

Mount Shasta Annotated Bibliography

Chapter 6

Early Exploration: Russian Explorers, 1812-41

That "Shasta" is a Russian name is one of the most interesting of Mt. Shasta legends. Unfortunately there are not many documents supporting this idea, and it is difficult to find materials on this subject. The classic account of the Russian derivation of the name "Shasta" was by historian Harry Wells. He explained in his 1881 History of Siskiyou County that the Russians who settled at Bodega could see Mt. Shasta from the highest mountains of the Coast Range, and called it "Tchastal," or the white and pure mountain. He explained that the early Americans adopted the name, pronouncing it "Chasta." Wells's account, and other accounts related to the American trappers' pronunciation and spelling of "Chasta," will be found in Section 14. The Name Shasta. The 1821 diary of Argüello as discussed in Section 5. Early Exploration: Spanish Expedition 1808-1821 lends support that the Russians had found their way into the Sacramento Valley. See also Michael Zanger's book Mt. Shasta: History, Legend and Lore for a discussion of the 1841 ascent of Mt. St. Helena by a Russian from Bodega Bay. In this section are a few entries which may provide leads to future research into this important aspect of Mt. Shasta history. It stands to reason that the Russians, who settled in Bodega Bay in 1812, would have ventured inland more than once or twice; the problem is finding evidence to that effect. There is also a large body of evidence which suggests that the name "Shasta" is not derived from a Russian word at all, but is derived from Native American tribal name.

The [MS number] indicates the Mount Shasta Special Collection accession numbers used by the College of the Siskiyous Library.

[MS1190]. Chappell, H. W. and Frank, B. F. **The History and Business Directory of Shasta County: Comprising an Accurate Historical Sketch of the County from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time A Full General Directory of the County History of Fraternal Societies Sketches of the Principal Points of Interest to the Tourist Table of Distances, Etc. Etc. Etc.** Redding, Calif.: Redding Independent Book and Job Printing House, 1881. pp. 149-150. Contains a derivation of the name "Shasta:" "Shasta. The word 'Shasta' is derived from the Russian language. Many years ago, and among the first travelers who visited this portion of the Pacific coast, was a party of Russians who passed through California, going from the north to the south. They gave a name to many of the more prominent landmarks which they encountered in their journey. To the peak now called Shasta butte, a mountain clothed in eternal snow, and the highest in Northern California, they gave the name of 'Tcheste,' signifying chaste, pure, clear. Subsequent travelers and geographers changed the name to 'Tchasta,' which was again changed, after the discovery of gold, to the present word 'Shasta.' When the counties of the State were first organized, Shasta butte was in Shasta county. Afterwards a new county was formed, Siskiyou, which embraces this lofty mountain within its boundaries."

Note that this book was published in the same year as H. L. Wells's 1881 History of Siskiyou County, which contains the best known and most influential account of the Russian origin of the name "Shasta." 06. Early Exploration: Russian Explorers, 1812-41. [MS1190].

[MS1289]. Gerasimov, J. P. [letter from the Academy of Sciences of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Institute of Geography, May 22, 1956, to A. F. Eichorn]. In: Eichorn, Arthur Francis 1957. **The Mount Shasta Story: Being a Concise History of the Famous California Mountain.** Mt. Shasta, Calif.: Mount Shasta Herald, 1987. p. 22 (1971 edition). Half Folio. 37pp. Third Printing with new introduction and minor additions updating information about climbing deaths and about the Mount Shasta Ski Bowl. First printing 1957, second printing, 1971. Written in response to an inquiry by A. F. Eichorn about the Russian origins to the name "Shasta." Reply letter states although no specific details about sighting Mt. Shasta were found, that: "...Fort Ross was founded by the Russians in 1812, and in the first

quarter of the 19th Century they made a number of expeditions along the valleys of the Sacramento and the Slavenka rivers." Letter specifies two books pertaining to inland California expeditions:" Golovnin, V. M. Expedition around the World on Orders of the Sovereign Emperor Made on a Military Ship, the Kamchatka in 1817, 1818, 1819, by the Navy Captain Golovin, Port Ore. St. Petersburg, Navy Press, 1822, p. 287 and on.; and Khlebnikov, K. Memoirs of K. Khlebnikov about America. Source Materials for History of Russian Settlements on the Shores of Eastern Ocean. Third Issue Supplement of Navy Collection No. 3, 1861, p. 159. 06. Early Exploration: Russian Explorers, 1812-41. [MS1289].

[MS292]. Lloyd, Rebecca. **Soviets May Have Resolved Origin of Shasta Name.** In: Mail Tribune Extra. Medford, Ore.: Jan. 28 - Feb. 3, 1988. p. 2. The visit of a Soviet journalist to Siskiyou county engages the interest of Shasta Nation historian Betty Hall. The visitor tells Hall that the Russian word for pure and white was "Tsisti." Hall explains that the origin of the name "Shasta" thus comes from the Russian trappers who came to this region in the early 1800s.

Hall also states that "Ieka (Yreka)" means frog in the Shastan language and her nation called the mountain Waka, a word she heard her father say when looking at the mountain. The findings of Jeff LaLande are also discussed in this article. 06. Early Exploration: Russian Explorers, 1812-41. MS292].

[MS1284]. Polansky, Patricia. **Fort Ross: More Digging Needed!** in: The Californians. May-June, 1992. Vol. 9. No. 6. pp. 26-27. Discusses the archives and materials available to scholars of Russian American history, with an emphasis on those sources useful to California topics. The author is a bibliographer of Russian materials, and according to a brief biography: 'Her many international archival contacts and first-hand knowledge of library holdings have resulted in several publications of incalculable value to historians and other researchers' (p. 27).

Note that this article offers many sources for research into the possible Russian origin to the name Shasta. The similarity of some Russian words to the word Shasta is apparent even in the title of one book mentioned in the article, the Russkie ekspeditsii po izucheniiu Severnoi chasti Tikhogo okeana vo vtoroi polovine XVII v. [Russian expeditions on the study of the northern part of the Pacific in the second half of the 18th century] (emphasis added). 06. Early Exploration: Russian Explorers, 1812-41. [MS1284].