

Fort Ross - Salt Point Newsletter

Published by the Fort Ross Interpretive Association—a California State Park Cooperating Association

www.fortrossinterpretive.org

Summer 2007

Cultural Heritage Day

Fort Ross Celebration
of Russian America 1812-1841

July 28, 2007
10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Historical Introduction

The surrounding environment of Settlement Ross (1812-1841) was remarkably like it is today, but you would find cattle pens, agricultural fields and gardens, and many structures that no longer exist outside the stockade (two windmills to the west and north of the fort, and in Sandy Cove a shipyard, forge, blacksmith shop, tannery, cooperage and bathhouse). On the bluff in front of the fort was a Native Alaskan village, and just west of the fort were the wooden houses where most of the Russian-American Company personnel lived with their families. There was a large warehouse in the fort located on the west wall, a barracks on the east wall, and a storehouse on the south wall.

Population of the settlement varied over the years. The term "Creole" designated a social class comprised mainly of citizens descended from Russians married to Native Alaskans and Californians. This group formed a large part of the colony's inhabitants. In 1836 Father Ioann Veniaminov recorded: "Fort Ross contains 260 people: 154 male and 106 female. There are 120 Russians, 51 Creoles, 50 Kodiak Aleuts, and 39 baptized Indians."



Schedule Of Events In The Fort (all times approximate)

- 10:00 Gates open to the fort.
- 10:00 St. Nicholas Cathedral performs a liturgy in the Chapel
- 10:30 Slavyanka Choir performs Russian secular music
- 11:00 Russian Folk Music & Dance
- 12:00 Musket and cannon demonstration
- 12:30 Blessing of the Baidarkas in the Cove
- 1:00 Russian Folk Music & Dance
- 2:00 Slavyanka Choir performs Russian liturgical music
- 3:30 Musket and cannon demonstration
- 5:00 Gates close

Activities Ongoing All Day

- (1) Fort Ross Compound—Join costumed participants for a festive day of Russian singing and dancing in the fort. Demonstrations and activities such as basket making, blacksmithing, spinning, needlework, storytelling, metalworking, woodworking, ropemaking, and historic firearm interpretation will be portrayed. Visitors are invited to join in activities such as dancing.
- (2) Fort Ross Visitor Center—Local Kashaya Natives share traditional language and culture. The rich history of Fort Ross begins with the Native Californian Kashaya Pomo who have inhabited this area for centuries. Descendants of these first inhabitants will tell you about their history.
- (3) On the bluff in front of the fort—Hudson's Bay Camp. The Hudson's Bay Bonaventura Brigade filed past Fort Ross in 1833 and camped 5 miles north, but on this day they will be closer to the fort to share their story.
- (4) Fort Ross Sandy Cove—Explore the beach and Russian camp, and watch demonstrations in the use of Native Alaskan baidarkas (kayaks) throughout the day.
- 5) Food for sale to the public in the Call Garden Picnic Area—

provided by
SEAWEED CAFE of Bodega Bay.

Fort Ross Cemetery Cross Restoration Project

Help Us Restore The Fort Ross Cemetery!

It's been some sixteen years since the Fort Ross cemetery underwent its last round of improvements. FRIA would like to rebuild the crosses in the cemetery using high-quality materials in a style that better reflects the historical record, and we are currently seeking underwriting for the project. The first phase of the project includes building and installing new crosses that reflect the design of the original crosses in the cemetery, as well as an interpretive panel. Our longer term goal is to return the cemetery to as close to its original appearance as possible, based on historical records. The proposed crosses will be made of redwood and will be painted white. Project inspiration and historical research is based on work done by Russian Academy of Science scholar Aleksei Istomin; Senior Counselor of the Russian Embassy in Washington DC, Oleg Stepanov; and former FRIA president John Middleton, whose research supports the cross design shown in the photo. The Fort Ross Interpretive Association has formed a committee to ensure consensus among both religious and secular scholars.



