

In relation to the issue of research and popularization of preserved physical evidence of culture on the northwestern part of the American continent during the period of Russian colonization.

Vladimir V. Tikhonov

The "Perestroika" which happened in the Soviet Union at the end of 1980's had allowed to democratize society, to create in it an openness, and also to promote significant information exchange between Russia and the United States of America, including scientific information, specifically in the field of history, especially in the common area of history: Russian colonization of the northwest of the American continent (Alaska and California).

Exploration and development by Russian merchants of the present Alaska territory had begun in the middle of 18th century, and the establishment of Russian settlement in California started in 1812. Fur was the main reason of penetration by Russian merchants to Alaska. The fur trade was bringing the most profit to them from all the activity in Alaska. It brought a significant income to organizers of Fur trade and to suppliers of furs, sometimes in ten times exceeding their business expenses.

The significant part of all merchants engaged in fur industry in Alaska was from northern and central territories of the European Russia. Many of them after been able to stand up firmly on their feet economically had stayed permanently in Irkutsk, or at least as a result of their activities had left a material trace in Irkutsk, including the structures where they had stayed and lived in, or which they had built with their own means.

Many people in Alaska were engaged in fur trade, from individual Irkutsk merchants who were able to collect enough resources for organization of trade expeditions for fur collection in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean to the entire merchant clans: Shelikov, Mylnikov, Sizikh, Bichevin, Yugov, Soldatov, Trapeznikov, Kiselev, Dudorovskii, Shabalin, Chumakov, Sibiryakov, etc. (Shakherov, 2007: 514). Only from 1770 to 1790 there was 169 Irkutskovites participating in those expeditions (State Archive of Irkutsk Region (ГАИО). Fund 70. Inventory 1. Case #1189: 3-8), and total of about 110 voyages in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean

were organized by private companies from 1741 through 1799, just prior to the establishment of the Russian American Company (RAC) (Alexeeva, 1998: 21).

The main reason of formation at the end of the 18th century of the Russian-American Company (1799) was a protectionist's aspirations of main players (merchants) of Irkutsk to control Fur trade market in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean and thus eliminating all the undesirable competitors who were not the company's shareholders. It is possible to consider that the Irkutsk Commercial Company was a predecessor of the Russian-American Company. It was established in 1796 by the Irkutsk merchants: Mylnikov, Sibiryakov, Michurin, etc. Its first directors were D.N. Melnikov and S.A. Startsev. Their houses in Irkutsk practically had become as control centers of some Russian companies in Alaska. The house of merchants Mylnikov located on the crossroads of Lugovaya Street (presently Marata) and Mylnikovskaya Street (presently Chkalov) is still there (Case #21981). Its modern address: 11 Marata Street (see photo 1). However, that house looks quite different, as well as two thirds of the other houses in the downtown of Irkutsk due to a grandiose fire in the summer of 1879. Mylnikov's house was one of the three residential buildings of that time built from stone (Ogli, 1982). The original building constructed in 1791 most likely was a single level house. After the fire the remained foundation of the building and its stone walls were used as a base for a new two-story house. In 1800 as a result of a conflict caused by one of the most influential citizens of Irkutsk, Mr. N.P. Mylnikov, who complained to the emperor Alexander I about the oppressions of Irkutsk' merchants by the governor N.I. Treskin, Mr. N.P. Mylnikov was exiled to the village Barguzin where he died, having transferred his share of the newly created Russian-American Company to his sons Jacob and Dmitry. They also had lived in this house and brought a significant contribution into development of the RAC.

The RAC headquarters in Irkutsk had been the most known object by historians and Irkutskovites in relation to the activities of the Russian-American Company. The building of the RAC headquarters is still there (24 Surnova Street), however, it has reached us in much modified condition (see photo 2). The 1879 fire destroyed 105 stone houses and 3418 wooden buildings and did not spare the RAC headquarters either. It was located on the Spassko-Luteranskaya Street at that time. Back then that building belonged to the Orthodox Tikhvin Congregation. After the fire the remnants of the building also consisted only of a foundation and stone walls.

