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# ALASKA

## MAGAZINE

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**Vol. 1 No. 1**  
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**January 1927**

MENDENHALL GLACIER, GASTINEAU CHANNEL

E. Andrews Photo



SUNSET  
LYNN CANAL

## *A New Vacation Land*

**S**KAGWAY, once rendezvous for 10,000 gold seekers, now welcomes other thousands—seekers of beauty and health and rest. Gate to the Klondike and Atlin; terminus of the magnificent Inland Passage, the Garden City has charm all its own.

A week with rod, gun and camera roaming about glacier, lake, mountain and stream is an unforgettable experience—you'll remember too the delights of a comfortable, modern hotel, and the zest of good food well served.

STOP OVER IN SKAGWAY AT THE

## Golden North Hotel

SKAGWAY, ALASKA

(Brochures and complete information on request.)



Kashevaroff Collection  
PRINCESS MAKSOUTOFF  
from a sitting at Sitka, 1867.



Kashevaroff Collection  
PRINCE MAKSOUTOFF  
in his uniform as a Russian Naval  
Officer.

## Uncle Sam Takes Possession

### An Account of the Transfer of 1867

By REV. A. P. KASHEVAROFF

Curator Alaska Historical Museum

Associate Editor, Alaska Magazine

THE whole transaction of the transfer of Alaska from Russia to United States was carried on with simplicity and friendliness. In Mr. Sumner's speech we read: "Few treaties have been conceived, initiated, prosecuted and completed in so simple a manner without protocols or despatches." Having acquired the Territory by gentlemanly negotiations the Americans raised the flag on October 18, 1867, with simple ceremony, free from indelicate patriotic demonstrations and all in the utmost feeling of friendliness.

President Johnson selected General George Lovell Rousseau as Commissioner to represent the United States at this ceremony, and it is a significant fact that Baron de Stoekl, the Russian Ambassador, was twice informed of the General's selection. The first note was dated

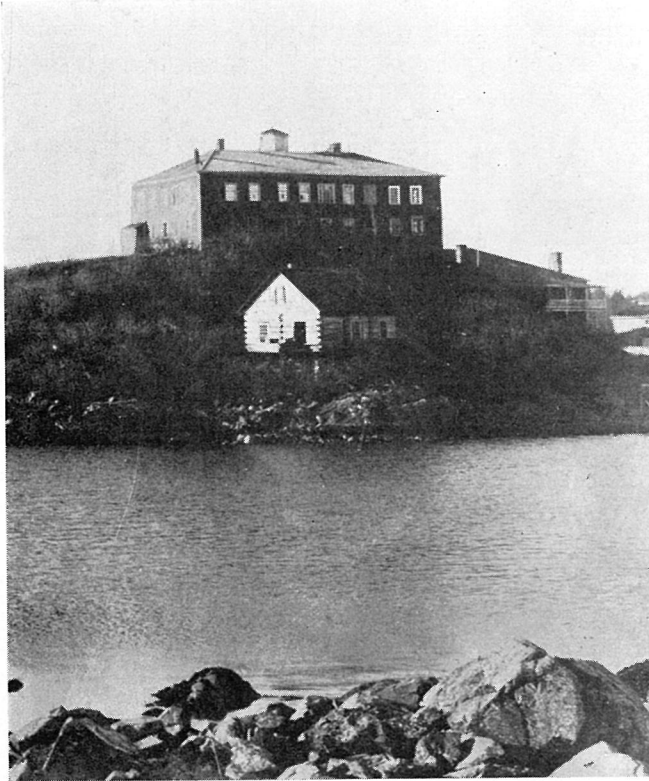
May 13th, 1867, and the second, identical in wording, August 13th, 1867. While the State Department correspondence shows that other officers then present on the Pacific Coast were under consideration for the errand, the choice eventually fell upon General Rousseau. He set out upon his journey from Washington with instructions from Secretary Seward "to receive . . . from similar officers of the Russian Government, the Territory ceded by that government to the United States, pursuant to the treaty of March 30th, last."

