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Fort Ross and Salt Point parks have benefited greatly from many dedicated volunteers and staff who have given generously to these parks. Board of directors from FRIA and FRC have fundraised, organized events, overseen volunteers, spearheaded interpretation and restoration projects, and offered substantial support to California State Parks across many decades.

These digitized newsletters capture the activities over the following historic periods:

- Fort Ross Interpretive Association (FRIA): 1976 - 2012
- Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC is the same legal entity as FRIA but the organization changed its name): 2012 - present

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Fort Ross Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) and California State Park cooperating association, connects people to the history and beauty of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks. © Fort Ross Conservancy, 19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, CA 95450, [707-847-3437](tel:707-847-3437) www.fortross.org



**FORT ROSS
INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
JANUARY - FEBRUARY, 1994
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

1993 ELECTION RESULTS

Incumbents Nancy Walton, John Middleton and David Willson have been reelected to the Board. In addition, Lenore Kosso has been elected to replace Molly Lee.

The Board reluctantly accepted Molly Lee's unexpected resignation. She has accepted a post-doctoral research fellowship at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and will be absent from this area for up to one year. Molly's expertise, professionalism and enthusiasm have been much appreciated. The Board appeals for her continued interest and participation in FRIA when she returns next year.

Lenore Kosso is a resident of The Sea Ranch. She is a retired manuscript curator with a special interest in Russian history and culture. We welcome you to the FRIA Board of Directors.

Thank you Lois Alcorn, Elizabeth Cresswell and Lynn Rudy for your interest in Fort Ross and for being candidates in this election! Your continued participation is very valuable.

1994 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

VIOLET CHAPPELL
GLORIA FROST
LAURIE HORN
DAVID KENLY * RECORDING SEC.
LENORE KOSSO
NICHOLAS LEE

JOHN MIDDLETON
JEANNETTE ROSSON
JOHN SPERRY * CORRESPONDING SEC.
FRIEDA TOMLIN * VICE PRESIDENT
DAVID WILLSON
MARIA SAKOVICH
NANCY WALTON * PRESIDENT

**MULTI VARIETY APPLE TREES
NOW AVAILABLE**

GRAVENSTEIN, PIPPIN, BLACK GILLIFLOWER AND BALDWIN APPLES DESCENDED FROM THOSE IN THE OLD RUSSIAN ORCHARD WILL GROW ON EACH TREE! BARE ROOT TREES ARE AVAILABLE AT THE FORT ROSS VISITOR CENTER MUSEUM BOOKSTORE.



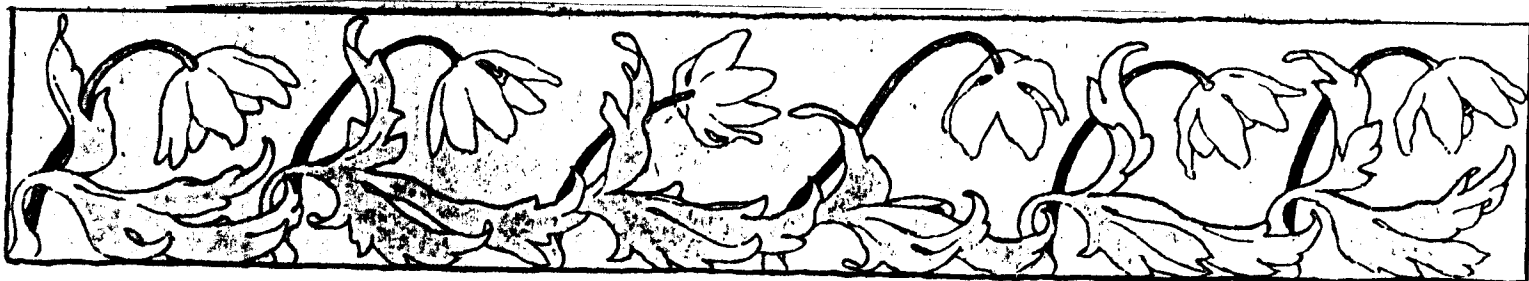
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Nancy Scheiber Walton

As 1993 draws to a close and the new year begins, we can reflect on the past and look forward to the future. At the start of 1993, FRIA's finances reflected the national economic condition. Bookstore sales were down and employees' salaries and benefits were up. Our financial state was sound, though there were less discretionary funds than in the past. Consequently, FRIA "tightened the belt" and looked for other sources of income. Jeannette Rosson succeeded in obtaining a grant from the County for \$4,000 for restoration of the Call House. A new fundraising activity, a raffle during Living History Day, was initiated and provided funds for the Interpretive Specialist Program in the fort. Some of our costumes were sold to the public. LHD entrance fees were raised. A donations box within the fort with proceeds to go to the Interpretive Program, was approved and should be in place in 1994.