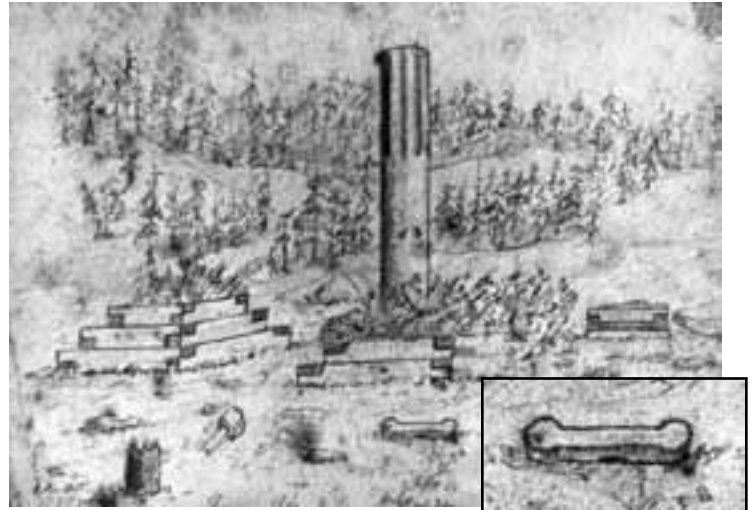
(6)

If you are interested in underwriting the construction of one or more crosses, or if you are interested in building crosses to the dimensions we specify, please contact us at friaadmin@mcn.org. All project sponsors will be acknowledged on an interpretive panel. FRIA's website (www.fortrossinterpretive.org) will soon have additional background information and a more detailed project description.

Sarah Sweedler, President
Fort Ross Interpretive Association

The Cemetery Cross Prototype

The proposed prototype design was based on two historic images from the Fort Ross archives. The first, a drawing from 1875 by Heittell (1) was the earliest image known of the cemetery and its dilapidated monuments. In the centre foreground, beneath the column, is a cross-arm from an orthodox cross. Long assumed to be either a human or animal bone, the lap-join on the underside of the cross-arm not only identifies it as a manufactured piece, but also identifies its method of attachment to the missing upright.



(1)

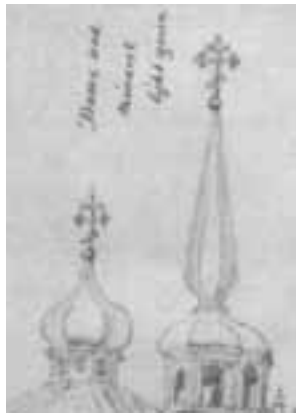
The second image, a photograph from 1895 by an unknown photographer (2) taken from a similar vantage point, shows the dilapidated remains of an orthodox cross to the left of the same column pictured in the 1875 drawing. The cross-arm still has the remains of rounded edges evident in the cross-arm on the ground in the 1875 drawing, though the left side is missing the top half-round, and the right side is missing the bottom half-round. What is interesting in these details is the method of attachment; the missing pieces appear to show that the half-rounds were fastened to the cross arm, rather than the whole being cut from a single piece.



(2)



All cemeteries, while retaining traditional elements, are also subject to fashion, as is everything in life. Choosing a design that reflected the time period of the Ross Settlement (1812-1841) meant locating evidence of cemetery monuments from the same period, preferably in Alaska and in Russia. Photographs of that time period in Alaska are non-existent, and are even extremely rare from Russia. Drawings are more readily available, and one, from 1867 of the "Rear View of the Greek Church in Sitka, Alaska" by W. Hamel (3), clearly shows a similar design in the crosses of St. Michael's Cathedral, built between 1844 and 1848. Only the centre of the three orthodox cross-arms bears this decorative element.



(3)

A photograph of the 300 year old Church of the Assumption, Devyatny, Russia, by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii (4) taken in 1909 also shows the crosses in the cemetery with rounded cross-arm ends, and the trefoil design found on the St. Michael's Cathedral crosses.



