By the end of the 18th Century the fur seals were disappearing as fast as the sea otters had disappeared a decade before. The Russian trading companies that were stripping the fur resources from the Alaskan region had learned no lesson and the Aleuts watched helplessly as the sea mammals on which their lives depended began to disappear. It was only an unrelated event that accidently rescued the fur seals from extinction.

In 1796 Catherine the Great died and was succeeded by her simple-minded son, Paul I, who was more easily influenced than his mother. Catherine the Great had insisted that the Russian government not intervene in the affairs of Russian-America. But after her death people were able to persuade Paul I that Russia should follow the colonial experiences of England by forming a single company to administer Russia's colony in America. Therefore, in 1800 Tsar Paul gave a 20-year contract to an outgrowth of Shelikhov's original company, which had been renamed the Russian-American Company. This company had the sole right and concomitant responsibilities of developing the fur colony of Russian-America; it also had the right to hoist its own colors and command its own ships. The contract, however, proved to be a double edged sword for the administrators of the Russian-American Company. On the one hand they were given autocratic control over all of Russian America with the potential of realizing huge fortunes. On the other hand, they were also required to pay all of their own expenses out of the profits of the Company, and furthermore were not allowed to either trade or buy from non-Russian merchants.
Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the contract from the Tsar was considered a tremendous honor for the Russian-American Company, and its managers immediately began to take charge of their vast domain.

The man who became the first governor-general of Russian America, Aleksandr Baranov, was by all accounts a unique man. Baranov had been a bankrupt Siberian business man when Shelikhov hired him to take over the operation of his company on Kodiak Island in 1791. On his voyage to Kodiak, Baranov had been stranded for the winter on Unalaska and with extraordinary vigor began to study the Aleut language and customs. He also became the only Russian to ever master the Aleut style of hunting from a baidarka. Many of the Russians bitterly resented Baranov's long sojourns with the Aleuts and his acceptance of their way of life. He didn't act as if he thought he was superior to these "primitive natives."

In 1799 when Baranov established a new capital for Russian-America in New Archangel, he had 200 Aleuts help him. Unfortunately, over 100 of these Aleuts were tragically killed a few hours after eating poisonous mussels; only the ones who could induce vomiting saved themselves. The other Aleut hunters were forced to follow the Russians in their attempts to colonize America during the next 60 years. The Aleuts were a major source of labor for the Russian colonial venture; they built the forts on the Alaskan coast, ran the shipyards at New Archangel and provided food and furs for the colony from their hunting.

When the Russian-American Company took over the administration of their colony they split it into three major districts. The mainland of Alaska was controlled from Baranov's new capital at New Archangel, the present site of Sitka. The Western Aleutians were controlled from the Siberian coast; and the Eastern Aleutian district, including the Pribilofs, were controlled from Unalaska where there were 30 Russians.

News travelled slowly at that time, but the effects of the new Russian-American contract were soon felt in the small communities huddled on the shores of the Pribilof Islands. The Russian hunters who were employed by other trading companies were immediately ordered off the Islands, leaving only the traders from the Russian-America Company and their Aleuts to hunt the seals. The Russian-America Company had decided for very practical reasons to rely more heavily on
the skilled Aleut hunters who were at home in the environment of the Pribilofs rather than on the more expensive Russian hunters. Since the Russian hunters had been paid one ruble per pelt while the Aleut hunters were paid almost nothing, the "Aleut" furs were much more profitable.

As the Russians became increasingly dependent on Aleut labor they had to develop more explicit regulations for the use of these "natives." The Board of Directors of the Russian-America Company decided that every Aleut community owed the Company half of the labor of all males from the ages of 18 through 50 years old; but they were to be paid, not by the fur as the Russian hunters had been paid, but by the year. This annual payment amounted to approximately 60 rubles worth of goods a year which was only one-fifth of the average Russian's payment. With great generosity the Russian government exempted the Aleuts from paying the Russian imperial tax and dues on this allowance.7

The economic base for the Russian American colony was furs from both sea and land mammals. Between 1741 and 1798 over 400,000 fur seals had been taken in Russian-America, 96,000 sea otter skins, and 102,000 fox skins of all kinds.8 After the decline of the sea otter the most important and certainly the most stable fur export came from the fur seals of the Pribilof Islands.9 Therefore, when news of the rapid reduction of the fur seal herd reached the Company's directors in Siberia the new manager of the Company, Nikolai Rezanov, made a trip to the fur empire to assess the damages.

