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Title: Fort Ross Interpretive Association / Fort Ross Conservancy Newsletter

Author(s): Fort Ross Interpretive Association / Fort Ross Conservancy

Published by: Fort Ross Conservancy Library

URL: [www.fortross.org](http://www.fortross.org)

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](http://www.fortross.org)



## FORT ROSS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

July - August 1995 Newsletter

### BOARD NOTES

by John Sperry

Main matters this June Board meeting were a paucity of directors (7 of 13!), and a determined effort at efficiency.

Nicholas Lee, Corresponding Secretary, received a letter from Richa Wilson who entered into a contract to record the fort's Rotchev house. Richa has accepted a Peace Corps assignment to Africa. Before leaving she will complete a "Third Report" and an "Interim Maintenance Proposal." Her final report will be completed after her return in two years. The secretary also received a letter from David Rickman, a former "director" of LHD activities at FRSHP. David criticized the period shift from 1833 to 1822 because so many interesting details of the fort were not yet in place—the chapel, the Rotchev house, the Hudson Bay Company, and because the volunteer-provided or FRIA-purchased "appropriate clothing" is no longer appropriate. Correspondence from Yulia Yarakalova in Russia requests an invitation to Fort Ross to present copies of portraits of Kuskov and of his wife. The board directed Nicholas to offer invitation.

Sherry Madrone gave her reasons for resigning as chair of the Costume Committee. Her reasons echoed Rickman's to some extent. Sherry's skills and energies will be missed.

A most active Ranch Committee (reporting a \$40,000 total budget) noted that the Call House reroofing contract is let to All Seasons Roofing, Petaluma. Foundation work is approaching "pour" day. Sonoma County gave \$12,530 to the stabilization effort in '94, largely through the efforts of Jeannette Rosson. Fund raising plans are underway—a new "Home Sweet Home" for April '96 and, maybe, a gourmet dinner/wine tasting gig.

It looks like the state will have increasing control over FRIA activities as a volunteer association. Our bookstore earning level is the indicator. Always unsaid in these matters is the antithetical nature of "volunteering" and state control of such energies.

*The Caretakers* is very close to publication. We should be pleased with our publications as being eminently interpretive—our mission. How fortunate that they are also money earners!

Policies concerning the library, collections, loans and accessions were fine-tuned and approved by the board.

Lastly, we may hope that future meetings will be short and efficient by way of a pre-meeting of the Executive Committee (five officers, plus one staff and one state representative). It is to be viewed as an agenda-setting, sort of "winnowing" operation of FRIA affairs, the plan is experimental through December.

### FLOWERS AND FIRE

by Lake Perry

This winter's squalls brought earth drenching rains: more than 120 inches measured in the hills inland from the coast ridge, and close to 52 inches have been logged in at the Fort Ross weather station since October 1, 1994. The deluge interrupted a significant drought, created access and habitation problems, but painted the hills with swaths of wildflowers.

A meander along roads and paths will reveal what else so much water from the sky brought: extravagant wild berry thickets, fungi or molds on trees (especially the bay laurel and madrone), and their dying leaves turning brown, and lush smile-high annual grasses.

The local four-legged vegans love this increase in the food supply, as do nesting creatures, insects, and photographers. Those of us who must mow with metal and fossil fuel, anticipating the usual long hot summer, wish we'd never progressed past mid-spring and thrice-weekly downpours. Well, not quite. Extra caution must be used when mowing—metal blades on stone can create sparks. So, those of us living just to the east of the Pacific Ocean have more than occasional qualms about just how hot this summer might be, and should be overly cautious.

Visitors, well-intentioned vacationers, even local residents, might exercise a lapse of common sense in a highly dangerous wildfire potential season.

#### Remember these rules:

- \* **Stay on roads when driving.** Catalytic converters and heat can start fires in dry weeds.
- \* **Ground fires or open fires of any kind are not permitted.** Off-the-ground barbecues are allowed or provided in some areas, unless, as at the Reef Campground, all fires are disallowed if conditions warrant.
- \* **Smoking is not permitted on trails.** Smoke only where allowed. Use extra caution with smoking materials and matches and their disposal.
- \* **Report to nearest state park personnel any observed violations of the above.**
- \* **Call 9-1-1 to report a fire.** Be as specific as possible as to location. Do not hang up until the answering emergency agency has.

**Our parks, forests, homes, and human lives depend on our care to prevent wild fires!**

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the members of FRIA: (10 May 1995)

I visited Fort Ross in April, with my sister Kathryn Clausen. We spent a few enjoyable days at the Sea Ranch, and did a little shopping in Mendocino. While there, my cousins Barbara Black and Laurie Horn visited us, and had a little lunch with us. Laurie mentioned that the newsletter was interested in articles for publication, and so I submit the enclosed piece, for your use, if appropriate.

It was a foggy, windy day and I was on my way to Santa Rosa to get the plane back to Washington DC. I drove by the Russian graveyard, and noticed that each grave had a marker. I stopped and used the last few pictures I had in the camera. After arriving home, I was going through some of the books I have about Fort Ross, and an article caught my eye. My Aunt Mercedes Pearce Stafford sent it to me many years ago. It is an article from the "History of Sonoma County, California". I changed some of the words because they are out of use, and made the reading difficult, so it is not a faithful copy, but the meaning is just as rich and true as when it was written so long ago. I had not realized until I re-read this article, that the Russians had left on such short notice.

Anna Pearce Hawkins  
(Daughter of George Call Pearce, grand daughter of Anna Rosa Call Pearce, great grand daughter of G. W. and Mercedes Call)

*"This is the forest primeval.....but where are the hearts that beneath it leaped like the stag, when he hears in the woodland, the voice of the huntsman? Waste...are the pleasant farms all the farmers forever departed. Scattered like dust and leaves when the mighty blasts of October seize them and whirl them aloft and sprinkle them far over the ocean. Naught but tradition remains.....Still, stands the forest primeval but under the shade of its branches dwells another race with other customs and another language. While from its rocky caverns, the deep voice of the neighboring ocean speaks, and in accents disconsolate, answers the wail of the forest.*

*Orders were sent to the Russian settlers at Fort Ross to leave at once for San Francisco bay, and ships were dispatched to bring them there. Whaling vessels, which were bound for the northwest whaling grounds, had been chartered to convey them to Sitka, in Alaska. The vessels arrived at an early hour in the day, and the orders shown to the commander, Rotscheff, who immediately had the bells rung in the chapel towers, and the cannon fired. This was the usual method of assembling the people at an unusual hour, for some special purpose.*

*So everything was suspended, just where the farmer left his plow standing in the half-turned furrow, and freed his oxen, never again to hitch them to the yoke, leaving them to wander freely over the fields. The craftsman dropped his planes and saws on the bench, leaving the half-planed board still in the vise. The tanner left his tools where he was using them, and dropped his apron, to never wear it again in California.*

