



19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, CA 95450 ■ 707.847.3437 ■ info@fortross.org ■ www.fortross.org

Title: Report to Mariano G. Vallejo

Author (s): Translated and edited by Nicholas Del Cioppo

Source: Fort Ross Conservancy Library

URL: <http://www.fortross.org/lib.html>

Unless otherwise noted in the manuscript, each author maintains copyright of his or her written material.

Fort Ross Conservancy (FRC) asks that you acknowledge FRC as the distributor of the content; if you use material from FRC's online library, we request that you link directly to the URL provided. If you use the content offline, we ask that you credit the source as follows: "Digital content courtesy of Fort Ross Conservancy, www.fortross.org; author maintains copyright of his or her written material."

Also please consider becoming a member of Fort Ross Conservancy to ensure our work of promoting and protecting Fort Ross continues: <http://www.fortross.org/join.htm>.

This online repository, funded by Renova Fort Ross Foundation, is brought to you by Fort Ross Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) and California State Park cooperating association. FRC's mission is to connect people to the history and beauty of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks.

REPORT TO MARIANO G. VALLEJO
CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION CONCERNING THE ROSS SETTLEMENT

(Anonymous) Bancroft Manuscript Collection MS C-A53. Pages 98-112.

Translated and Edited by Nicholas Del Cioppo, August 1979. (From Fort Ross Library)

May 5, 1833, San Francisco. Report to the Commanding General, Ensign of the Permitting Company, Mariano G. Vallejo (CONFIDENTIAL)

On the 28th day of last month, I left for Fort Ross in the direction of the Port of Bodega. Bodega is seven leagues distant from Ross. At the Port of Bodega there are two wooden structures built to assist the Russians with unloading their ships' cargoes, to accommodate travelers, and to house the Eskimos who live there.

This port and another nearby called San Francisco de Tomales together form a beautiful harbor with two peninsulas extending into the sea. Approximately a league and a half distant from each other, the two points of land encompass the port called Bodega. It would most appropriately be called a gulf, however. Inside the bay itself, that is, between the northern and southern extremities, there are two deep rivers, each being navigable for two leagues inland. Most smaller vessels can travel on these up to six leagues inland. Adjacent to both of these rivers lie abundant timberlands, but at Bodega the timber extends only one league inland.

All of the lands surrounding the bay are covered with various kinds of grasses, each in its own season. As for irrigation, there are five streams with abundant and constant water. There are also lakes, etc., making this land unsurpassable for cattle raising.

Although it was impossible for me to make a detailed examination of all the lands north of San Francisco (de Tomales) at the time, be assured that there are major advantages elsewhere than at Bodega.

The Port of Bodega has no major fortifications. A chief of the Christian Indians lives nearby on his rancheria, Fiutume. By actual count, his band numbers only 43 men and women. Their objective is to guard the Russian buildings because the Russians ensure that they are not to be bothered by outsiders while they remain on their rancheria. Before the arrival of the Russians, it was the opposite case. Gualinela is the name of the chief of the rancheria. he told me that just prior to my arrival there were 200 armed men, some heathen Indians and some Christians from (Mission) San Rafael. They had banded together to discourage any troops of soldiers from passing through their area. This information was confirmed by a Christian Indian from the Mission San Rafael name Forebio. Forebio had informed the Indians that they would be killed or taken to San Francisco and that they would be beaten and kidnapped by a "fierce captain of soldier". Captain is what they call all of our commissioned officers. By saying these things, Forebio managed to alarm all the Indians. The Christian Indians and the heathen alike responded to him saying that they were a

united people, armed, brave and ready to kill. They agreed that they were tired of suffering the cunning and treacherous lies of the soldiers, who said one thing, then did another. The soldiers, they said, always promised friendship, but as soon as their confidence had been gained, the soldiers would violently imprison them and take them to the Missions San Rafael or San Francisco Solano. There they would be forcibly converted to Christianity. The Indians also said they would not allow themselves to be taken, as was common before Forebio arrived. Essentially, this is the statement verified by the Christian Indians and by Gualinela, chief of the Fiutume rancheria.

I spoke to them to instill in them the confidence that this would not reoccur. This was done in Gualinelas' presence. I mentioned by my own captain the good fortune I had found with Gualinelas' friendship and the blind confidence he had in me and my troops, which totaled 20 men. My troops behaved with moderation and diligence.

Gualinela offered to send two or more of this men to Forebio, to speak on our behalf. They were to tell Forebio not to be alarmed and say that what had occurred in the past was no longer true because Gualinela himself had spoken to the captain of soldiers and that they did not want to fight or take the people away to other lands. Furthermore, Gualinela instructed his scouts to tell Forebio the Indians had become good friends with the soldiers and that we should be allowed to retain our arms. If requested, the Indians should accompany us to San Francisco (Solano). Gualinela dispatched his runners with this message, but we never learned Forebio's response, as we marched before they returned.

