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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 INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

MAY - JUNE

GEORGE WASHINGTON CALL, THE EARLY YEARS

George Washington Call was born near Painesville (Lake County), Ohio on March, 27 1829. His father was Asa Call, Jr. and his mother Mary Metcalf; both of his parents had ancestors who had arrived in the Massachusetts area in the mid-1600s. George was the sixth of eight children, having five brothers and two sisters. In 1833, his father died, and two years later, in February 1835, his mother married James Mahlin. When George was 14 years old, his step-father forced him to leave home, as he did for all of his step-sons. From that time on George was on his own.

After he left home, George worked at a number of jobs, moving around in Indiana and Illinois. He clerked, drove cattle, rafted lumber, and chopped steamboat lumber. In the Fall of 1850, he went to St. Louis and attempted to join a party that was to work for 100 days on the Panama railroad in payment for passage to California. Fortunately, George arrived too late--fortunate because there was tremendous mortality as a result of disease for those who attempted this approach to get to California. So he returned to Illinois, and started a wood yard to sell wood to steamboats. In 1851, he also taught geography in evening schools. It was apparently during these times that he took on the name 'Illinois George'.

In the Fall of 1851, George went to St. Joseph, Missouri in preparation of obtaining overland passage to California. While waiting, he struck a deal with a Kickapoo Indian Chief to cut fence posts on Indian land, raft them to St. Joseph, sell them, and then give the Chief one-third of the receipts. Then, in the Spring of 1852 at the age of 23, he joined a large overland party made up by Martin Pomeroy and Company that was heading for California. George worked his passage with a drove of about 600 head of cattle, one of three droves in the party. His main job was to hitch up six yolk of wild steers and, with the help of an assistant, drive the team to California; he also did some hunting for the party and was involved in some minor skirmishes with Indians. When he arrived in California in early August 1852 at about where the town of Quincy is now, his "capital", besides his gun, pistol, one spare woolen shirt, and one pair of blankets, was one dollar.

George immediately went to the mines, but he never expected to make much money there. As it was, he saved about \$300 in just over a year, and he then travelled around trying to find a ranch claim in the mountain valleys. In the Fall of 1853, he left the mining area altogether, travelling around for six weeks before finally settling in the Humboldt Bay area on November 15th. Between that date and mid-February of the next year, he made over \$1,000 in the logging business, always keeping his eye out for a good ranch claim. He described himself at that time as sporting a pair of reddish-whitish whiskers, still having his crooked back, weighing 172 pounds, and asking no odds of any man that didn't like him. It was at this time that he admitted to having a new nickname--'The Mountain Rat'.



Mercedes Leiva Call (Valparaiso, Chile, c.a. 1866)



George Washington Call
(Valparaiso, Chile, 1867)

In 1855, George left the Humboldt Bay area to go to San Francisco. There he soon became the backer and landlord for Grizzly Mammoth museum and menagerie, an operation that historians say was the first zoo in California. A few years later, George was advised by a doctor to take an ocean voyage for his health. So, in 1858 he left San Francisco, travelling in Puget Sound and the Vancouver Island area. Then in 1859, he returned to San Francisco where he chartered a boat and left on a voyage that would take him to South America. Before he left, however, he needed to collect what was owed to him by Grizzly. All reports indicate that Grizzly was a very poor businessman, and it appears that his dealings with George were typical. George finally settled his account with Grizzly just before he departed--he went to the menagerie and "appropriated" two grizzlies from the second floor of the building, lowering them in their cages to the street and then hauling them off to his ship.

George travelled down the coast from San Francisco to South America, visiting many ports along the way. In at least some of them, he used the grizzly bears in bear-and-bull fights, performances that were popular and acceptable in those times. Apparently, he parted ways with the bears in Peru after some stands collapsed during a performance--he was told to leave quickly, as people were rather upset.