Rezanov was a Russian noble who had taken over the control of the Russian-American Company when Shelikhov, his father-in-law, had died.10 He arrived on St. Paul on the 24th of June, 1805 and talked with both Aleuts and Russians about the decimation of the fur seal herd. He was horrified by the reported decrease and his first letter to the Tsar from Alaska announced his ban on all future sealing until the herd had replenished itself. However, any ban on sealing threatened the very livelihood of the Pribilof Aleuts who were dependent on the harvest for both food and income. Rezanov wanted the Aleuts to stay on the Pribilofs because they would be needed as soon as the harvest started again. Therefore, he suggested that they begin walrus hunting for ivory; they were plentiful around the Pribilofs and the ivory was highly prized in China and Europe. However the hunting of walruses did not provide

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enough work for the community of Aleuts on the Pribilofs and almost all of the people returned to Unalaska in 1806 and 1807.

In addition to investigating the disappearance of the fur seals, Rezanov and his entourage were also curious about the conditions of the Aleuts. Langsdorff, a doctor who was a member of Rezanov's group, was appalled at the conditions of the Aleuts:

They are at present so completely the slaves of the company that they hold of them their baidars, their clothing, and even the bone with which their javelins are pointed, and the whole produce of their hunting parties is entirely at their disposal. It is revolting to a mind of any feeling to see these poor creatures half starved and almost naked, as if they were in a house of correction, when at the same time the warehouses of the company are full of clothing and provisions. Nor is this the case with the natives alone: the Russian promuscheniks are not in a much better situation. They are extremely ill-treated, and kept at their work till their strength is entirely exhausted; if they are ill, they must never hope for medical assistance or support in any other way; while as little attention at the same time is paid to their minds as to their bodies.

It was not a picture to make the Board of Directors of the Russian-American Company proud. The awareness of the plight of the Aleuts however, did not compel Rezanov to make any substantive changes in the Company's rules and regulations.

Rezanov's prohibition on sealing on the Pribilofs became more unrealistic the longer it lasted; there was simply too much pressure to keep the colony financially alive with the fur seal skins. When supplies from Siberia never came, Baranov was forced against the terms of the Tsar's contract to trade seal skins to foreign ships for much needed food. In 1807, just two years after the ban on sealing was declared, Baranov was so desperate for supplies that he sent the ship, Neva, to the Sandwich Islands with a shipment of fur to trade for salt and sandalwood. Baranov even persuaded American ships to carry fur seal skins directly to China for him and at one point rented some Aleut hunters to an English sea captain. Captain O'Cain transported the Aleut hunters and their thirty baidarkas to Southern California to hunt the otters off those warmer shores. He paid the Aleuts $2.50 a pelt, which was
considerably more than they were getting from the Russians and paid their families $250.00 in case any of them died. However, no amount of imaginative business arrangements by Baranov could make up for the loss of revenues from the holiday on sealing.

In 1808 sealing was resumed and Aleuts from Unalaska and neighboring villages returned to the Pribilofs. When they landed on St. Paul they built their barabararas at Polovina, which in Russian means half way point. It was conveniently located near the major rookeries on the island, half way between North East point and the southeast rookeries on Reef. The size of the Polovina village site suggests that the number of Aleuts who returned in 1808 must have been somewhat smaller than the number who had occupied the different villages on the island before 1807.