(4)

The tradition of painting the cemetery crosses white clearly dates from at least the end of the 19th century, and continues throughout the 20th century in Alaska, as evidenced in numerous photos of churches in the 1940's, such as the Church of the Holy Ascension built in 1895 in Unalaska. (5)



(5)

In building the prototype, these elements were all taken into account. The rounded cross arm end was used because of the two fragments of crosses found in illustrations (1) and (2). They were only added to the centre cross-arm piece based on the St. Michael's cross (3) and on the crosses in illustrations (4) and (5). A trefoil design was considered, but as evidence of the Fort Ross crosses only shows rounded edges, it was abandoned. White painted crosses appear consistent historically both in Russia and Alaska.

In March of 2006 a proposal was made to Fort Ross State Historic Park to replace the fifteen year old crosses in the cemetery with historically researched replacements. Four sponsors came forward to offer crosses based on a prototype built by the author. (6) The photograph accompanying the proposal showed the unpainted cross to reveal construction elements consistent with the researched crosses. Having received no reply to the proposal, the prototype cross, built of redwood from the Fort Ross area, was erected on November 6th, 2006 over the graves of Nicholas and Camilla Rokitiensky in the Serbian Cemetery in Colma. A metal plaque, sent by Vladimir Kolychev of the Russia-America Society in Moscow, bearing the names of Nicholas and Camilla, was affixed to the cross base. The Rokitiensky's graves had been unmarked for 10 years. Professor Nicholas Rokitiensky had been a founding member of the Fort Ross Advisory Committee, FRIA, and an untiring supporter of Fort Ross throughout his life. (7) In addition to the cross and plaque, a small Russian-American Company flag decorates the graves today.

by John Middleton

FRIA now offers its enthusiastic support for this project and is moving forward to secure funds and reach consensus on the cemetery cross restoration project.



(7)

Natural History Gleanings from Salt Point



California State Parks are a summertime haven for many citizens escaping to a pristine and natural landscape to renew and restore themselves. At Salt Point State Park the campgrounds are seething with life and following the human population explosion comes a secondary bloom in the population of Sonoma chipmunks and Stellar jays feasting

on the detritus and crumbs that come with a bustling campground. The overwhelming majority of visitors come to Salt Point State Park in the summer for recreation, enjoying the quiet and solace that comes from being in a spectacular, rugged environment. There is a sub group who visit for the identification and study of specific species, and who are passionate about seeing spring or fall migratory birds, or perhaps to thrill to unusual lichens or spring wildflowers.

The staff at Salt Point was lucky to chance upon an individual who was botanizing in the park and whose chief delight is manzanitas. He brought to our attention that there is a hybrid group of manzanita growing in Salt Point State Park that is unique in Sonoma County. As per Arja Knight in *Flora of Sonoma County*, (1989) this manzanita is identified as *Arctostaphylos nummularia (mendocinensis) x A. uva-ursi*. This close-up view of the leaves was taken at Salt Point. Specimens of *A. nummularia x A. uva-ursi* can also be found at Tilden Regional Park Botanic Garden in Berkeley. Tilden Park probably has the most complete collection of mananitas to be found anywhere. For more information about the park visit Friends of the Regional Park's Botanic Garden at www.nativeplants.org.



Manzanitas are in the Ericacea or heather family, which includes madrones (*Arbutus menziesii*) and the rosebay rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*), all acid loving plants. The name manzanita means little apple in Spanish. California is home to most of the worlds manzanitas, a group of red barked shrubs primarily adapted to summer-dry climates. Manzanitas hybridize readily, so much so correct identification can be bewildering to a beginner.

