

## **Russia's Colony**

### **Vitus Bering (1681-1741)**

Born in Horsens, Jutland (Denmark) in 1680. One of his first sea voyages was to India on a Dutch ship. He fought in Russian wars against both Turkey and Sweden. Retired, Peter the Great called him back to service to head the Kamchatka expedition, which departed St. Petersburg in 1725, the year of Peter's death. Though instructed to sail to North America, he was unable to do so because his vessel was too small, intended only for coastal sailing (a peninsula of North America was thought to lie very close to Kamchatka). In 1738 he headed a second expedition to Kamchatka and beyond, to find America. This time the expedition sailed to and landed on the North American shore. Shipwrecked on the return, Bering died on December 8, 1741 on the island now named for him in the Commander Island group.