Among other instructions we find one in which "it is expected that in the transaction of the important business hereby intrusted to you, it will be borne in mind that, in making the cession of the territory referred to, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias has

been actuated by a desire of giving a signal proof of that friendship for the United States which has characterized his own reign and that of his illustrious predecessors. It is hoped therefore that all your intercourse with the Russian Commissioner will be friendly, courteous and frank." After a final meeting held at New York, where Baron de Stoekl, the Ambassador, Captain Pestchouroff, the Commissioner representing Russia, and Captain Koskul, representing the Russian American Company were present, General Rousseau arranged to sail for San Francisco via Panama. Leaving New York on

ship *John L. Stephens* arrived at Sitka on the 9th day of October 1867. It reached the proper anchorage on the following day. General Davis called upon Prince Maksoutoff, the Russian Governor and made arrangements for the landing of animals upon one of the little islands in the harbor. The animals were landed during the succeeding days, while the troops were retained upon the vessel in accordance with the instructions received from the headquarters.

The *Ossipee*, upon which the Commissioners embarked from San Francisco, although equip-



#### BARANOF'S CASTLE SITKA

Residence of the great Governor and Administrator and center of Russian influence in the far east, this storied structure was a familiar landmark to a generation of Pacific sailors. Photographed by Merrill, Sitka, shortly before its destruction by fire.

August 31st the commissioners arrived in San Francisco on September 22nd.

On reaching the port of San Francisco the Commissioners were saluted by the naval vessels as well as the shore batteries. They spent five days in preparation for the voyage and were entertained with elaborate courtesies. The Californians had been staunch advocates of the purchase.

The troops under General Jefferson C. Davis, sailed ahead of the Commissioners, leaving the port on September 25th with the intention of making a quick voyage by the open sea. The

ped with John Ericson's new propellor, was a slow going vessel; as General Rousseau reports, "Our ship was very slow and with a head wind or rough sea made not more than two to four knots an hour. The winds in the northwest Pacific, from May to November, are from northwest generally, and the balance of the year from the southwest. Besides I suffered greatly from sea-sickness, followed by what I feared was congestive chills, and sought to avoid this suffering by taking the inland passage."

On October 4th the *Ossipee* reached Esquimalt, Vancouver Island, where she remained



Winter & Pond Photo  
SITKA TODAY

With Mount Edgecumbe in the background.

two days loading coal. Then she proceeded to "New Archangel" or Sitka, arriving there on the 18th of October at 11:00 a. m.

Certain journalists had preceded the Commissioners to Sitka. From these journalists we have a description of the Sitka of 1867: "On a clear day the harbor and the town itself can boast of scenery equalled by few in the world. . . . It rivals Rio Janeiro."

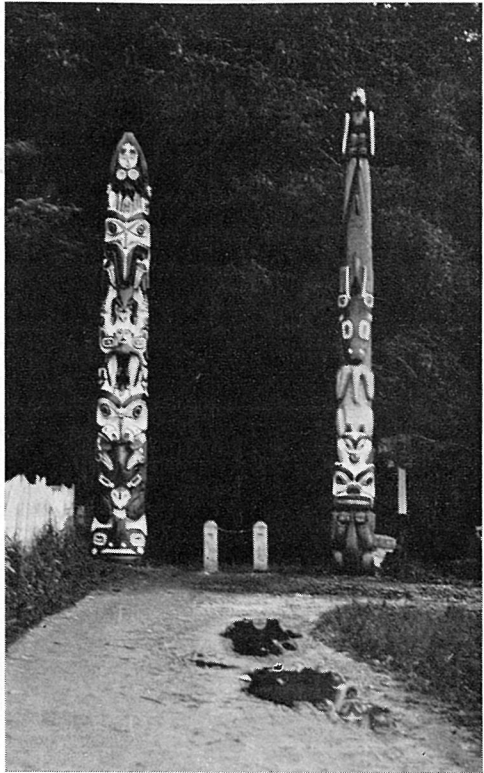
Amid the glowing descriptions of scenery in the prolonged twilight a list of vessels then in port is given, viz. The *John L. Stephens*, the *S. S. Resaca*, Captain Bradford; the *Jamestown*, Captain McDougall; the *Buena Vista*, of San Francisco; the *Mameluke* of the Sandwich Islands, and the two steamers and three vessels flying the Russian flags.

Beyond, the wharf and the "old style" guns of the battery, the long two-story fur houses, painted yellow, with red sheet iron roofs; with "furs now stored said to be worth \$1,000,000."