After the resumption of sealing in 1808 an assistant manager was assigned to the Pribilofs who directed the day-to-day sealing operation on the two islands. This resident manager made his headquarters on St. Paul but each spring made a trip to St. George to help him in the preparation for the summer fur seal harvest. He traveled in one of the two-holed Aleut baidarkas paddled by an Aleut and in most years he arrived safely at his destination. However, two times there was so much fog at the time of the voyage between the two islands that the baidarka missed St. George entirely. One year the baidarka continued south until it sighted the Aleutian Islands. Another year, the baidarka missed both St. George and the Aleutians; the island manager and Aleut seaman were never seen again.

Technically, the Aleuts who had been recruited to work on the Pribilof Islands from Unalaska and Atka were allowed to return to their homes after several years of work. However, this rarely happened because there were never enough people on the Aleutian Islands to replace them. With the exportation of most of the Russian hunters, the Russian-American Company had become completely dependent on the Aleut hunters to harvest their furs for them. Since a quota of workers always had to be filled, it was necessary to constantly import new workers to the Pribilof Islands. The voyage from the Aleutians to the Pribilofs usually took only a few days and went without mishap. But once, in 1812, a Russian sea captain, Merkulef, while transporting 80 Aleuts to the Pribilofs, was overtaken by disaster and 32 of them were lost at sea.
Over time, it was more profitable for the Aleuts who lived on the Pribilofs to stay where they had a regular annual job and enough food for the year. Gradually, a permanent community of Aleut men and women was established, many of whom had never seen the Aleutian Islands and considered the fur seal islands their home.

The Russian manager in every trading post throughout the colony maintained absolute control over the Aleuts.\(^{17}\) Shelikhov had given orders to his Russian managers to treat the Aleuts fairly, at least superficially, and Baranov himself behaved honorably, insisting that the Russian managers of each outpost could not force any Aleut to work for him. Of course, however, there was no way that this kind of rule could be reasonably enforced over the vast expanse of the Russian-American colony. And what Aleut could refuse a manager's demand when the Russian manager was judge, jury and jailor? The Aleuts and other native Americans were treated by their Russian managers as the Russian serfs were treated by their masters.

**The Second Contract of the Russian-American Company**

Despite Baranov's desperate attempts to make ends meet in his colony, he was suspended from his post in 1818 at the end of the first contract of the Russian-American Company. He died soon after. The Russian government renewed the contract of the Company for another 20 years and the supervision of the Pribilofs was shifted from Unalaska to the capitol of the colony, New Archangel, hundreds of miles further away. Over the next 40 years, Baranov was succeeded by a series of non-business men, none of whom were ever as successful as he was in keeping the colony afloat in the financial storms of colonialism.

Labor was always in extremely short supply in Russian-America. There was never more than 800 Russians in all of the colony; in 1805 there were only 400.\(^{18}\) Therefore, the Russian-American Company had to create a class of colonial citizens from the Creoles, the offspring of Russian-Aleut marriages. By 1820 there were approximately 200 adult Creoles in the colony who became eligible for Company employment. An Aleut Creole by the name of Kashevarov took advantage of this provision and became an outstanding navigator for the Russian-American Company. Years later in St. Petersburg he became an out-
spoken critic of the Company, accusing them of continual abuse and misuse of his Aleut people.

Another reform in 1844 provided education in Russia for Creoles who had worked for more than ten years in the colonial service. However, if they did receive education then they had to repay the Company by working ten to fifteen years more. Of course if they owed the Company store any money at all they would never be allowed to quit their work until the debts were paid. By 1861 there were 783 Creoles who were in the employment of the Company.19

The second Russian-American contract also spelled out in more detail the rights of the Aleuts with respect to their Russian managers. "Everything acquired by an Islander either through his own labor or inherited or purchased or bartered is his inalienable property and anybody attempting to take it away from him or to cause him personal insult will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law."20 Section 57 of the Charter stated that it was unlawful "to demand gifts, dues, tribute or any such sacrifices from these people."21 Unfortunately, the nature of the colony made it impossible to determine if these laws were being faithfully upheld. It was still too easy for a Russian manager who was visited only once a year to abuse the Aleuts who worked for him and to punish them if they reported the abuse.

