



THE HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM

The collection representing the culture of the people of North America began to form in the second half of the 18th century after the discovery of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands by the participants of the expedition headed by V.I. Bering and A.I. Chirikov. Participants of the expeditions headed by Yu.F. Lisiansky, V.M. Golovnin and others also contributed to the enrichment of the Museum's collections. An outstanding role was played by I.G. Voznesenskii, who in was acquiring collections in the Russian America at a special assignment of the Emperor's Academy of Sciences. He acquired around a thousand objects on the culture of Alaskan and Californian Indians, which at that time formed almost half of the Museum's collection on the peoples of North America. One of the latest collections on the people of Alaska was received from the missionary G. Chudnovskii.

YU.F. LISYANSKY



▲ *Yu.F. Lisiansky*

In 1803-1806 the first Russian round-the-world expedition headed by I.F. Krusenstern and Yu.F. Lisiansky was held on ships "Nadezhda" (in Russian 'hope') and "Neva". The "Neva" came to anchor in the Pavlov Bay of the Kodiak Island. After a month's anchorage, the ship headed to Sitka Island where it participated in the military campaign against the Tlingit. The crew spent the winter of 1804-1805 on the Kodiak Island, and in June 1805 the "Neva" left the Russian America.

During his almost a year-long stay on Alaska, Yu.F. Lisiansky familiarized himself with the culture of the local population and made a description of it. Yu.F. Lisiansky, P.V. Povalishin and G.G. Langsdorf collected rich ethnographical material.

V.M. GOLOVNIN



▲ *V.M. Golovnin*

A famous Russian sea-farer V.M. Golovnin visited Alaska twice – during his navigation on the sloop "Diana" in 1809-1811 and in 1818 during his circumnavigation in the ship "Kamchatka". During the second travel he acquired ethnographical collections. Like many other sailors, V.M. Golovnin, after his return to St.Petersburg, divided his collection into several parts. He gave one part to the Kunstkamera, another – to the Museum of the State Admiralty. It is possible, that V.M. Golovnin also gave part of his collection to the Academy of Arts together with the drawings made by artist M.T. Tikhanov, a member of the expedition. At present, all the three parts of V.M. Golovnin's ethnographical collection belong to the MAE.

I.G. VOZNESENSKY

In 1836 the Kunstkamera was divided into seven separate museums, including the Ethnographical Museum. Then it became obvious that the American collections of the newly created museums are small in number. To enrich the collections, the Emperor's Academy of Sciences decided to send one of its members of staff to Russian America. The choice fell on I.G. Voznesensky – assistant curator of the Zoological Museum.

I.G. Voznesensky arrived to Novoarkhangelsk (the administrative center of the Russian America) in May 1840. He made it his residence for five years, during which he returned here after his travels. During his stay in the Russian America, I.G. Voznesensky made contacts with many employees of the Russian-American Company, many of whom became his voluntary assistants. I.G. Voznesensky visited almost all regions: North California, the islands of the Alexander Archipelago, the Kenai Peninsula, the Kodiak Island, the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands, Norton Bay coast and the region of the Bering Strait. Everywhere he acquired collections. On the whole, 950 objects on 18 groups of the indigenous population of the Russian America were received from I.G. Voznesensky by the Museum. Using his experience of a zoologist, he acquired ethnographical collections in series, and not as single objects (for example, he acquired an Aleutian canoe together with all hunting gear).



▲ *I.G. Voznesensky*

L.A. ZAGOSKIN

A valuable ethnographical collection was received by the Museum from a famous explorer of Alaska L.A. Zagoskin. He arrived to Novoarchangelsk on October, 6th, 1839 and during the first two years of his service in the colonies, commanded the ships of the Russian-American Company. In 1842-1844 L.A. Zagoskin headed the expedition whose mission was to explore the inland regions of Alaska. He and his team of several people spent about four months in the Mikhailov redoubt on the Norton Bay coast. This area was populated by the Unaligmiut Eskimos. L.A. Zagoskin traveled along the Norton Bay coast to the mouth of the Unalakleet River and along it came to the Yukon River (Kwiguk). Going up the Yukon River he arrived to the Nulato factory that was located on the territory that belonged to the Koyukon Athabaskans.



▲ *L.A. Zagoskin*

L.A. Zagoskin explored the Yukon tributaries and the culture of the local population – the Ikogmiut Eskimos. Then L.A. Zagoskin explored the middle flow of the Kuskokwim River where he got familiar with another group of Eskimos – the Kuskokwim Eskimos. The Ikogmiut and the Kuskokwim Eskimos are often referred to as the “river Eskimos”. L.A. Zagoskin also collected materials on the Koyukon Athabaskans.



▲ *G. Chudnovsky*

G. CHUDNOVSKY

In May 1891 the Museum received a collection on the Tlingit culture from an Alaskan orthodox missionary Georgy Chudnovsky. G. Chudnovsky began his missionary activity in a Tlingit village called Killisnu on the Admiralty Island where he stayed from October 1889 until January 1890. G. Chudnovsky then again spent several months among the Killisnu Indians in the summer and autumn of 1890.

G. Chudnovsky's collection is one of the latest Alaskan collections received by the Museum. It is of special value as the Tlingit people themselves participated in its formation and gave G. Chudnovsky their antique objects.