were accused, that they slandered two persons found out by the Toiens under orders from that Shelekhov, even though I also argued to the end, but with servility as a subordinate, was obligated to put together for one shot from a “shtutsar” [make a double barreled weapon] and both were shot by Shelekhov himself. I did not hear about the shooting with this paired [double barreled] weapon of two person, and I do not know even if that occurred, but that not in my presence, and I only heard later about the chopping off of the head of one person, but of whom and for what reason I do not know. For the killing of those two Russians sent to Fogna [Afognak Is.] and Shuya [Shumagin?] (who were sent with a variety of goods for trade and given into the hands of the Toyen) there were sent definitely by Shelekhov to these islands for the destruction of the inhabitants three baydars of up to fifty persons under the leadership of the leader [perevodchik] Konstantin Samoylov (who died in the year 1788)// and the trader Vasiliy Malakhov, but whether actually that the destruction of the islanders on those islands was committed, because of my departure that same spring with that Shelekhov to Okhotsk on the ship “Three Saints” I can not know or state, but heard on the return here back to Kodiak from that Samoylov, that those who were found by them on the islands those who undertook and the participants in the killing, those inhabitants were annihilated, and the Russians who were on this mission all returned back, and that I on this testimony [dopros] for a very long time having past remember to, citing the journal [log book] given by me to the Okhtosk regional [oblastnoye] administration in 1787, in which all the aforementioned events [are described] in detail, by which my testimony shows the pure truth and nothing was kept secret, on which also I sign.

On the original was signed: To this testimony (dopros) of navigator Gerasim Ismaylov from words and depositions wrote the undersigned navigator Izmaylov. In the secretary’s responsibility the Gubernatorial registrar Vasiliy D’yakonov. Witness father [priest] Vasiliy Sivtsov.

This testimony was written in my witnessing [I witnessed the writing of this testimony], Fleet Captain Second Rank Robert Gall [Hull], with the original copied by the College Registrar Gavriilo Yermolov. [Trans.Note: Robert Hull was an Englishman serving in the Russian Navy.]

[_____]

The fourth of June in the year 1790 on the island of Kodiak the company of the merchants Golikov and Shelekhov and the store clerk [prikashchik'] of the city of Tomsk the townsman [meshchanin'] Vasiliy Petrov son Merkul'yev in the strength of the command given by the chief of the expedition Fleet Captain of the second rank Iosifa Iosifovich Billings. Also to Fleet Captain of the second rank Sarychev regarding the writing as is known to that chief [nachal'nik – i.e., Billings] about the ship having met a messenger from the Greek Delarov working for Purtov, who with his comrades had been sent with islanders on two hundred baydary and about having been informed by the local

Kodiak inhabitants that he, that same Greek Delarov, sent in all up to six hundred bayadari of islanders for hunting. And in the strength of the Ukaz of Her Imperial Highness, he was given the order that he must find out, truly do such group [naryad] dispatching of islanders occur, or do they of their own free will go on such hunting [expeditions], and for their hunting and labors carried out by them what payment is made to them, this was asked. And he stated that he knew nothing about the dispatching of the worker Purtov with the islanders who had been met. What about the group [naryad] of these islanders? In one word, he knows nothing about the company's activities and that he has not and does not get involved in anything, and the Head Director can demonstrate about everything in detail and clearly, that is the Greek who is here Yevstrat/ Delarov', but I, Merkul'yev, in my testimony kept nothing secret, and state the completely dry truth. Signed the original, and to this questioning I sign the tradesman Vasiliy Merkul'yev, the original was copied by the College Registrar Gavriilo Yermilov.

[_____]

The 9th of July the year of 1790 on Kodiak islands navigator Gerasim Izmaylov being in the company of Golikov and Shelekhov, Fleet Captain of the second rank Gavriiliy Sarychev in response to the order given him, Mr. Sarychev, by the Chief of the expedition [Billings], in which it was written that I and the Agent [prikashchik'] here are to be questioned about the group [naryad] of islanders whose leader from the company was the Greek Delarov, such that he was known during the voyage of the ship from the dispatch by that Delarov of the worker Purtov for hunting, that he, Purtov, was sent with his comrades with islanders on two hundred baydari. And also that from the Kodiak inhabitants here he reported [that] he, the chief, was sent by this same Delarov up to six hundred baydari with islanders from this here island for hunting, [and] is it true that such group dispatches of islanders do occur, or do they go on such hunting of their own free will, and what payment is made to them for hunting, was asked, and he stated, because that Purov stated, how were sent for hunting different animals, I was informed by the leader [peredovshchik] Delarov, that in twenty baydari, and was not in two hundred, and that the leader [predvoditel'] Delarov has truly sent up to six hundred baydary for seal unting in the named gulf Grose Fles, and with his authority sends for the departure one hunter assigned from the harbor, with whose authority also how many baydar there are to travel on the island of Shyyukh, additionally it is assigned to that hunter for payment by taking [dlya rasplaty sostrovityanami] from the Company and giving beads, "korolin"(tobacco?), hatchets made of iron, to a quarter length, and [depending on] how