Although the life of the Aleuts in Russian-America improved somewhat during the period from 1821 to 1841, the income from the fur colony fell over 25% during that time.22 The fortunes of the colony were closely tied to the fortunes of the fur seals and between 1817-1838 only one fourth as many fur seals were harvested as between 1787-1817.23 The past ravages of the fur seal hunters had taken its toll; the hunters in the first half of the 19th century reaped a much smaller harvest because of their predecessors' greed.

**The Way of Life of the Early 19th Century Pribilof Aleuts**

Despite the declining profits of the Russian-American Company the life of the Aleuts on the Pribilofs improved as their communities became more permanent. In 1821 a wooden chapel made from large pieces of drift wood was erected on the site of the present St. Paul village and named after the saints, Peter and Paul. It was elaborately decorated
inside with Russian icons and fixtures, all of which were paid for by private contributions of the Aleut community. But Aggey Galaktionoff suggests that the consolidation of the St. Paul people may have also had something to do with the Russian Orthodox church:

Northeast Point was the first village and as population increased some people disagreed with chiefs and wanted to move. The moved over to Zapadny. So this grew, and then moved to make another village across where the new houses are now. From there down into the flats in front of hospital. Used to be a nice hill right there. After Russians start doing baptizing they find out they done wrong and should be one group and so Northeast Point and Zapadny came into this village here.

They used to be separate—used to have limit to their waters too. Zapadny boat when wanted to come to this side—this village wouldn't allow them to come here. Northeast had limit to their water.

We used to pick eggs on Walrus Island. And seals from Sea Lion Rock. Now government take everything from us without permission.

The water well across from the by-products plant was build by government and next to it a deep hole in the ground. The Aleuts used the hole well but whites used the well water.

New homes were built in the harbor village in the style of their ancestors. They were partly underground with sod and dirt roofs. Only the continual burning of seal fat reversed the chill darkness inside these homes. This fuel gave off a greasy black soot which covered the inside of the houses and irritated the eyes. Therefore, the people mixed it with driftwood which was a much cleaner source of energy. The beds in the barabaras were made out of the dry grasses that grew on the island and the furniture was still largely made from driftwood and the different bones of sea mammals. It was at best a harsh life:

They were mere slaves...Here they lived and died, unnoticed and uncared for, in large barracoons half underground and dirt roofed, filthy and cold...Most of these huts were damp, dark, exceedingly filthy; it seemed to be the policy of short-sighted Russian management to keep them so...If their driftwood failed them at any time...
When winter came around they were obliged to huddle together beneath skins in their cold huts, and live or die, as the case may be.  

By the 1830s there were 137 people living on St. Paul in the Harbour village. The village included the church as its center, a house for the company manager, a small store, a warehouse, a barracks for men, thirteen barabaras and a small wind-mill. In addition there were two barabaras at a place called Stochnoye (Southeast). The village on St. George was also consolidated by 1830 at its present site and was also centered around a wooden church which had been built by the Aleuts and dedicated to St. George the Victor in 1833.

The primary food for the people living on the Pribilofs at that time was sea lion and fur seal meat. This was varied with roots and berries that could be gathered on the tundra, and halibut and cod from the ocean. In addition, many of the large households on St. Paul had more than 200 chickens which had been imported by the Russians and provided a continual supply of both eggs and meat.

The people on St. George ate more eggs and birds than the St. Paul people, partly because the bird cliffs were more accessible to them. The birds' eggs would often be collected by dangling a man tied to a rope over the high bird cliffs on the island to rob the nests of their eggs. This was often a dangerous occupation. Occasionally one of these hunters would be killed when his rope was cut through either by the sharp rocks of the cliff or by foxes that would teeth themselves on the hunter's life line.

The biggest occasion each year apart from the religious festivals of the Russian Orthodox Church was the arrival of a ship from New Archangel in June or July which brought supplies to supplement the food the islands provided. The return cargo of the ship was, of course, the valuable fur seal skins and the Russian employees.