Looking ahead, our new Board of Directors (we welcome Lee Kosso) will be meeting in January to reexamine our Mission Statement and set priorities for 1994 - 1995. Outgoing Recording Secretary Nick Lee is replaced by David Kenly. Thank you Nick for your two years of much appreciated written labor. Corresponding Secretary John Sperry continues on for another letter filled year. A heartfelt thank you goes to our outgoing President Frieda Tomlin. The past two years have not been easy ones, but your love and commitment to the Fort Ross State Historic Park has been an inspiration.

To all members of FRIA, thank you for all of your support and help this past year. We hope that you will continue to support FRIA in the future as we continue to follow our principle objective to work closely with the Fort Ross Staff "to promote the educational and interpretive activities of Fort Ross State Historic Park."



FORT ROSS WELCOMES VOLUNTEERS

PLEASE CALL US IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO:

ASSIST IN THE MUSEUM BOOKSTORE

WORK IN THE LIBRARY

VOLUNTEER TIME IN ANY OTHER WAY

707 847-3437

Right now the Bookstore is in special need of couriers back and forth to Russia! There is merchandise and mail which needs to be carried to California, and mail which must travel to Russia.



OLEG VIKTOROVICH BYCHKOV INTERN AT FORT ROSS

FORT ROSS WELCOMED DR. OLEG V. BYCHKOV, DIRECTOR OF ETHNOGRAPHIC BUREAU, IRKUTSK, RUSSIA! He arrived the first week in November and lived here through the month to participate in the Fort Ross internship program. His project examined the Russian way of life during the first half of the 19th century, and studied ethnographic features of the Fort Ross settlement.

During the time that Dr. Bychkov participated in the internship program he was available to provide interpretation to visitors, staff, and members of FRIA on a large variety of subjects relating to Fort Ross. He provided expertise on the principle of organizing the living area in Russian *sloboda* (settlements), the principle of organizing space in a Russian *usad'ba* (farmstead), the construction features of living quarters and farm buildings of the *usad'ba*, Russian building and carpentry techniques, Russian domestic life, furniture, kitchen, clothing, activities and crafts, and family, church and social life of the *sloboda*.

In addition to his work at Fort Ross, Oleg worked with State Archaeologists in Sacramento and University of California archaeologists in Berkeley identifying artifacts found in Fort Ross site excavations. He also worked with a state archivist advising on Fort Ross settlement reconstructions. With the assistance of several FRIA Directors, Oleg was able to work in and visit the Bancroft Library, Russian Cultural Center Archives and the Russian Veterans Society Museum. Other FRIA members and past and present FRIA Directors have agreed to work with Oleg in an exchange of articles and information which will appear in the historical journal for the city of Irkutsk which publishes articles on Russian America. Oleg's expertise prompted spirited discussions which challenged our notions about life at settlement Ross, and which led to an exchange of ideas which benefitted both parties. We hope that anyone who took notes during conversations with Oleg will submit the information to the Fort Ross library so that it can be added to the report prepared by Oleg.

Dr. Bychkov gave a seminar on the *sloboda* on November 27. In addition he is preparing a written report on his research which will appear in installments in future issues of your newsletter.

THANK YOU, OLEG, FOR COMING TO FORT ROSS! YOU HAVE LEFT US MUCH VALUABLE INFORMATION, AND WE THOROUGHLY ENJOYED GETTING TO KNOW YOU.



