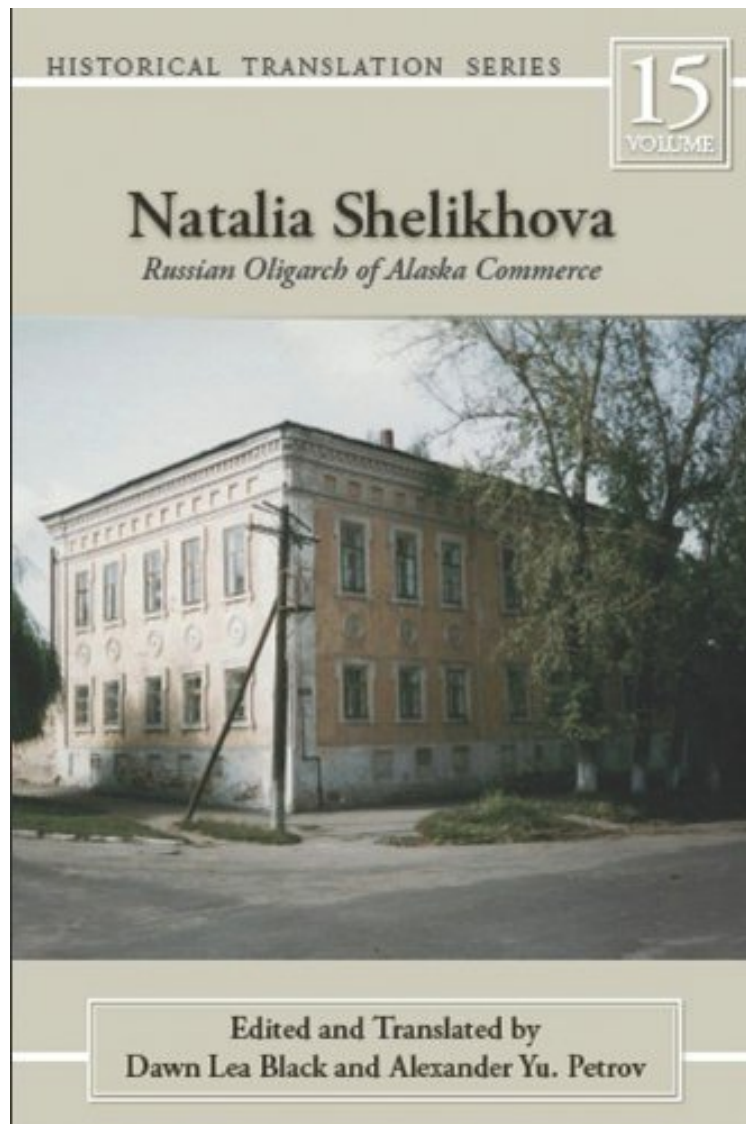


(Mobile book) Natalia Shelikhova: Russian Oligarch of Alaska Commerce (Rasmuson Library Historic Translation)

Natalia Shelikhova: Russian Oligarch of Alaska Commerce (Rasmuson Library Historic Translation)

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From University of Alaska Press : Natalia Shelikhova: Russian Oligarch of Alaska Commerce (Rasmuson Library Historic Translation) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Natalia Shelikhova: Russian Oligarch of Alaska Commerce (Rasmuson Library Historic Translation):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. 18th Century AlaskaBy Susan SouthworthThis book introduces Natalia Shelikhova, a stunning 18th century female figure and a multinational businesswoman. Her letters sound by

