

Introduction

An arranged marriage

After 1830, it seems to have been an unwritten rule that anyone appointed governor of Russian America had to bring a wife with him. The Board of Directors of the Russian American Company wanted no mistresses in the governor's house at Sitka. It was a matter of upholding the dignity and morals of the colonial administration – the representative of Russian empire and Christian civilisation in these remote parts of the world.

Governors of the colonies in Alaska were normally appointed for a period of five years, and the Board could very well imagine the privations and temptations connected with being a lonesome man at this northern outpost of civilisation, without a spouse of European upbringing and Christian belief to stand by his side. When the first Russian missionaries arrived in Alaska in 1794 to preach the gospel to the heathens, they were appalled to find their compatriots – fur hunters and merchants – living in unconjugal, or even polygamous relationships with native women.¹ One of the early governors left behind a native mistress and their three illegitimate children on returning home after his term in Alaska.²

Arriving at Sitka in 1830, Baron Ferdinand Wrangel was the first governor to bring his wife with him from Russia. "Her coming was an event of some import, for the young baroness transformed life in the rough frontier capital. The old 'castle' which was the Chief Manager's residence now featured formal dinners and balls. The casual relationships of company employees with the local women gave way to permanent wedlock, and the old roistering social life of the town acquired a higher tone".³ All later Russian governors of Alaska were to follow the Wrangels' example. Married appointees brought their wives, and unmarried ones faced the task of finding a wife before their departure for Sitka.⁴

In early 1858 Johan Hampus Furuhjelm, an unmarried Russian naval officer of Finnish birth, received a proposal from the Russian American Company to become the next governor of Russian America for a term of five years, from 1859. He was then harbour master of the Port of Aian, a gloomy place on the eastern coast of Siberia. He had served there since October 1855 (from 1856 as Captain of first rank).

¹ Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, p. 268.

² Pierce 1986, p. 11.

³ Pierce 1986, p. 13.

⁴ Pierce 1986, p. 40.

Describing social life in Aian in a letter to one of his friends, Furuhjelm wrote: "Apart from three married book keepers, one ditto priest and one ditto junior commissioned officer, Aian is inhabited only by workers with their wives. Nevertheless, I have from time to time arranged a dance for the local fops. They dance vigorously with their own and each others' wives – the only ladies in Aian."⁵

In the autumn of 1857 Furuhjelm's two unmarried sisters arrived unexpectedly at Aian by ship from Finland. They had been sent around the world to their unmarried brother, who – in the opinion of their elder brother Otto – was most able to provide for them. The sisters' unexpected arrival seems to have upset any budding marriage plans the 36 year-old bachelor may have had. In February 1858, Furuhjelm wrote to his benefactor and friend Arvid Adolf Etholén, another Finlander who had been Governor of Alaska (from 1840 to 1845), informing him of his decision to accept the post of Governor. Later in the letter, Furuhjelm confides: "I had very seriously considered going to Finland for a period of time to get married, but now, after the arrival of my sisters, I have given up the idea, since sisters and wives will never agree, as they say". Moreover, he concluded with irony and resignation: "I must consequently end my days as an old, sulky bachelor. But even in this matter I console myself that everything happens for the best and that I can live as a monk, if I have to, which I have already proved".⁶

The way of the monk, however, was not really an option for a future governor of Alaska. But time was running out for Furuhjelm. Since Aian had nothing to offer by way of a suitable partner, it was quite clear that his one and only opportunity to get married before going to Sitka would occur when he came to St. Petersburg to receive his instructions. He arrived in time for his official appointment by the Board of Directors, which took place on December 1 (old style), 1858. As for finding a wife before his imminent departure, he had to rely on the advice and services of good society in Helsinki (Swed. Helsingfors), in spite of the fact that he had not set foot there for eight years. And good society did not let him down. By the time Hampus arrived in the Russian capital, a suitable candidate for the role of governor's wife in Alaska had already been singled out. Her name was Anna Elisabeth von Schoultz. Although she belonged to one of Helsinki's noble families, she was nevertheless a newcomer in Finland and more cosmopolitan than most of her Finnish relatives.⁷

Anna was born on March 4, 1836 in Karlskrona, an important naval harbour in southern Sweden. Her father, Nils Gustaf von Schoultz (1807-1838), was of Finnish stock, but his branch of the family had moved to Sweden when Finland became a part of the Russian Empire in 1809. Nils appears to have been a very charming young