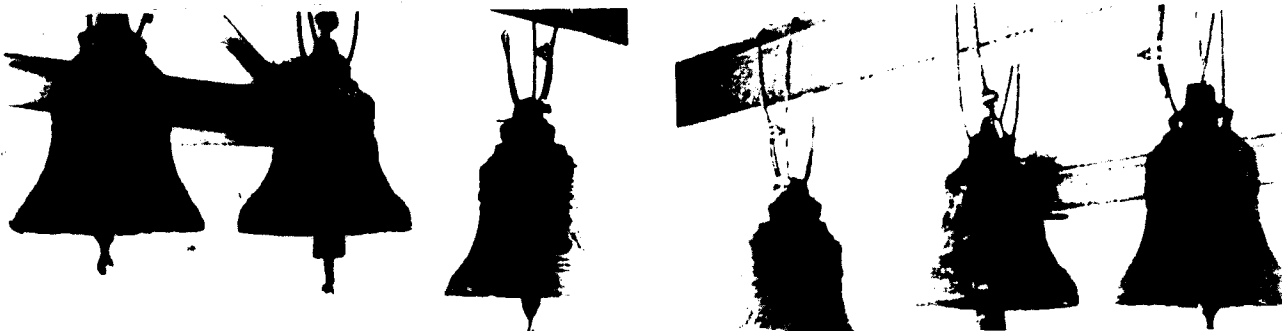
OLEG WITH BILL PREPARING TO FIRE THE PORT ROSS CANNON

OLEG'S OTHER SIDE

by Bill Walton

During the first week of Oleg's visit to Fort Ross I was able to have fun with, and get to know, Oleg on a deeper level than I had on the last two times we had met. His deep sense of humor emerged as he began to describe how his name, Bychkov, sounded similar to Beechcraft flying boats, and that while in Alaska he was very proud to be a Bychkov in a Beechcraft landing near the beach... You had to be there, humor has no borders. On a bottom fishing excursion off Salt Point State Park he successfully caught several "California" fish; that is, when your hook becomes anchored to the bottom, you catch one of these. He observed the similarities geologically between the Salt Point coastline and Lake Baikal in between the various big fish stories that always are discussed at times like these.

On another day, Nancy and I had the opportunity to take Oleg on a trip to San Francisco for some flight arrangements and a little sight seeing. On our way we stopped at the Holy Trinity Cathedral. It was closed that day, but finding a doorbell to ring, we soon met and were welcomed inside by Father Sokolov. After quick introductions we were given a complete tour of the beautiful church. Soon Oleg asked if it would be possible to see the famous church bells. A large smile came over Father Sokolov's face. As Oleg explained, in Irkusk he is the bell ringer for his church. As we ascended the stairway leading to the tower we could not have anticipated the beautiful sounds that would soon be heard from the church bells. Oleg proudly grasped the bell ropes in his right hand. He played the six smaller bells as if he were directing a symphony. Father Sokolov rang the largest church bell (5,765 pounds) in a rhythm that could be heard across city neighborhoods. Together they made beautiful music. This man with a great sense for history and humor had achieved a life goal on his first visit to San Francisco. The time I spent with Oleg showed me that he has as many facets as a Russian trade bead. I look forward to meeting him again soon.



BELLS OF HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL

THE RANCH ERA AT FORT ROSS

by

Kaye Tomlin

(Continued from previous issue)

THE DIXON/FAIRFAX PERIOD, 1867-1873

When Benitz left Fort Ross in 1867, he disposed of his land near Fort Ross in two main parcels: some 7,000 acres, including the fort, were sold to James Dixon for \$35,000, and another 7,000 acres went to Charles Snowden Fairfax for \$25,000. There is some evidence that Dixon and Fairfax may have entered into a partnership to more effectively operate their newly acquired property. But it was Dixon who was in charge, for Fairfax apparently seldom, if ever, came to Fort Ross.

Dixon, born in Ireland of middle-class origins, emigrated to the United States around 1848, when he was 18 years old. His reasons for leaving are not clear, but either before he left, or perhaps on a return visit, he became involved in the anti-British, Irish nationalist movement that led to his fear of returning. Once in America, he spent several years in California and by 1855 had established himself in Philadelphia as a merchant, sailing regularly between that city, Jamaica, and New York City. He did well enough in all of his endeavors to be able to continually send money to his family, enabling them to survive the harsh economic conditions in Ireland. Toward the end of 1855, Dixon came back to California, having decided that his best opportunity for success lay in the growing state.

