

extended their activities along the Aleutian chain and to the mainland.<sup>4</sup> Among the key events were the establishment of the first permanent Russian post at Three Saints Bay on Kodiak Island by Gregory Shelikhov in 1784, the discovery of the Pribilof Islands by Gerassin Pribilov in 1786, and the establishment of a new headquarters, Ikhailovsk (later Novo Archangelsk), on the island of Sitka by Alexander Baranov in 1799 and afterwards. The Russians were primarily interested in furs, especially those of the sea otter; and in the pursuit of this trade they not only subdued the natives with much brutality but also fell into serious quarrels among themselves. They had also to withstand an increasing challenge from foreign rivals, notably British, Spanish, French, and American; and in the latter part of the eighteenth century Cook, Clarke, Portlock and Dixon, Meares, Vancouver, Perez, Heceta, Quadra, Martínez, Haro, Fidalgo, Malaspina, Caamano, La Pérouse, Marchand, and others were all active in Alaskan waters and demonstrated great interest in the region.<sup>5</sup> In order to eliminate internecine strife among themselves, to combat the intrusions of foreign interlopers, and to maintain better control and management of the fur trade, several of the leading Russian companies took the initiative and in 1795 consolidated into a single organization. On July 3, 1799, an imperial ukase issued by Emperor Paul I confirmed the consolidation and granted the new organization the title "The Russian American Company".

The ukase in effect bestowed upon the Russian American Company a monopoly charter for a period of twenty years over all enterprises, including hunting, trading, settlement, and industry, on the coast of America north of 55° N. lat. and the chain of islands extending across the northern Pacific and southward to Japan. The company could make new discoveries not only north of 55° but south as well, and claim and occupy the lands discovered as Russian possessions if they were not already the property of some other nation. It was to have