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## From Russia, with love

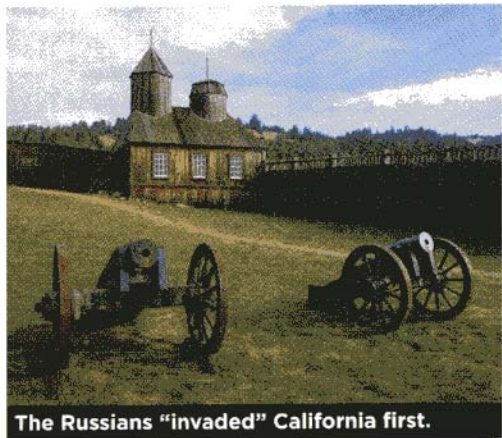
Fears of an invasion fueled American concern about Russia during the cold war. But the Russians had been on American soil for some 200 years, hunting otter for pelts along the wild coastline from Alaska to California before those territories became part of the United States. The trappers built their southernmost outpost in 1812 at Fort Ross (short for “Rossiya,” a transliterative spelling of their homeland), married local Native Americans, and stayed for nearly three decades, until depleted otter stocks rendered their operation unprofitable.

Today, Fort Ross is a state park offering a window onto history from its location on an oceanside bluff two hours north of San Francisco. Winter is quiet here, making it the perfect time

to ease into the ambience of this historic Russian village. On most weekends, costumed interpreters reenact daily activities of the fort during the 19th century. They add life to the settlement’s wooden structures, such as the original redwood chapel, which dates from 1824 and is topped with the Russian Orthodox Church’s distinctive cross.

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—GEOFFREY COFFEY



The Russians “invaded” California first.