At the time of his purchase at Fort Ross, Dixon had been operating a sawmill near Nicasio in Marin County for some five years. He immediately moved his mill, with a capacity for cutting fifteen thousand board feet of lumber a day, to his new land, first setting it up in Kolmer Gulch and later at a Fort Ross Creek site. In Fort Ross Cove, he built a loading chute and shipped lumber from his mill, taking advantage of one of the best summer harbors on the coast between San Francisco and Eureka. He also built a home, called the "White House", that stood near his Fort Ross Creek mill site. Dixon wrote that he intended to farm one thousand acres of oats, and he also probably operated a dairy. With these enterprises as primary activities, there soon ceased to be a need for many Indians to work as ranch hands. As a result, Dixon instructed that the Kashaya Pomo people move from Fort Ross, ending their centuries-old habitation of the place they called Mettini.

In 1873, after most of the timber on the property had been logged, Dixon sold some of his holdings and moved his logging and sawmill operation up the coast. The last known reference to him was in 1879, when he was appointed postmaster of the Miller post office in Mendocino County, a position he held for about three months. There is some indication that he may have died in a logjam accident.

Charles Fairfax came from a completely different background from that of Dixon. A descendent of a British family that had been granted a sizable tract of land by Charles II in 1649 in what is now the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax was born there in 1829, the fourth generation of American Fairfaxes. He was in line to become the Tenth Lord Fairfax, Baron of Cameron, had he returned to England to claim the title. Instead, he threw aside his opportunity to join the nobility and joined the rush to California for gold in 1849 at the age of twenty. But once there, he soon discovered that a life of physical work was not for him, and he turned to a career in politics.

In 1855, Fairfax married the twenty-year-old Ada Benham, described by her contemporaries as having extraordinary charm and beauty. Ada had been born into a distinguished family as well. Her father was a well-known lawyer and political figure in Ohio and Kentucky, her mother was a duPont, and her uncle, John Caldwell Calhoun, had served as vice president in the administrations of John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. As a wedding gift, the Fairfaxes were given land in Marin County, California, north of San Francisco (at today's town of Fairfax). Here, the couple built a country estate, which they named Bird's Nest Glen. The grounds were artistically landscaped, and imported game birds roamed the estate (in apparent harmony with the family's Irish setters who also had free run of the grounds). As a result of Fairfax's various political positions, including Speaker of the State Assembly, Clerk of the California Supreme Court, and Marin County Supervisor, the couple's circle of friends was wide and diverse, and Bird's Nest Glen was the scene of frequent and lavish parties. It was reported by local observers that there was always champagne cooling in the creek, and Jamaican rum, bourbon whiskey, and crème sherry always on hand in the house.

In 1868, Fairfax led the California delegation to the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Remaining in the East to visit his family, he took ill and died in 1869 of tuberculosis in Baltimore, Maryland; he was forty years old.

The free-spending Fairfax, who had been notoriously unconcerned with money matters in life, left his widow in financial straits in death. Ada's only assets of value were Bird's Nest Glen and the property near Fort Ross. She quickly sold the estate and took up residence at Fort Ross with her mother, a niece, and some servants while she attempted to sell her holdings there. She occupied the former Benitz family home, the modified quarters of the last Russian manager. There, "Lady" Fairfax, as she had come to be known, more for her cordial manner than her entitlement, established a social life heretofore unknown at the remote outpost. A steady stream of houseguests made their way to the Fort, where Ada entertained them in the tradition of the landed gentry, taking them on visits around the countryside to the Gualala River, to the town of Cazadero in the redwoods, and to the ocean beach for picnic outings, the entourage often consisting of as many as eight horse-drawn wagons and carriages.

The sale of her holding at Fort Ross in 1870 did little to provide Ada with much security, and in 1873 she moved to San Francisco and soon thereafter accepted a position with the U.S. Government in Washington, D.C., as an official hostess. There she lived out her life in grand style, becoming known as the "Belle of Washington," entertaining numbers

of important guests, among them President **Grover Cleveland**, future presidents **William McKinley** and **Theodore Roosevelt**, and visiting royalty. Like Charles, she too died of tuberculosis, at the age of fifty three, in Narragansett, Rhode Island, in 1888.

