



FORT ROSS
CONSERVANCY

NEWSLETTER

www.fortross.org

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Winter | 2014

Dear FRC Members,

We are busily preparing our 2015 calendar at the cusp of yet another new year, and this process reminds us all how rich and complex Fort Ross and Salt Point parks truly are. Both these parks boast fantastically long and diverse histories that encompass so many distinct eras and peoples. And both parks offer diverse and pristine ecosystems. With such abundant cultural and natural history we are never short on ideas to offer more interpretation, more events, and more ways to bring visitors to these public lands. Our calendar overfloweth!

In the new year we will be supporting events for the Kashia, Alaska Native, and Russian communities, and organizing

natural history hikes and trail cleanup days, wildlife photography and seaweed workshops, medicinal plant identification classes, and Pysanki egg decorating. Of course we're already planning our annual Fort Ross Festival, Fort Ross Dialogue, and Harvest Festival. Please check our events calendar at www.fortross.org for dates and details.

In 2014 we also created two scholarship funds to help bring more young people to our parks. We now offer scholarships for under-served students to participate in the State Park Environmental Living Program aimed at elementary school kids. We've also launched our FRC [Marine Ecology](#) program for high

school students, with scholarship funds also available. I strongly recommend you check out the web pages describing these exciting programs and help us spread the word.

Twenty-fourteen was the 200th anniversary of the first tree planted in the Fort Ross orchard. FRC has facilitated a major orchard preservation project, and we dedicate this newsletter to the generous individuals who are tending this long-lived natural and historic resource.

Looking forward to joining you under the apple trees,

Sarah Sweedler

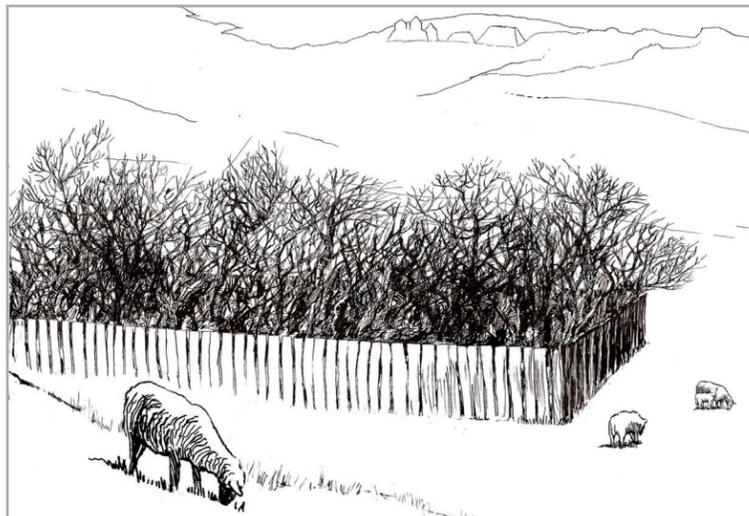
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2014: Celebrating 200 Years of the Fort Ross Orchard

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Russian Orchard by Maggie Rudy

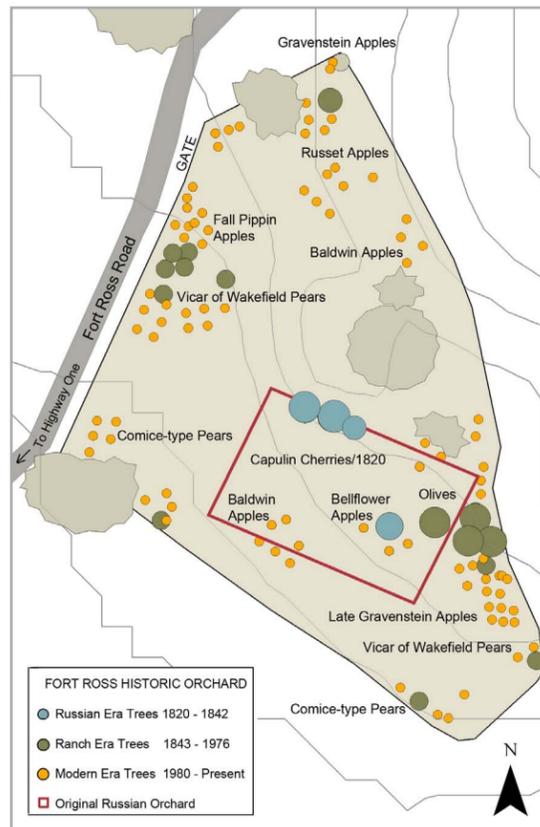
The Russian American Company established Fort Ross in 1812. Two years later the Russians planted a peach tree just uphill of the fort compound in what would become the Russian orchard, and over time the Russians planted a total of 286 trees at two Fort Ross orchards. During the Ranch era the Russian trees declined, but two more ranch-era orchards were planted to the east and west of the original orchard.

