

Who was not fascinated with Daniel Defoe's novel «Robinson Crusoe» in childhood? The adventures of the seafarer conjured up unforgettable pictures of discoveries, troublesome days on board unsafe ships, everlasting moments of struggle against the wave [9, p. 65-68; 10, p. 10-12]. The wonder of that reading, the charm of that fascination! And the majestic words «the Pacific Ocean».

As for today, in every Russian heart the name «Vladivostok city» is unmistakably connected with the navy in the Pacific Ocean and Russian exploration of the Far East. It is interesting to know the pioneers in the discovery of the Pacific Ocean.

The first European who sighted the Pacific Ocean from the eastern shore of Panama located in the continent of Central America was Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475–1519). He was a Spanish explorer, governor, and conquistador. Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama in 1513 and all of a sudden saw vast boundless glades of water that he called the Southern Sea [11].

In the autumn of 1520 another Spanish and Portuguese seafarer Fernão Magellan rounded Latin America from the South and found great expanses of water going far into horizon. It is interesting to note that during the three months of his voyage in these waters his expedition did not meet a single storm, so he called this ocean Pacific. Years later in 1589 the first detailed map was made by Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598), a Flemish/Netherlandish cartographer and geographer, officially known as the creator of the first modern atlas Theater of the World [2]. In the end of the XVI century Holland sent three expeditions led by Willem Barentsz, a Dutch navigator, to search for the north-eastern way from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. But the ships did not move farther than Novaya Zemlya, where Barentsz died and was buried [5, p. 371].

The XVIII century saw the most active exploration of the Pacific Ocean. The leading countries of Europe and Russia sent scientific expeditions under the guidance of such great navigators as the Englishman James Cook (1728–1779), Jean de Lapérouse (1741–1788) of France and Alessandro Malaspina (1754–1810) of Spain.

The Northern part of the Pacific Ocean was surveyed by Russian seafarers Semyon Ivanovich Dezhnyov (1605–1673), naval officer Vitus Bering (1681–1741), and Russian aristocrat, navigator, and night commander Alexei Ilyich Chirikov (1703–1748). Alexei Chirikov was Bering's assistant in their first expedition to Kamchatka in 1725-1730.

During the period from 1803 to 1864, Russian sailors made 45 round-the-world travels; as a result the Russian naval and commercial fleet discovered the seaway from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean and found out several islands in the Ocean.

The years 1872 to 1876 are famous for the first Oceanic expedition aboard the English sailing vessel «Challenger». It began the exploration of the water in the Ocean, its flora and fauna, and the relief of the Ocean floor. The first map of the oceanic depth was made and the collection of deep-water animals was gathered.

Now it is time to speak about Russian explorers. Russian seafarers made a great contribution in the study of the Pacific Ocean. It is divided into three periods. The first period is from ancient times to the year 1804, the second dates from 1804 up to 1873, and the third one is from 1873 up to the middle of the 70ies of the XX century [7].

The first expedition to the Pacific Ocean was undertaken by Dmitry Yepifanovich Kopylov and Ivan Yur'evich Moskvitin in 1636–1641. A detachment of 50 Cossacks under the direction of D.Ye. Kopylov moved from the Siberian town Tomsk to the Far East of Russia. On their way they built Butalskiy stockaded town on the bank of the river Mayi (up the Aldan River) in 1638 and soon a brigade of 30 Cossacks headed by I.Yu. Moskvitin joined the group of D.Ye. Kopylov and part of the two groups moved on and reached the shores of the Pacific Ocean. The first Russian winter hut Ust'-Il'inskoye was founded on the Ocean shore, thereafter the group returned to Tomsk [7].

In 1697, Vladimir Vasil'evich Atlasov made his journey from Anadyr' to Kamchatka, building a number of winter huts on the way. This very going to sea laid the foundation of geographic expeditions to the Pacific Ocean. The latter, in their turn, allowed Russian seafarers to achieve the shores of North America, and discover the Kuril, Komandorskie (or Commander), and Aleutian islands [2, p.199].

The Kopylov-Moskvitin expedition was of great historical importance: the Russians reached the shores of the Pacific Ocean, discovered new rivers, the Amur, the Ul'ya, the Okhota, and the Uda. They marked the beginning of Pacific marine and exploitation of Far-Eastern lands.

During the second period, the study of oceanic water and ocean floor bathymetry of the Pacific took place. The first Russian around-the-world expedition of Ivan Fyodorovich Kruzenshtern (1770–1846) and Yury Fyodorovich Lisiansky (1773–1837) on board the ships «Nadezhda» and «Neva» was made in 1804–1806. I.F. Kruzenshtern was the Honored member of Petersburg Academy of Sciences; he is also a founding shareholder of the Russian Geographic Society. He was the first to map thousands of kilometers around Sakhalin Island, and the author of The Southern Sea Atlas (volumes 1–2, 1823–26). The Kruzenshtern Bay in the north of the Kuril Islands immortalized his name [1, p.598]. As for Yu. F. Lisiansky, he discovered one of the Hawaiian Islands, that island was named after him. Lisiansky's name is also given to a peninsula on the northern shore of the Okhotsk Sea [1, p. 649].