*As soon as the entire population had assembled, Rotscheff arose and read his orders. Very sad and unwelcome indeed, was this message, but the orders had come from a source which could not be countermanded, the Czar, and the only alternative was speedy and complete compliance, however reluctant they might be.*

*And thus, four hundred people were made homeless by the few words in the message. Time was only given to gather up a few household effects, and some of the choicest keepsakes, and they were hurried on board the ships. Scarcely was time given to those whose loved ones were sleeping in the graveyard near by, and to pay a last sad visit to their resting place. Boarding of the ships began at once. And with the ebb of the tide the ships sailed out of the Fort Ross harbor, leaving behind them their dead on the shore. And all the happy scenes of their lives, which had glided smoothly along the beautiful shores of the Pacific and in the garden spot of the world, passed through their minds.*

*Sad and heavy must have been their hearts as they gazed for the last time upon the receding landscape which their eyes had learned to love,...because it had been that best of all places...Home."*



editor's note: Less delightful and romantic—but more realistic—descriptions about the Russian-American Company's departure from Ross may be found in contemporary works. *The Odyssey of a Russian Scientist: I. G. Voznesenskii in Alaska, California and Siberia 1839 - 1849* by A. I. Alekseev (The Limestone Press, 1987) is based on the first hand accounts of Russian scientist I. G. Voznesenskii who was at Fort Ross at the time the Russian-American Company vacated the settlement.

*"...Voznesenskii's sojourn in northern California coincided with a sad event in the life of the Russian-American Company. The explorer witnessed the last days of Fort Ross. The Russian government, as has already been said, had decided on April 15, 1839 to liquidate that legendary Russian settlement. In the course of two years everything that could be removed from Fort Ross to Sitka. The remaining real estate and cattle were sold in installments for 30 thousand piastres to a native of Switzerland and a Mexican subject, Johan Sutter...*

*April 11th he recorded in his journal...Upon arrival at the fort the traveler had to 'occupy myself with packing the natural history specimens and all the rest, of which by then a very large quantity had accumulated.'*

*...In July 1841 the Russian fort of Ross ceased to exist. Its population moved to Port Rumiantsev [Bodega Bay] to await the arrival of a ship from Sitka. Voznesenskii at that time was located in Khlebnikov Valley completing numerous excursions. On September 5th, he and the residents of Ross set out for Sitka on the brig Elena."*

## **PARTNERS IN PRESERVATION: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORT ROSS STATE HISTORIC PARK**

*by Maria Sakovich*

The story of Fort Ross as a state historic monument and park is one of passion and politics, the dedication of particular individuals, and the hard work of volunteers. In various ways and frequently motivated by different feelings, Americans and Russians have worked to preserve and eventually partially restore the site once occupied by the Russian-American Company from 1812 to 1841. Since this endeavor has taken place over the past century, what was accomplished (as well as how it was accomplished) has reflected the trends of several periods. The nascent historical preservation movement in the early decades was guided by little more than enthusiasm. During the Cold War there was very little communication between Russian and American scholars, or between park staff and Russian scholars. The era of citizen participation in the 1970s was followed by post-glasnost' cooperation with Russian scholars. Recently the budget crisis of the 1990s has affected park development. Throughout all these periods the unpaid work of hundreds of individuals has been crucial.

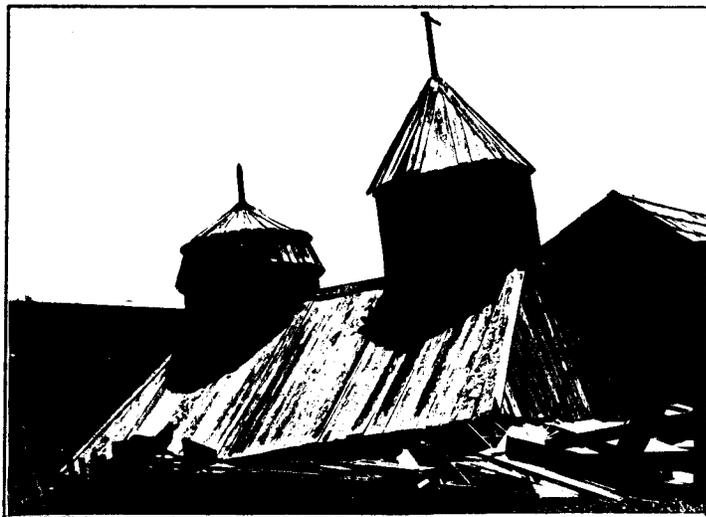
By 1880 Russian Fort Ross was nearly gone. What Sutter did not carry away, nature and the ranchers transformed. None of the original Russian-American Company buildings outside the stockade had survived. Inside the fort the Rotchev house, officials' quarters, and old warehouse had new uses. For a period of time the chapel served as a stable and the blockhouses, falling apart, moss-covered and worm-eaten, were used as pig sties. In the cemetery one could see markings of only twelve graves.

Initial interest in preserving this historic site came from Russian Orthodox clergy of the Diocese of the Aleutian Islands and Alaska headquartered in San Francisco. For these hierarchs, as for subsequent Russian immigrants and today's Russian visitors, Fort Ross was a sacred place. During his visit, probably in 1891, Bishop Vladimir expressed interest in acquiring the old chapel and some land including the cemetery with the intent of preserving them. Nothing came of this proposal; but perhaps this and subsequent visits and publications by the novelist Gertrude Atherton and by Charles Greene, editor of the popular magazine *Overland Monthly*, nudged G. W. Call to start thinking about preservation. Certainly their writings contributed to the growing interest in this historic spot. In 1897 Bishop Nikolai paid a visit from his headquarters in San Francisco. Like that of his predecessor Vladimir, his efforts to obtain a small part of Fort Ross, including the chapel and the cemetery, also came to naught; but it is possible that this bishop's visit resulted in some conservation efforts by Call himself. By September Mr. Call had donated lumber for the restoration of the chapel to be used by the recently organized Sunday school, and in June of the following year religious services were held. The first steps toward the preservation of Fort Ross had been taken.

Throughout California during the 1880s and 1890s many had been taking an interest in the state's history. New historical associations were created. An increasing number of books and periodicals concerned with California history became available.

Restoration work began on several missions and on Sutter's Fort. All this interest and activity generated a movement throughout the state that resulted in the preservation of several historical sites.

