

RUSSIAN AMERICA: STATISTICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION. By REAR ADMIRAL FERDINAND PETROVICH WRANGELL with additional information by KARL-ERNST BAER. Translated by MARY SADOUSKI. Edited by RICHARD A. PIERCE. Materials for the Study of Alaska History, No. 15. Kingston, Ontario: The Limestone Press, 1980. xxii + 204 p., drawings, end maps, gloss., index. No price indicated.

As is true of other Limestone Press books relating to Russian America, this one is enhanced by an informative preface that provides information about the origin of the book and the background of its principal author and editor.

The principal author, Ferdinand Petrovich von Wrangell, was a Russian naval officer who made two round-the-world voyages to Russian America before becoming Chief Manager of the Russian-American Company's Alaska operation in 1829. In that capacity he was not only an effective administrator, but an active collector of ethnographic and geographic data. The editor, Karl-Ernst von Bauer, never visited Russian America but wrote extensively about the area based on others' work. The result of Wrangell's and Bauer's collaboration are compiled in this book, first published in German at St. Petersburg in 1839.

The eleven chapters of the book discuss Russian settlements in Alaska, methods of catching marine mammals, native groups and their languages, and geography. The narrative is valuable not only for the information it presents about Alaska during the period of Russian influence, but also for what it tells about the state of knowledge about Russian America at that time.

Although Chapter 4 of the book has appeared previously in English ("The Inhabitants of the Northwest Coast of America", edited with an introduction by James W. VanStone (1970), translation and publication of the entire book is another significant contribution by the Limestone Press and Professor Pierce to the study of Alaskan history.

REFERENCES

VANSTONE, J.W. (ed). 1970. Arctic Anthropology 6(2):1-20.

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