

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

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## **CELEBRATE THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF WILDER RANCH STATE PARK AT THE ANNUAL HERITAGE HARVEST FESTIVAL ON SAT., OCT. 25**

### *EVENT TO INCLUDE DOCENT REUNION AND DEDICATION OF THE NEWLY- PAINTED ICONIC HORSE BARN*

OCTOBER 13, 2014—SANTA CRUZ, CA—Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks today announced the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the acquisition of Wilder Ranch State Park will be commemorated during the annual Heritage Harvest Festival at the park on Saturday, October 25. Festival-goers can enjoy living history demonstrations, apple tasting, live music, square dancing, draft horse rides, costumes for dress-up, and – just for kids – pumpkin painting, crafts and old-fashioned games. Food and drink, including hand-cranked pumpkin ice cream, will be available. The Heritage Harvest Festival and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration will be from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free to this family-friendly event; parking is \$10 (which supports the park).

A recognition ceremony celebrating the history of the park, including dedication of the horse barn, will be begin at 1 p.m. Wilder Ranch volunteers, staff and community supporters — both past and present — will be honored and the newly-painted iconic horse barn will be dedicated. The barn was refurbished thanks to a generous grant to Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks from the California State Parks Foundation, with funding from Anchor Brewing Company and the Margaret Spencer Donner Endowment.

A reunion and lunch for former Wilder Ranch docents, volunteers and State Parks staffers will be held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Those interested in participating in the reunion should call 831-426-0505 or email [barbara.cooksey@parks.ca.gov](mailto:barbara.cooksey@parks.ca.gov).

As part of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is helping add to the Wilder Ranch archive. Anyone who would like to share photos, mementos or memories about the land use story that created the park should email [elizabeth@thatsmypark.org](mailto:elizabeth@thatsmypark.org) or bring the items to the event.

A watercolor painting of the Wilder Ranch Victorian – painted in the 1970s by Marilyn Simandle shortly after the State Park was acquired – will be raffled off. The painting was donated by a generous supporter of Friends to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the park and benefit the Paint the Victorian Fund. Tickets are \$10 each; only 500 will be sold until 12/13/14.

Author Eric Henze will be signing copies of his book, *The Complete Guide to Wilder Ranch State Park*, sales of which benefit the park.

### **Wilder Ranch State Park History**

Native Ohlone people made the region their homeland for millennia, and evidence shows they had villages at Wilder Ranch. From 1791 to 1835 the site was the main rancho supplying Mission Santa Cruz. In the 1830s the land, known as Rancho del Refugio, was granted to three daughters of Joaquin Castro, including Maria Candida Castro and her husband Jose Antonio Bolcoff, a Russian

sailor who jumped ship to become a naturalized Mexican citizen. Bolcoff built two adobes (one of which remains today).

In 1854 Moses Meder acquired a large portion of the rancho, constructing a home, which is now the front portion of the old farmhouse known as the Meder House. He expanded dairy and farming, building a creamery, dairy barn and other buildings. In 1871 Levi K. Baldwin and Deloss D. Wilder purchased 4,160 acres of the former rancho and built a new creamery. Their partnership lasted until 1885 when the Wilder family obtained the lower lands on Meder Creek. The Wilder Family worked the land for five generations and nearly a century, building the Victorian farmhouse in 1897 and employing such innovations as harnessing water power to drive their equipment and the first electric lighting system in the county.

The Wilder Family ran the ranch until 1969 when property taxes exceeded farm income. In the 1970s, the land was proposed for a development of up to 10,000 homes. Local residents formed Operation Wilder to oppose the plan and county citizens voted to protect the open space. After continued advocacy, the State allocated \$6 million for the property and in 1974 State Parks acquired the land.

Today Wilder Ranch State Park covers approximately 7,000 acres, with 34 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails winding through coastal terraces and valleys. Major wetland restoration projects have attracted some of the original flora and fauna back to the area. In the cultural complex, visitors can explore Victorian homes, barns, shops, gardens, the historic Bolcoff adobe, and discover the history of early ranchers and farmers through tours, living history demonstrations and special events.

Wilder Ranch State Park is located two miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 1. Several buildings once belonging to the Wilder family have been restored and a portion of the park continues to be farmed by local families.

### **Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks' Role at Wilder Ranch**

Friends supports Wilder Ranch by operating the ParkStore, as well as funding and supporting a wide variety of park functions including:

- Personnel: park interpreters, visitor service aides and the docent volunteer program
- Programming: the Farm Animal, Living History and Ranch Kid Days programs
- Facilities: Meder House restoration, horse barn painting and the Paint the Victorian Fund

### **About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks**

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is an entrepreneurial nonprofit sustaining the legacy of our state parks and beaches. Through an innovative partnership with California State Parks, and by leveraging local community support, Friends has provided millions of dollars of funding for educational programs, visitor services and capital projects. Founded in 1976, Friends is passionately dedicated to the preservation of our spectacular natural environment and rich cultural history. Friends supports dozens of state parks and beaches in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties and operates six ParkStores, offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. ParkStore locations include Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch and Online. In May 2014, Friends was honored by California State Parks with a Dewitt Award for Partnership, which recognizes "commitment above and beyond the call of duty over a substantial period of time" and "recognizes those who have served as irreplaceable partners in the accomplishment of the State Parks Mission." Learn more at [ThatsMyPark.org](http://ThatsMyPark.org) or via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Pinterest.

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