In June 1902 the California Historical Landmarks League was incorporated in San Francisco. The main task of this group of sixteen different organizations, including the Native Sons and Native Daughters of the Golden West, was to preserve the historic landmarks of the state. Funds for this work initially came from the Native Sons (\$1,100) and membership dues of \$1 per year. In 1903 newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst sponsored a citizens campaign through the *San Francisco Examiner* to raise money to save several historic landmarks, including Fort Ross. He put himself at the top of the list of subscribers with a gift of \$500. At the same time as the birth of the Landmarks League, the Native Sons formed a Historic Landmarks Committee and designated Fort Ross as one "of the most important historical landmarks which should be preserved from decay and protected from vandalism." *The San Francisco Examiner* campaign was very successful; \$9,000 was raised in the first two months. On July 25, 1903 Mr. Call sold 2.5 acres, the stockaded portion of the site, to Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Lerman, who on the next day deeded it to William Randolph Hearst, the trustee for the Landmarks Fund. Since there was not yet any state agency to receive and administer Fort Ross and the other historic sites purchased by the fund, the League held the title to these properties until March 1906 when the State of California acquired them. At this time, five Russian buildings were still standing: two blockhouses (not in very good shape), the chapel, the Rotchev house, a warehouse, and the officials' barracks. A year later, less than a month after Fort Ross became an official historic site of the State of California, the earthquake of April 18, 1906, which destroyed much of San Francisco, damaged the historic buildings at Ross. The walls of the chapel collapsed and the roof, still intact, fell to the ground. It would be ten years before funding would be available for its repair.



*Fort Ross chapel damaged by the 1906 earthquake.*

Despite the efforts of Sonoma County Assemblyman Herbert Slater in 1911 and Senator Julliard in 1913 to obtain appropriations from the state legislature, not until 1915 was money procured to start the restoration of the chapel. In 1916 restoration began, and Carlos Call, son of George Washington Call, was appointed as inspector for the State Department of Engineering with a salary of \$2.50 a day. The work was completed two years and two more appropriations later. The restoration of historic structures and sites was in its infancy in California. Although the intention was to restore the chapel as it had been originally built, the standards of the day did not preclude the destruction of other buildings in order to carry out the chapel restoration. The officials' quarters, the best preserved Russian structure at that time, was taken down to supply the needed Russian-cut timber. In the process of restoration the chapel acquired a few new features: a fourth window, a raised floor, a porch and step, and a Roman cross on the cupola. The state architect, however, believed that it would "stand the storms of many winters and would be permanently preserved."

Although damage by earthquake and the first rebuilding attempts by the state were not a promising beginning, something else had been developing that boded well for the long run. An informal partnership between the initiative of private citizens and state government was emerging, a pattern which in one form or another would continue (and strengthen) to the present day. While the Native Sons had played a major role in the initial preservation of Fort Ross, the local Sebastopol chapter began taking an interest in the maintenance of the chapel sometime after its restoration. Pilgrimages were made on the Fourth of July to take care of the grounds and the building. In 1922 nearly sixty people, including the state architect, gathered to clear the weeds and debris and apply a coat of oil to preserve the structure from the elements. They also enjoyed a sumptuous picnic.

While the local Native Sons continued their annual work at Fort Ross those in Sacramento were doing theirs. An appropriation of \$2,500 was secured in the spring of 1925 from the State Legislature to reconstruct the southeast blockhouse, to rebuild a portion of the stockade, and for repair of the Rotchev house. Work on the house, including the dismantling of the two-story annex, took place that year.

In 1925 the Sebastopol Native Sons invited the Russian Orthodox congregation of Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco to their Fourth of July celebration. The Russian population in San Francisco had been growing quickly in the preceding few years as refugees from the Bolshevik Revolution and Civil War arrived on the west coast. For rector Father Vladimir Sakovich this Fourth of July service was probably both an opportunity to acknowledge the past and link it to the new future he saw for his countrymen. The sermon was in English. The Rev. William Seymour Short, rector of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation in Santa Rosa, assisted. This celebration at Fort Ross continues to this day.

For the newly arrived Russians whose country had been destroyed, Fort Ross was a special place. The America to which these educated and often cultured immigrants came felt very alien. Fort Ross represented something familiar, at least symbolically. Not only was this fortress a part and a symbol of their lost homeland, but it would become a focal point for the preservation of Russian culture and celebration of Russian contributions to American history.



*Russian emigres at Fort Ross, July 4, 1928*

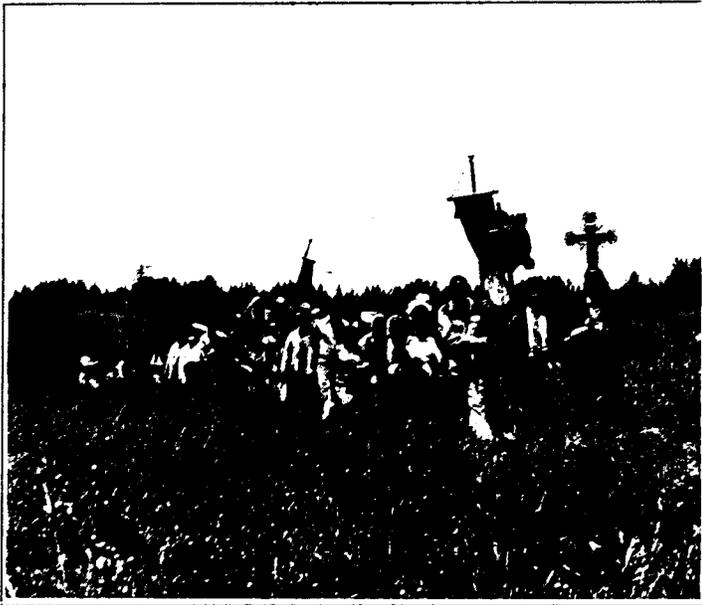
Through at least 1928 the Sebastopol Native Sons and the San Francisco Russian community celebrated the Fourth of July together at Fort Ross with prayer service and picnic. In September 1928 as part of their statewide campaign to place informational and commemorative plaques at historic sites, the Historical Landmarks Committee of the Native Sons erected a tablet on the chapel briefly describing the history of the Russians at Colony Ross. In that same year the California State Parks System was born and Fort Ross was one of five historical monuments. In November 1929, the reconstruction of the stockade along the southeast and southwest sides of the fort, was begun. With the early years of the depression, the state parks budget was very lean, although William Turk, the first caretaker/ranger was hired in 1930, no further restoration projects would be undertaken until after World War II. During the war many state parks were used for military purposes. At Fort Ross the U. S. Coast Guard maintained a station from 1942-1945, one of several along the coast. But during these difficult years interest in the old Russian settlement did not cease.