After passing rapidly over the customs house, the governor's mansion, the business houses, the journalists describe the Greek church: "The only building in town having any claim to architectural beauty—A spacious wooden structure, having a spire of oriental style on the front and a large dome on the center of the

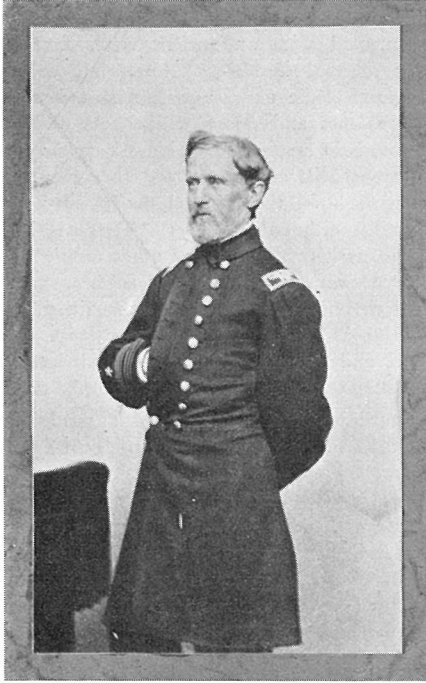
edifice. The spire has a chime of bells and is ornamented with an ancient clock face. The body of the church is a blue slate color, the roof and dome of a deep green, and the window frames and doors white. As a structure it would do credit to any New England town." The journalist also mentioned the school house, the workshops, the hospital, the foundry, and the saw-mill, although he says: "There is less use of boards here than in any other civilized place I have ever visited. Every edifice, large or small, is built of hewn logs, hewn in the better class so as to leave no crevices, with the external and internal walls so well dressed as to be suitable for painting or papering."

Saturday, October 12th, had a mild surprise for the American visitors; two European calendars had met on opposite courses around the globe; for the Russians, it was Sunday. The Americans had their Sunday the next day, when Rev. Rainier, an army chaplain held services in the Lutheran church. The Rev. Rainier had preached the first sermon in English in Alaska,



ENTRANCE TO LOVER'S LANE, SITKA

One of the finest collections of Totem poles has been placed in the park through which the famous Lover's Lane runs under and through foliage of almost tropical luxuriance.



Kashevaroff Collection  
**CAPTAIN GEORGE F. EMMONS, U. S. N.**  
 Commanding U. S. S. "Ossipee" and  
 U. S. Naval forces present at the  
 Transfer of Alaska to the United  
 States, 1867.

as he had previously had the distinction of preaching the first sermon in Portland, Oregon.

In another journalist's account we read: "At eleven o'clock the *Ossipee* came to an anchor in our midst." The *Ossipee* was in command of Captain George T. Emmons. "In view of the unavoidable discomforts on shipboard, General Davis was desirous that arrangements should be made to put the soldiers in quarters on shore at the earliest practicable time. After a conference between the Commissioners and Prince Maksoutoff, Governor, the hour of 3:30 p. m. was set for the transfer."

The Russian troops, one hundred in number, were assembled at three o'clock, dressed in their full dress uniform of dark cloth, trimmed with red, and flat, glazed caps. They formed on the parapet in front of the Governor's castle, on the right of the flag staff. The American troops, two hundred strong, in full dress uniform were paraded opposite them, the color guard of a sergeant and ten men under the command of Lieutenant J. E. Eastman, marching in front. Promptly at 3:30 p. m., they were brought to "present arms," the first gun in salute was fired by the *Ossipee* and the Rus-

sian shore batteries responded gun for gun, in a double national salute to each flag.

With the first gun fired, the lowering of the Imperial Russian banner was begun, but the ceremony was interrupted by the catching of the flag in the ropes attached to the flag staff, and in endeavoring to untangle it, the soldier who held the halyards pulled so hard that the border of the flag became detached from the rope.