As more and more development occurs along the coast of California our state, national and county parks are islands of wilderness, or partial wilderness. Within park boundaries issues concerning conservation, habitat protection and the thoughtful stewardship of endemic species are a small but essential component of the park mission. Academics and knowledgeable amateurs are enthusiastically welcomed and encouraged to share their expertise with the rangers in the park. With luck the raw, wild beauty of the Sonoma coast and the secret treasures found here will be preserved for generations to come. An island of preservation for people and manzanitas alike.

by Susanna Barlow
Salt Point Interpretive Specialist



Common Manzanita. Manzanitas are noted for their multiple crooked trunks with glossy dark red bark.

Wreck of the *Norlina* at Gerstle Cove, Salt Point



On August 4, 1926, the Steamship *Norlina*, owned by the Garland Line, departed San Francisco with 400 tons of general cargo and passengers bound for Portland, Oregon. The 386 foot long, 4500 ton coal-fired ship, built in 1911, rounded Point Reyes at 10 PM. Captain Soderlun retired for the night. Thinking he sailed a safe four miles off the rock-infested shore, the skipper left no instructions for the second mate.

When Second Mate Atwood came on duty at midnight, he read the first mate's note to hold to a course of 40 W, Var 22, 9 knots and call the Captain at Point Arena. At about 2 AM Mate Atwood sailed into heavy fog. He signaled for the Captain to come to the bridge, but all attempts to rouse the Captain proved useless. Left on his own, Atwood followed the seaman's rule of "heavy fog, half speed." At 2:30 AM the *Norlina* grounded at Gerstle Cove, Salt Point.

Awake at last, the captain discovered seawater gushing through a 100 foot gash in the hull, rapidly filling the forward hull. He immediately radioed for help, but erroneously reported his position as Horseshoe Point, three miles north of Gerstle Cove.

The tug *Sea Salvor* and the Coast Guard cutter *Shawnee* raced to Horseshoe Point, but could not find the *Norlina*. At about 5 PM she was located at Gerstle Cove. All the passengers were safely off-loaded and the cargo was saved. The wreck was sold to a salvage company who patched up the hull and prepared to tow the ship in October. As the towing started, a large storm swell came up and the *Norlina* hit a reef nearby that nearly broke the ship in half. She was towed closer ashore, salvaged out and blown up. A court inquiry showed that the skipper, second and

third mates had all been drinking, probably leading to the shipwreck.

In a conversation with Johnnie Parmeter, of Stewart's Point and Wilseyville (in the Sierras) in the mid 1980s, he remembered working on the Salt Point Ranch and staying in the old hotel. He said that the hired hands slept in bunks 18" wide hung from the ceilings on chain, five bunks high. When asked when this was, he said 1928. These chain bunks were for the stokers of the coal burning engine of the *Norlina*.

The bow of the *Norlina* can still be seen at lower tides just north of the South Gerstle parking lot, offshore about 70 yards. The boilers, huge pieces of steel, and the 150" long drive shaft delight divers on calm days with good visibility.

The *Norlina* has had an interesting past. As the steamship *Georgiana* (renamed), she sailed to England as a general cargo carrier. She probably sailed through the newly opened Panama Canal. She may have been involved in a sinking of a German U-boat, one of only two sunk by a non-military vessel.

As a shipwreck, she is the second largest on the California coast from Point Reyes to Point Arena. The largest was the *Pacific Enterprise*, 454 feet long and 16,000 tons, which foundered on Point Arena Rock on September 9, 1949.

Today, divers who take abalone near the wreck find that the abalone can be reddish-brown from the rusting iron plates the abalone attach to.

by Ranger Ashford Wood

Water at Fort Ross

One day in conversation at Fort Ross, we were wondering how it might have been to live here in the Russian era days. Because there had been no measurable rain here in January, we realized that water would be the crucial element to ensure success. Without an ample supply, it would mean survival at best; yet there is a well-documented thirty year history of a thriving community here. Where was the source of their daily water? Without pipes or pumps, how was water delivered to the stockade? Ranger Bill Walton picked up on the musings and sparked a conversation filled with his own experiences of water and the history here, and later, other park personnel filled in the technical details of the present water situation. Of course, without rain everything changes drastically. As of this writing in June, the seasonal rainfall from October 2006 to date has been 44 inches. In comparison, 106 inches fell the previous year.