In 1936 a small group from the Russian community in San Francisco began educating their compatriots about the history of the Russian colony in California. Calling themselves the Initiative Group for the Memorialization of Fort Ross, they first educated themselves about their predecessors in the New World and subsequently published articles in Russian newspapers in San Francisco, Harbin, and Shanghai as well as a small album of photographs. In 1937 they formed the Russian Historical Society in America. In 1945 new members of this society found the lost bell of Fort Ross and together with the Native Sons of Petaluma and Sebastopol brought it back in a special ceremony on Labor Day, 1945. For these Russian patriots the preservation of Fort Ross was also the preservation of Russian culture. These émigrés who had lost their homeland to the Bolsheviks felt a particularly strong urge to save what remained. The memorialization of Fort Ross was also viewed as an opportunity to explain Russian history and culture to Americans.

The end of the war brought renewed efforts of restoration at Fort Ross, and a professionalism to this task. It also brought the Cold War and a new generation of Russian immigrants to California from China and Eastern Europe. Early in the 1950s

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many of these new immigrants would establish, with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, an annual pilgrimage to Fort Ross on Memorial Day.



*Memorial Day procession to the Russian cemetery, 1976*

When Curator John C. McKenzie arrived in 1947, he brought tremendous enthusiasm. Although restoration of the Rotchev house had begun in 1945, work had ceased until 1947; now McKenzie could assist in the restoration of that structure and the seven-sided blockhouse. In the work on both these structures, attention was paid to the methods and tools used so that there were no traces of the 20th century. John McKenzie was responsible for the high level of authenticity of these and subsequent restorations. Not only did he request archaeological excavation long before this was part of the state park's restoration protocol, but he did extensive research and sought help from many Russian Americans during the course of his tenure.

In 1962 State Parks purchased 353 acres from the Call family, and Fort Ross acquired the status of a National Historic Landmark. Only one feature marred the successful restoration of the extant structures: State Highway One still ran through the middle of the stockade. Although the first state parks director recommended rerouting, no action had been taken. As long as this public thoroughfare existed, there was no consideration of reconstructing any of the demolished Russian buildings.

On Monday morning, October 5, 1970 a fire destroyed the Fort Ross Chapel. The intense heat melted the bell. The loss was keenly felt by all. In the twentieth century the chapel had become the chief symbol of Fort Ross. For Russian Americans Russian national culture and Russian Orthodoxy were inextricably linked. Local residents had regarded the historic chapel with affection. Offers of help right after the fire from a variety of sources were forthcoming. One source of help was suggested by the mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto, during a courtesy call by a group of Soviet journalists. Though the idea of Soviet assistance "was heartily accepted" by the journalists, the idea angered the Russian community. "Not a single

Communist nail can go into the rebuilding project," declared the editor of the Russian newspaper. "if California citizens of the Orthodox faith are going to participate as contributors to the restoration fund." Feelings about the loss of homeland had not dissipated in the 20 years since Russian Americans had fled the communist takeovers in Eastern Europe and China. While some people in the California Department of Parks and Recreation may have wanted Soviet assistance, especially access to archives, those in charge acquiesced to the feelings of the Russian community.

Less than a year later a fire set by an arsonist burned the roof and attic of the Rotchev house. Both fires proved to be the beginning of a new era at Fort Ross. First of all, the state took action that would result in greater safety: a new water supply system was built and plans were revived (and carried out in 1972) to reroute the local highway, enabling the complete closure of the stockade wall. Second, for the first time in history, federal money was available for restoring historic sites. This source, however, required that matching funds be raised, which in turn stimulated the participation of many groups and individuals throughout the state. Community participation in many sectors of society was a key element of this decade. At Fort Ross the partnership of state and private citizens which we have seen earlier, was entering a new phase not only in terms of raising funds to reconstruct the chapel but also in recreating a new old Fort Ross.

Several groups worked very hard to raise the over \$25,000 that was required to match the grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A group of residents at Sea Ranch just up the coast from Fort Ross spearheaded the movement with the Restore Fort Ross Fund. The Society of Russian Orthodox Laymen raised money to recast the bell; the American-Russian Historical Society established the Fort Ross Foundation; the congregation of Holy Trinity Cathedral, who started the Fourth of July annual pilgrimage in 1925 also raised money. Other groups contributed, too: Central Valley Council of Diving, Stanford University Faculty Club, members of the Call family, California historical societies, *Russian Life*, and the Russian Center of San Francisco. By June 1972, \$27,651 had been raised for the reconstruction of the chapel, over \$12,000 of which had been raised by local residents. (Labor and materials for a temporary roof on the Rotchev house had been donated by a local business.)

Several of the organizers of the Restore Fort Ross Fund were appointed to the newly forming Citizens Advisory Committee for Fort Ross State Historic Park, as were representatives of the Russian American and Kashaya Pomo communities. State Parks and Recreation Director William Penn Mott was a great advocate of citizen participation in the development of the state's parks. He encouraged the creation of citizens' advisory committees and cooperative associations. With the birth of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Fort Ross in April 1972, a new element entered the preservation picture at Fort Ross - the preservation of more than the Russian period. A change in California State Park's interpretation at historic sites from a static, single period to a "flow of history" concept, plus pressure from coastal residents on the Advisory Committee to include the American ranch period, as well as the original Indian habitation period, resulted in a triple focus in preservation and interpretation. While the Russian period remained the primary

period, and the only period for reconstruction, Fort Ross was now a historic site representing three periods. Such an interpretation would often be a source of tension between Russian American members of the Advisory Committee and those promoting the ranch period, but for the next two years everyone's energy would be directed toward rebuilding the chapel, repairing the Rotchev house, and preparing the first publication for sale at the park.

With the completion of the repair of the Rotchev house and rebuilding of the chapel in the spring of 1974, and with the passage of the State Beach, Park Recreation and Historical Facilities Bond Act that summer, State Parks was ready to begin a program of reconstruction, restoration, and interpretation of the Indian, Russian and American flow of history at Fort Ross. The General Development Plan, approved in late 1975, outlined the priorities for the interpretation of the primary historical period, as well as for the Indian and American periods. The plan included land acquisition and archaeological research. Most of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee had been taken into consideration. The plan was long-term and funding would come from periodic appropriations by the State Legislature.

Over the next ten years park staff, members of the Advisory Committee and of the Fort Ross Interpretive Association (formed in 1975 as the fundraising arm of the Advisory Committee) met, planned, researched, wrote, and argued, lobbied and monitored the progress of the rebuilding and furnishing of the officials' barracks (completed in 1981) and the Kuskov house (finished in 1983), and the restoration of the Russian orchard. Again, hundreds of hours of volunteer time were donated to the development of the park. For all concerned, authenticity was important. Russian American members of the Advisory Committee not only provided cultural oversight, as they had for the reconstruction of the chapel, but also access to important sources and information in Soviet archives. As in previous restorations, construction methods imitated those used by original builders. Also during these years more land was added to the park; the purchase of 239 acres in 1976 was made possible by the 1974 Bond Act.