The end of the Dixon/Fairfax period was signaled in 1873 when Dixon sold 2,500 acres of his land at Fort Ross (including the Fort and the chute) and \$10,000 worth of livestock to George Washington Call for \$25,000.

THE CALL PERIOD, 1873-1979

Born in Ohio in 1829, George W. Call had been turned out of his home, along with his brothers, at the age of fourteen. The young George struck out on his own, working at any job he could find to keep himself clothed and fed. He clerked, herded cattle, rafted lumber, cut cord wood, and taught night school in Indiana and Illinois. His travels finally brought him to Missouri, the gateway to the Far West, where, at the age of twenty three, he found a job with a California-bound wagon train as a drover and hunter. He arrived in California in 1852, with "his gun, pistol, one spare woolen shirt, one pair of blankets," and one dollar.

After working briefly in the gold mines, George turned to logging in the Humboldt area of northern California. Here, the six-foot youth, who sported a "reddish white beard" and was proud to say that he weighed one hundred and seventy-two pounds and "ask no odds of any man that don't like me," made enough money to try his enterprising skills in booming San Francisco. Among other ventures, he connected with a future associate of P.T. Barnum, John "Grizzly" Adams, and financed the well-known hunter's animal show. But, before long, plagued by a persistent respiratory ailment and possibly concerned that his businesses could decline in the depression that hit the local economy of San Francisco in the late 1850s, George decided to make a change. In settlement of money due him from Grizzly, he appropriated some bears from Grizzly's menagerie and sailed for Latin America, staging bear and bull fights for the populace along the way. He gave that up after a time to become a subcontractor building railroads in Chile for Henry "Honest Harry" Meiggs, a land promoter who had left San Francisco under a cloud after an embezzlement scandal. With his stake from railroading, Call opened Chile's first jute factory in Valparaíso, manufacturing gunny sacks for the nitrate and guano trade.

In the mid-1860s, George met attractive Mercedes Leiva, a fifteen-year-old Chilean girl who had been orphaned and was being reared by relatives on their wheat *estancia*. Their introduction was unorthodox but effective: at a dance, he stepped on the hem of her dress to get her attention, and so the courtship began, culminating in their marriage in 1866. When their first son was born in 1872, George decided to leave Chile for California in order to raise his son there at a time when there was a new surge of prosperity as a result of the great silver discoveries in neighboring Nevada. With his wife, two young daughters, an infant son, and \$45,000 in gold coin, George embarked on a sailing ship bound for San Francisco. Once he arrived, he began to trade in real estate and look about for a permanent place to settle, an endeavor that took on some priority with the birth of the couple's third daughter. He sought a place in the country, where he might do some ranching and where, as Mercedes hoped, there were apple orchards. That place turned out to be Fort Ross.

George Call recognized the potential of the site as a profitable ranch holding, but he also appreciated the beguiling setting of upland, seacoast, and forest that gave the place its appealing wilderness character. Together, he and Mercedes set about to make it their family home, and a place to welcome visitors.

In 1873, many of the buildings of the Russian period remained virtually intact, while others had fallen into disrepair or had been modified to reflect the needs of its post-Russian owners. Within the old stockade, the Rotchev House, with its two-story addition, became the first Call family residence, as it had for the Benitz and Ada Fairfax families. Here, two more Call daughters were born. In 1878, the Call's permanent home was completed, and the family settled in, adding two boys and another girl to the family.

Soon after the Calls moved out of the Rotchev House, George Call leased the building to Cushman and Leonard, who operated it as the Fort Ross Hotel for about a year and a half. In early 1882, William C. Morgan took over operation of the hotel complex and operated it until 1906 (when the Fort became the property of the State of California), his brother, George W. Morgan, joining him in partnership between 1888 and 1894. The hotel provided lodging for the increasing number of visitors arriving from San Francisco and other parts of California, among them horticulturist Luther Burbank and writer Gertrude Atherton. Other Russian buildings were also leased by Call, and they became part of the hotel complex. The Russian Officials Quarters was renovated—the east end of the building was used to house a saloon serving local workers and the hotel trade, the middle portion of the building became a storage room, and the north end a laundry. In addition, Call converted the Russian Old Warehouse to a dance hall, where local residents and visitors joined the family for festive musical evenings. An assortment of other structures—the chapel, the blockhouses, barns, wagon sheds, and a blacksmith shop—also still stood. Just outside the stockade was another building that became the store, post office, and telegraph office.

