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Title: Osteological Analysis of an Historic Burial at Fort Ross, California

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OSTEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AN HISTORIC BURIAL
AT FORT ROSS, CALIFORNIA

Peter D. Schulz

On April 21, 1972 an archaeological crew under the direction of William Fritchard discovered evidence of human skeletal remains near the bottom of what had been thought to be a privy pit or root cellar at Fort Ross. After exposing part of the skull and two loose molars which were assumed to derive from the interment, excavation was discontinued until representatives of the Russian community in San Francisco had been contacted. In the following week an agreement was reached whereby the burial would be exposed by the archaeologists at the site and then be removed for reburial in accordance with Russian Orthodox rites. The author was requested by the State Parks Archeologist to go to Fort Ross to aid in the exposure and retrieve any osteological information possible from the burial. The actual exposure occupied eight hours on April 28, and two hours the morning of April 29. The remains were removed about noon of the latter date.

Materials

The condition of the bones, as anticipated, was extremely poor. The only traces of bone in fact were portions of the cranium, mandible, left and right femur, and left tibia. These bones in turn were so badly decayed that no morphological

features whatever remained other than gross outline. The two teeth excavated on April 21 were assigned by the author to the genus Sus, and they may represent the same individual as a suid jaw found nearer the surface in the same unit.

In addition to these bones, ten tooth crowns or major fragments were exposed several centimeters caudal to the cranium. These were in association with what appeared to the excavator as faint traces of the mandible, but they were not in anatomical position. Only the enamel of the tooth was preserved, and this was chalky and quite fragile. Those teeth which had experienced dentine exposure exhibited thin-edged circular holes on the occlusal surface where the dentine had once been. Since the teeth were not in position and had lost all trace of roots, it was not readily evident if they were maxillary or mandibular. The symmetry of the corresponding pairs argues heavily for derivation from a single arch.

<u>Tooth</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Incisors	1	This fragment of about half a tooth shows clear and complete absence of shovel-shaping. There is some wear, but no dentine exposure.
Canines	2	Neither exhibits shoveling; both have experienced dentine exposure.
Premolars	2	Both show dentine exposure; one is apparently P1, the other P2.
Molars 1 & 2	3	All show isolated patches of dentine exposure. All appear to be four-cusped, without accessory

cusplets.

Molar 3 2 Both are tricuspid, appear fully developed and probably fully erupted, but show no wear.

Although the provenience of the teeth may suggest that they are mandibular, the canine morphology struck me impressionistically as being maxillary--a suspicion which is confirmed by the tricuspid nature of the third molars.

Burial Position

The body lay extended, the head almost due magnetic east. The upper surface of the femur shafts, as the burial lay exposed, were somewhat rounded and exhibited no hint of linea asperae. Hence the body rested on its back.

Age

On the basis of third molar eruption, suggested age is ca. 21, with a range of about 17 to 25.

Race

Assuming the recovered dentition was maxillary, the single incisor fragment was from a lateral incisor. This shows absolutely no sign of shoveling. Since Aleuts show shovel-shape frequencies of 100% (Moorehead 1957: 25), and aboriginal Californian frequencies approach this very closely (e.g., Newman 1957: 54), the individual buried at Fort Ross was almost certainly not

a Native American but rather a European.

Sex

It was impossible from the remains recovered to even tentatively suggest a sexual diagnosis on osteological grounds.