Always high on the list of priorities of the Advisory Committee was the building of a visitor center where the significance of the three historical eras could be explained to the public. Although planning had taken place and funds made available at an early stage it took over ten years for this dream to be realized. Like the chapel, this building too required that some of the funds come from private citizens. With help of the State Parks Foundation, \$25,000 was raised toward the total cost. The opening ribbon was cut on July 20, 1985.

Much volunteer time has gone into the preliminary stages of making the Call house a museum. State Park and Fort Ross Interpretive Association expenditures, as well as hours of digging to stabilize the foundation of the house and to restore Mercedes Call's garden, together with research on the furnishings, are part of the plan to bring to life some of the American ranch period.

Although funding was earmarked in 1986 for reconstruction of one of the Russian warehouses, it was not forthcoming. The abundance of state money was drying up. The end of one era was coming to a close, but a new one was beginning. With the emergence of *glasnost* in the USSR, visitors and scholars, who had previously been unable to travel to the United States, began

to come in unprecedented numbers. Some of the visits to Fort Ross have been very special. In 1989 a Russian Orthodox monk, great grandson of Father John Veniaminov who spent several weeks at Fort Ross in 1836, visited and wept, almost unbelieving and also grateful that he could travel to this sacred spot. On Living History Day in 1991 ten children from a Chernobyl contaminated town spent the day. On a summer's day in 1992 the chiefs of staff of the U.S. Air Force and the Russian Commonwealth of Independent States, visited Fort Ross together. Also in 1992 celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Bering and Chirikov Russian voyages which discovered Alaska brought many Russian visitors; several boats sailing from Russia for this celebration found their way to the Fort Ross Cove. In September 1993 the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church held a special service at the Fort Ross Chapel. In 1994 the speaker of the Upper House of the Russian Parliament made a pilgrimage to Fort Ross, and as a result of this visit, this California park has been nominated to become a Russian historic landmark.

Equally exciting and with more long-term benefits to Fort Ross have been the visits by scholars and museum professionals, many of whom have been sponsored by the Fort Ross Interpretive Association. At last much exchange of information, dialogue and mutual inspiration are taking place.

In 1990 with the help of the Advisory Committee and money from the Save the Redwood League, and the 1988 Park Bond Act, State Parks was able to purchase over 2100 acres of land. Fort Ross State Historic Park is one of the few historic sites in California not impinged upon by modern development. Visitors can truly step back to previous eras to experience the isolation of living at this spot.

Early this same year State Parks also dissolved the Citizen's Advisory Committee. The Fort Ross Interpretive Association continues to promote interpretive and educational activity at the park. Association staff and volunteers manage the museum Book and Gift Shop, and support the park's Living History Day and its Environmental Living Program for children. Staff and volunteers are organizing and cataloguing the Fort Ross Library, the extensive photo collection and archives, and have researched and developed a costume collection. Association membership dues and profits from the sale of items in the store are used for interpretive activities, research, improvements to the park, acquiring books for the library and funding publications about the history of Fort Ross.

As we head into the 21st century, partnership between state parks and private citizens continues. All that has happened in the past one hundred years to preserve and restore Fort Ross is experience with great value for the next one hundred years. Though the specific challenges will be different, the basic tasks of preservation and understanding and transmitting the past remain. May the legacy of park development in California, as well as Fort Ross, inspire the next generation of caretakers.



*For all those who lent scrapbooks and papers, who read with a critical eye, and who translated without pay, a big thank you!*

*Maria Sakovich*

**DIARY OF FR. MARIANO PAYERAS**  
**TRAVELS OF THE CANON FERNANDEZ DE SAN VINCENTE TO ROSS**

Bancroft Manuscript Collection MS C-C18 pages 411-428, translated and edited by Nicholas Del Cioppo, 1979

October 11, 1822. Diary of the travels which were undertaken under the auspices and assistance of the Imperial Commissioner Dr. Don Augustin Fernandez de San Vincente to the establishment called Ross, situated at 38 degrees, 47 minutes latitude...

At a distance of two leagues is found the river named San Ignacio. It was described by our noble companion, the Captain Arguello during his expedition of 1821 as being thirteen leagues long. When it is dry, the mouth is completely closed, and even when it is open and in a swollen state, it is only passable by canoe or balsa. At the mouth, some of the waters are received from the sea. At a distance of one and one half leagues from this river which terminates in the Bodega hills, we come upon the foothills of Ross. We then pass the river called Maria which has on it's banks some small trees and springs. Keeping on this course, we begin to ascend the hills of Ross, never leaving sight of the inaccessible sea whose waves break on the steep rocks. Once in the hills we begin a steep ascent which is not, however, dangerous but continues for more than two leagues. All at once we come upon a place of many trees; redwoods, pines, evergreen and other oaks, laurels, and madrones. Upon descending a high hill for about one league, and slightly toward the west, we find the object of our search after having traversed six and one half leagues from the green arroyo...the Russian fort. It was called Ross by it's commander and founder, Kuskov. the Christian Indians there told me of another place, and this was confirmed by the chief, that was founded by Karl Schmidt for the Russian Americans. Following this conversation, we were left to receive the commander and his four aides. At this time we were saluted by four cannon salvos, emanating from the two bastions situated in the northern and southern corners of the square.

One league before we arrived, a horse was dispatched for Don Luis, our captain, and a servant announced the departure of our followers. This was done that we might conduct business with the Imperial governor. Later they returned with the announcement that we might continue and that we would be received with hospitality.

Upon seeing us at a distance at the foot of the hill, Commander Carlos Schmidt left the square in the fort, and a young servant of twenty-three years erected a white flag of peace some two hundred paces west of the fort in a visible place. In front of the commander, he raised the green and blue flag of Russian commerce.

We were received at the foot of the hill by a four cannon salute and with the utmost graciousness possible from the commander, his aides and all the people. After more salutes and compliments we left his three-story house of eight rooms (which were very well distributed) accompanied by other men who live there. The fort is situated atop a mesa which is surrounded by ravines which abut the sea. It is constructed of

redwood planks (there is no other wood used in any of the structures) and forms a palisade. It is four varas high, uniformly, and is surmounted by a beam set with pointed stakes intended to dissuade any assault. It has three gates; one to the northeast, one to the west, and one to the southeast. Within the square are: the commander's house; two warehouses for cloth, furniture, household goods, and the like; another warehouse filled with provisions for the fort; a barracks and three officials houses; two bastions, one in the northern corner of the square mounting five cannons on two floors, and another bastion in the southern corner mounting four cannons. In the other two corners are two sentry boxes from which the sentinels chime bells each hour. Also within the square are four small cannons (violentos) mounted on carriages.