George travelled for about two years in South America, visiting the interior of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. He then spent two years, as a subcontractor to 'Honest' Harry Meiggs, building railroads in Chile (Meiggs was infamous in San Francisco for having hurriedly left when his investments went sour, leaving a number of investors, including the city, holding an empty bag). Finally, in 1865, he settled in Valparaiso, Chile. There he discovered what he thought was a good business opportunity. To take advantage of it, he returned to Indiana, bought machinery, shipped the machinery to Chile, and used it to establish that country's first gunnysack factory--a venture that turned out to be very profitable. In addition to operating the factory, George also contracted for public works projects and bought, improved, and sold real estate.

Soon after starting his business, George met his wife-to-be, Mercedes Leiva, at a dance. Mercedes, who was born in San Fernando, Chile on September 13, 1850, was an orphan; she and her brother, Carlos, had been living with relatives, who were wheat farmers. During the dance, George contrived to trip on and tear her dress, and he then showed up the next day at the bakery where she worked with a new dress over his arm so as to pursue the relationship. This seemed to work well, and on February 15, 1866, George and Mercedes were married in Valparaiso; at the time of the marriage George was almost 37 years old and Mercedes was 15.

GEORGE WASHINGTON CALL, THE EARLY YEARS, continued

In the next few years, three children were born to George and Mercedes (Ana Rosa in 1867, Emma Angelina in 1869, and Oscar Ambrose in 1870). When their first son was born, George decided to return to California. The family sailed to San Francisco in 1872, and George immediately purchased property there, a full city block called Hampton Place which was located at about where the Bay Bridge anchorage is today. For collateral, he used the profits from his business ventures in South America--50,000 Chilean pesos, which was converted to 45,000 US dollars in San Francisco. He then set out to look for a permanent place for the family to settle, his old dream of owning a ranch finally about to be realized. During this time, the fourth child was born in San Francisco (Mary Addie in 1872).

Finally ending his search in 1873, George found what he and Mercedes were looking for. Apparently, the choice was between property at Half Moon Bay and at Fort Ross. The story has it that the extensive apple orchards (probably close to 2,000 trees) were attractive to Mercedes, as it was with her support that the final deal was struck.

The initial purchase at Fort Ross was in June 1873 and was for 2,500 acres of land and the chute at a cost of \$25,000; the purchase also included stock, mostly milk cows, for \$10,000. (These initial holdings in the Fort Ross area were subsequently expanded--George's will in 1907 indicated he had about 7,115 acres, while the official 1908 map of Sonoma County shows about 8,563 acres.) The purchase was from James Dixon and Ada Fairfax, but it is currently believed that the only asset of Ada's in the deal was a share of the chute.

George, Mercedes, and their family soon moved to Fort Ross from San Francisco, and the San Francisco property was put up to sale to finance the purchase. They first took up residence within the fort in the Russian manager's quarters (the Rotchev House) that had been modified and lived in by William Benitz and his family and then by Ada Fairfax, her mother, and her niece. While living there, George started the process to turn his holdings into what was to become a thriving business. He had the coast highway down the coast and the current road to the ridge built, and he also worked on building the family a new home, which was completed in 1878. During their stay in their home in the fort, two more children were born to George and Mercedes (Lucy Minerva in 1874 and Laura in 1877); their last three children were born in the new home (Mercedes in 1878, Carlos Asa in 1880, and George Harry in 1882). With this start, the Call family's 106 year presence at Fort Ross was firmly established.

Kaye Tomlin
April 1990



Hampton Place, San Francisco (c.a. 1872)

From San Francisco Journal of Commerce and Price Current Annual Review, Jan. 22, 1879

