



FORT ROSS
CONSERVANCY

NEWSLETTER

www.fortross.org

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News from the Fort Ross Conservancy

As our bicentennial draws to a close we want to thank the many people who made this year so remarkable. We would like to thank several local businesses, in particular Fort Ross Winery and Raymond's Bakery, for going that extra mile for Fort Ross. We send special thanks to the Renova Fort Ross Foundation for underwriting many significant projects and events over the last 18 months, and Chevron, Transneft, and Sovcomflot for helping us make Fort Ross Bicentennial Weekend a smashing success. And we send thunderous applause to our neighbors and friends both at our doorstep and across the globe for helping us put Fort Ross on the world map. We worked hard and had some good times along the way.

As we look towards the new year it's abundantly clear what our priorities must be going forward. **Fort Ross**

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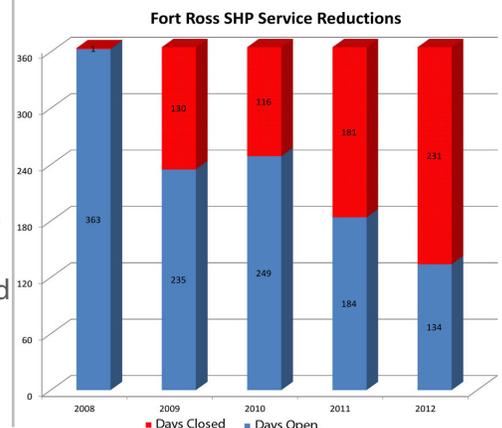
Pyatnitsky Choir at the Bicentennial Weekend. Photo by Paul C. Miller

Conservancy's primary goal in 2013 is to get Fort Ross and surrounding parks open to the public. Please know that while corporations have generously funded big projects and events over the last 18 months, no corporations are contributing operational funding to Fort Ross. Many of our parks are closed year round, or only open a few days a week, as part of the service reductions brought on by State Parks budget crisis. Here's the current list:

- Fort Ross—open weekends only
- Reef Campground—closed year round
- Salt Point –open
- Gerstle Campground—closed ½ the year
- Fisk Mill Day Use—closed year round
- Stump Beach Day Use—closed year round
- Kruse Rhododendron reserve—closed year round.

REEF CAMPGROUND

Reef Campground has been closed to the public since 2010 under Russian River District's service reduction policy – putting it in a rather grey area of not officially closed, yet not open to the public. Fort Ross Conservancy has submitted a proposal to Russian River district to operate Reef Campground as a concession.



The goal of this concession contract is to open a closed campground and provide our visitors inexpensive accommodations within walking distance of Fort Ross. Because Fort Ross is not in proximity to any urban centers, Reef Campground is essential to:

- Support events at the Fort (e.g., provide camping for volunteers who come to work our events),
- Reduce wear and tear on the fort by providing a place other than the historic compound for accommodations,
- Provide facilities for expanding our interpretive programs,
- Encourage general visitation to this pristine stretch of the Sonoma coast.

Depending on the negotiation process, FRC would like to open Reef in Spring of 2013. All proceeds from Reef campground will be part of FRC and will be spent in accordance with our non-profit mission.

NEW PROGRAMS, NEW DIRECTIONS

In addition to working towards getting parks open to the public, FRC is expanding its advocacy to better focus on the marvelous natural history that our cultural history rests upon – after all, visitors come for the beauty, outdoors, and history that the 9500 acres of Fort Ross and Salt Point parks offer. To that end, we are happy to announce several new programs and events for 2013.

PARK CHAMPIONS PROGRAM AT FORT ROSS & SALT POINT

With generous support from California State Parks Foundation, FRC and State Parks are organizing a series of trail maintenance days in 2013. **Free camping will be provided for all volunteers. Our first work day will be March 23, with volunteers brush clearing trails leading from Salt Point's Gerstle Cove campgrounds to the day use areas/visitor center.** For a list of volunteer work days scheduled for 2013, see our website at www.fortross.org.

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

FRC supports the development of a State Parks Fort Ross Trail Plan, and in 2013 we will seek outside funding to support the creation of a Fort Ross trail plan. A trail plan paves the way to a trail system that protects the natural and cultural resources while meeting the recreational and interpretive needs of its potential users. Currently Fort Ross doesn't have extensive trails to speak of, especially trails east of Hwy 1, but without a trail plan, we can neither extend nor create new trails within the park.