In the early 19th century there were many more sea mammals in the waters around the Pribilofs than there are today. There were so many whales in the Bering Sea that the Pribilof Aleuts didn't have to go out on the ocean to hunt them like their ancestors. Instead they could wait for the behemoths to be washed up on the beaches. Between six and ten whales would become stranded on the Pribilof beaches each year, usually on St. Paul. Whale and seal blubber could have been produced in quantity, but the facilities were never built and only a little was sent to New Archangel every year. Before 1827 the young sea lions, bred on
Walrus Island where they gathered just before the ice pack, would reach St. Paul in January. The Aleut hunters would swarm out in their baidarkas in the wintery seas to hunt them. Gradually, however, the sea lion numbers were diminished and the island was taken over by the migrating walruses, who gave their name to it.\(^{34}\)

The Pribilof Aleuts were paid annually for their work by the Company manager. The workers were divided into three or four categories. The lowest category was for the sick and the aged who received approximately 150 rubles a year. The highest category of workers were given 250 rubles a year. In addition, bonuses of 50 to 100 rubles were given to workers who had worked exceptionally hard and women who participated in the sealing were given 23 to 35 rubles for their work.\(^{35}\) In addition to cash wages, the Pribilof workers were also given various parts of the seals such as flippers, intestines, and throats which had no commercial value, but could be used by the Aleuts to make their waterproof clothing.\(^{36}\) The Pribilof Aleuts were comparatively wealthy in comparison with other Aleuts on the Chain and their supply of food was always better than in the Aleutian Islands. In addition, their work was not constant and left them free time in the winter. This was a luxury to people whose ancestors were released from work only by death.

According to an Aleut leader on St. Paul in the 1830's, Shayash-mikov, the Aleuts' free time had been well used. Almost every man on St. Paul during the off season had taught himself to read the Russo-Aleutian letters, which were so important in the conducting of the Russian Orthodox mass.\(^{37}\) The Bishop, Ivan Neneminov, who visited the Islands several times, was even more outspoken in his admiration for the Pribilof people:

\begin{quote}
It may be said of the present inhabitants that, as a rule, they are the wealthiest of their race, smarter, more active and more diligent in their work—particularly those living on St. Paul. More noticeable and more important than all, they are the most pious and sincere in their faith; indeed in this respect, the inhabitants of the Pribilofs hold the first place among all Aleutians.\(^{38}\)
\end{quote}

But not all the leisure time was taken with teaching themselves to read. The Aleuts also used to make ivory sculptures of different Russian managers and often the likenesses were very accurate, while at the same
time being subtly grotesque. The Russians were too flattered to notice the irony with which the Aleut sculptors worked.

**The Russian Orthodox Church and Father Veniaminov**

The Russian colonization of Alaska had a stronger impact on the Aleuts than on any other native groups in the Alaskan region. Geographically, the Aleuts were the first people the Russians had contacted and eventually they became the most familiar and the most dependent of the Alaskan people from the Russian point of view. Despite the devastation the early Russian hunters brought to the ancient Aleut way of life, it was natural that over time many of the Russian customs would be adopted by the Aleuts. They soon learned to play chess as well as the Russians while drinking their tea from Russian samovars. They also adopted Russian names and assimilated their blood. But the strongest and certainly the most important influence the Russians had in the Aleutian Islands was through the missionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church. As early as 1759, Captain Stepon Glotov had wintered on Umnak Island and when he returned to Siberia the next year, he took with him the son of an Aleut chief to learn Russian and be converted to Christianity. This was the same Captain Glotov who, a few years later, retaliated so viciously against the uprising of the Aleuts. However, his revenge did not extend to the Aleut boy he had taken to Siberia and when the boy returned to the Aleutians several years later, the Russians made him the supreme chief of the Aleutians as the first converted Christian. 40

In 1795 when the first Russian missionaries arrived on the Aleutians, they were immediately well-received. The Aleuts adopted the Russian Orthodox Christianity eagerly and soon each island belonged to a parish, which had a traveling resident priest. The Pribilofs were in the parish of Unalaska and the resident priest there began visiting the islands of St. Paul and St. George once every other year.