5 Copy of an undated letter from Furuhjelm, probably from 1856 or early 1857, in the editor's possession.

6 Copy of a letter from Furuhjelm to Etholén, February 26, 1858 (old style), in the editor's possession.

7 Annie Furuhjelm 1932, p. 107.

man, but he was definitely also an adventurer. By the time he met Anna's future mother, he had already taken part in the Polish Rising against Russia in 1830-1831, and served in the newly formed French Foreign Legion in Algeria. Too restless to settle down to married life in a provincial bourgeois setting, he left his family a couple of months after the birth of Anna, his second daughter, to try his fortune in the United States. He became involved in a haphazard rebellion to liberate Canada from British colonial rule, was taken prisoner, sentenced to death and executed at Fort Henry on the St. Lawrence River in December 1838.⁸

Anna's mother, Ann Cordelia von Schoultz, née Campbell, was born in India in 1813, but had been sent back to Britain at the age of five by her Scottish parents, to go to school. Ann and Nils met in Florence. After they got married, Nils brought Ann, his mother-in-law and his sister-in-law with him to Sweden. In 1842, six years after Nils fled home, Ann moved with her two daughters to Germany, a country she knew from her youth. Although she was eventually informed about her husband's violent death, she never revealed any of this to her daughters, and Anna sincerely believed herself to have been raised in "a happy, innocent Home, where nothing impure or unclean ever entered".⁹ After three years in Heidelberg, the small family settled in Darmstadt in 1845. Anna and her elder sister Florence received a German education, but spoke English with their mother. Through a friend, they made the acquaintance of the young princes Ludwig ("Louis") and Heinrich, with whom they played and later danced at the balls of the court of Darmstadt. Prince Louis eventually became Grand Duke of Hesse. In 1894 his daughter Alix was to marry Tsar Nikolai II and become Russia's last empress, under the name of Alexandra Feodorovna.

Anna and Florence spent many happy years in Germany. In 1856, the family visited their relatives in Finland for the first time. They were received with much cordiality and warmth. That is probably the reason why Anna's mother, having been seriously ill in 1856, decided to move to Finland in 1857. She may well have assumed that her daughters would not be left without support there in the event of her untimely death. They settled in a five-room flat at 27 Mikael's Street in central Helsinki.¹⁰

Because of her multinational background and upbringing, Anna spoke English, German, French and Swedish. Though only 22 years old in 1858 – and 15 years younger than Furuhjelm – she was thought of as a suitable first lady of the Russian American colonies. Her newly retrieved Finnish relatives played an active role in positioning her for what seemed a most advantageous marriage. In the summer of 1858 Anna spent some time at Tavastby, the estate of Adolf and Margaretha Etholén. Mrs. Etholén was a cousin of Anna's vanished father. "Uncle Adolf" and "Aunt Margeret" told her about Russian America and life in the colonies. We know already that the future governor Furuhjelm was Etholén's protégé. By early December Anna

8 Pipping 1967.

9 Letter No. 41, cf. the present edition, p. 191.

10 Annie Furuhjelm 1932, p. 115.

was, in her own words, "thinking of Hampus now already", and he too had heard of her.¹¹ It seems likely that Etholén played an active role in arranging the match.

The new governor of Russian America had to be installed in his office in Alaska before the end of June 1859, together with the wife he still lacked. So when Furuhjelm finally arrived in Helsinki shortly before Christmas, there was no time to lose. A ball was arranged in the house of Marie and Fabian Langenskiöld on December 24, 1858, the latter being another cousin of Anna's father. Here Anna and Hampus met for the first time. Hampus is reported to have been standing in the doorway of the salon, unceasingly watching Anna, while she danced with the other young people. As for Anna, she had ample opportunity to inspect the dignified slender figure of the governor who actually looked quite youthful. She may possibly have agreed with the opinion that his dark eyebrows and dark moustache, in combination with his grey hair, made him resemble "a French marquis from *l'ancien régime*".¹² She may even have found an opportunity to look into his dark eyes. In any case, they both seem to have liked what they saw. On January 10, 1859 they became engaged, and on February 2 they were married. Due to the tight time schedule, they had to have their banns read twice on one Sunday.

After the wedding lunch, for 60 invited guests, also at the Langenskiölds' home, the newly married couple set out from Helsinki on their long journey to Sitka in Alaska. The first leg was a sleigh ride to St. Petersburg. Anna's elder sister Florence had been invited to accompany them as far as to London. Anna's mother stayed behind in the Helsinki flat, together with her German servant Babette Fischer and her nephew Ormelie. Anna was never to see her again.

