

The orchard is generally open to the public during daylight hours. The site is on Fort Ross Road $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile uphill, northeast from the park entrance gate on Highway One. Parking is limited. Apples and pears are ripe between August and November - picking is allowed in small quantities for personal use only.

The orchard is an old, fragile and living resource - treat it with respect.

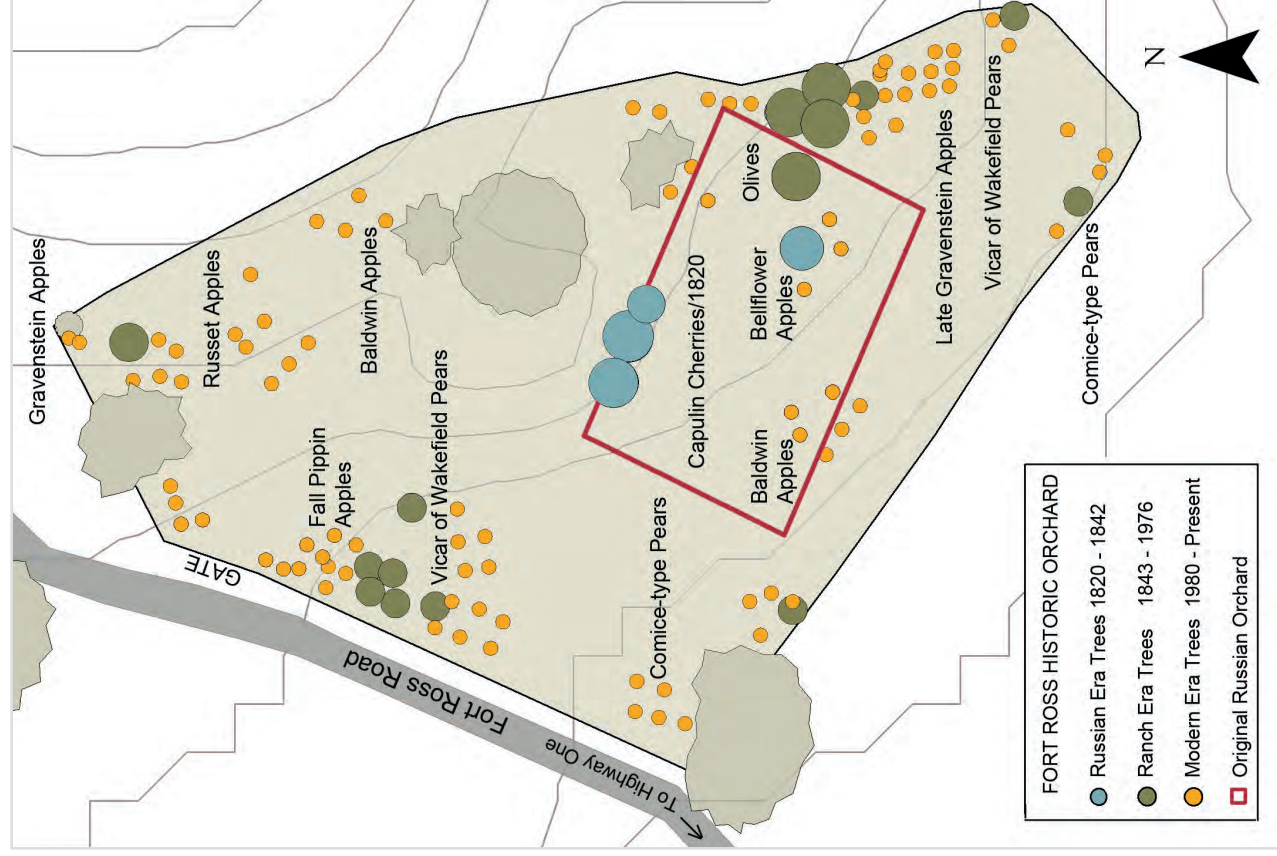
- Do not strike the trees with sticks to harvest fruit.
- Do not climb the trees.
- Do not shake the trees.

Fort Ross Conservancy wishes to thank
Renova Fort Ross Foundation
for their ongoing support of the historic
Fort Ross Orchard.