For Settlement Ross, the main source of water was Fort Ross Creek, just southwest of the compound. Imagine: a couple of men would take a cart, loaded with empty wooden barrels, down the road to the creek to be filled. How long would this supply last? Did the outer villages share in this supply or was it just for the fort? If livestock were free ranging, with access to the creek we wondered about untreated surface water and human health. Perhaps the daily samovar provided antidotes to foreign microbes of boiled water and strong tannins.

Bill reminded us that, typically, the Russians developed a secondary source of water. They dug a hole, just about mid-stockade, and found water at 35 feet. The four-by-four foot well was lined with wooden cribbing which has been replaced at least once, sometime before 1974. There has been added a sturdy barrier to protect the well and visitors from each other. "Water is still an issue," Bill said, as the talk about the Russian community and water continued. "Now we pump from the well at the Archy Camp. It's pumped to a treatment plant, then to storage tanks, before it heads downhill for use at the fort compound and visitor center."

Just adjacent to the San Andreas Fault a 60-foot deep well has been drilled to collect water for use at State Historic Park. A major refurbishment of the water plant has been in process the last couple of years. This system, as I understand it, was explained by Cress Cresswell, State Parks Equipment Operator/Water Operator, with additional help from Alfredo Pereyra, maintenance supervisor. Water collects in a slotted iron steel casing, about 6" in diameter, and is pumped by a ½-horsepower submersible pump at a sustainable rate of three gallons per minute, equaling 4,320 gallons per day. Recently installed new plumbing takes the water to the Tank Farm (five holding tanks, most of them new poly tanks rather than redwood tanks, which were used in the past) where it is oxygenated to help precipitate naturally occurring iron. This is the first stage of treatment. From the Tank Farm, the water moves to a pressure pump,

then is injected with chlorine, potassium permanganate, and alum. Then it goes to an eight-thousand gallon clarifying tank. It "rests" here, allowing the iron and arsenic to precipitate and to settle to the bottom. This is where the second treatment and the first chemical treatment take place. Public Health regulations permit 10 ppb (parts per billion) of arsenic to be present in drinking water. Straight out of the ground, there are 250 ppb of arsenic from the Fort Ross well. Finished water here has 3.9 ppb. From this clarifying tank the water is processed through a multi-media filter which removes more particles, and then is sent through a micron filter which removes microbes. Next, it is post-chlorinated and pumped to a new 163,000 gallon steel tank, then to the old 50,000 gallon redwood tank and stored as "finished" water. It is now ready to be distributed for human consumption at the Reef Campground, the fort compound, and the visitor center. There are a multitude of technical issues within this simplified version of capturing potable water at Fort Ross. For example, in addition to the clarifying tanks, there are "backwash" tanks which hold the by-products of filtration. When they are full, the water is "skimmed", and drained to half-full. The sludge at the bottom is drained out into settling ponds called "backwash ponds." The accumulations of sludge have very high concentrations of arsenic and iron and bacteria. Periodically, the sludge must be removed to toxic waste dumps. Trucks take it to the Bay Area, where it is put on rail and taken to Utah to a toxic waste landfill.

Comparing today's water system with the Call Family era model, we see that water was dealt with more simply back in the day. Even so, it took a huge initial effort. They built a wooden flume, or long running three-sided "pipe", up in the east hills. Starting at a collection "box" at a dependable aquifer, the water was gravity-fed to a large concrete cistern. This was built underground on the knoll to the north of the Call House. The system, once installed, was easily maintained. (Old posts, notched to a vee on the top, can be found along the gulches in the hills, remaining evidence of the system.) Unnamed well-informed "locals" suggest that the present-day water source should be one of the prolific springs uphill, emulating the Call system, and thereby mostly eliminating the current, more complicated methods. Of course, bureaucracy would stymie the implementation of this logical solution to costly and technical water retrieval and delivery.

Meanwhile, with water the most essential ingredient in the support of life on the planet, and with at least one billion people living without dependable sources of safe drinking water, the historic and current Fort Ross communities have been fortunate to be water abundant. May it always be so.

by Lake Perry

Ranger Update

On July 1 Ranger Bill Walton retired after 27 years of service to Fort Ross State Historic Park. The staff at Fort Ross have been dreading this date for quite a few years now, accepting it, of course delighting in it for Bill, but braced for the empty wake he will leave behind. Bill, Wally, W2, is a kind and courtly gentleman to staff and visitors alike, always willing to help (and chat!) and the very essence of a ranger who loves being outside, “rangering” as he called it. He is a perfect prince of a man to work with, and fun to boot. His infectious love of geology (his talk last year on Easter Sunday on the San Andreas Fault titled “It’s not my fault” drew throngs of appreciative fans. His fondness for black powder was legendary. He loved to blow things up, or should we say out, loved the fancy foot work of the militia and to shoot the muskets and did the canon presentations with rare aplomb.



Ranger Bill explaining the fence offset in the 1906 Earthquake

A happier retired ranger would be hard to find. Beaming, positively exploding with joy, he now fills his days with extended backpacking and camping trips, woodworking projects, bowl turning, and hand crafted jewelry. The delight of the recently retired, what could be sweeter? With customary modesty, Bill requested no retirement festivities or accolades. Nada. Just a final Kaboom! He is gone. Our loss, his gain.

Visitors to Fort Ross will still find our supportive supervising ranger Heidi Horvitz, and we enthusiastically welcome Ranger Todd Farcau to the team. He came here from the Santa Cruz State Parks, and is hard-working, dedicated, and compassionate. We are grateful for his new energy! He is looking forward to the interpretive and resource management aspects of the park.

In the Russian River District office there is new energy as well. Liz Burko is the new district superintendent who comes from the North Coast Redwoods District, Eel River Sector, and Linda Rath is the new sector superintendent from the Monterey District, Big Sur Sector. Welcome!

Membership Application

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

_____ \$10.00 Senior/Student _____ \$15.00 Regular _____ \$20.00 Family _____ \$25.00 Organization \$_____ Donation

Fria board meetings are scheduled for the second Saturday of every other month.

The next regularly scheduled meeting is Saturday, August 11, at 10:30 AM

www.fortrossinterpretive.org

Visit the Fort Ross web site: www.fortrossstatepark.org



Mission Statement

The mission of the Fort Ross Interpretive Association, Incorporated, is to promote for the benefit of the public the interpretive and educational activities of the Russian River Sector of California State Parks at Fort Ross State Historic Park and Salt Point State Park.

To enhance and conserve the cultural and natural historic, interpretive and educational resources of Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks.

To sponsor, publish, distribute, and sell appropriate items which increase visitor understanding and appreciation of this area.

To acquire materials and equipment to assist in the educational and interpretive programs at Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks.

To develop and maintain a library.

To preserve and archive historical material associated with Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks, and to provide and maintain adequate and secure storage facilities.

To sponsor, support, and assist scientific research and investigations relating to Fort Ross and Salt Point State Parks, 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 interpretive and educational activities at Fort Ross and Salt Point.

Board of Directors: President, Bob Madrone; Vice President, Jim Allan; Recording & Corresponding Secretary, Sarah Sweedler; Treasurer, John Sperry; Directors, Carolyn Coryelle; Ludmila Ershow; Thomas Fujiyoshi; Kent Lightfoot; Marion MacDonald
Staff: Lyn Kalani—Executive Director; Lake Perry & Sarjan Holt—Administrative Assistants; Susanna Barlow—membership secretary.

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