MARINE MAMMAL YOUTH PROGRAM

In 2013, FRC will begin the process of creating a marine ecology program at Fort Ross aimed at middle and high school students. The program will focus on marine mammal



monitoring & the ocean's health, making the connection between resources today and throughout the last few centuries. FRC has written for several grants and expects to write a few more as the project launches. If you are interested in participating, volunteering, or hearing more about this program, email us at info@fortross.org. We welcome your ideas.

MARINE MAMMAL MONITORING PROGRAM

On a related note, FRC aims to kick off a Marine Mammal Monitoring program, providing weekly observation of the mammals off of Seal Point Rocks just to the north of the Fort Ross parking lot. This project will be integrated into our marine mammal ecology program for youth, but we will also need additional dedicated adult volunteers to get proper training and help drive the program. We received a generous grant from California State Parks Foundation to purchase tripods and spotting scopes, so come join the fun while helping us track the health of our ocean. To learn more about either of these efforts, contact us at info@fortross.org

Fort Ross Windmill



First public turning of the windmill. Photo by Paul C. Miller

Join the FRIENDS OF THE FORT ROSS WINDMILL

Fort Ross is now the proud caretaker of a historic Fort Ross windmill, a full-size replica constructed in Russia and donated to Fort Ross by Victor Vekselberg's Link of Times foundation, a Russian-based cultural and historical nonprofit organization. The mill is a visually appealing icon that will surely bring visitors to Fort Ross to learn more about our historic agricultural traditions.

It's been several months since its installation, and the windmill is standing tall after weathering its first Sonoma coast storms. However, this structure requires care, and in particular its moving parts need to spin and turn on a regular basis. We are scheduling monthly maintenance events where we will turn the millhouse and spin the blades. Our first event in November was both fun and educational, and we had an enthusiastic turnout. At future events, once we get better acquainted with the mechanisms, we may turn the

blades into the wind and grind grain, weather permitting.

In 2013, our first Friends of the Fort Ross Windmill gathering & turning is scheduled for Saturday, January 19 at 1pm. If you'd like to join the **Friends of Fort Ross Windmill** group and stay tuned in to all mill-related events & news, please send us mail at info@fortross.org.



Windmill builders: Alexander Popov, Anton Maltsev, Chris Weiss, Keith Alward and Alexei Tereshkin.

Service Reductions at Fort Ross:

Fort Ross is only open on Saturdays and Sundays and December 26 through January 1st. It will be closed on Christmas day. Park grounds are open from sunrise to sunset; the parking lot, visitor center and the fort buildings are open from 10AM to 4:30PM.

Service reductions at Salt Point:

Woodside Campground - Closed
Fisk Mill Day Use - Closed
Stump Beach Day Use - Closed
Gerstle Cove - Open

New at Fort Ross Gift Shop:



☞ Many varieties of delightful holiday ornaments, Russian chocolates & kvass, Khokloma lacquer ware, jewelry, notecards by local artists, felted wool/silk scarves, handmade Pysanky eggs, and matryoshkas.

☞ *Russian California: Hidden Stories from Fort Ross and Beyond*

This bilingual large format hardcover book tells colorful stories of the Russian settlement's early years, incorporating striking photos, paintings, essays, & letters. ☞ Glenn J. Farris, retired Senior State Archaeologist for the California State Parks and current Fort Ross Conservancy board member, has published *So Far From Home*, by Heyday.

"The Gravenstein was introduced to western North America in the early 19th century, perhaps by Russian fur traders, who are said to have planted a tree at Fort Ross in 1811."

Origins of an Apple: The Gravenstein & Fort Ross

by Susan Rudy

Dozens of websites and sources state that the Gravenstein apple so famous across Sonoma County was brought to Sonoma by the Russians who settled Fort Ross. However, when you analyze the historic records, this romantic tale is at best an urban legend.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORT ROSS ORCHARD

One key item that the Russian American Company left behind at Fort Ross when they departed in 1842 was a one-acre fenced orchard with approximately 260 fruit trees, a number of grape vines, and a small house. The orchard was a rarity in those early days; although some Missions did cultivate fruit trees, orchards were not found in Mexican and Californio homes.