FORT ROSS HARBOR

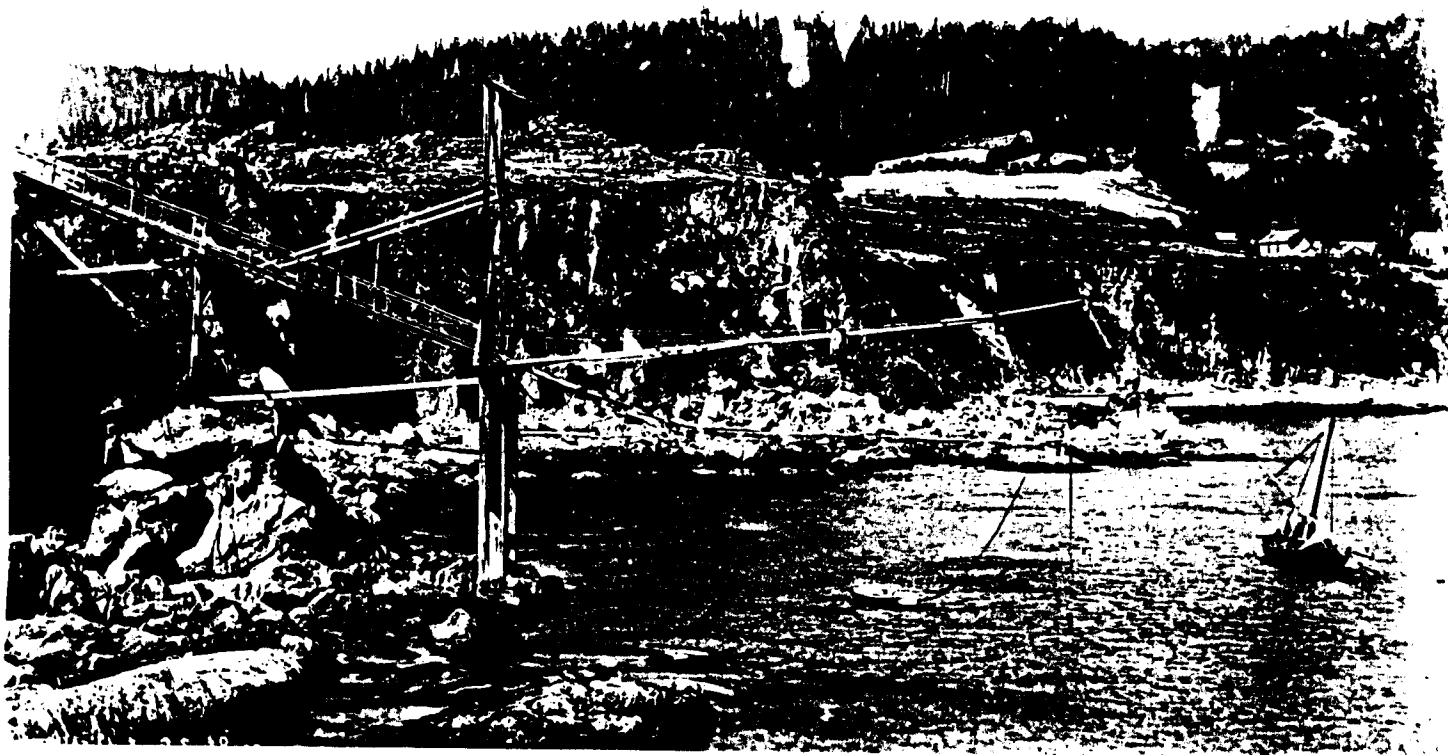
The anchorage at Fort Ross marked in the coast survey sheets is a pretty good one and considered by some one of the best northwest shelters on the coast. Though rather contracted, there is room enough for small coasters. This place is about seven miles above Russian River and has a chute for loading vessels. It used to be a trading post of the Russians and they built a fort there. Vessels entering the roadstead go close to the northern point and come to between the bouy and the chute. A sunken rock there is marked by a bouy. Schooners carry from here wood, tan bark, redwood posts, dairy and other products. This place was the first one opened north of San Francisco. The chute belongs to G. W. Call.

TIMBER COVE

The Timber Cove copy was somewhat blurred but the following was clear. There is a hotel, store, blacksmith shop and a number of dwellings at this point. They ship from here wood, tan bark, dairy products etc, by means of a chute belonging to George Tomassini. The moorings are good.

Stillwater Cove about a mile above (Timber Cove) is another small northwest anchorage, like all the others open to southerly gales. The bottom is very rocky and vessels come to anchor to windward of the northwest bouy. They ship from here by means of a chute belonging to John Rouff, wood, posts, tan bark, etc. The mooring are in good order.

