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Protection Bay Oct 17 & Out to Sea

Wind & W^r improving & Bar. rising but occasional rain squalls & starlight. At midnight hove up & steamed out into the straits. Passed between Coronation Isl^d & Cape Decision & crossed the southern entrance of Christian Sound where the heavy westerly met the ebbing tide from Chatham Straits & produced an irregular & confusing sea that frequently came on board & rendered the ship very uncomfortable in many respects. Genl. R. & many others toes up doubled around Cape Ommaney, Baranoff Isl^d & stood to the Nth & Wst along the land giving it a birth of 6 to 10 miles on ac. of the heavy sea. Occasional Hail squalls – mountains covered with snow at sunset op. Whale Bay – parted clew to M.T. sail. With much difficulty succeeded in mending it aloft – before midnight stood in near Mt. Edgecumbe & then steamed off & on under low fires until daylight.

18th

W^r cool & unusually pleasant for this Lat. Steamed in & anchored in 7 f. W. 45 f. C ^{good holding ground} ^{soft mud on rocks & gravel} in the narrow channel op. Sitka, swung ship & moored with the port bower Anchor & stream chain doubled to a buoy ahead and two hawsers astern or on each Q^r to Buoys. Govt officials came on board to assist in this operation. The Gov. afterwards called while I was on shore to call upon him. The necessary arrangements were made & the transfer of the Russian possessions in N.A. to our Govt. took place on shore at the Govt. House. At 3.30 P.M. in the presence of the Com. all the Officers in undress & side arms & some 200 of our Soldiers & some 100 Do Russians under Arms. The R. & Am. Colors being displayed at the mastheads of our 3 men of war laying here. And a National salute of 21 guns being fired alternately com. with this ship when the Russian flag came down & the same as our flag went up. The R. firing the first gun in the latter case followed by us alternately loosnd sails – displayed the R & Am colors.

Sitka, Alaska, Friday Oct. 18th 1867

No longer Russian America, the Am. (U.S.) emblem which has this day been hoisted here under a National salute and in the presence of nearly all the civil & military present I hope will hereafter be the emblem that will embrace all of N. Am. The transition was attended with an incident that I will mention— in lowering the Russian flag from a tall flag pole, it wound itself around the top mast crosstrees & became disengaged from the signal halyards apparently determined not to come down. Several Russians climbed up the shrouds supporting the staff but their strength became exhausted & had to slide down, in the interim the salute was going on & the Gov. & all hands were getting impatient, finally a running bowline was made in one end of the mast rope which was rove & a man was hoisted up who cleared the flag & instead of bringing it down with him as was evidently the wish & expectation of the R. authorities present, threw it down upon the bayonets of their own soldiers presenting arms underneath.

The Am. Ensign (which was brought out by Gen^l Rosseau) was then bent on & slowly run up, followed by another salute of 21 guns fired alternately by the battery on shore & the U.S.S. OSSIPPEE and 3 cheers given by the untterrified Americans present.

When the R. Com. Capt. Pestrousoff advanced with his hat in his hand & in a few appropriate words to Gen^l R. said "Gen^l Rosseau by authority vested in me by his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia I transfer to you the Russian possessions of Alaska." (which embraces all of their possessions in N. America.)

Gen^l R. replied, "I accept it in behalf of the Govt. of the U. States." This ended the ceremony—much to the disgust of two newspaper reporters, who were present & expected a spread eagle speech to report to their papers. All the officers now assembled in the Gov. Prince Makesoutoff quarters, drunk a glass of Champagne & dispersed. At sunset the Am. & R. flags were lowered together from the men of war following the motions of this ship—my being the Senior Naval Officer present.

The R. Com. Pestchousoff & Kuskall removed on shore. Gen^l R. was invited to accept quarters at the Govt House also, which he contemplated doing. The Prince apologized for not including me—saying that he had no accommodations. Gen^l J.C. Davis & he having been given the only remaining rooms.