Outside the fort a stream runs within a deep ravine just south of the fort. In this ravine are located a blacksmithy and a shop where they store and work wood used to construct the ships they launch. Three brigantines have already been built, and there is enough wood for another. In the bank of the stream they have a forge and a bathhouse. These are made of wood also. Here nothing is built of stone, adobe, or cement (lime). When I mention the bathhouse, be aware that I believe they are like those used by our Indians. Inside the bathhouse, they have built a rectangular stove of stone, like those in which they bake bread. Above are two high rooms which have iron grates. On these are set stones like those the Indians use to cook their acorn gruel. These stones are heated until they become red hot. In this state, they sprinkle them with water until the steam rises through the upper openings of the two mentioned rooms. They enter naked and soon begin to sweat oceans. Those that are situated on tiered benches to the side of the oven, amuse themselves with colorful stories. While at Bodega, I wanted to see one in operation. The order was transmitted to stir the fire and sprinkle on the water. My head became so light that I had to soon open a window.

In this same area, along the stream, and in all other places nearby, they have their kitchen gardens, there they grow very fine vegetables. Nearby are their wheat fields. These produce little, and that is of poor quality due to the extraordinary cold and constant fog. To the northeast, at a cannon shot's range, they have their cemetery which is without an enclosure.

In the graves are some distinguished persons. For the three honored founders, they place a marker made of three graduated tiers, larger to smaller. Atop this pyramid is a globe surmounted by a cross. The cross is painted white and black and as this is located on the side of the hill visible from the fort, the attention of the viewer is immediately called to it. Above other Christians, they build a box. Above the Kodiaks, they place only a cross. We saw many patriarchal crosses—these appear with a small crossbar above, below that a larger crossbar, and below that a diagonal beam which we believe was like our INRI.

To the north of the fort, at a distance of two cannon shots, they operate a fine windmill, of which the foundation is wood. To the north-northwest is located a beautifully constructed long granary. In it we saw all their gathered wheat, still on the stalk. As the climate is so moist, they have built a drying chamber with a stove. The wheat is thoroughly dried before flailing. Directly north is a cairn of natural (rough) marble pieces, and in this they propped the flag previously mentioned. Finally to the west, at about a rifle shot's distance, there is a long structure of two parts, similar to our houses which we call dobles. This has two openings which look upon the square. In the middle of each part is a door, in front of which is a beautifully built corral enclosed by a stake palisade. To the northwest is another for the sheep, and to the south one for the cattle. I have heard that they have one to two hundred cattle and two thousand sheep. When it rains or is cold, they go inside, when it is good weather, they go outside. Although worthless, they save the excrement of the animals. It is also said that they make fine cheeses, and their meat appears to be very savory and palatable.

To the south of these corrals are the houses of the Russians, their servants, the Kodiaks, and of the Christian Indians, proportionate to their income. All the houses as well as the mill are built of squared beams set upon one another. The roofs are made of planks joined by fillets. Each roof has a gutter to prevent rain from leaking inside.

As the redwood is so common and accessible, matures quickly, is pliable (soft) and as it is a wood they regard with affection, it does not rot, and is delightful to the sight, it is found all over their establishment. Their houses are almost all extremely comfortable because of the good glass used in their windows.

A companion said the sentry box to the east played the *Ave Maria* the time that we [word missing], but I later understood that it was just a call to dismiss the workers.

In the commander's living room, there was a tryptich. In this were pictures of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and Saint Nicholas. At the base was written "*Templum non Vidi in Ea.*" When in the chapel, we noticed there were no priests. Who administers the sacraments? Now I will tell a story concerning the delaying of the marriage of a Russian-Indian creole because of some doubt surrounding his baptism, and for other related spiritual

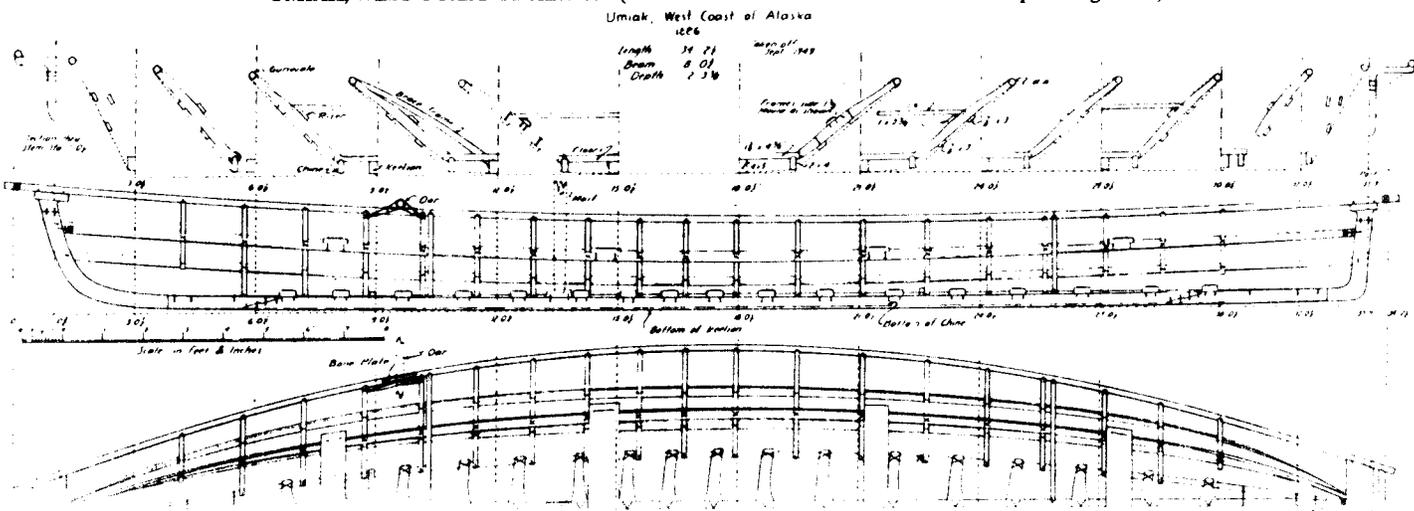
points. An officer second class, Theodor Svinin, related that all who live in Russian territory are legitimately baptized, as well as confirmed. To assure this, the creole was placed before me. How commendable for the bishop that he has assistance over Kodiak baptisms in this establishment. While we were there a priest came and took care of that which remained. At other times, these needs are ministered by the commander (Don Carlos confirmed one) and the governor at Sitka. The treatment given to us by the commander, to the most minor of the many, while we were there was unsurpassable given the nature of the area. The courtesy, respect, attention, and graciousness were of a superior degree.