A half mile to the northeast, beyond the stockade, was the orchard planted by the Russians, which was visible from the family residence; not far away was the Benitz orchard. To the northwest, a short way away, was the dairy. Herds of up to 470 dairy cows, heifers, steers, bulls, and calves grazed on nearby hills. The yield of butter from the dairy was of

high quality and in great demand in San Francisco. For the twenty-five-year period between 1875 and 1899, the Call Ranch, on the average, produced and shipped more than 20,000 pounds of butter a year.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the main lifeline between Fort Ross and the outside world was still the sea. Travel to the Fort over long distances by stagecoach was possible but arduous owing to rough roadbeds, numerous hills, landslides, infrequent rest stops, and occasional encounters with outlaws, including **Black Bart** and **Dick Fellows**. The transport of goods by sea had been employed traditionally by all previous owners, and Call, recognizing the advantage of enlarging this trade, constructed a wharf and warehouse in the cove near the Dixon chute; these facilities not only handled sizable shipments of Fort Ross produce but also those of neighboring farms and ranches. Produce and timber products were hauled to Fort Ross by four- and six-horse wagon teams over narrow, winding, and sometimes steep dirt roads. Up to twenty-five teams from as far away as fifteen miles came to store their products on the bluff near the top of the chute. When schooners were in port, the jingle of harness bells added a festive note to the clamor of loading operations (however, harness bells had a serious purpose—to warn wagon drivers of a team's approach on the narrow, often foggy roads). In 1877, eighty-six vessels loaded cargo at the Fort Ross chute, including timber products, tan-oak bark, dairy products, apples, hides, beef, hogs, and abalone. The latter were gathered and shipped by the **Ah Jim** and **Ah Fook** Chinese gangs, who were hired by Call between 1873 and 1885 to build and maintain a road along the cliffs down the coast from Fort Ross, as well as other roads, and to work at the chute. In early 1897, Call's gasoline schooner, *La Chilena*, began weekly service to San Francisco, and it proved so successful that a larger vessel, the *Mary C.*, was purchased in early 1899 to take over the run. Passengers, live animals, goods, and raw materials constituted "down-freight" to San Francisco, an 8- to 10-hour voyage. "Up-freight" included flour, sugar, salt, crackers, tools, and medicines. The passenger fare was \$1, a bargain, since the stage from Duncans Mills to Fort Ross cost \$5, and one still had to pay the ferry and train fares.

Within ten years, Call had transformed Fort Ross into one of the most active small shipping, communications, and business centers along the Northern California coast. He had also expanded his land holdings to more than 7,000 acres.

Now a heavy-set, squire-like figure, invariably dressed in a dark woolen suit, starched white shirt and necktie, made-to-order boots, a derby hat, and carrying a cane, George Call presided over his domain in a manner that befitted his hard-earned affluence. He supervised maritime affairs at the cove and acted as general manager of the ranch, assisted by foreman **John Daly**, who handled the livestock and harvesting operations. Another assistant foreman, **John Doda**, who was among a number of Italian-Swiss dairy workers at Fort Ross, managed the dairy. Between times, Call traded now and again in real estate, resolved disputes among local people with judicious fairness, entertained children with stories of an adventurer he called "Illinois George" (who was remarkably like himself), and occasionally slipped over to the saloon for a game of cards.

For her part, Mercedes, her "musical Spanish accent" ever-present and her brilliant dark eyes missing nothing, supervised the household, caring for their nine children with the help of a governess, a cook, and a kitchen maid. The hospitality of the Calls was legendary, and their home was rarely without visitors. Some guests were inadvertent, such as when the passenger steamer *Pomona* drove onto a rock in Fort Ross Cove in 1908, and Mercedes was able to marshal temporary shelter and meals for some eighty survivors at a moment's notice. Mercedes, with the help of a hired man, also found time to cultivate an extensive flower garden, known far and wide for its profusion and unusual species—passion flower, heliotrope, a rare black lily, two varieties of datura, pelargoniums (some of which she hybridized), and forty varieties of prize-winning fuchsia. Ship captains who called at the cove often brought her exotic plants from their travels, some of which she hybridized along with native plants.