These orchards became part of Fort Ross State Historic Park in 1976, when the northern areas upslope of the historic compound were acquired. The oldest orchard contains several Russian-era cherry and many Ranch era trees,

all of which reflect a style characteristic of 19th century homesteading rather than later commercial orchard designs. To quote from the soon-to-be-released Fort Ross Orchard Management Plan, "According to a 2007 California State Department of Transportation historic context, agricultural properties that were established in California prior to the Gold Rush are 'rare, minimally understood, and generally have a high potential to yield [archaeological] data.' Fort Ross is significant among the pre-Gold Rush agricultural properties for being the first

non-Spanish European agricultural establishment in California."

For over two hundred years fruit trees have grown on these lands, receiving more or less attention depending on the era. At the close of 2014 we can state proudly that the Fort Ross orchards are receiving the care they need in order to remain a significant part of the Fort Ross interpretive story well into their third century.



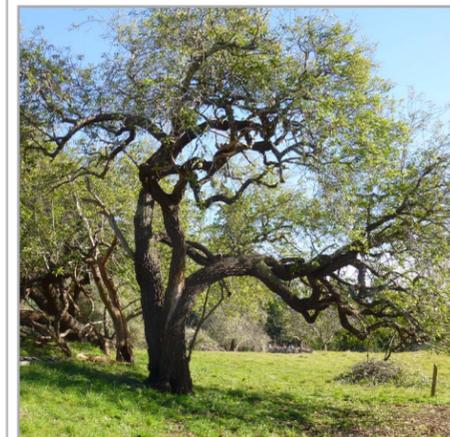
"We delivered at the fort two boxes of fruit trees from Santa Cruz. Mr Kuskov placed them in his garden and informed me that he had counted 100 plants, but that some of them had died. There were various kinds of apple trees, pear trees, bergamots, peach trees, and cherry trees. I also delivered seed for peach trees, watermelon, and cherry trees, which were thriving well at Fort Ross." From The Khlebnikov Archive, 1820

RENOVA FORT ROSS FOUNDATION



Orchard volunteers hard at work

We dedicate our end-of-year newsletter to the historic Fort Ross orchards and to the people who have worked over many decades to protect and enhance this fragile aspect of living history.



Capulin Cherry planted in 1820

The Fort Ross Historic Orchard Restoration project, initiated by Susan Rudy and generously funded by Renova Fort Ross Foundation, is a multi-year, multi-phase project that provides much needed, time sensitive care to protect and preserve this fragile living resource. FRC wishes to acknowledge Susan Rudy's expertise, professional network, volunteer coordination, and project management as the driving force that has guided this project from inception through execution. This project would not have been accomplished without Ms. Rudy's vision, dedication, and perseverance.

"The Orchard has a special place in every Russian heart. That's the place that not only feeds the body but, even more so, feeds the soul. In the past the orchard was a place that united or divided families and loved ones, where most sacred and intimate conversations took place, where folk songs, poetry and most wonderful pieces of verse were born. It is a living place that's conducive to a good conversation, unity between friends or strangers and reflection. That's the core of our inspiration and that's what makes the project special."

Olga Miller
CEO, Renova USA

Orchard Projects, 2012-2015

PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN AT THE FORT ROSS ORCHARDS WITH SPONSORSHIP FROM RENOVA FORT ROSS FOUNDATION:

STABILIZE AND PROTECT THE TREES

The wild pigs were evicted and the fence line restored. With hands-on training from Keith Parks, Horticulturist and Preservation Arborist at John Muir National Historic Site, and help from our fantastic local Fort Ross orchard



volunteers, many trees were pruned and stabilized.