In reference to the relations with Gualinela and Forebio, it must be said that when they speak of the treacheries of the soldiers, it can be observed that the natives have been misused and deceived by the soldiers, but mostly by the missionaries with their detestable ways. The missionaries have no policy for presenting Christianity to the Indians, but instead tear them away from their homes to be taken to strange lands to be forcefully baptized. It is the same thing with their talk of justice and reason, so that the natives no longer trust any promises made to them. Under these principles are the missions of Alta California founded.

We marched in the direction of Point Santa Rosa, located about 12 leagues from Bodega. Immediately crossing the first range of hills, we came upon the valley called Tamalanica where the Russians had maintained fields two years ago. This land is located about three leagues from the Port of Bodega and five from Ross. The farm is no longer occupied by the Russians or by any other foreigners, but a Kodiak Indian woman tills and maintains the property, acting as a caretaker. The farm is very small and is now abandoned to several of the Indian workers

who formerly labored for the foreman. This foreman originally came from the Mission San Francisco de Asis in 1821. Since abandonment of the farm, he has moved to Ross, where he lives today.

Continuing on our march, we passed a rancheria called Sotoyomi. It was abandoned, the former inhabitants having left to join the Indians in the interior. The land is made up of a very beautiful valley whose waters irrigate all the lands in the immediate area. This area abounds with timber of all kinds. Nearby, there is another valley called Melia which is similar to Sotoyomi.

The next valley we crossed is situated three leagues from Bodega. It is called Sayomi. Sayomi has an abundance of year around water and is surrounded by well irrigated lands with timber. About four leagues onward is found a valley called Liuantiyomi. Its creeks form large marshes which are filled with beaver, unlike other places where only vestiges of them remain because of the foreign hunters. Liuantiyomi is located west of the valleys of Santa Rosa and Jaquilliyomi, and appears to have the best environment for the founding of a town. Ideally, the town could be located adjacent to Santa Rosa and Jaquilliyomi because of the previously mentioned reasons and the ideal view, landscape, etc.

The descriptions provided are only what I could examine in passing without leaving the traveled paths. It was impossible for me to explore anywhere else due to the heavy rains making the ground unsuitable for horses and mounted men. It has, however, been assured to me, that deeper in the interior, perhaps eight or ten leagues inland, are other similar lands which we were only able to see from a distance. To better observe these lands, I climbed several peaks.

This report does not fulfill the objective set before undertaking the expedition since severe problems were encountered which prevented me from verifying all the information I was told. The situation is not the best for reporting at this time and in truth, I cannot verify which lands would be best for founding a town. Since there may be so many good lands to choose from, my plans were not satisfied by the little that was examined. Otherwise, it might be possible to say which lands might be the most favorable for the founding of a town. I believe it would be advantageous to mount another expedition during a better time of year because of all the careful attention required for such an interesting study. Careful planning is necessary, as these lands are heavily populated by natives who are very mistrustful of our motives. This fact should be observed from the outset. Unfortunately, the lack of reason and unjust treatment of the natives in the past, now results in the state of general alarm, apprehensiveness and overt hostility with which we are now faced.

I performed various explorations to further my investigations, but could not verify much of what was told to me because of the poor conditions of the ground. I sent scouts out to the heathen and Christian Indians to assure them that if they remained

peaceful, they would not be harmed. It later occurred to me to give them confidence so they would come to me. Although my scouts did not return, I have been informed that my promises have been discussed among the natives, assuring the truth of the pact given to them by me and my soldiers and reminding them of the kind treatment I gave them. They hold me in great esteem and consider me a great captain.

Before our arrival, others have persecuted them ceaselessly. This was done by the missionaries without necessity. It is mandatory that the Commanding General recognized the incredible cruelties and injustices perpetrated by those who are in charge of capturing the natives. The great spiritual harm done to these unhappy people has come from the missionaries who have debased the origins and fundamentals of our Christian doctrines. The result is that the natives now ridicule our attempts at evangelism, lose the truth of our religion and ignore the true morality of our customs. This is precisely the state of these unhappy men who have become hostile with sufficient reason. As earlier stated, they have united themselves in an extremely hostile band in consequence of the evil maltreatment and cruelty instigated by the missionaries, with their bloody methods for introducing our faith. The poor natives now believe the methods of the Inquisition to be the same as the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. It would not be difficult to cite some examples of the punishment practiced at the missions of this region. What monstrosities! Many of the methods used horrify and humiliated the native men excessively, but this is neither the time nor place to discuss these matters in detail. Let it suffice to say I have found no untruth in any of these accusations.

As instructed, I used all the means at my disposal to ascertain the truth concerning the settlements at Ross and Sitka as told by the Russians. I came by the information that there are a total of nine settlements. Among these are the Island of Sitka, Unalaska, Kodiak, Kamchatka and others. The Island of Sitka houses 400 military personnel, all from Russia, as well as a considerable number of natives. They live within good forts because of the continuous insurrections fomented by some of the natives they trade with.

