

CALL RANCH  
Fort Ross State Historic Park  
19005 Coast Highway One  
Jenner  
Sonoma County  
California

HALS CA-32  
CA-32

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### CALL RANCH AT FORT ROSS STATE PARK

HALS NO. CA-32

Location: 19005 Coast Highway One, Jenner, Sonoma County, CA  
Lat: 38.51958 Long: -123.24696

Significance: The Call Ranch is part of the Fort Ross State Historic Landmark No. 5. The Call family owned the property for 100 years until it was acquired by the California Historical Landmarks League and later became a State park.

History: Call Ranch is part of Fort Ross State Historic Park. George W. Call and his wife Mercedes Leiva Call purchased the Fort Ross property from James Dixon and Lord Fairfax in 1873. Initially the Calls purchased 2500 acres and increased their holdings to 7000 acres. They used the property for agriculture, livestock and shipping. Call came to Fort Ross with his Chilean wife and a fortune he had acquired in South America. He and his family remained on the property for 100 years and in 1979 the property was sold to the California Historical Landmarks Committee.

George Washington Call (1929 – 1907) was born in Ohio and came to California in 1852.

Initially they lived in the Rotchev House and moved into the ranch house when it was constructed in 1878. They had nine children. The Rotchev House was then operated as the Fort Ross Hotel until 1906 when the State acquired the property. Hotel visitors included Luther Burbank and writer Gertrude Atherton.

The Calls preserved the chapel and used it for weddings and for storage. They built several other structures – barns, sheds, a smithy and a large dairy barn some of which remain. They had a herd of up to 470 dairy cows between 1875 and 1899. A store and post office were constructed outside the stockade during the Calls tenure. The post office closed in 1928 and the store continued to operate until the 1960s.

The Calls established a thriving shipping port and constructed a wharf and warehouse near the Dixon lumber chute. In 1877, eighty-six vessels loaded cargo at the Fort Ross chute. The Calls shipped an average of 20,000 pounds of butter a year out of the Port of Ross. They also maintained the orchard on the hill above the fort established by the Russians and shipped apples. Starting in 1897 they operated a schooner that made weekly service to San Francisco and transported passengers, animals, goods and raw materials.

Mercedes Call was an avid gardener and remnants of her work remain today. Blooming philadelphus, datura, old roses, foxglove, calla lilies, and fuchsia were photographed by the author May 2009. The Call House and garden have been

restored by the Sonoma County Landmarks Commission. The property is part of State Historic Landmark No. 5.

Sources: Fort Ross State Historic Park brochure, California State Parks, [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

"Fort Ross" published by Fort Ross Interpretive Associates, General Editors: Lyn Kalani, Lynn Rudy and John Sperry. E-mail: [fria@mcn.org](mailto:fria@mcn.org), 1998

"Historic Spots in California", by Mildred Brooke Hoover, Hero Eugene Rensch and Ethel Grace Rensch, third edition revised by William N. Abeloe, 1966.

Site visit and review of interpretive material in visitors center, May 22, 2009

Historian: Chris Pattillo, Landscape Architect, June 14, 2009

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Two outbuildings on the Call Ranch with foundation plantings (Chris Pattillo, May 22, 2009).



Front porch Call House with restored Mercedes front garden (Chris Pattillo, May 22, 2009).