CREATE ORCHARD BROCHURE AND WEBSITE CONTENT

We want to encourage our visitors to explore the park beyond the historic compound and visitor center. Our new brochure explains the orchard's unique history and hopefully inspires visitors to make

the trek up Fort Ross Road to experience the orchard first-hand. Added incentive: it's located in a warm micro-climate, the perfect place for a picnic.

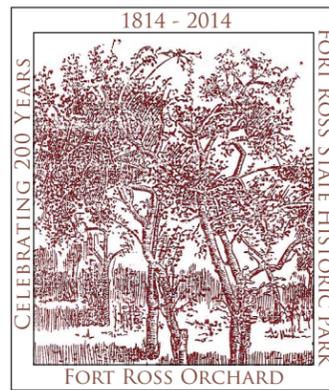
ORGANIZE 200 YEAR ORCHARD CONFERENCE

This conference brought experts from across the Pacific Northwest to Fort Ross for a day-long seminar on historic orchards. The Visitor Center was packed and it was a great way to launch the Orchard Management Plan.

CREATE ORCHARD MANAGEMENT PLAN

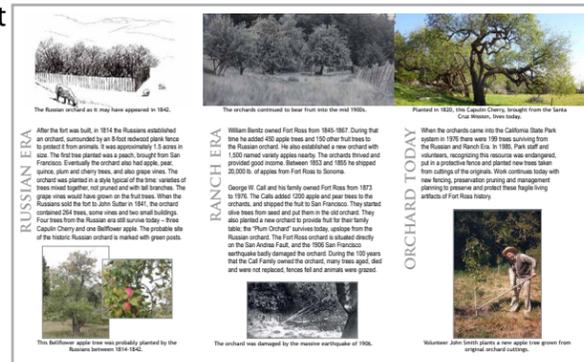
Working with California State Parks, National Parks, and FRC, the soon-to-be-released Orchard Management Plan (OMP) provides a thorough examination of Fort Ross' many fruit trees.

This 300+ page document encompasses both geeky hands-on content for the serious historic orchardist as well as a historical survey of Fort Ross agriculture throughout the eras. It inventories existing fruit trees, provides maintenance and treatment



recommendations, and suggests future projects to better share this unique history with our visitors.

OMP fieldwork was conducted for a total of five days in April, May, and June to assess the historic and contemporary fruit trees within the state park. A total of 169 fruit trees (cherry, apple, pear, plum, and olive) were evaluated.



You can download the orchard brochure at www.fortross.org/orchard.htm.

"On the slopes I saw two grapevines growing from those we had brought from Lima on the Kutuzov in 1817. There is a good chance that one of them will yield grapes this year."

From The Khlebnikov Archive, 1820

Kathleen Kennedy, Historian and National Historic Landmark Coordinator for California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), and Patrick Riordan, Archaeologist and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Coordinator for CDPR, provided assistance with the fieldwork. In addition, the team mapped the site using a Trimble GPS data



collection device and collected location information for each tree. They also collected soil samples and tree cores. Genetic testing is underway to determine the specific variety of rare fruit trees.

The complete OMP will be made available via FRC's online library at www.fortross.org/library.htm no later than March of 2015.

FIRST GRAPES IN SONOMA COUNTY

Most of the Franciscan missions throughout Alta California cultivated gardens and fruit trees, and by 1778 Alta California missions were growing grapes for wine production. Russians planted grapes at Fort Ross purchased in Lima, Peru. Because the Sonoma mission was not established until 1823 and the historic documents show that Russians planted grapes in 1817, it is very likely that Russians at Fort Ross planted the first grapes in what is now Sonoma county. While we won't be serving wine on the premises, we do hope to re-introduce grape vines to the Fort Ross orchard in the coming years.



Mission Grapes

OMP PROJECT TEAM

Susan Dolan, National Park Service Cultural Landscapes National Program Manager

Keith Park, Horticulturist and Preservation Arborist, John Muir National Historic Site

Susan Rudy, FRC Conservancy Advisor, Lead Fort Ross Orchard Volunteer

Gary Shannon, Russian River District Landscape Architect

Corinna Welzenbach, Landscape Historian at Turnagain Design and Consulting

Jan Wooley, California State Parks Historian III (Retired)

Text for this newsletter also relies heavily on the OMP, and FRC thanks the authors and reviewers for their good work.

