

THE SLOOP *Appolon* IN SYDNEY IN 1822

In 1822 the Russian ships visited Australia again. They were the naval sloop *Appolon* (arrived in Port-Jackson on the 27th of May and stayed till the 13th of June) and the brig of the [Russian-American Company](#) (RAC) *Ryurik* (stayed in Port-Jackson from the 15th of July to the 4th of August). Both ships were on their way to the Russian America: *Ryurik* with the company's cargo and *Appolon* with an aim to protect the Russian interests there.

A ball was held to honor the Captain of the Russian ship Khrushchev and his officers a day before their departure. The *Sydney Gazette* wrote the following about it:

The Naval Officers, Merchants and Gentlemen of Sydney gave a Ball and Supper at Hill's Rooms, Hyde Park on Friday evening last to Captain Chroolstoff (sic!) and the officers of the Russian ship Apollo, preparatory to the departure of these gentlemen from Australia. Lieutenant Governor [James Erskine](#) and the Officers (with their ladies) of his majesty's 48th regiment, honored the ball room with their presence. Such a display of festivity, harmony and brilliance is seldom exhibited, as that which was happily effected on Friday evening. The strangers were quite enraptured at the splendid enetertainments they had already experienced; as this was formally declared to be the finale, Australian Hospitality called into action its well known powers to prove that the genuine friendship and unaffected liberality of Albion were also the predominating principles that pervaded the breasts of His most distant Colonists; and that we are worthy of such a monarch as George the Fourth!

Splendor and generosity were not one-sided. The Captain Khrushchev donated 10 pounds and 10 shillings - a considerable sum for those times - for the building of a Catholic chapel.

Among the crew of *Appolon* there was a 19-year old serviceman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Akhilles Pavlovich Shabelskii which had volunteered to join the navigation and been appointed to *Appolon* as an interpreter. The implementation of these duties was not difficult for him as the young man had received an excellent education having graduated from the famous Tsarskoselskii Liceum. A.P. Shabelskii kept filling his diary during the whole navigation from Kronshtadt to the Russian America and later on, in 1826, published it in French. It is noteworthy, that one copy of it Shabelskii presented to his Liceum mate [A.S. Pushkin](#) with an inscription: "To my good man Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin - a gift from the zealous author." The same year 1826 a piece of the Shabelskii's book in which the *Appolon*'s stay in Australia was described was published in the "Severnyi Arkhiv" ("Northern Archive") magazine. It has to be pointed out, that the travelling notes of Shabelskii's deserved rather a high appraisal of the contemporaries. The famous Russian seafarer [F. Kruzenshtern](#) who had been sent the manuscript of the book for a reference wrote: "The Mr. Shabelskii's notes about the countries he visited are very interesting and it is desirable to publish them in Russian." The Rear Admiral Kruzenshtern emphasized that the text of the manuscript evidenced the author's deep knowledge and showed his inclination to "scientific occupations".

Really the Shabelskii's diary is not only a sum of impressions. Its author was a clever, attentive and highly educated man - not just an observer but an explorer. For example, in Australia with a permission of the New South Wales Governor [T. Brisbane](#) which had replaced [L. MacQuarie](#), he conducted botanical and biological research in the valley of Nepin, visited the Blue Mountains. Due to his remarkable knowledge in botany and biology he managed to win respect of two naturalists who were working in Australia then - J. Jamieson and C. Fraser. The traveler's reasoning on flora and fauna of Australia is not just retelling of something previously read or heard, but a result of his independent research. The Shabelskii's story about the Australian

Aboriginals was based on his own observations as well. In this case he did not share the widespread amongst the British notion about the racial inferiority of the natives.

The Russian traveler astutenessly predicted the fast development of Australia and its eventual transition into one of the major centers of international trade. Considering that he was in Sydney for little over a fortnight, the accuracy of his descriptions and observations is remarkable ... he not only touched on general subjects but covered every aspect of life in the new colony, - the Australian historian C. M. Hotimsky wrote. The literature merits of the Shabelskii's diary were appraised highly as well.

After the navigation onboard of *Appolon* A.P. Shabelskii continued his service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, became a secretary of the Russian Diplomatic mission in Philadelphia. He died in 1856.

Schabelski A. Voyage aux colonies russes de l'Amerique, fait a bord du sloop de guerre l'Apollon, pendant les années 1821, 1822 et 1823. St. Petersburg, 1826.

Chereiskii L.A. Pushkin i ego okruzhenie, 1988. Shabelskii A.P. Prebyvanie g. Shabelskogo v Novoi Gollandii. Severnyi Arkhiv. 1826.

Hotimsky C. M. A Russian Account of New South Wales in 1822. Melbourne Slavonic Studies. 1967, vol. 1, № 1, c. 86.

A. Evans. A Navy for Australia. 1986