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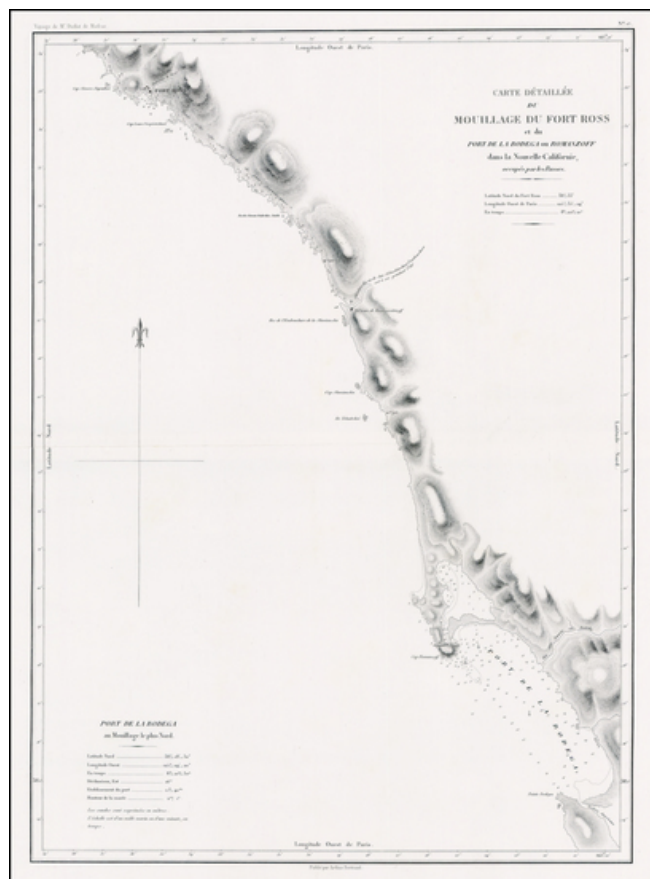
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(Russian California) Carte Detaillée du Mouillage du Fort Ross et du Port De La Bodega ou Romanzoff dans la Nouvelle Californie, occupés par les Russes.

Stock#: 29338
Map Maker: Duflot De Mofras
Date: 1844
Place: Paris
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 16 x 21.75 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Detailed Chart of Fort Ross and the Russian Colony—Russian California!

Remarkable chart of part of the coast of Northern California, one of the few obtainable maps documenting the Russian colony north of San Francisco Bay.

The chart extends from Bodega Point in the south to Fort Ross in the north. Most of the toponyms are Russian and this is one of the few obtainable maps to feature Russian California so prominently.

The map is quite rare on the market.

In the south, in Bodega Bay, there is a fortification at Cape Romanzoff. It is shown complete with



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magazines and batteries. Sounding depths are shown in the bay, along with a safe anchorage point.

As one glances north up the coastline there is a river called the Slavianska, or Slav, with a note that explains that this was also called the San Sebastian by the Spanish. This is the Russian River referenced today in the Russian River Valley region.

Hills are noted along the coastline, which would have served as aids to navigators. There is also a note that reads, "All of this coast is bordered by gigantic pines," an awestruck mention of the enormous redwood trees found in the area.

Fort Ross itself is shown with outer walls visible, as well as with its surrounding buildings.

Fort Ross and Russian California

Fort Ross was part of the southernmost colony of Russia's North American holdings. The Russian Empire expanded eastward in the seventeenth century, reaching the Pacific in 1639. During the reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725), Russia began to look into oceanic exploration to further broaden their trade horizons. The main result of this new policy were the two voyages of Vitus Bering. These voyages (1725-30, 1733-43) navigated the eponymous Bering Strait and claimed the Aleutians and mainland Alaska for Russia.

Much of Russia's eastward expansion had been fueled by the fur trade. Once word of the second Bering expedition's findings spread, businessmen and government officials alike were eager to spread this trade to Alaska, which was rich in fur seals and sea otters. From the 1740s, traders began to frequent Alaska to gather pelts. By the early 1800s, this trade had grown to 62,000 pelts per year, totaling 2/3 of a million rubles or \$133,200 dollars. That would be worth over \$2.7 million today.

To regulate and further expand this trade, and to keep out other imperial rivals, the first permanent Russian settlement was founded on Kodiak Island in 1784. Its founder, Grigory Ivanovich Shelikhov, was a merchant involved in the fur trade who was also interested in expanding the Russian area of influence to the south.

By 1800, however, the number of fur-bearing animals was in steep decline, making the market for furs very competitive. In 1797, Shelikhov's widow, Natalia Shelikhova, combined her late husband's firm with that of a business partner, forming the United American Company. In 1799, the business was reorganized and received a charter from Tsar Paul I. It became the Russian American Company. The Company was endowed not only with a trade monopoly, but also with a mandate to explore and claim land in the name of



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Russia. The Company established its headquarters in Novo-Arkhangel'sk, or Sitka, in 1808.