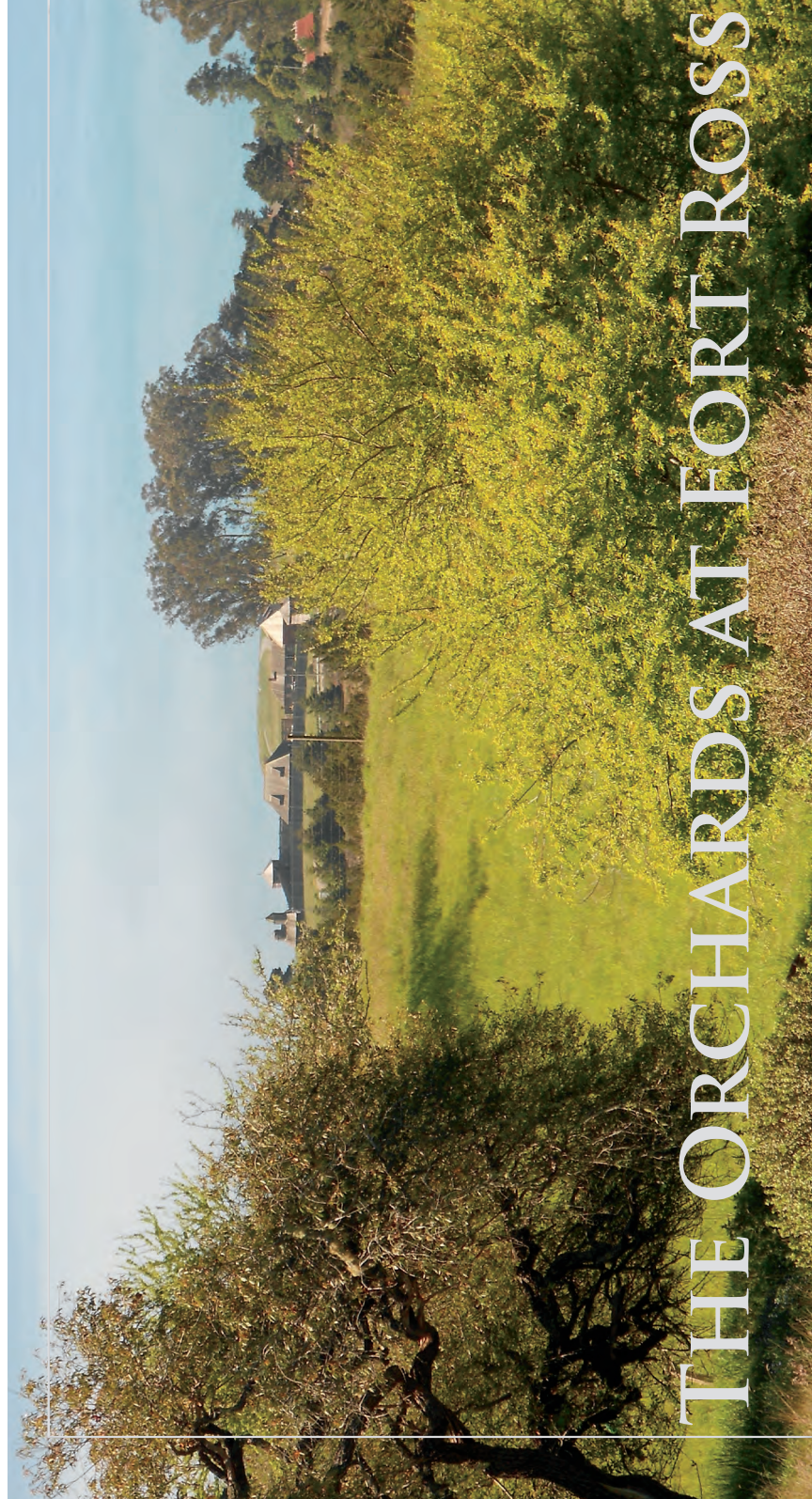
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Fort Ross Conservancy is a California State Cooperating
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THE ORCHARDS AT FORT ROSS

RUSSIAN ERA



The Russian orchard as it may have appeared in 1842.

After the fort was built, in 1814 the Russians established an orchard, surrounded by an 8-foot redwood plank fence to protect it from animals. It was approximately 1.5 acres in size. The first tree planted was a peach, brought from San Francisco. Eventually the orchard also had apple, pear, quince, plum and cherry trees, and also grape vines. The orchard was planted in a style typical of the time: varieties of trees mixed together, not pruned and with tall branches. The grape vines would have grown on the fruit trees. When the Russians sold the fort to John Sutter in 1841, the orchard contained 264 trees, some vines and two small buildings. Four trees from the Russian era still survive today – three Capulin cherries and one Bellflower apple. The probable site of the historic Russian orchard is marked with green posts.



This Bellflower apple tree was probably planted by the Russians between 1814-1842.



The orchards continued to bear fruit into the mid 1900s.

RANCH ERA

William Benitz owned Fort Ross from 1845-1867. During that time he added 450 apple trees and 150 other fruit trees to the Russian orchard. He also established a new orchard with 1,500 named variety apples nearby. The orchards thrived and provided good income. Between 1853 and 1855 he shipped 20,000 lb. of apples from Fort Ross to Sonoma.

George W. Call and his family owned Fort Ross from 1873 to 1976. The Calls added 1200 apple and pear trees to the orchards, and shipped the fruit to San Francisco. They started olive trees from seed and put them in the old orchard. They also planted a new orchard to provide fruit for their family table; the "Plum Orchard" survives today, upslope from the Russian orchard. The Fort Ross orchard is situated directly on the San Andrea Fault, and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake badly damaged the orchard. During the 100 years that the Call Family owned the orchard, many trees aged, died and were not replaced, fences fell and animals were grazed.



The orchard was damaged by the massive earthquake of 1906.



Planted in 1820, this Capulin cherry, brought from the Santa Cruz Mission, lives today.

ORCHARD TODAY

When the orchards came into the California State Park system in 1976 there were 199 trees surviving from the Russian and Ranch Era. In 1985, Park staff and volunteers, recognizing this resource was endangered, put in a protective fence and planted new trees taken from cuttings of the originals. Work continues today with new fencing, preservation pruning and management planning to preserve and protect these fragile living artifacts of Fort Ross history.



Volunteer John Smith plants a new apple tree grown from original orchard cuttings.