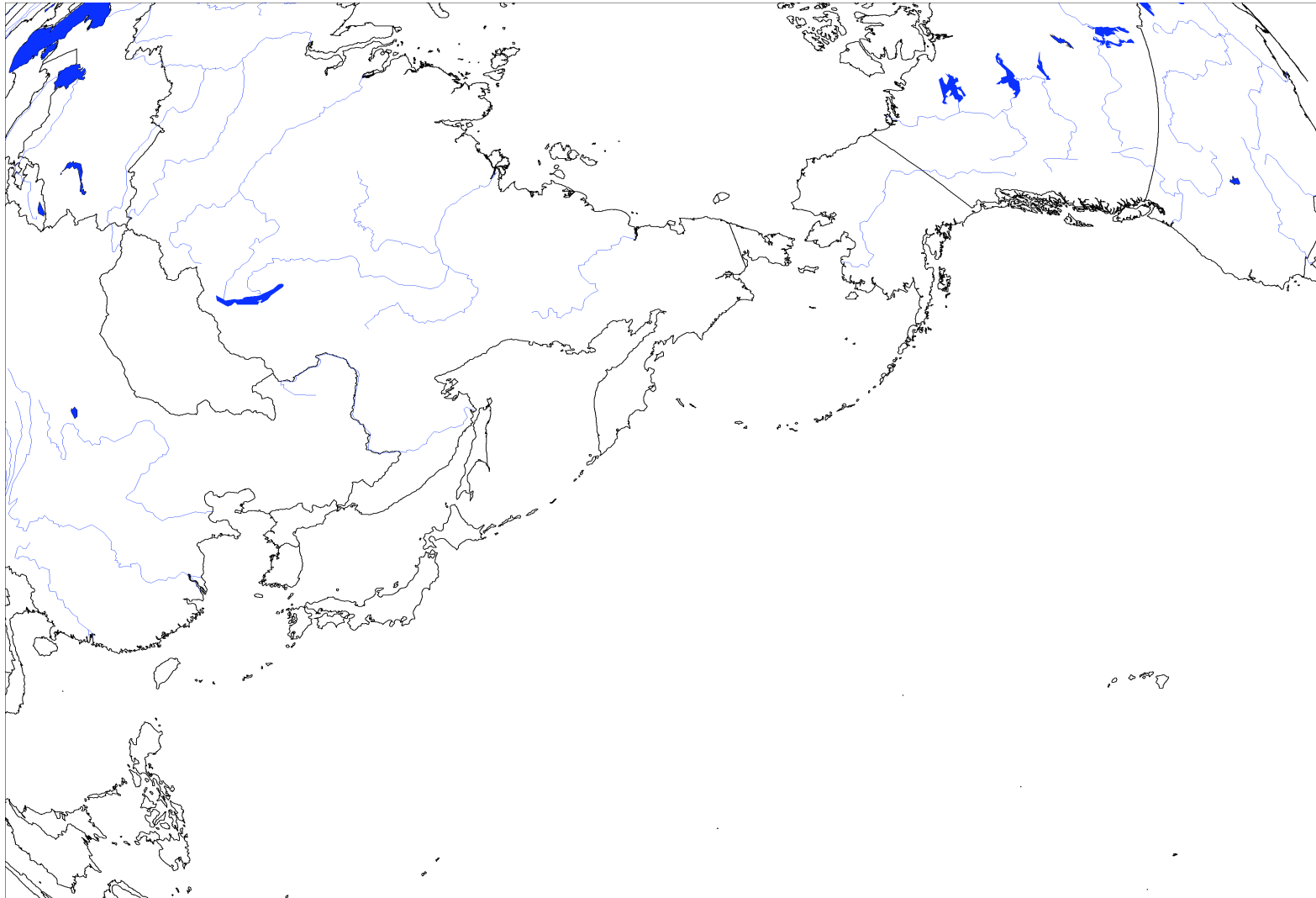
they carry out the hunt, but I was not present at this and do not know in what quantity, for the construction of new and the repair of old baydary, the order is to be immediately ready on the 15th day of April. And on that date they were sent out.

The original signed: to this testimony navigator Gerasim Izmaylov signs.

Copied from the original: College Registrar Gavriilo Yermilov.

NOTE: This document is a draft translation provided by Donald F. Lynch.

North Pacific



Alaska