"In an instant," says General Rousseau, "the Russian soldiers, taking different shrouds attached to the flag staff, which was perhaps ninety feet high, attempted to ascend to the flag, which, having been whipped around the ropes by the wind, remained tight and fast. At first, being sailors as well as soldiers, they made rapid progress, but laboring hard they soon became tired, and when half-way up scarcely moved at all, and finally came to a standstill. There was a dilemma; but in a moment a boatswain's chair, so called, was made by knotting a rope to make a loop for a man to sit in, as he was pulled upward, and a Russian soldier was quickly drawn up to the flag. On reaching it he detached it from the ropes, and not hearing the calls from Captain Pestchouroff to bring it down, dropped it be-



Kashevaroff Collection  
**CAPTAIN F. V. KOSKULL**  
 Representing the Russian American  
 Company; the photo is inscribed,  
 "With compliments, to Capt. G. T.  
 Emmons, commanding the U. S. S.  
 "Ossipee."



PRINCE AND PRINCESS MAKSOUTOFF Kashevaroff Collection

The last of the Russian Governors and his wife. Prince Maksoutoff participated in the ceremony of transfer.

low, and in its descent it fell on the bayonets of the Russian soldiers."

George Lovell Rousseau, the fifteen year old son and secretary of the General then had the honor of hoisting the American banner supplied by the State Department for that purpose, and afterwards returned to the archives of the department in Washington, where it now is.

With the last gun of the salutes, the flag had reached its place, and Captain Pestchouroff stepped up to General Rousseau and said: "General Rousseau, by authority from his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, I transfer to the United States the Territory of Alaska." General Rousseau replied: "I accept from you as agent of his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, the Territory and Dominion which you have transferred to me, as Commissioner on the part of the United States to receive the same."

The ceremony was at an end, save for three cheers from the irrepressible Americans present, "No part of the program," reported the General, "and on some accounts I regretted that it occurred."

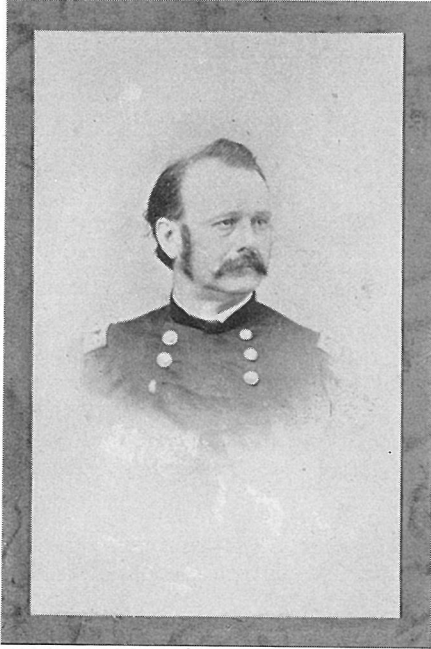
During the ceremony of the transfer there were six American ladies present: the wives of General Davis, Colonel Weeks, Captain Wood and the Rev. Mr. Rainier of the *John L.*

*Stephens*, the wife of Mr. Dodge, Collector of the Port and the wife of Captain McDougall of the *Jamestown*. Six Russian ladies were also present: The Princess Maksoutoff, the wife and daughter of Vice-Governor Gardishoff and three others whose names do not appear. (\*) The Indians were represented by a number of chiefs, prominent among them: Annahootz, Shkauthlieth, and Katlean, the last two descendants of the chiefs who took such prominent part in the destruction of the first Post at the old Sitka in 1802.

From the official report of Captain W. A. Howard, commanding the revenue steamer *Lincoln*, we learn that the United States flag was hoisted elsewhere in Alaska on the same day and within a few minutes of the time it was raised at Sitka. In June 1867, Captain Howard was stationed in New York. He received instructions "to proceed to San Francisco and take charge of the steamer revenue cutter *Lincoln* which has been designated to make the voyage to Sitka, and the Russian Possessions in America, lately ceded to the United States, to acquire a knowledge of the country with a view to the protection of the revenue when it shall become a part of the United States, and for the information of Congress and the people."

(\*) (H. Ex. Doc. No. 177, 40th Cong. 2nd. Sess. P. 72).





Kashevaroff Collection

## GENERAL ROUSSEAU, U. S. A.

United States Commissioner for the Transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States.

Acting upon these instructions, Capt. Howard proceeded to San Francisco, arriving there the latter part of August. He at once took command of the steamer *Lincoln* and proceeded to Sitka, at which port he arrived about the end of September.