The Company was led by manager-in-chief Alexandr Andreyevich Baranov, Shelikhov's former assistant. Baranov was eager to push the Company's holdings south. In 1803, he sent a reconnaissance and hunting expedition to the California coast. They sailed with an American captain, Joseph O'Cain, reaching as far south as Baja California. They found the sea otters numbers more plentiful on the California coast than in depleted Alaska waters and the land more fertile. The latter was an important attribute, as the Russian American Company struggled to provision their Alaskan settlements with agricultural goods and foodstuffs.

After the disastrous winter of 1805-6, when no Russian supply ship visited the Alaskan settlements for months, Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov—a Russian American Company official and Shelikhov's son-in-law—purchased an American ship and sailed it to San Francisco Bay. There, he bought grain and sought diplomatic relations with the Spanish. He received permission to trade with the Spanish and to marry the commandant of the presidio's daughter.

Unfortunately, Rezanov died on his return to St. Petersburg, leaving his new wife, Doña Concepción, a widow. His advice to colonize part of the California coastline, however, lived on. Baranov sent Timofei Tarakanov to find a suitable colony site. He landed at Bodega Bay, on the Sonoma Coast near San Francisco Bay. From there, Tarakanov explored the area and, in 1811, chose a cove to the north for the main Russian settlement. This was the site of Fort Ross.

In spring 1812, a party of 26 Russians and 80 Aleuts arrived to set up the colony. By late summer, they had constructed a stockade with two blockhouses. The name of the fort, settlement, and colony, Ross, is a reference to Imperial Russia, or Rossiia. Over the course of the 1820s and 1830s, other buildings joined the stockade, which later served as the manager's house. These included two windmills, cattle yard, bakery, two threshing floors, chapel, cemetery, several bath houses, farm outbuildings, shipyard, forge, tannery, boathouse, and canoe shed. In addition, there were several houses built away from the settlement, and the dwellings of the Aleuts and the local Kashaya Indians, upon whose land the colony was built.

The settlers focused on agriculture and ranching for, by 1820, the otter numbers were again in decline. Agriculture peaked in the 1830s, but it never proved as fertile and abundant as hoped. Company officials set up three ranches in the 1830s in an attempt to boost production. One of these, under the supervision of the agronomist Yegoy Chernykh, planted a vineyard, the first to do so in the area. Ranching proved much more successful and the California ranches supplied the Alaskan settlements with a variety of goods and meat.



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By 1839, Russians officials came to the conclusion that the colony had outlived its usefulness. An 1836 attempt to achieve Mexican recognition had failed and the colony continued to underproduce relative to expectations. Company employees offered the colony for sale; they approached the Hudson's Bay Company, who declined, and then France via Eugene Duflot de Mofras, who also declined. The ultimate buyer was Charles Sutter, who purchased it for \$30,000. The colonists sailed from Bodega Bay on January 1, 1842, ending the Russian American Company's experiment in California.

The travels of Eugene Duflot de Mofras in the American West

In 1839, Eugene Duflot de Mofras (1810-1884), was assigned to the French embassy in Mexico City and instructed to visit the northwestern provinces of Mexico, report on potential commerce, observe US, British, and Russian interests, and determine the feasibility of French trading posts in the region. In effect, he was acting as a spy, undertaking reconnaissance of the West and assessing the relative strengths and interests of the United States, Britain, Mexico, and Russia.

De Mofras visited Jalisco, Colima, Sinaloa, and Sonora in 1840, then sailed from Mazatlán to Monterey. He met with commandant Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in Sonoma, continued to Fort Ross, and returned to Monterey in July. He then sailed up the Sacramento River with A.G. Rotchev, governor of the Russian colony and manager of Fort Ross, to New Helvetia, where he met with John Sutter, with whom Rotchev was negotiating for the sale of the Russian fort.

He later visited San Jose, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco, before traveling to the HBC's Fort Vancouver. On this trip, de Mofras met and talked with Charles Wilkes, the commander of the United States Exploring Expedition. He returned to San Francisco with HBC Director Sir George Simpson, factor John McLoughlin, and US agent Horatio Hale. On January 3, 1842, de Mofras sailed via Santa Bárbara to San Diego, before returning to Mexico.

Duflot de Mofras provided important information on the economic life, geopolitics, and geography of the American West. He gave excellent descriptions of the Russian posts at Fort Ross and Bodega just prior to their sale and of California in general prior to the Gold Rush. He specifically noted Sutter's willingness to serve France, and reported on the reputed plot of Isaac Graham to overthrow the Mexican government in California. He published his adventures in a travel account that was accompanied with an atlas volume, *Exploration Du territoire de l'Orégon, des Californies et de la mer Vermeille* (1844).

Detailed Condition: