

# Fort Ross & Salt Point News



March 2017

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Park Champions](#)  
[Spring Celebration](#)  
[Volunteer Coordinator](#)  
[ELP Update](#)  
[Save the Dates](#)  
[How the Muniz Rancho Got Its Name](#)

Fort Ross is open Friday,  
Saturday, Sunday and  
Monday. 10am - 4:30pm

Reef Campground is closed.

The Call House Museum is  
open first weekend of each  
month from 1 to 4 PM.

Windmill Turning - First  
Saturday of each month at 12  
noon

[Please visit our website for  
more information.](#)

Fort Ross Conservancy  
501c3 / California  
Cooperating Association

[www.fortross.org](http://www.fortross.org)  
707-847-3437  
[info@fortross.org](mailto:info@fortross.org)

Environmental Living  
Program  
Marine Ecology Program  
Tours in English & Russian  
Information on special events  
Visitor Center Museum and  
Bookshop

[Register or Update Your  
Email Address](#)

## Contact Us

Fort Ross Conservancy  
19005 Coast Highway One  
Jenner, CA 95450

Dear friends,

It is my sincere pleasure to send our March e-news on International Women's Day. To all the women across the globe we send our warmest greetings. May your opportunities be vast and your circle of supporters strong.

The changing season is surely in the air, and FRC and California State Parks are busily preparing for high season. We'd love to see you for our upcoming [Park Champions work days](#), the first of which (March 11th) we will be coordinating invasive species removal to keep our marine terrace grasslands healthy; on March 26th we will clean up the Salt Point Woodside campground and clear nearby trails. It's a very pleasant way to help with land stewardship and enjoy some time in the field. Questions? Email Susanna Barlow at [susannab@fortross.org](mailto:susannab@fortross.org)

Our coast has witnessed some strange weather lately, with hail, rain, rainbows, bright sun, and more rain -- Fort Ross State Historic Park received 58 inches of rain for the season! Now the land is awash in bright green grasses and wildflowers, and I can highly recommend checking your device at the door for some quality time outside. Last week I walked the bluff from the Salt Point's Gerstle Cove Visitor Center to Stump Beach and it was spectacular. Don't wait for the first day of Spring!

Our official [Spring Celebration](#), Krasnaya Gorka, is Saturday April 22nd, and the beautiful families from Kedry and talented women of Kitka will join us at Fort Ross to formally welcome the new season. It's also an opportunity to celebrate Robin Joy Wellman's long and productive tenure at Fort Ross. After 27 years of service Robin will be leaving Fort Ross for new opportunities. We hope you join us to honor her tremendous dedication. Please read [her letter](#) and let her know how much she will be missed by coming to our Spring Celebration -- details on our [events page](#).

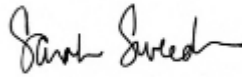
Many of you driving up from the Bay Area may have noticed the iconic wooden **Muniz Ranch** sign just north of Jenner on your way to Fort Ross. We close this newsletter with an essay on "[How The Muniz Rancho Got Its Name](#)," an intriguing essay about the inconsistencies of land grants and map making in early California history, written by our colleague Glenn Farris.

Wishing you all a sun-filled early Spring full of renewal and promise,

-Sarah

[info@fortross.org](mailto:info@fortross.org)  
707-847-3437

[Fort Ross Website](#)



Sarah Sweedler  
Fort Ross Conservancy CEO



---

## **PARK CHAMPIONS**

### **March 11th, March 26th and 27th**



#### **Salt Point State Park** **Saturday, March 11, 10am-3pm.**

Improve habitat by removing invasive fireweed before it produces seeds and reposition rocks from the trail that have been disturbed in recent storms. Kids 10 and up welcome with a legal guardian. Tent camping available in a group setting Friday and Saturday nights.

#### **Sunday, March 26, 10am-3pm.**

Join us for this annual volunteer event to prepare the Woodside Campground for spring reopening. After such a wet winter, we will have plenty to do! Teens ages 14 and up welcome with legal guardian. Tent camping available in a group setting Saturday and Sunday.

#### **Fort Ross State Historic Park** **Monday, Mar 27, 9am-noon**

Hand pull fireweed and thistle in order to prevent the spread of these highly invasive species. Kids 12 and up welcome with a legal guardian. Camping available in a group setting at Salt Point SP on Saturday and Sunday.

Please visit [calparks.org/parkchampions](http://calparks.org/parkchampions) to register and see a complete calendar of upcoming events!

---

## **SPRING CELEBRATION**

**&**

### **Going Away Party for Robin Joy Wellman** **Saturday, April 22nd, 11am - 3:30pm** **Fort Ross State Historic Park**



Join us on Earth Day for our Spring Celebration, Krasnaya Gorka, as the beautiful families from Kedry and talented women of Kitka formally welcome the new season. It's also an opportunity to celebrate Robin Joy Wellman's long and productive tenure at Fort Ross -- after 27 years, Robin will be leaving Fort Ross for new opportunities.

There will be traditional Russian Spring calling songs, circle dances, and games with Kedry & Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble, as well as a bench dedication, Kashaya and Church blessings, and potluck to recognize Robin's many years of service.

Free (but park entrance fees apply). Visit our Events page at:  
<http://www.fortross.org/events.htm>

---

## Meet Our New Volunteer Coordinator Melissa McCarthy



As Volunteer Coordinator I will be working with neighbors and friends from across the Bay Area to encourage volunteerism at Fort Ross and Salt Point parks. I'll be responsible for special events like Fort Ross Festival as well as coordinating all the hard work our locals take on--work such as tending the orchard, fixing the fences, counting marine mammals, maintaining the Call House or keeping our windmill turning. I'm really looking forward to working with you; please feel free to email me at [melissam@fortross.org](mailto:melissam@fortross.org).

My family established their roots in the hills of Cazadero in the 1970s. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area but always treasured the time I spent on my family's land and fell in love with the natural beauty and rich history of Sonoma County. I graduated from UCSC with a degree in Global Economics and found myself drawn to study and explore the world, its cultures, and the varying systems they use. I moved to the area to be closer to my family and help my grandparents on their six-acre vineyard and homestead as they move towards retirement. As a new mother, I am excited to share my experiences and knowledge of the region with my daughter. I have always been intrigued with Fort Ross and the role it plays in connecting the natural, local, Native, Russian, and Alaskan histories and

cultures. I am looking forward to being part of the Fort Ross Conservancy team.

---

## Environmental Living Program



Time really does fly when you're having fun! Fort Ross Conservancy is now in its fifth month of running the fabulous Environmental Living Program (ELP)! It's been quite a learning curve, but we have had a wonderful time learning the ropes and we are thrilled to announce ELP is as strong as ever. In addition to our main ELP Instructor Hank Birnbaum who has over 5 years of experience with ELP, we have now hired 3 new Instructors, Charon Vilnai, Tricia Ialeggio, and Amber Courreges, they make a most excellent team!

April 1st marks the start of Open Enrollment for the 2017/2018 school year. If you are interested in participating and have not already heard from me as the ELP Manager, please make sure you contact me ahead of that date to get on the list. A huge thank you to all the ELP staffers for continuing to give their heart and soul to the program.

Sondra Hunter  
Director of Programs  
[sondrah@fortross.org](mailto:sondrah@fortross.org)

---

## SAVE THE DATES!

### Alaska Native Day May 20th

4th Annual Alaska Native Day to celebrate the Alaska Native history at Fort Ross/Metini and to build community among the Alaska Native people. Kayak race, crafts, dance performance, story telling, and games.



## Fort Ross Festival July 29th

Historical vignettes, hands-on crafts, horse and buggy rides, music & dance from numerous cultures, an international food bazaar -- and of course, the **Fort Ross Beer Garden!**



## Harvest Festival October 14th

Gentle apple picking in the historic orchard, wine tasting, Eastern European music and Kedry, old-world charm of the 19th century Russian settlement.



---

## How The Muniz Rancho Got Its Name

By Glenn Farris

State Archaeologist, California Department of Parks and Recreation



Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley

Fort Ross has been long associated with the Mexican land grant that was claimed by Manuel Torres under the name, the Muniz Rancho. But who or what was Muniz? The name sounds Spanish and yet isn't. Was it a corruption of an Indian name? I found myself puzzling over this piece of trivia and simply was getting no answers until Susan Clark, a local historian from Sea Ranch, gave me a lead by citing the only known explanation of the name. It appeared on page 440 of Honoria Tuomey's *History of Sonoma County, Vol. 1*, published in 1926.

*Muniz Rancho --This grant includes the historic Russian fort of Ross, and all the wide expanse of agricultural and timber lands that for 30 years had been the familiar home of the Russian colonists from 1812. Muniz was the caretaker of Ross for a time, and his name was given the grant.*

However, since no one by the name of Muniz had otherwise appeared in documentation, this explanation was shaky at best. Going back to the original land grant *expediente* for the rancho, dated 1844, and its accompanying map or *diseño*, it struck me that the original land grant request explicitly did not include Fort Ross, but only the extensive area to the south. In fact, Fort Ross, appeared on the *diseño* for the German Rancho which extends to the north to the Gualala River, but only as a locational device, not really claimed to be a part of that rancho either. Somehow, in the American period, the lines were redrawn to include Fort Ross and it has ever since been considered to have been part of the Muniz Rancho. To my frustration, in all the discussion of the rancho in the *expediente*, there is no clue as to the derivation of the name. However, in its original intent, it appears to have been meant to clearly differentiate the property from Fort Ross.

Recently, I came across an earlier *expediente*, dated November 1, 1843, in which a man named Juan Maria Sainz requested the Bodega property. When his request was denied based on the prior claim of "Estevan Smith" (Stephen Smith), he requested the right to plant crops on the "Rancho de Muniny" which he described as having agricultural fields "*a/ otro /ado del rio de Ross, cuyo parage ocupaban los Rusos*" (on the other side of the Russian River which place was [previously] occupied by the Russians). This spelling intrigued me as being possibly closer to the correct name to be associated with the property. I then checked the names of Russians at Fort Ross and one jumped out, Efim Munin. According to Richard Pierce (*Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*), pg. 368) Munin had arrived at Fort Ross in 1820 and had worked there until 1841 when he evidently left with the other Russians. Pierce comments that in 1838, a visiting Russian officer by the name of Zavoiko, met Munin who was at that time in charge of the Kostromitinov Ranch, near the mouth of the Russian River.

It then became clear that Muniny was a Spanish corruption of Munin and in the same way that the Californios would often refer to Fort Ross as Fort Coscoff (i.e., Kuskov), they apparently came to refer to the property surrounding what we know as the Kostromitinov Ranch as "Munin's Rancho." It further seems that Muniz is simply this corruption of the name taken one step further, possibly as a transcription error on the part of the copyist on the land grant documents. And so, in a way, the Tuomey statement is correct, if inexact.

A further level of potential importance of this statement was that the "rancho de Muniny" was described as having a "*sementerías*" (sic, *sementeras*, or field for planting) being "on the other bank of the Russian River," i.e. away from the area of Bodega. This could be important in our attempts to understand the historic layout of the Kostromitinov Ranch.

As a final note, I think it is interesting that Juan Maria Sainz (also sometimes spelled Sais) had two sons, Manuel and Nazario, who were involved in the 1845 raid for Indian labor at Fort Ross led by Antonio Castro and Rafael Garcia, when William Benitz held the property. In Benitz's letter of complaint to the Alcalde of San Rafael Timoteo Murphy, he particularly

mentions "the Saises have threatened to shoot me." This may indicate that they still lived in the neighborhood.

---