Submitted by Barbara Black



STATE PARK PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Earlier this year Ron Hanshew, District Superintendent, met with members of FRIA to jointly plan interpretive functions for Fort Ross State Historic Park. Ron outlined the plans and priorities that State Parks has for Fort Ross and then an open discussion was convened regarding ways that FRIA might best assist. In the future a complete narrative will be available.

FRIA SUPPORT OF STATE PROGRAMS

I. Artifact Management

A. Facility Development

1. Original plans
2. Better use of existing facilities
3. Computer
4. Volunteer Curators
5. Volunteer Conservators
6. Volunteer Archeologists

B. Exhibits

1. FRIA funding exhibit change (revolving exhibits)
2. Input into exhibit planning

C. Conservation, Preservation, ID, Catalog, Acquisition and Loans

1. Volunteer assistance
2. Funding of materials and special needs
3. Docents and Interns

II. Interpretive Delivery

A. Electronics

1. Planning and developing of programs
2. Tape oral histories
3. Purchase equipment and materials
4. Produce videos for sale
5. Produce audio tapes for sale
6. Seek corporate involvement

B. Volunteer Interpreters

1. Recruiting
2. Recognition
3. Training
4. Housing
5. Transportation
6. Specific weekends
7. Supporting student programs

C. Planning Input design, funding and interpreting for other languages

1. Brochures
2. Directional Signs
3. Information and Interpretive panels
4. review and critique

D. Outreach Interpreters

1. Campfire and Auditorium presentations
2. Utilize visiting specializing
3. Hype interpretive association
 - a. Use farm animals
 - b. Develop more programs that involve women
 - c. "Sell" FRIA during all programs at all facilities
 - d. Use windmill as attractor
 - e. Put Interpretive messages at the entries to the parks

III. Historical Restoration

A. Call Ranch House and other Ranch Buildings

1. Garden
2. Interim interpretive
 - a. Work projects
 - b. Demo of long term plans
 - c. Sell our needs
 - d. Volunteer Interpreters

B. Fur Barn (warehouse) and other facilities inside the Fort

1. Research the Blacksmith shop
2. Build a stove at the Blacksmith shop
3. Kitchen (for use in special programs)
4. Build Loom

C. Rotchev House

1. Cemetery
2. Orchard

D. Kuskov House

1. Heating
2. Exhibits and Furnishings
3. Hands on Interpretations

IV. Staffing

A. State Paid Staff

1. Native Americans
2. What special funding is needed?

B. Volunteers

1. Recruiting
2. Training
3. Interns

C. Other

1. BSA
2. GSA
3. Russian Boy Scouts from San Francisco

V. Special Programs

A. Living History

1. Funding
2. Planning
3. Participation
4. Research
5. Advertising
6. Soviet involvement
7. Coordinate through the coastal community

B. ELP

1. More historical material
2. Costumes
3. Volunteers
4. Archeologists, interns and other specialized persons

VI. Research

A. FRIA - "Research Associate"

- B. Encourage University involvement
- C. Encourage Graduate degree involvement
- D. Provide classes
- E. Educational conferences
- F. "Sister" associations
 1. Soviets
 2. Alaska
 3. etc.

CANNON CARRIAGE COLORINGS PROPER TO THE FORT ROSS PERIOD

By 1812 armies of the great European countries used distinctive cannon carriage colors to identify, for the benefit of their own soldiers and those of the enemy, their Artillery pieces. France and Russia both used an olive drab paint, while Prussia had light blue grey, and Austro-Hungary a combination of light red and a yellow ochre. In paintings of the great Napoleonic battles the Artillery's nationality are more easily identified than the multicolored and often similarly attired Cavalry and Infantry soldiers.

The State Artillery History Museum has preserved, along with the massive battle scenes, many of the actual cannons from the Petrine Era to the First World War in its Russian History Section. Close inspection of the cannon carriage paint, mostly darkened and deteriorated with age, revealed little of its original color. The paint was discolored to such an extent as to appear a very dark, almost black green, whereas paintings of the period show a much lighter shade.