In these establishments are to be found 12 civilian merchant ships, three frigates and four brigantines which were built at Fort Ross. On the Island of Sitka is a settlement devoted to fishing and the fur trade with the [word unintelligible] and some fine lumber. With respect to their agriculture, the land produces nothing due to the year around snow. The natives subsist on fish which is extremely abundant. Provisions are purchased on our coast for the island and surround territories, are distributed in proportion to all the settlements for the survival of the Russians who live there.

I inquired casually concerning the Ross settlement and discovered it was founded with the object of taking otters and wolves which were abundant. They also intended to till the soil and although the fields look like they have much work put into them, they produce just enough for the survival of the Russians.

REPORT TO MARIANO G. VALLEJO, page 2

There are some large and small livestock which have yielded 800 head of cattle, 700 horses, 2,000 sheep, and 60 hogs. This is the largest number that the settlement can support. Wheat is only sold when justified by a high yield from the poorest producing lands. Wheat is not traded as the almost perpendicular rocky hillsides and the mountainous terrain severely limit the amount of land which can be worked by horses.

I was also told that a small wheat field was under cultivation in a valley some distance from Ross, which the commandant at San Francisco had reclaimed from the Russians demanding that they restrict themselves to their establishments. The previous commandant-general had cautioned Don Cirilio Chlebnikoff the Russian manager, against expanding the boundaries of the establishment even though they might be reduced to existing on a small piece of land. The Russians are also cultivating an orchard of 400 fruit trees which is located on the best land at the bottom of an embankment which is part of the hills above Ross. They have a vineyard of 700 vines at this location and all is ready for harvesting.

At Ross there are two fine grist-mills, one powered by wind and the other by water. These serve to grind all their wheat. Both mills are kept in constant motion by the ceaseless wind and by the water off the slope of the box canyon. Here they have constructed a beautiful house and shipyard for building ships. They have built four brigantines and various other boats which travel to the port of San Francisco.

Another building is used as a tannery where all kinds of pelts are cured. The workers are well instructed in their various trades. A forge or iron works is in good condition.

The existing population is composed of 300 men, women and children. Among these are 70 Russians of all ages and both sexes. The remainder are mixtures of Russian and Kodiak Indians and natives of this country.

The fort is in a constant state of deterioration. The walls form a quadrangle of exactly 100 varas square. In the two corners opposite each other, one overlooking the mountains and the other overlooking the sea, are mounted 12 pieces of artillery up in two towers or lookout platforms. Each piece is of eight caliber and six are located in each tower. Six more pieces of the same caliber are located inside a large building with gunports on both sides. This is called the barracks and is located by the gate next to the sentry box. A sentry is stationed there to check all who enter or leave. Three pieces of artillery are located by the back of the commanders' house, all of which are mounted on naval gun carriages, except for two 3 caliber violentos which are mounted laterally at the staircase of the large building.

Each commissioned individual keeps a musket in his house. Sixty extra muskets and eleven rifles are kept in a gunrack in the antechamber of the commanders' house.

The walls and the buildings are constructed of weak timbers insufficient to withstand any attack except by the natives who have not heavy arms, only bows and arrows. The walls could not withstand a cannonball of any caliber. The settlement has no military force, for those residing there are all businessmen or merchants. The commander in particular is charged with administering business matters as well as justice. He depends heavily on Sitka.

The commander and his subordinates are very disgusted with the Indians who have left their posts on the nearby rancherias. The Russians have killed a few who were seen some distance away from Ross and had stolen a considerable amount of wheat. In extreme exasperation the commander said to me that if my orders included hostilities against the natives, that he personally with 30 of his men would assist me in tracking down and attacking them. I excused myself, saying that my presence here did not include hostilities, but thanked him for the offer.

The agreement with the Indians works well when they help to harvest the wheat, but at other times the Russians are very harsh with them. Not one rancheria has submitted itself to the Russians unless it lies within the boundaries of the lands previously mentioned.

Neither the commander of Ross, his petty officers or his junior officers of any rank said any more concerning the defections. Even so, I continued to observe the conduct of all of them [narrative illegible]. I have noted that the junior officers and all of the men are of lower quality and education and their ideals concerning government matters are very liberal.

Communications say that the Governor of Sitka should be at Ross by the eighteenth of June proximo.

The residences at the settlement consist of 59 large buildings, more or less, and they are arranged without order or symmetry. The manner in which they are arranged presents a confusing and disorienting perspective. Inside the walls there are nine buildings. All of these are large and beautifully made, including the warehouses and granaries.

This is all I have to report to you for now as per the orders dated April 11th, which were received by me on the nineteenth of the same.

I believe also that the tax mentioned by you would be indispensable if applied to the lands mentioned in this report. This would realize the objective of opening the better lands to settlement with more certainty.

In conclusion, I say to you that I was pleased to cooperate in some way toward the increase of my nation and to the prosperity of this interesting and priceless port of the Grand Republic of Mexico.

(without signature) August 11, 1833, Mexico, Department of Alta California.