The Fort Ross orchard started around 1814, when the Russians gathered a variety of unnamed fruit trees—apples, pears, cherries, quince, peach and grapes. These plants, often delivered by ships captains who provided the Ross settlement with goods, came in the form of seedlings gathered from San Francisco, Monterey, and Peru. The specific provenance of these seedlings is unknown.

The orchard was maintained in a somewhat lackadaisical fashion. As

was typical in the mid-19th century, trees were planted close together in a random fashion and varieties were mixed. The vines probably used the trees for support, climbing into their branches. Watering and pruning was non-existent. Yet many trees survived and thrived.

When Augustus Sutter purchased Fort Ross in 1843, he transferred the moveable assets to his settlement in Sacramento. The orchard was left unattended but not forgotten. Also in 1843, Cyrus Alexander, for whom the Alexander Valley was named, traveled for several days from inland Sonoma County to Fort Ross to collect seeds and sprouts from the Russian orchard to start his own. Obviously, the site was understood to be a rare resource for fruit tree starts.

The Russian orchard was enlarged several times by subsequent owners. William Benitz (owner from 1845-1867) added trees to the original orchard and established 1500 apple trees outside of the Russian orchard's footprint. George Call and his family



Gravenstein apple in the orchard. Photo by Susan Rudy

(owners from 1867-1976) continued to interplant new trees in the Russian orchard. Neither owner documented the names or locations where they planted these newer additions – but they both greatly expanded the Russian orchard's boundary.

The orchard straddles the San Andreas fault line, and the 1906 earthquake caused enormous damage to the orchard. The quake toppled trees and steepened the slope on a portion of orchard floor. Though the Calls continued to harvest many apples from the trees that survived, no new trees were added to the Russian orchard after the 1906 earthquake.

THE HISTORY OF THE GRAVENSTEIN APPLE

The Gravenstein is a beloved and delicious apple closely identified with Sonoma County, and Sebastopol in particular where it is grown extensively. It is a roundish often lopsided apple with greenish skin overlaid with reddish stripes. It ripens in late summer during its short two-week season, and is not a good “keeper.” However, as a baking apple, it is unsurpassed.

This variety was introduced into the United States around 1790. Thought to have originated in Italy in about 1669, it got its name after being grown in the Duke of Augustinberg’s garden at Graasteen (Gravenstein) in Holstein - once part of Germany, now Denmark. In 1847, the Gravenstein was one of the varieties of fruit tree brought as grafts into Oregon by Henderson Leulling and William Meek by wagon pulled by oxen. Leulling and Meek established the first nursery on the Pacific Coast.

THE GRAVENSTEIN & FORT ROSS

The Gravenstein apple has often been associated with Fort Ross. Articles and websites claim that the Gravenstein apple in the west originated at Fort Ross – brought

by the Russians from Russia. We know this can’t be the case for a number of reasons, many of which were touched on:

- Russians did not bring “Russian” fruit trees to Fort Ross. They planted trees that originated in North and South America, not from Russia.
- Apple trees live a maximum of 150 years. The likelihood of a Russian apple tree surviving –it would be between 170-200 years old–is extremely low. Though there is a Gravenstein-type apple growing in the orchard area, it is located outside the footprint of the original Russian orchard. Because we know that both William Benitz and George Call interplanted new, unnamed trees into the old orchard, we can state that it was probably planted during the Ranch era.
- Gravensteins were introduced to the Pacific Coast via the Oregon Trail in 1847 – five years after the Russians left Fort Ross.

In hindsight, it’s likely that the tradition of identifying the Gravenstein as a Russian tree from Fort Ross probably originated with the Call Family. During their years at Ross, they assumed that the trees in the “Old Orchard” were of Russian descent. Further research has shown this to not be true.



Harvest 2012. Photo by Paul C. Miller

Interested in reading more on the history of orchards and old apple trees? Here are two very wonderful books you might consider:

Susan Dolan/National Park Service
Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States, with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places.

Creighton Lee Calhoun, Jr.
Old Southern Apples: A Comprehensive History and Description of Varieties for Collectors, Growers, and Fruit Enthusiasts.

Also available on the Fort Ross Conservancy website (www.fortross.org)
Lynda S. Stainbrook
Fort Ross Orchards: Historical Survey, Present Conditions and Restoration Recommendations. 1979.