George and Mercedes solved the matter of their children's early education in the idyllic but remote site by some clever maneuvering. Fifteen students were required by the education authorities to qualify a community to establish a school. To fill the required complement of scholars, George made it a point to hire help who had families, and he invited friends with children to take up residence on the ranch. He also went so far as to require his oldest daughter to repeat the eighth grade two times. The first classes were held in a small building constructed behind the Call house. Later, in late 1884, George had a one-room school house built on the bluff overlooking the cove. It was light and airy, with a stove in one corner, a blackboard, and a bucket of fresh water with a dipper always handy to slake youthful thirst.

A highlight of the school week was "schooner day", when the *Mary C.* put into Ross harbor on her weekly visit. To the children watching from the schoolhouse, the tricky procedure of hoisting the arriving cargo safely off the ship and loading outgoing goods onto it by way of the fragile-looking chute was far more exciting than their lessons, and from the moment the vessel dropped anchor until she departed there was little book learning.

When it came time for the children to go to high school, George bought a house in San Francisco, and the children spent the school year in the city. But they counted the days until they could return to the ranch. Ultimately, all the girls received teacher's certificates at a normal school in San Francisco, and the boys received surveyor's certificates from a technical school. It was George's decree that "my girls will be teachers and my boys engineers." However, except for the two girls who taught at Fort Ross school, none of the others followed the vocations selected by their father, choosing other occupations instead.

Of the Call daughters and sons, three spent their lifetimes at the ranch after their schooling, and two others bought

and resided on neighboring property. The rest, who lived farther away, came often to the ranch, and throughout the years Fort Ross was the scene of grand reunions of family and friends from near and far. For amusement there were picnics, swimming, croquet, horseback riding, and horse racing on their racetrack. In the evening, there were hayrides, campfires, sing-alongs, and dances in the ballroom that had been gaily decorated with boughs of redwood, fresh flowers, and ornaments. In the 1880s-1890s, Fort Ross became the acknowledged social center of the surrounding countryside.

At the turn of the century, a move toward preserving Fort Ross as an historic site was initiated by Oakland newspaper publisher **Joseph R. Knowland, Sr.**, then a state senator (1902-1904). As president of the recently formed California Historical Landmarks League Knowland, along with the sixteen other member organizations of the League, advocated raising funds to buy historic landmarks and deed them to the people of California. The idea appealed to George Call, and, on July 25, 1903, he negotiated the sale of two and a half acres of his property to the League, which included the Fort and its buildings, for \$3,000. On March 23, 1906, the property was deeded to California and its agency, the Sutter's Fort Board of Commissioners (the forerunner of the California State Parks Commission), with **William Randolph Hearst**, San Francisco publisher and civic leader, acting as trustee for the League.

George Washington Call died in San Francisco in 1907 at the age of seventy eight. Mercedes continued to live at the ranch until shortly before her death in Santa Rosa in 1933. She took an active part in preserving the place of Fort Ross in history, loaning Russian artifacts to San Francisco's de Young Museum for display and becoming quite involved in finding the lost Russian-cast chapel bell. But her garden was her joy. When she was asked during her twenty-six years of widowhood if she were not sometimes lonely, Mercedes quickly and emphatically answered, "Never, so long as I can be with my flowers!"

At the death of their father, **Carlos Asa and George Harry Call** took over management of the ranch and the shipping operation. The ranch continued to operate as before—with animal, dairy, and timber products regularly produced and shipped out of the cove. However, by the 1920s, changing markets and the development of alternative means of land transportation reduced the viability of shipping, so the Call brothers sold the chute equipment and ceased shipping operations at Fort Ross in 1921. They also split the management of the ranch. George took over management of the inland half of the ranch and built a ranch complex on the ridge road above the fort. Carlos took over the coastal half and continued to reside at Fort Ross and use the old ranch facilities. In 1923, the cattle and dairy business was discontinued, and sheep-raising became the major ranching operation.