An answer was found with the assistance of Victor Malashaev, Objects Conservator of the Museum. He directed me to the prototypes submitted to the Army's design and Appropriation Office, which kept on file, as it were, models which acted in the same fashion as our patent models, perfect in every detail, and workable in all features. Because these models were kept in cabinets for over 150 years, they have suffered little from exposure to the elements and are in excellent condition.

From these models were made the comparisons with currently produced American oil based paints taken to the U.S.S.R. on sample cards. As no exact color was the same as the original, a range was made between the two colors closest.

Now, to complicate matters, the Navy had an entirely different system of preserving the wood of its cannon carriages and trucks. Again, according to Victor Malashaev, carriages (trucks) in use aboard Russian Naval ships were either varnished, in most cases, or oiled with a mixture of linseed oil and varnish. In cases when an effect was desired at a cheaper price than varnish and at less upkeep, trucks were sometimes painted an ochre color that resembled, at least at a distance, varnished wood.

There was, however, one interesting exception to this Naval tradition and this is the most interesting for Fort Ross. Cannon carriages (trucks) in Naval Fortresses were always painted BLACK.

After 1817 the Governorship of the Russian American Colonies came under the influence of the Imperial Navy, and until its sale in 1867 almost all of the Governors were former Naval officers. As almost all of the cannon at Fort Ross were of Naval design, one might assume that given the directorship of the Company, that many Naval traditions would be in use. Given the availability of paint in the always price conscious Company (black being half the cost of green) logic would also direct one to the Navy's traditions, rather than the Army's.

Submitted by John Middleton



RUSSIAN FOLK ART IN SAN FRANCISCO

"Art lovers have the good fortune to see a major show of Russian folk art this summer. "Folk Art of the Soviet Union," exhibited by the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, runs June 21 through July 29 at Pier 2 at Fort Mason, San Francisco. More than 750 objects, most from the 19th century, will be on view; they come from the craftsmen of more than a hundred different ethnic groups. It's a wonderful opportunity to learn something about the diverse cultures of the fifteen Republics of the Soviet Union. Included are rugs from Central Asia, Ukrainian glass and ceramics, Siberian ornamented costumes, silver jewelry and samovars, embroidery, carved and painted wooden kitchen implements, and ceramics. The objects, all indigenous art made for daily use, are from the collections of the State Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR, Leningrad. Hours are Monday - Friday, 10 to 7:30; Saturday and Sunday, 10 to 6. For information phone (415) 775-0990." From May/June 1990 Motorland
Submitted by Midori Hanus



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 19, Saturday--Seminar EDIBLE SEaweEDS AND POKE POLE FISHING taught by Jesse Longacre, \$15.00 fee
- May 26, Saturday--Seminar SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA INDIAN BASKETRY taught by Pegg Mathewson, \$15.00 fee plus \$15.00 materials fee
- May 27, Sunday--Seminar INTRODUCTION TO FLINTKNAPPING taught by Pegg Mathewson, \$15.00 fee plus \$10.00 materials fee
- May 28, Monday--MEMORIAL DAY
- June 9, Saturday--FRIA BOARD MEETING
- July 5, Thursday--Submissions due for July - August Newsletter, PLEASE CONTRIBUTE!

FRIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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We regret to announce that John Stafford has resigned as a FRIA Board Member because he is moving.

FRIA CONSULTING STAFF

WENDY PLATT, Treasurer * LYN KALANI, Newsletter Editor, Bookstore Manager, Seminar Coordinator * LAKE PERRY HENTER, Bookstore Sales

VISITOR CENTER NEWS

Please stop by the expanded FORT ROSS LIBRARY. FRIA members may check out books from a large selection on the history and natural history of Fort Ross and many other related subjects. Visit also a new POMO EXHIBIT in the Revolving Display Case. This exhibit is on loan from Jesse Peter Native American Art Museum.

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