The most important of all the missionaries to come to the Aleutians was Father Ioann Veniaminov. He was a large man, over six feet tall, who had been born in Siberia and became a brilliant seminary student with a special genius for languages. 42 When he accepted the assignment of the parish of Unalaska in 1823 he became the priest for approximately 1,200 parishioners who were spread over hundreds of
miles. During his tenure in Alaska, Father Veniaminov visited the Pribilofs three times and each time stayed from two to five weeks. An aged Aleut recalled that "when he preached the Word of God all the people listened and listened without moving until he stopped. Nobody thought of fishing and hunting while he spoke; nobody felt hungry or thirsty as long as he was speaking, not even little children." In addition to spreading the Word of God, Father Veniaminov also spread the first written word throughout the Aleutians. In 1831 he wrote an Aleut grammar and phonetic alphabet using the characters of the Church Slavonic which he felt expressed the sounds of the Aleut language better than Russian characters. With his grammar in hand he instituted a course in the local Aleut dialect, Aleutian-Fox, and within ten years everyone in his district had some ability to write. All education at that time came through the Church and since everyone in his district belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, education spread very quickly among the Aleuts. Soon after the Aleut dictionary was circulated, an Aleut named Salamatoff used the dictionary to prepare biblical texts and other materials for the Akashka Aleuts. This was a striking example of how quickly the Aleuts assimilated new ideas.

One Aleut in particular was instrumental in constructing the Aleut-Slavonic dictionary with Father Veniaminov and disseminating both Christianity and literacy on the islands. He was the chief (toyon) of Tidal Island in the Fox Islands who was named Ivan Pan'kov. The Russian navigator, Dimitri Pan'kov, who had discovered the Fox Islands in 1758 had been the patron of Ivan's father, Favrill, and perhaps also of Ivan, who was born in 1778. Ivan Pan'kov became a devout Christian and spoke both Russian and Aleut fluently. His fluency in Russian plus his native intelligence made him extremely valuable not only as a translator for the young Father Veniaminov, but also as an interpreter of the Aleut culture as well.

Ivan Pan'kov was the translator for an extraordinary meeting between Father Veniaminov and a well-known Aleut shaman on the island of Akun, Ivan Smirennikov. Father Veniaminov described the meeting to his church superiors back in Russia:

During my stay in April of 1828 on the island of Akun and the other three islands belonging to the former, I learned through the interpreter Ivan Pan'kov that the resident of the village Recheshnoye
on the island of Akun, on its southeast side, about ten versts from the main settlement on the island, Ivan Smirennikov, an old man of about 60 years of age, is regarded by the local inhabitants and by many others as well, as a shaman, not an ordinary person, at least.

There are many instances which prove his gift of clairvoyance, but I shall omit them here. Such tales, confirmed by trustworthy informants, convinced me that I should meet Smirennikov in person and personally inquire how is it that he knows the future and what means does he employ to learn it? . . .

I asked him, what did he feel when the spirits appeared—sorrow or joy: he said that only if he was conscious of having done something bad did he feel a twinge of conscience, but otherwise he did not experience any fear. Moreover, as the people regard him as a shaman, and he does not want to be a shaman, he asked the spirits to leave him alone; the spirits replied that they were not demons and cannot leave him. To his question, why they do not appear to others, the spirits replied that they were so ordered. . . .

All of the above is attested to by Smirennikov under oath, and transmitted by me not word for word but true to the meaning, without additions or omissions. Moreover, the freedom, fearlessness, and even pleasure of his discourse and above all his clean manner of life, convinced me and confirmed me in the conviction that the spirits which appear to this old man (if they appear) are not demons. 48

Father Veniaminov's decision was that Ivan Smirennikov could continue to teach and heal the sick, but to tell his people that he did these things with the power of God.

