



NEWS RELEASE



BICENTENARY OF FIRST CONTACT BETWEEN RUSSIA AND VANUATU 1809 - 2009



of surveying and discovery in North Pacific waters.

On 26 July 1809 the sloop found itself entering a small bay in the tropical Pacific named by Captain Cook "Port Resolution" and by Tanna islanders – "Uea", in the dark, volcanic lee of Mount Yasur. "Diana" had no orders to call at Tanna Island - her arrival was a consequence of a dramatic and unlikely series of events, including capture by the British, an escape from Simon's Bay in South Africa, at dusk and in a storm, and an exhausting, uninterrupted passage across the Indian Ocean and Tasman Sea with the intention of avoiding all encounters with the British fleet or British merchantmen in Australian waters. Tanna was chosen by V.M. Golovnin as their resting and revitalizing spot, well removed from normal shipping routes and likely to be free of Europeans, yet supplied with ample fruit, some drinking water, and a neatly charted harbour.



All, in fact, passed off as well as Golovnin could have desired, after tense initial meetings with a Kwamera-speaking Tannese group led by an elder called Gunama. Drawing maximum advantage from the works of the two Forsters who, had been at

Tanna with "Resolution" in 1774, Golovnin proceeded cautiously but amicably. A single day produced, through barter at the water's edge, some forty feet of sugarcane, 400 coconuts or more, and yams. Uea Bay, meanwhile, was surveyed by cutter, and Tannese weaponry and other artifacts were collected and can be now seen at St. Petersburg Kunstkamera Museum. Full notes were taken about the evidence of tribal warfare, social structure, navigation, husbandry and diet, clothing, ornament, and language. "Diana's" visit to Uea Bay was beneficial in both practical and scientific terms.

This stamp issue marks 200 years since the first Russian-Vanuatu contact, which continues today and will be celebrated on 28 July 2009 in Port Vila.

Collectors' Notes

Designers:	Denise Durkin, Wellington, New Zealand
Printer:	Wyatt and Wilson Printers, Christchurch, New Zealand
Process:	Offset lithography
Stamp Size:	50.16 mm x 34.96 mm, two horizontal stamps.
Miniature Sheet Size:	128mm x 89mm.
Denominations:	130, and 350 vatu. M/S is 480 vatu.
Paper:	104gsm litho gummed stamp paper
Period of Sale:	28 July 2009 for a period of 2 years

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