The latest were used for construction of a second floor of a building. Thus, single level building during the activity of the RAC subsequently had turned into a two-story building. Nevertheless, it has kept a historical value as the witness and the participant of history. The building was constructed in 1800. According to some sources, the RAC headquarters were placed in that building in 1800, but according to other sources, it happened only in 1807, at the time when this building was purchased from merchants Osip and Athanasius Sizikh, also shareholders of the RAC and active participants in organizing of the trade expeditions.

Another building that has historical interest is located nowadays at the address: 29 Zhelyabova Street (see photo 3). Today it is known as a Kuskov's House. According to some data, in 1822-1823 Mr. I. Kuskov had stayed there while visiting his relative during his return from the American colonies back home, to the city of Totma (the Vologda Province). The building is two-story, wooden, well preserved and is located in the part of the city that did not suffer from a fire of 1879.

Some significant years of his life were spent in Irkutsk by the orthodox missionary to Alaska, Innokenty Veniaminov, who later had become a Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna. On arrival to Irkutsk in 1808 he was accepted to the Irkutsk Theological Seminary. This building had survived and is still there at the address: Nizhnaya Naberezhnaya Street (see photo 4).

Activity of Innokenty Veniaminov as a priest during the years of 1821-1823 when he went to Unalaska island had been connected with the Irkutsk Blagoveshchensk church (see photo 5). That building was located on the main street of the city, Bolshaya street (nowadays Carl Marx's Street), and destroyed in 1931. It is necessary to note that the given church at the time was built by the joint efforts of merchants Michael Sibiryakov, Dmitry Sizikh and Nicolay Mylnikov with the money that they received as a profit from Fur trade in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. To commemorate the historical importance of this place the Irkutsk community is planning to build a chapel between the public garden that is presently located on the grounds of the old church and between the modern houses.

Several temples and cathedrals had survived in Irkutsk: Bogoyavlenskiy, Krestovozdvizhenskiy and a very special one, Znamenskiy, where the ashes of Grigory Shelikhov were buried. These places in the past were popular and frequently visited by direct

Tikhonov, Vladimir. "In relation to the issue of research and popularization of preserved physical evidence of culture on the northwestern part of the American continent during the period of Russian colonization."

participants of trade expeditions and the officials involved in the activities of Russian colonies in America. Therefore, these places are still fascinating to those for whom the history of Alaska and Fort Ross represents general and scientific interest. Certainly systematic continuous research of the given issue, including the archival materials, will allow us to open up a multitude of forgotten moments of our common history and possibly make some unexpected discoveries.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexeeva, E.V. *Russian America*. Ekaterinburg, 1998.

Ogli, B.И. *Irkutsk. About the architectural planning and building of the city*. Irkutsk, 1982.

Shakherov, V.P. "Establishment of Russian America as a factor of expansion of economic space of Russia." *Materials of the 3d International Scientific Conference "Russian America."* Irkutsk, August, 8-12th, 2007: 513-518.

State Archive of Irkutsk Region (ГАИО), fund 70, inventory 1, case #1189: 3-8.

State Military-Historical Archive (ГВИА), fund of the military-accounting archive. Case #21981.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1. The house of merchants Melnikov, Irkutsk

Photo 2. Headquarters of the Russian American company, Irkutsk

Photo 3. House of Mr. I. Kuskov, Irkutsk

Photo 4. Building of the Theological Seminary, Irkutsk

Photo 5. The Blagoveshchenskaya Church, Irkutsk, 1905

Introduction (written in English by the author)

Vladimir Tikhonov – Candidate of culture sciences, director of Architectural and Ethnographic Museum «Talci», Russia, Irkutsk-city. E-mail: talci@irk.ru

Summary: This presentation is dedicated to reviewing of the old survived buildings in Irkutsk that are related to the history of Russian colonization of the northwestern territories of the American continent (Alaska and California): the Headquarters of the Russian-American Company, the house of merchants Mylnikov, the house of Kuskov, the Irkutsk Theological Seminary and Irkutsk Blagoveshchensk Church, where served as the priest the Apostle of Alaska Innokenty Veniaminov.