The first night that we remained there, we were entertained with fireworks and a full orchestra played in the Russian manner which amused us more for its foreignness than for its agreeableness.

Don Carlos made a generous offer to take us to Bodega in his fifteen-oared launch. The only problem was to travel in the boat which was made of many seal skins after the fashion of the Kodiak kayaks. The skins were stretched over the poles of [avetlano?] instead of timbers. Don Carlos assured us repeatedly of its safety and that in three hours we would be in Bodega, a distance of thirty miles by sea. We were eager to view the coast from the sea and also the port [of Bodega]. On the 24th at about 8:30 in the morning we embarked on the south commissary at the foot of the hill near the blacksmithy, near where the mouth of the creek emptied. With ultimate civility our officers took leave of the Russians who saluted us with a four cannon salvo, and waving their hats, they cheered us three times; "Hurrah, Hurrah, Hurrah!" This was our farewell.

The sea was calm and as there was no wind; we moved along with only oars. Because of the motion of the sea off Bodega, I threw up three times. During that time my pilot remained calm and navigated with extra care. The skin covering of the launch became translucent in the water, despite it's coat of grease and oil. Upon arriving off Bodega, we attempted to enter at a point northeast, but the pilot made us pass this point so that we finally arrived at three in the afternoon. In a short while we noticed an official and retinue with horses at the opposite point of the port. Later they told us that only small boats may anchor inside the bay. We all ate together in the houses there.

UMIAK, WEST COAST OF ALASKA (version of seal skin covered launch described in preceding article)





(more gardens)

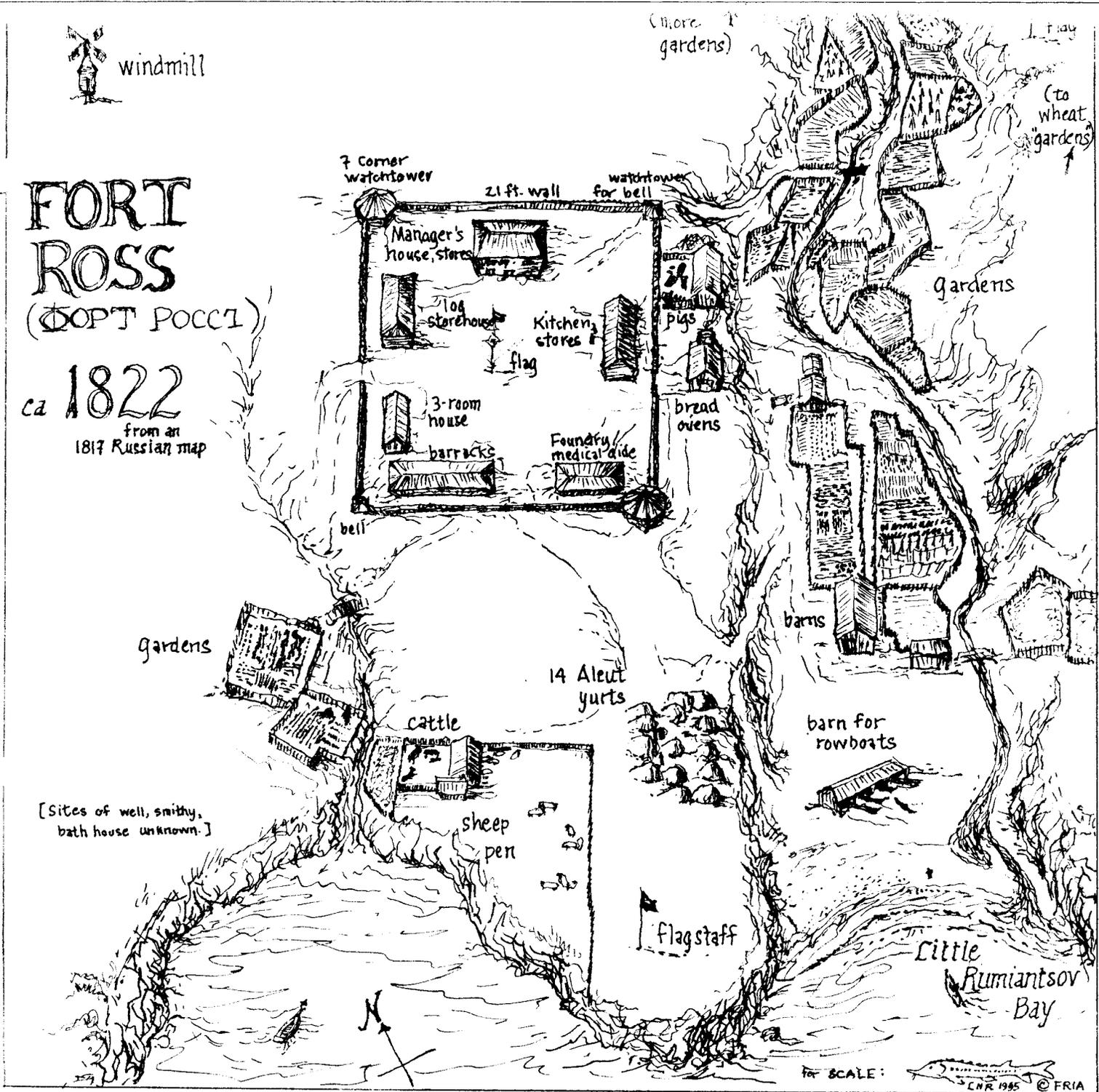
1. way

(to wheat gardens)

# FORT ROSS

(ДОПТ РОСС)

