

Merlot, Mammoths and Middens Tour

April 19-21, 2013

The tour of archeological sites on Sonoma Coast began at **Duncan's Landing Rockshelter**, an archaeological site (CA-1Son-348/) on the Sonoma Coast between Bodega Bay and Jenner on Friday, April 19. The era when mammoths, horses, bison, saber tooth cats and short-faced bears roamed the area north of San Francisco came alive with archeologist, Breck Parkman's tour. Before starting the tour Breck counseled us to be aware of mammoth poop while we hiked. Starting at Duncan's Landing over 20 of us were first swept back in time by visiting **Duncan's Landing Rockshelter** also known as Duncan's Point Cave and Coyote Hole. This rock outcropping above Duncan's Cove was used in historic time (1870's) to stack redwood before shipment. The rock outcropping that had once been part of Pangaea continent was eroded, compacted, pushed upward by the Pacific Plate subduction and again eroded to form a cave in the sea stack. Excavation of a three meter deep shell by Breck Parker, John Foster etc. confirmed that this cave had been used by Native Americans for at least 8500 years. To our dismay the cave had recently been the location of recent illegal digging. We found the protective wire pulled away and the sand was disturbed. Site vigilance is never ending.



Overlooking Duncan's Cove



Duncan's Point Cave

From Duncan's Landing the group proceeded to Jasper Rock. There we saw our first evidence of "Mammoth" rubbing (Parkman, 2004). Jasper was polished four meters above ground, higher than current era livestock could comfort themselves. Breck described the present day elephant process of wallowing in the mud and then rubbing off the cakes on the edges of the rocks thereby polishing the rock surface and freeing their skin of insects and parasites. We traversed the wetland that could represent a relic animal wallow and touched the polished blue schist at both Jasper Rock and Mammoth Rocks. When we returned from the hike to Mammoth Rocks, we realized that we had transported ourselves back in time to when the mammoths grazed in the immense coastal grassland that is now submerged by the Pacific Ocean.



Jasper Rock



Breck showing location of Jasper Rock Excavation



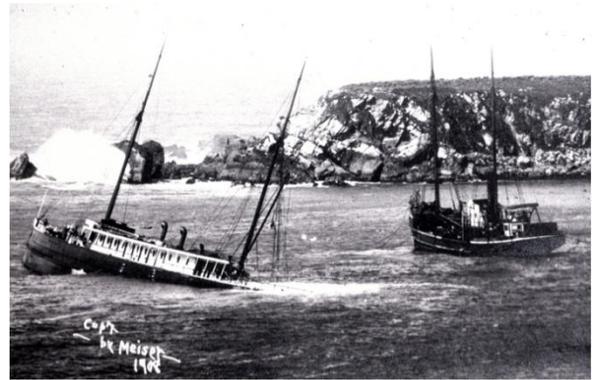
Hiking to Mammoth Rocks



Breck feeling rubbings at Mammoth Rock

It was hard to beat Breck's tour but on Saturday, April 20th State Park Ranger, Bill Walton met the challenge at **Fort Ross**. There beyond a grove of huge eucalypts we overlooked the site of the *S. S. Pomona* shipwreck, a passenger steamer lost on March 17, 1908. Bill and John Foster described the event and the underwater excavation. The caption made a valiant attempt to safely

each the ship. Unfortunately the ship didn't make the intended Fort Ross Cove. It caught on a rock in the bay and sunk. We saw the rock.



Above site of *S. S. Pomona Shipwreck*

S. S. Pomona Shipwreck

During our visit Fort Ross was bustling with special activities. The recently constructed windmill (a replica of a windmill that was built 200 years ago at the fort made its debut in October) was rotated to catch the wind and it simulated the grinding of grain. Native Americans from Kashaya tribe danced traditional dances in the Fort Ross court yard. For the history buff the visitor center was a goldmine.



Fort Ross Windmill



Fort Ross



Native American Dancers



Fort Ross and Cemetery

In brief the Russian-American Company was chartered in 1799 by Tsar Paul I to use the coastal areas of North America south to 55 degrees north latitude and exploit surface and mineral resources and colonize unoccupied land. Since sea otters were valued highly for their pelts especially by the Chinese, it was the most profitable trade item. The Russians employed the Alaskan natives to catch sea otters and set up a trading headquarters in Sitka in 1808. As the supply of sea otters dwindled and the difficulty keeping the Sitka settlements fed, Russians looked to California for alternative sea otters and food, especially grain. Supplies sent from Saint Petersburg took two years to arrive. In 1811 Bodega Bay became the headquarters for sea otter hunting along the Pacific Coast. It didn't easily accommodate ships; hence another site was needed. On August 30 1812 the Fort Ross became a company outpost. By 1828 sea otters were nearly extinct. Production of food stuff continued to be a priority. Two wind mills had been built for grinding wheat. Between 1826-1833 wheat growing did not meet the needs of Russians in Alaska and the Russian-American Company was not sufficiently profitable. By 1839 the officials in the company decided to abandon the colony. In 1841 Sutter bought the assets of the Russian colony.

Above Fort Ross on the hillside was its orchard. Here, not only did we view old fruit trees we saw the **San Andreas Fault** line. We stood on each side of the line simultaneously. At this site in the 1906 earthquake a stretch of redwood trees lost their tops due to excessive shaking.

At the **Fort Ross Cemetery** it was believed that there were 40 graves. During an excavation after removing the top layer of soil, many more graves were evident. In all 140 graves were found. Finds included a military uniform, beads, glass, and a medallion. Crosses were placed at the head of each grave. In 2008 a bicentennial celebration was held at Fort Ross. The cemetery was rededicated in a processional ceremony including leaders of the Russian orthodox church.

On Sunday, April 21 the **Cloverdale petroglyph site** was our destination. We climbed onto a deeply incised boulder that was covered, mostly on the 3 x 5 meter top with cupules, vertical and horizontal incised lines and incised notches on the edges of natural raised surfaces. The marks appear at random. There were series of parallel lines, punctate designs and cupules with integrated incised lines. This boulder is in Pomo territory and may have been used in fertility rituals. Powder from "baby rocks" such as this fluorite schist was removed by cutting or grinding. The powder was made into a paste and used ceremonially to encourage pregnancy. <https://dl.dropbox.com/u/98457583/Hedges-Cloverdale%20Rock.docx>



Cloverdale Rock Art Site



Cloverdale Rock Art: lines



Cloverdale Rock Art: lines and cupules



Cloverdale Rock Art: lines and cupules



Cloverdale Rock Art: nail cuts



Cloverdale Rock Art: lines