Thank you to all the Fort Ross orchard volunteers for your hard work.

Calendar of Events

**January 1:
1st Day Hike**

**February 14:
Members only Annual Meeting**

**February 21:
Pysanki Egg Decorating Workshop**

**March 1:
Edible/Medicinal Plant Workshop**

**May 3:
Wildflower Photography**

**May 16
Alaska Native Day**

**June 6:
Big Time
Seaweed Workshop**

**July 25:
Fort Ross Festival**

**October 17:
Harvest Festival**

**November 6:
Society for the Preservation of Old Mills-
Fort Ross Windmill Visit**

Our website is updated daily.
For event details go to:
www.fortross.org/events.htm



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FRC Annual Members' Meeting

**Saturday, February 14, 12:30pm
Fort Ross State Historic Park Visitor Center Auditorium**

We will hold an FRC Members' Meeting on Saturday, February 14, 2015 at the Fort Ross State Historic Park Visitor Center. You must be an active member to attend the FRC Annual Members' Meeting. If you have not renewed your FRC membership for 2015, please go www.fortross.org/join.htm and sign up. According to our bylaws:

With thirty (30) days written notice the annual meeting of the members of the Conservancy for the transaction of such business as may properly come before such meeting shall be held on such date of each calendar year as may be determined by the Board of Directors.

The agenda for the meeting is:

- 12:30 pm – Call to Order
- Announcement of members present – 51% of which constitutes a quorum
- President's Report
- Changes to the Conservancy's Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws (at this time there are none)
- Challenges to Board Actions (at this time there are none)
- Members comments and/or questions

If you plan to attend the meeting, please call or email Sarjan Holt – 707-847-3437 sarjanh@fortross.org. If you have any material or information you wish to present to the members, please send it electronically to sarjanh@fortross.org by January 31, 2015 so it may be sent to the members before the meeting. A potluck lunch will start at 1:30pm. We'll put food on the table but please bring something to share. Looking forward to having you join us.

A new book by James R. Gibson



**Russian California,
1806-1860
A History in Documents**

James R. Gibson, York University, Canada and
Alexei A. Istomin, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

This two-volume book is a documentary history of Russia's 19th-century settlement in California. It contains 492 documents (letters, reports, travel descriptions, censuses, ethnographic and geographical information), mostly translated from the Russian for the first time, very fully annotated, and with an extensive historical introduction, maps, and illustrations, many in colour. This broad range of primary sources provides a comprehensive and detailed history of the Russian Empire's most distant and most exotic outpost, one whose liquidation in 1841 presaged St Petersburg's abandonment of all of Russian America in 1867.

Agricultural excerpts from James R. Gibson's introduction to *Russian California*

"Gardening and orcharding afforded small surpluses for export. The "site plan" of September 1817 of Fort Ross shows up to fifty small gardens, mostly along both sides of the Fort Ross creek. By 1841 there was also a separate garden nearby of 1¼ -1½ fenced acres. Under Manager Kuskov, who favoured gardening over grain growing and stock rearing, abundant and sizeable potatoes, radishes, beets, turnips, lettuce, cabbage, peas, and beans were grown, and also pumpkins, watermelons, and muskmelons. One of Captain-Lieutenant Golovnin's midshipmen aboard the *Kamchatka* in 1818 reported that Kuskov once grew a horseradish in his garden that weighed forty-nine pounds."



[After the Russians departed, John] "Bidwell also found 'a vineyard between Ross and Bodega nearer the latter and about three miles [?] from the coast at the residence of a Russian gentleman Don [because he was a rankholder] George [Yegor Chernykh]. The vineyard was 'half an acre in extent' and had been planted by Chernykh himself; its grapes 'were said to be of a better variety than those cultivated at the missions,' although its site was 'too shaded by the redwood forest, the soil too wet, grass too luxuriant, deer, hare, and cattle too plenty, fences too poor.' The vineyard boasted 2,000 vines and 'some fruit trees.' "



**FORT ROSS
CONSERVANCY**

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Contact Information

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(707) 847-3437

Highlights of Upcoming Events:

SAVE THE DATE!!

February 14:
Membership Annual Meeting

May 16: Alaska Native Day

July 25: Fort Ross Festival

October 17: Harvest Festival

Please check the entire list of
2015 Events at
www.fortross.org/events.htm.