On the very first day of the journey, Anna wrote a letter to her beloved mother. It was the first in a long series, in which she was to share her thoughts and impressions from the New World or, more precisely, from *her* new world, which had two unknown continents to be explored: married life and Russian America. These letters make up the present book.

Russians in the New World

At the time Anna set out to discover Alaska for herself, little more than a century had elapsed since Europeans first learned of its existence. Its coast was sighted on July 17th, 1741, at 58°14' northern latitude, by a Russian navy expedition under the command of Vitus Bering, a Dane by birth. A small party of seamen went ashore on the island now called Kayak Island to get fresh water. The German naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller went with them and nearly made the first contact with the local Americans, when he came across the remnants of a fire, which seemed to have been left in the middle of a meal.

¹¹ Letter No. 30, cf. the present edition, p. 111.

¹² Annie Furuhjelm 1932, p. 108.



Ann von Schoultz, the mother of Anna Furuhjelm.

Bering himself never made it back from the expedition, but died on an uninhabited island now known as Bering Island, where his ship the *St. Peter* was stranded on the return voyage along the Aleutian string of islands. Surviving crew members, however, brought home tales of the incredible wealth of furs in this part of the world, and soon Russian entrepreneurs set out to exploit it. Fur hunters, usually part owners or employees of small trading companies based in Northern Russia and Siberia, started coming to the Aleutian Islands in search of valuable pelts, especially those of sea otters. A merciless slaughter of these animals began. The native Aleuts, being highly skilled hunters, provided cheap labour, and a great many of them perished in the process.

Typically, company-owned ships would take parties of “promyshlenniki” (hunters, traders) to promising locations in the newly discovered territories, leave them there with a stock of supplies, and call again after a number of years to fetch the men and their harvest of pelts. The ships might also bring replacements for a following term. As hunting activities gradually reached further eastwards, larger trading companies emerged and became increasingly dominant.

A new era began with the arrival in the 1780s of the rich and energetic merchant Grigorii Ivanovich Shelikhov, who was destined to play an important role in the Russian colonisation of North Western America. Shelikhov saw very clearly that further growth of the fur trade required permanent Russian settlements in America. His company, founded in 1781 in partnership with another well-to-do merchant, Ivan Golikov, gambled by building three galiots in Okhotsk, on the east coast of Siberia. In August 1783 the small flotilla set out under Shelikhov’s command, with

192 labourers and some livestock on board.¹³ One year later Shelikhov arrived on the island Kodiak near the base of the Alaska Peninsula. Having ruthlessly subdued the native inhabitants, who were unfamiliar with the effects of gunfire, he founded the first Russian colony on American soil. Kodiak became the stepping-stone to further Russian expansion into the New World.

Shelikhov remained on the island together with his wife Natal'ia for two extremely active years (1784-1786). He organised fur hunting, built houses, fortresses and boats, taught the native Eskimos, whom Russians called "Koniagi", to keep goats and grow vegetables, converted some of them to the Orthodox faith and even founded a school, where 25 native boys, given in hostage to the colonists, started learning Russian.¹⁴ In the summer of 1860, Anna, together with Governor Furuhjelm, paid a visit to the former centre of Russian America and left her vivid impressions of the island in two letters to her mother.¹⁵

After Shelikhov's return to Russia, he and his partner Golikov petitioned for government support, including a monopoly on trade in the North Pacific. They argued that one strong, united company was necessary in order to sustain Russian commercial interests and territorial claims in the region. In spite of protests from competing merchants, their proposal gained support from high-ranking officials in Irkutsk and St. Petersburg. In 1788, Shelikhov and Golikov presented their ideas – and their application for 200,000 roubles – directly to Catherine the Great. The Empress awarded them with silver medals for their achievements, but, rather unexpectedly, refused all their requests. Philosophically, she was in favour of free trade and against monopolies. Politically, she was too cautious to provoke England and Spain by openly laying claim to unexplored American territory.

Initially, the Russian expansion into the North Pacific had taken place without attracting too much attention from other European powers. But in the last three decades of the 18th century other nations had become increasingly interested in exploring and mapping this unknown region, and in establishing to what extent the Russians were already present there. In 1769 Spain began to push north from Mexico into Alta California, and by 1784 nine Catholic missions had been established, stretching from San Diego to San Francisco.¹⁶ Several Spanish naval expeditions explored the coast further north, and in 1789 the Spanish ambassador in St. Petersburg warned Russian ships not to encroach on Spanish-American territory, which allegedly extended as far north as Prince William Sound, at 61° northern latitude.¹⁷

For a while it looked as if the Northwest Coast might become a colonial realm divided between Russia and Spain. However, the international rivalry for exploration

13 Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, p. 118.