Ivan Pan'kov's contribution to Father Veniaminov's work on the Aleutians was also remembered by the Russian priest in a letter to his Archbishop:

I should like to draw your Grace's attention to the diligence of the Toyon Ivan Pan'kov in the matters of the propagation of the faith. As you know, he helped me consistently with the catechism. He responded with pleasure to my invitation, and continued to work with me, sometimes at the cost and inconvenience to himself. Prior to my visits to the Aleuts under his jurisdiction, he—often, as I was told—on every conceivable occasion taught the Faith to the leading men. Such constant effort deserves recognition, and therefore I ask Your Grace to send as the most pleasing and suitable gift, a book possibly inscribed in your own hand. . . . 49
After ten years on the Fox Islands, Father Veniaminov was transferred to New Archangel which extended his diocese from the Siberian Coast to the Alaskan colony. While Father Veniaminov was building a seminary at New Archangel for native American students, Ivan Pan'kov continued his work on the Aleutians. In 1840 Veniaminov was made a bishop and was given a new archdiocese based at Yakutsk, Siberia. In 1842 and 1844, Ivan Pan'kov established two more chapels on the Aleutian Islands. Sometime before 1855 Ivan Pan'kov died an old man who had spent his life bringing the Russian Orthodox church and the written language to his people.

When Bishop Veniaminov was 71 years old in 1868, he was made the Metropolitan of Moscow. In 1879 he died at the head of his church, recognized by everyone as a great leader. The legacy he left the Aleuts was not only his indomitable spirit, but also a three volume work on the Aleutians modestly entitled "Notes on the Islands of the Unalaskan District." In these "Notes" he had recorded with great enthusiasm all of his scientific and anthropological observations about the Aleutians and their people.

**The Disasters of 1835 and 1836**

During the 1830's there were several natural disasters on the Pribilofs. The dates may be imprecise, but the vivid descriptions of the disasters were not. In most winters the northerly winds blew the arctic ice pack south, surrounding St. Paul after Russian Christmas. However, in one winter, probably in 1835, St. Paul was blocked by ice for months longer than usual. The food resources of the sea on which the people depended were hidden under the ice pack and as a consequence more than half of the Aleuts on the Island died before the ice finally withdrew. The seals also suffered since the ice had prevented the pregnant seals from climbing on shore in June to have their pups. Many of the females died giving an unnatural birth to the pups in the ice-bound sea.

One year later, on April 2, 1836, there was a violent tremor under the earth that came from the East. On St. George, where the earthquake was most severe, cliffs crashed into the sea and the aftershocks lasted for weeks. On St. Paul the quake was felt less severely, lasting only a minute. Father Veniaminov visited the Islands the following year and observed that the direction of the earthquake was similar to the earth-
quakes on the Aleutian Islands. This suggested to him that the Eastern Aleutian Islands and the Pribilofs were part of a larger submerged land mass, which today is considered very likely.

**The Third Twenty-Year Contract**

The Russian-American Company's charter was renewed by the Tsar in 1844 for another twenty years. Under this new charter the Aleuts received, in addition to their yearly wages, 86 rubles of goods as well as extra supplies for renting their boats to the Russian administrators. However, since the value of the fur exports to Russia were declining during this period the Aleuts probably received much less than what was written out in the contract. Under the renewed contract the administration of the Aleuts was also more clearly spelled out than had been done previously. The Aleuts were to be governed by their traditional system of toyons and elders. However, these leaders had to be approved by the Russian administrators. The toyons were made clerks of the Russian-American Company, given salaries, medals and pensions to ensure that they would supervise the Aleut hunting. Up to one half of the men in an Aleut village could be called to hunt for the Russians and even if they weren't working for the Russians they were not allowed to sell any of their furs to anyone else. They were also not allowed to leave the seas around their villages without permission, in hopes of preventing them from making contact with non-Russian traders.

It was in this third contract that all Aleuts were unanimously classed with the dependent and civilized tribes for the first time. This meant that they had accepted the Russian Orthodox Church and therefore were Russian subjects rather than serfs. It was an important distinction in the minds of the Russians, but it had little practical results for the Aleuts. The Russian-American Company divided the American natives into three groups; the dependent natives were the Aleuts and Eskimos; the semi-dependent people were the Indians who lived near the coastline; the totally independent people were the warlike Indians from the interior of Alaska whom they never could conquer.