Here he waited for some time expecting the *Ossipee* with the Commissioners aboard. But realizing that the *Ossipee* was a slow boat, he left for Redoubt on the 8th of October, from whence he sailed for Chilkat on the 13th for the purpose of getting acquainted with the Chilkat Indians known then as the most powerful tribe, and the most war-like and troublesome on the coast. He hoped to return to Sitka in time to receive the Commissioners and assist in the ceremonies of hoisting the flag of the United States but the weather was stormy during the whole trip so he was obliged to seek shelter at many coves where suitable anchorage could be found. He arrived at Chilkat on the evening of the 16th.

Next morning it was blowing so hard that he did not send boats ashore but the wind died out at noon and at 1:30 p. m. five large war canoes came alongside, one with the Hudson Bay Company's flag flying, and Jack, pilot and interpreter, in full uniform of an English offi-

cer, came aboard. "The head chief soon arrived with his wife, (daughter of the great chief of the Stikines) and was received in my cabin, where I had a long talk with him," Captain Howard writes. "He is a very quarrelsome Indian, and tries one's patience exceedingly. Whiskey not being given him he was much incensed and said: 'If I had no presents, coats, trousers and shirts, why come? Talk without whiskey was nothing; s'pose plenty whiskey and presents, then talk good.' I was well aware of the character of this chief, and knew it was necessary to secure his good opinion and friendship for the Bostons (Americans) otherwise it would not be safe for any small trader with the flag of the United States to go there.

"I felt exceedingly the want of presents for such occasions. I had not, however, asked the Department for any, nor the power to purchase. Whiskey I had but would not give him any, knowing that it was the intention of the Department to prohibit all traffic in it.

"After an hour's talk he was convinced the ship was not a trader, but the great American (Boston) chief sent to talk with him; that presents would be made him, provided he was true to the new flag; also being assured that the traders would come in proper time. Presenting him with a handsome and new overcoat, lined with red broadcloth, and fully trimmed with braid; tobacco, molasses and biscuit, an American flag and staff, which was fitted in the bow of his canoe, he departed much better disposed than I had anticipated. Several minor chiefs and friends of his were made suitable presents, and all departed at sunset, kindly disposed towards their new rulers. The United States flag was hoisted at Chilkat within a few minutes of the time it was hoisted at New Archangel, as it was afterwards ascertained."

Captain Howard arrived at Sitka on October 19th, where he found the flag of the Union flying over the Government House.

After the ceremony of the transfer, the Russian population was not only saddened but somewhat bewildered by the presence of so many strangers amidst them. As the Americans at once began to adjust the existing conditions to suit the life of the capitol according to the new laws and regulations, which seemed much easier and freer to the citizens, there was somewhat a marked disregard for laws that should have given them better living conditions. It was not because the citizenry was naturally uncontrollable, but because the old pressure was removed and the new control had



MOUNT EDGECUMBE FROM THE SEA Winter &amp; Pond Photo

Named San Jacinto by the Spanish explorers, it now bears the name bestowed by Captain James Cook. The classic outline of this extinct volcanic cone is a perpetual temptation to photographers and one of the sights of Sitka.

not yet been understood by them. During the Russian regime the town was one big family, guided by the company's agents and subject to their whims, but suddenly they found themselves entirely free to act and work for whom-ever they pleased.

Were all things faithfully recorded, it would be hard to determine who was at fault. Many later American writers censured the American soldiers but the Russian citizens could not be held entirely blameless.