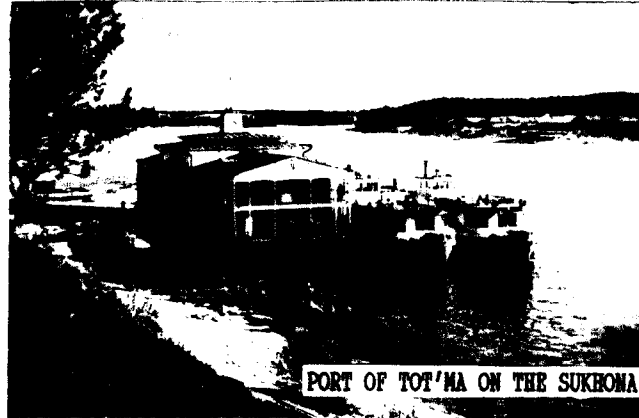
A new element was briefly added to the ranch routine during World War II when the U.S. Coast Guard established a station at Fort Ross. This was one of many that were to provide early warning of possible enemy activity along the California north coast. The station was located in an old house next to the chapel, and the lookout site was located above Fort Ross Cove with a sweeping view of the coast. The five-man contingent posted to the station (some of whose wives were permitted to accompany them), manned the telephone-booth-sized lookout from January 1942 until August 1945 in a round-the-clock rotation of watches. No unusual activity was ever observed, and to keep loneliness and boredom at bay, the off-duty Coastguardsmen often helped with ranch chores, a welcome event in view of the manpower shortage during the war.

In addition to managing the every day activities of the coastal part of the ranch, Carlos Call found time to develop new facilities and techniques for his sheep business. An important improvement was instituting an innovative procedure for handling the winter lambing process so that the survival rate of ewes and newborn lambs increased significantly. He also made a point of continuing the volunteer climatological observations at the Fort Ross station founded by his father in 1874, and, in April 1972, he received the National Weather Service Special Service Award for his record-setting sixty-four unbroken years of weather measurements. Still actively managing the coastal portion of the ranch in his late eighties, Carlos was able to elaborate on much of the history of the Ranch era and was in frequent demand by interviewers. The last resident of Fort Ross among the Call children, he died in late 1972. The last of the Call children died in 1976.

In his will, George Washington Call had placed certain conditions and restrictions on the sale or division of the Fort Ross property. The effect of these stipulations was the protection of Fort Ross from encroaching urban and commercial development. Thus, when the State of California began to acquire land to enlarge the site of historic Fort Ross in 1961, the land was available and essentially unchanged. The State acquired more than 700 acres at Fort Ross before the Call family sold the remainder of their sizable holdings to a timber corporation in 1979, bringing to a close the one-hundred-and-six-year tenancy of the family at Fort Ross.



"Old Fort Ross"
as seen from the hill.
It illustrated an 1877
edition of Thompson and
West's Atlas of Sonoma
County.



FRIA MEMBERS INVITED TO JOIN SUKHONA RIVER EXPEDITION IN 1994

The Moscow Historical Educative Society Russian America is planning a second river voyage to the homeland of many of Russian America's founders. The Sukhona River in northern Russia provided a water link which took explorers like Baranov and Kuskov to Siberia, and from there ultimately to Alaska and California. This homeland of Russian America offers, in addition to its beautiful northern landscapes, an insight into the culture and heritage these explorers brought with them to California.

The two week trip by river steamer includes a two day stop in Moscow, visits to northern Russian towns of Vologda, Velikie Ustiug, Tot'ma (the home of Ivan Kuskov, founder of Fort Ross), and visits to this area's museums, monasteries and extraordinarily beautiful churches. Several FRIA members were among the first trip's passengers, and being the first Americans seen by many of this area's residents, were treated with a celebrity unknown to most tourists on excursion.

The expedition is planned for May of 1994. Exact schedules and costs have not been determined as yet. For more information interested persons should write or call:

VLADIMIR KOLYCHEV, PRESIDENT
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THE KUSKOV HOUSE MUSEUM



VOSNESENSKY CHURCH



WAY TO JERUSALEM CHURCH

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FEBRUARY 12, SATURDAY
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