It was shortly after the third contract was signed that the Russians finally realized that female seals had to be protected if the extinction of the fur seal herd was to be prevented. From that year on, they rigidly
enforced the rule that no female fur seals were ever to be killed. And very slowly, the seals began to repopulate the Pribilof beaches.

It was also in 1848 that a polar bear drifted down on the pack ice and stepped off onto St. Paul. For several months it harressed the villagers when they went out hunting until finally they decided to kill it. The Aleuts formed a party to find the bear who was believed to be living in the lava tubes under Bogoslov Hill. Eventually the bear was found and killed, providing stories for people to tell for years.  

Two events on St. Paul in 1849 provided permanent names to the places where they occurred. A large English whaling ship became stranded that year on one of the shores just off the western side of St. Paul and the wreck was finally driven ashore in the bay that is now called English Bay after the nationality of the ill-fated ship. That was also the year that a large white whale was stranded on the other side of the island on what is now called Ketavie Point. Many of the Russian names that were given to places on the Islands have been translated into English over time, such as Novastoshnah, which is now called Northeast Point. But Ketavie, which in Russian means whale, has never changed.

As the years went by, the Russians who had come to colonize Russian-America had to face the fact that the fortunes they had hoped to make in the new colony were never going to be realized. There are several obvious reasons for their disappointment in the colony. Part of the failure of their dreams was the responsibility of the Company who did not protect the female fur seal until 1848. They thereby senselessly destroyed their economic base because of their own carelessness and greed. The figures speak for themselves. In the first thirty years from 1787 until 1817 a total of 2,500,000 fur seal exports had declined to just under 600,000 and by 1841 to 1861 they were further reduced to 400,000.  

However, in addition to the Company's inability to protect its fur resources it was also saddled with a difficult contract from the Russian government that required the company to pay not only all of its own expenses, but also to trade only with Russian companies. These companies had always been too undependable and too far away to guarantee supplies when they were needed. After sixty years it was clear that the potential profits that had once been dreamed of in Russian America were not going to materialize under the shortsightedness of both public and private policies.
When the third contract ran out the Russian-American Company appealed to the Russian court in St. Petersburg for a renewal of their contract. Even though their profits were low, they had already invested more than 13,000,000 rubles in the colony that they wanted to protect. However, at the court of St. Petersburg the widely respected Aleut navigator, Kashevarov, denounced the Russian-American Company's administration of his homeland. He argued persuasively that despite the Russian ukases (laws) that had insisted that the Aleuts be treated fairly the Company had continued to exploit and abuse his people. Due partly to his testimony the Tsar did not renew the contract and consequently for the next several years the company administered the colony without a written agreement from the Russian government. By 1864 the Company was trying desperately to transfer all the costs of the colony to the Russian Government who wanted only the profits, not the costs of such an operation. Russian-America had become a legal and economic no-man's land with neither the Russian-American Company nor the Russian Government able to afford its expenses. After 120 years, the Russian invaders had been defeated by their own practices.

The Aleuts, who had been decimated by the Russian invasion, survived the Russians. The extent of the decline of the Aleut people during the Russian occupation is in dispute. Estimates of the number of Aleuts at the time of Bering's discovery range from 16,000 to 20,000. By 1824 the Russians estimated there were 8,403 Aleuts left; in 1866 there were only 4,363. Other observers said there was only one tenth of the original population by the 1860's. Regardless of actual numbers, a striking decline of the Aleut population could not be ignored. A Russian observer pronounced his own judgment on the Russian treatment of the Aleuts:

It was necessary for the fur hunters to enslave the Aleuts and make laborers out of them; but it was impossible to do this, in view of the large native population that would always rise up in meeting and receive the Russians, arms in hand. It was necessary to exterminate the greater part of these recalcitrants so that the rest might inevitably become Russian serfs.