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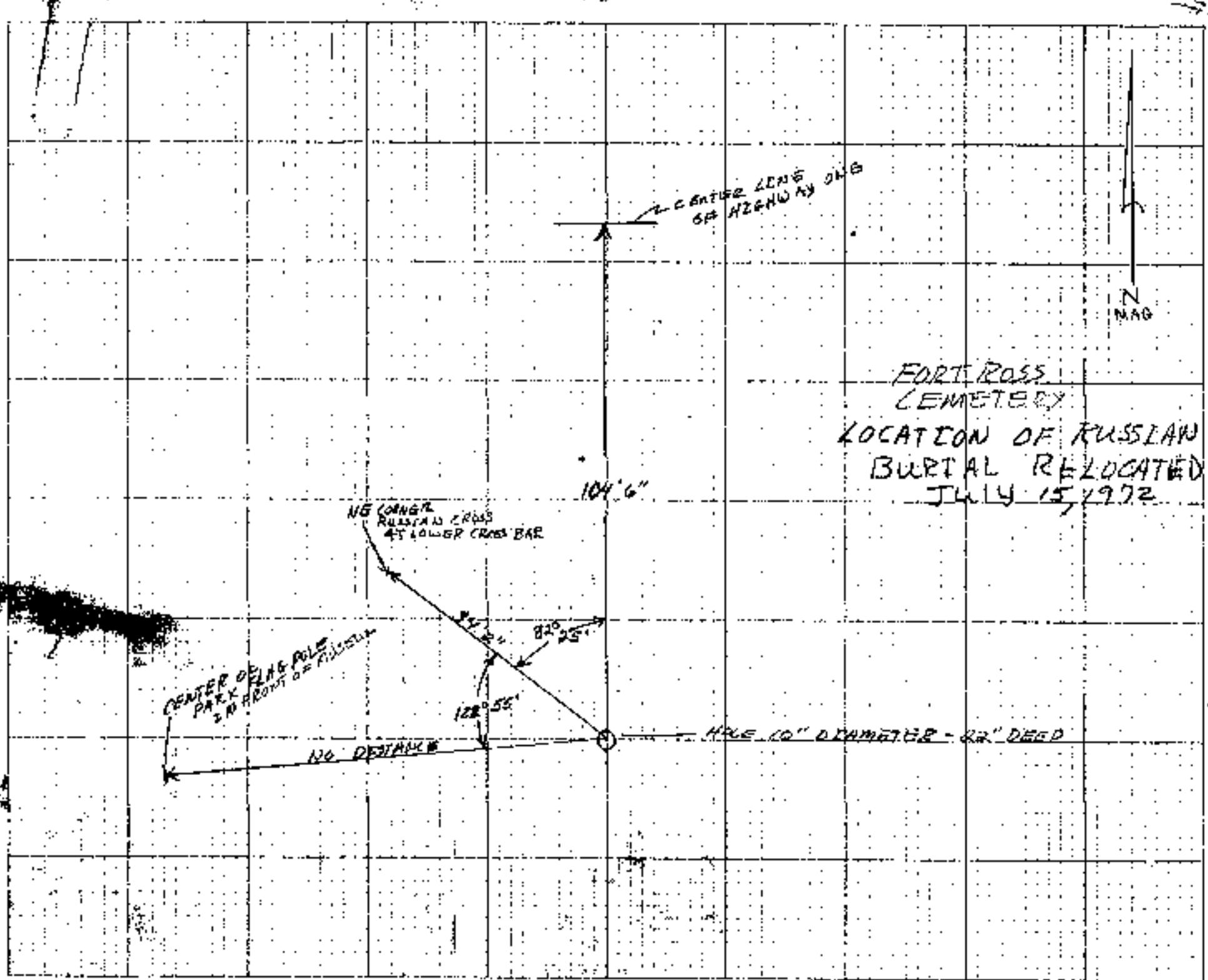
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May 12, 1972

cc: F. A. Riddell
W. E. Pritchard



← CENTER LINE
OF HIGHWAY ONE

N
MAG

FORT ROSS
CEMETERY
LOCATION OF RUSSIAN
BURIAL RELOCATED
JULY 15, 1972

104' 6"

NE CORNER
RUSSIAN CROSS
AT LOWER CROSS BAR

CENTER OF FLAG POLE
PARK 20' FRONT OF FORTRESS

100' DISTANCE

82° 25'
25.24'
122° 55'

PIPE 10" DIAMETER - 42" DEEP



New Excavations

Findings Show Russ Were In California Before 1812

By Wilson K. Lythgoe
Bay City Journal Staff

Highway engineers seldom see eye to eye with archaeologists, but in California they are working side by side.

In fact, some highway builders who a few years ago did not know an artifact from a hunk of rock can now spot one at 100 paces.

And archaeologists have found that highway builders can help unearth the past.

The basis of the system is simple: Division of Highways excavation plans are sent in advance to the Society of California Archaeology at 11 major educational institutions in the state. Thus alerted, the archaeologists can do their digging while the bulldozers work around them.

Fort Ross Digs

An example is the roll-back of more than 160 years of California history by the archaeological digs sponsored by the California Division of Highways at Fort Ross.

Twelve miles north of where the Russian River empties into the Pacific Ocean, new excavations along Route 1 have unearthed both human and

structural remains of a Russian settlement that sets the historical clock back even earlier than 1812 — the generally accepted founding date of Fort Ross.

In addition to the usual structural and religious benchmarks, the surveys found an individual grave site that predates by at least 20 years the common Russian cemetery located a mile distant from the grave. It is the first Russian grave to be excavated south of Alaska and is believed to be that of a colonist.