14 Al'perovich 1993, pp. 89; Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, pp. 126-127.

15 Letters Nos. 36 & 37, cf. the present edition, pp. 144, 146, 157.

16 Haycox 1997, pp. 6-7.

17 Al'perovich 1993, p. 145.

and overseas possessions in the region was soon joined by England and France, and later also by the United States. Captain Cook, during his third voyage, mapped a long stretch of the Northwest Coast in 1778, and passed through Bering Strait into the Arctic Ocean. In 1786, the French expedition of Lapérouse also investigated the coast of Alaska and visited both the Spanish colonies in California and Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka. The Russian-Spanish rivalry slackened in 1790 when England forced Spain not to lay claim to American territory north of Nootka Sound, at 49°35'.¹⁸

There were also a couple of official Russian naval expeditions, by Krenitsyn and Levashov (1764-1771), and by Billings and Sarychev (1785-1794), following up on Bering's discoveries.¹⁹ But the most important part of the Russian empire building in America was done by merchants.

The creation of a Russian monopolist trading company comparable to the British East India Company (EIC) or the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) had to wait until after Catherine's death in 1796 and the accession to the throne of her son Pavel. By then Shelikhov had passed away, but his widow skillfully looked after the family business. Following the merger in 1798 of Shelikhov's and Golikov's company with that of the wealthy Irkutsk merchant Nikolai Myl'nikov, Emperor Pavel I graciously directed, in 1799, that the new company "be called the Russian American Company under the patronage of His Imperial Majesty" (RAC), and that it be granted exclusive rights and special privileges for a period of twenty years.²⁰ The founders' invested capital of 724,000 roubles was divided into 724 shares, and 1,000 additional shares were issued and offered for sale to the Russian public. The subsequent emperor, Alexander I, and several members of his family and his cabinet, were among the new shareholders.

An imperial decree signed by Pavel I on December 27, 1799, specified the privileges granted to the RAC. The decree was also an official statement of Russian territorial claims in the North Pacific. Based on her rights of first discovery, Russia claimed possession of the coast of America from 55° northern latitude to Bering Strait and beyond, and of the archipelagos extending from Kamchatka to America and to Japan. The Company received permission "to profit from all hunting and other ventures presently established along the coast of America [...] and likewise on the Aleutian, Kuril and other islands located in the North Pacific Ocean." In addition, the RAC could "undertake to make new discoveries, not only above 55° northern latitude, but to the south as well; they may occupy lands they discover and claim them as Russian possessions, [...] provided that these newly discovered territories have not previously been occupied by other nations or have come under their protection".²¹

18 Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, p. 300.

19 Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, pp. 197-250.

20 For an English translation of the charter and other foundation documents of the RAC, see Dmytryshyn 1989, pp. 3-23.

21 Dmytryshyn 1989, pp. 18-19.

However, the new company not only received special privileges, it also had to accept a number of obligations. One was "to support the Christian Greek Catholic mission in America which is working to teach the Holy Gospel and enable the illiterate people in America and on the islands [in the North Pacific Ocean] to gain knowledge of the True God".²² The first Orthodox mission to be appointed and sent to America was a group of 11 priests, monks and lay brothers. They arrived on Kodiak in 1794. Soon after, the leader of the mission, Father Ioasaf, was appointed bishop-vicar of "Kodiak and the adjacent islands in America".²³ He was summoned to Irkutsk and consecrated in 1799, but drowned on his way back when his ship went down in a severe storm.²⁴

In spite of this early set back, Russian clergymen were quite successful in converting the Aleuts and the Koniagi to the Orthodox faith. They organised schools and built chapels and churches. Their work had a lasting impact: almost all inhabitants of the Aleutian Islands and Kodiak, who were classified by the RAC as "dependent" natives, have remained Orthodox. The missionary efforts encountered more obstacles when it came to the "independent" Tlingit Indians (or the Kolosh, as the Russians called them), who lived on the mainland and on islands further down the Alaskan coast. The Tlingit outnumbered the Russian colonizers many times over. While the number of Russians rarely exceeded 500, there were between 15,000 and 20,000 Tlingit, according to an 1860 Russian estimate.²⁵ Only a small minority converted to Orthodoxy.