ca 1822  
from an  
1817 Russian map

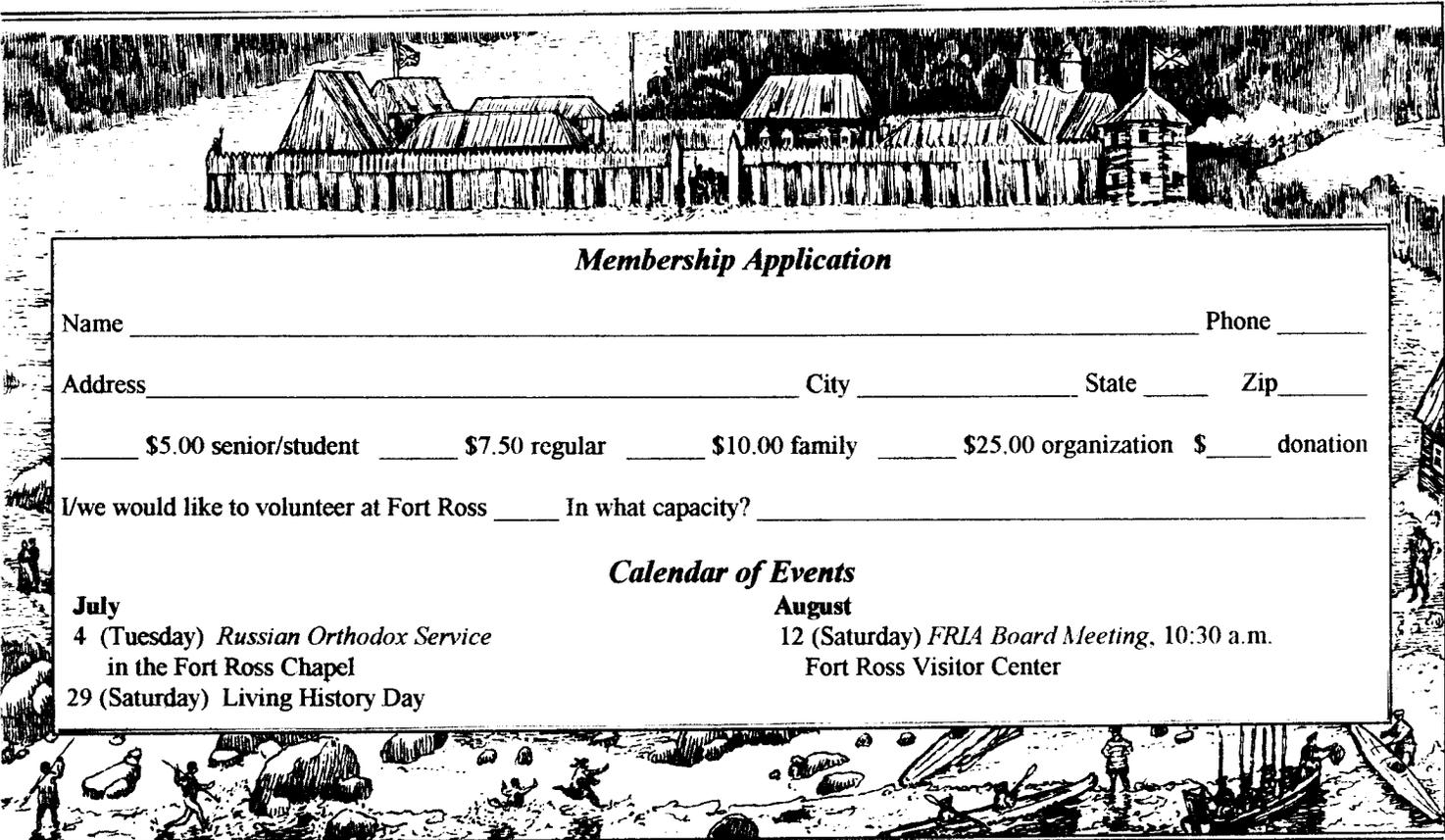


## FORT ROSS LIVING HISTORY - JULY 29, 1995

Throughout the day, over one hundred costumed participants will recreate the sights and sounds of a day in the life of this nineteenth century Russian-American Company settlement. The Slavyanka Choir will perform a cappella Russian secular and liturgical music. The year is 1822 when Mexican envoy Don Agustin Fernandez de San Vicente arrived with some questions about the Russian's right to be in Alta California—expect his arrival to be saluted by a cannon blast or two. Around noon (arrival time may vary depending on weather conditions), look for the arrival of the *Mentor*, a Yankee trading vessel recently returned from Canton. Feel free to chat about the life and times of this remote settlement of nineteenth century Russia with the knowledgeable Russian-American Company representatives you will meet.

**Tentative Schedule:** 10:00 Gates open; 10:45 Slavyanka Choir performs Russian liturgical music; 11:30 Father Mariano Payeras arrives from Spanish California; 12:30 The ship *Mentor* arrives at Fort Ross Cove; 2:00 Slavyanka Choir performs Russian secular music; 2:45 Father Payeras arrives (repeat of earlier performance); 3:00 Musket and cannon demonstration; 3:15 Trade with Hudson's Bay Company; 3:45 Baidarka skills demonstrated in Fort Ross Cove; 4:30 Closing ceremonies; 5:00 Gates close

Bring your picnic—there will be no food available for the public at the park. Fort Ross is twelve miles north of Jenner on Highway One. Cost is \$8.00 per car, \$7.00 seniors. For further information, call (707) 847-3286.



### Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$5.00 senior/student \_\_\_\_\_ \$7.50 regular \_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 family \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 organization \$ \_\_\_\_\_ donation

I/we would like to volunteer at Fort Ross \_\_\_\_\_ In what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

### Calendar of Events

#### July

- 4 (Tuesday) *Russian Orthodox Service*  
in the Fort Ross Chapel
- 29 (Saturday) *Living History Day*

#### August

- 12 (Saturday) *FRLA Board Meeting, 10:30 a.m.*  
Fort Ross Visitor Center

### Fort Ross Interpretive Association

**Board of Directors:** Violet Chappell, Gloria Frost, Laurie Horn, David Kenly, Lenore Kosso, Nicholas Lee, John Middleton, Jeannette Rosson, Maria Sakovich, John Sperry, Frieda Tomlin, Nancy Walton, David Willson

**Staff:**

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Lyn Kalani, bookstore manager & administration, newsletter editor  
Lake Perry, bookstore assistant, mail order, membership  
Sherry Madrone, substitute bookstore assistant

**Bookstore Volunteers:**

Jaci Hallett, Moses Hallett, Elizabeth Cresswell

**Membership Chair Volunteer:**

Jodi Sperry

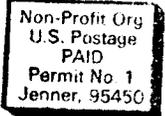
#### Mission of the Fort Ross Interpretive Association

The mission of the Fort Ross Interpretive Association, Inc. is to promote for the benefit of the public the interpretive and educational activities of the California Park Service and Fort Ross State Historic Park.

- ◆ To enhance and conserve the interpretive and educational resources of Fort Ross State Historic park, as well as those of the State Park Service.
- ◆ To sponsor, publish, distribute, and sell appropriate items which increase visitor understanding and appreciation of Fort Ross State Historic Park.
- ◆ To acquire materials and equipment for the use in the educational and interpretive programs of Fort Ross State Historic Park.
- ◆ To develop and maintain a library.
- ◆ To preserve historical material associated with Fort Ross State Historic Park, and to provide and maintain adequate and secure storage facilities in an archivally sound environment.
- ◆ To sponsor, support, and assist scientific research and investigations relating to Fort Ross and presentation of these studies to the public. To promote interpretation that reflects current research.
- ◆ To plan, organize, and implement fund raising programs to support the interpretive and educational activities of Fort Ross State Historic Park and of the State Park Service.

### Fort Ross Interpretive Association

19005 Coast Highway One  
Jenner, CA 95450  
(707) 847-3437



**Please check your newsletter label to determine membership expiration!**