turn like an MBA or corporate lawyer or the matriarch of a large family. Together with her merchant husband, she founded the first Russian settlements in North America, meanwhile giving birth to 12 children, the last a few days before the death of her husband. Widowed with so many responsibilities, she petitioned the Empress, Catherine the Great to grant her license for the Russian American Company. It was granted and she soon monopolized the Alaskan fur trade. "Natalia's concern for the welfare and education of the native people of Alaska with whom she lived helped soften some of the rougher edges of early Russian America." What did the Alaskan natives make of the education in Lomonosov's grammar and other Russian textbooks? They were also exposed to the new writing of the Russian intellectuals, including the radical political theories. While the Russian archive that is newly translated here provides great detail on her business dealings and family after her marriage and especially after she lost her husband, her maiden name, parents and place of birth are unknown. Several theories about her origins are offered but no definitive documentation exists. The most intriguing lineage was documented in Velikii Ustiug but a flood destroyed that archive. It reportedly indicated that Natalia is the "...granddaughter of Nikifor Akinfievich Trapeznikov, who was an Old Believer merchant from the village of Ulanovskaia ...". This theory explains Natalia's exploratory nature and specific interest in Alaska, since Trapeznikov went to the Aleutians himself. He returned with a very valuable cargo and sent out nine more vessels. The name of his son-in-law, Aleksei Guliaev, is consistent with Natalia's patronymic, Alekseevna. Whatever Natalia's family origin, she was remarkably international in her outlook. She established an extensive trade with China in both Canton and Kiakhta, importing cottons, silks, black and brick tea, lacquered furniture, and medicinal herbs. The Chinese were eager to acquire sea otter pelts for hats, fur trimming and even full cloaks. They sold for nine times more than beaver pelts. Natalia longed to trade with Japan but Japan refused to trade even when she sent her son-in-law, Nikolai P. Rezanov as her personal representative. She also arranged to have him temporarily designated Ambassador of Emperor Alexander I to Japan. Wherever Rezanov went, he met with the local officials as part of his efforts to establish new trading opportunities. This was true when he visited the San Francisco Presidio in April 1806 where he met the daughter of Commandante Don Jose Dario Arguello. Concepcion Arguello was then 15 years old and, although the Spanish refused to trade with Russians and Rezanov was twice her age, an infatuation developed during his visit. This brief romance became a popular legend illustrated in a mural of the pair in the Presidio chapel and elaborated in several published fictional accounts. The Russian archival documents correct the myth. Rezanov was not the founder of the Russian American Company. Rather, he was the son-in-law of the founder of the Company and failed to create any trading opportunities in several years of efforts. The legend suggests that Nikolai and Concepcion agreed to marry as soon as Rezanov rushed back to St. Petersburg but that he died a few months later. He didn't die in 1806 and there is no Russian evidence of a proposed marriage. Rezanov himself wrote on March 7, 1807 to his brother-in-law, Mikhail M. Buldakov telling him of his abiding love for his late wife Anna, who had died in 1802. He also mentioned Concepcion, perhaps because some inquiry had come from San Francisco. "Concepcion is sweet like an angel, beautiful, kind-hearted, loves me; I love her and cry about the fact there is no room in my heart for her." In 1802 Natalia transferred the Russian American Company headquarters to St Petersburg, where she raised her grandchildren, Peter and Olga Rezanov while their father sailed to ports around the world. She became increasingly dissatisfied with the conduct of her business in the Far East and Russian Alaska. In 1805, Rezanov wrote to Buldakov, who had become a partner in Natalia's company, "I have a headache from thinking that all my efforts are in vain. I wish I were not a loafer..." By this time Natalia was borrowing one thousand rubles from Count Nikolai Petrovich Rumyantsev to maintain herself and the grandchildren. The shares in the Russian American Company were not providing the income they did when she was actively running it. Natalia wrote very long, clear and well organized letters detailing her complaints about the Mylnikovs to whom she had granted her holdings in America, Kamchatka, Gizhiga, Okhotsk, Yakutsk, Irkutsk, Kiakhta and in Moscow as well as ships and other goods for a price that was low in her opinion. She complains to Lieutenant General Boris Letstano in Irkutsk that these merchants are not conducting the business properly and are "shortchanging people," apparently the shareholders. Whether or not Letstano investigated the matter in his region is not clear. In 1808, at the end of her life, a letter to her daughter Avdotia (nicknamed Amerikanka) and son-in-law Buldakov expressed her disappointment forcefully. "It is too late, my dear daughter Avdotia Grigorevna, that you decided to bring me happiness by your arrival. My maternal ardor has died out due to your childish coldness. I still had my maternal ardor up to that unhappy time when you readily agreed with your husband to permit slander and smear your mother in the most disgraceful manner. God defended me and all the shame returned on yourselves. ...And so instead of coming to me, stay with your children and teach them not to treat you in the way you have treated me. As always, wishing you and your children happiness and a zealous blessing. Natalia Alekseevna Shelikhova" At the beginning of the 1740's Russians regarded the Aleutian Islands as the "Great Land" beyond Kamchatka. This fascinating book provides an intimate picture of the Russian experience in America.

This volume makes available for the first time in English a variety of primary source materials relating to the life and work of Natalia Shelikov, a pioneering nineteenth-century Russian-American businesswoman. As a principal of the Russian-American Company, Shelikov worked in Alaska, and her business acumen and wide-ranging connections—including the empress of Russia and a swathe of northern leaders—were crucial to the growth

of Alaska's economy, as well as to the welfare of the Native people, in whose life and culture she took a strong interest. The letters, petitions, and personal documents presented here will be indispensable for students of Alaska and nineteenth-century women's history.

About the Author Dawn L. Black is a former teacher and businesswoman who currently owns and manages a family estate in Kodiak, Alaska. Alexander Petrov is a historian at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow.