



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service



PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

Restoring, Enhancing and Sustaining Forests in California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands

Sierra National Forest

Jesse Ross Cabin

Bass Lake Ranger District

The Jesse Ross Cabin is one of the scenic stops along the 90 mile Sierra Vista National Scenic Byway. The cabin was built in the late 1860s by Jesse Blakey Ross and its traditional log cabin design shows the pioneer spirit and technology of the mid-nineteenth century. It is also the oldest known residence still standing in Madera County, representing a significant period in the Euro-American settlement. Until the 1930s, this was the “end of the road” and the beginning of the John French Trail which crossed the Sierra Nevada to Mammoth Lakes. The Mono people, the first inhabitants of the area, had annually used this and other trails to travel to the east for over a thousand years. These routes provided the Mono a chance to trade native resources and gather with families and tribes.

JESSE ROSS

Jesse Blakey Ross, born in April 1835, came west from Missouri during the Gold Rush. Ross's Scot-Irish parents made their home in Kentucky.

By the 1860s Ross made his way to Mariposa County and packed in supplies to the mines. It was during this time that he found this site and began construction on the 1½ story cabin. Jesse Ross was of slight build, standing almost six feet tall and had thick dark hair.

During one of his trips to the mountains, he met Mary Waspi, a Mono Indian. Not long afterward they were married and in December 1871, Mary gave birth to their only child, Julia Belle Ross.

Jesse divided the interior of the cabin, adding two separate rooms, one for himself and his wife and one for his new daughter. During the mid-1880s Mary left and returned to her people never living on the ranch again.

JULIA BELLE ROSS

Daughter Julia Belle Ross attended the Rachel Ward School in Fresno. There she met Frank G. Hallock, a native of New York, and in 1891, Julia and Frank were married. Julia gave birth to a son, Homer. In 1900, Jesse Ross died and was buried on his ranch. Frank, Julia, Homer, Henry Super and an Indian employee named martin were living on the ranch when Jesse Ross died. Julia inherited the ranch in 1902 and was in poor health. She died in 1904 and was buried next to her father. Frank continued to farm the ranch, raising apples and beans until 1910, when he sold the ranch to Samuel L. Hogue.

THE HOGUE RANCH

Hogue worked in the San Joaquin Valley as the first schoolteacher in the Selma Schools and served as Justice of the Peace in Fresno. The Hogue’s settled in the log house and renamed the ranch, "The Hogue Ranch". In 1912, Samuel Hogue planted an additional 20 acres of apple trees and continued raising pink beans, planting them in the orchard rows until the trees became too large. Hogue purchased a fanning mill to clean the beans, raised hogs and built a small sawmill powered by a wooden water wheel along Hogue Creek.



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In 1930, Hogue sold the ranch to Joseph E. Foster and his son Clyde, who had leased the ranch in 1928. Joseph and wife Ida had five sons and four daughters. The Fosters made improvements on the ranch, expanding the orchard, grafting new trees and constructing a seven-foot high deer fence. The cabin was in disrepair, so the Fosters built a new foundation for the cabin, re-roofed it, removed the deteriorated front porch and added a rear porch roof. They remodeled the fireplace, adding a draft, log mantle and mortared around the large cut-granite stones on the hearth.

The Fosters used the Hogue Ranch during the summer, wintering at their ranch in Dunlap. They used the log cabin until the 1940s when they built a new home next to the log cabin. In 1984 the cabin and a portion of the ranch were sold to Richard and Jannetta McClurg.

ROSS CABIN RESTORATION

In order for the historic cabin to be preserved and enjoyed by the public, the McClurg family donated it to the Forest Service.

Forest Service archaeologists evaluated the historic significance of the cabin and recorded all the features that made it unique. One important determination was how to move the cabin onto National forest land. A commercial house mover moved the cabin in one piece.

In the summer of 1990, all parts of the cabin were numbered and labeled in case any were dislodged during the move. For stabilization, the cabin was reinforced with beams, plywood and cables. It was jacked up, placed on I-beams, large rubber tired dollies were rolled underneath, and then towed 1/4 mile south to its new location near Clearwater Station. The new site was selected to give access to the public and keep it in the same environmental setting as the original location.

In June 1991, the Forest Service offered a class in log cabin restoration, which was attended by people from throughout the United States. While working on the cabin, participants learned the art of restoration. Replacement logs were hand hewn, using many of the tools used in the 1860s.

ROSS CABIN SITE

The cabin has been completed and the fireplace rebuilt with rock. A wood pole fence surrounds the cabin area. The cabin can be reached by a short hike from the parking area just off the Byway. An accessible toilet is available at the parking area.

Please view the cabin with care. It is a violation of Federal law to destroy or remove artifacts from historical sites. Thank you!

We hope your visit to the cabin and travel on the Byway is a safe and pleasant one.

For further information please contact:

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