To lead RAC's activities on location in America, the Board of Directors appointed the Siberian merchant Aleksandr Andreevich Baranov who thus became the first chief manager or *governor* (in Russian: *glavnyi pravitel'*) of Russian America. By the time of his appointment, he had already been the Kodiak-based manager of Shelikov's affairs for almost ten years. With tireless energy, in spite of numerous difficulties and setbacks, Baranov continued exploring the coast and developing the Russian network of permanent settlements, outposts and seasonal hunting bases. Under his direction, the Russian American Company increased its earnings and grew. Baranov's projects were often visionary and far-reaching. He tried to develop trade with China, the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands, and Chile. In 1812 he founded Fort Ross in California, not far from San Francisco. It was to supply Russian America with grain, since agriculture was almost impossible in Alaska. In the end, however, Fort Ross proved incapable of feeding the northern colonies and was sold off in 1841.

Baranov was also the founder, in 1804, of Novo-Arkhangel'sk (New Archangel, present-day Sitka), Russian America's new capital and the ultimate goal of Anna's long journey in 1859. The town was built on the island of Sitka (now Baranof Island),

22 Dmytryshyn 1989, p. 4.

23 Bolkhovitinov 1997-1999, 1, p. 271.

24 Black 2004, pp. 235-236.

25 Black 2004, p. xiii; Dmytryshyn 1989, p. xlix.

which had in previous years served as a summer base for parties of RAC fur hunters exploiting new grounds further down the American coast. The Tlingit had put up a stiff resistance against the emerging Russian settlement on Sitka. Never subdued, they remained independent of RAC's colonial rule. As late as in 1855, during the tenure of Furuhjelm's predecessor, Governor Stepan Voevodskii, the Tlingit attacked Novo-Arkhangel'sk, killing seven Russians and wounding fifteen. Voevodskii estimated Tlingit losses at about fifty.²⁶

Novo-Arkhangel'sk had developed at a moderate pace. In 1860, one year after Anna arrived, its population – according to an official Company report – totalled 1,024.²⁷ This figure, which did not include a Tlingit settlement just outside the town's palisade, is not particularly impressive. Nevertheless, Novo-Arkhangel'sk was for several decades the most urban settlement on the entire North American west coast, until the Californian gold rush in 1849 gave momentum to the rise of San Francisco. It had a shipyard, a warehouse, workshops, grain and saw mills, and three churches: the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Michael the Archangel, the Lutheran church, erected on the initiative of Governor Etholén, and the Tlingit Orthodox Church of the Holy Life-Creating Trinity, built into the palisade as a precaution. The streets had board sidewalks. There was a club where gentlemen played billiards, a hospital, schools, an excellent library, a museum of natural history and ethnography, private residences and Company barracks, and last, but not least, the governors' magnificent manor house, often referred to as "the Baranoff Castle".²⁸ Built on the top of a steep hill overlooking the town and the harbour, it was to become Anna's next address after her mother's city flat in Helsinki, and the first home that Governor Furuhjelm and his wife had shared.

The penultimate governor

In 1818 the 71 year-old Governor Baranov was replaced by an officer of the Russian Imperial Navy. From then on, until the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, 13 governors, all high-ranking naval officers, handled the interests of the RAC in the colonies.²⁹ The advent of a new type of governor marked a substantial increase of government involvement in the Company. Under the new rules that were laid down in the second RAC charter of 1821 (and restated in the third charter of 1841), the Emperor appointed a governor from among naval officers. The governor was responsible not only to the RAC Board of Directors in St. Petersburg, but also to "Supreme Government Authority".³⁰ He had to play a double role: that of a mer-

²⁶ Black 2004, p. 269.

²⁷ Fedorova 1973, p. 205.

²⁸ Black 2004, pp. 275-279.

²⁹ The navy governors have all been portrayed in Pierce 1986.

³⁰ Dmytryshyn 1989, pp. xxxviii-xl & 365.

chant, and that of an administrator with far-reaching rights and obligations. Baranov had been a cunning trader and a ruthless manager. Most of his naval successors in the office felt more at home with the role of an administrator. By the beginning of Furuhjelm's tenure (1859-1864), the Company had long been a normal part of the Imperial administrative machinery and closely supervised by the Ministry of Finance, although formally separated from the state finances.