William E. Pritchard of Sacramento, state archaeological consultant, called the discovery "a very significant find."

"The excavations prove there were more buildings and burial grounds outside the stockade than have been recorded," he said.

Below the building site, the survey team found part of the Mad-Shu-Mui Indian village.

Fort Ross was founded by Russians from Siska, Alaska, who were hunting sea otters along the California coast. They remained there until 1841, when Capt. John A. Sutter bought them out

The fort was acquired by California as a state historic park in 1906 and the remaining buildings were restored, including the Orthodox Chapel, the commandant's quarters and the stockade. Recent fires, however, seriously damaged the structures.

Assumption Shattered

Until the recent discoveries all living and working quarters were assumed to have been within the fortification.

A part of the state's \$700,000 contribution to the preservation of historical landmarks, the survey team has now unearthed evidence that a great deal of life — and death — went on outside the fort's walls.

High officials of the Russian Orthodox Church presided over the exhumation of the Russian colonists' remains on April 9.

The relocation of Route 1 around Fort Ross is planned for this summer, and will cost about \$400,000. The job will provide a two-lane scenic highway which will bypass Fort Ross and will include a park entrance and parking lot.



Fort Ross Diggings

Archaeologists Frank Martin Jr. and Peter Banks sift for small artifacts found in a "dig" at Fort Ross. The Russian whose grave was unearthed is pre-

sumed to have been a soldier because of insignia found alongside the remains in the four-foot grave.

Russian History In California Advanced Through

Historic Find At Ft. Ross

SACRAMENTO — A chapter of early California history dating back 160 years was uncovered last week as a result of an archeological survey conducted by the Department of Parks and Recreation in partnership with the Department of Public Works at Fort Ross State Historic Park in Sonoma County.

Thanks to the state's policy of making exploratory surveys in advance of highway alignments and other public works construction, a grave site and evidence of an early Russian structure were found by State Park archeologists that pre-dates by at least 20 years the original Russian cemetery located a mile away.

The survey was being made along the new right of way for State Highway 1, which presently bisects the historic fort and is being rerouted.

State Park Archeologist William E. Pritchard, project supervisor of the survey team, call the new discoveries "a very significant find. The excavations prove there were more buildings and burial grounds outside of the stockade than have ever been recorded before."

He added that in the same area the survey team also found remains of the Mod-Shui-Nui Indian village, whose land has been purchased by the Russians from the Kasha Indian tribe.

Fort Ross is the site of a settlement founded in 1812 by the Russians to search California's coastal waters for sea otters. They remained here until 1841, only 10 years before California joined the Union, when Captain John A. Sutter purchased their supplies and equipment for \$30,000.

Over the next few years, Sutter and his men took down several of the buildings and removed the arms, equipment, and livestock that the Russians had left. After 1845, the area became the center of a large ranching enterprise.

The Fort was acquired by California as the fifth State Historic Park in 1906, and the remaining buildings were restored, including the Orthodox Chapel, the commandant's quarters, and the surrounding stockade timber ramparts.

The Fort Ross excavation is typical of the California Division of Highway's policy of cooperation in archeological salvage projects. Information is immediately disseminated by each of the eleven highway districts to the Society of California Archeology at eleven major educational institutions throughout the State. Funding is provided for actual excavations and recovery of worthwhile archeological, paleontological and historical objects.

The relocation of Route 1 around Fort Ross State Historic Park is planned for this summer and will cost in the neighborhood of \$400,000. It will provide a two-lane scenic highway which will bypass the Fort and will include a park entrance and parking lot.

Metropolitan Vladimir and Father Kishkovsky, officials of the Russian Orthodox Church, presided over the exhumation of this early Russian colonist. They will return to Fort Ross State Historic Park in early June for re-burial of the remains.



ARCHEOLOGISTS Frank Martin Jr., of Stewart's Point and Peter Banks of Bolinas carefully sift dirt (photo above) from the site recently discovered near Ft. Ross in search of small artifacts. Consulting archeologist (at right) William Pritchard and anthropologist Peter Schultz inspect remains of the skull removed from the unknown and unmarked grave.



ARCHEOLOGIST Alice Engadó of Carmichael (at left) sketches the grave site found near Ft. Ross for future reference. The Metropolitan Valdemir (photo above) conducts memorial services at the burial site. Assisting are George Lebedeff, member of the Russian-American Historical Society of San Francisco; anthropologist Peter Schultz; Daniel Evers, member of the Russian-American Historical Society of Los Angeles; and Father Kishkovsky of the Russian Orthodox Church of San Francisco.