The Commissioners at once began to settle

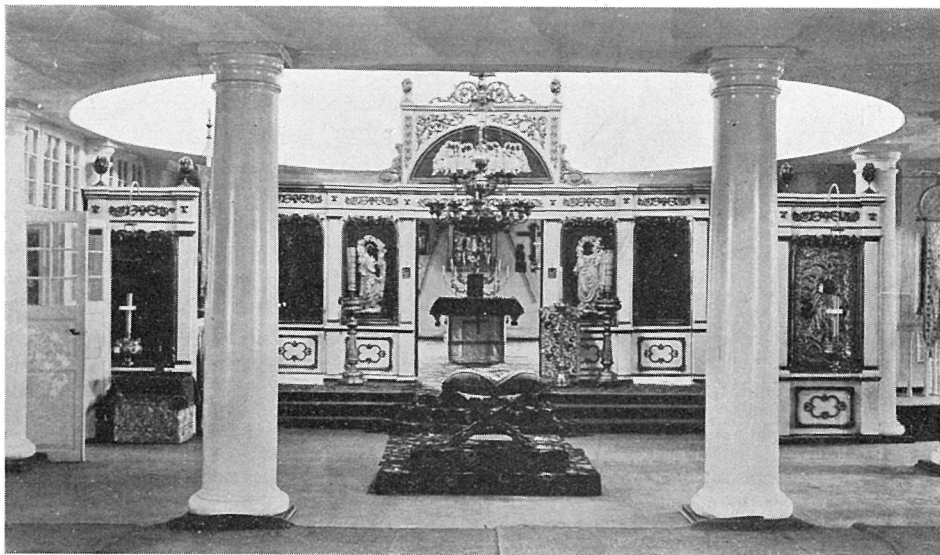
titles of lands held by the people as wards of the company. The Russian-American Company was everything in Alaska and the dwelling houses belonged to the company and were merely occupied by the employees. There were also large barracks built for the families of the working class. A map of the city was drawn up, the title of each resident carefully determined and a certificate signed by the Commissioners issued. We find among the "first families" of Sitka such names as: Adolph Lindfors, William Ivanoff, Anna Kostrometinoff,



PYRAMID HARBOR

Winter &amp; Pond Photo

A quiet beauty spot in the famous Inland Passage, where the steamers thread through a thousand miles of placid waters, fenced off from the sea by hundreds of wooded islands and glacier-topped hills.



INTERIOR OF ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL, SITKA

Elite Photo

Built by the Russians in 1848, this is one of the most historic religious structures on the Pacific Coast. Screened by curtains in line with the pillars, rests the famous Madonna, for which fabulous sums have been offered by art collectors. Cathedral authorities have been firm in resisting the temptation and the classic canvas still remains to inspire their congregation.

Elizabeth Bollman, John Kilkowsky, Natalia Kashevaroff, Artemy Lavrientieff, John Kaitsky, Nadezda Timofejeff, Kusma Terentijeff, Anna Konoplitsky, John Makaroff, William Vickstrom, Simeon Sokoloff, Jacob Lavoulin, John Ponomarkoff, Olympiada Vachramejoff, Michael Buldakoff, Gabriel Lyloff, Andrei Ziezeff, Basil Pavloff, John Peterson, Michael Ivanoff and—the congregation of the Lutheran Church.

The greater part of the citizenry failed to avail themselves of their right under the treaty to retain Russian citizenship by returning to Russia within three years and their descendants are numbered among Alaska's sons and daughters today. Our journalist from San Francisco heard one of them say, "There will be many tears shed in Sitka tonight," and another, "I cannot be present at the death of the country," while the native Indian population paddled their canoes around the anchorage to a favorable spot in the harbor, and watched the ceremony in silence, if not approval. One Kolosh chief is said to have remarked, "Oh, we let the Russians use the island alright, but we didn't intend to let every fellow who came along take it."

The church buildings were held under the treaty to be the property of the Graeco-Russian congregation, and the adjustment of the titles was settled without argument. Certain chains

and buoys had been placed in the harbor by the company; these were purchased for \$10,000 in gold. The properties at Kodiak and other points were described, and the work of the Commissioners was finished.

Prince Maksoutoff, for three years previous to the transfer Governor of the Company, with the approval of the Tsar, was a "well built, business-like, affable gentleman of forty, an officer of the Imperial Navy," whose "annual salary was \$7,000 with \$1,000 for family expenses and perquisites in furs worth from \$4,000 to \$6,000," and "unless prodigal of his income,—worth at least \$50,000."

The Governor's wife is described as a lady of rare personal attraction, as well as intelligence, "is perhaps, ten years younger than her husband and speaks English with ease and accuracy." She returned to St. Petersburg via San Francisco and Liverpool some few weeks after the transfer, while her sailor husband stayed on until the following summer, visiting Kodiak, Unalaska, and other points to settle his Company's affairs.

An influx of Americans from California and Washington overran the placid little Russian town for a time; set up their own government, and established a newspaper, and then, failing to experience the "boom" which had been so confidently predicted, drifted away to other parts.