The second charter came together with an Imperial decree prohibiting foreign merchant ships from trading in the Russian colonies of the North Pacific.³¹ North American vessels, most of them from Boston, had during the past 25 years been hampering RAC activities on the Northwest Coast. The 'Bostonians' traded provisions, firearms and rum with the natives, in return for sea otter pelts, which were then sold to the Chinese at Canton where the Russians were not permitted. A practical Baranov had nevertheless made the best of the situation: Shiploads of supplies bought from the American traders had more than once saved the Russian colonies from starvation. The new decree sought to put an end to the foreign competition. By warning ships from other nations not to anchor along "the entire Northwest Coast of America [...] from Bering Strait to 51° northern latitude", it also suggested a southern limit to Russia's territorial claims in America.³²

The Russian decree stirred up anger in the United States and in England, but the three nations eventually solved their problems peacefully. The Russians were more than willing to bargain, since they lacked the naval power to back their claims. The ensuing negotiations provided the proper occasion for US President James Monroe to assert the famous 'Monroe doctrine' in his annual message to the Congress (December 2, 1823): "that the American continents, by the free and independent condition they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers". The Russo-American Convention of 1824 and the Russo-British Convention of 1825 defined a new southern border for Russian America at 54°40', but permitted a restricted continuation of American and British hunting and trade north of this border for another 10 years.

The new link between the Russian navy and the RAC, formalized in the second charter, shows that the Russian government intended to let the navy play a permanent role in sustaining the overseas colonies. It was to patrol the coasts of the Russian possessions on both sides of the North Pacific. Together with the Company's own ships, it was also to supply the American settlements with provisions and other goods from Russia, and to transport the colonial fur catch back to Russia or to other markets. The first step in that direction had already been taken in 1803, when two company-owned ships under the command of naval captains Krusenstern and Lisianskii departed from Cronstadt. In the course of their circumnavigation, they rendered a variety of

31 For an English translation of the decree of September 4, 1821, and the subsequent second charter, see Dmytryshyn 1989, pp. 339-366.

32 Dmytryshyn 1989, p. 339.

services to the RAC before returning to Cronstadt in 1806. A series of multi-purpose voyages between the metropolis and the North Pacific followed. By 1864 at least 65 such voyages had been launched, 33 of them by the Russian government and 19 by the Company, and the last 13 by “other Russian owners”.³³

The bonds between the Navy and the RAC were to play a decisive role in the career of Johan Hampus Furuholm (in Russian called Ivan Vasil'evich Furugel'm). He was born in Helsinki on March 11, 1821, the same year that the second RAC charter was issued. His family belonged to the Finnish nobility and included another three sons and three daughters. Young Hampus was educated at home until, at the age of 15, he joined the First Finnish Marine Unit. From then on, he received no financial support from his father, who was on the verge of ruin. In 1839, Furuholm was promoted to midshipman (the lowest rank of a Russian naval officer) and then to lieutenant in 1845. After five more years of naval chores in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic and Black Seas, his career took a new turn.

On the recommendation of Etholén, Furuholm was assigned to the Russian American Company in the North Pacific. He arrived at Sitka at the beginning of May 1851 and served there as harbour master until the end of the year. In 1852-1853, he navigated in the Pacific, visiting Honolulu, San Francisco and Shanghai on business for the Company. Later in 1853 when his RAC transport “Prince Menshikov” was drafted as a supply vessel for the Russian navy expedition to Nagasaki, Furuholm became a participant in the ‘opening of Japan’, the series of events that marked the beginning of Japan’s rapid modernization.

The opening of Japan first brings to mind the American Commodore Perry and his squadron of navy steamships. As they approached the Japanese capital Edo (now Tokyo) in early 1854, emitting columns of black smoke, they looked so ultra-modern and irresistible that the Shogun decided to abolish 200 years of isolationism and sign a peace and friendship treaty with the United States. The treaty opened two Japanese ports to American ships and promised help for any American ships wrecked on the Japanese coasts. It also allowed American ships to replenish their supplies in Japanese ports.

It is less known that at the same time a Russian navy expedition under Vice-Admiral Putiatin was also trying to ‘open’ Japan. In fact, Perry and Putiatin’s squadrons were racing one another for the prize of being the first to establish official relations with Japan. Putiatin’s secretary, the classic of Russian literature Ivan Goncharov, memorably told the story of the Russian expedition. His narrative was entitled *The Frigate Pallas* after the flagship. Furuholm is named on several pages of the book, which was first published in 1858 – the eve of Furuholm’s departure for Alaska – and the author gave him a dedicated copy. Due to the expedition, Furuholm’s name also appears on detailed maps of the Sea of Japan. He was the first to sight a small, unknown island in Peter the Great Bay. Putiatin named it Furugelm Island to honour the able commander of one of his four vessels.

33 Gibson 1976, pp. 76-82.