Kashia-Fort Ross Bicentennial Expedition to Russia

by Billyrene Marrufo Pinola

My name is Billyrene Marrufo Pinola, and I am a member of the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians. I lived in the surrounding area of Metini (Fort Ross). I went to school at Fort Ross Elementary School from kindergarten through eighth grade. My grandmother Julia Marrufo used to tell me stories of Metini while growing up. I used to go to her house on the reservation during the summer when I was out on school break. Later we moved back to the reservation and as she got older, she would stay the night at our house sometimes, and she'd sleep next to me. We would lie there while she would tell me stories of the surrounding areas of Kashia and the

names of the different places. Now my father, the oldest elder of our tribe, does the same thing, telling me stories of the past.

The reason I'm telling you a little about myself is because seven of our tribal members went on the Kashia-Fort Ross Bicentennial Expedition to Russia in September of this year. It was a beautiful trip. It was remarkable to hear all these stories of our people while growing up and then be able to go back to the museum that holds some of our regalia, along with belongings from the Coast Miwok. I will never probably in my lifetime feel what we felt back there. As we

stepped out of the bus to go into the museum you could feel our people waiting for us. You could feel the happiness, and the sadness. I felt my knees weakening as I wanted to cry like if death was near, but happy at the same time. We as Kashia people all have history at Metini, sad to say some good and some not so good. I have been blessed to have seen and felt our history while in St. Petersburg. I hope one day all our people's stories can be heard. Mine is just one small piece of this story.

Yahwiw
Thank you.



Billyrene Marrufo Pinola and her husband Lester at the Kunstkamera, St. Petersburg Russia. Photos by David Sus Susalla.

A New Ranch Era Discovery

by Lynn Hay Rudy

The work of a Fort Ross historian, professional or amateur, requires sifting through large quantities of very familiar information concerning this area's long Kashaya, Russian, and Ranch era history. It's always a "Eureka moment" when something new turns up, and we working on the Ranch era had just such a find recently.

Recently, Ferne Fedeli, a Pt. Arena Library volunteer, read my book *The Old Salt Township* and got in touch. Apparently her grandmother, Mamie (Morrill) Bidwell -- the Morrills also had a Timber Cove connection in that they are descended from the Ruoffs of Timber Cove, but that's a story for another day -- was the first teacher at the Jenner School in 1904. She brought with her the Morrill Family Bible. This massive book, printed in 1873, celebrated the second marriage of Francis (Ruoff) Park and Louis Baxmann, and it had three brightly colored pages of family records and four pages of 1850s and 60s photographs of Timber Cove settlers, the Parks, Thomases and Ruoffs, which had never been seen outside of the family.

The last portrait found in the bible was truly the jackpot: a copy of a painting of Christian Friedrich Ruoff as a very young man. Ruoff, born in Stuttgart, Wurttemberg, Germany in 1801, died at Timber Cove 15 December 1854, and his is the first grave marked in the Timber Cove Township. While Ruoff did not live at Timber Cove long, he left four children, twelve grandchildren and many great grandchildren, at least one of whom stayed on the coast until after 1940.



Portrait of Christian Ruoff from Ferne Fedeli's family bible.

The tragic early death of the father was memorialized by a fine stone (probably purchased by Benitz) on the ocean's edge below the Ruoff home. For decades it stood alone on the cliff, but eventually nine other family members were buried in the small cemetery. The last family burial was for the grandson, Frank Thomas, in 1942, who in the 1920s had built the wall with its onion dome gate posts—causing some of the locals to mistakenly call it the "Russian" cemetery. Today the cemetery, whose onion domes are just visible from Highway One, is privately owned and not accessible to the public; the current owners have also buried family members there.

Stories of the Ruoffs and over 200 pioneer families of the old Salt Point Township will appear in Lynn Rudy's Volume II: Ranch Area Settlers, 1841 - 1941, still in the works. For an unabridged version of this article, please see www.fortross.org

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Photos by FRC except where noted.

Highlights of Upcoming Events:

Winter celebration and windmill turning, January 19

Lecture series on Fort Ross natural and cultural history, planned for late winter and early spring. Check www.fortross.org in January for dates.

Fort Ross Festival, last weekend of July 2013. Save the date!